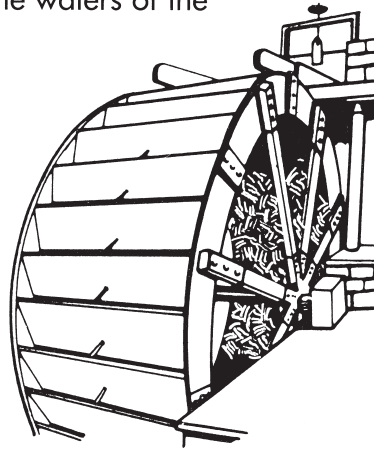
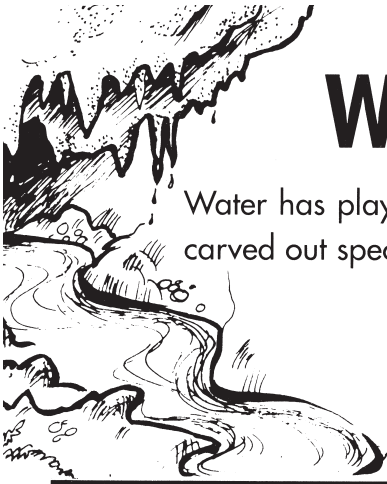


WATER AT WOOKEY HOLE

Water has played a very important part in the history of Wookey Hole. Not only has it carved out spectacular caves and created dramatic rock formations, but the waters of the River Axe have also been used in the Papermill since the beginning of the 17th century.



THE CAVES

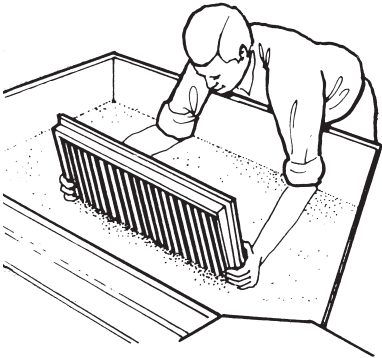
An average of 11 million gallons of water flow through Wookey Hole Caves every day. Over millions of years this rainwater has dissolved the rock, widening cracks to create a fascinating underground world of caves, pools and passageways.

POWER

Up until the middle of the 19th century, a water wheel provided power for the machinery in the Papermill, turned by the flow of the river.

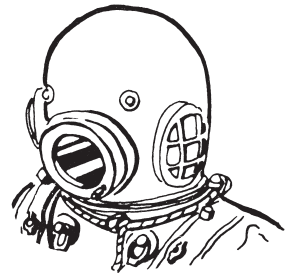
PAPERMAKING

Papermaking came to Wookey Hole because of the excellent water supply. The River Axe provided a steady flow to power the water wheel, a plentiful supply for all the processes and, most importantly, the water was clean enough to produce pure white paper.



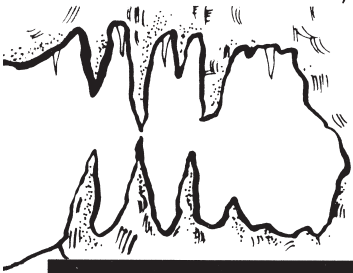
CAVE DIVING

Wookey Hole is the birthplace of British cave diving. In 1935 brave divers walked along the river bed as far as Chamber 7. Since then, modern underwater equipment has allowed divers to explore deep into the caves reaching Chamber 25, a distance of 3.7 kilometres.



CANAL

In 1857 a canal was dug to bring the waters of the River Axe from the cave mouth to the Papermill. Building the canal dam raised the water level in the caves by about 1.5 metres. The water in the canal is so clear that it appears to be shallow and still. It is in fact 2.0 metres deep and flowing steadily.



CAVE FORMATIONS

The constant dripping of water in the caves has led to the development of some amazing rock formations. Stalactites hang down from the ceiling and stalagmites grow up from the floor, sometimes joining together to form a column.

Questions

1. Which river flows through Wookey Hole?
2. What form of power was used at the Papermill until the middle of the 19th century?
3. How far have cave divers explored into the cave system?
4. What effect did the canal dam have on the water level in the caves?
5. Describe the difference between stalactites and stalagmites.
6. Why is the River Axe so important for papermaking at Wookey Hole?