

Thursday 22 January, 2009

Kents Cavern Gears up for First Archaeological Excavation for Over 80 years – in Search of Torquay’s Neanderthals

A team of archaeologists will survey Kents Cavern on 26th January in advance of two major excavations, at Easter and in September, that aim to discover more about the Neanderthals that lived in the caves tens of thousands of years ago.

Invitation to Attend a Press Call

You are cordially invited to attend a press call at Kents Cavern, where you will have the opportunity to talk with archaeologists Dr Mark White and Dr Paul Pettitt, and Torquay Museum Curator Barry Chandler, about this much-anticipated dig in search of evidence of our ancient ancestors:

Time: 12 Noon

Date: Monday 26th January

Location: Kents Cavern, Torquay

Contact: Carl Smith, tel: 0775 9216139; 01803 293975; 01803 215136

Excavation Directors Dr Mark White, of the University of Durham, and Dr Paul Pettitt, of the University of Sheffield, said: “We hope that the information recovered from these excavations will contribute to widely-debated issues in human evolution – specifically whether the expansion in numbers of our own species tens of thousands of years ago was connected with the extinction of the Neanderthals. Britain has so far failed to play a role in this fascinating and important debate, and we believe that Kent’s Cavern is the prime site where answers could be found.”

The team of archaeologists also hopes to learn more about the origins of Kents Cavern’s use as a human shelter, and establish firm dates for the first occupation of the cave by Neanderthals and early members of our own species.

More follows...

“We are thrilled that Kents Cavern could soon be revealing more of its tantalising secrets, and play a part in increasing our knowledge of the Neanderthal occupation of Britain, thanks to the expertise of Dr Pettitt, Dr White and their team,” said Nick Powe, Kents Cavern’s proprietor. “The caves have already yielded some incredible finds, such as a 37,000 year-old ancient human jawbone unearthed during the last excavations at Kents Cavern in 1927, which it is believed could be Neanderthal.”

“Many Torbay residents know Kents Cavern as a tourist attraction, but I don’t think many realise just how important an archaeological site the caves are, not just in Britain but in Europe,” continued Nick. “Kents Cavern is the oldest Scheduled Ancient Monument in Britain, with evidence of human occupation dating back half a million years – and as such it’s the oldest recognisable human dwelling in the entire country.”

Kents Cavern will be open during the excavation at Easter, from 30th March until 12th April, and visitors will be able to view the dig in action as part of their cave tour.

Many of the breathtaking artefacts unearthed during previous excavations at Kents Cavern can be found in Torquay Museum, under the care of Curator of Collections Barry Chandler. These gems include the 37,000 year-old ancient human jawbone, 400,000 year-old stone tools and the fossilised remains of some of Kents Cavern’s most terrifying occupants, including Scimitar Cats, Cave Bears, Hyenas and Cave Lions.

-ENDS-

For further information contact:

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