

**GLA 18: Harrow Weald, SSSI**

London Borough of Harrow, TQ 147 929

Ownership: Squires Garden Centres

Harrow Weald is a small (3.7 hectares) but important geological site which exhibits the most complete exposure of the Stanmore Gravel, overlying the Claygate Member at the top of the London Clay Formation.

Hilltop occurrences of gravel up to 2 million years old at 130-150m [OD](#) on the Harrow Weald/Barnet plateau have been named the Stanmore Gravel. Consisting mostly of flint with a little quartz, quartzite and some materials in a clay and sandy clay matrix with pockets of coarse sand, it is of uncertain age and origin. The subject of much controversy over the last century, the gravel has been interpreted as either Pleistocene river deposits from tributaries of the proto-Thames – when the Thames flowed north of London to the Colchester area prior to the Anglian glaciation<sup>1</sup> – or offshore or beach deposits of latest Pliocene to earliest Pleistocene age (see BGS Special Memoir, p. 52).

There are very few natural exposures but the gravel is exposed in both sides of the perimeter bank of a former gravel pit on private land adjacent to the Harrow Weald Common open space and the former access roadway to the centre of the pit. The banks are overgrown with moss with scree of leaf litter and fallen clasts. This section is important as a key site (Site of Special Scientific Interest) on which to base further studies of these deposits (see [http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/sssi\\_details.cfm?sssi\\_id=1003687](http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/sssi_details.cfm?sssi_id=1003687)). The London Loop crosses Harrow Weald Common ([www.walklondon.org.uk](http://www.walklondon.org.uk)).

The Stanmore Gravel is also temporarily exposed in the London Borough of Harrow's nearby Stanmore Common local nature reserve, where scraping of topsoil as part of a heathland regeneration project exposes the upper surface of the deposits.

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**Moss and leaf litter obscuring gravel bank**

Source: Dave Brook



**Gravel from small cleared section of face**

Source: Dave Brook



**Site Map**

Source: London's foundations, page 149

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