

4. Gilman Road Bank

Glacial sands and gravels outcrop beside Gilman Road, giving rise to sandy soils. The road was built in the late 19th century, to replace an existing trackway which had given access to the clay and stone pits formerly active on this part of the Heath.

Gilman Road Bank is the best place on the Heath to see the glacial sands and gravels which make up the main body of Mousehold. Three terraced cuttings have been specially made in the bank, allowing us to investigate geological details. They are windows into the world of Ice Age Norfolk, over 430,000 years ago.

By interpreting the sediments, we can see what the environment close to the ice front was like. It was probably an outwash plain with slabs of dead ice, and unstable gravel bodies slumping into pools or streams of meltwater.

These new geological exposures will benefit heathland wildlife favouring dry, sandy soils and open ground. Close by, foxes have made use of an easily excavated sandy layer to locate their 'earth' or burrow.



1. A dead ice pond close to the glacier at Gigjokull, Iceland.



2. The lower cutting – alternating sands and gravels laid down by pulses of glacial meltwater of fluctuating energies.



3. The middle cutting – a body of chaotically- bedded gravels laid down by a debris flow, overlain by bedded sands containing clay seams, marking an episode of quieter deposition, perhaps in a pool or stream bed.



4. The top cutting – bodies of chaotically-bedded gravel alternating with disturbed beds of sand. The gravels are evidence of debris flows which loaded and distorted the beds of sand between them. Interestingly, the sand body at the top shows micro-faulting, where its bedding has been repeatedly sheared by loading from above.

Photo credits

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