

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

A team of archaeologists from the Universities of Durham and Sheffield will begin excavating at Kents Cavern from 30th March until 12th April to discover more about the Neanderthals that lived in the caves tens of thousands of years ago. They also hope 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 early members of our own species.

Kents Cavern will be open from 10am until 4pm during the excavation at Easter and visitors will be able to view the dig in action as part of their cave tour. Alternatively visitors can pay just £2 to enter the cavern where the dig will take place, between 10-11am from 2nd – 9th April, ask the archaeologists questions and then view the Finds Tent outside the caves where archaeological material from the dig will be sieved and sorted.

“Kents Cavern already has a reputation as one of the most important archaeological sites in Europe,” said Nick Powe, Kents Cavern’s proprietor, “and we’re hoping that this dig will unearth more secrets about the enigmatic and elusive Neanderthals who called Kents Cavern home 40,000 years ago. Raising the profile of the caves in the national and international media will be a really positive boost for Torquay, and should inspire more people to visit the area and explore its rich history and archaeology.”

“But we would love not just holidaymakers but local residents to visit Kents Cavern during the dig,” said Nick. “Torquay is indeed privileged to be home to the oldest Scheduled Ancient Monument in Britain, with evidence of human occupation dating back half a million years. If you would like to hear the latest information on the dig, excavation Directors Dr Paul Pettitt and Dr Mark White will be giving an entertaining evening talk at Torquay Museum on 8th April – contact the Museum on 293975 to reserve your tickets.”

Italian archaeology student Chiara Corbino, studying for a PhD in Archaeology at the University of Siena, has come to Kents Cavern to lend her expertise to the dig, along with over a dozen volunteers from Torquay and across Britain.

Coincidentally, the Institute for Field Archaeologists is holding its annual conference in Torquay in early April, when 450 archaeologists from across the country will descend on the area.

Many of the breathtaking artefacts unearthed during previous excavations at Kents Cavern can be found in Torquay Museum. These gems include the 37,000 year-old ancient human jawbone discovered during the last excavation in 1927, 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:

Carl Smith

Kents Cavern Prehistoric Caves

Torquay

Mob: 0775 9216139

Tel: 01803 219242

Email: carlsmith@kents-cavern.co.uk