

**Brentford Waterside Block A  
Watching Brief for French Drain  
St Lawrence Churchyard  
Brentford  
TW8 8EW**

Site Code: BJB18  
NGR: 517416 177286

Report on an archaeological watching brief

**Sign-off History:**

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# Summary

On the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of January, MOLA monitored groundworks associated with the construction of a french drain on the northern wall of St Lawrence Church, High Street, Brentford in London borough of Hounslow.

The groundworks uncovered four stone ledgers with headers and footings and another potential fifth burial. The excavations reached a maximum depth of 0.50m below Ground Level (BGL). The gravestones uncovered are being processed, the results of which will appear in another report.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Site background

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- 1.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was carried out by MOLA at Block A of the Brentford Waterside site, St Lawrence Church, Brentford TW8 8EW (NGR 517403, 177288, Figure 3) on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2023. The aim of this watching brief was to ensure human remains were not disturbed and to record deposits revealed during excavations to lay down a French drain along the southeastern wall of St Lawrence Church. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Ballymore.
- 1.1.2 A written archaeological Enhanced Desk-Based Assessment was previously prepared, which covered the whole area of the site (MOLA 2019). This document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site. A previous watching brief was carried out within the site on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2022
- 1.1.3 This document reports the results of the watching brief.

## 1.2 Planning background

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- 1.2.1 The watching brief was undertaken as best practice in accordance with methodologies set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation which formed the project design for the previous archaeological work in Block A (see section 1.2, MOLA 2021). To summarise here:
- 1.2.2 Block A is located within the archaeological priority areas (APA's): The Isleworth, Syon Park and Brentford APA and the Staines Road/London Road – Line of a Roman road (APA)

## 1.3 Scope of the watching brief

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- 1.3.1 An archaeological watching brief is normally a limited fieldwork exercise. It is not the same as full excavation, though individual features may be fully excavated.
- 1.3.2 The watching brief was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for watching brief specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA, 2014).

## 2 Topographical and historical background

- 2.1.1 A detailed description of the geology, archaeology and history of the site was provided in the Enhanced Desk Based Assessment (MOLA 2019) and in the WSI (MOLA 2021)/ A brief resume is provided herein.
- 2.1.2 The ground level lies at c 5.0m Ordnance Datum (OD).
- 2.1.3 Previous geoarchaeological investigations south of the site have dated alluvium deposits to the medieval and post-medieval periods and suggested that the site has low paleoenvironmental potential. Stratigraphy is considered to comprise 1.5-2m made ground, overlying Langley Silt and alluvium.
- 2.1.4 Block A contains the Grade II\* Listed St. Lawrence Church, associated burial ground and the former Vicarage, St Lawrence House. It is described in the National Heritage /List for England as having a 15th century tower of Kentish Ragstone, an 18th century body with 19th century additions. The main burial ground lies to the south of the church.
- 2.1.5 Although the majority of the Brentford Waterside Development site lies within the ancient parish of Ealing, Block A lies within 'New Brentford'. Until 1721 it remained part of the Hanwell Parish following which it was made into a separate ecclesiastical parish. Eventually the parish was absorbed into the administration of Greater London Borough of Hounslow.
- 2.1.6 Brentford itself has known Bronze Age and Roman settlement with the medieval and post-medieval historic centres located close to the site. A Roman Road connecting London to Silchester lies north of the current High Street.
- 2.1.7 Previous archaeological evaluation in Blocks, B, C, E-F and K identified Roman, medieval, 18th/19th and 20th century remains.
- 2.1.8 In 2021 an excavation was undertaken, comprising the of the area east of St Lawrence's church containing part of the "Old Burial Gound" and an area outside of the burial ground to the east and the "New Burial Ground" to the south and east of the church (MOLA in prep).
- 2.1.9 A pair of northwest- southeast aligned Roman ditches which had previously been identified in the evaluation were excavated in the north-east area of site.
- 2.1.10 Structural features were excavated dating to the 19th century including the foundations of a mortuary chapel in the southwest area of site, brick and concrete vicarage foundations in the northeast area of site and brick walls and floors associated with building belonging to the Ronalds family and their garden nurseries.
- 2.1.11 Over 400 burials dating from 17th to 19th, were uncovered in the Old Burial ground. The new burial ground contained over 600 burials all of which dated from 1884 to 1973.

## 3 Results of the watching brief

- 3.1.1 The excavation works were carried out alongside a raised bed by the northern wall of the church.
- 3.1.2 The turf was broken out and cleared by contractors under MOLA supervision. The area alongside the northern wall was excavated by hand by the contractors, and monitored by a member of staff from MOLA
- 3.1.3 Because of the nature of the fieldwork it was not possible to accurately measure/calculate OS OD levels for features recorded.
- 3.1.4 The excavations reached a maximum depth of 0.50m below ground level and was through garden soil mixed with rubbish and masonry fragments. The excavation uncovered 4 casket shaped stone ledger (Photo 1, Figure 4) with head and foot markers. A fifth pair of head and foot markers were identified without the stone ledger, suggesting that 5 potential graves are along the northern wall within the raised bed.
- 3.1.5 Memorials 13 and 14 which were previously identified were seen to be portions of two stone ledgers emerging above the ground surface, with the other ledgers and headstones being completely covered by the garden soil deposit.
- 3.1.6 All of the headstones were truncated/broken possibly at the former ground level during previous landscaping or gardening.
- 3.1.7 Some unstratified bones present in the garden soil, it was uncertain whether they were human or animal though given then context they could be human. These were collected but not removed from site, and were to be reburied during backfilling. One headstone fragment with inscription was been found likely not in situ but placed during landscaping.
- 3.1.8 The most easterly grave abutted the northern church wall and its foot marker was incorporated into the extension building. This suggests that the grave predates the extension of the church.



*Fig 1 East facing shot of fourth ledger*



*Fig 2 West facing shot of first three ledgers exposed*

## 4 Archaeological potential

- 4.1.1 The graves uncovered appear to predate the extension of St Lawrence's church and demonstrates that this part of the church yard was used for burials.
- 4.1.2 The headers and footers as well as memorials 13 and 14 will be processed and detailed in a later report (MOLA in prep), this will aid in answering the research aim outlined in the Research Report (see section 8.1.3 MOLA 2018).
- 4.1.3 The processing and analysis of the gravestones will also aid in answering the Major Research aims outlined by ORION referring to the demography and death in comparison to other excavated areas of human burials in London (Section 2.2.1 MOLA 2021).
- 4.1.4 The results of the watching brief also add to the information known about the differing burial practices in the City and beyond it (Section 2.2.2 MOLA 2021)



## 5 Publication and archiving

- 5.1.1 The results of the watching brief will be made publicly available by this report and will be incorporated into the site wide post-excavation programme where appropriate. This report and site records will form part of the archaeological archive for the wider site.

## 6 Acknowledgements

- 6.1.1 The author would like to thank Ballymore for commissioning this report. Thanks also to Eamon Murphy from Ballymore and his team for his assistance on site and to Helen MacQuarrie of Orion Heritage. Also those members of MOLA who worked on the project.

## 7 Bibliography

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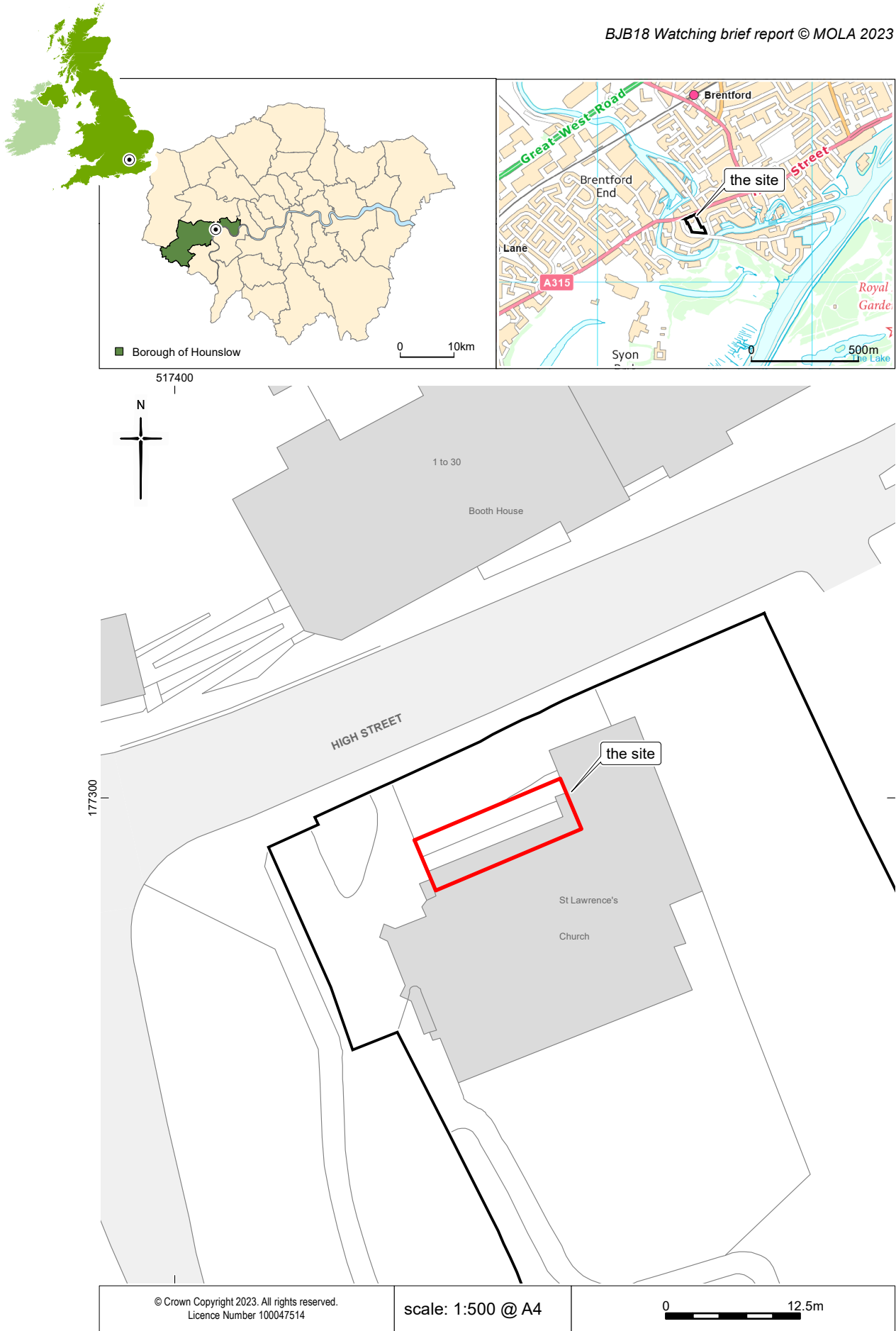


Fig 3 Location of watching brief area

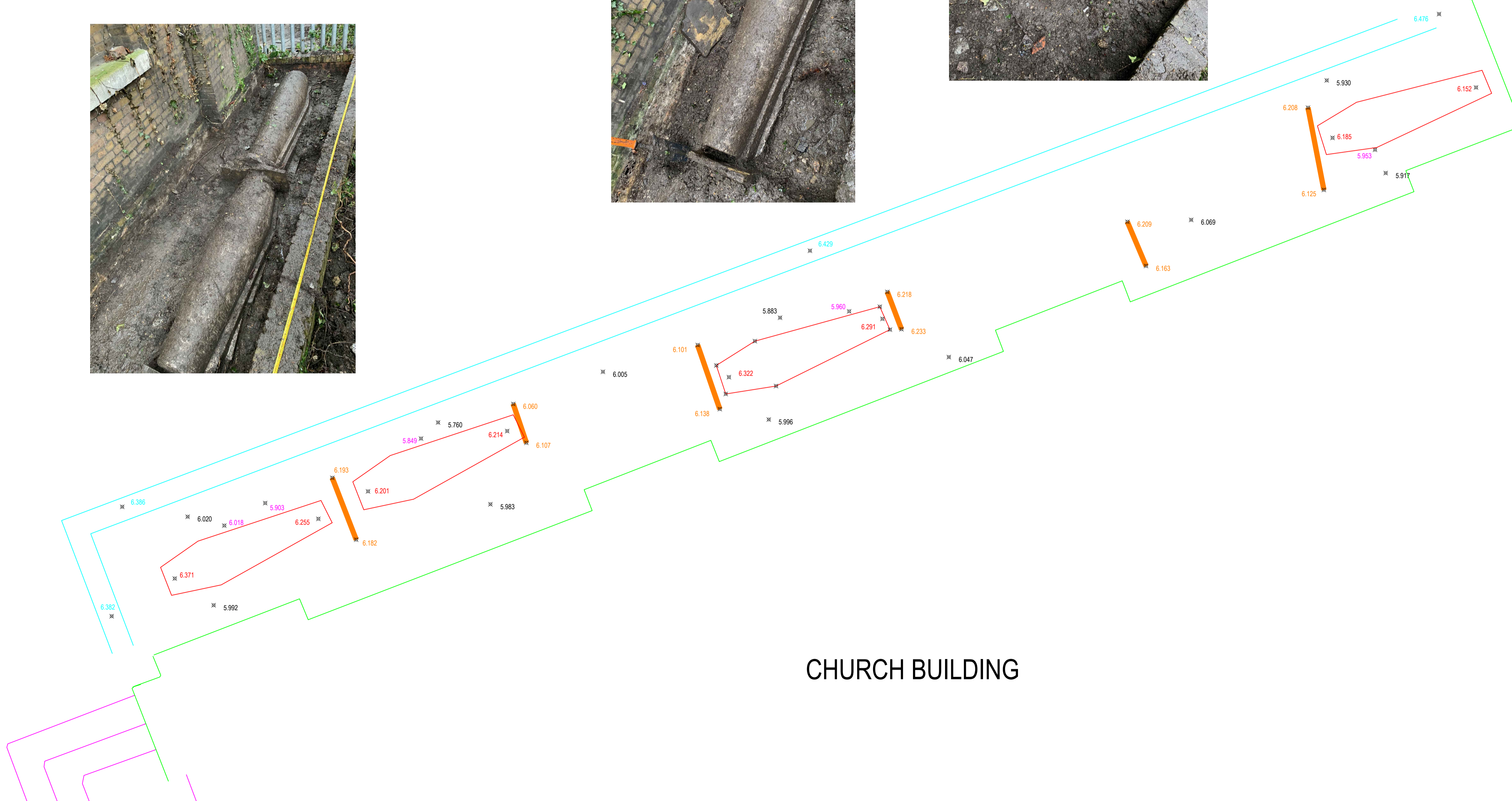
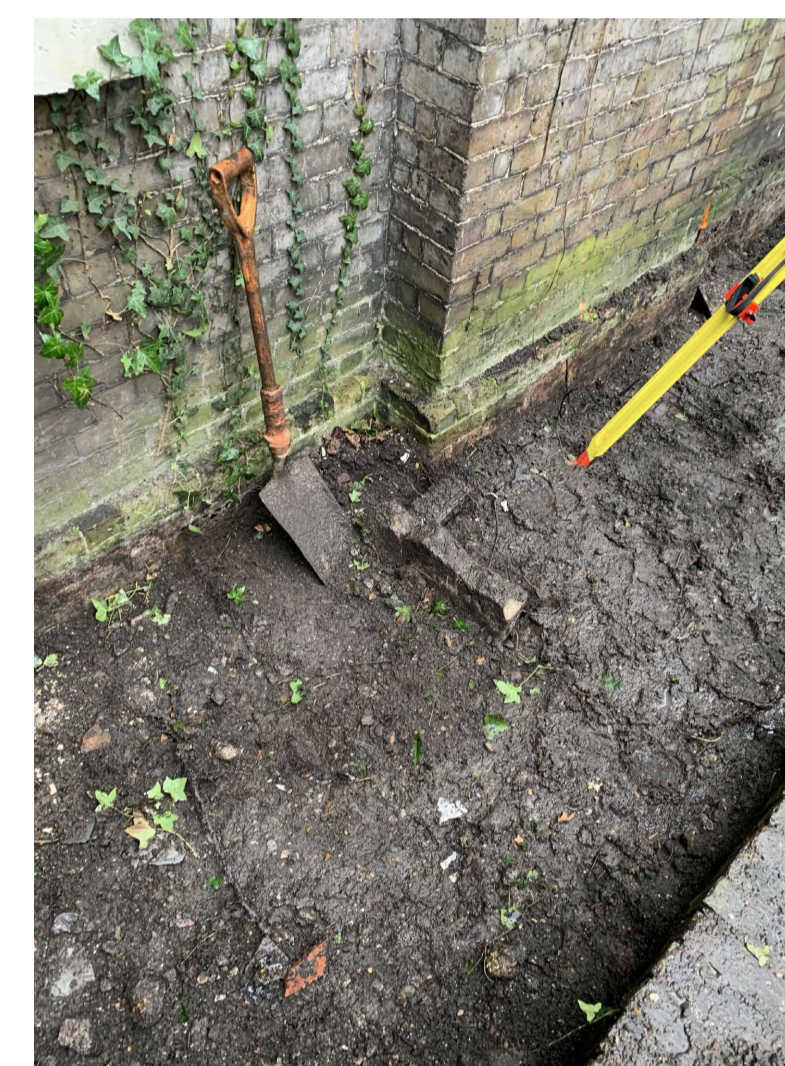


NOTES

SES survey information shown in colour.  
Grid origin and orientation are related to existing site control.  
Levels are related to existing site control.

LEGEND

- 5.432 ✕ Level at location shown in m. to same ordnance datum as per the whole site
- Outline of gravestones
- 5.432 ✕ Level on top of gravestones
- 5.432 ✕ Level on base of gravestones
- Buried / broken headstone
- 5.432 ✕ Level on top of broken headstone
- Low brick wall
- 5.432 ✕ Level on top of low brick wall




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**Ballymore**

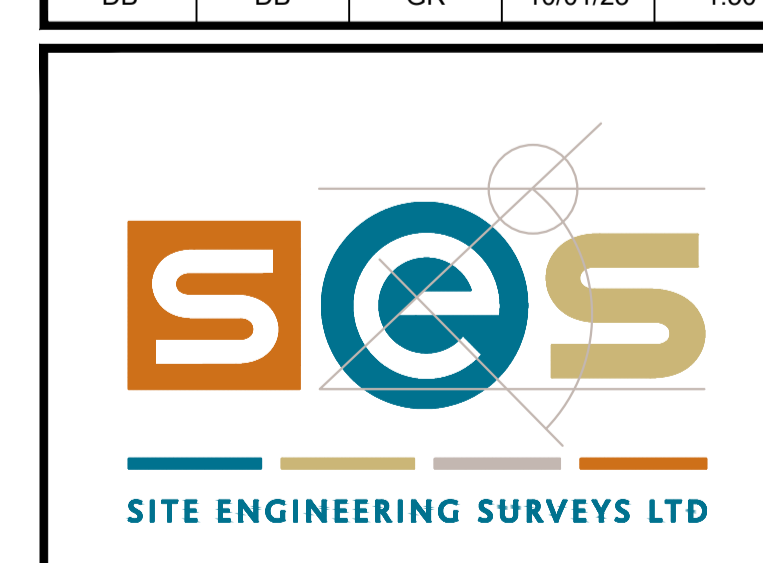
PROJECT TITLE

The Brentford Project

TITLE

Churchyard North Area Survey  
of Gravestone Locations and Levels

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