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Book review

CLAY MATERIALS USED IN CONSTRUCTION

G. M. Reeves, I. Sims and J. C. Cripps (eds). The Geological Society, Bath, 2006, ISBN 978-1-8623-9184-X, £100, 525 pp.

This volume is the final part of Geological Society's publication trilogy on geological materials in construction, adding to the previously published volumes on aggregates and stone. This latest volume on clays contains 15 chapters that can be broadly divided into three loose sections, covering composition and formation; exploration and testing; and clay as an engineering and construction material. Thus a complete and detailed coverage is given allowing the reader to fully develop their understanding of many key inter-related issues associated with clays and their use as a construction material. As noted in the preface a notable omission is the engineering aspects of clay in situ. This omission is however, necessary in order to achieve the high level of detailed yet well-written and informative text that has been produced.

The book aims to present and explain a wide range of geological information about clays. Has this been achieved? In short the answer is yes and much more. Clay, as a construction material, has often been elusive and difficult to understand. This book unravels the mystique that is clays, illustrating both traditional and more contemporary uses of clay as a construction material, highlighting certain aspects. These range from earthworks and special usage of clays in construction such as slurry, to clay as a source of building materials including brick and unfired rammed earth. No volume can present a comprehensive treatment of all related areas but with the use of detailed references at the end of each chapter the reader is guided to excellent sources of further specific and detailed information.

The book is well prepared with good and useful illustrations, well referenced with excellent and very detailed data and information about the properties of clays. Importantly a full and detailed glossary is provided at the end of the book, which itself makes an excellent contribution. The only real criticism that could be levelled at this book is its predominantly UK focus, although the book does try to address this in parts, by discussing aspects of clays in Europe and across the globe.

The chapters contained within this book have been written by experts in their fields and the working party, under the chairmanship of Professor Peter Fookes, who gathered all this material together should be congratulated for a job well done. This is an impressive, well edited book which is a very welcome addition to any construction professional's bookshelf. It covers all you could want to know about clays and more, and offers both the novice and the seasoned expert information and new perspectives about clays and their use as a construction material. In short, this volume meets most, if not all, of the requirements of a useful and valuable reference document. With a price ticket of £100 it may seem an expensive volume, but considering the depth, coverage and detail contained within it, must be considered excellent value for money.

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