

Welcome to Wells & Mendip Museum's newsletter with information about exhibitions, talks, events and developments at the Museum. If you would like to receive a copy by e-mail please contact admin@wellsmuseum.org.uk

Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 4pm (Closed Sundays & Mondays)

First Floor Exhibition Room

Until 7 September 2024

“Out of Time: Underground Mendip” Events Programme

Our final exhibition as part of the Search & Learn project, *Out of Time: Underground Mendip* is now on display in the museum's Exhibition Room and the Balch Room until Saturday 7 September. Curated by Josephine Lanyon, the exhibition features a series of black and white pen and ink drawings by the museum's founder Herbert E Balch, alongside works by his contemporaries John Hassall and Harry Savory, and contemporary artists Ben Rivers and Emma Stibbon.



We are delighted that both artists are available to take part in an illustrated panel discussion which will be held in the museum's Lecture Hall on the evening of **Wednesday 4 September (6pm-7.30pm)**. The panel will comprise the exhibition's curator Josephine Lanyon, artists Ben Rivers and Emma Stibbon, and the museum's Hon. Curator David Walker. This is an opportunity to learn more about Rivers and Stibbon's careers and the challenging environments and ideas that they explore in their film-making and drawing projects. The curators will give an insight into the way new Balch works came into the collection and how contemporary artists are commissioned to respond to place and history. We are offering the museum's Friends and volunteers complimentary tickets to this event for a limited time only – please contact Victoria Northwood, Search & Learn Project Manager by Monday 19 August if you would like to come: searchlearnwells@gmail.com

Emma Stibbon will also be participating in an afternoon of conversation and cake in the Exhibition Room on **Saturday 17 August (2.30 – 4.00pm)**. She will be joined by Robin Gray, a renowned contemporary painter of cave exploration and the museum's Hon Curator David Walker. The conversation will explore the ways in which Stibbon's new commissions for *Out of Time* have responded to Herbert Balch's caving research and geological collections.

Tickets are available from the museum's front desk and cost £5.00.

If you are not local to Wells but would like to purchase a ticket for either or both of the events, please contact the Museum Manager, Christine Fewer, to discuss payment options: admin@wellsmuseum.org.uk

10-14 September – Paintings by Robin Gray NDD ATD NAPA

Robin Gray is an artist that is well known to regular visitors of the museum. In this short exhibition we will see a carefully selected display of his famous 'Organic Abstract Paintings' together with some of his other more figurative works, including paintings depicting high mountains, meticulous pen drawings, and prints of some of his well-known subjects.

Discovering acrylic paint in the late 1950s while still at art school, and acrylic paint not available in the art shops, Gray made his own acrylic paint and has pioneered the use of this medium to the present day. He was awarded the contemporary art prize by the National Association of Painters in Acrylic in 2018 at their exhibition in St. Ives. Work in this exhibition will range in size from fairly large paintings to tiny drawings in pen and ink. All work will be for Sale, and Robin will be at the Museum to talk about his work while the exhibition is open.

Free entry to Exhibition



24 September – 12 October

"Mists and Shadows" – An exhibition of contemporary photography by Jack Hardin BA (Hons)

Photographer and longtime resident of Wells and the surrounding area. Inspired by the almost unrivalled image-making opportunities of the British Isles, particularly of the South West. Specialties: landscape & related, light & mood, portraiture... and whatever catches the critical eye

Free entry to exhibition only

Ground Floor Meeting Room

"The Italians of Wells" – now extended to 31 August 2024

Due to its popularity, "The Italians of Wells" exhibition has been extended by a month until 31st August. There are many glowing tributes to the exhibition in the Visitor Book, so please browse through and add your own comments. A commemorative booklet all about the exhibition is available to buy at £10 per copy.

Please ask for details in the Museum.

Included in museum entry fee

From the Curator

There are newly made ambrotypes in our 'Out of Time' exhibition in a display created by artist Emma Stibbon. Cave mineral specimens in the museum's collection were expertly photographed by Tim Pearce using a wet collodial glass plate camera.

Italians of Wells
Exhibition
9th - 30th July 2024
Extended to 31st August 2024

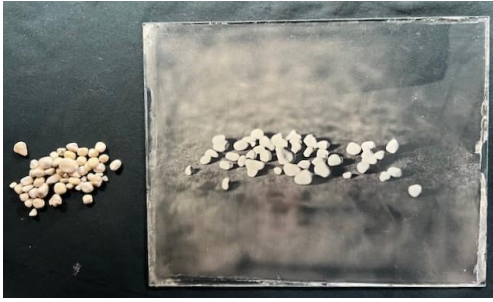
Did you know there were 3 POW camps in Wells?

Why is Wells twinned with Fontanellato?

Why is there a Romulus & Remus statue on the A39?

Find out why we have so many Italian families living in Wells.

Wells & Mendip Museum
8 Cathedral Green
Wells BA5 2UE



Swildon's Hole cave pearls

The photographic technique dates from the earliest years of photography and relies on viewing negative collodions using reflected light against a black background, so the image appears to be positive. The collodions are displayed next to the specimens, and Emma's drawings of them in a booklet. The juxtaposition of the old and the new is most thought-provoking.

On 5 August, the museum was presented with an album recording the creation of the Harry Patch memorial, by its author, Alan Williams pictured here with his wife, and Richard Lovegrove, one of the museum trustees. The album is to be kept in the museum library. Anyone wishing to view the album should contact the museum.



Library News

The *Endeavour Journals: Captain Cook in Australia* (which was mentioned in our previous Newsletter) has now appeared in the Library. It can be found below a portrait of Cook alongside the Library's Albatross. In spite of its being exhibited alongside the Albatross, the *Endeavour Journals* belong to the other end of the room which holds the complete *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Another new book has arrived, though it is not yet on the shelves. It was presented to the Library with the surprising title of *Criminal Women 1850-1920*. The authors, Lucy Williams and Barry Godfrey, present five chapters of background, 30 criminal women and five chapters on 'how to research'. This book is not yet on the shelves, but curiously is published by the same publishers as those of the *Endeavour Journals* – Pen and Sword Books!

Two other additions are historic newspapers. The most interesting is the very first issue of the *Wells Journal* incorporating Frome, Shepton Mallet, Glastonbury - and Axbridge Gazette. Our copy is No. 1 and is dated Saturday August 2, 1851. Unlike our modern *Wells Journal*, it reports on the House of Commons where the Speaker agreed that Mr Reynolds's Proceeding 'was most decidedly very inconvenient, but he could not say that the hon. gentleman was technically out of order.' Mr Reynolds then proceeded to contend that not a single bill had been passed to ameliorate the condition of Ireland during the session, and the reason assigned by the premier for not doing so was that too much time had been occupied in forging chains for the Catholics of that country as well as of England.' It was also surprising to find that news from the following countries was reported in the *Wells Journal* in that first issue: Russia, Germany, Greece, America, California – and news of two shipwrecks.

The Library has also received a copy of *The Times* for Saturday 26 September 1891. Unlike the *Wells Journal*, reports from many foreign countries can be expected. But the list includes: Russian policy in Asia, Germany, the Balkan States, Austria, Hungary, the King and Queen of Rumania, France, the Vatican and the United

States. But what is surprising is to find the following account of a railway accident in Spain: 'Responsibility for the collision rests with a young man of 18, an apprentice telegraphist, who received no salary, and was employed in miscellaneous services at Burges Railway Station. The express train from San Sebastian, at the time of the collision, was travelling at 60 kilometres (37 miles) an hour. It was provided with old-fashioned brakes, which did not work automatically. The driver, on turning a bend in the line, saw the mixed train approaching, but was hardly able to check the speed of his locomotive, which at the moment was descending an incline. Both driver and the fireman were killed in the wreck. The driver in the mixed train lost his life in endeavouring to stop his engine. As to his companion the fireman, though he escaped without serious injury, he has since lost his reason.'

The accuracy at such distance is surprising. **Stuart Andrews Hon. Librarian**

Wells City Archives



Austin Little has been updating our plans index using a new flexible spreadsheet. The original card index was created by former Wells City Archivist Jean Imray and the index is still a great way of showing the planning documents in the collection. Austin's update makes this index searchable in different ways however, for instance, the information can be sorted by architect. Wells

City Archives is very grateful to Austin for this, and the index has already been useful in exploring the collection in new thematic ways.

We have also been working on a new popup display for Heritage Open Days 2024. The subject will be 'Courts and Conduits,' featuring petty sessions court documents and information on the Market Place conduit. The display will be at Wells Town Hall on the 11th September from 10am till 3pm. More details to follow.

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