A Winter's Work on the Ipswich Palæolithic Site

Author(s): Nina Frances Layard

Source: *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 36
(Jul. - Dec., 1906), pp. 233-236

Published by: [Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1193259>

Accessed: 15/06/2014 00:07

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

A WINTER'S WORK ON THE IPSWICH PALÆOLITHIC SITE.

BY NINA FRANCES LAYARD, F.L.S.

[WITH PLATES XXX, XXXI.]

SINCE the British Association Meeting at Cambridge, when I had the honour of giving a second account of the Palæolithic discoveries in Ipswich,¹ I have had another winter's work on the same site. The results have again been satisfactory, as many as fifty-four definitely formed implements being found, besides several dozens of small flints showing signs of work, though of rougher construction. On Plate XXXI, Figs. A and B, two specially fine examples of the tools are shown. It is, however, to the more unpretentious forms that I should like to call the attention of workers on Palæolithic sites, as they are easily overlooked, and would certainly escape the eye of the ordinary workman. Only when found in large numbers, within a small area, are they likely to attract notice. (Plate XXX.)

These small tools are of two kinds, but are found associated together, a fact which suggests that they were both required for the particular work in hand. They appear to be respectively adapted for scraping and skinning. I have discovered them at depths varying from 10 to 12 feet in red gravels below clay, in close proximity to larger tools which have been more carefully made. Again and again during previous excavations I had picked up and preserved odd specimens of these small varieties, but it was only during the winter of 1905 that I fully realised that they may be found in sufficient numbers to be described as distinct Palæolithic types deserving attention.

Within a compass of 3 square yards, I found thirteen of the small scraping tools. (Plate XXX.) Some are roughly squared, but they are by no means uniform in shape. Most of them show the bulb of percussion on the under side, and on the upper side the edge appears to be worked down. Though probably as serviceable, they have not the artistic finish of the Neolithic scraper. In size they are larger than the neat thumb-scraper (the largest being $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length), and are not so thick in proportion. Mr. S. H. Warren has proved convincingly that shapes closely resembling these forms, and with chipped edges, can be produced by the pressure and movements of soil-creep.² In other words, Nature was the first to fashion scrapers, and these man naturally selected for this purpose, afterwards imitating them when the desired shapes were not to be found. This being the

¹ Published in *Journ. Anth. Inst.*, vol. xxxiv, p. 306.

² *Journ. Anth. Inst.*, vol. xxxv, p. 337.

case, if we happen to light upon a spot where skin-scraping once took place, we may expect to find both natural and artificial scrapers lying together, and this has been my experience. Strewn among the scrapers I also noticed a number of small flat flakes which appeared to have been selected on account of their sharp edges. (Plate XXX.) I picked up seventeen of these in the same small space, and on examining them afterwards, noticed that in cases where not flat enough for whatever purpose they were to serve, a few extra delicate blows had been given to reduce them to the required shape. These pieces closely resemble Neolithic flint knives. Only six days after finding these specimens I came upon another nest of the small scrapers, ten more of which I secured; and these were again associated with ten flat sharp flakes lying beside them. In all I obtained forty-six of the scrapers, and thirty-three of the flat flints. There is one argument in favour of their acceptance as true scrapers and skinning tools which must not be overlooked. As it is generally supposed that Palæolithic man clad himself in the skins of animals, then the dressing of skins must have occupied much of his time; but where are the tools with which this was done? Except in rare instances where a few larger tools of the kind have been recognised, no form has, I think, been considered sufficiently suited to the purpose to have specially claimed this distinction. Everyone knows the Neolithic thumb-scrapers and the Neolithic flint knife, but their Palæolithic prototypes have so far escaped detection.

While it is certainly true that the same tools may have been used for many purposes, it is equally true that implements sharpened on both sides of an edge would be liable to cut instead of merely scraping, and as this is the case with a large majority of Palæoliths, they are precluded from being regarded as true scrapers. Neolithic man found a very small tool most convenient for this work, and it is reasonable to suppose that his predecessor's experience was the same. In these specimens before us it is possible that we see the small Palæolithic scrapers and skinning knives hitherto overlooked.

We do not recognise in them an early stage in the development of skill in flint chipping, but the deliberate work of men who knew that these quickly made implements would serve their purpose quite as well as more finished tools. That those who fashioned them were capable of superior work is evident by the large ovate tool found within a yard or two of these simpler forms. (Plate XXXI, Fig. A.)

Since writing the above I have received an interesting consignment of stone tools from Dr. J. Mildred Creed, of Sydney. Among them are ten flat sharp stones exactly corresponding to those which I found beside the scrapers. They are described by Dr. Creed as "chipped scrapers or knives, used in skinning, cleaning skins, and finishing wooden weapons by a Sydney tribe extinct at least one hundred years."

As regards the geology of the pit, one or two points, which the extension of the excavation brought to light, may be worthy of note.

Working in a southerly direction, the bed of brick earth which had hitherto divided the upper from the lower gravels, in both of which implements had been

found, was seen to be getting narrower on both south and west walls of the pit, until it finally ended in a tongue of clay, beyond which the two gravels were united. (Fig. 1.)

Here a fine example of false bedding was seen. I forwarded drawings of the sections to Professor Boyd Dawkins, who sent me the following notes:—

“Your interesting sections find their explanation in the normal action of currents in depositing materials. The river currents which have deposited with swift movement the gravels, slower movement the sands, and with slowest of all the mud, have moved in the direction of the pencilled arrows. When the bottom of the shore had been filled up to A the way sand and gravel were deposited above it, parallel to the level of A. The clay is the latest of the sloping beds.”

FIG. 1.—PHOTOGRAPH OF PIT.

It would appear, then, that the clay-pit represents a pool in a river-bed, at the bottom and up the sides of which the flints were found, as well as in the parallel gravels which were finally deposited above it.

The finding of this junction of the gravels appears to me to be of considerable importance in determining the age of the Palæolithic tools, for had it not been reached, it would have been natural to suppose that the true depth of the lower Palæolithic bed was from 12 to 14 feet, that an enormous interval then ensued during which the thick band of clay was deposited, and that another Palæolithic bed of much later date, and quite distinct from the first, was then laid down over it. It now appears possible that some of the flints from what was then the surface were swept into the pool with the rapid rush of water; that when this subsided, the mud had time to settle down over them, while other flints from the

same original level were brought with the gravels and laid horizontally over the silted-up pool. That the mud had not yet compacted into clay when this was done is evident, as the flints had in some cases penetrated it a foot or two.

If this be the true interpretation, we need no longer wonder that tools similar in type were found in both upper and lower gravels, for both must have belonged to the same period. That period should apparently take its date, not from the lowest level at which flints occurred, but from the highest spot at which they were found, namely, $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet only from the present surface.

Had we worked northward instead of southward we should doubtless have found flints just as deep as the original depth of the pool, which might be, for all we know, another 20 feet deeper. It is a pity that this cannot be determined by further work on this spot, but, unhappily, our excavation is stopped for the present, and it is doubtful whether we shall ever have the opportunity of continuing it.

Description of Plates XXX, XXXI.

PLATE XXX.	A.—Eight Palæolithic scrapers. (Ipswich.) Scale : slightly larger than $\frac{1}{2}$.
" "	B.—Twelve Palæolithic skinning knives (Layard Coll., Ipswich Museum).
Scale : slightly larger than $\frac{1}{2}$.
PLATE XXXI.	A.—Found in red gravel at a depth of 11 ft. 10 ins. ; length $6\frac{1}{2}$ ins. :
within a few yards of it were ten small scrapers and sixteen small
skinning knives ; <i>cf.</i> Plate XXX.
" "	B.—Found in mixed red and grey clay at a depth of 9 ft. Beside it
were fifteen small scrapers and skinning knives ; <i>cf.</i> Plate XXX.
(Layard Coll., Ipswich Museum.)

A.

B.

A WINTER'S WORK ON THE IPSWICH PALÆOLITHIC SITE.

A.

B.

A WINTER'S WORK ON THE IPSWICH PALÆOLITHIC SITE.