

Prehistoric Crayford

For over a hundred years there have been discoveries relating to Crayford's prehistoric past.

There is a lot of evidence of settlements in Crayford from the Palaeolithic (c.500, 000 - c.9, 000 BC) period to the Iron Age (650 BC - AD43). Many Palaeolithic objects have been discovered in Crayford, for example, blades and flint implements, discovered by Flaxman C.J. Spurrell in the late nineteenth century. In Crayford brickearth, numerous Palaeolithic animal bones have been also found, for example, bones of a mammoth, musk ox, deer antlers and woolly rhino jaw, which date back to over 130,000 years ago. A flint working and kill site at Stoneham pit also contained Palaeolithic remains, such as flakes, cores, hammerstones and the bones of butchered animals. In addition, at a gravel extraction site in 1961 more Palaeolithic animal bones were found, including mammoth and deer antlers, a human skull and flints. A number of other Palaeolithic finds have come from the Crayford area such as eight hand axes and over a hundred flint flakes.

There have also been Mesolithic (c.9,000- 4,300 BC) discoveries, such as a tranchet axe from a gravel pit near Crayford station. Crayford would have been a good settlement as River Cray would have provided food, such as fish, and the discovery of 21 flint blades in Crayford gives more evidence of a settlement being in Crayford in the Mesolithic period.

There is evidence of a settlement in the Neolithic period (c. 4,300 - 2,000 BC). In gravel workings bordering the Cray, a saddle quern for corn grinding was found in 1961 by workmen. It consists of a piece of rough stone about 20 inches long, the material being sandstone from the Hythe Beds. The upper face is smooth and slopes towards one end. This artefact is thought to be of the late Neolithic era and is retained in the local collection at Hall Place. There has also been a Neolithic axe found in Barnes Cray Road and a dagger, which was discovered in the 1930s.

There have also been discoveries from the Bronze and Iron Ages. From the Bronze Age (2,000 - 650 BC), a scraper was discovered north of the River Cray. West of St. Paulinus Church, traces were found of an

Iron Age settlement. While preparing the ground for new buildings, pits and heavily silted ditches were discovered, along with large amounts of Iron Age pottery, which is evidence to suggest a previous settlement, dating to c.30 BC - AD43. There is uncertainty as to whether the settlement was a farmstead or an open village of huts, as the iron 'shoe' of a wooden plough was found, indicating that agriculture was practiced. Another possible ditched enclosure at Glebe Road Estate was discovered and contained loom weights, burnt flint, two iron knives, the top of a plough-coulter and pottery, which has been dated to the mid to late Iron Age.

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