



PRESS RELEASE

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Gibraltar Caves inscribed into UNESCO's World Heritage List

Gorham's Cave, its sister caves and surrounding cliffs, have been inscribed onto UNESCO's World Heritage List. The decision was taken by the World Heritage Committee at its 40th Session which is currently being held in Istanbul, Turkey. This is Gibraltar's first site to be inscribed on the prestigious list; with it the United Kingdom's list of World Heritage Sites reaches 30. The Gorham's Cave Complex thus joins a select club of United Kingdom sites that includes the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey, the Giant's Causeway, Stonehenge and the Tower of London.

The acceptance speech by the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC, MP, was read out to the World Heritage Committee immediately after it had taken the decision to inscribe. In his speech the Chief Minister recalled how the Rock of Gibraltar had been one of the universal markers of the known world in ancient times, mariners stopping and paying tribute to the gods precisely in Gorham's Cave. He spoke of how the Neanderthals, chief protagonists in the caves, had drawn the short straw when it came to being recognised as a part of humanity. "This is the forgotten dimension of humanity's universality and it is a humbling privilege to be participating actively in redressing the situation", added Mr Picardo.

Mr Picardo went on to add that "Many people, from diverse cultural and political backgrounds have lived in Gibraltar. Today, I am the democratically-elected leader of the Gibraltarians, a cosmopolitan, warm and friendly people. The Gorham's Cave project reflects this openness. It has involved, and continues to involve, researchers from many different countries and disciplines; it has been an exemplar of how people can come together, leaving politics aside, and work towards a common goal to the benefit of humanity".

Reacting to the news Deputy Chief Minister, Joseph Garcia, who has been spearheading the bid on behalf of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar said: "I am delighted that Gorham's Cave and the surrounding area has been inscribed as a World Heritage Site. I want to congratulate all those who have worked hard over so many years in order to make this bid a success, particularly Professor Clive Finlayson and Dr Geraldine Finlayson and their team. This degree of international recognition is a tribute to their hard work and the outstanding universal value of the site. It is something that all in Gibraltar can be proud of."

For his part, Professor Clive Finlayson, Director of the Gibraltar Museum and of the new World Heritage Site, expressed his delight and satisfaction at the news: "It is a fairy tale come true" said Professor Finlayson. "None of us could have suspected all those years ago when we started this project that we would be here today. There are so many people to thank for their involvement over the years - they have all contributed to this wonderful moment - that it would be impossible to list them all here and now. But I have to highlight the support of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar throughout this process. Without that support, active interest and participation we would never had got to where we are today. I wish to



thank the Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo for his belief in our work and his unstinting support; the Deputy Chief Minister, Joseph Garcia, for his leadership and commitment throughout the process; and to Ministers Steven Linares (Heritage) and John Cortes (Environment), for their support and for making a course, which involved many government departments, a smooth one. Finally, I wish to thank my wife Geraldine, who has been with me in this project from the very beginning, for her encouragement, belief and professionalism; and my son Stewart who grew up in Gorham's Cave and has been a staunch companion, full of ideas, throughout the process".

For his part, Minister for Heritage, Steven Linares, said: "I know how much the Museum team have been working on this project and it has been due to their commitment and professionalism that we have world recognition of this world class site. I would like to thank them and look forward to continue working with them to make this site one which visitors and locals can appreciate fully". And Dr Cortes, Minister for the Environment, added: "I am of course delighted. I have supported this proposal for many years and my Department has been working hard with the Museum team to provide all the information and support possible. It is deserved recognition for what is a spectacular historical and biological feature, particularly well preserved and fully protected by law. We will ensure that the site now flourishes even more and takes its rightful place in the extraordinary network that World Heritage Sites represent."

Note to Press: For further information, photographs and videos of the site, please email: stewart.finlayson@gibmuseum.gi