

Local Crag Flints. Centre of Controversy 1910-1914. Were they made by humans?  
Labels from a display at Ipswich Museum 17.10.15

3 million years ago, in the Pliocene age, there existed here a land known as Paradise. Herds of Mastodons, Gazelles, Three-toes Horses roamed its plains. Red Pandas climbed its trees. Stands of mighty Redwoods lent their majesty to Paradise. Flints, many flaked and broken lay scattered across the land.

Very soon rising sea levels of the North Sea (the Crag Sea) drowned this land, which was finally destroyed by the glaciers of the Ice Age.

Fast forward to the early years of the 20thC AD. Two men, Sir E Ray Lankester and James Reid Moir, both Presidents of Ipswich Museum, excavated these Pliocene flints (preserved in geological deposits), and claimed them to be the earliest work of prehistoric peoples. There were objectors to these claims, and although Ipswich won many of the battles, the modern archaeological establishment says it has won the war.

Lying defeated and hidden for many years, we today show you some of these Pliocene survivors, the flints that were the 'eagles' of those Ipswich legions.

Sir Ray Lankester President of Ipswich Museum 1900-1929. 'A giant of a man in intellect and stature'. Sir Ray was a champion of the Crag flints as 'humanly-made' (photograph).

The Norwich Test Specimen - from Crag at Whitlingham near Norwich. Its acceptance or not was taken as a test of intelligence by Sir Ray Lankester (drawing).

James Reid Moir (1879-1944) gentleman's outfitter of Ipswich. In 1909 he discovered flints, flaked on both sides, at the base of the Red Crag (geological deposit about 2.75 million years old) at Dales Road Brickfield, Ipswich. This discovery was announced in a letter to The Times in October 1910. He continued to find many such flints in the Crag, claiming them to be worked by humans. They attracted much attention, visitors to see them including Professor Henry Fairfield Osborn of the American Museum of Natural History (1926); the author H.G. Wells (1927); and Louis Leakey of the Kenya National Museum (1931). There were also opponents of his claims of human workmanship, and the modern archaeological establishment has discarded these claims.

James Reid Moir wrote over 340 articles on Prehistory. As a memorial the Ipswich Museum Archaeology Room was named after him (most of the room is now used for Ethnography), and an inscribed oak seat (now gone) was placed by the large oak tree ('Moir's Oak') which he had been instrumental in preserving, at the junction of Westbourne Avenue and Valley Road.

Postcards satirising James Reid Moir's 'Rostro-carinates' were circulated by Frederick Haward, an engineer from Ealing, West London. One says, 'I shall be hung and quartered at Ipswich for this!' on the back. Opposition to the Crag flints led to very strained relations between interested parties for many years.

James Reid Moir's Classification of Crag flints was by differences in colour (patination) and re-flaking - interpreting these as different ages:

- Bramfordian (oldest) – named after Coe's pits, Bramford.
- Boltonian – after Bolton's brickfield, Dales Road, Ipswich.
- Whittonian – after Bolton's, Whitton.
- Thoringtonian – after Thorington Hall, Wherstead.
- Henleyan – after Bolton's, Henley Road, Ipswich.

Flint from Crag at Dales Road, Ipswich. Bramfordian Stage – original flaking was later stained and patinated, and subsequently the specimen was re-flaked. The flaking shows clearly against the older surface.

Flint from Crag at Dales Road, Ipswich. Boltonian Stage. Brown-stained with a glossy patina. An edge-worked thick flake.

Flint from Crag at Dales Road, Ipswich. Whittonian Stage? Yellow to brown mottled patina with few signs of abrasion or rolling.

Flint from Crag at Bramford Brickyard. Thoringtonian Stage? Yellowish, creamy, grey patination.

Flint from Crag at Dales Road, Ipswich. Henleyan Stage. Black flaked surface.

Flint from Crag at Thorington Hall, Wherstead. Henleyan Stage. Black flaked surface.

Flint from Crag at Bramford Brickyard. Figured in Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia, volume 4, figure 9.

Flint from Crag at Dales Road, Ipswich. Close to a Rostro-carinate. Rostro-carinates (meaning beaked flints) have one end of the flint nodule flaked on either side in the resemblance of an eagle's beak or prow of a boat.

Flint from Crag at Dales Road, Ipswich. Could this be a pebble tool?

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