

WRITTEN IN STONE

Reading the Rocks of the Great Ocean Road

What is most appealing about the book “Written in Stone”, along with its clarity of text and design, is its ability to breathe life into the natural world. It does this by recognising that rocks are alive to change – metamorphosis. Charles Lyell initiated this thinking in the early 19th century when he proposed radical changes in geological phenomenon across time, just as Charles Darwin was exploring the concept of evolution.

Set in a framework harking back to the days of Gwondana, when continental Australia broke away from other landmasses, Lorne author Philomena Manifold is able to approach the concept of changing rock formations along the Great Ocean Road with the practised eye of a geologist and a clear appreciation of their beauty and magnificent colour. She is both artist and scientist - a rare feat in today’s disciplined world. Her descriptions are crisp and revealing, her hand-drawn pencil sketches delicate and accurate.

Walk on any beach along the Road and you will, if you look, notice the changes in sand and plants. What you don’t see in the here and now are the altered rock formations. They happen in minute detail across centuries. Nor as you travel from one location to the next along the Road are you necessarily aware of the dramatic variations in colour and shape of the rock formations.

The text of “Written in Stone” explains the reasons behind such extensive variety – differing interactions between sea, sand, soil and rock types: commanding and resilient Eagle Rock at Airey’s Inlet, its limestone and basalt battered by the sea; Lorne’s gentle folded volcanic rocks sheltered in

Louttit Bay. Further west shelly middens, caves, forest gorges, cannon balls and sheer cliffs all tell their stories. As Manifold says: ‘The land is constantly being carved, sculpted and coloured’.

It is, though, Manifold’s dedicated photography which finally illuminates the rock variations and makes this book one you will be keen to take with you as you travel the Road.

Available from Lorne Books at \$55 rrp

Review by Sandra McComb who worked as an editor and publisher both in Australia and overseas.

Below: Lorne author Min Manifold, artist, and scientist, explains the constantly changing interaction between sea and the landmass along the Great Ocean Road.

