



A Palaeolithic flint hand-axe found in north Abingdon. Possibly around 200,000 years old. Examples of similar tools are on display in the Museum. Such hand-axes are the only trace that is left of the area's earliest inhabitants.



Hand-axes of a type made by Neanderthals, found in the Abingdon area.



Mammoth tusk and teeth, found by AAAHS in a gravel quarry at Sutton Courtenay.

Early hunters and gatherers in the Abingdon area



A rare 'leaf-point', around 40,000 years old, made of black flint. Found by AAAHS in a gravel quarry at Sutton Courtenay. Possibly made by Neanderthals, or by some of the first modern humans. The leaf-point is on display in the Museum.



Small flint tools, known as 'microliths', found by AAAHS at Pumney (Radley), close to the River Thames. These date to the Mesolithic period, 10,000 BC to 4,000 BC, after the end of the last 'Ice Age'.

People have been present in the Abingdon area since around 400,000 BC. This is the 'Palaeolithic' period. These earliest inhabitants were of a different species to modern humans.

Traces of human activity from this distant period are quite sparse. They consist mainly of flint tools. People were very mobile, and lived by hunting, gathering and scavenging.

Some of their hand-axes, made of flint, have been found in gravel quarries and elsewhere around Abingdon. The sand and gravel which is quarried today was laid down by fast-flowing rivers, especially during and after times of glaciation ('Ice Ages').

At Sutton Courtenay, AAAHS members found a rare 'leaf-point' - possibly a spearhead, made of black flint. It dates from about 40,000 BC. It may have been made and used by Neanderthals (a species of pre-modern human), or by some of the first modern humans.

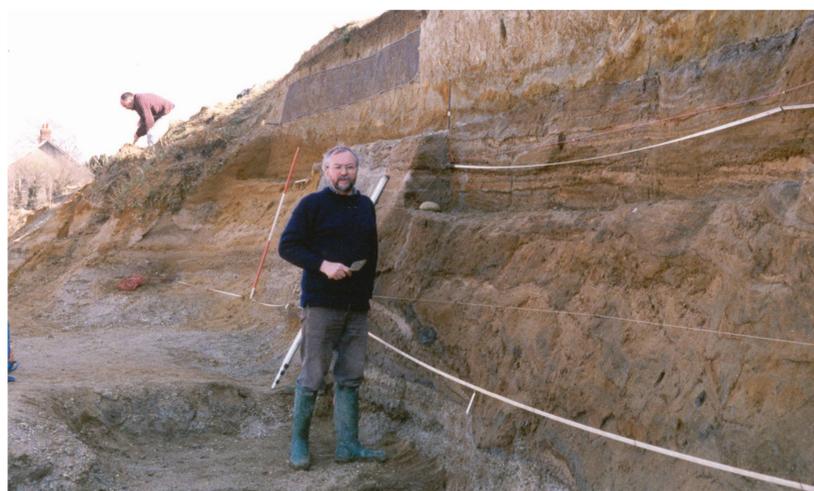
Many bones of extinct species of animals, such as mammoths, were found in the same gravel pit, along with evidence for the changing environment.

After the end of the last Ice Age (about 12,000 years ago) much of Britain became covered by forest. It was colonised by mobile hunters and gatherers, who moved around with the seasons. This was the 'Mesolithic' period, about 10,000 BC to 4,000 BC.

Unlike the earlier hand-axes, many of the flint tools of this time were very small ('microliths'). Some were larger flint axes, known as Thames picks. Flints of this age have been found at several sites around Abingdon.



A type of flint axe, known as a Thames pick, found by AAAHS at Thrupp (Radley), close to the River Thames. It dates to the Mesolithic period, around 10,000 BC to 4,000 BC. This axe is on display in the Museum.



AAAHS recording a section through layers of sand and gravel in a quarry at Sutton Courtenay. The gravel in the Oxford area was laid down by a fast-flowing river, especially during and after periods of glaciation. The different layers contain evidence of environmental change over long periods.