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Field Evaluation & Excavation

Historic Building Recording

Site & Landscape Survey

Geophysical Survey

**St John's Parish Church & Hall,
Oxgangs, Edinburgh
Building Recording Survey
Report No 3425**

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standard operating procedures.

**St John's Parish Church & Hall,
Oxgangs, Edinburgh
Building Recording Survey
Report No 3425**

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Working Methods	4
3.	Desk-based survey results	4
4.	Building Recording Results	5
5.	Conclusion	8
6.	References	8

APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Photographic Record	10
Appendix 2	DES Entry	12

FIGURES (Bound at rear)

Fig 1	General location map showing St John's Church and Hall
Fig 2	Floor plan of the St John's Church and Hall
Fig 3	North-east-facing elevation
Fig 4	South-east-facing gables
Fig 5	South-west-facing elevation
Fig 6	North-west-facing elevation
Fig 7	St John's Church nave with seating removed
Fig 8	Church pulpit and the altar steps
Fig 9	Concrete framed geometric altar window
Fig 10	The interior of the meeting room
Fig 11	The interior of the vestry with cupboards
Fig 12	St John's Church Hall, north-east-facing elevation and south-east-facing gable
Fig 13	Church Hall, south-west-facing elevation and north-west-facing gable
Fig 14	Church Hall, interior view from the stage
Fig 15	Church Hall stage
Fig 16	Church Hall storeroom
Fig 17	Church Hall kitchen
Fig 18	St John's Church bell tower
Fig 19	Social Services building

Contact prints (Bound at rear)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This report presents the results of a Level 2 standing building survey undertaken in April 2016 by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) at St Johns's Parish Church, Oxfords, Edinburgh (NGR: NT 23650 68660; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Bilfinger GVA. St John's Church and Hall are to be demolished prior to redevelopment of the site for retail development. Although the church is not a listed structure, the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service (CECAS) consider the site to be of local historical interest and as such they requested that a Level 2 (English Heritage 2006) standing building recording survey be carried out prior to its demolition.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the work was approved by John Lawson, at CECAS.

1.2 Background

St John's Church was constructed in 1957. The last service was held on 31 December 2013 and following its closure the church merged with Colinton Mains Church. St John's church occupies a rectangular footprint. On the north-east side of the church was the detached bell tower and church hall. On the north-east boundary of the proposed redevelopment site was a disused former Social Services building that was constructed during the 1990s.

1.3 Objectives

The aims of the programme of archaeological works were:

1. To carry out a Level 2 survey (annotated plan, photographic and written report) of the church hall, bell tower, church hall and Social Services building.
2. To produce an illustrated report outlining the results of the work.

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 General

CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, and Standards and Guidelines for Historic Building Surveys as appropriate.

2.2 Desk-based Assessment

A desk-based assessment was carried out. The records held on the Historic Environment Scotland (HES) CANMORE website were examined and online documentary sources were sought and checked for relevant information.

Historical map coverage for the proposed development area was checked to establish the presence of any archaeological sites and monuments likely to be impacted on.

2.3 Building Survey

A plan of the church and hall are shown on Fig 2. The building survey included an inspection of all interior rooms within the church and hall. Dimensions of each room were obtained using a Leica Distometer. General notes were taken on the layout of the buildings.

A photographic record of the exterior and interior of both buildings was made using a Nikon D300 digital 35mm camera. The orientation at which each photograph was taken is shown on Fig 2. Selected images that best portray the character of the buildings are produced as Figs 3-19.

3. DESK-BASED SURVEY RESULTS

Historic Environment Scotland

HES record NT26 NW 414 relates to St John's Parish Church. The record notes that on 29 January 2014 a photographic survey was carried out following the closure and merging of St John's with Colinton Mains Church. The record holds 29 on-line digital images of the church.

The record also holds a plan, elevations and section entitled 'Proposed Church at Oxfangs, Comiston for the church of Scotland Home Board' signed in 1957 by Alan Reiach, Architect.

Documentary Sources

Gifford *et al* (1984) provides no architectural description of St John's church but within their appraisal on modern churches within the region they mention that St John's Parish Church has a "pleasant Scandinavian feel".

In the *Dictionary of Scottish Architects*, the architect Alan Reiach (1910-1992) is credited with designing St John's church at a cost of £28,727 with seating for 380 in the church and 300 in the church hall.

Cartographic Sources

The early Ordnance Survey maps offer no useful information relevant to the architectural form and layout of the church.

4. BUILDING RECORDING RESULTS

4.1 General

Fig 2 shows the ground plan for the church and church hall. The dimensions of the individual rooms and features within both buildings are listed in Table 1.

Building	Unit No	Function	Dimensions (m)
St John's Church	1	Nave	18.2 x 14.6
	2	Alter	11 x 4.2
	3	Meeting Room	4.2 x 3.5
	4	WC	2.8 x 1.6
	5	Vestry	3.6 x 2.8
	6	Cupboard	1 x 1
	7	Cupboard	1 x 1
Church Hall	8	Main Hall	18 x 9.1
	9	Stage	9.1 x 5.5
	10	Cleaning Cupboard	1.8 x 0.9
	11	Storeroom	2.9 x 2.2
	12	Cupboard	No access
	13	Kitchen	3.3 x 3.3
	14	Vestibule	3.5 x 2.9
	15	Disabled WC	2 x 1.9
	16	Gents WC	3.3 x 3.1
	17	Ladies WC	3.5 x 3.5
	18	Caretakers storeroom	No access

Table 1 Summary table of individual room/feature dimensions

4.2 St John's Church exterior descriptions

North-east-facing elevation (Fig 3)

The north-east-facing elevation had two distinct elements. The first was an outshot porch with a pitched roof situated at the south-east corner of the elevation. It had white-painted brick-built walls and a felt covered roof. A fire door and a small square toilet window were present within the entrance. A rectangular casement window occupied the centre of the outshot wall. Set back from the wall was the wall of the nave which had four casement windows all equally spaced. The roof was pitched and covered with pan-tiles.

South-east-facing gables (Fig 4)

The south-east-facing elevation includes the roof of the outshot porch and the main gable of the church. The outshot gable for the porch had a small boarded toilet window. Both walls incorporated timber eaves boards. Towards the apex of the church gable was a small crucifix.

South-west-facing elevation (Fig 5)

Set back from the line of the main church wall was the outshot porch that had a boarded casement window. This window lit the vestry. The roof was covered with pan-tiles and the rain goods were cast-iron.

Set back from the line of the main church wall was a concrete-framed altar window with long and short geometric panes of frosted glass. The main church wall was white-painted brick with rectangular clerestory windows below the advanced eaves. The roof was pan tiled.

North-west-facing gable

The north-west-facing gable was white-painted brick and pitched. Five steps led up to double-leaved doors that were situated below a steel-framed and timber covered porch. The only architectural embellishment was a small crucifix below the apex.

4.3 St John's Church interior description (Fig 2)

The nave (Unit 1) was accessed by the double-leaved doors on the external north-west elevation. A timber clad curved screen with two doorways led into the nave. The nave (Unit 2) was lit on its south-west and north-east elevations by clerestory and casement windows. Six boxed-in steel I-beams supported the roof and the ceiling that was clad with cedar. The nave floor was parquet along the central isle. The seating, now removed, was arranged in two blocks with twelve rows on each side. The pulpit was a simple tubular steel-framed construction clad with cedar (Fig 8). Situated at the south-east end of the nave was the altar that was flanked by two brick-built curtain walls. The altar floor was paved and was accessed by four wide steps. The altar was lit on its south-west side by a large concrete-framed geometric frosted paned window (Fig 9) and a frosted glass panel wall on its north-east side.

Accessed by a doorway in the south-east corner of the nave was a small meeting room (Unit 3). This room was lit by a casement window on the south-west-facing elevation. A door led off to a passage that provided access to a toilet (Unit 4) and the vestry (Unit 5). The vestry was a small rectangular room and was lit by a casement window on its north-east-facing elevation. On the opposite wall was a pair of cupboards (Units 5-6).

4.4 St John's Church Hall exterior descriptions

North-east-facing elevation (Fig 12)

The north-east facing elevation had four bays with long casement windows set within plain white-painted rendered brick walls.

South-east-facing gable (Fig 12)

The south-east-facing gable had an asymmetric roof. The only notable feature on this otherwise featureless wall was a brick-built external chimney stack probably for a boiler situated in the caretakers storeroom (Unit 18).

South-west-facing elevation (Fig 13)

The elevation contained three doors. The principal entrance comprised a set of double-leafed doors, flanked by a single paneled door at the north-west end and a third door at the south-east end. The elevation was clad with brown painted planks and surmounted at the north-west end by boarded and frosted clerestory windows. The elevation had a cat-slide roof covered with zinc sheeting.

North-west-facing gable (Fig 13)

The north-west-facing gable mirrored the south-east-facing gable but without the attached brick-built chimney. A small boarded window was the only feature.

4.5 Church Hall interior descriptions (Fig 2)

The Church Hall (Fig 15, Unit 8) was rectangular with a wooden parquet floor and paneled walls and ceiling. The hall was well lit by four large rectangular casement windows on the south-west-facing elevation. On the north-east-facing elevation doors led to the kitchen passage and a vestibule with the main exit doors and the doors to the disabled, gents and ladies toilets.

A 1m high stage (Unit 9) at the north-west end of the hall was accessed through the kitchen passage. The stage had an undercroft that contained a series of storage areas. A small extension ladder on the south-west side of the stage allowed access through a glass sliding door into the roof space above the south-west-facing elevation. Below was a set of steps leading down to the kitchen passage.

Leading off the kitchen passage were a cleaning cupboard (Unit 10), a storeroom (Fig 16, Unit 11), a cupboard (12) and the kitchen (Unit 13). The kitchen (Fig 17) had modern fixtures and fittings and was lit by clerestory casement windows.

The vestibule (Unit 14) provided access to a disabled, gents and ladies toilet (Units 15-17). All three had modern fixtures and fittings having been installed probably within the

last ten years. A caretaker's storeroom (Unit 18) was situated at the south-east-end of the Hall.

4.6 Bell Tower

The detached bell tower (Fig 18) occupied an H-shaped plan and was a steel-framed and brick-built structure. A steel-covered door was present on the south-east side of the tower. The tower had a small pitched roof covered with pan tiles. The bellcote was open-sided with a steel guard rail on two sides. The sides without the guard rails were pierced with four crucifixes arranged in a diamond formation.

4.7 Social Services building

The two storey Social Services building (Fig 19) occupied a rectangular footprint and had a flat roof. The brick walls were clad with wet-dash render and had five and six bays on the opposing long elevations. The main door was on the south-east-facing elevation. The north-west-facing elevation had five bays. All the windows were boarded.

5. CONCLUSION

The survey has provided a record of the architectural character of St John's Parish Church and its Church Hall and external bell tower. The architectural style of the buildings is firmly rooted in 1950s Modernism. The church has undergone no major modifications since it was first constructed in 1957 with the exception of the installation of a modern toilet. Similarly, the Church Hall had undergone no major structural alteration since it was constructed in 1957, although the kitchen and toilets were probably upgraded within the last ten years. The c.1990s Social Services building has been surveyed, but it is of no particular architectural interest.

An online OASIS entry and submission to Discovery and Excavation in Scotland will be made to disseminate the results (Appendix 2).

6. REFERENCES

English Heritage 2006 English Heritage 2006 *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording Practice*. London.

Gifford, J, McWilliam, C and Walker, D (eds) 1984 *Edinburgh: The Buildings of Scotland*.

Dictionary of Scottish Architects

www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=202732

Appendix 1: Photographic Register

Image	Detail	Facing
001	St John's Church, bell tower and church hall	South-west
002	St John's Church, bell tower and church hall	South-west
003	St John's Church, north-east-facing elevation	South-west
004	St John's Church, north-east-facing elevation	South-west
005	St John's Church, outshot porch	South-east
006	St John's Church, outshot porch	South-west
007	St John's Church, outshot porch	South-west
008	St John's Church, outshot porch gable wall	North-west
009	St John's Church south-east-facing gables	North-west
010	St John's Church, south-west-facing elevation	North-east
011	St John's Church, window detail	North-east
012	St John's Church distance view	North
013	St John's Church distance view	North
014	St John's Church, south-west-facing elevation	North-east
015	St John's Church, south-west-facing elevation	North-east
016	St John's Church, north-west corner	South-east
017	St John's Church, main doorway	South-east
018	St John's Church, main doorway detail	South-east
019	St John's Church, north-east corner	South-west
020	Bell Tower, north-west-facing elevation	South-east
021	Bell Tower, south-east-facing elevation	North-west
022	Church Hall, south-east corner	North-west
023	Church Hall, north-east-facing elevation	North-west
024	Church Hall, south-east-facing gable wall	North-west
025	Church Hall, north-west-facing corner	South-east
026	Church Hall, north-west-facing gable wall	South-east
027	Church Hall, north-west-facing corner	South-east
028	Church Hall and Bell Tower	North-east
029	Church Hall south-facing corner	North
030	Church Hall general view	North-west
031	Church Hall general view	North-west
032	Church Hall general view	South-east
033	Church Hall, Unit 4, storeroom	North-west
034	Church Hall, Unit 4, storeroom	South-east
035	Church Hall, hallway	North-west
036	Church Hall, stage interior	North-east
037	Church Hall, doorway into hallway	North-east
038	Church Hall, stage interior	North-west
039	Church Hall interior from the stage	South-east
040	Church Hall, Unit 6, kitchen interior	South-west
041	Church Hall, Unit 9, vestibule	North-east
042	Church Hall, Unit 9, vestibule entrance doors to main hall	East
043	Church Hall, Unit 9, vestibule, door to ladies WC	South
044	Church Hall, Unit 9, vestibule main entrance doors	South-west
045	Church Hall, Unit 10. Ladies WC	South-west
046	Church Hall, Unit 10. Ladies WC	East
047	Church Hall, Unit 7 disabled WC	North-east
048	Church Hall, Unit 10. Ladies WC	South-west
049	St John's Church, Unit 1 interior of the nave (Unit 5)	South-east

	and alter	
050	St John's Church, interior Unit 1, nave	North-west
051	St John's Church, interior Unit 1, casement windows	West
052	St John's Church, interior window detail, Unit 5 alter	South-west
053	St John's Church, interior glass partition between the alter and Unit 2 meeting room	South-east
054	St John's Church, pine-clad pulpit	South-west
055	St John's Church, general view of the pulpit	South-east
056	St John's Church, Unit 1 interior clerestory windows	South-west
057	St John's Church, notice board near main door	North-west
058	St John's Church, hymn number board at the south end of the nave (Unit 1)	South
059	St John's Church, Unit 1, scar from commemoration plaque	South-east
060	St John's Church, interior Unit 2, meeting room	South-east
061	St John's Church, interior Unit 2, meeting room	North-west
062	St John's Church, interior Unit 4, vestry	South
063	St John's Church, interior Unit 4, vestry	East
064	St John's Church, interior Unit 5, window flanking the alter	South-west
065	St John's Church interior, Unit 3 WC	South-east
066	St John's Church, fire door and hallway	East
067	Social Services building, exterior south-west-facing elevation	North-east
068	Social Services building, exterior south-east-facing entrance	North-west
069	Social Services building, south-west corner	North-east
070	Social Services building, north-east-facing elevation	North-west
071	Social Services building, north-east-facing elevation	South-west

APPENDIX 2: DES ENTRY

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	City of Edinburgh Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	St Johns's Parish Church and Hall, Oxfangs Road North , Edinburgh
PROJECT CODE:	OXGA
PARISH:	Edinburgh
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Dr M Cressey
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	CFA Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Historic Building Survey
NMRS NO(S):	NT26 NW 414
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Parish Church
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	N/A
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NT 23650 68660
START DATE (this season)	April 2016
END DATE (this season)	April 2016
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>A historical building survey was carried out prior to the demolition of the redundant St John's Parish Church, bell tower and church hall, which were constructed in 1957.</p> <p>The church had a brick and steel-framed construction and a pitched pan-tile roof. Its interior was lit by casement and clerestory windows in its north-west and north-east-facing elevations. The altar was situated at the south-east end and was lit by a concrete framed geometric window. At the rear (south) end of the church was a toilet and vestry.</p> <p>The church hall was a rectangular brick structure with a flat-roof. The hall was lit by casement windows on its north-east facing wall. A stage and undercroft was situated at the north-west end of the hall.</p> <p>The detached steel-framed and brick-built bell tower occupied an H-shaped footprint and was c. 30m high with a pitched pan-tile roof.</p>
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Bilfinger GVA
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	CFA Archaeology Ltd, Old Engine House, Eskmills Business Park, Musselburgh, EH21 7PQ
EMAIL ADDRESS:	mressey@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Survey reports lodged with NMRS and SMR. Archive to be deposited with NMRS.



Key:

- Site Boundary
- Photo location



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Title:
General location map and
photographic orientation arrows

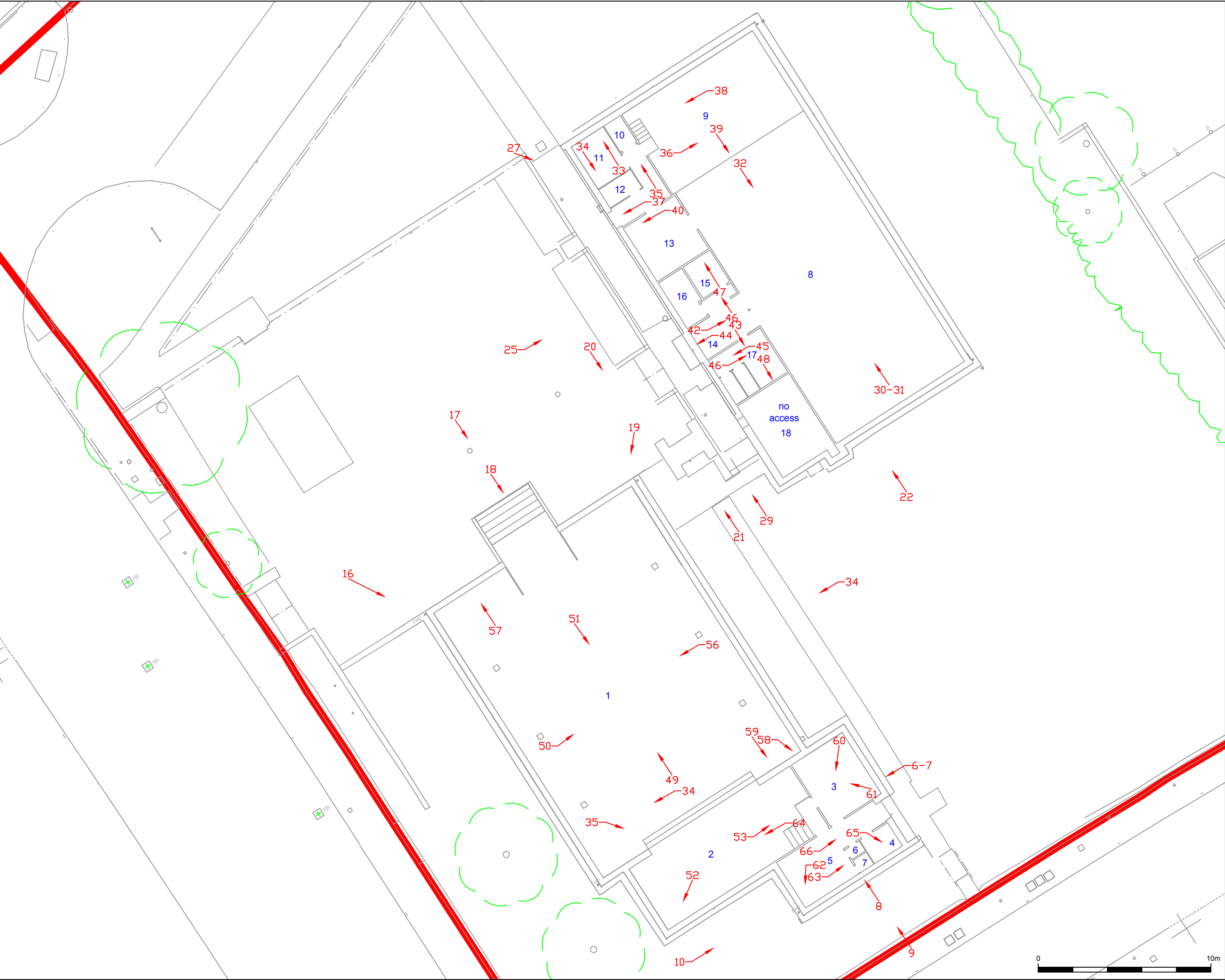
Project:
St John's Parish Church & Hall,
Oxbgangs,
Edinburgh, Building Recording
Survey

Client:
Bilfinger GVA

Scale at A3:
1:400

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- Photo location
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Title:
**St John's Parish Church & Hall
layout plan with photographic
orientation arrows**

Project:
**St John's Parish Church & Hall,
Oxgangs,
Edinburgh, Building Recording
Survey**

Client:
Bilfinger GVA

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Fig. 3 North-east-facing elevation



Fig. 4 South-east-facing gables

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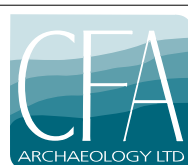


Fig. 5 South-west-facing elevation



Fig. 6 North-west-facing elevation

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Fig. 7 St John's Church Nave with seating removed



Fig. 8 The Church pulpit with altar steps

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Fig. 9 Concrete framed geometric altar window



Fig. 10 The interior of the meeting room

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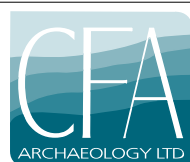


Fig. 11 Interior of the vestry with cupboards



Fig. 12 St John's Church Hall, north-east-facing elevation and south-east-facing gable

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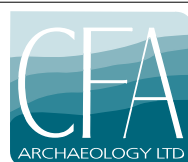


Fig. 13 Church Hall, south-west-facing elevation and north-west-facing gable



Fig. 14 Church Hall, interior view from the stage

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Fig. 15 Church Hall, stage

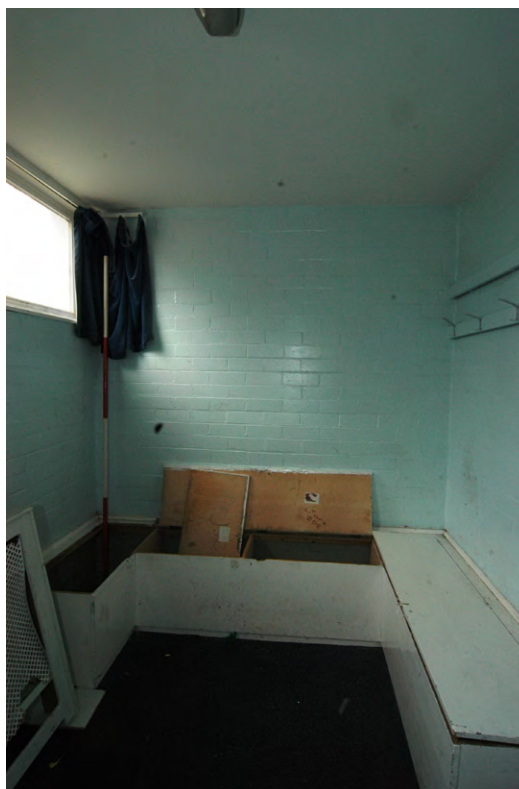


Fig. 16 Church Hall store room, Unit 11

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Report No: 3425		Fig. No: 15 - 16



Fig. 17 Church Hall, kitchen



Fig. 18 St John's Church bell tower

Project:
St John's Parish Church & Hall, Oxfangs, Edinburgh: Building Recording Survey



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Client:
Bilfinger GVA

Drawn by: GC	Checked: SW	Date: 20/05/16
Report No: 3425		Fig. No: 17 - 18



Fig. 19 Social Services building

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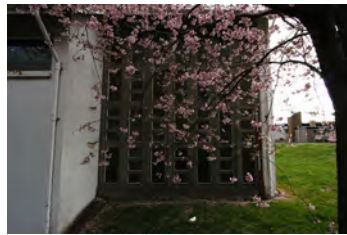
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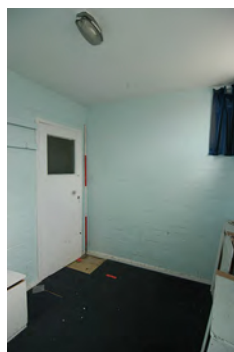
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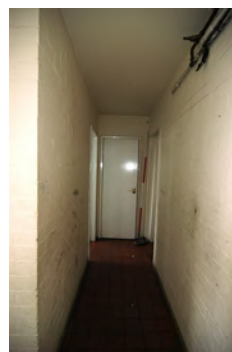
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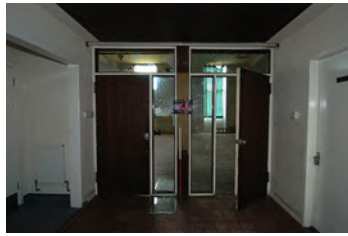
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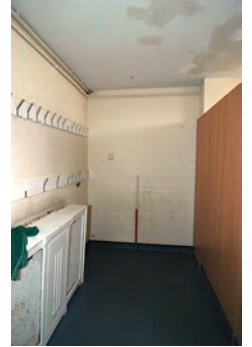
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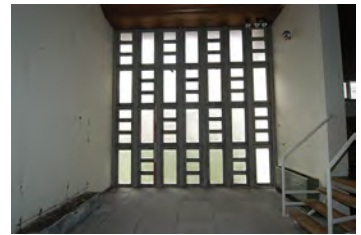
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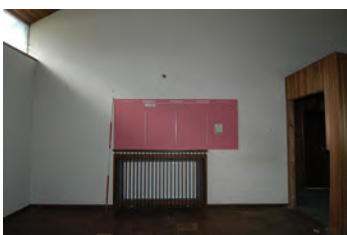
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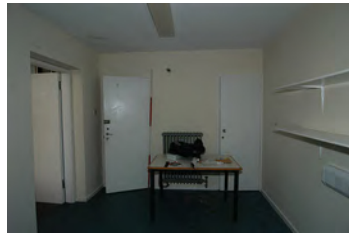
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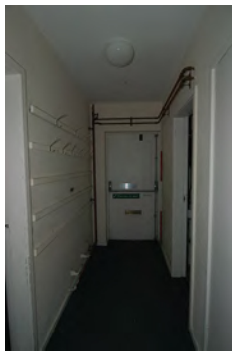
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