

PROGRAMME OF  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING  
OF LAND NORTH OF  
ROMAN ROAD,  
HOLMER,  
HEREFORD

Graham Arnold and Tom Vaughan

With contributions by Angus Crawford

Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Project 3507  
Report 1826  
HSM 51840



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## Programme of archaeological recording of land north of Roman Road, Holmer, Hereford

Graham Arnold and Tom Vaughan

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### Background information

<i>Client</i>	Crest Nicholson South West
<i>Site address</i>	land north of Roman Road Holmer, Hereford
National Grid reference	centred on SO 5135 4225
Sites and Monuments Record reference	HSM 51840
<i>Planning authority reference</i>	Herefordshire Council DCCW2006/2619/O
Project design	CA 2010
Project parameters	IfA 2008

### *Background and previous archaeological work on the site*

The site has been the subject of previous desk-based assessment (CA 2005) and archaeological evaluation (Potten and Vaughan 2006). The desk-based assessment identified that material of prehistoric and Roman date had been recovered to the east of the site during fieldwalking and that the site was bounded on the southern side by the route of a Roman road. The evaluation comprised twelve trenches within the field adjacent to Roman Road and the field accessed off Atwood Lane. A number of tree bowls were noted in both fields. Otherwise no archaeological features, structures or horizons were recorded, and residual finds were minimal. There was no evidence for Roman occupation activity, nor any indication that the medieval village of Holmer extended this far south-east of the present settlement. There was no evidence of ridge and furrow as has been recorded to the north-east. The very compact nature of the subsoils and lack of residual material suggests minimal modern ploughing. The fields were probably kept largely as pasture, prior to the planting of orchards within two in the post-medieval period.

The predominant soils of the area belong to the Bromyard Soil Association (571b). These comprise well-drained reddish fine silty soils over shale and siltstone, some similar soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging and some well-drained coarse loamy soils over sandstone. The parent material is Devonian reddish silty shale, siltstone and sandstone (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

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### Aims

The aims of the programme of archaeological recording were to preserve by record any archaeological deposits encountered during groundworks; record the nature of the main stratigraphic units encountered; assess the overall presence, survival and potential of structural remains; assess the overall presence, survival, condition and potential of artefactual and ecofactual remains; record any evidence of past settlement or other land use; recover artefactual evidence to date any evidence of past settlement that may be identified; sample and analyse environmental remains to create a better understanding of past land use (CA 2010, 3). The main focus was the area adjacent to Roman Road.

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### Methods

General specification for fieldwork	CA 2010 HA 2004 IfA 2008
Sources consulted	HEAS 2006

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Date(s) of fieldwork	8 June 2010 to 11 February 2011
Area of site	c 12.5 ha
Sampling	areas investigated indicated on Fig 2
	proportion of total site area c 15%

*Access to or visibility of deposits*

Observation of the excavated areas was undertaken during machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe the deposits and areas were occasionally cleaned by hand. Access to deep trenches was not made for safety reasons. The excavation areas and spoil was also scanned with a metal detector.

*Statement of confidence*

Access to, and visibility of, deposits allowed a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.

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**Deposit description**

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface (b.g.s) – top and bottom of deposits
1001	Topsoil	Loose mid yellowish brown sandy silt. Rare small to medium sub-angular stones with frequent root and vegetation disturbance. Variable depth from 0.12-0.40m.	0.00-0.40m
1002	Subsoil	Moderately compacted mid orangey brown silty clay. Frequent rounded and sub-rounded pebbles and small angular sandstone.	0.15-0.45m
1003	Natural	Compact mid reddish brown clay with lenses of blue grey clay, marl and mudstone. Occasional small rounded pebbles, angular sandstone and mudstone.	0.27m+

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**Discussion**

The natural clay matrix was observed across all excavated areas below the overburden of topsoil and subsoil which lay to a variable depth of between 0.27m and 1m below the existing ground surface (Plates 3-18). A number of modern geotechnical test pits, a dump of modern hardcore and the base of a roadside hedgerow were the only features observed within the site (Plates 3 and 5). During works adjacent to the road a number of modern service trenches were observed. No significant archaeological features, structures, layers or horizons were recorded. These results therefore do not inform or add to the West Midlands Regional Framework for Archaeology (Ray 2002).

Residual finds from the topsoil and spoil heaps consisted of a largely post-medieval and modern assemblage of brick, ceramic building material, pottery, china, clay tobacco pipes, animal bone and metalwork debris. One Victorian gold half sovereign dated to 1896 (Plates 1 and 2) was recovered from a spoil heap during the excavations for the access road onto site. A very small quantity of residual medieval and imported post-medieval Chinese pottery was also identified within the assemblage (pers comm Angus Crawford).

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## Conclusions

The results of the programme of archaeological recording compared with those of the previous evaluation: there was no evidence for Roman occupation adjacent to the Roman road, nor was there any indication of the medieval village of Holmer extending onto the site, or for ridge and furrow. It is therefore considered that the area has been largely used for pasture through the medieval and post-medieval periods. Similarly minimal findings for Roman roadside activity were made along Roman Road to the west, between Tillington Lane and Stretton Sugwas during investigations undertaken by the Service in 2002-2005 (Vaughan 2010).

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## Publication summary

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*A programme of archaeological recording was undertaken at the request of Cotswold Archaeology on behalf of Crest Nicholson on land north of Roman Road, Holmer, Hereford (NGR SO 5135 4225) who intend to develop the site for residential use. The depth of topsoil and subsoil deposits was found to be variable across the site, from 0.27m to 1m below the ground surface. No significant archaeological structures or features were found and the residual finds assemblage comprised largely post-medieval and modern debris along with a few sherds of medieval pottery and a gold half sovereign of 1896. There was no evidence for Roman roadside activity, for the continuation of the medieval settlement of Holmer to the north-west, or of ridge and furrow agricultural activity.*

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## Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, David Mecke (Site Manager, Crest Nicholson South West), Terry Harris (CDM Co-ordinator, Davis Langdon), Simon Cox (Head of Fieldwork, Cotswold Archaeology) and Julian Cotton (Archaeology Advisor, Herefordshire Council).

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## Bibliography

CA 2005 *Land at Holmer, Herefordshire: archaeological desk-based assessment*, Cotswold Archaeology, unpublished report, dated 29 November 2005, CA Project 2051, report, **05142**

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Herefordshire Archaeology 2004 *Standards for archaeological projects in Herefordshire: issue 1*,

IfA, 2008 *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, Institute for Archaeologists

Potten, S and Vaughan, T M, 2006 *Archaeological evaluation on the land at the corner of Attwood Lane and Roman Road, Holmer, Hereford*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished report, **2915**, revised 17 April 2006

Ray, K, 2002 *The Romano-British Period in Herefordshire*, West Midlands Regional Framework for Archaeology, Seminar 3

Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983 *Midland and Western England, sheet 3, scale 1:250,000 + Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales (A brief explanation of the constituent soil associations)*

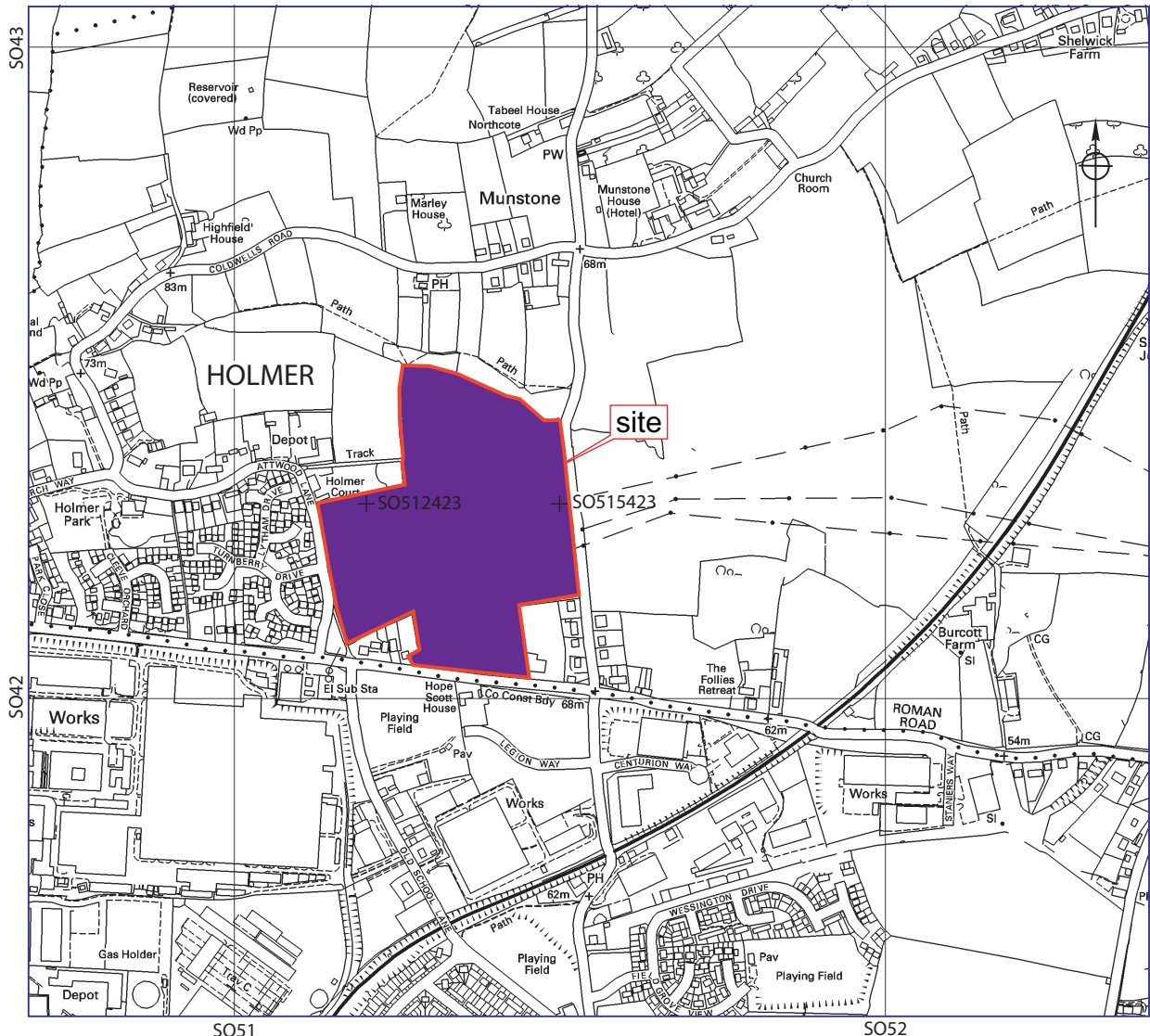
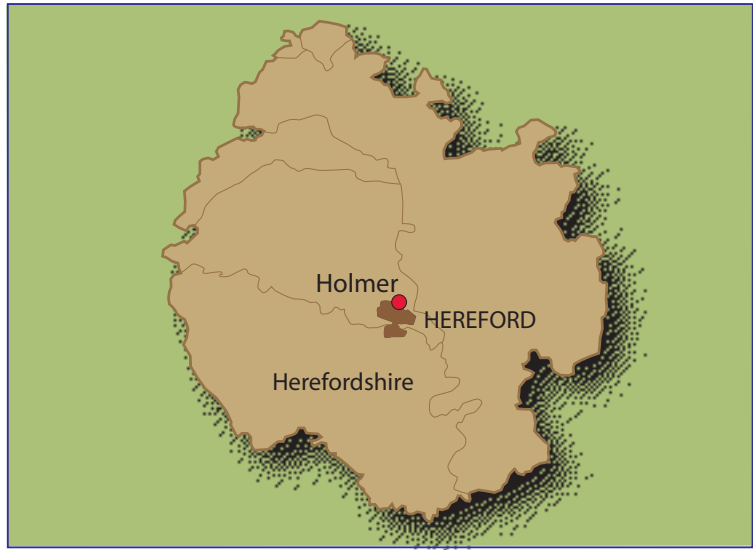
Vaughan, T M, 2010 *Archaeological Investigations along Roman Road, Hereford, 2002-2005*, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council, unpublished report 1730, dated 30 March 2010

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## **Figures**







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Location of the site

Figure 1



Areas observed during Watching Brief

Figure 2

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## Plates



*Plate 1, The obverse side of the gold Victorian half sovereign with the old head of Queen Victoria, found within spoil from the access road (Photograph by Angus Crawford)*



*Plate 2, The reverse of the gold Victorian half sovereign dated 1896, found within spoil from the access road (photograph by Angus Crawford)*





*Plate 3, Soil strip in progress for access road into site, showing a hardcore spread within topsoil, looking north-east*



*Plate 4, Soil strip for access road into site after excavation, looking south to Roman Road*





*Plate 5, Hedgerow removed and area stripped alongside Roman Road, looking west*



*Plate 6, Access road off Roman Road complete, looking north-west*



*Plate 7, Soil strip in advance of excavation of house footings along south side of site, looking west*



*Plate 8, Soil strip in advance of excavation of house foundations toward the east side of site, looking north*





*Plate 9, Soil strip for east road, looking north*



*Plate 10, Soil strip to east in advance of excavation of house foundations, looking north*





*Plate 11, General shot of east field in advance of soil strip for road and pumping station, looking east*



*Plate 12, Soil strip for east road, looking east*





*Plate 13, Soil strip for east road and pumping station, looking east*



*Plate 14, Soil strip for east road and pumping station, looking east*





*Plate 15 Soil strip of north-west area in advance of excavation of house foundations, looking north-west*



*Plate 16, Soil strip of north-west area in advance of excavation of house foundations, looking north-west*





*Plate 17, South-west area in advance of soil strip, looking south-west*



*Plate 18, Soil strip of south-west area in advance of excavation of house foundations, looking south-west*

## **Appendix 1 Technical information**

### **The archive**

The archive consists of:

6	Context records AS1
26	Field progress reports AS2
2	Photographic records AS3
139	Digital photographs
1	Drawing number catalogues AS4
7	Scale drawings
1	Context number catalogues AS5
1	Recorded Finds Record AS13
8	Trench record sheets AS41
1	Box of finds
1	Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Hereford City Museum and Art Gallery

Broad Street

Hereford

HR4 9RU

Tel Hereford (01432) 268121 ext 207/334

## Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record

<b>Report Name and Title</b>	Programme of archaeological recording of land north of Roman Road, Holmer, Hereford	
<b>Contractors Name and Address</b>	Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service Woodbury, University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ	
<b>Site Name</b>	Land North of Roman Road, Holmer, Hereford	
<b>Grid Reference (8 fig)</b>	SO 5135 4225	<b>Planning Application Number DCCW2006/2619/O</b>
<b>SMR number/s of site</b>	HSM 51840	
<b>Date of Field Work</b>	08 June 2010 – 11 February 2011	
<b>Date of Report</b>	28 February 2011	
	<b>NUMBER AND TYPE OF FINDS</b>	
<b>Pottery</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Number of sherds</b>
	Post-medieval and modern + few residual medieval sherds only	
<b>Other</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
	1x gold half sovereign dated 1896	
	<b>NUMBER AND TYPE OF SAMPLES COLLECTED 0</b>	
<b>Sieving for charred plant remains</b>	No of Features sampled - none No of buckets - none	
<b>C14/scientific dates</b>	No and Type - none Result - n/a	
<b>Pollen</b>	No of Columns/spot samples Name of pollen specialist	
<b>Bone</b>	Number of buckets sieved for bone - none <i>Quantity Recovered</i> <i>Period</i> Few residual animal bones only	
<b>Insect</b>	No of Columns/spot samples - none Name of pollen specialist – n/a	
<b>Other</b>	Type and specialist n/a	
<b>Summary of the report</b>	<p>The depth of topsoil and subsoil deposits was found to be variable across the site, from 0.27m to 1m below the ground surface. No significant archaeological structures or features were found and the residual finds assemblage comprised largely post-medieval and modern debris along with a few sherds of medieval pottery and a gold half sovereign of 1896. There was no evidence for Roman roadside activity, for the continuation of the medieval settlement of Holmer to the north-west, or of ridge and furrow agricultural activity.</p>	