

# Highgate Wood Heritage Assessment

Prepared for City of London  
by Land Use Consultants

January 2013



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**Client:** City of London

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January 2013

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## Acknowledgements

LUC is grateful to Michael Hammerson and Jonathan Meares who shared their knowledge and research with LUC to enable this Heritage Assessment to be produced. Also to City of London staff – Dennis Fletcher, David Humpheries, Cindy Blaney, Declan O’Brien and Rebecca Hirst for their contribution.

# 1 Background and Context

## Location

- 1.1 Highgate Wood is a 28ha Ancient Woodland, located in the London Borough of Haringey in North London (refer to Figure 1.1). Muswell Hill Road forms the eastern boundary of the Wood and separates it from Queen's Wood to the east. To the south and south west the Wood is bordered by the back gardens of properties on the A1 Archway Road and the London Underground Storage Line. Properties on Lanchester Road, Woodside Avenue and Holt Close form the Wood's northern boundary. Today Highgate Wood serves a diverse community and contains a range of facilities including a cafe, sports pitches, toilets and a playground.

## Acquisition and Administration

- 1.2 Highgate Wood was acquired by the Corporation of London in 1886 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners under the Highgate and Kilburn Open Spaces Act 1886. It was publicly dedicated as 'an open space for ever' on October 30 1886 by Lord Mayor, Sir John Staples.
- 1.3 Highgate Wood continues to be owned and managed by the City of London Corporation (formerly the Corporation of London) through Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Management Committee. The committee meets six times per year at the Guildhall and meetings are open to the public.
- 1.4 The Open Spaces Department are responsible for managing the Wood on behalf of the Committee. The Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Joint Consultative Committee which consists of City Members and representatives from local groups, was created in 1974 and meets biannually.
- 1.5 Highgate Wood is maintained from City of London funds at no cost to the communities which it serves. This has been sustained since the then Corporation of London acquired the site in 1886.

## Designations

- 1.6 Highgate Wood (excluding the sports ground) is designated as Ancient Woodland (refer to Figure 1.2) which is defined in England, by Natural England, as 'land that has had a continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD'. Ancient Woodland can be:
  - Ancient semi-natural stands composed predominantly of trees and shrubs native to the site that do not obviously originate from planting. They include stands that may have been managed by coppicing or pollarding in the past, as well as those where the tree and shrub layer has grown up by natural regeneration.
  - Ancient replanted woodland sites (also called plantations on ancient woodland sites) where the original native tree cover has been felled and replaced by planted stock most commonly of a species not native to the site, for example conifers such as Norway spruce or Corsican pine, but also broadleaves such as sycamore or sweet chestnut.
- 1.7 Highgate Wood is defined as Ancient Semi Natural Woodland on the National Inventory of Ancient Woodlands, which is maintained by Natural England.
- 1.8 Highgate Wood is a locally designated<sup>1</sup> Ecologically Valuable Site (Metropolitan Importance), Historic Park, Area of Archaeological Importance and Metropolitan Open Land (refer to Figure 1.2). These designations all also apply to the adjacent Queen's Wood. A locally designated Ecological Corridor runs along the north western and south eastern edge of Highgate Wood, associated with the existing and dismantled railway lines. Highgate Conservation Area lies to the south and east of the Wood and Muswell Hill Conservation Area lies to the north.

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<sup>1</sup> Haringey Unitary Development Plan Adopted July 2006. Saved Policies version July 2009

### **Geology, Soils and Water**

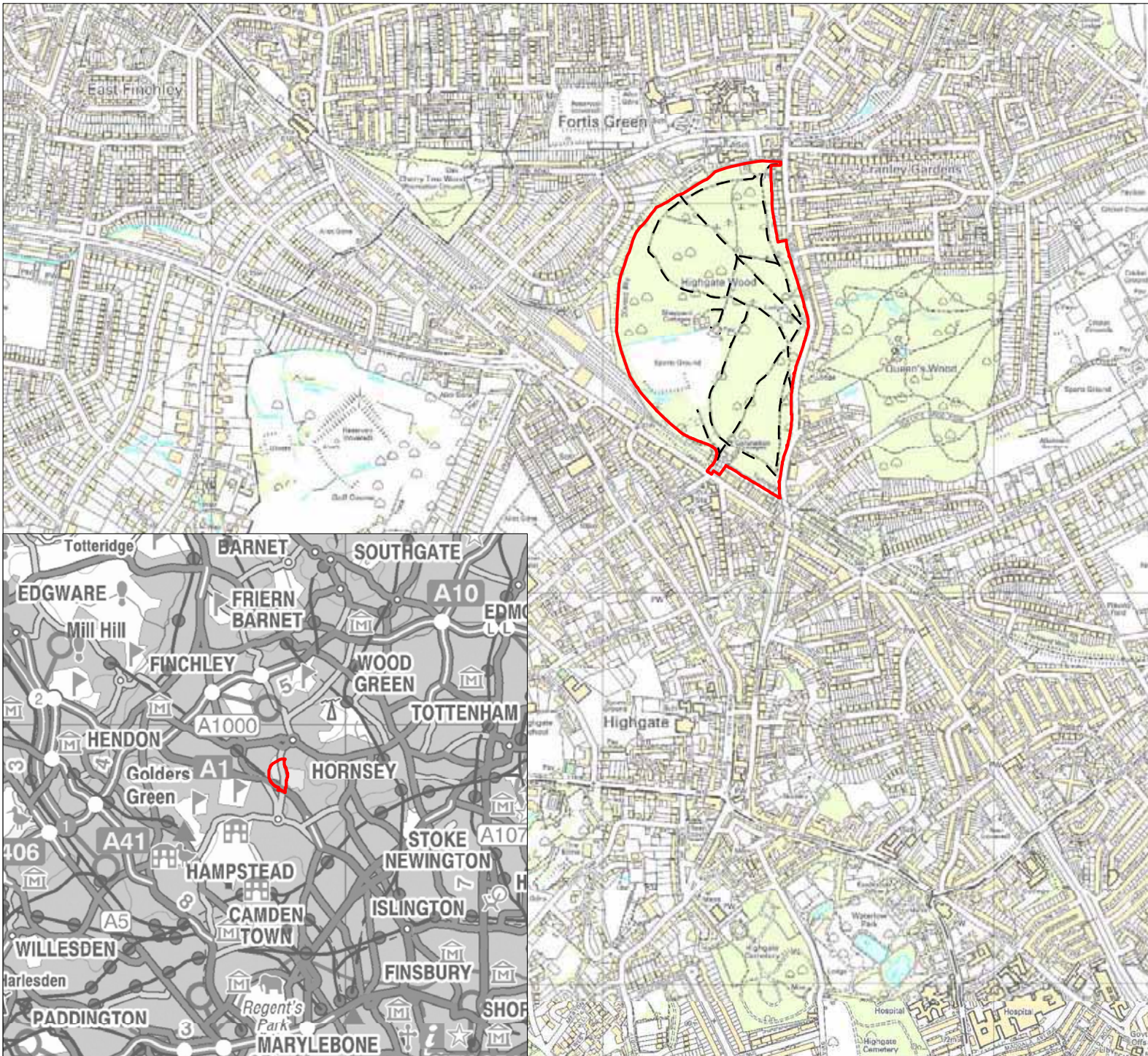
- 1.9 Highgate Wood is located mainly on Claygate Beds. Deposits of sand, clay and gravel cut into and are embedded into the clay, probably as an out-wash from a glacier which reached as far south as Muswell Hill during the Pleistocene<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.10 The Wood is on the Muswell Hill Ridge which is a watershed between the valleys of the River Brent to the west and River Lea to the east. A small 'stream' in the north west of the wood is now completely dry and only receives flood water run-off. It used to flow via Mutton Brook, Dollis Brook and the River Brent into the Thames. 100 years ago there were more streams and pools in the wood with streams and springs on the eastern side of the wood flowing into the Thames via the River Lea. The springs on the eastern side still show activity and surface flow at times.
- 1.11 Highgate Wood together with Queen's Wood has been identified as a potential Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) by the London Geodiversity Partnership, and is mentioned in 'London's Foundations: Protecting the Geodiversity of the Capital', London Plan 2012, Mayor of London. London RIGS are sites which are considered to be worthy of protection for their geodiversity and are equivalent to Sites of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. The report recommends that further consultation should be carried out at Highgate Wood and Queen's Wood to consider their designation as RIGS in Development Plan Documents.

### **Purpose of the Heritage Assessment**

- 1.12 The Heritage Assessment has been produced to inform the preparation of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for Highgate Wood. The CMP will replace the existing management plan which expires in 2011 and will encompass all aspects of the site providing clear aims and objectives to guide future management.

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<sup>2</sup> Brown and Sheldon (1969) London Archaeologist Vol 1pg39 in Museum of London (1998) Highgate Wood An Archaeological Earthwork Survey

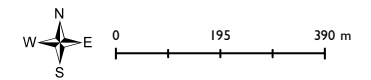


# Highgate Wood Heritage Assessment

Figure 1.1: Location Plan

## Key

- Highgate Wood site boundary
- Current path network

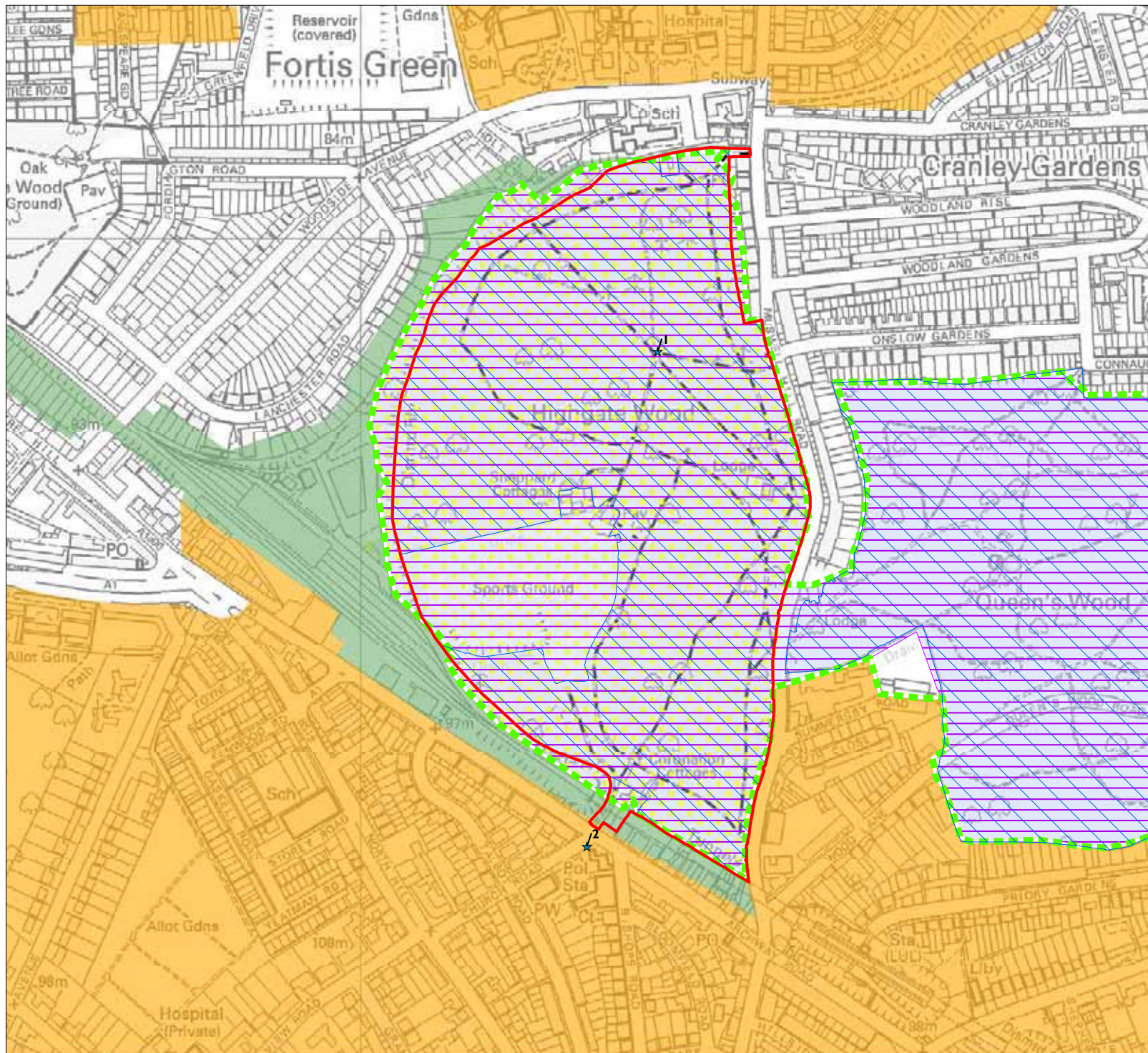


1:10,000 at A3 (main plate)

Source: Land Use Consultants

Date: 24/10/2011  
Revision: B

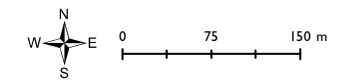




# Highgate Wood Heritage Assessment

Figure 1.2: Designations

- Key**
- Highgate Wood site boundary
  - Ancient Woodland
  - Metropolitan Open Land
  - Ecologically Valuable Site of Metropolitan Importance
  - Ecological Corridor
  - Historic Park
  - Area of Archaeological Importance
  - Conservation Area
- Listed buildings**
- 1. Drinking fountain in Highgate Wood
  - 2. Cattle trough
  - Current path network



1:4,500 at A3

Source: Land Use Consultants, Haringey Council

Date: 24/10/2011  
Revision: B





## 2 Documented History

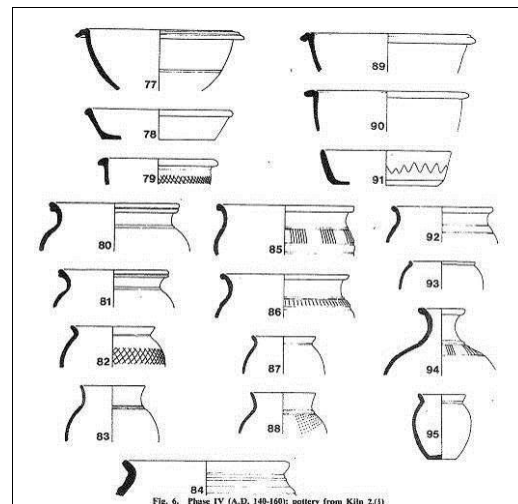
- 2.1 This section provides a summary of the history of Highgate Wood. Historic maps are presented in Appendix 1 with analysis provided in Chapter 6. In addition a timeline highlighting events in the history of Highgate Wood is presented in Figure 2.3.

### Early History

- 2.2 Highgate and the adjacent Queen's Wood are part of a cluster of Ancient Woodland sites which are located within a five kilometre radius of Highgate Village (refer to Figure 2.1). These woods have all managed to escape development and are a valuable vestige of a past landscape which comprised a mosaic of farmland, managed woodland and enclosed estate land for hunting. The period pre dating the Bishop of London's ownership in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD is full of conjecture, and it is uncertain whether these sites were part of a much greater woodland area that remained uncleared until the early medieval period. Highgate Wood contains a number of indicative features of Ancient Woodland, including several fine wild service trees (*Sorbus torminalis*), and the remnants of a ditch and bank system which once formed the coppice compartments.
- 2.3 In Roman times the site of Highgate Wood was in an area bounded to the west by Watlin Street and to the east by Ermine Street which shows little evidence of occupation during the Roman Period. However archaeological excavations carried out in the late 1960's and early 1970's unearthed a series of kilns in Highgate Wood and subsequent dating suggested that pottery was being made in AD 43 to approximately AD 160 (Refer to Chapter 5 Archaeology for more information).



**Wild service tree (*Sorbus torminalis*)**



**Pottery excavated from the kilns**

- 2.4 It is probable that pottery manufacturing was cyclical with the process linked to the coppicing cycle that would have provided fuel wood to fire the kilns<sup>3</sup>. The Roman activity recorded in the area suggests that roads must have existed in the vicinity of the Wood but their exact position remains unconfirmed<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Hammerson (2009) for the City of London Highgate Wood A Self-Guided Walk.

<sup>4</sup> Museum of London (1998) Highgate Wood An Archaeological Earthwork Survey

- 2.5 From the early 7th century the Wood was part of the lands owned by the Bishops of London. After the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 the Wood was part of a much larger Hunting Park given by King William to William the Norman Bishop of London 1051-75. Interestingly the Norman influence predated the invasion of 1066, with a number of prominent Norman nobleman appointed as bishops during the reign of Edward the Confessor. Figure 2.2 shows the Bishop of London's Demesne in Finchley and Hornsey c. 1788 indicating the parish boundaries. The boundary of the medieval Hunting Park is also shown. Deer were kept in the Hunting Park, which was enclosed by a 'pale' or embankment. There were still visible sections of this structure in existence on the western side of the Park until the early part of the twentieth century, but with the construction of Hampstead Garden Suburb they were grubbed out. There is a mention of Highgate Wood as part of the Hornsey Woods in the Domesday Book of 1086 as supporting pannage for 770 swine.
- 2.6 The Park was also known as Hornsey Park and covered an area of just in excess of 1000 acres (approximately 400 hectares). It was enclosed initially almost exclusively for hunting but there were woodland areas within the site and these would also have provided an important income and resource for the Church. At the centre of the Park was the Bishops Hunting Lodge, located where the Highgate Golf course is now, and this residence was in regular use into the early fifteenth century. The first records of the site as a Hunting Park appear in 1241 when the estate had been requisitioned by the Earl of Pembroke during one of the periods where the episcopacy had remained vacant for some years. The estate was the centre of several intrigues during the medieval period including a legend attached to the escape of Robert Bruce in 1205, and the later necromantic acts carried out by Roger Bolinbroke and Thomas Southwell during the reign of Henry VI. The Park gradually became fragmented as land was leased off to various local landowners on long leases often becoming being passed from one generation to the next.
- 2.7 The village of Highgate grew up because it was the 'High Toll Gate', the southern entrance to the road through the Hunting Park where tolls were collected until 1871. The western entrance to the Hunting Park was known as Spaniards Gate and the northern entrance known as Finchley Gate. Figure 2.2 shows the location of the gates in relation to the Hunting Park.



**The moat which surrounded the Hunting Lodge is visible on the 12th tee of Highgate Golf Course. This view is along the northern moat. (Photograph: Michael Hammerson)**

- 2.8 Although named by 1354, Highgate in the 14th century was recorded only in connection with the road to the gateway or with the hermits who lived nearby and repaired the road. Early growth was probably due to general traffic and to the hermitage, which attracted pilgrims by 1464<sup>5</sup>.



**The 'High Toll Gate' southern entrance to the Hunting Park. View of about 1750 looking from Highgate Village towards the toll gate**



**The western entrance to the Hunting Park 'Spaniard's Gate' dating from about 1900. The small brick building opposite the Spaniard's Inn is an 18th century Toll House.**



**Painting dating to 1780 showing the northern entrance to the Hunting Park known as Finchley Gate**

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<sup>5</sup> 'Hornsey, including Highgate: Highgate', A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 6: Friern Barnet, Finchley, Hornsey with Highgate (1980), pp. 122-135. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=22519> Date accessed: 18 October 2011

### 16th century and commonwealth period

- 2.9 Between the 16th and 18th centuries the Wood was leased to various tenants who managed it as coppice with standards. In the 16th century this management system was a legal requirement when the Crown required oak timber to build the navy's fighting ships. By the Tudor period good quality oak timber was becoming increasingly scarce and with a ship of the size of the 'Mary Rose' requiring upwards of 600 large oak trees to build there was concern that the nation's timber reserves were close to being exhausted. Henry VIII was forced to enact decrees banning the felling of oak timber trees in various locations to ensure the survival of a sustainable reserve for future building. The period following the English Civil War known as the Commonwealth 1649-1653 saw the estate of the Bishop of London confiscated and sold to Sir John Wollaston a prominent local landowner and parliamentarian. The village and environs of Highgate were a parliamentarian stronghold with links with the infamous 'Regicides' the group of individuals who signed the death warrant of Charles 1 in 1649. Oliver Cromwell's son in law Sir John Ireton was linked to this group and had vested interests in the Village. With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the return of Charles II the church was restored as landowner

### 17th and 18th century

- 2.10 In the 17th and 18th centuries coppice was increasingly in demand to supply charcoal to the iron and glass industries. Oak supplied bark for tannin.
- 2.11 In 1664 Highgate contained 161 houses<sup>6</sup>. The Bishop of London retained hunting rights over the land until as late as 1662. The Wood was known as Brewer's Fall or Brewhouse Wood making reference to ownership by local brewers in the 17th and 18th century. A 'fall' was compartmented coppice wood and the name is recalled in nearby Coldfall Wood to the north of Highgate Wood in Muswell Hill. In the 1780's the wood was leased by Francis Gillow who owned four Highgate Inns and the Brewhouse on North Hill.

### 19th century and fragmentation

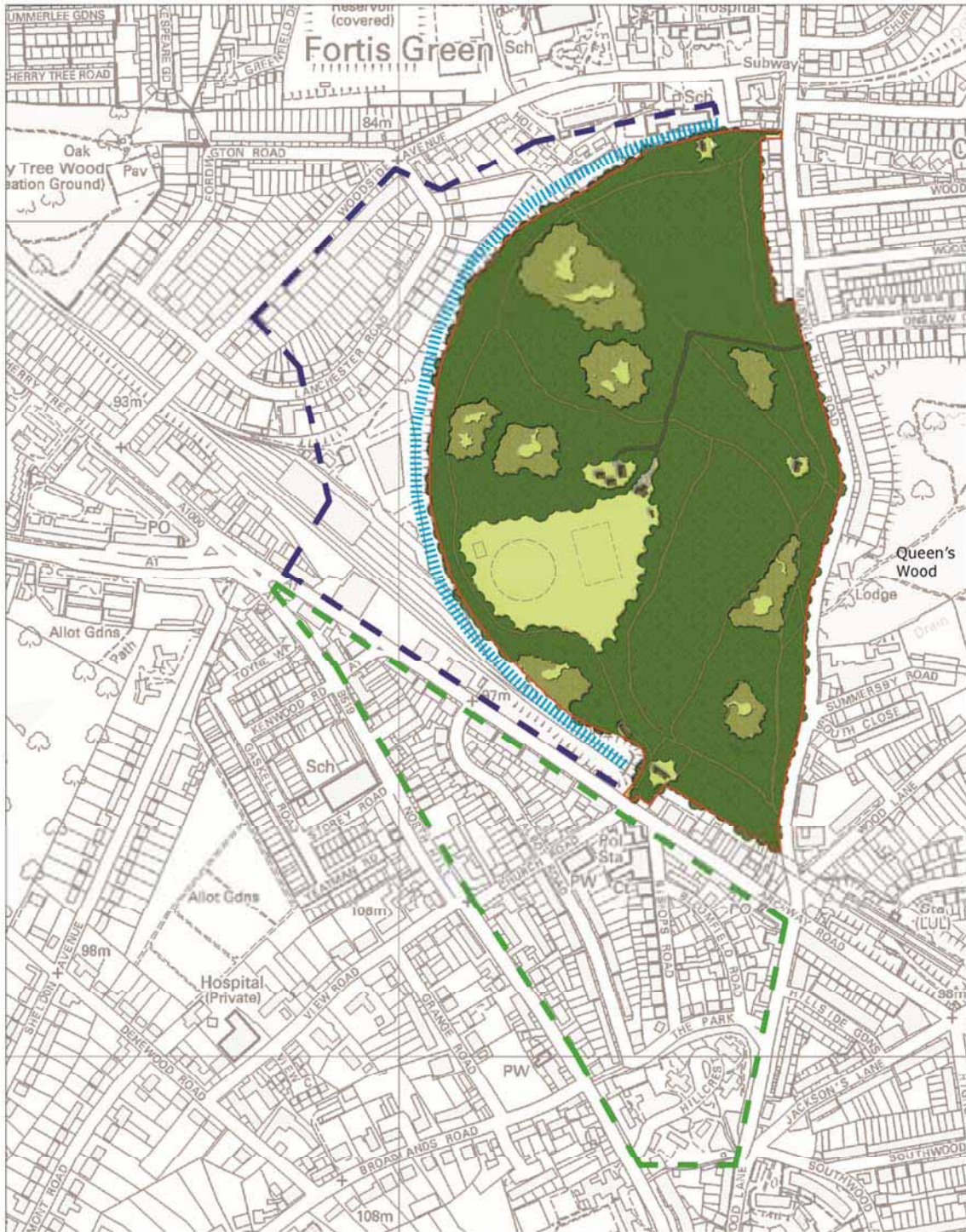
- 2.12 Gillow got into financial difficulties and the wood was passed to John Addison who leased it until at least 1809. Highgate Wood was known as Gravelpit Wood in the 18th and 19th century when it was used for gravel extraction<sup>7</sup> (refer to 1873-76 and 1894 Maps in Appendix 1 which record the name Gravelpit Wood). The name was changed from Brewhouse Wood to Gravel Pit Wood when the Wood was back in possession of the Ecclesiastical Commission. The current name 'Highgate Wood' was adopted by 1896 (refer to Appendix 1).
- 2.13 Until the late 19th century the Highgate area was still predominantly a rural farmland landscape of woods and fields. People lived mainly in the villages of Highgate, Crouch End, Hornsey, Finchley and Hampstead. The agricultural landscape employed most of the population and provided fuel and food for London which at that time was the largest city in the world.
- 2.14 The Archway Road was built in 1813 as a 'bypass' to Highgate Village and Highgate Hill which became impassable in winter making it impossible for horses and wagons to make the steep gradient. The new road cut through the southern part of Highgate Wood, effectively severing an area of approximately thirty acres and rendering it irrecoverably fragmented from the main part of the wood. Prior to this event the wood had extended to North Hill as far up as Park House Passage. This section remained intact until the 1860s (refer to Pricketts Map 1842) when it was finally developed. Three ancient oaks from this lost part of the Wood still exist in a back garden of a property in Church Road<sup>8</sup>.


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<sup>6</sup> From: 'Hornsey, including Highgate: Growth before the mid 19th century', A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 6: Friern Barnet, Finchley, Hornsey with Highgate (1980), pp. 107-111. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=22517> Date accessed: 18 October 2011


<sup>7</sup> The City of London (2006) Highgate Wood Management Plan 2006-2011


<sup>8</sup> Highgate Wood A Self-Guided Walk. Compiled by Michael Hammerson for the City of London 2009



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**Current extent of Highgate Wood covering an area of approximately 28 hectares.**
- 

**1813: The construction of Archway Road resulted in the division of southern section of Highgate Wood, which subsequently resulted in the loss of approximately 15 hectares of woodland.**
- 

**1870's: The construction of the Alexandra Palace railway line resulted in the division of the western section of Highgate Wood and the loss of approximately 1 hectare of woodland.**
- 

**1870's to 1930's: The Northern Line and Lanchester Road developments led to a further loss of approximately 10 hectares of woodland.**

Losses of Highgate Wood during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

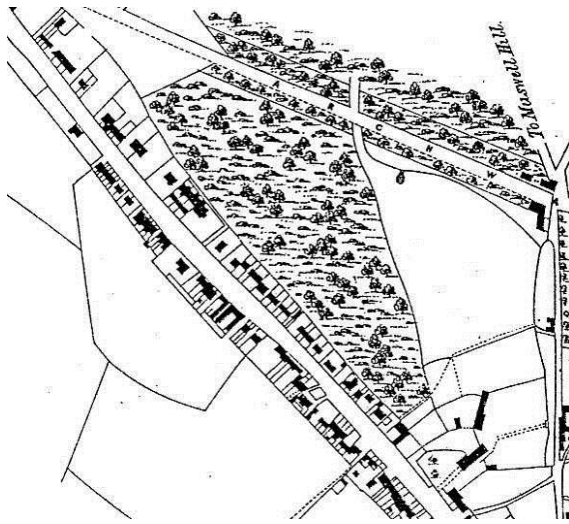


**1878 farmland landscape. Far left is the northern edge of Highgate and Queen's Woods. Alexandra Palace on the hill.**



**Lithograph showing the new Archway Road and original Archway in 1814.**

- 2.15 The gravel pits were probably quarried for construction of the road. By 1900 the Archway depicted was too narrow for all the horse drawn traffic and was demolished and replaced by the one in existence today.
- 2.16 Regular coppicing was carried out until at least 1842, the Wood was then leased to the Earl of Mansfield (owner of the Kenwood Estate) and the importance of coppicing declined followed by a period of neglect. In 1884 as recorded by the Illustrated London News (11th October 1884) the Wood was leased to a dairy farmer. At this time development was intensifying with the expansion of housing and building of the railways to serve the expanding city and there was local concern that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who owned the Wood, would develop the land. In 1871 work commenced to construct the railway through to Alexandra Palace, with a further swath of woodland lost on the western boundary. It is difficult to quantify the amount of woodland lost during this period, but the corridor of railway line would have necessitated the removal of many trees and associated habitat. The Church Commissioners who now administered the land had also allowed a new road to be built through the Ancient Woodland that still existed around the site of the Bishops of London's old hunting Lodge, just to the west of Highgate Village. The loss of woodland and the rapid expansion of housing was causing an upwelling of public opposition much of which was directed at the church. It was this growing concern that would ultimately be the saving of Highgate Wood.



**Prickett's map 1842**

- 2.17 The successful campaign to save Hampstead Heath in 1871 had highlighted the importance of green space in London. The local concern about the future of Highgate Wood instigated a campaign headed by the chairman of the Hornsey Local Board and a local politician, Henry Reader Williams with much coverage given in *The Times* newspaper. In February 1885, The Ecclesiastical Commissioners offered the Wood to the Corporation of London as a gift and this offer was accepted in 1886 under the Highgate and Kilburn Open Spaces Act 1886. There is some evidence to suggest that this apparent gesture of goodwill was actually an attempt by the Church Commissioners to reduce the ill feeling that was growing amongst the local community following their development of the Ancient Woodland surrounding the site of the Bishop's Lodge.
- 2.18 On 30th October 1886 the Wood was publicly declared 'open for the use and recreation of the public forever'<sup>9</sup> by the Lord Mayor of the time Sir John Staples.
- 2.19 From acquisition in 1886, The Corporation of London embarked on a programme of works to convert the site into a 'park' and there is some anecdotal evidence that a number of the old oaks were felled between 1899 and 1906<sup>10</sup>. Asphalt and cinder paths were constructed and drainage 'improved', many wildflower areas were lost between 1890 and 1905. The Wood took on a 'manicured' appearance with shrubs along paths having a 'tidy' edge. Ornamental trees were also planted and dead wood removed and burned. The Wood was managed more as an urban park, to serve the now surrounding suburban population, than an ancient wood and the wildlife suffered accordingly<sup>11</sup>.



**The Fountain area 1902**



**Neat hard surface path 1905**

<sup>9</sup> Highgate Wood Leaflet, City of London

<sup>10</sup> Highgate Wood A Self-Guided Walk. Compiled by Michael Hammerson for the City of London 2009

<sup>11</sup> David Bevan (1992) *The Natural History of Haringey's Ancient Woodlands*

- 2.20 A letter dated 1894 from A.C Houseman to the Standard Newspaper records his concern about the felling of trees which had revealed views from within the Wood to the railway, a public house and to the washing hanging out in the back gardens of properties along Archway Road.
- 2.21 The photograph below (left) depicts the Muswell Hill Road in the 1890s showing the current entrance to Queen's Wood and Alexandra Palace in the distance. To the left of the photograph, an elevated bank with a track for pedestrians marks the edge of Highgate Wood. This was probably dug away to accommodate the widened road and pavements by c.1910 (refer to photograph below right).



**Muswell Hill Road 1890s. Highgate Wood to the left, Queen's Wood to the right**



**Muswell Hill Road 1910. Highgate Wood to the right, Queen's Wood to the left**

### 20th century developments and further degradation (with further progression map)

- 2.22 The photograph below (left) shows the Wood in 1903 probably separated from the playing field by estate rail fencing. The Rocque Map of 1754 suggests that the playing field may have been a field for centuries and was not created when the Wood became a public space (refer to Appendix 1).
- 2.23 A view of the Wood and eastern edge of the playing field in 1915 is shown in the photograph below (right). The building is a pavilion which no longer stands. The present café was built in 1930s and in relation to this photograph would be located behind the photographer.



**1903 Photograph**

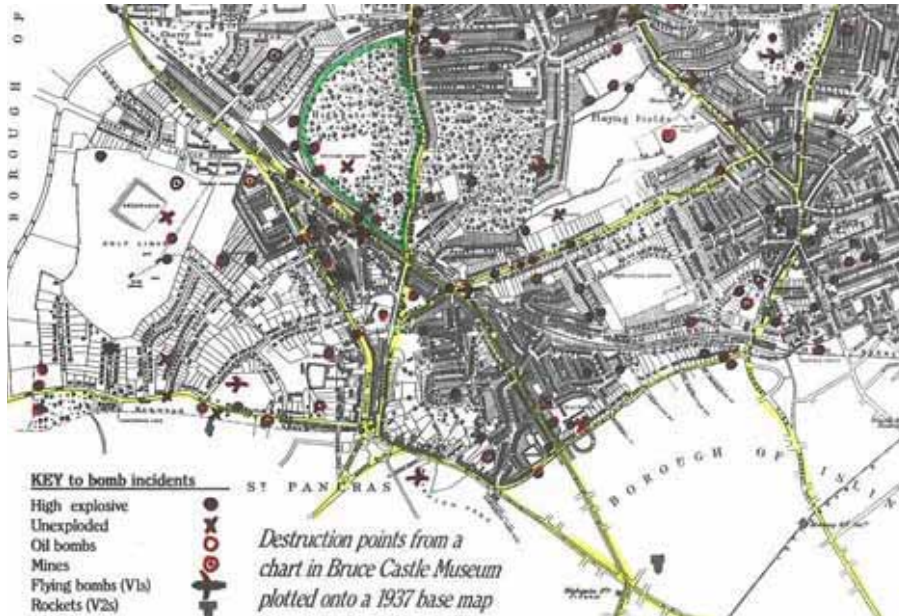


**The Playing Field in 1915**

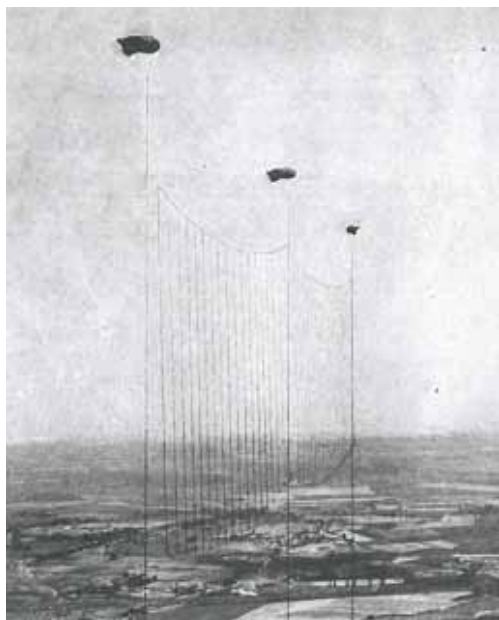
- 2.24 By 1916 the London Natural History Society was reporting that bluebells and wood anemones were almost non-existent in Highgate Wood. The 'improved' drainage of the Wood destroyed numerous plants which were present and recorded in the Wood in the 19th century (e.g. sedges). During the 1930s the area that had been partitioned off following the construction of the Alexandra Palace railway was finally developed thus closing any opportunity to reunite the woodland remnant in the Lanchester Road area with the main body of the site. It is a sobering thought that during the period between 1813 and 1930 an area of close to fifty acres was lost to development. The present site is just under seventy acres, so assuming Highgate Wood extended to an area of approximately 120 acres prior to 1813, by 1930 the site had lost over 40% of its woodland.



2.25 During the Second World War barrage balloons were stationed on the eastern side of the sports field as the railway line running past Highgate Wood was a target for German aircraft. The map below shows where bombs fell in the Highgate Wood area 1939-1945, all of them on the southern and western edge of the Wood in proximity to the railway. The barrage balloons were secured to the ground with metal cables and used to defend against low-level aircraft attack, by making the attackers approach more difficult and damaging the aircraft on collision with the cables. Today, when the weather is dry the concrete blocks which formed the anchor for the barrage balloon are evident.



**Locations where bombs fell 1939-1945**



**Line of barrage balloons provides some indication of what the defences on Highgate would have looked like**



**Parch marks reveal the anchor points for barrage balloons**

2.26 Throughout the earlier part of the 20th century inappropriate management continued to cause damage to the Wood. Compaction of the ground by public trampling affected the native ground

flora and a well-intended but misguided programme of beech planting took place. The photo (right) shows a view towards the playing field in 1911, the hornbeam topped bank, once forming a boundary to an old coppice compartment has been almost lost due to erosion by users of the Wood.



**Row of hornbeams, once forming a hedge on an old coppice compartment. The banks have since been destroyed by erosion**

- 2.27 During the 1960s disc harrowing was used in an attempt to ameliorate the compaction of the previous decades, but the operation probably caused more harm than benefit as harrowing would have damaged the rooting zones of the nearby trees. In 1968 the Conservation Council of the London Natural History Society expressed concern at the planting of exotic conifers in the Wood including Corsican pine, western hemlock, Norway Spruce and Douglas fir. These trees were planted mostly on the eastern perimeter of the site to form a shelter belt against the prevailing winds during the winter months. Quite a number of these trees remain, and form impressive stands at the Gypsy and Onslow Gate entrances.



**Location of coniferous trees in the Wood**



**Coniferous planting**

- 2.28 Little or no coppicing was carried out in the Wood between the 1890s and 1970s. The photograph (right) shows the wood in 1964 after 70-80 years without coppicing and management as a 'park'. The ground is relatively bare, overshadowed by mature trees and trampling by visitors. Stumps of any felled trees were often grubbed out. A report dated 1973 by a Forester responds to criticism of elements of management of the woods made by Highgate Wood Residents association. Since 1974 there have been Joint Consultative Committee meetings between the City and certain interested bodies (e.g. the Friends of Highgate Wood).



**The Wood in 1964 after 70-80 years without coppicing**

- 2.29 Since 1977 small clearings of approximately 0.5 acre have been created in the Woodland and fenced off to allow natural regeneration over a five year period. The purpose of this work is to gradually introduce a mosaic of regrowth throughout the woodland area including a variety of different age classes of tree stock to ensure continuity. This will have the additional benefit of increasing habitat variation and enhance the biodiversity value of the site. See attached map showing the seven conservation areas created since 1977 and the next proposed area to be created in 2012.
- 2.30 For some years the Woodkeeper team have been aware of a progressive decline amongst the population of oak standards. This decline manifest itself by a gradual thinning of the canopy and the trees effected normally die over a period of between three to five years. This is part of a nationwide cyclical process and the disease is now known as Chronic Oak Decline (COD). There are normally a suite of reasons for the decline, but typically compaction, previous management and environmental stress factors such as insect defoliation are among the common causal factors which precipitate the tree into a spiral of decline. The Woodkeeper and Ecology team have devised a survey methodology based on a forestry process and are now monitoring the canopy condition of a sample group of just over 300 of the oak standards every summer and recording their findings.
- 2.31 The conservation area established in 2002 aims to maintain a new generation of standard oaks and coppiced and pollarded hornbeam while maintaining groups of self-seeded birch and goat willow.



**An example of an oak with canopy decline and caterpillar defoliation**



**Oak planted in the 2002 conservation area**

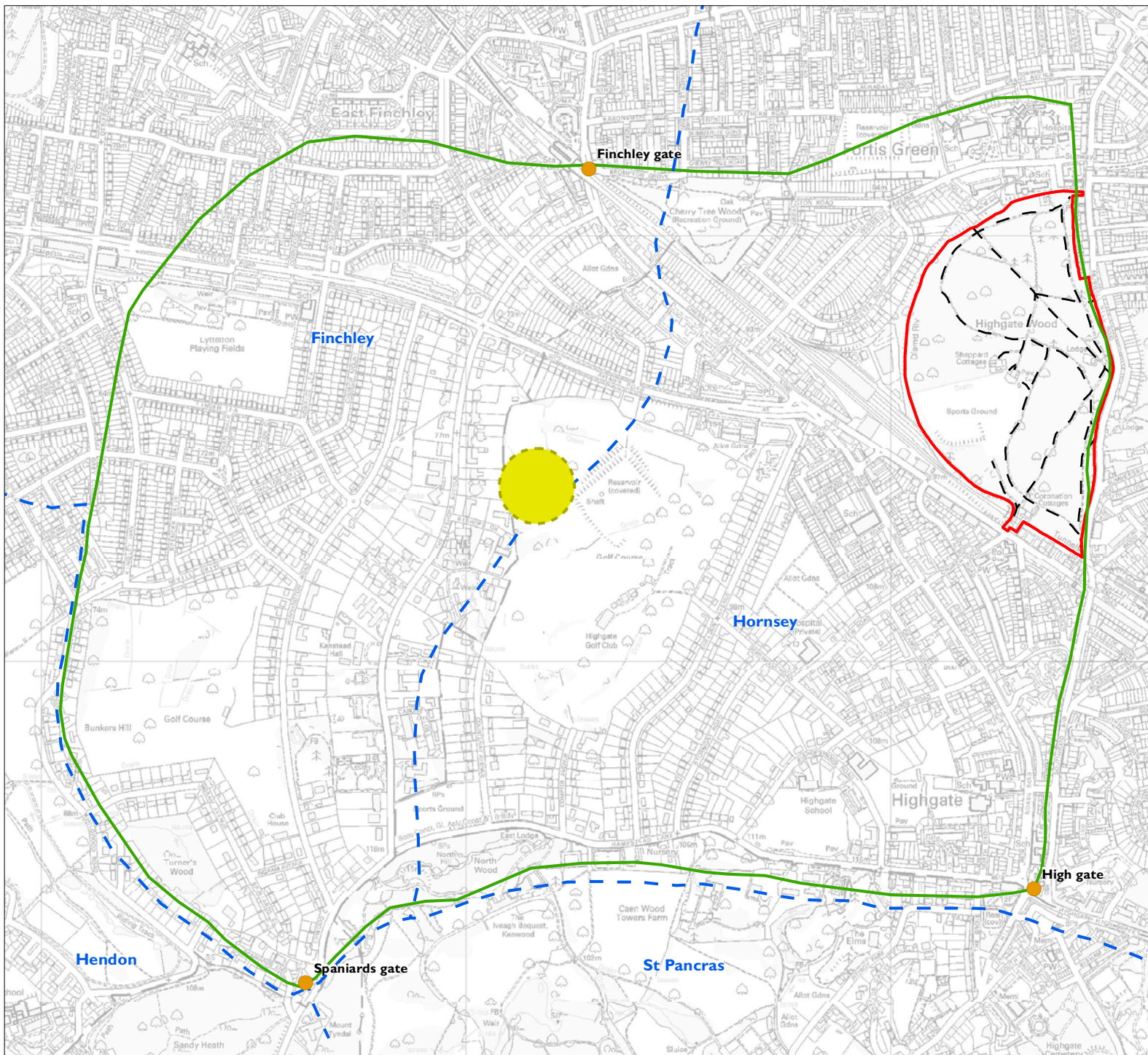


Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital map data © Crown copyright 2012. All rights reserved. Licence numbers 100047514, 0100031673. LUC LDN 5223-01 004 Ancient woodland context 25/10/2012

Highgate Wood	
<b>Figure 2.1</b>	
<b>Ancient Woodland Context</b>	
<b>LUC</b>	

Map Scale @ A4: 1:30,000

Source:

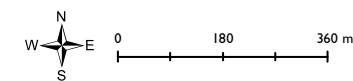


## Highgate Wood

Figure 2.2: The Medieval Park & The Bishop of London's Demesne

### Key

- Present day boundary
- Medieval hunting lodge
- Boundary of medieval hunting park
- Gate to medieval hunting park
- Current path network
- Parish boundary & name - The Bishop of London's Demesne in Finchley and Hornsey c.1788



1:9,198 at A3

Source: Land Use Consultants

Date: 24/10/2011

Revision: A



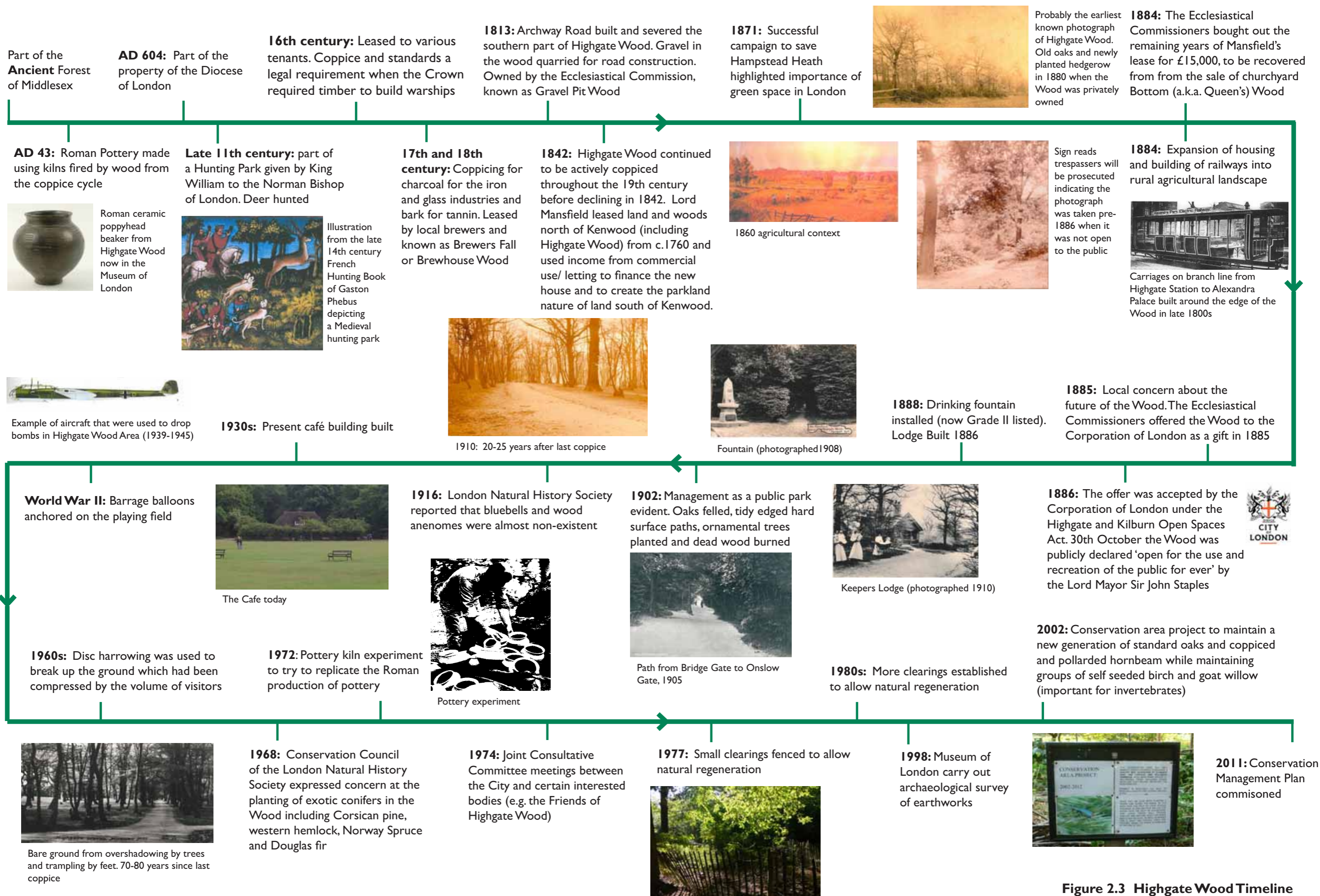


Figure 2.3 Highgate Wood Timeline





# 3 Historic Woodland Management Practices

## The Coppice with standards process

- 3.1 Highgate wood was managed as a fuel wood resource for many centuries, certainly into the late nineteenth century. The site would have probably been divided into a number of compartments or 'falls' each of which would have been cyclically cut and then cleared to encourage re-growth and the timber sold. There are a number of earthbank and ditch structures within the woodland which may well be the remnants of old compartments. There would also have been areas of laid hedge, probably in combination with earth banks to prevent grazing animals from entering areas that had been cut and grazing on regenerating coppice stools. There are still some locations within the wood where small sections of laid hedge can be seen.
- 3.2 Planted amongst the coppice areas were oaks which were then grown on over 80 to 100 years and periodically pruned to encourage a straight stem and high canopy. These trees were a long term investment and would have been destined for ship building or construction. Oak was also highly valued during the nineteenth century for its bark which was used in the tanning industry.



**Bundle planted beech that was never thinned out**



**A hornbeam coppice stool**



Tree to be coppiced

Cut close to base in winter

Shoots rapidly regrow from stool the following spring

Coppice ready for harvest between 10-20 years

### The coppice cycle



**1910 -1915 low earth bank to the left which divides coppice compartments**



**Some large hornbeam stools in 1904, coppiced around 10-15 years before.**



Tree to be pollarded

Tree cut to a height which grazing animals can't reach

### **Pollarding**

### **The Tree Resource Today**

- 3.3 There are a diverse range of woodland types in Britain. Highgate Wood is typical of the oak and hornbeam woodlands particular to Middlesex, Southern Hertfordshire and West Essex.
- 3.4 Wild Service Trees (*Sorbus torminalis*), a rare native tree and indicator of ancient woodland, are found in the Wood. A few large individual beeches (*Fagus sylvatica*) occur and are the oldest trees with some more than 250 years old. There are many more beech of various age from seedlings to early mature.
- 3.5 Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) is most common in the shrub layer and natural regeneration is controlled.



**Oak and hornbeam with holly understorey**



**Dead wood retained in situ**

### **Veteran Trees**

- 3.6 The oldest trees in the woodland are the many old lapsed coppice hornbeams, some of which could possibly be over three hundred years old. There are also a number of veteran status birch and rowan trees all of which provide excellent conservation value due to their plentiful decay pockets and exposed heartwood. There are a number of oaks within the woodland that would qualify as veteran trees through more for their form than their age. As well as being of historic and cultural value veteran trees are particularly important for providing valuable habitat for a number of species that have specific associations with older trees

### **Dead wood**

- 3.7 Dead wood habitat is retained whenever possible and particular effort is made to retain standing dead trees or part of the main structure as this provides a wide variety of micro habitats for colonisation by a range of species from fungi to bats. These columns of dead wood are known as monoliths and realise their best potential in sunny, well lit areas where they will be favoured by invertebrates.



## 4 Built Fabric

### Listed Buildings/Features

- 4.1 There is one listed feature in Highgate Wood – a Grade II listed drinking fountain located in the north of the Wood and dating to 1888. It is a picturesquely sited example of a public drinking fountain, erected shortly after the opening of Highgate Woods as a public open space. The obelisk is made of Pink Peterhead granite with chamfered angles, over a broad basin, carried on a square plinth standing on an octagonal base; the lower elements are of grey granite. Within the plinth is a narrow dog trough.
- 4.2 The west side of the obelisk has a bronze plaque with the inscription 'The Gift of a few Friends. Erected 1888'. Below, on the same side, is a second plaque bearing an inscription from Coleridge who had strong connections with Highgate, living there from 1816 until his death in 1834: 'Drink, Pilgrim, here! Here rest! And if thy heart / Be innocent, here too shalt thou refresh / Thy spirit, listening to some gentle sound / Or passing gale or hum of murmuring bees!'



**The Fountain**

### Lodges

- 4.3 There are six staff lodges within Highgate Wood (refer to Figure 4.1):
- Nos. 1 and 2 Sheppard Cottages (there is also a store shed located next to Sheppard Cottages)
  - Nos. 1 and 2 Coronation Cottages
  - Hornbeam Cottage
  - The Lodge
- 4.4 The Lodge was built in 1886 designed by the English architect Sir Horace Jones who also designed Leadenhall Market and Old Billingsgate Market. It is built in mock Tudor style popular at the time and was traditionally the home of Highgate Wood's Head Keeper. The Coronation and Hornbeam Cottages were built in the 1950s and the Sheppard Cottages were built in the 1970s.



**The Lodge 1904**



**The Lodge today**

### Café and changing rooms

- 4.5 The café was created in the old cricket pavilion which was built in the 1930s.

### Playground

- 4.6 The playground located on the south western edge of the Wood was modernised in 1990 and covers 2000m<sup>2</sup>.

### Gates

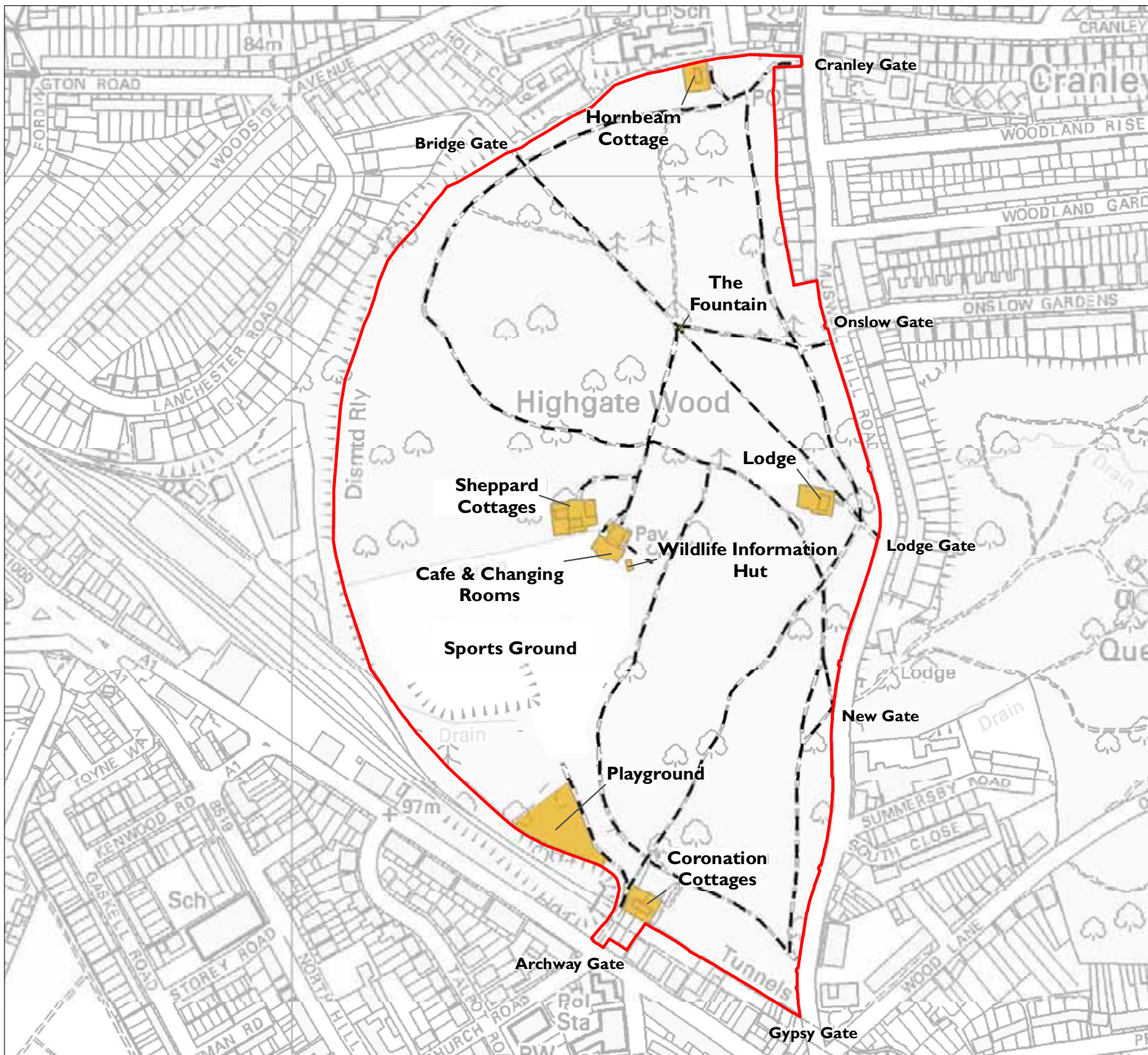
- 4.7 There are seven entrances to Highgate Wood with gates named Gypsy Gate, New Gate, Lodge Gate, Onslow Gate, Cranley Gate, Bridge Gate and Archway Gate. The entrances at Gypsy Gate, Archway Gate and Onslow Gate are recorded on the 1873-76 Map (refer to Appendix 1). An entrance in the Bridge Gate location is also shown but changed slightly with the building of the Alexandra Park Branch. By 1913-15 the entrances at Cranley Gate, Lodge Gate, New Gate and bridge gate are also recorded.
- 4.8 Today the entrance gates to Highgate Wood are of modern design.



**Gypsy Gate – recalls the pub named the Gypsy which closed in 1907 however the building still stands.**



**Modern entrance gates**

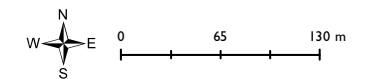


## Highgate Wood

Figure 4.1 Built Fabric

### Key

- Present day boundary
- Current path network



1:3,500 at A3

Source: Land Use Consultants

Date: 24/10/2011

Revision: A







## 5 Archaeology

- 5.1 The area around Highgate Wood is 'not rich in well provenanced archaeological material, although some notable finds have been made.'<sup>12</sup>

### Romano-British Pottery Factory

- 5.2 The most significant discovery in the Highgate Wood area is the Romano-British Pottery site located at the northern end of the wood (refer to Figure 5.1). The site was excavated in the 1960s and 70s and appears to have been used seasonally and intermittently until circa AD16013. The pottery site was established shortly after the Roman conquest to supply London 'Londinium' and the south east with table ware and notably 'poppy head' beakers. The kilns were surrounded by ditched enclosures interpreted as water management features and a number of clay extraction pits<sup>14</sup>. A second potential Roman kiln is evidenced in a surface scatter of pottery, located to the south of the main kiln. As of 2006 this is the only known Roman pottery site in Greater London, some of the finds are exhibited in the Museum of London.

### Earthworks

- 5.3 An topographical Survey of Highgate Wood was carried out in 1998 by the Museum of London Archaeological Service (MOLAS). The survey delineated and modelled the principle physical characteristics of two earthwork features (a double bank and triple ditch earthwork and a single bank and ditch earthwork) and the surrounding topography. The two earthworks lie towards the north eastern end of a ridge that runs from Hampstead to Muswell Hill.
- 5.4 The survey mapped the earthwork features and provisionally recorded them as probably medieval or earlier with few parallels in north London. The function of the earthworks was not ascertained as part of the survey and it was suggested further work may elucidate the date and function of the earthworks and increase their significance at a 'rural level.'



**The pottery site on high ground**



**The earthwork at the western edge of the Wood**

<sup>12</sup> Museum of London Archaeological Survey (1998) Highgate Wood An Archaeological Earthwork Survey

<sup>13</sup> Museum of London Archaeological Survey (1998) Highgate Wood An Archaeological Earthwork Survey






<sup>14</sup> Brown and Sheldon London Archaeologist Vol 1 pg 38-44 150-154 300-303, Vol 2 pg 222-231 in Museum of London Archaeological Survey (1998) Highgate Wood An Archaeological Earthwork Survey

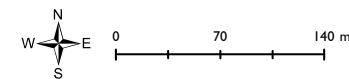


# Highgate Wood Heritage Assessment

Figure 5.1: Archaeology

## Key

-  Highgate Wood site boundary
-  Ancient earthwork
-  Site of ancient pottery kilns AD 50-150
-  Wood bank
-  Current path network



Source: Land Use Consultants

Date: 24/10/2011  
Revision: B





## 6 Historic Map Regression

- 6.1 A series of historic maps overlaid with present day base mapping are shown in Appendix 1 and interpreted below. The Ordnance Survey (OS) maps dating from the late 1800s to the present day show more detail of the Wood and its context. Using these OS maps a series of figures showing how the Wood has changed (including changes to the boundary and footpaths and addition of built features) have been developed. They are presented in Figure 6.1 and interpreted below.
- 6.2 Rocque's 1754 Map of Middlesex (Refer to Appendix 1) clearly shows the extent of Highgate Wood located in a rural farmland landscape north of Highgate Village. The Muswell Hill Road (medieval) defines the eastern extent of the Wood and the south western extent of the Wood is also defined by a road (North Hill). The extent of the Wood is greater to the south, west and north than it is today. The scale of the map is too large to show detail within the Wood. However the Rocque Map indicates that the Highgate Wood playing field was not created when the wood became a public park and has been a field for many centuries. Refer also to the Hornsey Map of 1600 which also show this area as open with a ride through woodland to the south. Note also the rural context of woodland commons and fields with Highgate recorded as having a school and chapel.
- 6.3 Greenwood's 1819 Map of Middlesex (Refer to Appendix 1) shows the reduced extent of the Wood, a result of the construction of the Archway Road built in 1813 which cut off the southern part of the Wood. The Greenwood Map 1819 shows clearly the ride between two sections of wood to the south of the field. This still partly survives in the wood today pointing towards what is now the Archway Road Gate. The ride follows the line which would have connected the wood to the site of the Gillow's Brewery on North Hill. Gillow owned the Wood in the 18th century when it was known as Brewhouse Wood.<sup>15</sup> As described in Chapter 2 the partitioned segment of the Wood between North Hill and Archway Road survived as woodland until the 1860s before it was developed.
- 6.4 The 1873-1876 Map (Refer to Appendix 1) records the Wood's name as Gravelpit Wood. To the east Queen's Wood is shown as Churchyard Bottom Wood. The Great Northern Railway (Edgware, Highgate and London Line) runs to the south of the Wood. The company which built the railway line was established by a private act of parliament passed on 3 June 1862. The route ran through parts of rural Middlesex from Finsbury Park, through Crouch End and Highgate to Edgware. Before it opened as a single line track in 1867 it was purchased by the Great Northern Railway. The extensive use of cuttings particularly around Highgate Station is notable. Highgate and Muswell Hill are still relatively undeveloped settlements to the north and south. Figure 6.1 shows the path network through the Wood at this time which is functional and direct connecting east to west and north to south. There are 6 points of entry to the Wood and the total length of paths/ routes through the Wood is 2.04 km. The ride between two sections of woodland in the south is shown and there is a pond on the eastern edge of the playing field. The Wood extends beyond the present day boundary to the north and south.
- 6.5 Additional acts in 1864 and 1866 granted powers to construct branch lines from Highgate to Muswell Hill to coincide with the opening of Alexandra Palace. The 1896 Map shows the Muswell Hill branch from Highgate to Alexandra Park cutting across the western edge of the Wood, severing the western extent of the Wood (name retained as Gravelpit Wood) from the main body of Highgate Wood (so-called in 1896). By this time the village of Highgate has expanded and is more densely developed. Some housing has been built to the north of the Wood (Woodside Avenue) and to the east (including Onslow Gardens). The rural landscape is diminishing and suburban development encroaching. The 1896 Map shows a different circulation through the wood from that shown in 1873. The paths connect and form loops, allowing circular walks around the Wood (total path/route length 2.94 km). This reflects acquisition of Highgate Wood by The Corporation of London in 1888 and management of the Wood for public use and enjoyment. A straight avenue crossing the top portion of the Wood diagonally north-west to south east is

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<sup>15</sup> Hammerson (2009) Historic Highgate Wood a self-guided walk


prominent. There are 4 entrances to the Wood, one on the western edge has been lost due to the branch line construction and one has been bridged. There has been loss of one entrance along Muswell Hill Road since 1873-6 and two remaining entrances are in different locations. The Lodge (west of Lodge Gate and Muswell Hill Road) built in 1886 is shown however the pond to the east of the playing field is no longer present.

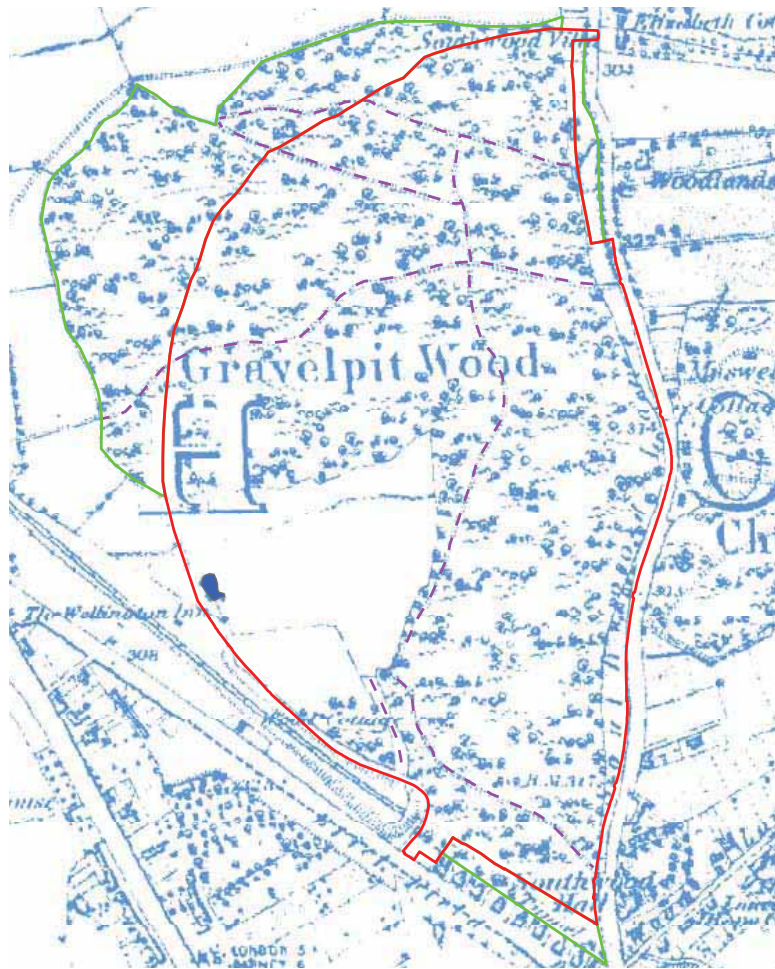
- 6.6 The map of 1913-15 shows a record of the Wood after 25 years ownership by the The Corporation of London. Since 1896, Lanchester Road has been constructed through Gravel Pit Wood to the west of the Alexandra Park Branch railway line. By the time the Lanchester Road area had been developed for housing, close to 50 acres of the original early nineteenth century footprint of 120 acres had been lost to development. The drinking fountain (constructed 1888) is shown halfway along the straight diagonal avenue in a central position. The Lodge is shown as well as the pavilion building to the south east of the sports field which no longer stands. A small building is also shown in woodland to the north east of the sports field. Three fenced woodland compartments are shown. The square compartment in the north west relates to the current bird sanctuary 'The Hollies'. Terraced and semi-detached housing has been built along Muswell Hill Road to the eastern edge of the Wood (north of the Onslow Gate entrance). To the south of the new housing the Wood has been planted and extended to meet Muswell Hill Road and a number of coniferous trees are shown in this location. The path network has extended to cover 6.45 km with 7 entrances (refer to Figure 6.1). The increase in paths by approximately 4.41km since 1873-76 reflects the management of the Wood as public park.
- 6.7 By 1935 properties have been developed either side of Lanchester Road and Gravel Pit Wood (already detached from Highgate Wood) has been all but lost, a sliver remains to the south. A slightly larger building footprint is shown to the north east of the sports field with a change in the path network to make it more accessible. The pavilion building to the south east of the sports field is no longer recorded. The path to the north west of and connecting to the sports field has been lost (shown in 1913). These changes explain the slight reduction in paths across the Wood to 6.13 km (refer to Figure 6.1). All 7 entrances remain however the ride to the south of the sports field appears to have been narrowed between 1913 and 1935.
- 6.8 The 1952 map shows a new cricket pavilion building in the north east corner of the sports field, this is the current cafe and was built in the late 1930s. The building to the north, of here in woodland remains. The open area is shown as a 'sports ground' and a drain runs along its northern edge. Some grading of the landform has taken place in the south of the sports ground and a drain is also present here. The square fenced compartment in the north west of the Wood persists (shown in 1913) but the location of two other fenced areas has changed and they are located further south in the Wood. The path network remains largely similar; however 5 segments of path have been removed to the north of the sports ground, adding to the one removed in 1935. This explains a further reduction in the total length of paths through the Wood to 5.22 km. The 1952 boundary of the Wood is as it is today.
- 6.9 The Alexandra Park station closed in 1954 and the disused railway line is now wooded with no public access. Today, in addition to the Lodge (built 1886) and Cafe (built late 1930s) there are Keeper's Cottages to the west of the Pavilion (Sheppard Cottages built in the 1970s) at the Archway Gate entrance (Coronation Cottages) and on the northern edge of the Wood (Hornbeam Cottage). There is also a wildlife information Hut to the south east of the Cafe. There are still 7 entrances to the Wood but since 1952 the path network has been rationalised (total path length of 3.81 km) particularly in the north of the Wood (refer to Figure 6.1). This has allowed larger expanses of woodland with less fragmentation by hard surface paths. Small areas of woodland are fenced off to allow coppicing and regeneration.

# Highgate Wood

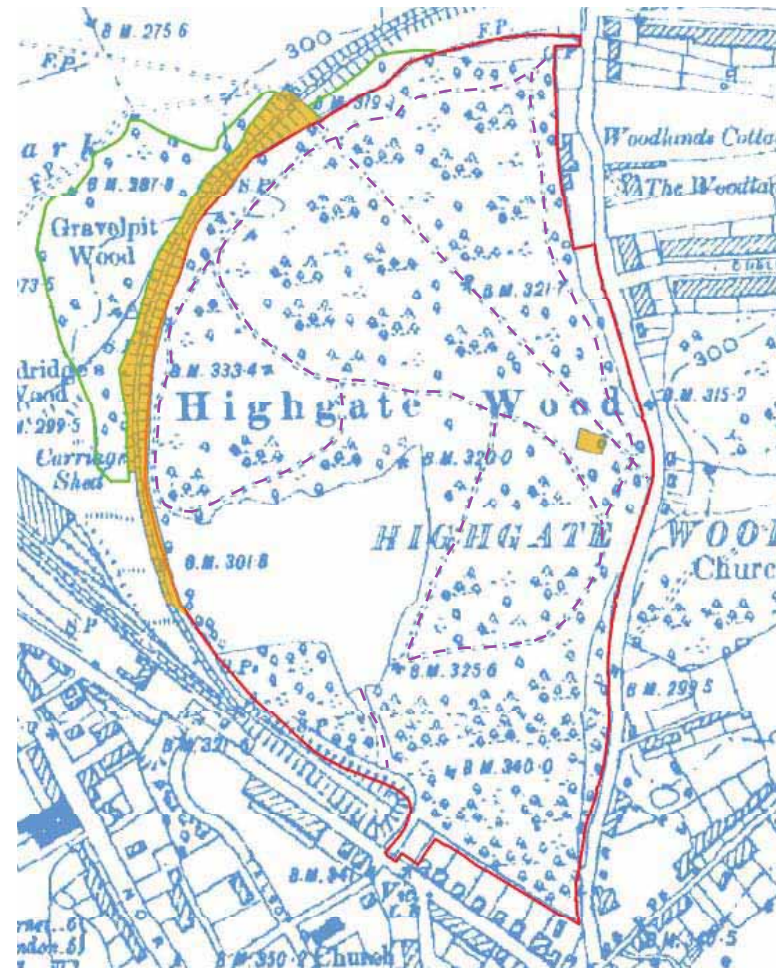
Figure 6.1  
Historic Map Analysis

Key

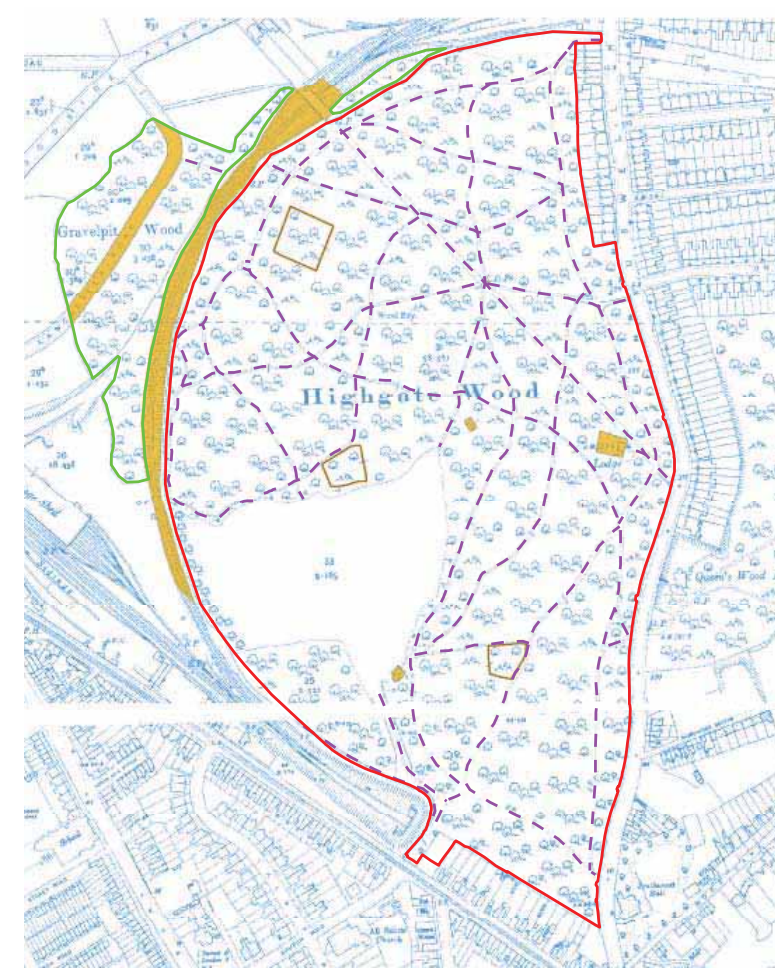
-  Present day boundary
-  Historic boundary
-  Built feature
-  Enclosure
-  Pond
-  Footpaths / routes



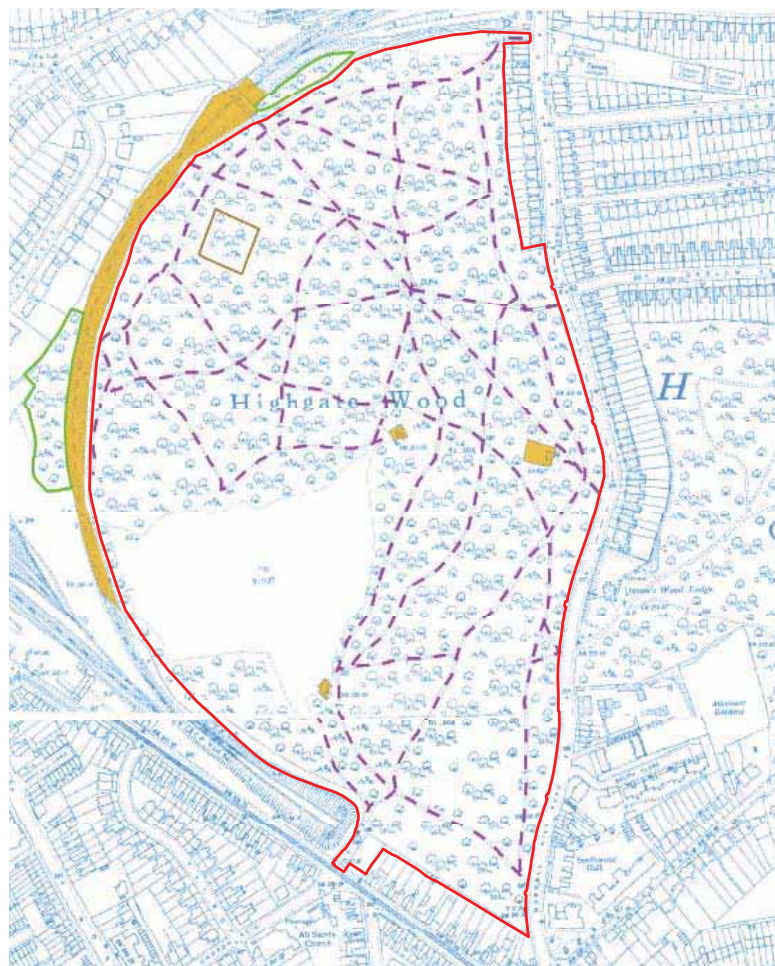
1873-76 Total path/ route length = 2.04 km



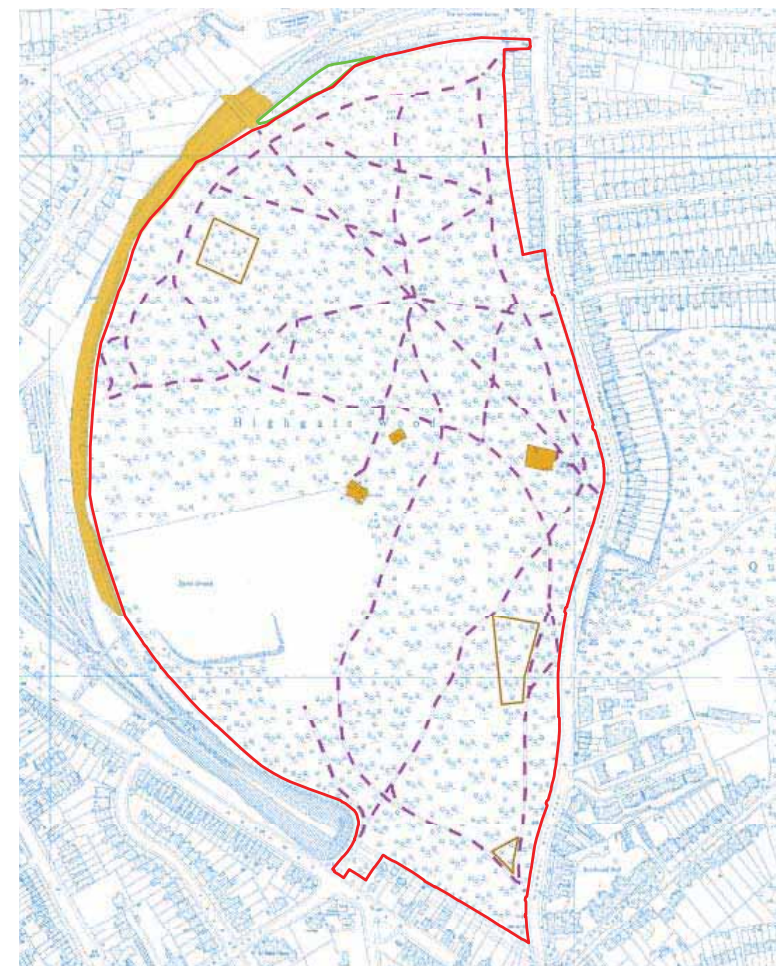
1896 Total path/ route length = 2.94 km



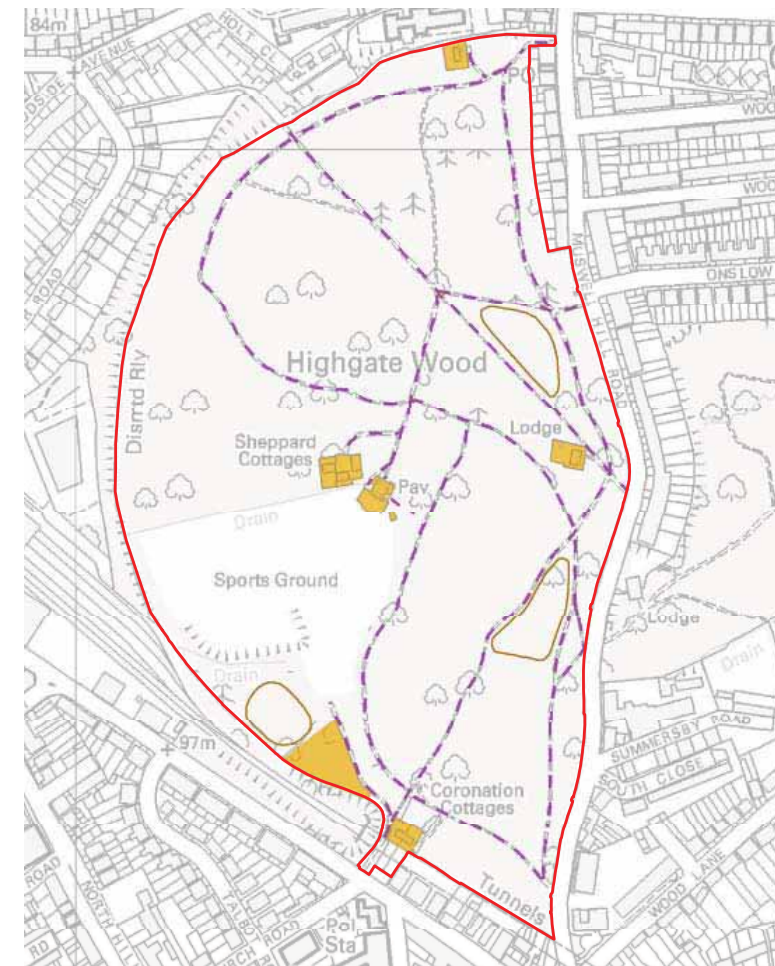
1913-1915 Total path/ route length = 6.45 km



1935 Total path/ route length = 6.13km



1952 Total path/ route length = 5.22 km



Present day Total path/ route length = 3.81 km





## 7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The ancient woodland of Highgate Wood has a rich history having been influenced and shaped by thousands of years of human management and intervention. The tree resource managed, as coppice with standards, has been used to fuel kilns to produce Roman pottery, to provide a habitat for deer as part of a wider medieval Hunting Park, to supply timber for warships and to provide charcoal to fuel the growth of London.
- 7.2 Once part of a vast extent of swamps and forest and then a rural agricultural landscape, the Wood is now surrounded by the sprawl of London's suburbia and is part of a number of fragments of ancient woodland which provide a reminder of a past landscape.
- 7.3 The Wood was saved from development in the late 1800s and acquired by the Corporation of London. At this time coppicing ceased and the Wood was formally managed as a park to serve the expanding suburbs. Today it is a much valued greenspace in London's inner suburbs. Its management is changing to focus on maintaining and improving the Wood as a habitat for wildlife and to ensure the layers of history still evident in the Wood are protected for generations to come.

### Further research

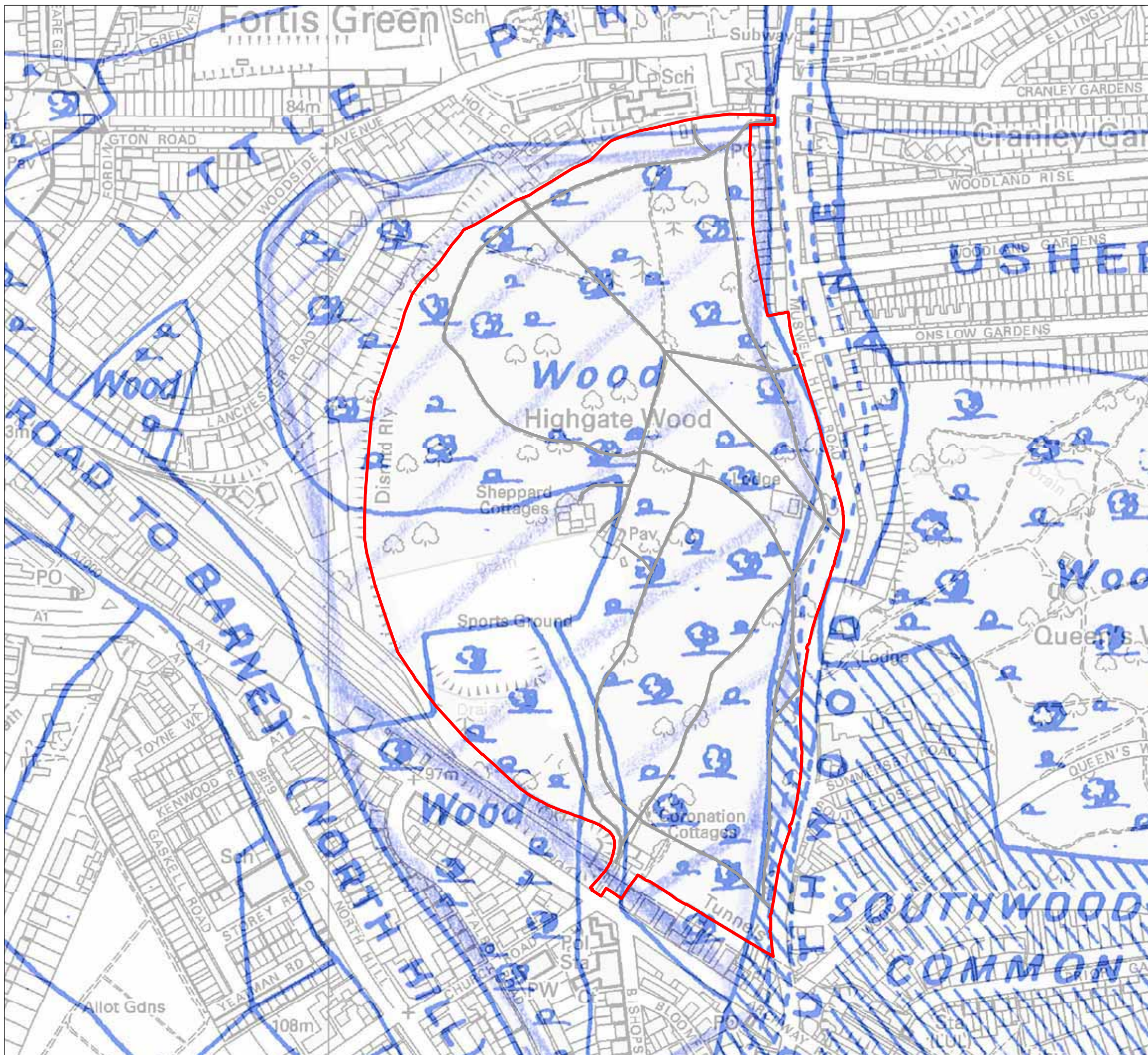
- 7.4 A workshop was held in September 2011 as part of the Highgate Wood Conservation Management Plan process. The following areas for further survey and research were suggested to enable a more thorough understanding of Highgate Wood:
  - Detailed contour survey of the whole wood to reveal early coppice compartments.
  - Pollen survey if conditions are suitable.
  - Desk top research on the Bishop of London.
  - Review of Wartime archives.
  - Interview staff regarding 20th century management.
  - Trial excavations of the earthwork.



# Appendix I

## Historic Maps



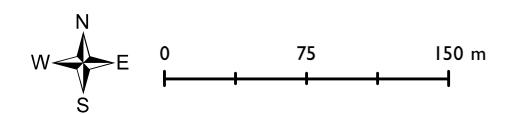


## Highgate Wood

Historic map - 1600 (Hornsey)

### Key

- Highgate Wood site boundary
- Current path network



1:4,000 at A3

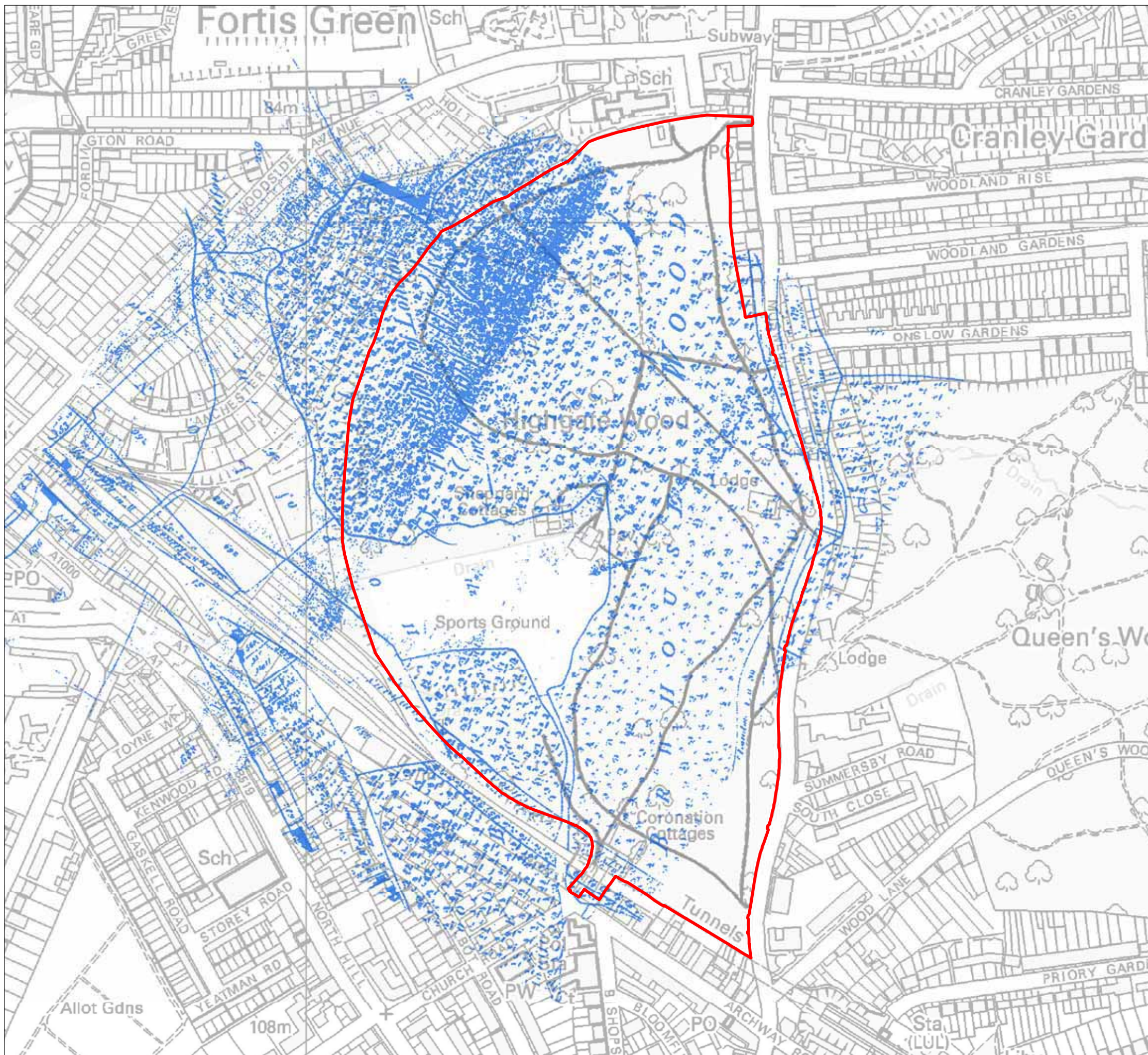
Source: Land Use Consultants

Date: 24/10/2011

Revision: A





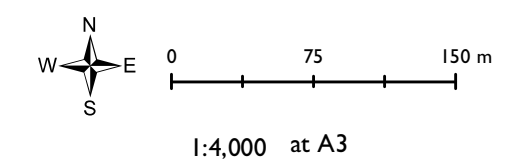


## Highgate Wood

Historic map - 1815 (Hornsey Enclosure Map)

### Key

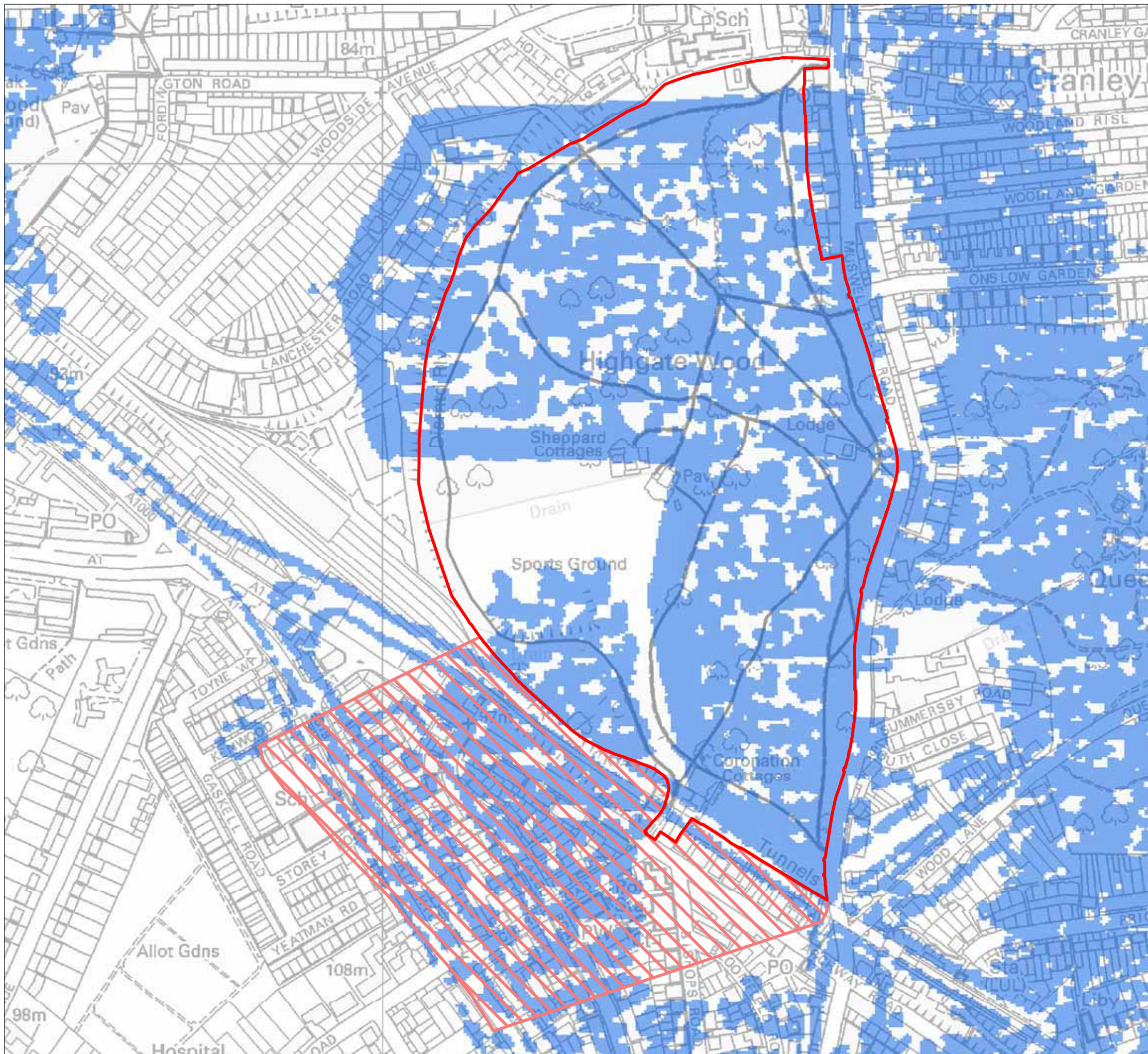
- Highgate Wood site boundary
- Current path network



Source: Land Use Consultants

Date: 24/10/2011  
Revision: A






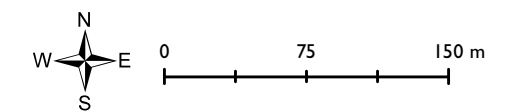


# Highgate Wood

## Historic map - 1819 (Greenwood)

### Key

-  Highgate Wood site boundary
-  Current path network
-  Approx area of woodland cut off as a result of construction of Archway Road built 1813 (11ha)



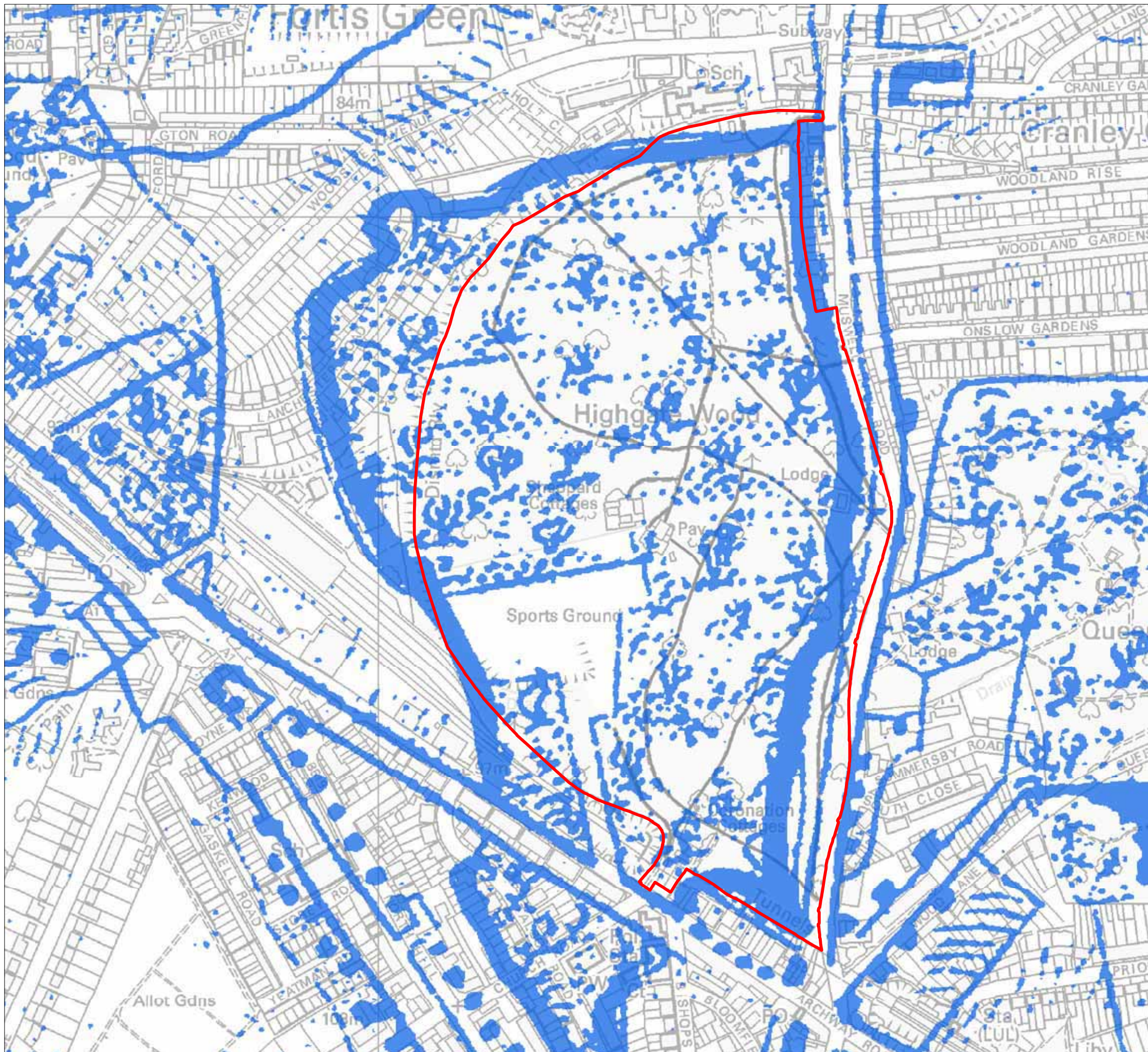
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Source: Land Use Consultants

Date: 23/05/2012  
Revision: A





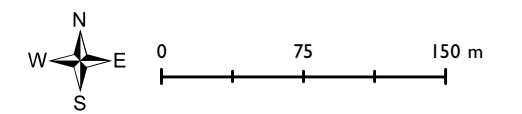


## Highgate Wood

Historic map - 1822

### Key

- Highgate Wood site boundary
- Current path network

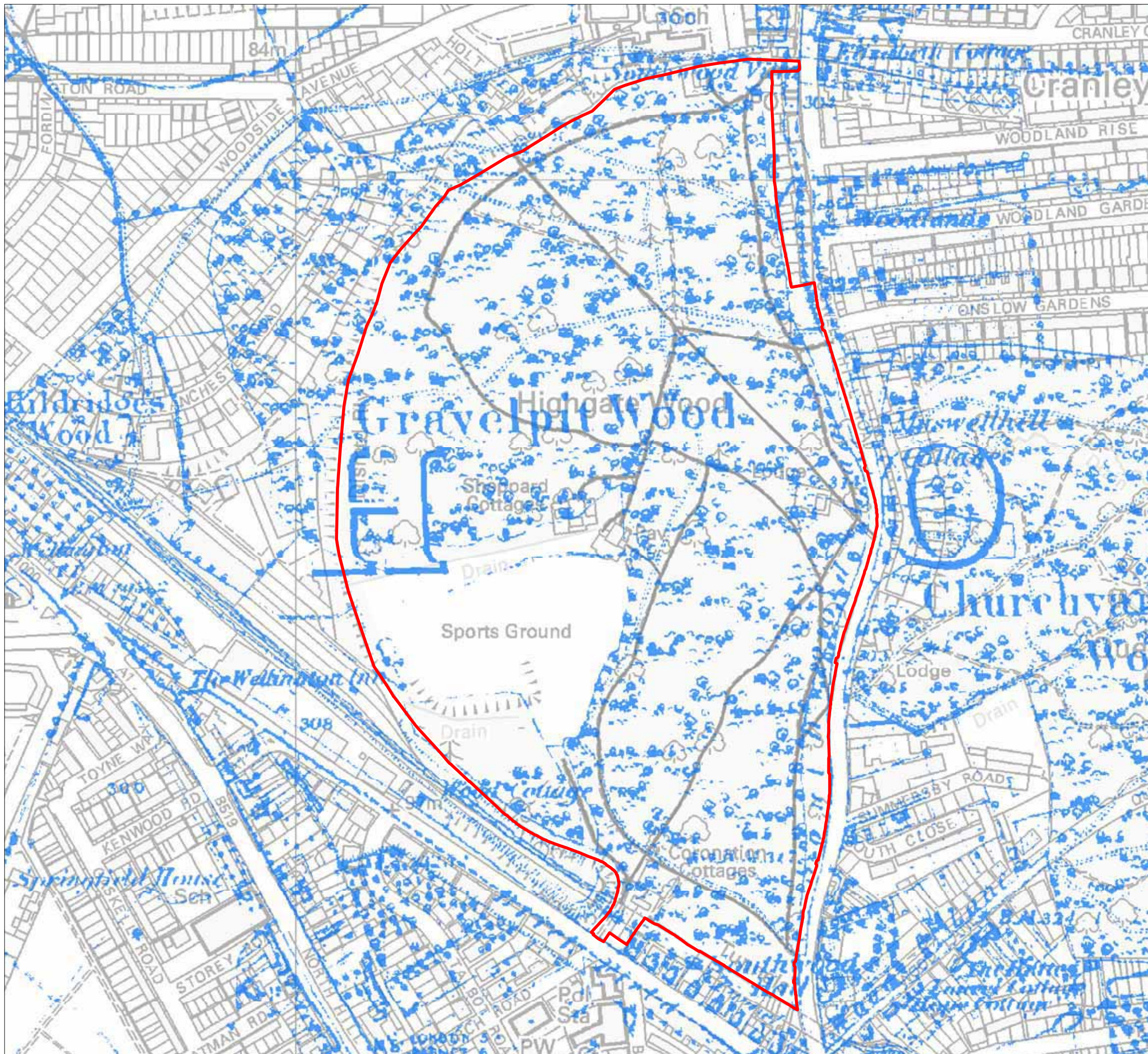


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Source: Land Use Consultants

Date: 24/10/2011  
Revision: A



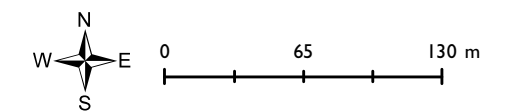


## Highgate Wood

Historic map - 1873-76

### Key

- Highgate Wood site boundary
- Current path network



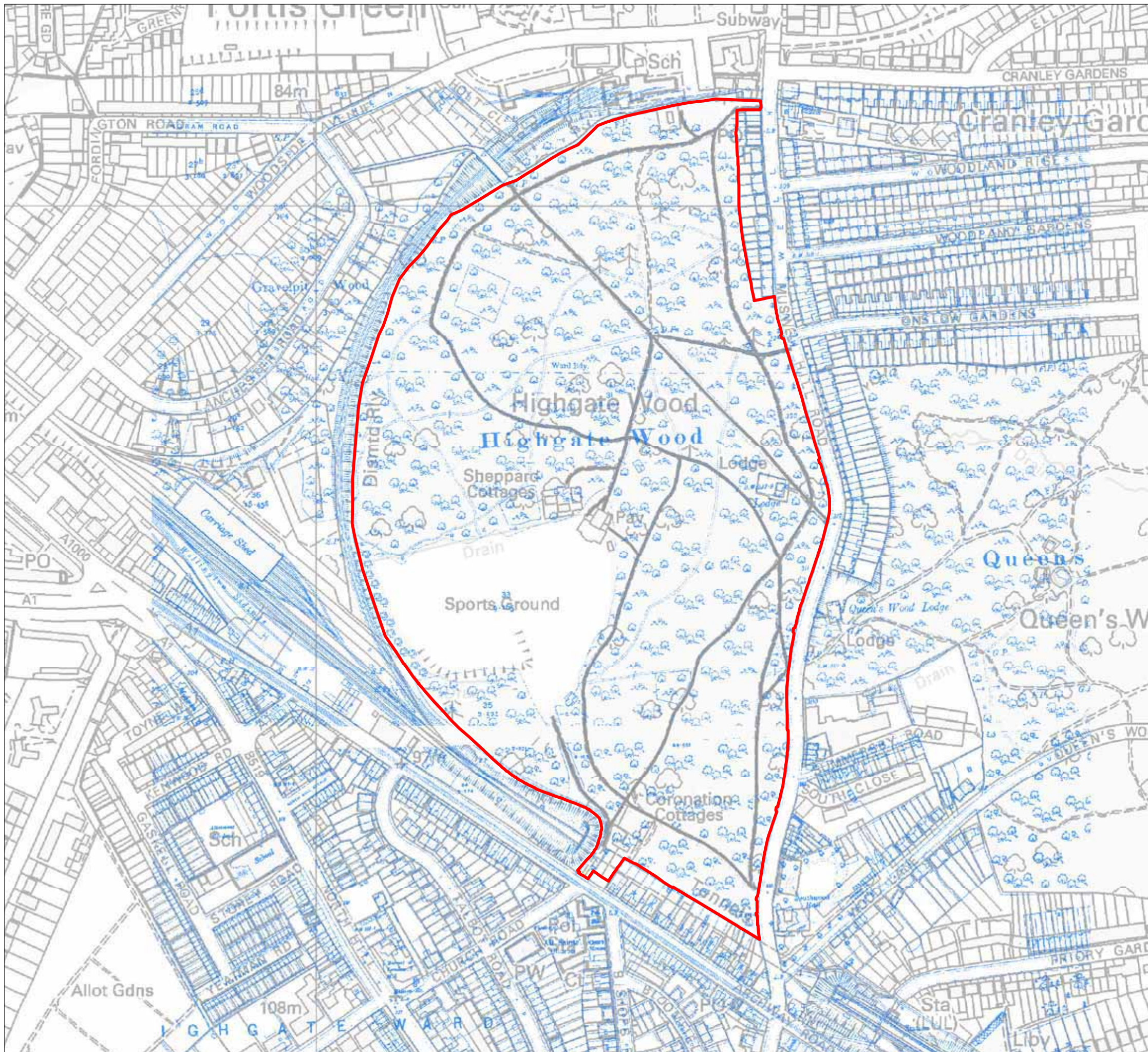
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Date: 24/10/2011  
Revision: A





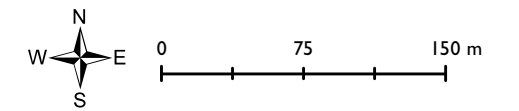


## Highgate Wood

Historic map - 1913-15

### Key

- Highgate Wood site boundary
- Current path network

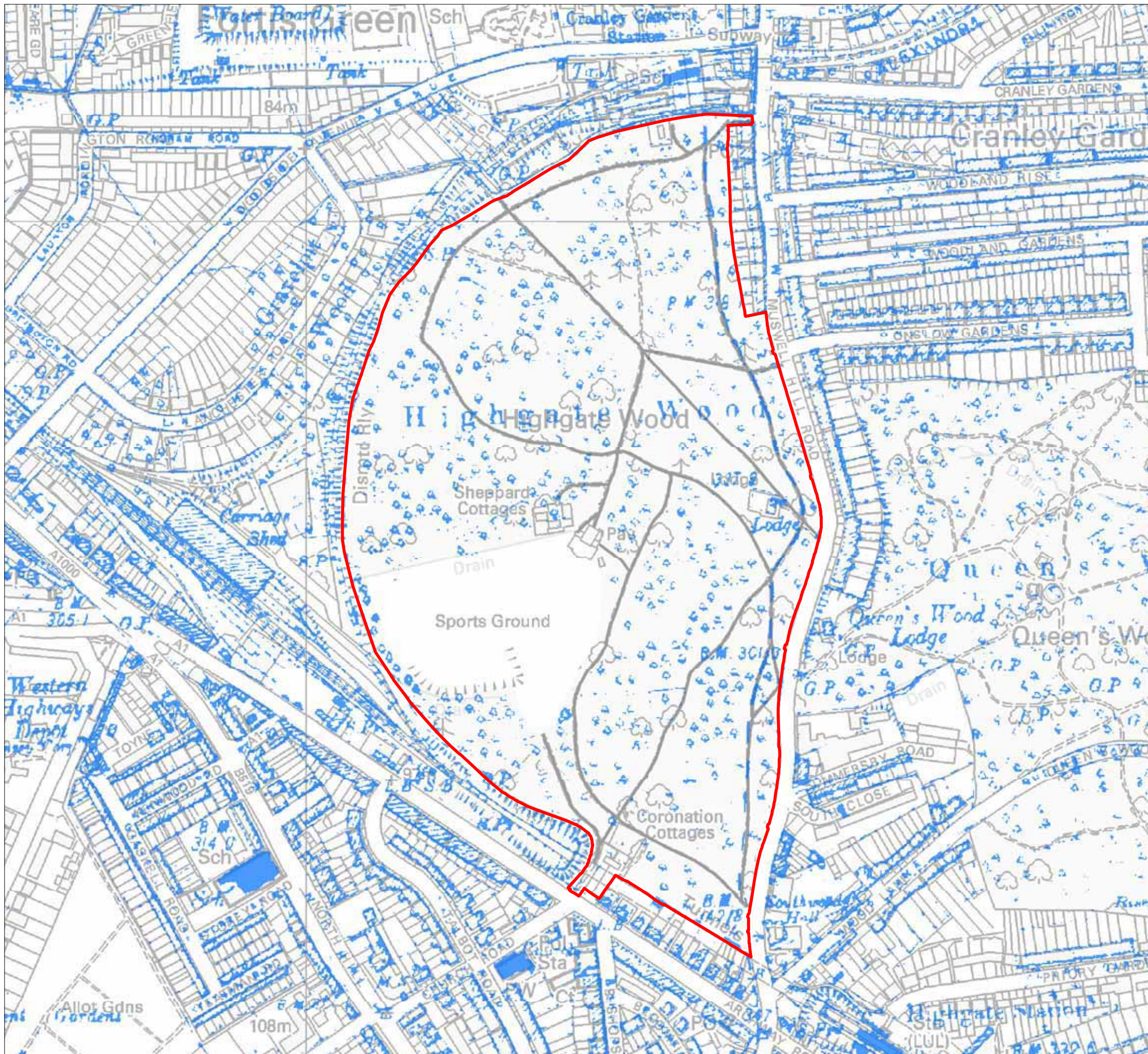


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Source: Land Use Consultants

Date: 24/10/2011  
Revision: A



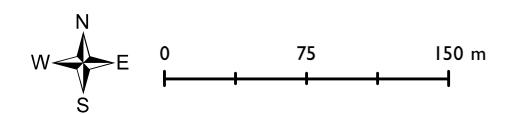


# Highgate Wood

Historic map - 1920

## Key

- Highgate Wood site boundary
- Current path network

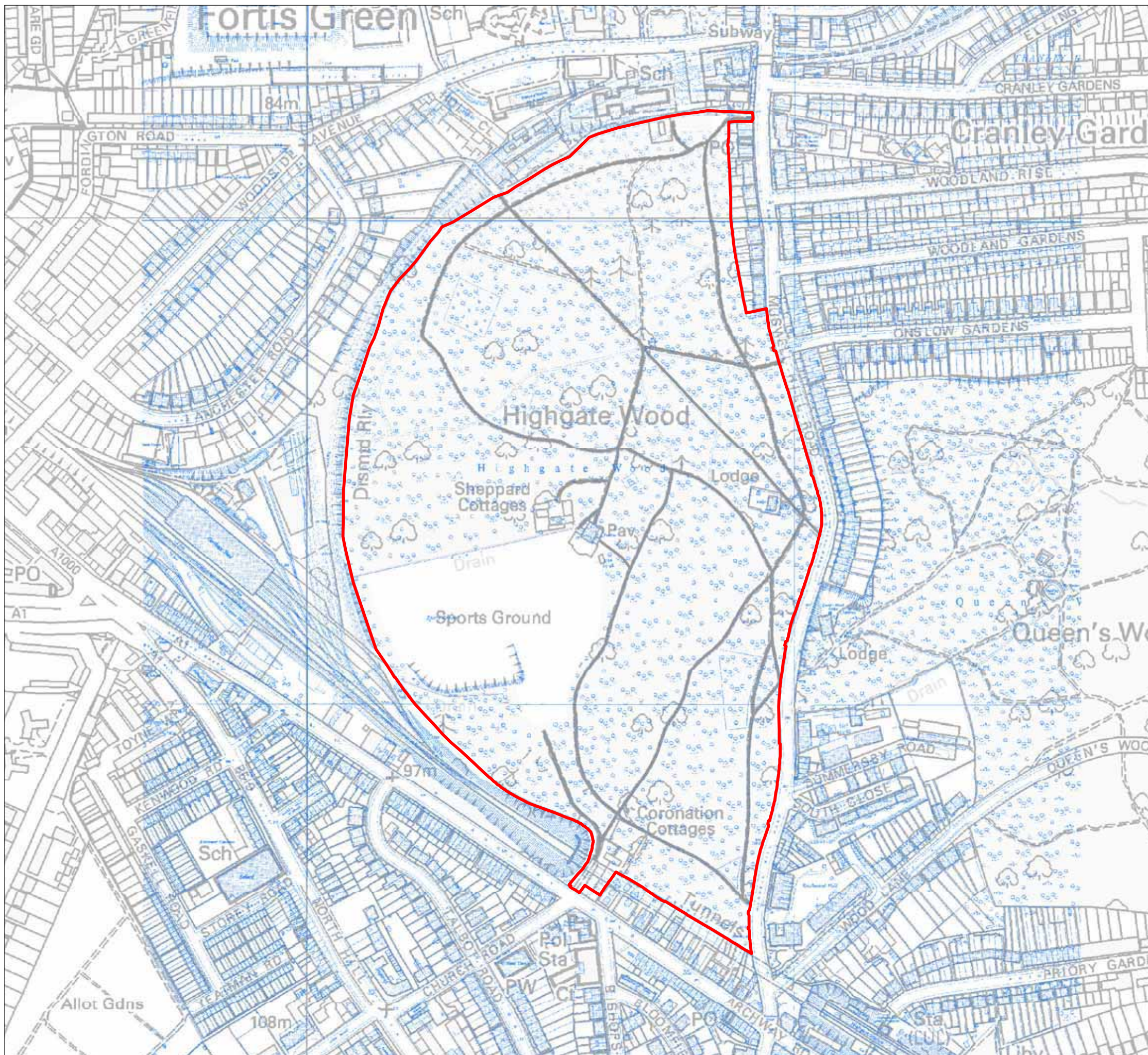


Source: Land Use Consultants

Date: 24/10/2011  
Revision: A





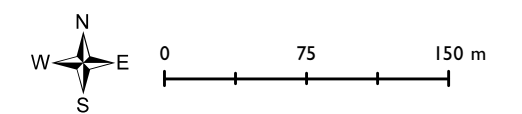


## Highgate Wood

Historic map - 1952

### Key

- Highgate Wood site boundary
- Current path network



1:4,000 at A3

Source: Land Use Consultants

Date: 24/10/2011  
Revision: A

