



**Bernard Johnson**

**H**ow much art do we see in an average day? How much do we recognise as we go about our daily business? Do we look or do we assume that there is none? In fact there is art in the most unlikely of places.

Visit a cemetery, a sports centre, a cafe or even a town hall — perhaps not the first places you might go to see some striking artwork.

But look closer at headstones in any graveyard and you will see beautiful lettering and figurative carvings. These were designed and created by artists wielding their hammers and chisels to create lasting memorials.

Stone carvers like Bernard Johnson turn a lump of stone or slate into a work of art. He has just finished a headstone for Oxford City Council and St Clements Parish Church as a memorial to mark the reburial of 18th century skeletons unearthed during recent road improvements at The Plain — the site of the original St Clements parish church and graveyard.

Memorials may seem to be a bleak subject, but Bernard enjoys the challenge of reflecting a life in stone.

Recently, he was approached by a local farming family with an enormous piece of stone they had found on their farm. They wanted a memorial for their father, a great nature lover.

The stone was duly shaped and Bernard is currently carving leaves, squirrels and birds to reflect the interests of this man's life.

You can visit Bernard's studio to see a variety of his work, from a series of remarkable carved panels inspired by Eric Gill's column carvings in Westminster Cathedral, to the more prosaic house names.

You can try your hand at carving and enjoy light refreshments at The Pig Sty, Park Farm, Kiddington OX20 1BW. Bernard's studio is open on May 22-24 and again on May 28-31 from noon to 6pm.

Visit the website [www.bernardjohnson.co.uk](http://www.bernardjohnson.co.uk) for more details.