

**GLA 44: Highgate Wood and Queen's Wood, Potential RIGS**

London Borough of Haringey, Highgate Wood TQ 280 885, Queen's Wood TQ 285 885

Ownership: Highgate Wood – Corporation of London, Queen's Wood – Local Authority. Public open space, woodland and grass

**Topography**

These two woodland areas and specifically the Muswell Hill Road, which separates them, marks the important north-south interfluvium dividing the watershed of the headwaters of the River Brent, flowing to the west, from one of the head streams of the Moselle stream, flowing to the east and eventually joining the River Lea. There are deeply cut ravines in Queen's Wood that indicate intense water flows which are likely to be associated with glacial events.

**Solid Geology**

The underlying geology is London Clay, which is overlain by the Claygate Beds on the higher land in Highgate Wood. The London Clay was deposited in the Eocene period over 40 million years ago and the Claygate Member is at the top of the London Clay Formation, consisting of sandy, silty clay laid down when the seas had shallowed.

**Superficial deposits**

More recent Pleistocene and Holocene sand and gravel deposits are found on or near the surface in parts of the woods. It is unclear precisely what fluvial or glacial processes caused the formation of the very hilly and deeply cut topography and, in turn, the provenance of the gravels deposited.

**Archaeological and historical associations**

Archaeological excavations in the early 1960s and early 1970s verified the presence of a Romano-British pottery manufacturing complex in Highgate Wood. Remains of kilns, trenches and ditch features were revealed and dated from AD 50 to AD 200<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup>. All that is visible now is the raised knoll at the site (TQ 283 8900). In 2010 excavation, linked to an experimental archaeology project, provided samples of *in situ* sediments, which indicated that the Claygate Member extended further north than the BGS map indicates<sup>5, 6</sup> (BGS Special Memoir, pp. 47-50). Elsewhere in the woods there is evidence of later sands and gravel extraction and on the 1873 OS map Highgate Wood is shown as *Gravel Pit Wood*.

**References:**

- <sup>1</sup> Brown, A.E. & Sheldon, H.L. 1969. Post excavation work on the pottery from Highgate. *London Archaeologist*, V1.7:60-65. London.
- <sup>2</sup> Brown, A.E. & Sheldon, H.L. 1970. Highgate 1969. *London Archaeologist*, V1.7:150-154. London.
- <sup>3</sup> Brown, A.E. & Sheldon, H.L. 1971. Highgate Wood 1970-71. *London Archaeologist*, V1.13. London.
- <sup>4</sup> Brown, A.E. & Sheldon, H.L. 1974. Highgate Wood: the pottery and its production. *London Archaeologist*, V2.9:222-231. London.
- <sup>5</sup> Collins, P. and Hacker, M. 2013. Highgate Wood Roman pottery production complex: Geological and topographical factors influencing its location. (unpublished)
- <sup>6</sup> BGS, 2006. *North London England and Wales Sheet 256, Bedrock and superficial deposits 1:50000*, British Geology Survey

**Excavation into the Claygate Beds at the top of Highgate Wood.**

Source: Peter Collins



**Site Map**

Source: London's foundations, page 202

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