

## Respecting the Mendip Ridge #mendipridge

There are 34 designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) across the country and the Mendip Hills is one of the lucky ones. It's obvious for all to see what is and what's not the AONB. The limestone ridge cuts through the flat levels either side giving the area a very recognisable boundary. Some AONBs have a very indistinct boundary line. I'm sure our boundary leads to a greater sense of community, you know when you're on Mendip.



Around 300 million years ago, at the end of the Carboniferous and beginning of the Permian, rocks were pushed up into a vast mountain range that stretched thousands of kilometres to the east and west. It is during this time that the Mendip Hills were folded into their characteristic 'whale back' form.

The Mendip Hills were close to the northern limit of mountain building, and probably reached an original altitude of around 1500m, today the highest point is a mere 325m. I struggle to get my head around some of the huge timescales involved in this process but I can, sort of, visualise a 1500m mountain compared to only 325m, and that's a lot of erosion taking a lot of time to bring it down.

If you really want a clear understanding, with great illustrations, of the folding process and how that increased the speed of the erosion take a look at the [Foundations of Mendip](#) website.

Through the ages the ridge has played such an important role in our heritage; ancient boundaries traverse it, forts were built on peaks, ceremonial sites drew neolithic people from across the country, minerals and stone were exploited, people learned to climb higher and cave deeper. All thanks to the limestone ridge.

Today we try and protect the line of the ridge by encouraging planners and developers to minimise vertical intrusions like buildings to think about minimising light pollution.

To carry on the ceremonial theme to this day we are just about to kick off the Mendip Rocks! programme of events that celebrate the unique geology of the Mendip Hills. There are about 30 events across the next couple of months to entertain families and satisfy the hardcore 'ologists in the academic world. Get up close and personal in to quarries you can't normally access, visit the bonecaves (sold out I'm afraid), or go on a caving trip from the comfort of your chair. Discover all the events [here](#).