

IRENE LEVI SALA
1929-1991

Irene Levi Sala began her career in archaeology in 1979 as an undergraduate at the Institute of Archaeology earning a BA honours degree in 1982. Her interest in microwear began during her work on her undergraduate dissertation and was more fully developed in her Ph.D research.

In the early 1980's microwear was a relatively new branch of archaeology. Irene soon discovered that the then accepted methods of research were not without their problems. She began to concentrate on the alterations visible on the surface of flint implements with two goals in mind: investigation of the processes involved in 'polish' formation and the study of the surface modifications caused by post depositional processes. After meticulous testing and thorough analysis of her results Irene reached the conclusion that polish formation was the result of abrasion of the flint surface not an additive process as had been widely accepted. Her experiments led her to the conclusion that post depositional surface modification affected wear traces visible on the surface of an implement. This effect, if ignored, could lead to a misinterpretation of usewear patterns. She was concerned that archaeologists be aware of these effects and emphasised this concern in her Ph.D dissertation, *A Study of Microscopic Polish on Flint Implements* and in published articles. On completion of her Ph.D in 1989 she continued her work as an honorary research fellow of the Institute.

During her career Irene worked on sites and material in England, Israel and Italy and attended international conferences. Her most recent results were presented in December 1990 at "Les gestes retrouvés" a microwear conference in Liège where she found her conclusions corroborated by the work of Japanese colleagues.

Irene set herself a high academic standard which she achieved unflinchingly. Her accomplishments are all the more remarkable when the fact that she started her archaeological studies at the age of 50 while bringing up a family, keeping a home and taking part in a number of charitable activities is taken into consideration. Additionally she studied and wrote with great facility in a language which was not her mother tongue.

Irene Levi Sala was not just a respected colleague but a well loved friend. She had time for everyone and was always willing to advise or help on academic, or indeed on any other matters. She was unobtrusively kind and always good company; one felt better for having been with her. Irene had been a constant part of the Institute for ten years. Her absence will leave a personal and professional gap. We shall all miss her deeply.

A fund has been opened to establish an annual award in Irene's memory to a student at the Institute whose interests are connected with Irene's own work. Contributions may be sent to the editors. Cheques should be made payable to "University College London (Sala fund)".