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**Archaeological monitoring and recording  
(comprehensive watching brief)  
at the church of St James the Less,  
Halse, Somerset  
NGR ST 139 277**

**12-13 January 2015**

**Project number:  
RGA 2015\_01**

**OASIS ID:  
richarda1-200102**

**Prepared by  
Richard Anderson**

**on behalf of  
the church of St. James the Less,  
Halse, Somerset**

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## Archaeological monitoring and recording (comprehensive watching brief) at the church of St James the Less, Halse, Somerset 12-13 January 2015

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### **SUMMARY**

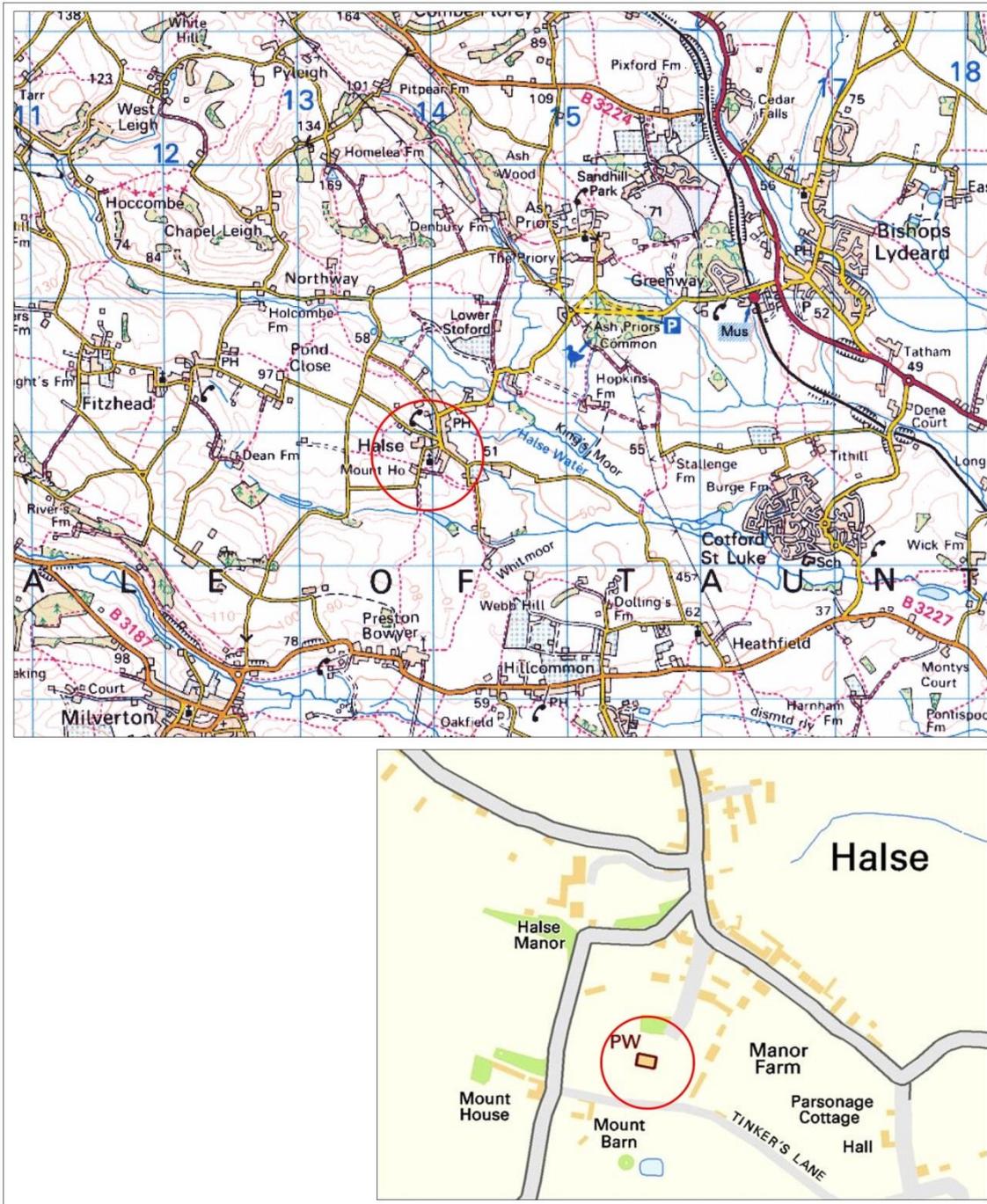
An archaeological watching brief has been undertaken during groundworks for the installation of a potable water supply across the churchyard of St James the Less, Halse, Somerset.

A single narrow trench of width 30cm, depth not exceeding 45cm, approximate length 65 metres, was excavated by mechanical digger and by hand, following where possible routes of previous modern service trenches.

The trench produced fragments of wall render concrete and broken roof tiles, the deposition of which is securely dated to post-1840 by the presence of a tile maker's stamp of Sealy's of Bridgwater, and represents the consolidation of a former footpath along the perimeter of the churchyard, present before 1840 and absent by 1904. No other material or contexts were observed.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Richard Anderson was commissioned by the Church Archaeologist, Annie Evans, to undertake an archaeological watching brief on behalf of the officers of the church of St James the Less, Halse, Somerset, during the installation of a potable water supply pipe across the churchyard of St. James'.
- 1.2. As a preliminary preparation for the provision of a toilet and servery within the church of St. James', a potable water supply was to be piped from an existing stand pipe in the south-east corner of the churchyard to the church building. Following a Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) delegation visit to the site in June 2014, a route for the pipe trench was agreed. This was to run along the eastern boundary of the churchyard for approximately 50 metres to the position of a former oil tank which had supplied a now-redundant heating system inside the church. From here the trench was to run westwards, using where possible the existing trench created for the oil pipe, for approximately 12 metres where it would enter the church via a low level entry to the basement below the north aisle. The DAC report recommendations included the advice that *'the route of the water pipe would be via the now redundant oil pipe and old excavations made for that'*, and the stipulation that *'an archaeological brief will be necessary and, again, the Church Architect will be able to arrange for this'* (Diocese of Bath and Wells 2014). In granting *de minimis* permission for the work the Archdeacon of Taunton, the Venerable John Reed, reiterated this stipulation with the condition that *'the work will be under the supervision of your Church Architect and there will be an archaeological brief as the work is carried out. You accept this as a strict condition'*. Subsequently, Richard Anderson was commissioned by Annie Evans Architects to undertake this work. As the work had been granted *de minimis* permission, and had not travelled through the secular planning process, there had not been a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared to guide this archaeological brief. However, both Richard Anderson and Church Architect Annie Evans agreed that a WSI was essential to frame the work, and the document was prepared by Richard Anderson and submitted to Linda Goodman, Churchwarden.
- 1.3. The current document presents a report of a comprehensive archaeological watching brief, informed by the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Richard Anderson (2015), with reference to *Somerset County Council Heritage Service Archaeological Handbook* (Membery *et al.* 2011) and relevant Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) and English Heritage Standards and Guidance advice.
- 1.4. The village of Halse, Somerset, is situated 7 miles to the north west of Taunton, 3 miles south west of Bishops' Lydeard. The site is centred on National Grid Reference ST 13999 27741. The church of St. James the Less occupies an elevated position of about 74 metres above sea level at the south end of the village. The underlying geology is Triassic Otter Sandstone, with a distinctive red colour, from which the church itself is built.
- 1.5. Archaeological fieldwork was undertaken by Richard Anderson on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015. Groundworks were undertaken by Mike Ford and John Hards of M & R Groundworks.



**Fig.1.** Site location. Reproduced from the 2014 Ordnance Survey Explorer map with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Richard Anderson archaeology licence no. 100056159.

## 2. Definition and Purpose of a Watching Brief

2.1 A watching brief is defined by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) as:

**“...a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons within a specified area or site on land or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.”**

2.2 The purpose of a watching brief is also defined by the CIfA:

- **“to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.**
- **to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.”**

## 3. Archaeological Background

3.1. The present church of St James the Less is largely of Perpendicular style, but shows 12<sup>th</sup> century work in the rear arch of the south door, the font, and a fragment of carved stone beneath the east window. A plain tower dates to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the north aisle was added c.1546 (VCH 1985). The extant building most probably replaced a Saxon predecessor, the position of which is unknown but was very likely on or near the footprint of the current structure.

A chantry chapel, bestowed by Robert Arundell who had also given the manor to the Hospitallers, was said in 1374 to have stood in the church until ‘twelve years ago’, namely 1362. The exact position of this chantry is not known but it may have been on the north side of the chancel in a position now covered by the 1546 north aisle, although ‘the corbels in the present arch between chancel and chapel are of the 13th century’ (Baggs *et al.* 1985). It is also possible that the chapel was a free-standing structure elsewhere in the churchyard, as is seen at other Somerset churches including the neighbouring parish of Milverton (HER PRN 43296).

The churchyard has been in use ‘since at least medieval times’ (HER PRN 43239). The churchyard also holds a group of four chest tombs, to the Prior family, which are listed Grade II (HER PRN 17456, 17457, 40166, 40167).

Immediately to the west of the churchyard is a field named Glebe Field (TA 1840, 295), which has now been incorporated into the churchyard for burials. The roadway bounding the churchyard to the west and south, part of which is known as Tinker’s Lane, is recorded as a turnpike of the Wiveliscombe Trust, believed turnpiked in 1786 (HER PRN 26255).

There does not appear to have been any prior recorded archaeological work undertaken in the churchyard.

### 3.2. Historic Environment Record

The Somerset HER holds the following records pertaining to this work at Halse St James –

Primary Record Number (PRN)	Site name
43239	Church of St James and churchyard, Halse
17456	Unidentified chest tomb
17457	Unidentified chest tomb
40166	Richard Prior chest tomb
40167	George Prior chest tomb
18186	War memorial
26255	18 <sup>th</sup> century turnpike road
43296	Church of St Michael and All Angels, churchyard cross and chantry site, Milverton

## 4. Methodology

- 4.1 A 50metre length of trench along the churchyard eastern boundary was excavated from south to north using a mini mechanical excavator with a foot-wide (30cm) bucket, operated by M & R Groundworks. Earth was removed in gradual spits, to a final depth never exceeding 45 centimetres, with spoil heaped on wooden boards along the length of the trench. It was anticipated that the old oil pipe trench would pose a potential environmental hazard, as the redundant pipe was still in situ and undoubtedly held residual oil. Therefore it was decided between the groundworkers and Richard Anderson that the pipe trench would be identified by hand digging where it was known to pass under the gravel churchyard path, following identification by Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT). The route of this trench was also informed by consultation of the churchyard grave plan, and this identified several known graves which were avoided. Once the old pipe trench was seen, it was possible to use the mechanical digger and hand excavation to create a trench which used as much as possible of the existing pipe trench without compromising the integrity of the oil pipe. This was dug eastwards to meet the first length of trench at its northernmost end. Where the redundant oil pipe passed under the churchyard path it was possible to thread the new water pipe through an existing duct sleeve, removing the need for any new excavation here. On the west side of the churchyard path it was expected that excavation would need to deviate from the oil pipe trench and cut through undisturbed ground. This work was carried out by hand. Fortunately, an electrical cable serving a lamp-post by the churchyard entrance had been dug into the ground here, so the water pipe route adopted this existing trench and again avoided cutting through undisturbed ground, passing directly alongside a concrete float placed as a base for the recently installed church heating system to meet the concrete drainage surface along the church wall base. This concrete was dug out using an electric Hilti gun. The water pipe was then to pass through a modern stone wall surrounding the basement stairs, and from here the pipe was surface mounted to conclusion, as the groundworkers agreed that to dig into the brick and concrete stairwell base would probably compromise the integrity of the stairwell itself.

- 4.2 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* published by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), December 2014, and was fully informed by the project WSI (Anderson 2015). Current Health and Safety legislation and best practice was observed and applied at all times by all site staff.
- 4.3 A photographic record of the archaeological work was compiled, and comprises digital photographs of the general appearance of the site before and during works. One photograph illustrates the Sealy's tile discovered.

## 5 Results

- 5.1 The churchyard boundary section of the trench comprised turf and very loose topsoil with much tree root infiltration in a single context, containing cinder and clinker, abundant small (<5cm) fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century rubble including concrete wall render and quarry tile, small (<5cm) fragments of roof slate and an incomplete fired clay roof tile made by Sealy's of Bridgwater.
- 5.2 The second section of trench, running east-west, comprised the loose earth infill of modern service trenches topped with turf. An earlier, iron, oil pipe was present, just below the very recent plastic-coated copper oil pipe. No archaeological features or artefacts were observed.

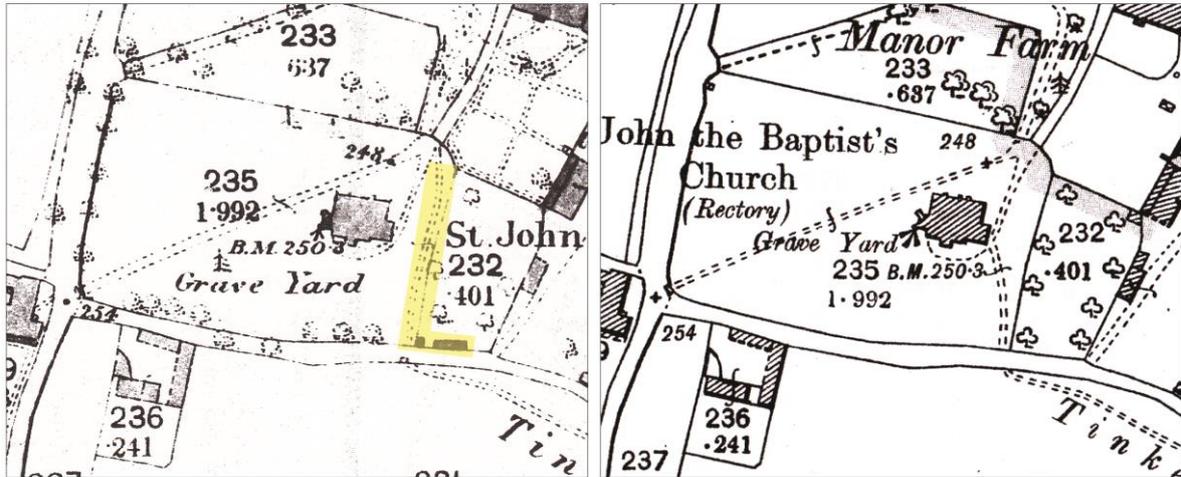
## 6 Finds

- 6.1 An incomplete fired red clay roof tile, with a stamped makers' mark reading 'SEALY'S PATENT' was recovered from the churchyard boundary section of trench. It is illustrated in figure 3, below. The mark identifies the tile as having been made by John Sealy of Bridgwater, who is known from directories to have operated between 1840 and 1869 under the name John Sealy and Sons (Murless 2000; Crew 2004).

## 7 Discussion and Conclusions

- 7.1 The water pipe trench had been planned in the hope of avoiding the disturbance of any archaeological features or inhumations. In this it has succeeded admirably. The section which runs along the eastern boundary of the churchyard lay directly over a former churchyard footpath, present in 1840 but absent by the Ordnance Survey map of 1904. The remainder of the new pipe trench followed the routes of various modern services and disturbances.
- 7.2 The fragmentary rubble uncovered along the eastern churchyard boundary lay directly below turf level and was mixed with the natural loose red soil. The presence of the Sealy's roof tile presents a date for deposition of no earlier than 1840. A small outbuilding, seen on the Ordnance Survey of 1888, had been demolished by 1904, and it is possible that this material was used to consolidate the footpath in the later years of its use.
- 7.3 The present work has avoided disturbing the potential archaeology of the site due to the re-use of modern service trenches, but it must be assumed that future work is likely to threaten undisturbed contexts. The location of the Arundell chantry chapel is

still not known, and there is as yet no evidence of the position of a possible Saxon predecessor to the present church.



**Fig.2.** (left) Extract from Ordnance Survey first edition map sheet 69:NE of 1888, with churchyard boundary path and adjacent outbuildings in place and highlighted.  
(right) Extract from Ordnance Survey second edition map sheet 69:4 of 1904, showing absence of boundary path and outbuildings.  
The church is shown as 'StJohn the Baptist', and was rededicated to 'St James the Less' at some point in the early C20, exact date unknown but presumably after 1904.  
(Somerset Heritage Centre)

## 8 Archive

- 8.1 The archive currently resides with Richard Anderson, and comprises 18 digital photographs in .jpg format, a photographic register, and the incomplete Sealy's roof tile. Printed and digital copies of the report and photographic archive will be submitted to the client and to the Somerset County Council Historic Environment Record (Som HER). An OASIS report has been compiled, under the OASIS ID richarda1-200102.
- 8.2 Richard Anderson retains the copyright to this report with all rights reserved, excepting the granting of an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the report in all matters relating to the project detailed herein.

## 9 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Grateful thanks to Mike Ford and John Hards of M & R Groundworks for their skilful, professional work, their very willing cooperation with the archaeological requirements, and for their sensitivity to the nature of the site.

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**Fig.3.** Incomplete fired clay roof tile by John Sealy's and Sons of Bridgwater, showing the makers' stamp used between 1840 and 1869. (*Photograph: author*).

## Appendix 1: OASIS Summary Sheet

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### Printable version

**OASIS ID: richarda1-200102**

#### Project details

Project name	Archaeological monitoring and recording at the church of St James the Less, Halse, Somers
Short description of the project	Report on an archaeological watching brief undertaken during groundworks for the installation of a potable water supply to the church of St James the Less, Halse, Somerset. About 65metres of shallow (<50cm deep, 30cm wide) trench revealed no archaeological contexts.
Project dates	Start: 12-01-2015 End: 13-01-2015
Previous/future work	Not known / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	43239 - Related HER No.
Any associated project reference codes	1060602 - NHLE No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Monument type	CHURCHYARD Medieval
Monument type	CHURCHYARD Post Medieval
Monument type	CHURCHYARD Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Faculty jurisdiction

#### Project location

Country	England
Site location	SOMERSET TAUNTON DEANE HALSE Church of St James the Less
Postcode	TA4 3AD
Study area	0 Square metres

Site coordinates ST 13999 27741 51.0420399914 -3.22686254871 51 02 31 N 003 13 36 W Point

**Project creators**

Name of Organisation Richard Anderson archaeology  
Project brief originator Annie Evans Architects  
Project design originator Richard Anderson archaeology  
Project director/manager Richard Anderson  
Project supervisor Richard Anderson  
Type of sponsor/funding body Church of St James the Less, Halse  
Name of sponsor/funding body Church of St James the Less, Halse

**Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists? No  
Digital Archive recipient Somerset Historic Environment Service  
Digital Contents "none"  
Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography"  
Paper Archive recipient Somerset Historic Environment Service  
Paper Contents "none"  
Paper Media available "Report"

**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)  
Title Archaeological monitoring and recording (comprehensive watching brief) at the church of St James the Less, Halse, Somerset  
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## **OASIS:**

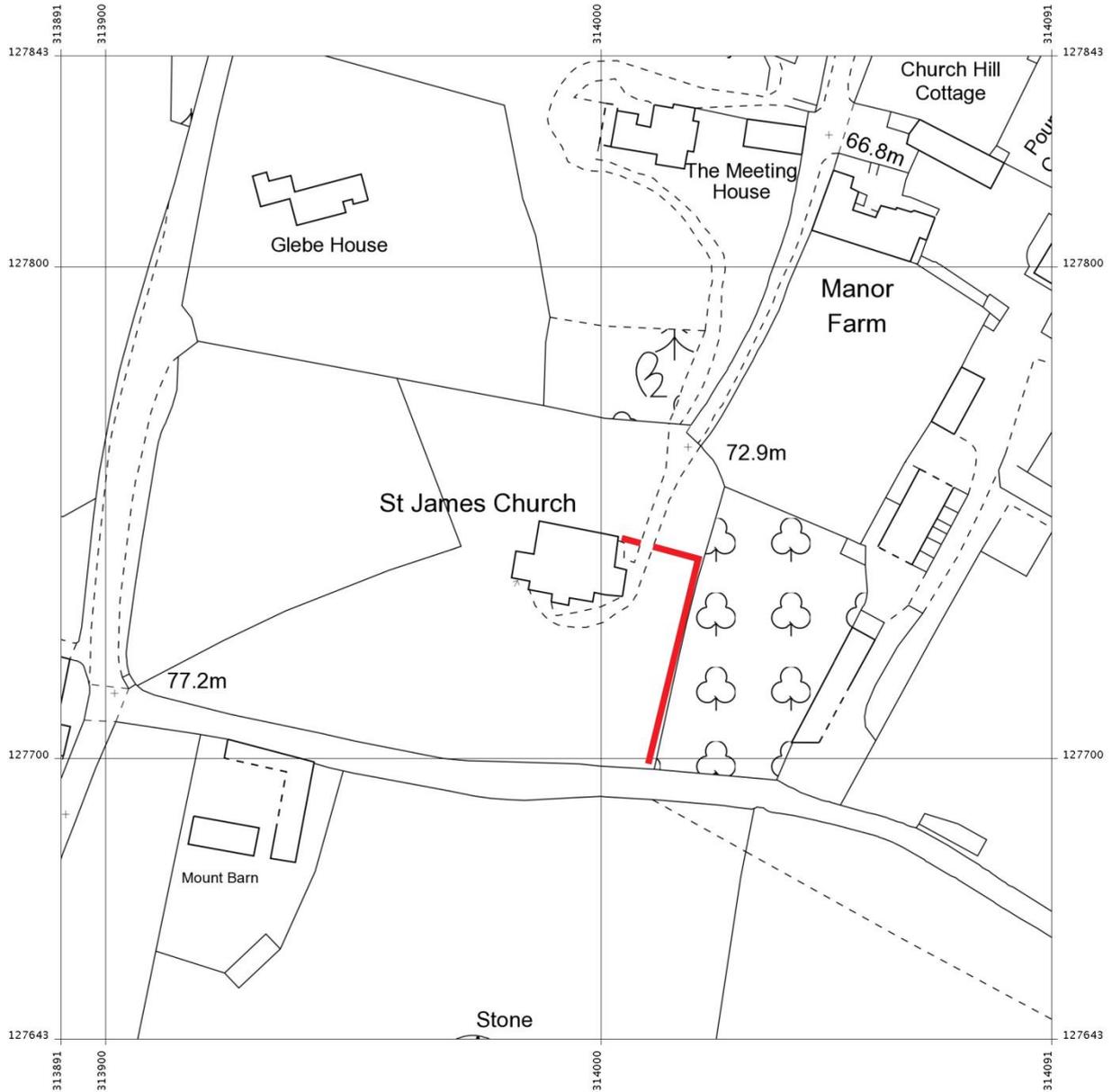
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## Appendix 2: Photographic Register

halse_wb_jan_2015 (1)	Route of pipe trench prior to excavation, churchyard eastern boundary, showing existing stand pipe and tap. Gate opens onto Tinker's Lane, former turnpike road. Facing S.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (2)	Route of pipe trench prior to excavation, churchyard eastern boundary, and general view of eastern churchyard. Boards have been laid for passage of mini excavator. Facing S.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (3)	Route of pipe trench prior to excavation, churchyard eastern boundary, and general view of eastern churchyard. Boards have been laid for passage of mini excavator. Facing S.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (4)	Position of former oil storage tank, on eastern boundary of churchyard amongst trees and shrubs, prior to excavation. Facing N.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (5)	Supports of former oil storage tank, on eastern boundary of churchyard amongst trees and shrubs, prior to excavation. Facing N.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (6)	Supports of former oil storage tank, on eastern boundary of churchyard amongst trees and shrubs, prior to excavation. Facing W.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (7)	Position of former oil storage tank, on eastern boundary of churchyard amongst trees and shrubs, prior to excavation. Facing NE.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (8)	Route of pipe trench E-W across churchyard and footpath, prior to excavation. Facing N.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (9)	Route of pipe trench E-W across churchyard and footpath, prior to excavation. Facing NW.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (10)	Route of pipe trench at E end of north aisle, alongside heating installation, prior to excavation. Facing NW.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (11)	Route of pipe trench at E end of north aisle, alongside heating installation, prior to excavation. Facing W.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (12)	Excavation of pipe trench along E churchyard boundary in progress by mini mechanical digger, operated by John Hards of M & R Groundworks. Facing N.

halse_wb_jan_2015 (13)	Excavation of pipe trench by hand, by Mike Ford of M & R Groundworks, and mini mechanical digger, operated by John Hards of M & R Groundworks, across churchyard at footpath. Blue copper redundant oil pipe can be seen in situ. Facing E.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (14)	Excavation of pipe trench by hand, by Mike Ford of M & R Groundworks, and mini mechanical digger, operated by John Hards of M & R Groundworks, across churchyard at E side of footpath. Blue copper and grey iron redundant oil pipe can be seen in situ. Facing E.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (15)	Excavation of pipe trench by hand, by Mike Ford of M & R Groundworks, and mini mechanical digger, operated by John Hards of M & R Groundworks, across churchyard at E side of footpath. Blue copper and grey iron redundant oil pipe can be seen in situ. Facing E.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (16)	Excavation of pipe trench by hand, by Mike Ford of M & R Groundworks, across churchyard at W side of footpath. Blue copper and grey iron redundant oil pipe can be seen in situ. Pipe trench follows electric cable service trench, with cable visible at corner of concrete plinth, at top of picture. Facing W.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (17)	Excavation of pipe trench by hand, by Mike Ford of M & R Groundworks, across churchyard alongside concrete float site of heating installation. Pipe trench follows electric cable service trench, then cuts through concrete drainage surface, stopping 15cm short of church wall. The trench, depth 45cm, has filled with rainwater following a sudden downpour. Black electric cable, serving church gateway lamppost, can be seen alongside water-filled trench, and runs alongside the concrete float, providing the existing service trench into which the new water pipe was laid. Facing W.
halse_wb_jan_2015 (18)	Studio photograph of incomplete red fired clay roof tile, marked with 'Sealy's Patent' stamp. Product of Sealey's of Bridgwater, 1840-1869. From churchyard eastern boundary trench.

### Appendix 3: Position of trench, scale 1:1250



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Metres

1:1250

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