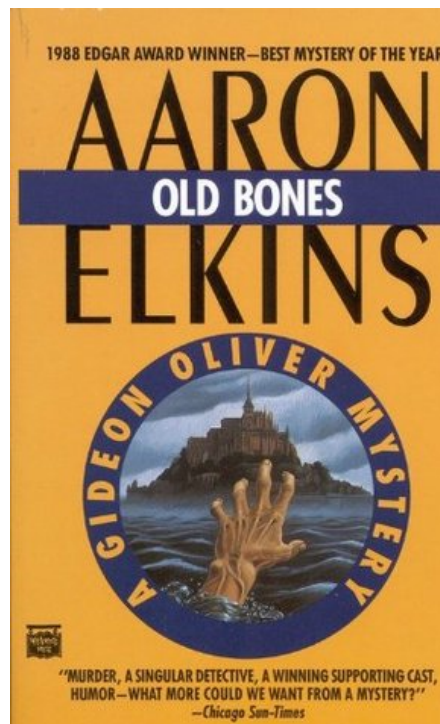




Old Bones

Aaron Elkins

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When an old skeleton is found beneath the floor of the du Rocher estate, American "skeleton detective" Dr. Gideon Oliver is called in to uncover the secrets behind the Old Bones. Winner of the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Mystery of 1987.

Old Bones Details

Date : Published October 1st 1988 by Mysterious Press (first published November 1987)

ISBN : 9780445406872

Author : Aaron Elkins

Format : Paperback 256 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction

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From Reader Review Old Bones for online ebook

Jennifer S. Alderson says

Enjoyable mystery set in Mont St. Michel, an incredible abbey in France. I had a little trouble getting into the story, but once I did, I enjoyed the characters and mystery. Gideon Oliver is a great lead.

Brie says

This is not my kind of book. We all have styles we prefer. Me? Witty dialogue, clever storyline, something of substance to chew over afterward.

This book has none of these. Instead, the author uses every available moment to write in tidbits of French culture he likely researched from a book. There are conversations and whole scenes that do nothing to advance the storyline. My edition claims this book would have pleased Sherlock Holmes. While I believe we can all be intrigued with the method used to determine cause of death, no one is pleased with the unnecessary references to clothing or the budding romance of two minor characters.

I would not recommend this book to anyone.

Karin says

Plenty of plot twists in this one.

Paul says

What we have here is a good old-fashioned mystery. No mundane facts about the main character's daily routine. No subplots about a child that's lashing out because the main character missed her latest piano recital. It sets the scene and doesn't stray. This is not a bad thing, and given that it's less than 250 pages, it's conducted masterfully.

The book starts with someone dying and ends with the mystery solved. Case closed. One reviewer mentioned it lacked humor and was too "by the book", but I wholeheartedly disagree. The author's sense of humor shines throughout the book, and it's not always subtle. I found the characters very well developed and I wouldn't mind revisiting Gideon Oliver in the future, as this was my first book in the series. Since Oliver is an American and the book takes place in Europe, I expected more of a "fish out of water" take, but the author avoids that slant for the most part.

If you're looking for something more in the vein of an Agatha Christie novel (though I have read little Christie), I think you'll find Elkins I might fine substitute.

Karen says

Gideon Oliver series #4 and winner of the Edgar Prize for mystery writing in 1987. Gideon is a renowned

anthropologist who is in France for a conference. When a dismembered body is found in the basement of a local chateau, Gideon and his sidekick John from FBI get called into action. The plot is typical of the series, Gideon is almost killed in trying to solve the murder. There are some twists and turns but nothing too spectacular. At 210 pages it is an easy read.

kathy says

The book was stilted and the "action" confusing. It was difficult to keep track of who was related to whom. And really wasn't sure it mattered to the progression of the book anyway.

All in all, not an enjoyable read.

Karen says

The du Rocher family is present in force at their estate for a family council. The head of the family has brought everyone together to make some sort of announcement but no one's is quite certain what it is. When the head of the family dies in a tragic accident, the family is stunned but not devastated and upon the reading of the will, old grievances are loudly aired. As the new head of the family takes charge, he oversees some work on the plumbing as workers begin tearing up the basement under the chateau. Their work is quickly halted as they discover some bones.

Professor Gideon Oliver is in France, presenting sessions about forensic anthropology to an international audience of policemen. His friend, John Lau (FBI), is also there trying his best to stay awake during a series of relatively dull academic sessions of lectures. The last thing Gideon or John expected was to be asked to look at some old bones at a local chateau. Things become more intriguing as Gideon realizes these bones are at the home of someone he knows... the head of the du Rocher family (now dead) and one of his relatives who taught at the same university as Gideon.

So many questions and too many motives make this an exciting case. Who is the corpse (that dates back to the 1940s) in the basement? Is he an SS officer who ordered the death of one of the du Rocher family? Was the accidental death of the head of the family really an accident? When a third death occurs right in front of Gideon, it narrows the field but not by much. Can Gideon, with John's help, get to the bottom of this mystery?

Elizabeth Du says

Classic mystery with Gideon Oliver holding forth in the lovely locale of the Breton coast with

The famous tides of Mount St Michel playing an active role in the plot. Interesting characters gathered at a major house for a family council. But the patriarch who called the meeting does before revealing its purpose. With the titular Old Bones found in the cellar there's reason enough for the skeleton detective who is lecturing at the Mont to come render an opinion on the bones ... And much more of course. A thoroughly satisfying read.

Pamela Hofman says

It's always fun to reread something you remember really liking many years after the first time so that you know you're going to enjoy it, but it's long enough that you don't remember the story too well nor "whodunnit."

I really enjoyed this book. Again. Dr. Gideon Oliver is a fun protagonist. He's smart but still makes some mistakes. He's a little goofy at times but seriously knows his stuff. His sidekick, John Lau, the big Hawaiian detective, is an excellent character as well with his regularly sardonic comments and unaffected attitude toward life.

If you're going to read this, you're better off starting with book 1 and reading in order.

Diane Heath says

One of the better Gideon Oliver stories

Lauren Albert says

Spoiler

The plot was a little convoluted for me and I don't think there was any way for someone reading the book to figure it out. There was also a bit of predictability about the shy, quiet girl everyone likes getting the inheritance. But I enjoyed the book anyway.

Connie says

Forensic anthropologist Gideon Oliver is attending a conference in France with his friend FBI agent John Lau. He's asked to examine some old bones that were unearthed in the stone cellar of the nearby du Rocher chateau. The bones seem to date from around World War II. The village had been occupied by the Nazis, and the villagers still remember who were collaborators and who were involved in the Resistance. The owner of the chateau cannot be questioned since he had drowned a few days ago--on the same day he had scheduled an important family meeting.

I enjoyed Gideon's explanations of the forensic findings, although the author overdid the use of long medical words describing the bones. The banter among Gideon, John, and the French Inspector Joly was entertaining. One would not want to be related to most of the unpleasant du Rocher family.

The setting of Mont St Michel in Normandy was a big draw. The island has an interesting military and religious history. Mont St Michel is famous for its extreme tides of around 15 meters (50 feet) between low and high tides. Quicksand adds to the dangerous conditions as the high tide thunders in. This is not a spoiler

since the book opens with a scene of a stranded walker being surprised by the changing tide rushing into shore. The book was an Edgar Award winner.

Deborah Wysinger says

This one was great. Totally confused as to the killer. So many twists and turns it was easy too get the wrong guilty party.

Andrea says

Gideon Oliver is an American forensic anthropologist known as “The Skeleton Detective”, because he has achieved some notoriety for solving a number of murders. In this book, he’s on a trip to France, taking part in a lecture series on forensic anthropology. Although he’s having a pretty good time as a lecturer, some of the other speakers are quite dull, and things are sometimes becoming boring for both Gideon and his good friend, FBI agent John Lau. And so when some old bones are discovered in an old French chateau, Gideon and John welcome the invitation to check them out, as a break from the monotony of academic workshops. What Gideon and John walk into at the chateau turns into a locked-room mystery, which seems to involve crimes from the past. A number of the people staying at the chateau were alive during World War II, when the small French village became divided due to the Nazi occupation. Although events involving Resistance fighters versus Nazis took place decades before, the bitter and violent memories are very present to those who were there at the time.

I liked many aspects of this book. Gideon is a good character, with his mix of intelligence and arrogance and humour and compassion. He’s excellent at his job – although he does sometimes make mistakes – and the forensic anthropology information is interesting. I like the banter and competition that’s present in Gideon’s friendship with the more prosaic John Lau. Inspector Joly, the French policeman investigating the crimes, is well-drawn – seemingly arrogant and impatient, he becomes more interesting as the story progresses.

As well, there is a lot of delicious-sounding food and drink, and the Mont St-Michel setting is compelling. I’m having a lot of fun working my way through this series.

Sue Munson says

A little slow but ultimately satisfying

If you're looking for a page turner, this author is probably not for you. That said, if you're looking for a good story with likeable characters, this may be right up your alley.

Linda says

Dr. Oliver Gideon (Aka the Bone Detective) is at a conference in France when he is asked to look at some bones found in the basement of an old mansion. Before he gets to the mansion the owner dies in an accident at the seaside while looking for seashells but other members of the family had gathered at the owners request for a family meeting. The bones seem to be from WWII and the timing of the death of the owner seems to be

mysterious to Gideon. There are several possibilities for the bones and at least a couple for the death of the family patriarch.

A very interesting story with a number of . I really like the characters in this series, they are real, down-to-earth and funny. I think any mystery reader would enjoy the Bone Detective Series.

Susan says

This is one of the most interesting and compelling mysteries I've ever read. It has believable characters, a WW II history, a French setting - including the amazing Mt. Saint Michel - and a very clever academic forensic anthropologist!

Peter Tillman says

A competent, well-written mystery that held my attention. Histronics at the end are classical (denouement & drama in the grand salon of a country estate!) but perhaps a bit much. I'm only an occasional mystery-reader, but I'd consider another by this author.

Gary Sundell says

A top notch mystery which was certainly deserving of its Edgar as best mystery novel in 1998. This is the first Dr. Gideon Oliver mystery I have read. This book was the 4th in the series. It will not be my last.

Munityobrien says

A clever read.
