





Church View Barn, Denchworth, Wantage, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Prepared for:

Scottish and Southern Energy – Power Distribution

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Wessex Archaeology Reference: 108940.01

June 2015

Report reference: 108940.01



Quality Assurance

Project Code	108940	Accession Code		Client Ref.	
Application	N/A Report approved by OCC 26 th June 2015	Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference	438094, 19175	54	

Version	Status*	Prepared by	Checked and approved by	Approver's signature	Date
v01	F	JIMcK	AIM	delytranj	25 th June 2015
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^{*} I = Internal Draft; E = External Draft; F = Final

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Church View Barn, Denchworth, Wantage, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology undertook an archaeological watching brief at Church View Barn, Denchworth, Oxfordshire during the diversion of the electricity supply to the property. The Site was centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 438094, 191754.

The diversion of the electric power supply involved the removal of an overhead cable and its replacement by underground cables in a trench running along the western margins of the village green and the northern boundary between Church View Barn and the property to the north. All are situated to the west and north of the 12th century church of St. James and its cemetery, which it was believed may originally have extended beyond its current boundaries.

The trench crossed worked garden soils along its southern side (adjacent with the Old School House), and cut through the edge of the make-up for the road bordering the west side of the village green. Evidence suggestive of the presence of a former water-source and possibly a waterlogged area was revealed towards the north end of the village green, and the adjacent road-way may have been deliberately raised to avoid flooding.

The watching brief revealed no evidence for human remains either *in situ* or redeposited. No significant archaeological features or deposits were observed. The few residual finds recovered were of late 19th – early 20th century date.



Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Scottish and Southern Energy – Power Distribution, and the assistance and co-operation of Peter Smeaton and Bob Binnie is gratefully acknowledged. The project was monitored by Hugh Coddington, Principle Archaeologist at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).

The project was managed on behalf of Wessex Archaeology by Andrew Manning. The watching brief and reporting were undertaken by Jacqueline McKinley; finds assessment by Lorraine Mepham. The illustrations were prepared by Nancy Dixon.



Church View Barn, Denchworth, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the diversion of the electric supply at Church View Barn, Denchworth, Wantage, Oxfordshire, OX12 0DX, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 438094, 191754 (hereafter the Site) (Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 Diversion of the electric supply involved the removal of an overhead cable and its replacement by underground cables to be located in a trench running along the western margins of the village green and the northern boundary between Church View Barn and the property to the north (Church Cottage), all situated to the west and north of the 12th century church of St. James and its cemetery.
- 1.1.3 The proposed works were 'permitted works', which did not require planning consent. However, early consultation was held between Scottish and Southern Energy and Hugh Coddington, Principle Archaeologist at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). The advice from OCC was that given the proximity of the works to the graveyard associated with the church, and uncertainty to the former extent of the graveyard, there was the potential for human remains to be discovered, as well as a lower potential for other archaeological remains.
- 1.1.4 Accordingly, it was advised that an archaeological watching brief was carried out during the course of the ground works to ensure that archaeological recording of any human remains or other material could be undertaken.
- 1.1.5 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), setting out the strategy and methodology for the archaeological watching brief, conforming with current best practice and to the guidance (outlined in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* ('MoRPHE', English Heritage 2008) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA) *Standard and guidance: archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a)), was submitted to and approved by the Principal Archaeologist at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) prior to commencement of the ground-works.

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 Denchworth is situated approximately 4km north of Wantage within the Vale of the White Horse, Oxfordshire. The Site was located at the southern end of the village, at the end of Hyde Road, on land immediately adjacent to the 12th century Parish Church of St. James and its cemetery.
- 1.2.2 The Site is centred on NGR 438094, 191754 at approximately 74m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology is mapped as sand and gravel of Wolvercote member overlying Gault Formation mudstone (BGS Online Geology map).



1.2.3 The cable trench skirted the small triangular village green from the existing distribution line wooden pole located on the north side of the boundary hedge of the Old School House, 4 m to the west of the churchyard gate (**Cover plate**). Initially following the hedge line to the west, the trench turned northwards along the margin between the green and the road. At the north end of the green the trench turned east across the access to Church View Barn and through the property to the existing distribution pole approximately 24m from the entrance (**Figure 1**).

1.3 Archaeological and Historic background

Designated Heritage Assets

- 1.3.1 Consultation of the English Heritage datasets and the Oxfordshire Historical Environment Record (OHER) confirmed there are no Scheduled Monuments within the vicinity of the Site.
- 1.3.2 A number of listed buildings are recorded in the immediate area including the Grade II* church of St. James and the Grade II* Denchworth Manor. A further 12 Grade II buildings and a number of Grade II structures are also listed including the stump of the 14th/15th century limestone village cross, a late 17th century gravestone in St. James' churchyard, a mid-19th century cast-iron village pump and a telephone kiosk.

Historic background

- 1.3.3 The Abingdon Chronicle records that Caedwalla of Wessex granted *Deniceswurth* to Abingdon Abbey in the late 7th century and that this was confirmed by Coenwulf of Mercia in the 9th century. The Domesday Book records that by 1086 the manor was held by Henry de Ferrer and comprised a small manor with 10 households, each with a quite large tax assessment (5 geld units), while South Denchworth contained 19 households and a church.
- 1.3.4 The manor remained within the de Ferrer's family until the late 13th century when it passed to the Earls of Lancaster. Thereafter it was held by the Tubney family; sold to the Hyde Family in the mid-15th century; to Sir William Cockayne in 1614; to Gregory Deering in 1663; and to Worcester College, Oxford in 1758, who held the manor until the 1920s. (Page and Ditchfield, 1924 280–4).
- 1.3.5 Denchworth Parish includes the Manor of Suthcote, to the south of the village; the name evolved from Sudecote in the 13th century through Southcote and Circote in the 17th century to the current Circourt. It was recorded in 947 when it was held by Wulfric thereafter passing to Abingdon Abbey who held it until the Dissolution.
- 1.3.6 The school, situated immediately west of the church, was established in the mid-19th century; the playground incorporating what now comprises the small village green (**Cover and Back Plates**). This northern, triangular half of the playground assumed its current role in the first decade of the 20th century. Thereafter the limits of the playground followed the line of the extant hedge which is in-line with the northern limits of the churchyard, the gate to which lies at its north-east corner. The school itself remained open until the 1970s when it changed to its current use as a private residence.

Archaeological background

1.3.7 A number of medieval remains and structures survive within Denchworth and the immediate vicinity. Three moated sites are known: the Grade II* Denchworth Manor (OHER No. 9610) is late 15th century in date with 17th century alterations; to the north at



Hyde Copse (HER No. 2614), some 350m south-east of Hyde Farm (OHER No. 2741) the probable manor house of the Hyde family in the 14th century; and to the south, *Southcote* or Circourt Manor (OHER No. 2775) at Upper Circourt Farm. The 1801 Inclosure map recorded three sides of the moat, and a long, low timber-framed thatched farmhouse. Little remains of the moat today and the farmhouse was demolished in the 1930s.

- 1.3.8 The same location includes the remains of Southcote deserted medieval village (DMV) (OHER No. 9018), considered a Class IV DMV, which contained a substantial number of households taxed in 1327 and 1379, deserted c. 1450–1700 (Beresford and Hurst 1971 12). A medieval rabbit warren (OHER No. 2750) is also recorded in a paddock known as 'Coney Close' (recorded in 1649) at Upper Circourt Farm. Local tradition suggests that the 'Black Death' was the main factor for the desertion and led to the movement of the Hyde family north, away from the village and the church.
- 1.3.9 The current church of St. James is likely to have been constructed on the site of the church recorded at Domesday. A small part of the southern wall of the nave is of 12th century date, but in the 13th century the nave appears to have been rebuilt and lengthened towards the west; the north tower and north chapel were apparently added during the same century. The south transept was built in the 14th century, and in the 15th century the chancel was rebuilt with the north chapel and, possibly, the outer walls of the south transept.
- 1.3.10 A number of medieval remains and buildings are situated around the church including the Grade II listed village cross stump (OHER No. 9608) situated at the north end of the village green (Cover Plate). Of c. 14th/15th century date, the cross was relocated here in 1998 from the top of Brook Lane (approx. 100m to the north) due to repeated damage. A watching brief undertaken during the repositioning (AOC 1998) recorded original stone mason's marks on the base stone but no other finds were recovered. To the south of the church there is a late 15th/early 16th century cross (OHER No. 9609) with a modern head.

2 AMS AND METHODS

2.1 Methodology

- 2.1.1 The aims of the watching brief were to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains, their nature, condition, extent and date, and ensure their preservation by record.
- 2.1.2 The detailed methods for the watching brief were set out in the WSI (WA T19809.01). The close proximity of the churchyard was of particular concern (**Plate 1**). This may originally have been larger that it currently is, and any human remains encountered were to be recorded and rapidly assessed *in situ* by the on-site osteoarchaeologist.
- 2.1.3 The watching brief involved monitoring the hand (southern segment only) and machine excavation (by tooth-less ditching bucket) of the 0.45-0.60m wide trench. A full digital photographic record was made, together with written and drawn records as conditions allowed.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken over two days between the 20th and 21st April 2015. Originally, the trenching was to extend across the field plot within the property itself, but this *c*. 24 m length of trench (**Figure 1**) had already been cut by the landowner and was consequently only subject to observation.
- 3.1.2 The 6.50m length of hand-excavated trench, located along the hedge-line from the support pole to the road at the south end of the village green, cut (to 0.50m below ground level) through a heavily bioturbated (roots) mid-brown, silty clay loam garden soil (03; (Plate 2). The layer contained occasional fragments of late 19th-20th century material, including pottery, brick and an iron nail.
- 3.1.3 The 20m length of machine-excavated trench along the boundary between the village green and the road predominantly cut through 0.50m deep road make-up layers over which the turf (0.10m depth) had encroached.
- 3.1.4 The make-up layers (**04/05/06**) comprised mid and dark greyish brown silty clay matrices, with common small subangular gravel in the upper 0.15-0.20m depth, and moderate-occasional small-medium subangular stone (sandstone) in the lower 0.20-0.30m (**Plate 3**). In places these two levels were separated by lenses of yellow gritty sand and black silty clay with charcoal flecks (**Plate 4**). Fragments of unfrogged modern brick and tile were recovered at all levels, with occasional fragments of 19-early 20th century pottery, iron nails and a 1921 penny (base of **05**).
- 3.1.5 Where bottomed, the make-up layers overlay the natural clay (**07** and **08**) with the exception of a 0.50m width comprising a dense stone 'outcrop' situated 8.50m from the south end of the trench. The fractured stone was of the same type (sandstone) seen in the make-up layers and may have been natural (no well-defined edges to 'outcrop'; **Plate 4**).
- 3.1.6 At the north end of the village green, adjacent to the relocated village cross, an upright metal post-pipe, with a large stone apparently acting as packing, was observed in the west-facing section (09). At the same level, within the trench itself, the remnant of a wooden post were also encountered (Figure 2; Plates 5 and 6). The location of these features, evident from the turf line and 20th century in date, corresponded with the point at which ground-water began to rise from the base of the trench. Anecdotal evidence suggests this may have been the former location of a water pump.
- 3.1.7 The clay natural occurred as a 'clean' yellow matrix (**08**) in part of the road-side trench and to the east as it crossed the access to Church View Barn, continuing along the northern boundary of the property within the trench excavated by the owner.
- 3.1.8 For a *c*. 3m length of the road-side trench, at the north end of the village green adjacent to **09**, the clay is dark grey with an organic content indicative of former/extant waterlogging. Some of the natural to the south in the road-side trench had a similar appearance. No finds were recovered from the clay.
- 3.1.9 Observations in the trench cut by the owner of Church View Barn within the property boundaries showed a 0.70m depth of worked soils (dark brown loam) below the turf line along most of its length. The transition between the worked soil and yellow clay (08) coincides with the eastern boundary of the property to the north, where make-up layers for



paths/hard standing overlay a small pit (02) with a fill of dark grey slightly silty clay from which a few animal bones were recovered (Plate 7).

4 FINDS

4.1 Finds

4.1.1 A small quantity of finds was recovered during the watching brief. These comprised fragments of pottery, ceramic brick and tile, glass, metalwork and animal bone. All datable material was of post-medieval date, and the more closely datable items (pottery) suggest that there is little or nothing earlier than 19th century. None of these finds have been retained.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Conclusion

- 5.1.1 The Watching Brief revealed no evidence for human remains either *in situ* or redeposited, indicating the cemetery is unlikely to have extended to the north-west across the area currently forming the village green.
- 5.1.2 The presence of ground-water at the north end of the road-side trench, in conjunction with implied waterlogging of the natural clay, suggests the presence of a former water-source and possibly a waterlogged area. The potential presence of a water pump is also suggested but was not investigated.
- 5.1.3 The road level may have been deliberately raised to avoid flooding.
- 5.1.4 No finds or features of archaeological significance were revealed.

6 ARCHIVE

6.1 Preparation and deposition

- 6.1.1 The project archive will be deposited in due course with Oxfordshire Museum Service, under the accession code OXCMS: 2015.98.
- 6.1.2 The complete Site archive, which includes paper records, photographic records, and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Oxfordshire Museum Service, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014b; Brown 2011; ADS 2013)
- 6.1.3 The complete Site archive is currently held at the Wessex Archaeology offices in Salisbury under the WA project code 108940.

6.2 Security copy

In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011); on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital



preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

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On-line sources

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http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/ - Previous archaeological work

http://www.british-history.ac.uk/ - History of Denchworth (Victory County Histories)



APPENDIX 1: OASIS SUMMARY

OASIS ID: wessexar1-215717

Project details

Project name Church View Barn, Denchworth, Oxfordshire

Short description of the project

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Scottish and Southern Energy - Power Distribution, to undertake an archaeological watching brief at

Church View Barn, Oxfordshire. The Watching Brief revealed no evidence for human remains either in situ or redeposited. Evidence suggestive of the presence of a former water-source and possibly a waterlogged area was revealed in part of the trench. The adjacent 19th/early 20th century roadway may have been deliberately raised to avoid flooding. No significant

archaeological features or deposits were observed.

Project dates Start: 20-04-2015 End: 21-04-2015

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference

codes

108940 - Contracting Unit No.

Site status None

Current Land use Other 14 - Recreational usage

NONE None Monument type

Significant Finds POTTERY Post Medieval

Project location

Country England

OXFORDSHIRE VALE OF WHITE HORSE DENCHWORTH Church view Site location

Barn

Postcode OX12 0DX

Study area 0.45 Hectares

Site coordinates SU 38107 91766 51.6229528249 -1.44947127608 51 37 22 N 001 26 58

W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 73.00m Max: 74.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Wessex Archaeology

Project brief originator

with advice from County Archaeologist

Project design originator

Wessex Archaeology

Project

Andrew Manning

director/manager

Project supervisor J.I. Mckinley



Type of sponsor/funding

body

Developer

Name of sponsor/funding

body

Scottish and Southern Energy - Power Distribution

Project archives

Physical Archive

Exists?

No

Digital Archive

recipient

Oxfordshire Museums Service

Digital Contents "none"

Digital Media available

"Survey","Text"

Paper Archive

recipient

Oxfordshire Museums Service

Paper Contents

aper content

"none"

Paper Media available

"Context sheet", "Notebook - Excavation', 'Research', 'General

Notes","Photograph","Report"

Project bibliography 1

Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Publication type

Title Church View Barn, Denworth, Wantage, Oxfordshire: Archaeological

watching brief report

Author(s)/Editor(s) Mckinley, J.I.

Other bibliographic

details

108940.01

Date 2015

Issuer or publisher We

Wessex Archaeology

Place of issue or

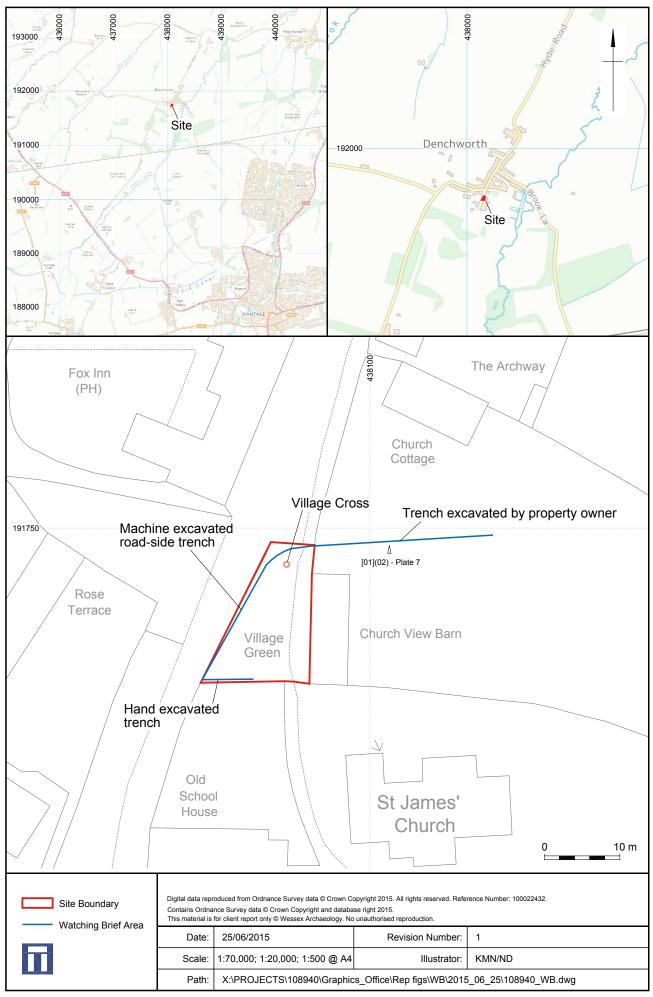
publication

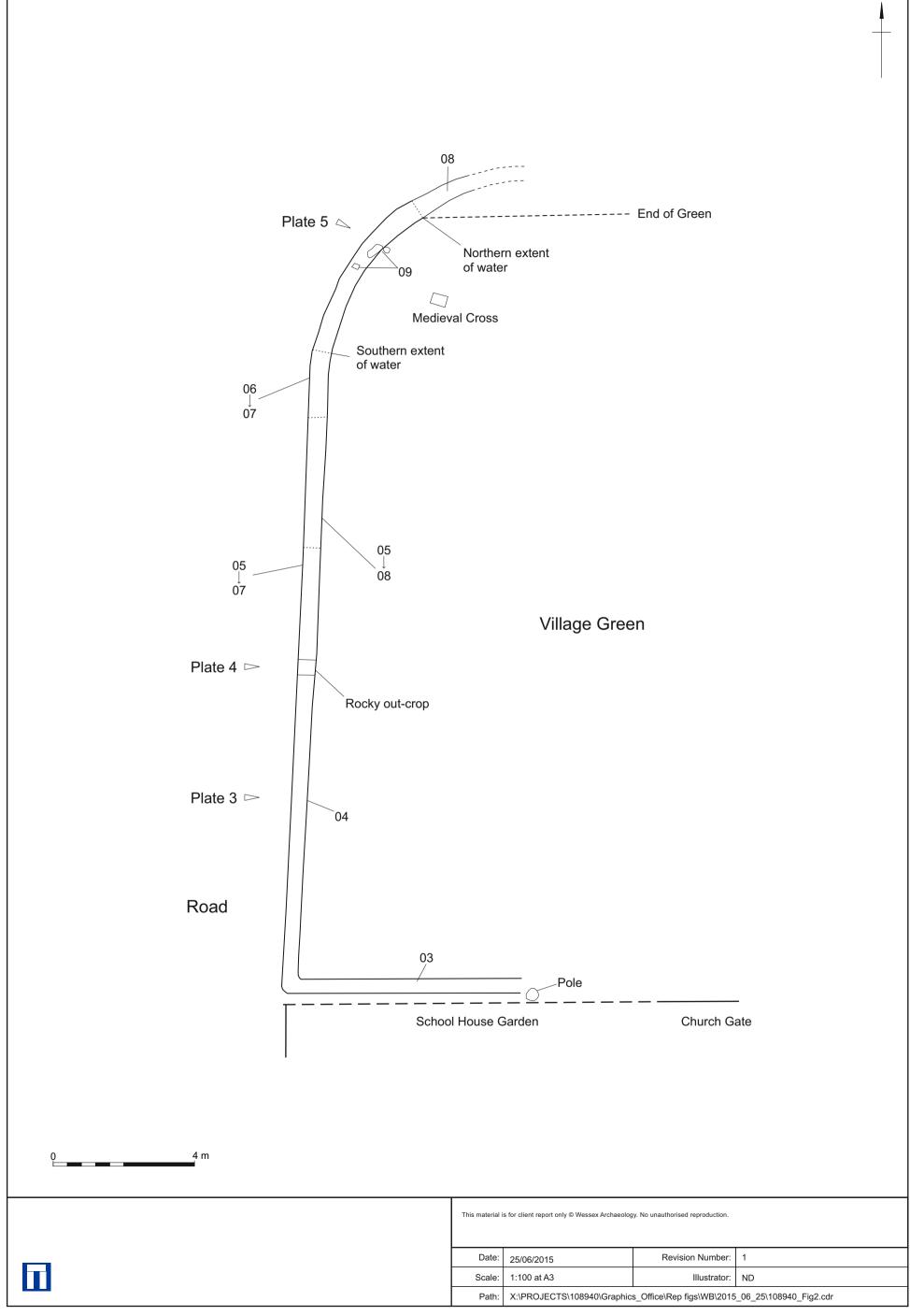
Salisbury

Description Short illustrated watching brief report, approx. 11 pages

Entered by Andrew Manning (a.manning@wessexarch.co.uk)

Entered on 25 June 2015





Trench plan with plate locations



Plate 1: View of the village green and Church View Barn from the south showing the close proximity of the churchyard

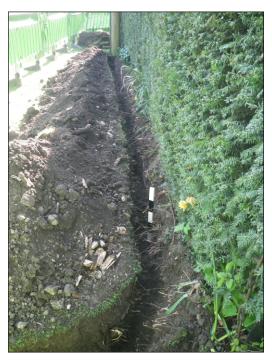


Plate 2: Southern section of trench from support pole to road; garden soil (03)

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Plate 3: West facing section through road-side trench showing variations in road make-up $(\mathbf{04})$; 2.75m from south end



Plate 4: West facing section through road-side trench showing variations in road make-up $(\mathbf{04})$ and band of compact stone across base; 4.50m from south end

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Plate 5: Metal post-pipe and stone packing (09) at north end of village green with village cross in background



Plate 6: View of road-side trench from north showing post-pipe and packing (09) and ground water

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Plate 7: South-facing section through the trench on the northern property boundary of Church View Barn showing pit $\bf 02$

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