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Land at 104 Llwyn Road, Oswestry, Shropshire

Archaeological Evaluation

SLR Ref : 406-04931-00001

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Bryan Parry



**FAME**  
Federation of Archaeological Managers & Employers

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Planning Background

The client, Bryan Parry is currently in the process of making an application for planning permission (ref. 13/04954/OUT) for housing to the rear of land at 104 Llwyn Road, Oswestry, Shropshire.

The Historic Environment Team at Shropshire Council has highlighted the archaeological potential of the site, and indicated the need for an archaeological evaluation of the site prior to determination of any planning application, to comply with paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework. In response the client commissioned SLR Consulting to design a scheme of archaeological work which has been agreed with the planning authority<sup>1</sup>. The following report contains results of a programme of rail trenching undertaken from 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

### 1.2 Location, topography and Geology

The application site is located at 104 Llwyn Road, Oswestry, and the land immediately to the east of the house that is presently located on this property. The land is c.0.47 hectares (1 acre and 26 perches, pers comm. with A. Parry) and was previously a small-holding. The land is located on the south-facing slope of Llwyn Hill, a small glacial mound, to the south of Old Oswestry and to 0.5km north of Oswestry

The site is between 135m and 140m AOD on a south facing aspect, towards Oswestry town. The site is situated on Devensian tills, over Etrurian formation mudstones and sandstone.

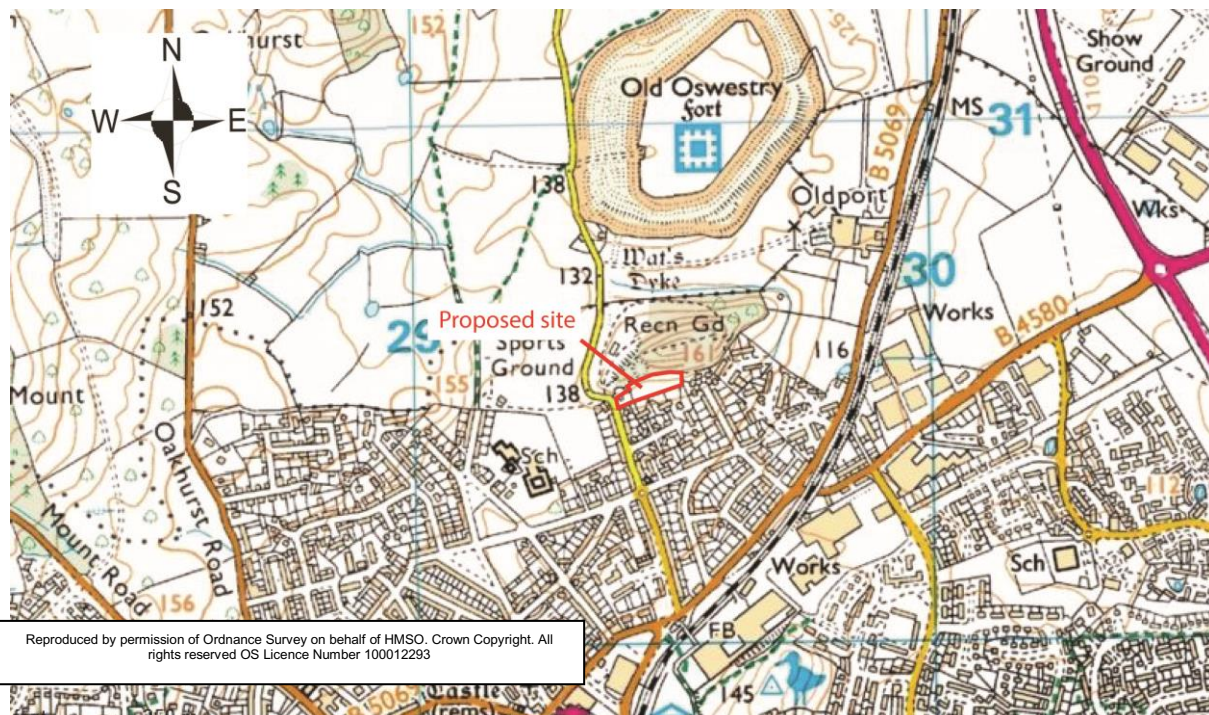


Figure 1 Site location

<sup>1</sup> SLR 2014 Land at 104 Llwyn Road, Oswestry, Shropshire Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation

### 1.3 Archaeological and Historical background

The site lies 0.5km north of the historic core of Oswestry (Figure 1), but is adjacent to the north-west - south-east aligned Wat's Dyke, a Mercian boundary created by a bank and ditched earthwork. This monument runs for 63km from Maesbury to Holywell on the Dee Estuary and has been dated at Gobowen to the early 9<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>2</sup>. To the south, in the industrial estate at Mile Oak, previous excavations had obtained a radiocarbon date from a hearth sealed by the bank, which gave a wide range for its construction, from 268 – 630 cal AD<sup>3</sup>.

The site is shown in the Shropshire Historic Environment Record with the line of Wat's Dyke running along its western side, on a north-westerly – south-easterly alignment.

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<sup>2</sup> Malim T and Hayes L 2008 the Date and Nature of Wat's Dyke: a reassessment in the light of recent investigations at Gobowen, Shropshire *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History Volume 15*, p.147-179

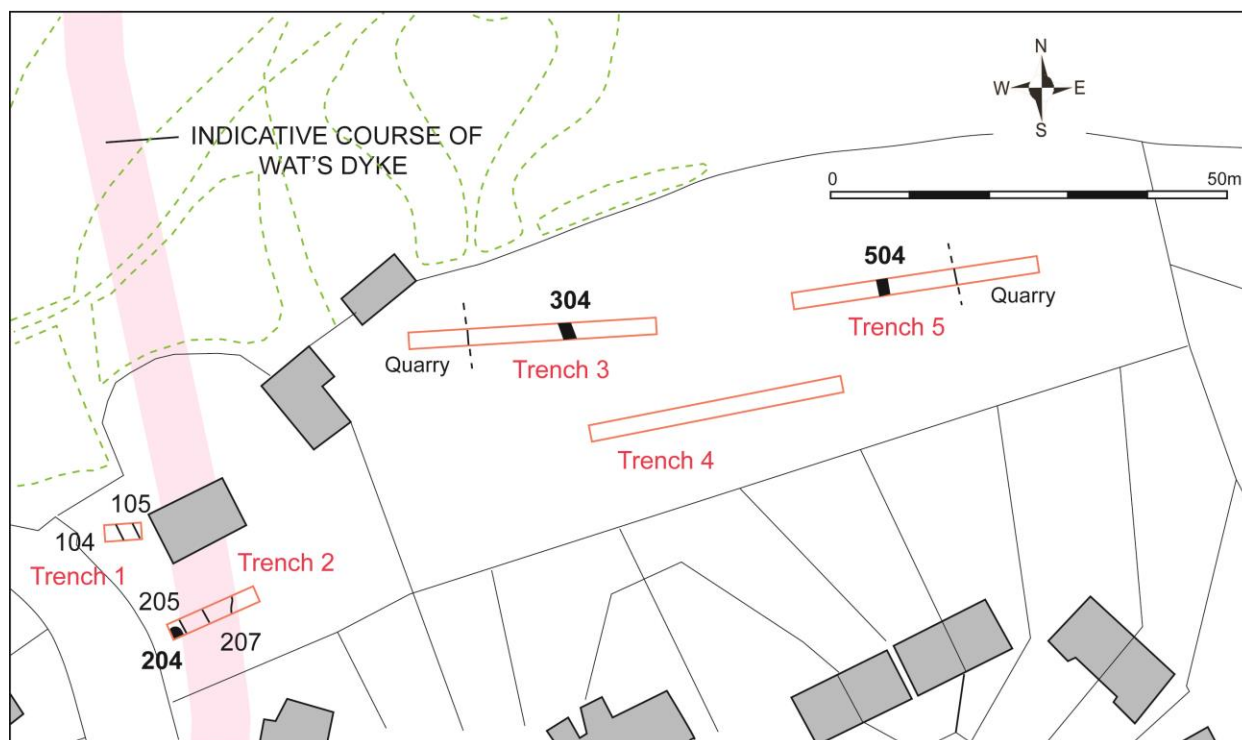
<sup>3</sup> Hannaford H 1998 An Excavation on Wat's Dyke at Mile oak, Oswestry, Shropshire *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society Volume 73*

## 2.0 RESULTS OF EVALUATION

### 2.1 Trench Layout

Both trenches 1 and 2 had to be moved, Trench 1 to a slight NW-SE angle due to a lack of space at the front of the house, and Trench 2 was moved closer to the house as a medium sized conifer was located where the trench had been originally sited. Trench 3 was moved about 25m east, to avoid the garage and stable block which are still in use, though Trenches 4 and 5 were both in the same position as noted on Figure 2, however due to the extent of the brambles and undergrowth in the land located at the rear of the property, this was at best approximate.

All the trenches were machine excavated by a 7.5 ton JCB, with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket.



**Figure 2**  
**Trench Plan, showing archaeological features found during investigation**

### 2.2 Results of Evaluation

#### Trench 1

Trench 1 was located between the house and a retaining wall marking the edge of the property with Llwyn Road. It was originally machine excavated on a NE – SW alignment about 4m west of the house, though this proved to have a negative result, as the trench was dug into made ground which was in excess of 1.2m deep, and with no natural clays and gravels reached (Figure 3).



**Figure 3**  
**Section of Trench 1, original location, showing depth of made ground.**

This was then backfilled, and the trench was excavated closer to the house on an E-W alignment. A 0.25m thick mid brown layer of clay silt topsoil (101) overlay a 0.15m thick mid grey brown clay silt subsoil (102), which in turn overlay the natural mid orange brown undifferentiated clays and gravels (103). Possibly truncating the natural clays were two features, both appearing to be on a north-west – south-east alignment. Alternatively these could be layers that were sealing the natural, which had itself been eroded or cut away.

At the western end of Trench 1, (105) there was a layer overlying the natural, consisting of a mid brown sandy clay with frequent 19<sup>th</sup> century detritus including slate, porcelain and brick and tile fragments. This is interpreted as the backfill of the retaining wall built along Llwyn Road (Figure 11) and also the infill for the ditch fronting Wat's Dyke. A small sondage was hand excavated into this layer, however, the full depth of this material could not be determined as it was presumed to extend beyond a safe working depth if it continued to the retaining wall. At the eastern end of Trench 1, there was another layer (104), consisting of a light orange brown silty sand. However no further investigation of this layer was able to take place. As such, it is impossible to determine whether this deposit was of archaeological or natural origin.



**Figure 4**  
**Trench 1, east facing, with [105] and sondage in the foreground.**

## Trench 2

This trench was located to the south of the existing house, on an approximately E – W alignment, and was 10.5m in length. As with Trench 1, a 0.20m thick mid brown layer of clay silt topsoil (201) overlay a 0.15 m thick mid grey brown clay silt subsoil (202), which overlay the mid orange brown glacial till consisting of natural undifferentiated clays and gravels (203).



**Figure 5**  
**Trench 2, east facing**

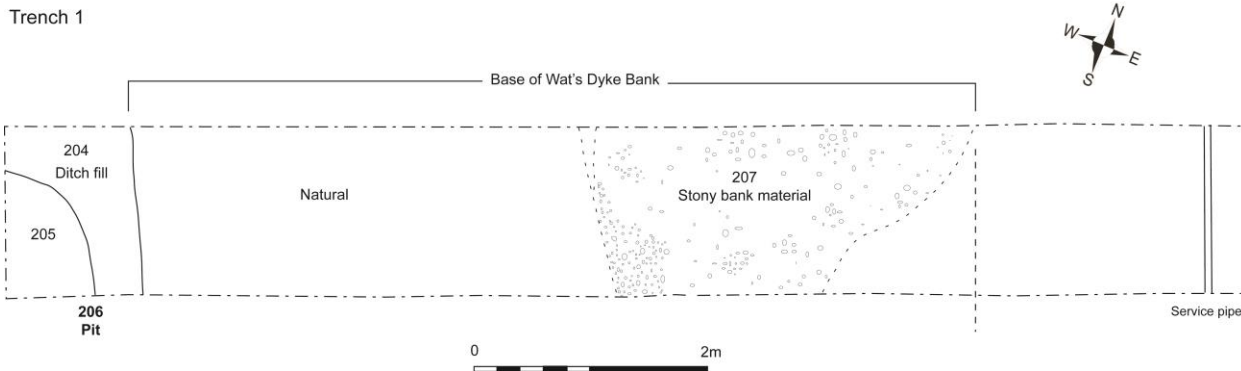
At the western end of the trench a mid grey brown sandy clay deposit (204), was found sealing the natural (203), which had been truncated by a 19<sup>th</sup> century pit [206] containing a dark grey brown firm sandy clay with slate and tile fragments (205). In the centre of the trench a layer of loosely compacted brown clay, gravel, and pebbles (207) was sealing the natural.





**Figure 6**  
**Trench 2, facing west, showing gravel layer (207) and domed shape to deposit sequence indicating location of bank for Wat's Dyke**

The interpretation given to these deposits is that they represent the remnant of the bank, and edge of the ditch, for Wat's Dyke (Figures 5, 6 and 7). At the western end deposit (204) is the fill of the ditch, and further east the microtopography shows the extent of a bank approximately 6m wide, defined by a stony deposit along its eastern edge.



**Figure 7**  
**Trench 2 plan of archaeological features and extent of Wat's Dyke**

### Trench 3

Trenches 3, 4, and 5 were excavated in the allotment area, to the rear of the house and garden. All three trenches were 30m in length, on an E – W alignment. This area had been used in the past for a variety of small holdings, including a piggery, and an orchard. The western end of the area had also been used for access to a gravel quarry that was located on Llwyn Hill.

Trench 3 had a 0.35m thick dark grey brown loose clay sand topsoil (301) overlying a 0.15m mid yellow brown clay silt subsoil (302), which overlay a mid orange brown layer of natural undifferentiated gravels and clay (303).

At the western end of the trench an 8m+ long quarry pit [305] was exposed, which was machine excavated to a depth of 1.0m. This had been backfilled with 19<sup>th</sup> century CBM, ceramics, and assorted detritus (304). This was probably related to the quarrying activity mentioned above. Roughly in the centre of the trench was a 0.9m wide ditch [307], on a north – south alignment with a concave base, which was filled with a mid grey brown firm silty clay (306) with occasional sub-rounded pebbles (Figure 8). No artefactual dating material was recovered from this context.



**Figure 8**  
**South facing section of Trench 3, with Ditch [307].**

#### **Trench 4**

Trench 4 was between 0.5m to 0.75m deep, and had a heavily rooted 0.3m – 0.5m thick dark grey brown loose clay sand topsoil (401) overlying a 0.25m mid yellow brown clay silt subsoil (402), which overlay the mid orange brown undifferentiated clays and gravel natural. A small feature located at the western end of the trench, thought to be similar to [307], was found to be the result of rooting. The remainder of trench 4 was negative.

#### **Trench 5**

The topsoil (501) subsoil (502), and natural (503) in this trench were very similar in colour and consistency to those in Trenches 3 and 4. As well as this a further quarry pit [505] was located in Trench 5, at the eastern end, which had also been backfilled with 19<sup>th</sup> century rubbish (504) (Figure 9), though with a higher concentration of 18<sup>th</sup> century CBM than the quarry pit in Trench 3, possibly indicating the demolition of a nearby structure. A 1.3m wide north – south aligned V-shaped ditch [507] was found (Figure 10), which had been filled with a 0.5m deep mid grey brown silty clay (506) with frequent sub-rounded pebbles, though no finds were retrieved from this context.



**Figure 9**  
**North facing section of Trench 5, showing cut of quarry pit [505].**



**Figure 10**  
**South facing section of Trench 5, with Ditch [507]**

### 3.0 DISCUSSION

Trenches 1 and 2 contain evidence for Wat's Dyke. This is shown by the increasing depth along the western edge of the property, and the layers that fill this depression. While this may be interpreted as a more recent truncation of the landscape for the construction of the retaining wall facing the road (Figure 11), the gentle slope exposed by the sondage in Trench 1, and through machine excavation in Trench 2, is reminiscent of the section recorded by Earthworks Archaeology Services at Nant Farm in 1995<sup>4</sup>. Along the length of Trench 2 there is a decrease in the depth of the topsoil and subsoil towards the centre of the trench, resulting in a domed effect to the exposed natural, with a rise indicating the location for the bank of Wat's Dyke, and a stony deposit as a foundation to the bank along its eastern edge, similar to that found at Gobowen in 2006<sup>4</sup>. The trench then became slightly deeper towards the east and had to be terminated because machine excavation disturbed a water-pipe that ran north-south across the trench.

Trenches 3, 4 and 5 show the past use of the allotment area, with the varying depth of the topsoil indicative of the agricultural use of the land. The two linear features in these trenches are interpreted as field boundaries, though no evidence of these has been found through a map regression. Both are perpendicular to Llwyn Hill, and are parallel to Llwyn Road, and show past land use in the Oswestry area. The backfilled quarry pits show a more recent past, with extensive gravel quarries having been in operation around Llwyn Hill.

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<sup>4</sup> Malim T and Hayes L 2008 the Date and Nature of Wat's Dyke: a reassessment in the light of recent investigations at Gobowen, Shropshire *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History Volume 15*, p.147-179



**Figure 11**  
**East facing shot, showing location of trench 1, and relative height of retaining wall facing Llwyn Road**

#### **4.0 CLOSURE**

This report has been prepared by SLR Consulting Limited with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the manpower and resources devoted to it by agreement with the client. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

This report is for the exclusive use of Bryan Parry; no warranties or guarantees are expressed or should be inferred by any third parties. This report may not be relied upon by other parties without written consent from SLR. SLR disclaims any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the agreed scope of the work.



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