

ESLR14



# EDGAR STREET LINK ROAD, HEREFORD: POLICE TRAINING GROUND

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
EHE NO. 80166

commissioned by Balfour Beatty Living Places  
on behalf of Herefordshire Council

January 2018



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## PROJECT SUMMARY

Archaeological works were undertaken by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd within the northern extent of the Essex Arms playing field, Hereford. The project was undertaken in advance of the construction of the Hereford City Link Road and diversion of the Tan Brook through a new culvert. The work uncovered peat deposits some of which were filling a series of meandering channels. Previous work on the site had dated the peat to the Bronze Age and an assessment of plant macro-fossils suggested these deposits could be similar in origin and date to those previously analysed. No further work is recommended on the site or material recovered from it.

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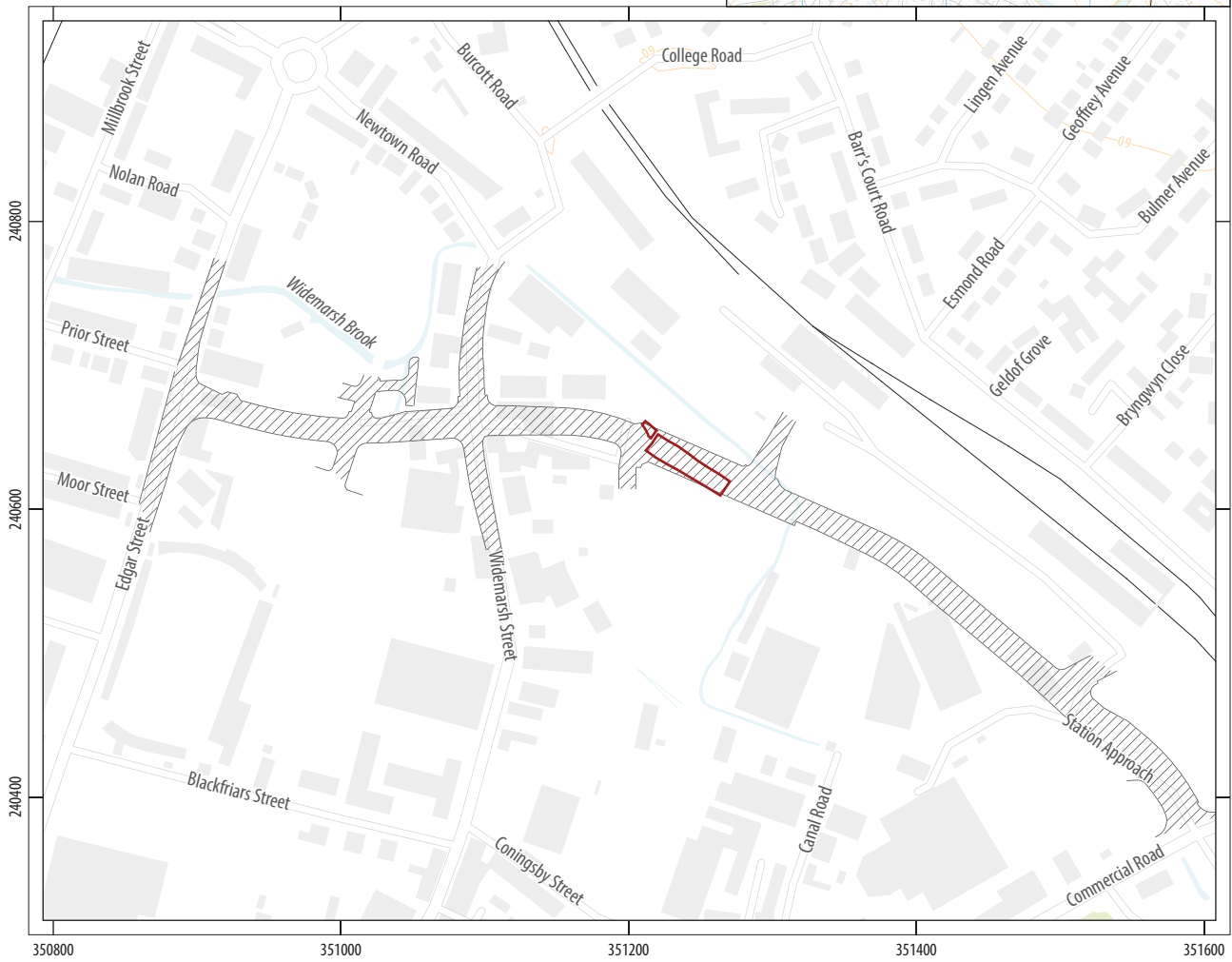
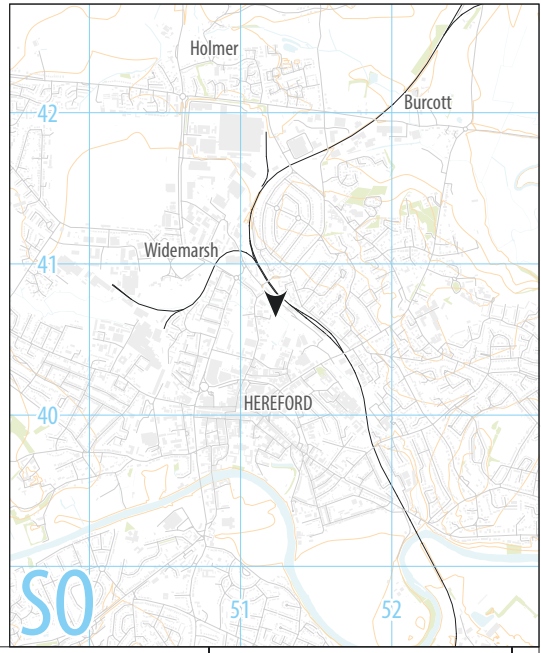
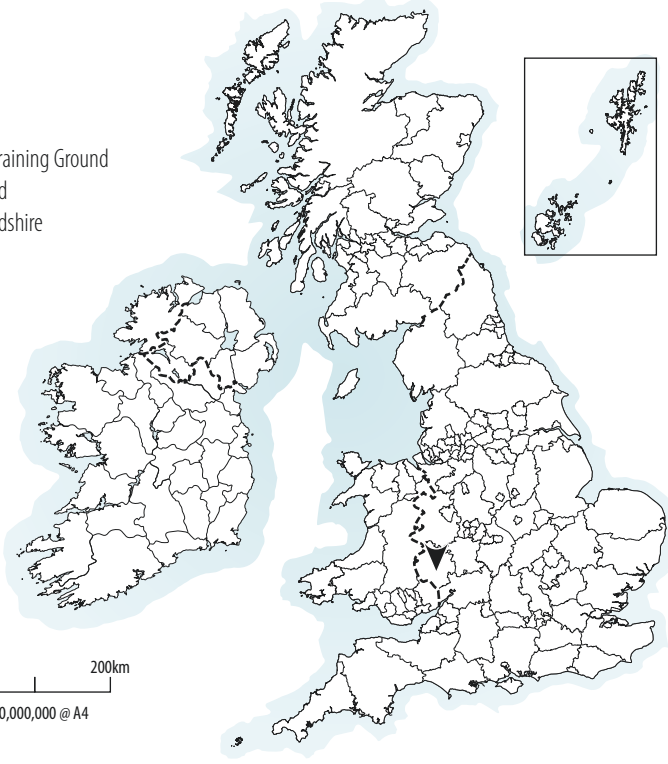
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Police Training Ground  
Hereford  
Herefordshire

0 200km  
1:10,000,000 @ A4



0 100m  
1:5,000 @ A4

 excavation boundary  
 new road (Hereford City Link Road)



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ILLUS 1 Site location



# EDGAR STREET LINK ROAD, HEREFORD: POLICE TRAINING GROUND

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by Balfour Beatty to undertake an archaeological evaluation within the Essex Arms playing field. The playing field is used by West Mercia Police as a training ground. The northern part of the field is situated on the route of a proposed new road running from Edgar Street, through Merton Meadow, across Widemarsh Street and the Police training area, and finishing at Commercial Road.

The archaeological advisor to the planning authority (Mr Julian Cotton) identified that the location was likely to contain archaeological remains that could be adversely affected by the proposed works, and requested the implementation of a programme of works so that any significant remains present and at risk of harm could be suitably recorded or avoided. The advisor's requirements have been encapsulated within Herefordshire Archaeology's brief (ref b092576s2) and the Headland Archaeology Written Scheme of Investigation (Kimber 2014).

#### 1.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The location of the new road lies to the north of the historic core of Hereford City (Illus 1). It is located within an area called Widemarsh and comprises low lying deposits that have been subject to peat formation at various times in the past.

The excavated site is situated on the old Police Training Ground (SO 51245 40628) and is bounded to the west by the back of properties fronting Widemarsh Street, to the north and east by Widemarsh Brook, and to the south by the Tan Brook. It is currently open grass land, formerly playing fields.

The geology of the site consists of siltstones and mudstone of the Raglan Mudstone Formation, overlain by Alluvium (NERC 2017).

#### 1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Previous excavation of fifteen trenches on the site did not reveal any indication of human occupation on the site other than late post-medieval and more recent tipping behind properties fronting Widemarsh Street. The site did, however, contain a sequence of two distinct peat deposits. The pollen and radiocarbon analysis on samples from the earliest of these suggested that an open landscape was established on the site by the middle Bronze Age (Crooks, Rouse and Boucher 2008).

#### 1.3 AIMS

In general, the purpose of the investigation was to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage assets before they are lost. This was achieved by determining and understanding the nature, function and character of any remains on the sites, disseminating the results of that work and archiving the material and paper records.

The objectives of the archaeological works are as follows:

- › to establish whether there is any human activity associated with the edges of the ancient peat bog located during previous phases of work.

### 2 METHOD

The working area was fenced off in order to control access.

In line with the Herefordshire Council Brief and Headland Archaeology WSI an area of 60m x 12m was excavated (Illus 2). The excavated area had 2m bulks left between stripped areas measuring 5m x 12m to allow any potential waterlogging of the site to be managed and



ILLUS 2 Plan of excavated areas showing location of peat deposits

assist in recording sections through deposits (Illus 3). At the south-eastern end of the site, where a sewer pipe ran across the exposed area, two smaller areas (Trenches 2 and 3) were opened up to make the most of the space unaffected by the cut for the modern pipe. An additional area (Trench 8) measuring 9m x 6m was excavated to the north-west where a culvert is going to be placed.

Overburden and subsoil were removed by a tracked 360° mechanical excavator, fitted with a flat-bladed ditching bucket. All machine stripping was carried out under close archaeological supervision and ceased when the upper surfaces of archaeological features/deposits were encountered.

Overburden was stored separately from the peat, adjacent to (but at a safe distant from) the sides of the excavation area.

All machinery was kept off the stripped areas until they were fully excavated archived recorded according to the specification approved by the archaeological advisor.

Excavations that extended below a metre in depth were stepped in at intervals of 1m from the excavation edges.

Following completion of the site strip, a meeting was convened between Headland Archaeology, the client (Hereford Council) and Balfour Beatty (the consultant) in order to define the most appropriate sampling and recording strategy.

A team of two archaeologists excavated and recorded the site from 14th October 2015 – 20th October 2015.

No features were encountered, as such the methodological approach for these outlined in the WSI (Kimber 2014) was not required.

Sampling took place after a site meeting with the project manager and archaeological advisor in order to gain a greater understanding of the peat formation on the site and to provide an insight into the landscape from which it derived.



**ILLUS 3** General view showing excavation methodology

### 3 RESULTS

The locations of monitored areas and sample sections (Illus 4 and 5) through deposits are provided in Illus 2. Full context descriptions are presented in Appendix 1.

The earliest deposit exposed was a loose, light yellow-pink glacial gravel (1007). The upper level of this deposit was recorded at between 0.60m and 0.85m below ground level (BGL), becoming deeper to the south-east. At the far south-east end of the site, the earliest deposit comprised a mid-grey/blue gravelly clay (1006) recorded at a level of 0.86m BGL.

Above the geological deposits was a layer of organically rich material, possibly peat (1005). It was a very dark brown deposit containing roots, recorded between 0.72 – 0.86m BGL. Above this was another slightly darker organic rich deposit (1004), possibly a later peat bog containing the remains of roots, this measured between 0.40 – 0.72m BGL.

Overlying the organic rich deposits were two layers of alluvial clay; Deposit (1003) comprising a light blue-grey clay with some bioturbation and rooting throughout had a diffuse relationship with the earlier deposit (1004) between 0.35 and 0.40m BGL. The later alluvial deposit was (1002), a light brown-pink clay with infrequent flecks of charcoal, this was present between 0.24 – 0.35m BGL.

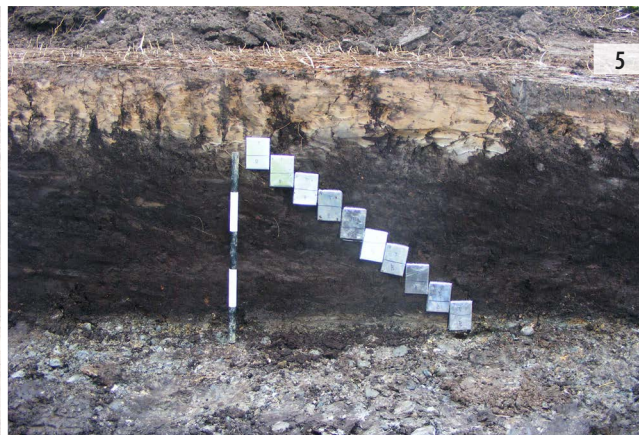
The subsoil (1001) was a mid-grey/brown sandy clay deposit that contains modern refuse, animal bone and some post-medieval

finds such as clay pipe stems. Unfortunately, due to the origin of this deposit (imported as levelling material to create a playing field on the site), any finds within it cannot necessarily be attributed to a particular area or even as originating from this site (0.24 – 0.13m BGL). The topsoil (1000) was a mid-grey/brown silty clay with heavy rooting and fragmentary modern inclusions (0.13 – 0m BGL).

All areas of the site excluding the isolated excavation area (Trench 1) at the furthest south-east contained channels filled with an organic rich deposit (1005) that ran through the natural gravels (1006) (Illus 6). Above these was a thin (0.20m) layer of (1004), a possible later peat bog. The most easterly segment of the excavation contained a much deeper area where the organic rich deposit (1005) had significantly built up. These natural channels possibly fed a boggy area (1005) before the surrounding dead vegetation began to decompose and accelerate the silting up of these channels.

Assessment of the macrofossils recovered during environmental sampling (Appendix 2) suggests that there was initially either a damp woodland or mixed open landscape present in the area of the Police Training Field. Over time, the conditions became wetter as indicated by the presence of sedge nutlets, root and stem tissue, in the middle of the sequence. Trees and shrubs were still present in the vicinity at this time. The presence of charcoal in upper levels may indicate burning of the vegetation or be a product of more recent disturbance.





**ILLUS 4** Trench 7, north-west facing section    **ILLUS 5** Trench 1, north-west facing section through (1004) and (1005) showing kubiena tins in situ    **ILLUS 6** Trench 7, plan view showing channels of organic deposits

## 4 DISCUSSION

The excavation undertaken revealed the same two distinct organic rich deposits that were observed during the 2007 excavation (Crooks, Rouse and Boucher 2008). Assessments of the organic rich deposits were undertaken during both excavations and came to the same conclusions that the area was initially either a damp woodland or mixed open landscape forming c 3000 years ago (Griffiths 2008 and Longford 2015).

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

No archaeological features were identified during the evaluation. The assessment of plant macro-fossils suggested that the peat deposits were likely of similar origin and date to those previously analysed. No further work is recommended on the site or the material recovered from it.

## 6 REFERENCES

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) 2014a *Code of Conduct* (Reading) <http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/CodesofConduct.pdf> accessed 08 January 2018

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## 7 APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT REGISTER

Context	Type	D (m)	Summary interpretation	Full interpretation
1000	Deposit	0.13	Topsoil	Modern topsoil
1001	Deposit	0.11	Subsoil	Modern levelling material containing post-med/modern material
1002	Deposit	0.11	Pink Clay (natural)	Alluvial clay spread
1003	Deposit	0.05	Blue-grey clay (natural)	Alluvial clay spread
1004	Deposit	0.32	Naturally formed peat	Upper peat bog
1005	Deposit	0.18	Naturally formed peat	Lower peat bog
1006	Deposit	-	Marl (natural)	Natural glacial material
1007	Deposit	-	Glacial gravel	Natural glacial material

### APPENDIX 2 MACROFOSSIL ASSESSMENT

#### Introduction

A series of ten overlapping kubiena tin samples were taken from layers of organic rich clay and peat during excavations at the former Police training field in Hereford (Illus 5). The sequence of kubiena tins began at the base of the alluvial clays (1003) at 0.35m below ground level BGL and continued through the organic rich clays and peats of layers (1004) and (1005) into the natural grey-blue gravelly clay at a depth of 0.90m BGL.

#### Methodology

Subsamples for analysis were taken from the top of the organic rich layer (1004) at a depth of 0.42-0.44m BGL, at the base of (1004) at 0.62 – 0.64m BGL and in layer (1005) at 0.77 – 0.79m BGL. From each subsample, 50ml of soil was processed and sieved into coarse (>2mm) and fine (2 – 0.5mm) fractions. All of the coarse and fine fractions were scanned using a low power Kyowa stereomicroscope at x10 – 45 magnification.

Relative abundance measures were used for identifiable 'seeds', leaf tissues, grass and sedge stems, wood fragments and mosses. Seed identifications were made with reference to seed atlases including Cappers et al (2006) and Beijerinck (1947), and plant taxonomy follows Stace (2010).

#### Results

The results of the assessment are included in Table A2.1 (Plant remains). There was a low density of plant remains in all samples.

BGL (m)	0.42 – 0.44	0.62 – 0.64	0.77 – 0.79
Context	1004	1004	1005
Sedge nutlets (Carex sp.)	-	++	-
Monocotyledonous stems and roots	+	++++	+++
Wood tissue	-	+++	++++
Wood charcoal	++	-	-

**TABLE A2.1** Results of plant macrofossil analysis

#### 0.77 – 0.79m BGL

This sample was taken from the lowest peat layer (1005). The peat appeared brown with a low degree of humification. Fragments of preserved wood were abundant in the sample. Monocotyledon stem and root tissues, from grasses or sedges, were common. No seeds or fruits were present in the sample.

#### 0.62 – 0.64m BGL

The sample was taken from the base of layer (1004) in a section of dark brown peat. Fibrous monocotyledon roots and stems were abundant in the sample together with occasional woody rootlets

and wood fragments. The only seeds present were trigonal sedge nutlets (*Carex* sp.). The presence of sedge nutlets indicates that this was an area of damp growing conditions.

#### 0.42 – 0.44m BGL

The sample was taken from the upper layer of (1004) which contained a mix of peat and clay. Fragments of wood charcoal and monocotyledon roots and stems were present in the sample.

### *Discussion*

The plant remains from the lowest level (0.77 – 0.79m BGL), a mix of wood fragments and grass/sedge root and stem tissue, suggest that there was initially either a damp woodland or mixed open landscape present in the area of the Police Training Field. Over time, the conditions became wetter as indicated by the presence of sedge nutlets, root and stem tissue, in the middle of the sequence (0.62 – 0.64m BGL). Trees and shrubs were still present in the vicinity at this time. The presence of charcoal in upper levels (0.42 – 0.44m BGL) may indicate burning of the vegetation or be a product of more recent disturbance. A previous study of the Police Training Field identified that the area was a wet grassland during the middle Bronze Age which had developed into a birch-hazel fen-woodland possibly by the late Iron Age (Crooks et al 2008). The lack of taxonomically identifiable material in these samples inhibits a more accurate identification of the type of vegetation represented by these peat layers. Nevertheless, these results appear consistent with the previous study and suggest that the peat layers sampled here may have also formed c 3000 years ago.

### *Recommendations*

No further work is recommended on this material due to the low density of plant remains in the samples.

### *References*

- Beijerinck W (1947) *Zadenatlas der Nederlandsche Flora H. Veenman & Zonen* Wageningen
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- Stace C (2010) *New Flora of the British Isles* (3rd Edition) Cambridge





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