

County: Greater London **Site Name:** Abbey Wood

District: Bexley

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authority: London Borough of Bexley

National Grid Reference: TQ 481786 **Area:** 6.3 (ha) 15.7 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 177 **1: 10 000:** TQ 47 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1975 **Date of Last Revision:** -

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987 **Date of Last Revision:** -

Other Information:

A Geological Conservation Review Site. This site was formerly known as Lesnes Abbey Wood.

Reasons for Notification:

Abbey Wood contains some of the most fossiliferous deposits in the Greater London area providing remains of a diverse mammal assemblage of early Tertiary age. The deposits are also important for studies in the evolution of bird faunas.

The site covers deposits of late Palaeocene age (Blackhead (Beds) Formation) including a unique and valuable exposure of the Blackheath Shell Bed approximately 2 metres below ground level. Excavations of these Beds have yielded an important mammalian fauna of 22 species attributable to 12 orders. This is the richest 'Sparnacian' fauna in Britain, comparable to sites in the Paris Basin, and containing elements resembling those of the Wasatchian faunas of North America.

This site also yields remains of one of only two birds described from the Palaeocene of Great Britain. A lower mandible has been reconstructed as the holotype of *Marinavis longirostris*, which is the only bird of this type known from this period. It appears to have been a large Procellariiform sea bird and would seem to indicate a coastal fauna. The site has great potential in that it might help solve the problem of Procellariiform - Pelecaniform ancestry.