This volume is the product of a PhD carried out at the London Institute of Archaeology between 1983 and 1989. This was a critical time and place for use-wear studies, with the optimism inspired by the western, and in particular Keeley's (1980), discovery of Semenov's (1964) pioneering work in the field having run headlong into Newcomer's experimental expertise and healthy scepticism. Under Newcomer's influence an active group of researchers, of which Sala became one, were questioning numerous aspects of use-wear interpretation - did different substances really leave distinctively recognisable "polishes", and if so how? Were polishes due to abrasion, or was there an element of deposition? Could polishes be quantified and described in more empirical terms than like "melted snow" (Keeley 1980: 56) or "comet-shaped pits" (Vaughan 1981, 132)?

This volume in fact contains two theses for the price of one - Parts I and II. It was refreshing to see the opening chapter of Part II headed "Revised Aims" hinting at a narrative anyone who has, or feels they have, undertaken a wrong turning or a blind alley in a major piece of work will recognise. The Part I thesis was conceived as a conventional use-wear study in which the researcher carried out a body of experimental work, and having become educated in the recognition of the characteristic polishes of different materials applied this knowledge in the interpretation of an assemblage of archaeological material. However problems were encountered in isolating use-wear on even carefully excavated archaeological material, and suspicions started to creep in concerning the vagueness of polish characterisation and the impact of post-depositional processes. In Sala's own words "At first all problems were attributed to inexperience ... It was only when we, as a group of researchers, carried out the blind tests described in Newcomer et al. (1986) that my serious doubts about the theory behind the method itself were confirmed. We noticed how often even the most experienced among us mistook one supposedly distinctive polish for another" (page 9). At this point Sala's academic honesty forced her to confront that her work had, to her, suggested too many pitfalls and problems in the interpretation of polishes on archaeological material for her thesis to stand as a conventional study of archaeological material. Chapter 5, the conclusion to Part I, "Examples of over-interpretations: cautionary remarks" is required reading. Here we have the archaeological interpretations of wear traces to reveal hafting, handedness, meat polish and duration of use given proper consideration, but ultimately having their credibility shredded on the basis of careful experimentation and observation.

Following the recognition that the established methodology and theoretical basis for interpretation of use-wear were fraught with problems when examined rigorously, the Part II thesis was developed, aimed at investigating the process of polish development and using a systematic and controlled experimental programme to investigate polishes formed by different materials under different conditions. Sala argues convincingly that polishes develop by progressive abrasion, a major contribution in its own right, conflicting with previous theories of polish formation, and with major interpretive implications for those who identify material trapped within polish as of archaeological relevance. And yet the supposed failure of the first thesis is in fact anything but. In a small and expert field making such exciting claims, Sala has sounded a healthy, and well-founded, note of caution in the face of the interpretive miracles delivered by some practitioners. However seductive such miracles are - and who does not want to believe? - establishing the parameters where reasonable interpretation gives way to outright speculation is in itself a valuable and positive contribution.

Sala has provided a meticulously thought-through critique of the use-wear project, founded on a solid experimental basis. Anyone who continues to provide easy interpretations such as meat, leather or prehension polish needs to address the points made in this important volume. One can only hope that the narrative of Sala's theses may become a model for the narrative of the use-wear discipline itself, with early optimism challenged by further more rigorous work, breaking through to a better understanding of how use-wear, and other modifications, are formed on lithic artefacts and the consequent limitations of their interpretive potential.

It is a great sadness that Irene Levi Sala died untimely in 1991, shortly after completion of her PhD, and while she was in the process of editing it for publication. Two friends and colleagues from the Institute, Norah Moloney and Margaret Maher, felt her work was too valuable to go unpublished and took over the editing task which has led to the production of this volume. As they say, they could not guess at what changes or re-emphases she might have made so they left her PhD text virtually unchanged. It is a mark of the quality of the work that it makes such an organised and focused monograph in this raw state. Her final, and very important, conclusion is that use-wear traces are more vulnerable to post-depositional modification than generally recognised by use-wear practitioners; post-
depositional processes can alter and obscure genuine use-wear traces and polish without leaving clear signs that this alteration has taken place, even in apparently inactive depositional environments. This conclusion has obvious implications for those who study such traces, and Irene highlighted for the future the need to develop a critical approach to the distinction of post-depositional from genuine traces. One can only regret that Irene herself is not able to follow up the research avenues highlighted in this volume, as she undoubtedly would have done, and hope that others will take up her typically, but unduly, modest concluding exhortation that "the flaws in this work may spur others to continue the investigation of polish and post-depositional processes on flint artefacts to develop the usefulness of such studies still further".


Between 1989 and 1994 a British Museum team lead by Nick Ashton investigated a series of exposures in and around East Farm brickpit, Barnham, Suffolk, principally to investigate claims of a relationship between the Acheulian and Clactonian on site as well as hopefully recover more refitting cores and flakes that had originally been recovered by John Wymer. A third aim was to place all existing and new discoveries in sound geological and environmental context. That all of these aims were clearly successful is ably demonstrated in a lavish volume running to 22 chapters and 7 appendices, illustrated by Phil Dean's characteristically superb illustrations. The result is a clearly presented account of Lower Palaeolithic activity around a watercourse that deservedly joins the published ranks of High Lodge, Swanscombe, Hoxne and Boxgrove as flagships of the British Lower Palaeolithic.

This is a multidisciplinary project par excellence, but even excluding everything-bar-the-lithics there are still five chapters and one appendix that will be of direct interest to LSS members. The main chapters of the book are penned by the triumvir of the new generation of East Anglian Lower Palaeolithic British scholars - Simon Lewis (geology), Simon Parfitt (fauna and environment) and Nick Ashton (lithics); all of these are of exceptional quality. In addition, a number of scholars have made important contributions to the volume ranging from, for example. Rob Kemp (micromorphology), ichthyofauna (Brian Irving), avifauna (John Stewart), mollusca (Mary Seddon), wood charcoal (Caroline Cartwright) and palynology (Chris Hunt). The application of absolute dating techniques is reported by D. Q. Bowen (aminosratigraphy), Nick Debenham (TL) and Eddie Rhodes (OSL and ESR). As the archaeological and palaeontological horizons overlie Anglian gravels and tills with no apparent unconformity it seems clear that the deposits can be attributed to the immediately post-Anglian warm stage (OIS 11, between 364 and 427 ka BP), which is supported by the mammalian faunal assemblage which shows the strongest affinities with the early part of the Hoxnian. For once the aminostratigraphy results agree with this, although there are problems with all other dating methods which have yielded minimum ages of some 300 ka BP.

A series of sections cut in and around the pit facilitates the reconstruction of the geological succession, and these are illustrated clearly in a number of section illustrations in Lewis' chapter. A (disappointingly small) number of photos convey the general impression of the site. Essentially the succession relates to processes of an initial incision and filling of a channel in the chalk substratum during the Anglian and a subsequent smaller channel at the end of the glaciation through to the succeeding warm stage; the sediments of the latter preserve evidence of environment, animal and human activity in the form of faunal remains within the channel and archaeology.

**Bibliography**


Francis Wenban-Smith, *Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton*