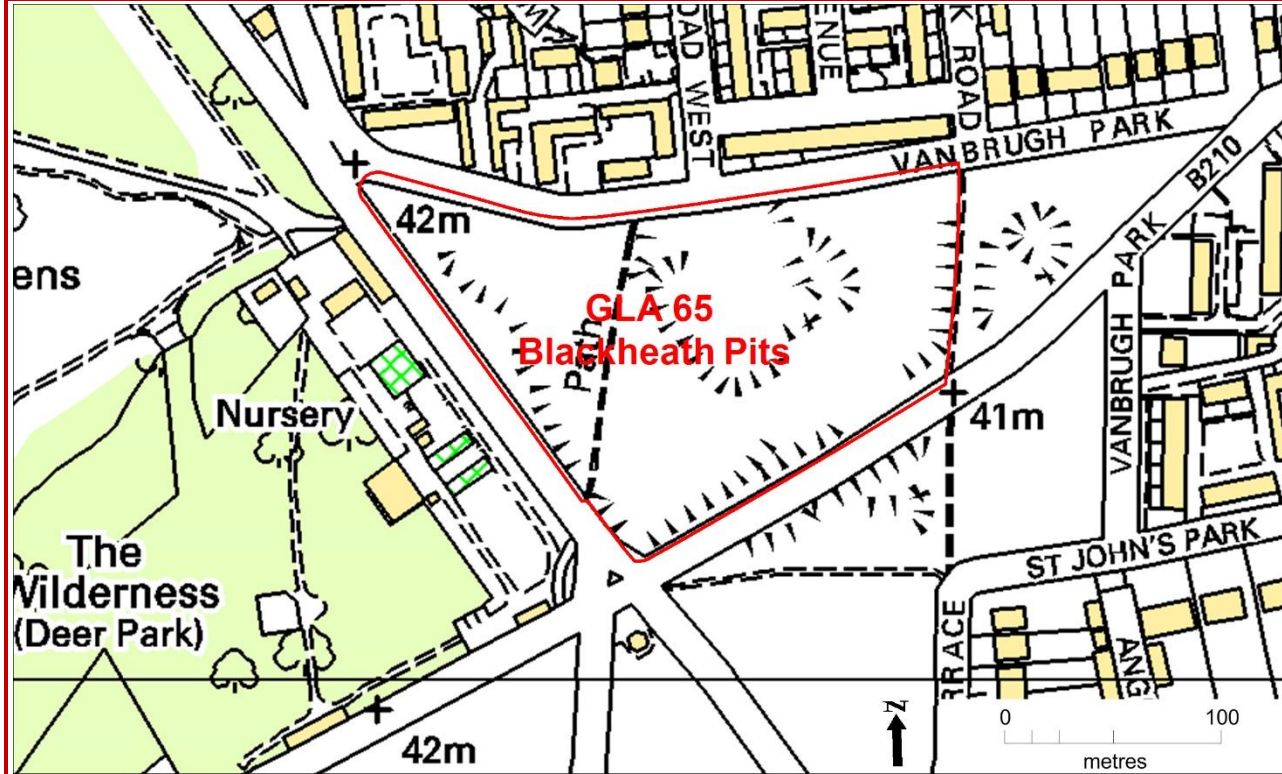


GLA 65 Old Gravel Pit, Blackheath (Vanbrugh Pits)

Grid Reference: Exposure best seen at TQ 3980 7715	Site Type: Series of small disused gravel pits on Blackheath plateau
Site Area (hectares): 3.02	Current use: Recreational as part of Blackheath open space
Site ownership: Royal Borough of Greenwich	Borough: Royal Borough of Greenwich
Field surveyor: Laurie Baker, Diana Clements Visited: Laurie Baker, Diana Clements, Paul Rainey Revisited: Laurie Baker	Date: June 2012 Date: January 2016 Date: November 2020
Current geological designation: Recommended by Partnership as a LIGS	Other designation: Metropolitan SINC (Blackheath and Greenwich Park)

Site Map OS Topography © Crown Copyright



Stratigraphy and Rock Types

Time Unit: Eocene	Rock Unit: Blackheath Member, Harwich Formation, Thames Group
Rock Type: Sand and gravel	Details: Sand and pebbles (mostly round, black), with a fragile brackish marine fauna locally. Calcitic conglomerate found at certain horizons.

Site Description



These small pits were made by quarrying the rounded pebbles of the Blackheath Member that form the Blackheath plateau (Harwich Formation). Many have since been back-filled with wartime rubble. These are better exposures than GLA 24 on the south side of Blackheath (in Lewisham) which is very overgrown. The pebbles can be well seen in the worn paths, enhanced by BMX bikes. In 2021, both sites had acquired interpretation boards; the one at GLA 24 included information on the geology. GLA 24 is shown as Eliot Pits and the Greenwich pits are shown as Vanbrugh Pits. There is scope to link these pits to the nature trail.

Assessment of Site Value

Geodiversity topic: Lithostratigraphy; sedimentology; palaeontology.

Access and Safety

Aspect	Description
Safety of access	The paths through Vanbrugh Pit is rough and sometimes steep-sided. The rounded nature of the pebbles can make the paths slippery.

Safety of exposure	Walkers and BMX bikers help the small exposures not to become vegetated	
Permission to visit	Open access at all times. Vanbrugh Park, Charlton Way and Prince Charles Road provide parking possibilities (2 hours free in Vanbrugh Park at least).	
Current condition	Mostly vegetated, only small windows of gravel where eroded	
Current conflicting activities	Walkers and bikers aid exposures.	
Restricting conditions	Many of the former pits have been filled with wartime rubble	
Nature of exposure	Small disused pits where Blackheath Gravel has been dug	
Culture, Heritage & Economic		
Aspect		Rating
Historic, archaeological & literary associations	Shown on 1896 OS Historic map as Old Gravel Pit. Both are shown on 1863-7 map that is included within the Greenwich Park Geotrail: www.londongeopartnership.org.uk/geotrails/#greenwich	?
Aesthetic landscape	Open space remaining close to urban conurbations	8
History of Earth Sciences	'Type' area for the Blackheath Member of the Harwich Formation	7
Economic geology	Formerly locally important source of gravel	7
GeoScientific Merit		
Geomorphology	Part of the plateau that runs along to Lesnes Woods with the higher ground at Shooters Hill	4
Sedimentology	The small round black pebbles gave the plateau its name	4
Palaeontology	None described from here	0
Igneous/mineral/ Metamorphic Geology	None.	0
Structural Geology	None.	0
Lithostratigraphy	The Blackheath Beds are best viewed at Gilbert's Pit SSSI GLA 14 although this is the Type locality	4
Potential use	Research; further education; on-site interpretation.	
Fragility	Natural overgrowing; weathering/slumping.	
Current Site Value		
Community	Combined with Eliot's Pit (GLA 24) it is one of 12 sites on the Green Chain audio on London Geodiversity Partnership website	6
Education		6
Geodiversity value		
Recommended by Partnership as a LIGS:	Combined with GLA 24 (Eliot's Pit) they provide local interest of the Blackheath Beds from which the Blackheath area is named.	4
GLA 65 Old Gravel Pit (Vanbrugh Pits)		
		

Photos: Diana Clements 2012



General view of pit in November 2020.
Photo: Laurie Baker