



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
Ministry for Health & Environment
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GIBRALTAR MARINE EXPERT INVITED TO CONTRIBUTE AT INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

The Gibraltar Museum's work at Gorham's and Vanguard Caves is revealing unexpected aspects of the lives of people in prehistory. Among these are discoveries of the extent to which Neanderthals and other humans exploited marine resources in the Palaeolithic. Dr Darren Fa is the Gibraltar Museum's expert on marine ecology and he has been recently been invited to present and discuss some of the latest results at several top-level academic events.

At the University of Seville Dr Fa participated in a seminar on environmental conservation where he presented final-year undergraduate students with evidence indicating the effects of historical events on present-day marine ecosystems and the pervasive influence of human activities on the marine environment. Examples of how entire marine ecosystems have been changed, some in relatively recent history, through overfishing and other activities, were illustrated with examples from both historical sources and archaeology. The approach, in line with the museum's research policy of bringing in historical aspects to the understanding of present-day ecology and environmental management, provides answers and creates exciting challenges to current hot topics such as ecosystem restoration.

This event was followed by a presentation at the Iberian Conference on Archaeomalacology at the University of Cadiz where evidence was presented of human use of marine mollusc resources from a single site in Gibraltar, namely Gorham's Cave, which uniquely spans over 30 thousand years of human occupation. This is additionally of high importance as it is one of the few European sites which has yielded strong evidence of the systematic exploitation of these resources by Neanderthals, something that until recently was considered beyond the scope of these early humans and only practised by our direct ancestors.

Dr Fa also formed part of an international panel that examined a PhD thesis at the University of Santander on the use of marine molluscs as tools by early humans. Recently, the Gibraltar Museum announced a post-doctoral award to Dr Ruth Blasco to work in this institution for two years. The recent participation at these meetings by Dr Fa is further evidence of the high-level team that is being assembled in the Gibraltar Museum with scientific projection at the highest level.

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