



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
MINISTRY FOR SPORTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE & YOUTH
Gibraltar Culture and Heritage Agency
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Gibraltar Museum – working with volunteers

One of the aims of the Gibraltar Museum is to encourage volunteer participation in the study of our history and the care of our heritage. With the start of the Gorham's Cave excavations, help with processing finds will be among the tasks suitable for volunteer effort under supervision. But the involvement of volunteers goes further.

Recently, as part of the wider Gibraltar Caves Project, which was started in 1991, the Cave Unit of the Gibraltar Museum has been working with volunteers in the surveying of Gibraltar's caves. This is specialised work which is carried out under supervision and is already producing excellent results. The unit is preparing an inventory of Gibraltar's caves, checking previous work done and looking at each site today. The number of caves now exceeds 200!

Part of the work involves assessing the archaeological and palaeontological potential of each site. Some of these caves were last excavated in the 19th Century, so determining how much archaeology is left is a major challenge. Others were excavated in the 1960s by the late Mr George Palao, and the unit has not only used Mr Palao's reports which are in the archives of museum, but has also met with some of his collaborators in order to obtain as much information as possible. The unit is also in contact with – and collaborating with – the GONHS Cliffs and Caves Section who have also worked a number of Gibraltar's caves.

Searching through archival material is also providing insights into the work done many years ago. In some cases, cave names have been changed on a number of occasions so a standardisation of names will be required. All this work will assist the Gibraltar Museum in coming up with management plans and strategies that will ensure the protection of one of Gibraltar's least-known heritage assets. The results of this work will be made available to the public once the arduous work has been completed.

The unit is keen to hear from anyone who has either worked with Mr Palao, or who has any information about caves (for example, some of the 18th Century diarists wrote about caves in the upper town area that were incorporated into peoples' houses!).

The Gibraltar Museum sees this project as a prototype for others which will also be open to volunteer effort. It has already been actively involved in the start of GibraltarpediA, a project that aims to involve as many volunteers as possible, and other areas of history and heritage are being looked at for similar work.

Anyone wishing to help the museum in its volunteer projects should email Dr Geraldine Finlayson on geraldine.finlayson@gibmuseum.gi or call on 200 74289, stating their particular interest. Names will be put on a list and persons will be contacted as projects are started.