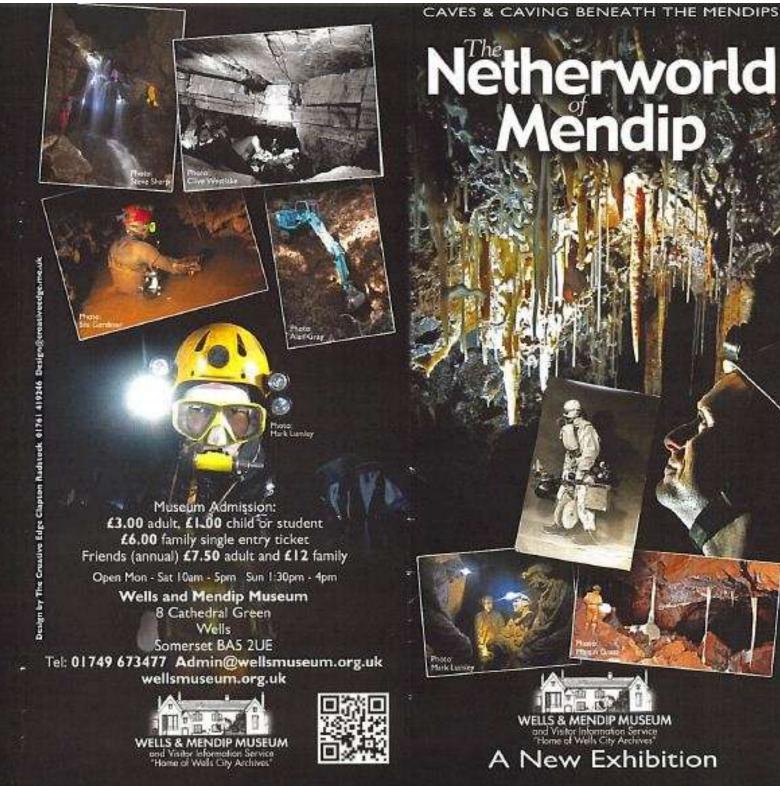
The Netherworld of Mendip is a new, permanent exhibition at the Wells & Mendip Museum portraying the fascinating world of caves that lies hidden beneath the Mendip Hills and charting the development of caving and cave diving that has led to their discovery and exploration.

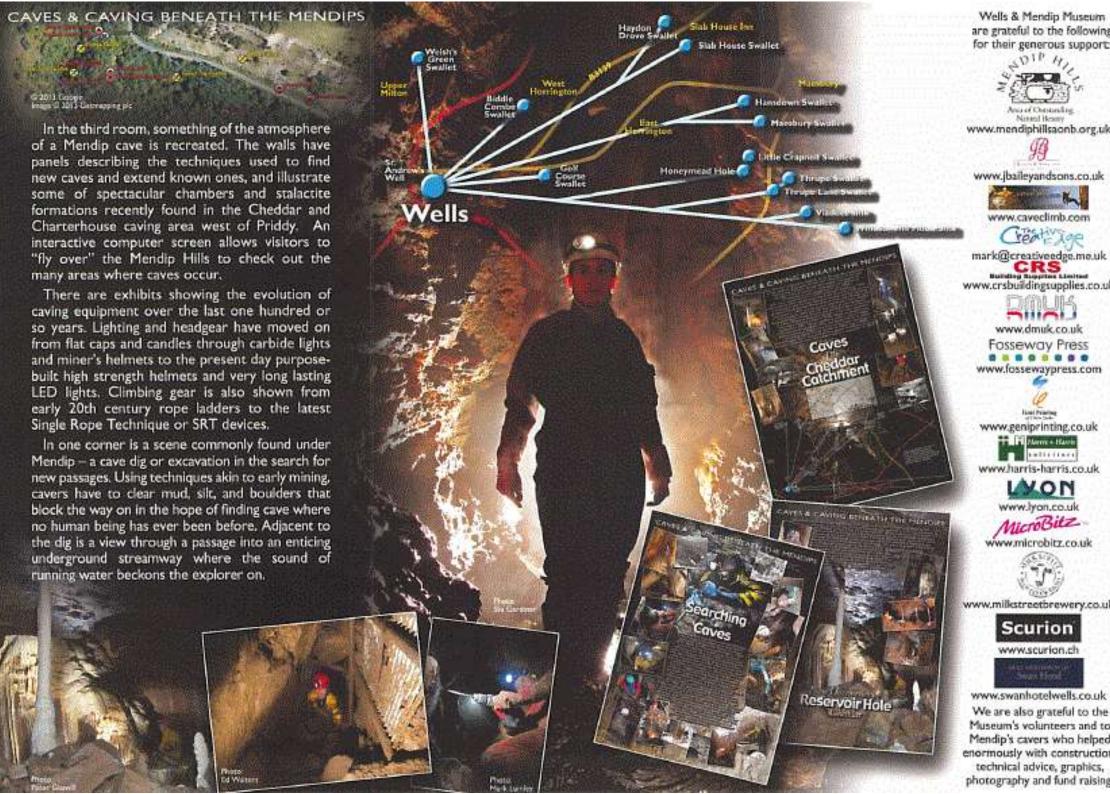
In the first room, a series of illustrated panels Follow the Stream tells the story of the caves at Priddy and the 150 year quest to follow their underground streams down to Wookey Hole, where the combined waters emerge as the River Axe, Swildon's Hole, Eastwater Cavern and St. Cuthbert's Swallet now comprise many thousands of metres of varied and often beautiful passageways and chambers, but the link with the flooded passages in Wookey Hole has still to be made.

The second room explains how the geology of the Mendip Hills creates the conditions for caves to be formed, carving out the stream passages and chambers that eventually re-emerge into daylight at the foot of the hills through resurgence caves such as those at Wookey Hole, Cheddar and the great springs that gave the city of Wells its name. The room is dominated, however, by exhibits illustrating the history of cave diving which began in Britain in the Mendip caves in the 1930s. On display is the very first piece of diving equipment designed for the exploration of flooded underground passages or sumps - the Bicycle Respirator - which was used by Graham Balcombe in Swildon's Hole in 1934. Another striking exhibit is the representation of a diver of the mid 1950s, cumbersomely kitted out for bottom-walking, upstream exploration in Wookey Hole. Alongside is a recreation of an underground sump pool surrounded by modern day diving equipment.





A New Exhibition



Wells & Mendip Museum are grateful to the following for their generous support:



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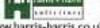
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We are also grateful to the Museum's volunteers and to Mendip's cavers who helped enormously with construction technical advice, graphics, photography and fund raising.