

**CPAT Report No 1205**

# **Oswestry Substation**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**



**THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**

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*Project Name:* Oswestry Substation  
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Cover photo: Topsoil stripping in progress (CPAT 3623-0006)

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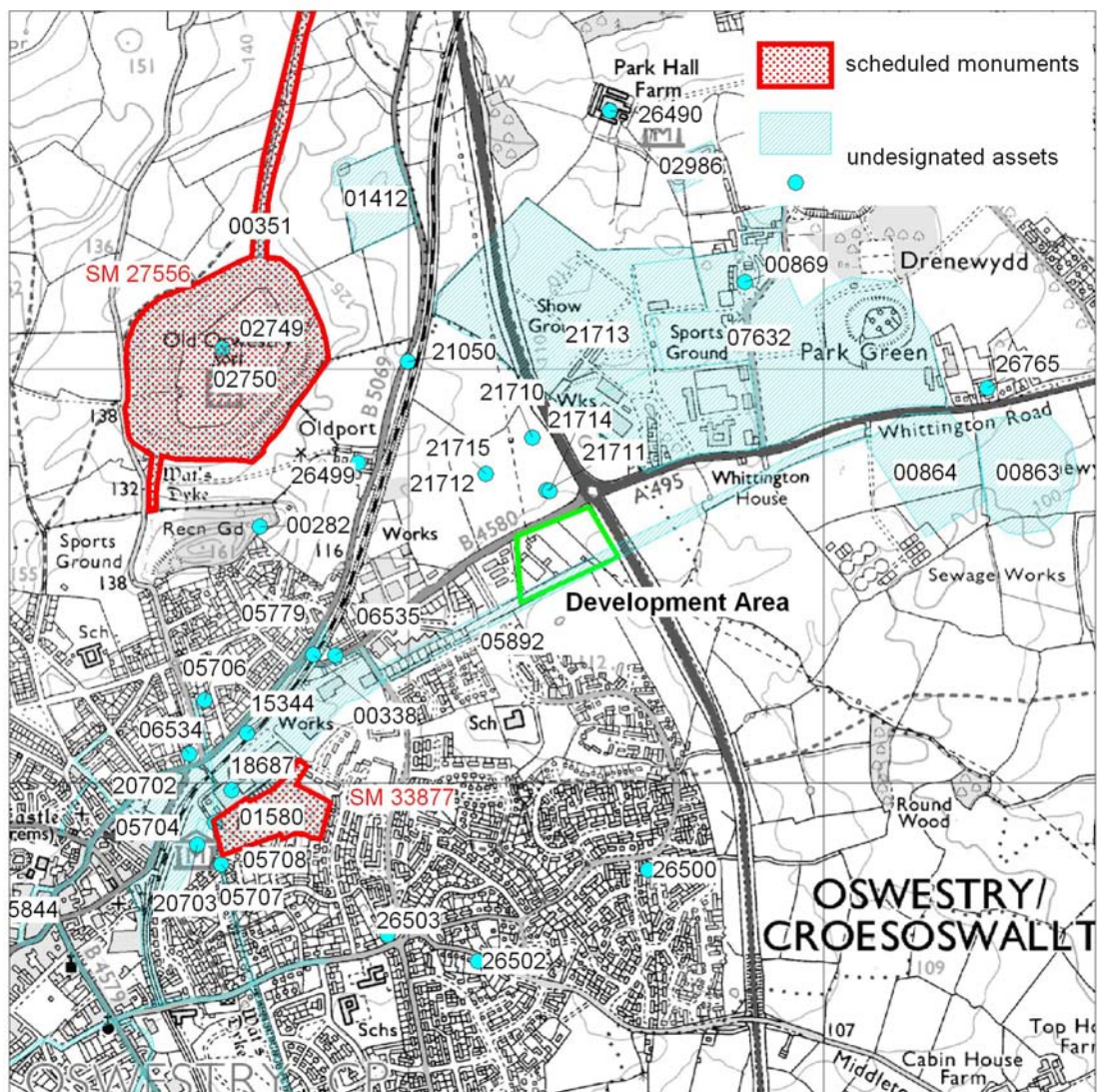
## **Summary**

In May 2013 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) carried out a watching brief on the site of a new substation on the south side of Whittington Road, on the outskirts of Oswestry in Shropshire (SJ 3036 3058). The work involved the relocation of the original substation to a new site immediately adjacent, which had previously been arable land. It occupied an area of around 3.2ha, bounded to the north by the B4580 Whittington Road, to the west by Harlech Road and to the east by the A5.

The only features identified during the watching brief were a series of land drains which probably date to the later part of the post-medieval period. A few sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the topsoil which had probably been introduced during manuring of the fields.

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) on the site of a new substation on the south side of Whittington Road, on the outskirts of Oswestry in Shropshire (SJ 3036 3058).
- 1.2 The work involved the relocation of the original substation to a new site, which had previously been arable land, immediately adjacent to the east of the old installation. The area shown on the plan below as the Development Area includes the existing substation and the relocation site; it occupies an area of around 3.2ha, bounded to the north by the B4580 Whittington Road, to the west by Harlech Road and to the east by the A5 (Fig. 1).



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Fig. 1 The Development Area, showing cultural heritage assets within 1km of its boundary

- 1.3 An assessment was carried out prior to the commencement of works to identify elements of the cultural heritage, but only one undesigned asset was revealed within the Development Area, a former railway line (No 05892 on Fig. 1), in heritage terms considered to be of low value (Jones 2012). An earlier programme of archaeological assessment, unrelated to the

present development, was conducted immediately to the north of the site in 2006 and 2007, and failed to identify any significant cultural heritage remains. About 0.7km to the east, cropmarks have revealed possible Iron Age enclosures, but no cropmarks have to date been identified within the arable field used for the new substation.

- 1.4 The watching brief described herein was carried out during the topsoil stripping phase of the work, between 29 April and 10 May 2013, and this report written immediately thereafter.

## 2 **Watching Brief**

- 2.1 Only the eastern part of the Development Area was examined since the central and western parts had been heavily disturbed during the construction of the original substation. The soil profile at the western edge of the area examined by the watching brief demonstrated that the upper soil layers had been largely removed down to red boulder clay, so it was thought unlikely that any sub-surface features had survived in the adjoining parts of the original substation compound.
- 2.2 Initially, element of the watching brief observed the excavation of a trench just within the northern boundary of the Development Area. This was designed to accept an underground cable link and was about 1.0m wide and 1.0m deep. The soils consisted of an upper layer of dark brown silty topsoil, averaging about 0.3m thick and covering about 0.4m of buff-coloured clay silt; the lowest 0.3m was red boulder clay. No significant archaeological features were exposed, the only artificial features being a series of former tile drains, some of circular cross-section and some U-shaped.



Fig. 2 The trench within the northern boundary of the Development Area (CPAT 3623-0001)

- 2.3 The main part of the watching brief monitored the removal of surface soils by machine down to the natural subsoil. These deposits comprised a 0.3m-thick layer of dark brown silty

topsoil, overlying a buff-brown silt, 0.2m thick, which lay directly above the natural buff-coloured stony silt. Where machining approached the central portion of the Development Area (see para 2.1) the buff-coloured silt had been partially or wholly removed, presumably at the time of the construction of the original substation, revealing the underlying red boulder clay.



Fig 3 The eastern part of the Development Area after topsoil removal (CPAT 3623-0008)

- 2.4 As with the cable trench the only artificial features were a series of old ceramic field drains. Most of these were of circular cross-section, with occasional runs of U-shaped tiles; all were of relatively late post-medieval date. No other features were observed.

Table 1 Medieval pottery recovered from the topsoil

<i>Find No</i>	<i>NGR</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Type</i>
1	SJ 30485 30596	1	Jug body sherd with external glaze
2	SJ 30485 30586	1	Jar rim, unglazed
3	SJ 30475 30563	2	Jug body sherds with external glaze
4	SJ 30474 30550	1	Thumbbed jug base, unglazed
5	SJ 30432 30606	1	Jug body sherd with rouletting

- 2.5 Where possible, the stripped topsoil was examined for artefactual material. Most of the objects seen were sherds of 19<sup>th</sup>-century glazed pottery, but six sherds of medieval pottery were recovered (Table 1), perhaps of 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup>-century date. All of these came from the topsoil and it seems likely they had been brought to the area in the process of manuring the soil.

### **3     Conclusions**

- 3.1     The watching brief failed to find any evidence of significant sub-surface archaeological features or deposits, the only features being a series of land drains of post-medieval date.
- 3.2     A few pottery sherds of medieval origin were recovered from the topsoil. It is likely that they were imported to the locality during manuring of the soil in the medieval period and this may imply that the area formed part of the arable fields of Oswestry at that time.
- 3.3     Although the watching brief only examined the eastern portion of the Development Area, it is considered that the other parts are unlikely to have retained any sub-surface archaeological evidence following the levelling of the ground which took place when the original substation was built.

### **4     References**

#### **Unpublished sources**

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#### **Cartographic sources**

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- 1884     Ordnance Survey 6" 1<sup>st</sup> edition Shropshire 12 SW
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