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Interpretation, Design & Display

**Land at Oswestry Water Works
Oswestry
Shropshire**

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Report No. Y160/14

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Land at Oswestry Water Works
Oswestry
Shropshire

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
OBJECTIVES	4
METHODS AND STANDARDS.....	5
ARCHAEOLOGICAL BASELINE	6
CONCLUSION.....	11
BIBLIOGRAPHY	12

Appendices

Appendix 1: Gazetteer of Heritage Assets

Figures

- Figure 1: Site location and proposed development area
- Figure 2: HER sites within 500m buffer
- Figure 3: Ordnance Survey 1884 1:2500 Map
- Figure 4: Ordnance Survey 1969, 1:2500 Map

Plates

- Plate 1: A man-made hollow within woodland at Llanforda-isaf farmstead
- Plate 2: Revetment wall and steps within the woodland at Llanforda-isaf Farmstead
- Plate 3: Revetment wall and steps within the woodland at Llanforda-isaf Farmstead
- Plate 4: The remains of Llanforda-isaf Farmstead
- Plate 5: The remains of Llanforda-isaf Farmstead
- Plate 6: The remains of the south-east wall along the public footpath of Llanforda-isaf access track.
- Plate 7: Stone structure at east of the southern pond (Site 2)
- Plate 8: Capping stones

1 INTRODUCTION

A desk-based assessment was undertaken by CFA Archaeology on behalf of United Utilities on the site of Oswestry Water Works, Oswestry, Shropshire. Archaeological remains within the proposed development area comprised the stray find of a Roman coin, two artificial ponds and an abandoned farmstead.

1.1 Project Background

This report presents the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) during May and June 2014. The work was commissioned by United Utilities to evaluate the potential for archaeological remains to exist within the proposed development area of the water works.

1.2 Proposed Development

The proposed development is an extension to Oswestry Waste-Water Treatment Works. Construction will involve a significant amount of excavation for new structures, access roads, perimeter fencing, inter-process pipeline, hydro transfer connection and a new service reservoir.

1.3 Site Description

The proposed development area comprises the existing water works and reservoir to the west of Oswestry, Shropshire (Fig. 1, SJ 27829 29267). This area (henceforth ‘the site’) is at approximately 170m above the Ordnance Datum (AOD), sloping upwards to the west. It is bounded by the outskirts of Oswestry to the east and open fields in all other directions.

1.4 Soils and Geology

The underlying bedrock consists of Pennine Lower Coal Measure Formations and Pennine Middle Coal Measure Formations (undifferentiated) beneath superficial deposits of Devensian-Diamicton Till (BGS 2014).

1.5 Previous Archaeological work

To date no intrusive archaeological fieldwork is known to have taken place within the proposed development or study area.

2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 General Objectives

The general objective of the desk-based assessment is to produce a report to enable judgements to be made on the condition and significance of remains and any mitigation that may be necessary on the site in relation to the proposed development.

2.2 Research Objectives

The research objectives were to interpret any archaeological or historic remains according to their significance in contributing to the further understanding of the periods they may relate to.

3 METHODS AND STANDARDS

CFA Archaeology is a registered organisation (RO) with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). All work was conducted in accordance with relevant IfA Standards and Guidance documents (IfA 1994), English Heritage guidance (EH 2006 and 2008), and CFA's standard methodology.

3.1 Desk-based Research

Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted on 23 May 2014, for sites, find spots or monuments within the site and the 500m buffer (study area), historic mapping and relevant documentary sources. The Local Studies Collection and Welsh Collection of Oswestry Library and the Shropshire Archives were visited on the 13 June 2014 for local histories, historic mapping and other secondary sources.

In addition to the above, internet sources were consulted for information relating to general background, listed buildings and other heritage resources within the study area.

3.2 Site Walkover

A walkover of the site took place on 13 June 2014. Photographs were taken of the site and notes were taken as to the general topography and any potential archaeological remains, or any indication of former land use. Locations were recorded using a handheld GPS.

At the time of the walkover, conditions were dry and sunny and visibility was very good. The site was systematically traversed with an emphasis on the undeveloped land in the west of site, whilst a low intensity assessment was undertaken within the grounds of the water works itself. Access through the woodlands to the west and north-west of the water works was restricted due to the dense concentration of trees and only a limited examination of this area was possible. An electric fence also prevented examination of the very far north-west corner of the site.

3.3 Archiving

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, finds, plans, reports, and photographs will be ordered to nationally recognised standards (Brown 2011).

The archive currently consists of:

Digital Photographs	1 x CD
Notes and Research materials	1 x A4 folder
Survey data and photographs	
All non-confidential correspondence	
This Report	-

Should further work be undertaken on the site then the archive resulting from such work would be incorporated into the current archive which will be deposited together.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BASELINE

4.1 Desk-Based Research

There is little documentary evidence for activity on the site prior to the construction of the water works; however, there is information for the surrounding area and for Oswestry Town itself. The following is compiled from secondary sources. All sources consulted appear in the bibliography.

There are no records of prehistoric activity within the site. A stray stone axe was found between the old medieval town of Oswestry and the new housing development to the east of the water works, listed in the HER (No. 05702). The Pegasus Stone (rare example of Late Prehistoric bas relief) (Nash 2014) and Old Oswestry, one of the largest Welsh Borders Hill Forts (OOLAP 2007) are significant features of the prehistoric landscape of the area, to the north of Oswestry Town.

It is said that the town of Oswestry gained its name from St. Oswald, who died in the Battle of Maeserfeld in AD 642. The location of the battlefield has never been proven, but one of the possibilities is thought to be Maes-y-Llan, just south of the site (Hannaford 1995). An alternative theory is that it was named after Oswael, son of Cunedda Wledig, a 4th century British chieftain (*ibid.*).

Oswestry Town is mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086. It started as a nucleated settlement in the shadow of a motte and bailey castle, later, in the 13th century it was surrounded by a town wall with four gates, though did not incorporate St. Oswald's Chapel and Well. The town rapidly expanded beyond the wall with suburbs along the roads out of town. By 1660 the wall no longer exists, and apparently leaves no evidence, though the medieval street system has partially survived. A fragment of a 'town wall' was found south-west of the site near Maes-y-Llan cottages (Hannaford 1995).

The southern half of the site, and the area to the west and south, belonged to the Township of Llanforda. Llanforda Estate was purchased by Sir William Williams (1634-1700) from Edward Lloyds in 1675 (National Library of Wales 2013, ref: GB 0210 WYNNSTAY). The Baronets of the William-Wynn family owned the lands of Llanforda and some of those within the Liberties of Oswestry, including the site and wider study area. This includes the farmstead, Llanforda-isaf (see below), which lies in the centre of the western half of the site.

Much of the information for the construction of the Liverpool Corporation Water Works can be found in the archive of the water works itself. In 1946, the Water Treatment Works is mentioned in the 'Report on Water Supply' by A. H. S. Waters. It mentions that water is passed through rapid gravity filters from three service reservoirs with the capacities of 140,000 gallons, 1,400,000 gallons and 3,300,000 gallons respectively into a clear water tank of 200,000 gallons capacity with top water level 640 feet AOD. Oswestry Water Treatment Works is the only one of its kind in the county, possibly in the country, to employ the methods it uses in the treatment of water.

4.2 Historic Maps

The following presents a selection of Ordnance Survey and Tithe Maps from the 19th century to the recent past.

1838 Tithe and Apportionment Maps

The 1838 Tithe Maps show that the site straddles the boundary between the Llanforda Township and the Liberties of Oswestry, with Llanforda-isaf Farmstead lying on the boundary itself. The farmstead is visible as a ‘squared horseshoe’ courtyard of buildings and a smaller structure to the south-west, with land to the south-west and north-east, which may have contained trees. These are recorded as a house, garden and yard occupied by George Evans. There is an access road leading to this farmstead, along the same line as the municipal boundary. The land use of the site according to the apportionments was a mixture of meadow and pasture.

1884 Ordnance Survey (1st edition) 1:2500 Map (Figure 3)

These maps show additional buildings at Llanforda-isaf Farmstead to the north, west and south with the pasture land which to the south-west and north-east was converted to a small wood with footpaths. The access road along the Municipal Boundary has altered, with an additional access route to the south-west. There are two ponds (Sites 1 and 2, Figure 2) in the south and west fields.

The surrounding land is predominantly open fields with evidence for oak cultivation, with some trees surviving to the south along a field boundary, and a pond (Site 2) also on the boundary. The fields to the north form a rifle range.

1901 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Map

By 1901 the first four pairs of the northern-most filter beds and associated structures of the Water Treatment Works appear on the map. They are recorded as being owned by Liverpool Corporation Waterworks. Part of the Vyrnwy Aqueduct, linking the filter beds to a valve just east of the new reservoir, has also been recorded and mapped since the previous OS map. A well and drain linking the water works to Llanforda-isaf farmstead are also mapped.

The rest of the surrounding landscape remains relatively unchanged with the target workers hut from the former rifle range only shown as mere earthworks. Some very small scale developments are visible to the very south-east of the area and along Upper Brook Street, including the presence of a quarry to the east of the study area. To the north-east of the area High Inn is also shown.

1926 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Map

By 1926 the Liverpool Corporation have added another four pairs of filter beds, just south to those that appeared first on the 1901 OS Map. Groundworks appear to be taking place to the south of the filter beds, possibly in preparation for the third and final set of filter beds.

The tree-lined boundary just to the south of Llanforda-isaf is no longer shown on the map, though the oak trees are still present. Apart from a well appearing to the east of the western pond, no other changes are apparent.

1938-54 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 Map

The only changes from the previous map are the field boundaries to the south of Llanforda-isaf.

1954 Ordnance Survey Post-WWII 1:10,560 Shropshire Map

By 1954, the third and final set of four pairs of filter beds and associated structures of the waterworks are shown, but there is no mention of ownership. The aqueduct and the footpaths from Llanforda-isaf northwards, which appeared in previous maps are no longer visible.

1969 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Shropshire Map (Figure 4)

The 1969 OS Map shows the south-east complex of buildings associated with the Llanforda-isaf are no longer in existence, with the exception of the north and west structure, with some minor possible walls still evident. However, the previously unmapped, tree-lined boundary to the south of the Llanforda-isaf has been recorded.

Modern Maps

From 1979 to the present, the only changes on later OS Maps is the expansion of the town of Oswestry westwards with development now abutting the waterworks, and a building complex along the access track from Broom Hall Lane to Llanforda-isaf on the western boundary of the Treatment Works.

4.3 Historic Environment Record

The list of records of monuments and archaeological events recorded within the proposed development area and within the wider study area site appear as Appendix 1 and are shown on Figure 2.

HER Records within the Proposed Development Area

Historic environment records (HER) within the proposed development area comprise the find spot of a Roman coin (02877), Vyrnwy Aqueduct (21491) and Llanforda-isaf Farmstead (26505).

The Roman Coin of Constantine I (02877) was found in a clay layer, whilst enlarging the filter beds. The HER database records the find as pre-1927, which corroborates the map evidence, (the second set of filter beds were built between 1901 and 1926).

Llanforda-isaf farmstead (26505) consisted of a regular courtyard with multiple yards with the farmhouse itself set a distance away. Not much of this complex survives and it has undergone much alteration, though some of the farm buildings are still standing (see Section 4.4 below).

A small section of the route of the Vyrnwy Viaduct (21491) crosses the north of the site. It is a 68 mile long aqueduct opened in 1891 to take water from Lake Vyrnwy to Liverpool. Work began on the dam and aqueduct in 1881 and it comprised three 42-inch diameter pipes, the third of which was laid between 1926 and 1938. The route follows the Dee/Severn watershed and maintained high ground until reaching the basins of the Mersey and Weaver. The structural remains of the aqueduct no longer exist though there may be some archaeological evidence remaining below ground.

HER Records within the Study Area

In addition to the sites within the proposed development area, there are 16 HER sites within the study area. These are described in Appendix 1, appear on Figure 2, and include; St. Oswalds Well (00335), evidence of ridge and furrow and other earthworks at Meas-Y-Llan (04590), Maes-y-Llan field system (04626), Maes-y-Llan enclosure (04627), several rectangular platforms at Meas-Y-Llan (04628), St. Oswald's Chapel (05709), find spots for a stone axe and fragment of worked masonry (05702 and 08584), Headmasters House of Oswestry School (13109), Maes-Y-Llan Cottage (15339), Penyllan Hall (18770), High Fawr Farm (26506), Broom Hall Park (07621), Park and Gardens of Llanforda Hall (07631) and Broom Hall (16180). The town's medieval street system (05785) also lies in the east of the study area.

4.4 Walkover Survey

In the east of the proposed development area there is a series of three sets of filter beds with associated structures and buildings, some dating to the early 1930s. The remaining area consists of fields and pasture, with long and short grass. A probably modern drainage channel has been cut through the northern field, and has been altered and blocked up in recent times. With the exception of the two ponds (Fig. 2; sites 1 and 2) and Llanforda-isaf farmstead (26505), the fields to the west of the treatment works showed no evidence of archaeological remains.

Llanforda-isaf

The remains of Llanforda-isaf farmstead were visible from the field to the west of the water works, (Fig. 2; 26505). The majority of the farmstead remains were within a dense woodland area which it was not possible to access. Though some upstanding structures visible on the 1969-1974 OS were still present (Fig. 3), along with some manmade hollows (Plate 1). The surviving structures within the woodland comprised a series of walls, and a revetment wall to the farmstead which survived to a height of 1.7m, with stone and brick steps providing access from the lower to higher ground (Plates 2 and 3). Other features were visible within the area of the farmstead, some of which may have represented modern disturbance.

The building to the north of the Llanforda-isaf Farmstead (SJ 27454 29362) was only visible from the pasture field and full access was prevented by dense woodland (Plate 4). The remains consisted of an unroofed building, with its north-east facing elevation surviving to a height of 3.2m and width of 5.5m. It was constructed of squared, stone blocks in courses 0.3m high, with narrow filling courses forming a horizontal level for the next course up. The walls were 0.45m thick, with possible internal walls still

surviving. A doorway with a timber lintel was also present along this elevation (Plate 5). A building to the west survives and was being used as a cow shed.

The boundary walls surround the farmstead and access path, now part of a public footpath survive to varying degrees of preservation. The north-west end survives the best to a height of 1.1m, and along the footpath, the remains of capping stones still survive (Plate 6). The walls do not survive the full length of the access path which is made up of pebbles and brick, overgrown with vegetation.

The Ponds

Two ponds were identified during the walkover; in the west and in the south of Llanforda-isaf farmstead (Fig. 2; sites 1 and 2). These ponds appear on the first edition OS map, and pre-date the Oswestry Water Treatment Works. The western pond (Site 1) still contained water and was formed by banked material. The well, visible on OS maps, was not visible during the walkover survey, though this may have been due to the long grass and/or poor preservation.

The pond to the south (Site 2) was much drier, but was still fed by a culvert from the west. It was dammed in the east by a stone wall (Plate 7), overlain with five brick courses in English bond. The brick part of the wall was 7.5m long north to south and 0.7m wide, capped with two large stone slabs, each 2.5m long, with holes carved into the western edge (Plate 8), possibly for railings. The slabs had been disturbed by vegetation, and the underlying stone courses extended north for another 2.5m. The visible depth of the wall was 1.3m, and it may have been a dam, revetment or a way of controlling water flow from the pond.

There was no evidence on the ground for the former Vyrnwy Aqueduct (21491).

5 CONCLUSION

The east of the site is occupied by the Water Treatment Works. Although there is evidence of activity dating to the Roman period (02877) its construction during the 20th century has meant that the potential for archaeological remains surviving within the footprint are unlikely. However, although modern, the water works itself is the only one of its kind in the county and possibly the country, is of heritage value and should the existing water works be significantly affected then appropriate mitigation may be considered.

The remains the Llanforda-isaf farmstead consist of upstanding walls, buildings and possible subterranean structures. The full extent of these remains could not be ascertained due to their inaccessibility and no detailed plans of the farmstead are known, though its general layout appears on maps since 1838. Woodland clearance and exposing the farmstead layout, extent, form and function, may assist in the evaluation of this heritage site and should it be significantly affected then appropriate mitigation may be considered.

Two ponds (sites 1 and 2) survive to the west and south of the site. These are likely to date from the early 19th century and could provide information on water management within in the area during this period and in the later development of the site as a water treatment works. Site 2 includes structural features and should they be significantly affected then appropriate mitigation may be considered.

As the historic landuse of much of the western side of the proposed development area appears to have been pasture, it is possible that hitherto unknown archaeological remains may exist in this area. The remains of the former aqueduct such as foundations if not removed during decommissioning, may similarly exist at the near the northern boundary of the site.

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1888 Ordnance Survey, 1:10,560 Map

1901 Ordnance Survey, 1:2500 Map

1902 Ordnance Survey, 1:10,560 Map

1926 Ordnance Survey, 1:2500 Map

1928 Ordnance Survey, 1:10,560 Map

1938 Ordnance Survey, 1:10,560 Map

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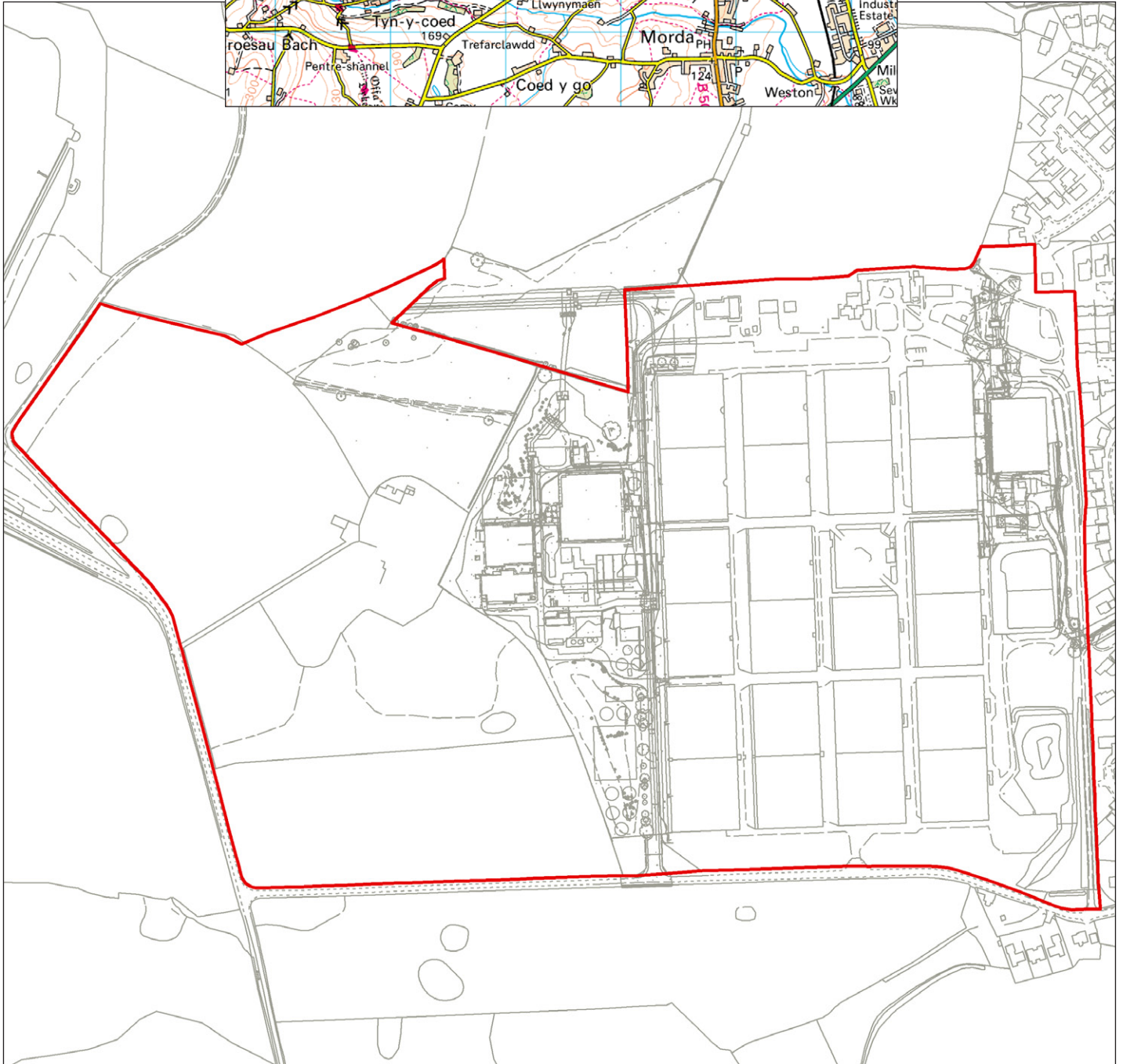
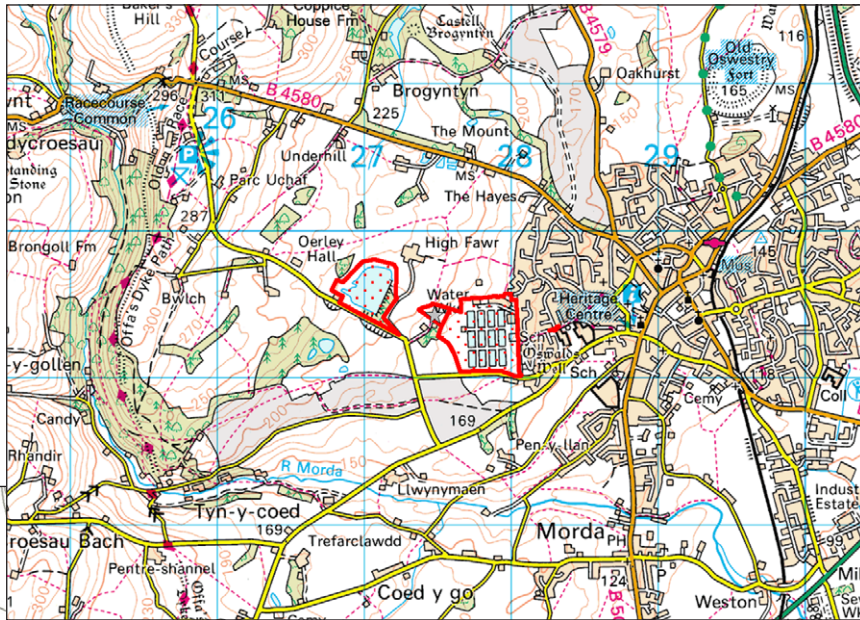
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Appendix 1: Gazetteer of Heritage Assets

Appendix 1: Gazetteer of Heritage Assets

HER No.	Name	Source	Period	NGR
00335	St Oswalds Well , Maserfield (south side)	Holy Well/ Well Head	Early Saxon – Post-Medieval	SJ 2840 2938
02877	Find Spot before 1927 of a Roman coin at Llanforda.	Findspot	Roman	SJ 2801 2927
04590	Ridge and furrow and other earthworks West of Broom Hall	Ridge and Furrow	Medieval	SJ 277 288
04626	MaesyLlan field system	Field System	Medieval – Post-medieval	SJ 2832 2897
04627	Possible house platforms at MaesyLlan	Building Platforms	Medieval-Post-medieval	SJ 2822 2891
04628	MaesyLlan enclosure	Enclosure	Medieval	SJ 2813 2880
05702	Find Spot before 1870 of a stone axe near Oswestry Grammar School	Findspot	Early Neolithic-Late Bronze Age	SJ 284 292
05709	St Oswald's Chapel, Oswald's Well lane, Oswestry	Chapel	Medieval	
05785	Medieval street system, Oswestry	Road	Medieval	SJ 2894 2970
07621	Broom Hall Park	Park	19th Century	SJ 277 288
07631	Park and Gardens at Llanforda Hall	Garden Park/ Walled Garden	17th Century Early 19th– Early 20th Century Early-Mid 19th Century	SJ 266 288
08584	Find of worked masonry, Broomhall Lane	Architectural Fragment	Post-Medieval	SJ 2833 2913
13109	Headmasters House, Oswestry School	School House	Late 18th Century	SJ 2850 2925
15339	Maes-Y-Lan Cottage	Toll House	Early 18th – Late 19th Century	SJ 280 288
16180	Broom Hall	(Former) Country House	Unknown	SJ 2815 2899
18770	Penyllan Hall, Trefonen Road	Villa	Early-Mid 19th Century	SJ 2801 2861
21491	Vyrnwy Aqueduct	Aqueduct	Late 19th – 20th Century	SJ 3171 3441
26505	Llanforda-isaf farmstead	Farmstead	Early 19th Century /Unknown	SJ 2746 2932
26506	High Fawr Farm	Farmstead	Early 19th Century/ Unknown	SJ 2734 2985

Figures 1-4



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Title:
**Site location and proposed
 development area**

Project:
Oswestry WTW

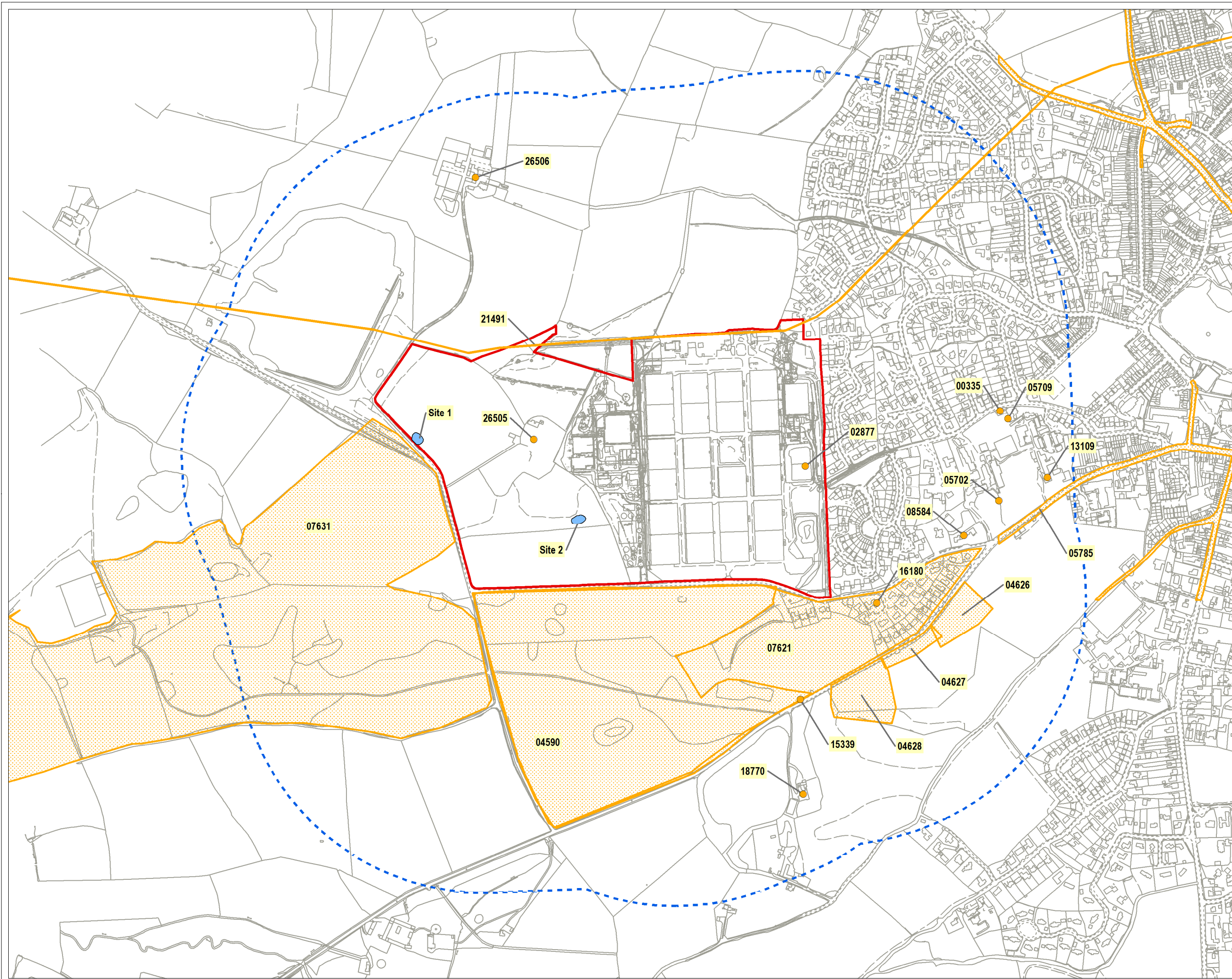
Fig. No: 1 Report: Y160/14 Drawn: KH CKD: ML Date: 17/06/14

Client:
United Utilities

Scale:
1:5,000

 Work Area





Key:

- Development Boundary
- HER Buffer Zone
- HER Points
- HER Areas
- HER Linears
- Pond



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Fig. No:	2	Report No:	Y160/14
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Title:
HER Sites within 500m buffer

Project:
Oswestry WTW

Client:
United Utilities

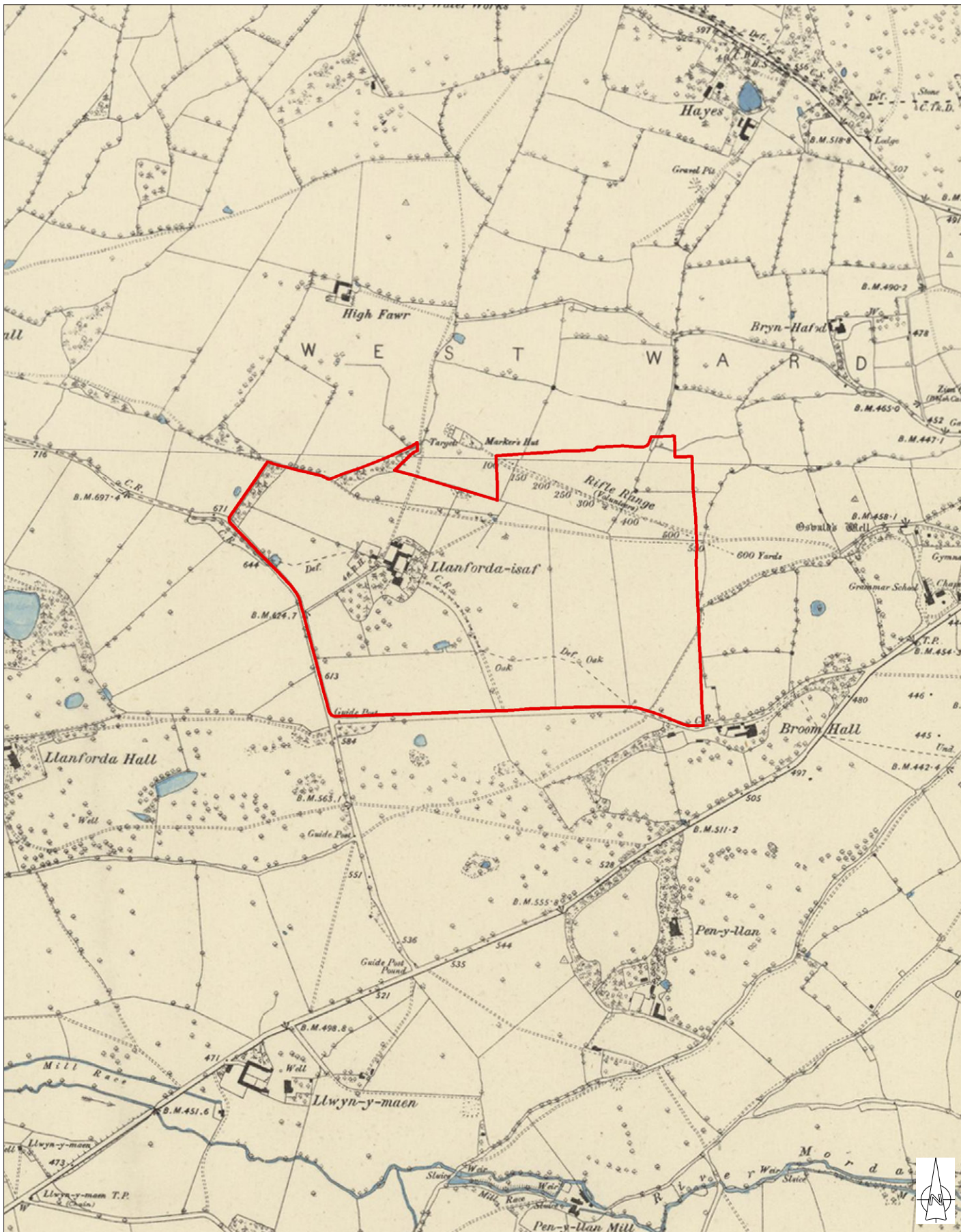
Scale at A3:
1:7,000



Drawn by:	Checked by:	Date:
KH	SW	17/06/14

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Title:
Ordnance Survey 1884 Six-inch Map

Project:
Oswestry WTW

Fig. No: **3** Report: **Y160/14** Drawn: **SW** CKD: **ML** Date: **17/06/14**

Client:
United Utilities

Scale:
1:10,000  **Work Area**





Mapping: Epoch 5, Date(s): 1969-1974 Survey scale: 1:2,500
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Title:
**Ordnance Survey 1969, 1:2500
 Map**

Project:
Oswestry WTW

Fig. No: 4 Report: Y160/14 Drawn: SW CKD: ML Date: 17/06/14

Client:
United Utilities

Scale:
1:5,000  Work Area



Plates 1 - 8



Plate 1: A man-made hollow within woodland at Llanforda-isaf farmstead



Plate 2: Revetment Wall and steps located within the woodland at Llanforda-isaf Farmstead



Plate 3: Revetment Wall and steps located within the woodland at Llanforda-isaf Farmstead



Plate 4: The remains of Llanforda-isaf Farmstead



Plate 5: The remains of Llanforda-isaf Farmstead



Plate 6: The remains of the south-east wall along the public footpath of Llanforda-isaf access track



Plate 7: Stone structure at east of the southern pond (Site 2)



Plate 8: Capping stones



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Title:	Plate. No:	Report:	Drawn:	CKD:	Date:
	5-8	Y160/14	SW	ML	17/06/14
Project:	Client:				
	United Utilities				
	Scale:				
Oswestry WTW	NA				

REGISTERED
CONSTRUCTION

