LOCAL HISTORIES

Nina Frances Layard



Teacher Pack

Nina Frances Layard FSA FLS (1853 – 1935)

Nina Frances Layard was an archaeologist, prehistorian, and poet. She conducted important excavations in the Ipswich area and helped to change the way that women were viewed in the field of archaeology.

Curriculum keywords: local history, women in science, women in STEM, gender equality, archaeology, prehistory, Anglo-Saxons, LGBTQ, sex discrimination.

- Early Life -

Nina Frances Layard was born 1853 in Stratford, Essex. Her father was a Reverend, and her early life was spent travelling around his vicarages.



Layard's early education was at a 'Dame School' in Willesden, Middlesex. These informal schools were typically run by a woman in her own home, but fell out of favour with the introduction of compulsory education in the 1870s.

Despite this lack of formal education, she became fascinated by the natural world and was an ardent collector of natural history objects such as eggs and shells. Her interests were supported and encouraged by several of her father's scholary friends or relatives.

Her father's cousins included Sir Austen Henry Layard, who excavated the ancient cities of Nineveh and Nimrud in Upper Mesopotamia - modern-day Iraq. Many of his finds are now in the British Museum. Austen's younger brother Edgar Leopold Layard was curator of the South African Museum, and later became governor of Fiji. He corresponded with Charles Darwin about South African birds.

Austen and Edgar's grandmother was Lady Charlotte Guest, best known for her translation of the 12C collection of Welsh myths known as *The Mabinogion*.

Perhaps inspired by her relatives, Layard later became a writer, poet, prehistorian and archaeologist. She remained deeply religious all her life, writing a book about the lives of Suffolk Protestants who were executed for their faith - *Seventeen Suffolk Martyrs* - and raising funds for a memorial to nine Ipswich Martyrs, which is now in Christchurch Park.

- An Archaeologist in Ipswich -

Nina Layard's interest in prehistory began around 1882, but she seriously began her study of archaeology in 1890 after her move to Ipswich. She became friends with retired teacher Hamlet Watling, an elderly antiquarian who had excavated Roman sites and made meticulous illustrations of Roman finds and Medieval stained glass.

Watling wrote weekly for *The Suffolk Chronicle* and *East Anglian Daily Times* on a range of topics, such as the Anglo-Saxon history of Suffolk. His support and introductions may have been important in launching her archaeological career, according to biographers.

In 1899 Nina Layard was recruited by the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology, and did many artifact identifications for them. She became known as an expert in her area and continued to foster connections within the archaeological community. Both actions helped to grow her reputation, which allowed her opportunities not normally available to the average woman at the time.



Layard had an informal advisory team which included Sir John Evans, botanist Sir Clement Reid, geologist Horace B. Woodward and William Boyd Dawkins, who encouraged her to undertake her own excavations.



In 1902, when she was nearly 50, she began work at the former brickearth quarry on the southern side of Foxhall Road (now under Celestion Drive and Bull Road.)

This excavation, and her research on the flint tools found there, would be the work she became best known for: evidencing that humans lived before the Ice Age, and understanding how they made their tools.

It became one of the most important excavations of her career due to her use of modern techniques and attention to detail.





Layard worked on several other digs in Ipswich. One of these was the Hadleigh Road site - now under Allenby Road - which was a prehistoric pagan cemetery that was being exposed due to a road widening project.

This site was hugely important because Anglo-Saxon burials were rare in Suffolk: 159 graves were located, and the remains were sent to the Ipswich Museum, along with significant quantities of grave goods – special objects such as tools or jewellery that were put into the graves.

The museum made her an honorary curator of this collection.

Nina Layard continued to lead other excavations, including White Park Bay and Lough Larnie in Ireland, and Larkin Valley in West Suffolk. This work allowed her to amass a large collection of comparative samples for prehistoric materials, which helped in analysis of other sites.

She was also instrumental in raising popular awareness of archaeology in Ipswich, by reaching out to the public and making archaeology more accessible to them.

- Nina Layard's Major Excavations in Ipswich -

Blackfriars, Medieval: 1898

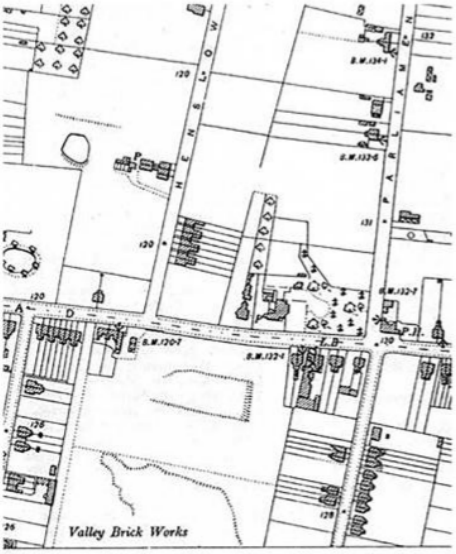


The remains of the priory today: Blackfriars Walk, Ipswich IP4 1BS.

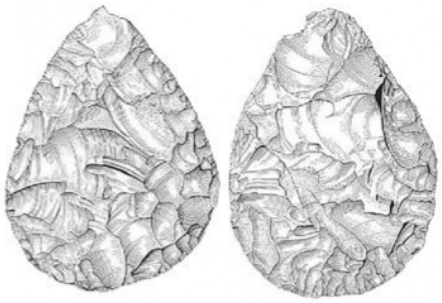
- Layard's first excavation in Ipswich was of the Blackfriars Priory in Foundation Street - a medieval building founded in 1263, and demolished during the reign on Henry VIII.
- This was hugely significant at the time: by locating the walls, and finding human remains, she showed evidence of both prehistoric and Saxon occupation of the site.
- Her handling and reporting of the investigation bolstered her reputation, and she now began working with the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology.

Foxhall Road, Paleolithic: 1902 - 1905

- In 1902 Nina Layard began excavations at the Paleolithic site at Valley Brick Field in Foxhall Road. This is considered her most important contribution to archaeology and prehistory. Her work here provided important evidence for the existence of early humans in Suffolk before the Ice Age: this was the first discovery of stone age tools in Ipswich.
- Layard chose an unquarried area on the edge of Foxhall Road pit and spent two field seasons (1903 and 1904) supervising workmen who had been specially hired to dig for artefacts. They were instructed to remove the sediments stratigraphically – one rock layer at a time - while Layard recorded the context, vertical depth and horizontal position of the finds.



1902 map of Valley Brickworks, south of Foxhall Road



Two ovate handaxes from Foxhall Road

- She conducted the dig with a care unknown in other open-air Palaeolithic sites of the time: her careful recording and documentation preserved an effectively three-dimensional record of the site.
- Among the finds were perfect miniature handaxes, which Layard thought might be children's toys.



A 'toy' stone axe excavated by Layard (Front and back views)

- Altogether Nina Layard discovered 134 Acheulian handaxes - stone tools of a distinctive oval and pear-shape, associated with early hominids including Homo erectus. These finds helped create a wider understanding of how these tools were made. She presented three reports on this site to the British Association for the Advancement of Science (now the British Science Association).

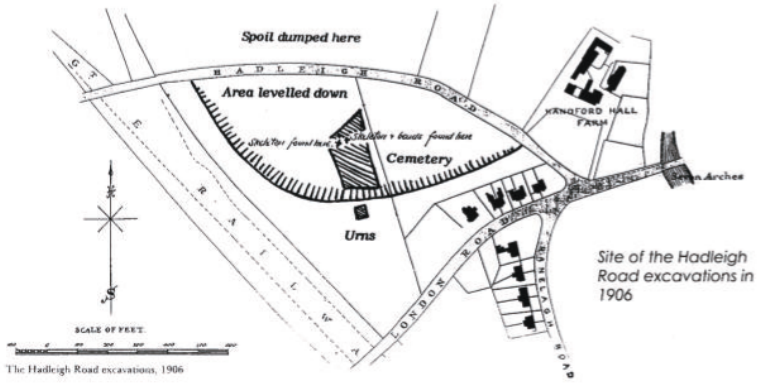


Hadleigh Road, Anglo Saxon: 1906 - 1907



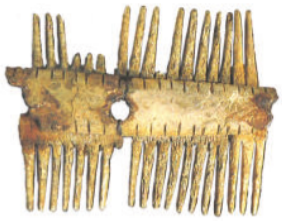
- In 1906 Nina Layard began an excavation at Hadleigh Road, the site of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery that was threatened by a road-expansion project. The graves uncovered were rich in grave goods, such as jewellery, glassware, and weapons. Many of the finds were sent to Charles Hercules Read, Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum, to be illustrated for a proposed paper and publication.
- Part way through the excavation, however - and while Layard was away in London – her trained workers were taken off the dig, and other men were brought in. It seems that the foreman took advantage of her absence to speed up the levelling of the site.
- In the space of about a week 30 graves were destroyed before she had the chance to record them.





- Nonetheless, through her work at Hadleigh Road 159 graves were documented, along with a large quantity of the objects buried with them.
- Layard's report on the excavation was later published by the Society of Antiquaries in London, although as a woman, she herself was not allowed to become a member at the time. In 1906 her paper was presented to the Society of Antiquaries - read by C.H. Read, who would later become President of the society and who was less than pleased that she was not permitted to deliver it herself.
- She was allowed to attend the reading, but was obliged to sit out of sight behind a curtain. She would not become a fellow of the society until they began to admit women 14 years later.







- The many objects recovered from this dig were ultimately sent to Ipswich Museum, who provided a room in the East Wing of Christchurch Mansion for her study of the finds, and funded a glass cabinet for their display.
- She was made an honorary curator, and a vote of thanks for her work in uncovering and rescuing these significant finds was noted in the museum minutes.

Stoke Tunnel, prehistoric fossils and stone tools: 1908 and 1919-20

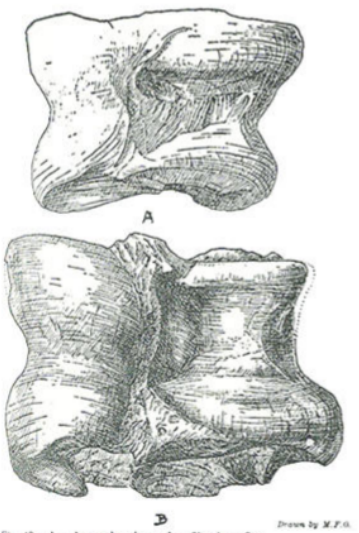
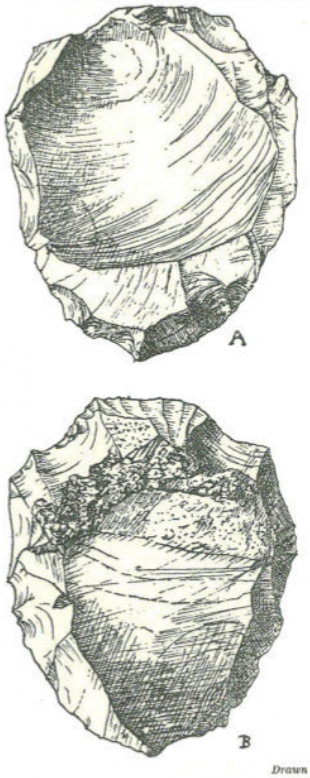


Fig. 49. A.—Astragalus of a modern Shorthorn Ox.
B.—Astragalus of *Bos primigenius* (the Giant Fossil Ox).
These bones demonstrate the difference in size, but they belong respectively to right and left legs of the animals.

- This was probably the second most important excavation of Layard's career, at a site called the Stoke Bone Beds.
- In the 1840s a tunnel was cut through Stoke Hill for the railway line. A 330m long tunnel, engineered by Peter Bruff, it is thought to be the earliest railway tunnel on a continuous curve. During its construction it met a large bed of fossilized animal bone.
- In 1908 Layard was able to get permission to expose a small section of the site and collected a large sample of these fossils. These turned out to be the remains of animals such as cave lions, mammoths, and woolly rhinoceros, as well as a lot of worked flint.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY.



Drawn by M.F.O.

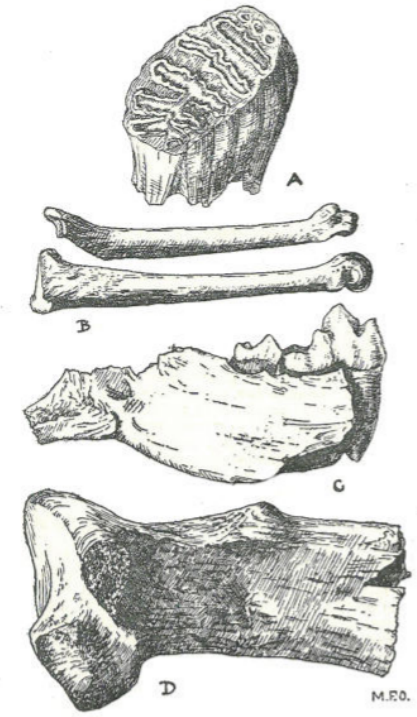
Fig. 50.—Tortoise-core found with the animal remains at Stoke bone-bed. A.—Ventral surface from which Levallois flake has been removed. B.—Dorsal surface.

- In 1919 another section of the cliff was exposed during the construction of new railway sidings, and Layard once again got permission to excavate. She found many mammoth remains, but most were too difficult to remove. There were also bones from horses, wolves, cave bears, and cave lions, alongside deer and a freshwater tortoise.

THE STOKE BONE-BED, IPSWICH. 215

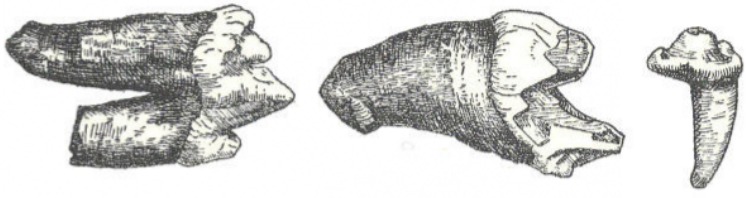


Fossilised mammoth teeth from the Stoke Bone Bed. Ipswich Museum, Layard Collection



M.F.O.

Fig. 48. A.—Upper ante-penultimate milk molar of *Elephas primigenius* (Mammoth). B.—Toe-bones of *Canis* (Wolf). C.—Jaw of *Canis* (Wolf). D.—Upper end of radius of *Ursus spelæus* (Cave bear).



- The discoveries at the Stoke Bone Beds allowed for a new understanding of the ecology and climate of prehistoric England.
- She published her findings in the proceedings of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia (Vol.III 1919 - 22). These illustrations are taken from that journal and were drawn by Mary Frances Outram

The Stoke Tunnel site is now designated a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).



Nina Frances Layard
Photo circa 1878

- Personal Life: Nina and Mary -

In 1895, a few years after her move to Ipswich, Layard met author and artist Mary Frances Outram. The two women began a relationship that would endure for the rest of their lives.



Mary Frances Outram
Photo circa 1890

Mary Outram's writing was known for its insight into human relationships and the moral dilemmas faced by individuals. Her themes included love, betrayal, and redemption, characterized by rich detail and psychological depth.

She also explored the societal expectations of her time, particularly regarding women's roles and their desires for autonomy.

The Religious Tract Society published several of her books aimed at young Sunday School readers, including '*The Mystery of the Ash Tree*', '*In the Van of the Vikings*', and '*Branan the Pict*' - based on the life of St Columba.







Her best-known novel, '*Tarnished Silver*', is still in print.



Outram illustrated many of Nina Layard's finds, as can be seen on the previous page which shows her drawings for Layard's paper for *The Prehistory Society of East Anglia*.

This painting of a square-headed brooch is from the Hadleigh Road site, next to a later photograph of the same object.



She also painted many of Layard's digs in other parts of the UK and Europe, such as this watercolour of a prehistoric site in Norfolk.

Outram helped to transcribe Layard's notes, and in many other ways supported Layard's career as an archaeologist. They lived together for forty years, in several locations in Suffolk and Essex.

Mary Outram died in the spring of 1935, and Nina Layard followed her that autumn. The couple were buried in the same grave in Kelvedon Churchyard.



Mary (L) and Nina (R) at Hill House, East Bergholt, in 1933

- Layard's Relationship with Ipswich Museum -

Nina Layard lent and later donated much of her collection to Ipswich Museum, where it was housed in a room in the recently acquired Christchurch Mansion. She was told at the time that she would have an honorary curatorship over the finds she had recovered from Hadleigh Road.

However, when she came to do post excavation analysis, the museum tried to block her. It took the intervention of Ipswich Museum's President - Sir Ray Lankester of London's Natural History Museum - to get her curatorship fully recognized.

By this time, she and the official curator Frank Woolnough were no longer on speaking terms. Woolnough objected to her removing objects at will and considered her extremely meddlesome. It is suggested that he was more concerned at the time with the acquisition of a large Rhinocerous. Woolnough kept a scrap book of Layard's many letters of complaint.

They eventually managed to repair their relationship, although she refused to formally donate her collections to the museum until after he retired.

" ...the scientific world generally are indebted to Miss Layard for her discoveries....That is something indeed for a lady to have done." (Sir John Evans, Ipswich 1906)

The new displays in Ipswich Museum will feature objects from all of Nina Layard's major Ipswich excavations, across several of its new galleries.

- Layard's Membership of Professional Bodies -

In **1902** Nina Layard became a Fellow of the Anthropological Institute.

In **1906** she was admitted as a Fellow of the Linnean Society, in their second year of allowing women's admission.

In **1908** she became a founding member of what was then called the 'East Anglian Society of Prehistorians' - perhaps in response to not being permitted membership of the Society of Antiquaries. In **1914** she became their first female president. This society is still in existence, having changed its name to The Prehistoric Society in 1935. It has become an international institution, with 25% of its membership coming from outside the UK.

She eventually became one of the first four women invited to become a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, in their first year of allowing the admission of women in **1920**. This institution began to admit women in response to the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919, which removed legal barriers to the admission of women by chartered bodies.

She was also Vice President of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology.

Ipswich Museum holds the records of the Prehistoric Society from 1922 – 1935, with the remainder being held by the Society of Antiquaries of London.

"Layard's great contribution was the discovery, excavation and recording (in detail unusual for the period) of Foxhall Road, Ipswich – over 300,000 years old, this site preserved the repeated visits of tool-making hominins to a river bank. Thanks to her meticulous work, she gained a unique understanding of site formation processes and the importance of studying stone tool assemblages in their entirety." (Trowelblazers)

Explore More: Pioneering Women in Archaeology

Margaret Murray FSA Scot FRAI (1863 – 1963)



Margaret Alice Murray was an Anglo-Indian Egyptologist, archaeologist, anthropologist, historian, and folklorist. In 1898 she became the first woman to become a lecturer in archaeology in the UK, working at University College London until 1935. While best known for her work in Egypt, she also worked on expeditions in Malta, South Arabia, and Zimbabwe, where she led an all-female team. They uncovered an indigenous, complex, rich civilization with trade networks in the Near and Far East.

Gertrude Bell CBE (1868 – 1926)



Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell was an English writer, traveller, political officer, administrator, and archaeologist. From 1899 she spent a decade travelling around the world and had a passion for archaeology and languages. She spoke Arabic, Persian, French, German, Italian and Turkish. In 1916 she became the only female political officer in the British forces as "*Correspondent to Cairo*". She supervised excavations and created the Bagdhad Archaeological Museum (now the National Museum of Iraq). Against European opposition she insisted that excavated finds should remain in their country of origin, thereby ensuring that her museum retained a collection of Iraq's antiquities. The museum officially opened in June 1926.

Dorothy Garrod CBE FBA (1892 – 1968)



Dorothy Annie Elizabeth Garrod was an English archaeologist who specialised in the Palaeolithic period. Between 1925 and 1926 she excavated in Gibraltar and in 1928 led an expedition through South Kurdistan, followed by an excavation in Palestine. She became Professor of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge from 1939 to 1952, aside from a gap during WWII when she served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. She was the first female professor at Cambridge before women were even admitted as students. Garrod was a leading authority on the Paleolithic and one of the most influential archaeologists of her time.

Tessa Wheeler FSA (1893 – 1936)



Tessa Wheeler née Verney was a South Africa-born English archaeologist who made major contributions to the techniques used in archaeological excavation. Due to gender politics of the time she was better known as the wife and professional partner of Mortimer Wheeler. They collaborated on major excavations in Wales and England, using advanced archaeological methods such as the grid system.(developed further by Kathleen Kenyon, and known as the Wheeler-Kenyon method). She became a lecturer at the London Museum in 1928. Her professional trademark was the intact excavation of Roman mosaics.

Ione Gedye (1907 – 1990)



Ione Gladys Gedye was a British conservator and archaeologist who founded the Repair Department at the Institute of Archaeology in London. There was no formal training programme in conservation in the 1930s, so Gedye conducted experiments to inform her work. Gedye joined archaeologists Tessa Verney Wheeler and Kathleen Kenyon in excavations at Verulamium (Roman St Albans). She worked for several decades in conservation at the Institute, and was also a significant influence in the early years of archaeologically-themed television programmes.

See more here:

https://archaeologymag.com/2020/03/pioneering-women-in-archaeology/

Explore More: the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919: Removal of disqualification on grounds of sex.

"A person shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function, or from being appointed to or holding any civil or judicial office or post, or from entering or assuming or carrying on any civil profession or vocation, or for admission to any incorporated society."

The Act is only 4 pages long, but it marked a significant step forward for women's professional lives, permitting them to become lawyers and civil servants, as well as members of professional societies that were formally only open to men. It built upon the Representation of the People Act 1918, which had given some women (but not all) the right to vote.

Find out more:
https://www.innertemple.org.uk/women-in-law/the-significance-of-the-sex-disqualification-removal-act-1919/

Explore More: web pages

The Ipswich Women's Festival Group has created and published **The Ipswich Women's History Trail** booklet which includes a town map marking locations across the town with notable links to local women, including Layard. It can be downloaded here:
https://www.suffolkwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk/the-ipswich-womens-history-trail

Suffolk Women's History Network article:
https://www.suffolkwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk/women-of-suffolk/nina-layard

The King's Candlesticks: Nina Frances Layard - Something Indeed for a Lady to Have Done. *https://thekingscandlesticks.com/webs/pedigrees/2/27305.html*

TrowelBlazers: A site dedicated to highlighting the contributions of women in the 'digging' sciences - archaeology, geology, and palaeontology - and to outreach activities aimed at encouraging participation, especially from under-represented minorities. *https://trowelblazers.com/2014/04/27/nina-layard-flint-hunter-first-class/*

Article from **Suffolk Naturalists Society** 2016. Foxhall Road, Ipswich: A re-investigation and reassessment of an archaeological site.
https://issuu.com/suffolknaturalistssociety/docs/tsns43h

The Prehistoric Society: *https://www.prehistoricsociety.org/about/history*

Erenow's article about The British Palaeolithic discusses Layard's' findings at Foxhall road in a broader European Context, here:
https://erenow.org/modern/global-history-earlier-palaeolithic-assembling-acheulean-world-1673-2020s/5.php

Ipswich-lettering.co.uk: Information on the Foxhall Road brickearth quarry can be found here: *https://www.ipswich-lettering.co.uk/whersteadred.html* Scroll down to 9. The Valley Brickyard, Foxhall Road .
See also *https://www.ipswich-lettering.co.uk/layardclose.html*

For Children:
Kiddle: Nina Frances Layard facts for kids. *https://kids.kiddle.co/Nina_Frances_Layard*

Explore More: Reading List

By Steven J. Plunkett, former Keeper of Archaeology, Ipswich Museum:

- **Miss Layard Excavates: a Palaeolithic site at Foxhall Road, Ipswich, 1903-1905.** White, M.J. & Plunkett, S.J. 2004. Publisher: Liverpool, Western Academic & Specialist Press
- **Guardians of the Gipping. Anglo-Saxon Treasures from Hadleigh Road, Ipswich.** Publisher: Ipswich Borough Council 1994
- **Nina Layard's excavation of Hadleigh Road 1905 – 1908** *in* Proceedings of the Suffolk Instute of Archaeology and History 2014 Vol 38 Pt 2, pp 167 – 192. Volume XXXVIII Part 2 (1994)_Nina Layard Hadleigh Road Ipswich Museum 1905-1908 S J Plunkett_167 to 192.pdf
- **Hamlet Watling, artist and schoolmaster 1818–1908** *in* Proceedings of the Suffolk Instute of Archaeology and History Vol 39 Pt 1, pp. 48–75. Volume XXXIX Part 1 (1997)_Hamlet Watling artist and schoolmaster 1818-1908 S J Plunkett_48 to 107.pdf

By Nina Frances Layard:

- **Wolsey's College and the Priory of St. Peter and St. Paul, Ipswich** https://archive.org/details/poemslayard00laya/page/16/mode/2uphttps://archive.org/details/layard-1899-archaeologicaljo-56brit
- **An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery in Ipswich** https://archive.org/details/layard-1907-archaeologia-60-2-24471
- **Further Excavations on a Palaeolithic Site in Ipswich** https://archive.org/details/layard-1904-journal-of-the-anthropological-institute-34-18607.16806
- **Poems** https://archive.org/details/poemslayard00laya

See also: in the British Museum

Sir Austen Henry Layard: over 20'000 objects excavated by Austen Layard are in the collection of the British Museum. They can be searched online here: *https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/search?agent=Sir%20Austen%20Henry%20Layard*

Some of his finds are on display, such as this lamassu, or human headed winged lion, from the Northwest palace of Ashurnasirpal in Nimrud. *https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1851-0902-509*



Image © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0

Nina Layard: The British Museum also holds some of Nina Layard's Neolithic finds: from Grimes Graves in Norfolk, UK, St Gertrude in the Netherlands, and Forêt de Piscop in France. They can be searched for here: *https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/search?agent=Nina%20Layard*

Nina Layard's Ipswich finds remain in the collection of Ipswich Museum.

- Local Landmarks -



- The Ipswich Society Blue Plaque to Nina Layard can be found at the site of her first excavation on Foundation Street.
- There is a street called Layard Close in Ipswich, off Cauldwell Hall Road.
- There is also a Layard Street in London E20 which includes the caption *"Stratford born Nina Layard (1853-1935) was a botanist, antiquary, archaeologist, poet and prehistorian who made many important discoveries in her field."*
- The memorial to nine Ipswich Martyrs can be seen in Christchurch Park.



Nina Frances Layard 1853 - 1935

- Acknowledgements -

- Image of Nina and Mary at home by kind permission of Ipswich Museum.
- With many thanks to Steven J. Plunkett for permission to reference his books and papers about the life and work of Nina Layard.
- With thanks to www.ipswich-lettering.co.uk for permission to use their image of the Foxhall Road site.
- Photographs of Anglo-Saxon jewellery by Douglas Atfield