



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
MINISTRY FOR SPORTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE & YOUTH
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Gibraltar Caves featured at international conference in London

An international meeting on “Human Evolution: past, present and future” was held in London on Thursday and Friday of last week. The conference was organised by the Royal Marsden Hospital and was held in the Grange St Paul’s Hotel. Among invited speakers were Sir David Attenborough and Professor Donald Johanson, famous for his discovery of the fossil that came to be known worldwide as Lucy. Also attending the conference was a team from the Gibraltar Museum, led by Professor Clive Finlayson who was also among the invited speakers. His presentation focused on contrasting the evolutionary trajectory of our own ancestors with that of the Neanderthals. A part of this presentation was taken up with the story as told by the important sites at Gibraltar.

Gorham’s and Vanguard Caves are providing important new evidence on Neanderthal behaviour, especially subsistence strategies. Professor Finlayson highlighted the exploitation of seals, dolphins and fish by the Neanderthals, behaviours that had been unsuspected until revealed by research in Gibraltar. Among the Neanderthal behaviours was the regular exploitation of birds of prey and crows which seem to have been sought for their feathers. Professor Finlayson also highlighted the unusual and unique conditions at Gibraltar that brought together a community of animals that included leopards, hyaenas and wolves.

Commenting on the Gibraltar participation at the conference, Professor Finlayson said that it was vital to be present at these major events now that we were in the countdown to nomination for UNESCO World Heritage Status. “The Gibraltar caves are now known worldwide thanks to our research. We are now preparing to start our excavations which will commence on 6th June. With just over a year to go for World Heritage nomination it is vital that we maintain this high profile. With luck, the huge effort put into the excavations may provide us with even more information about the way of life of the enigmatic Neanderthals.”