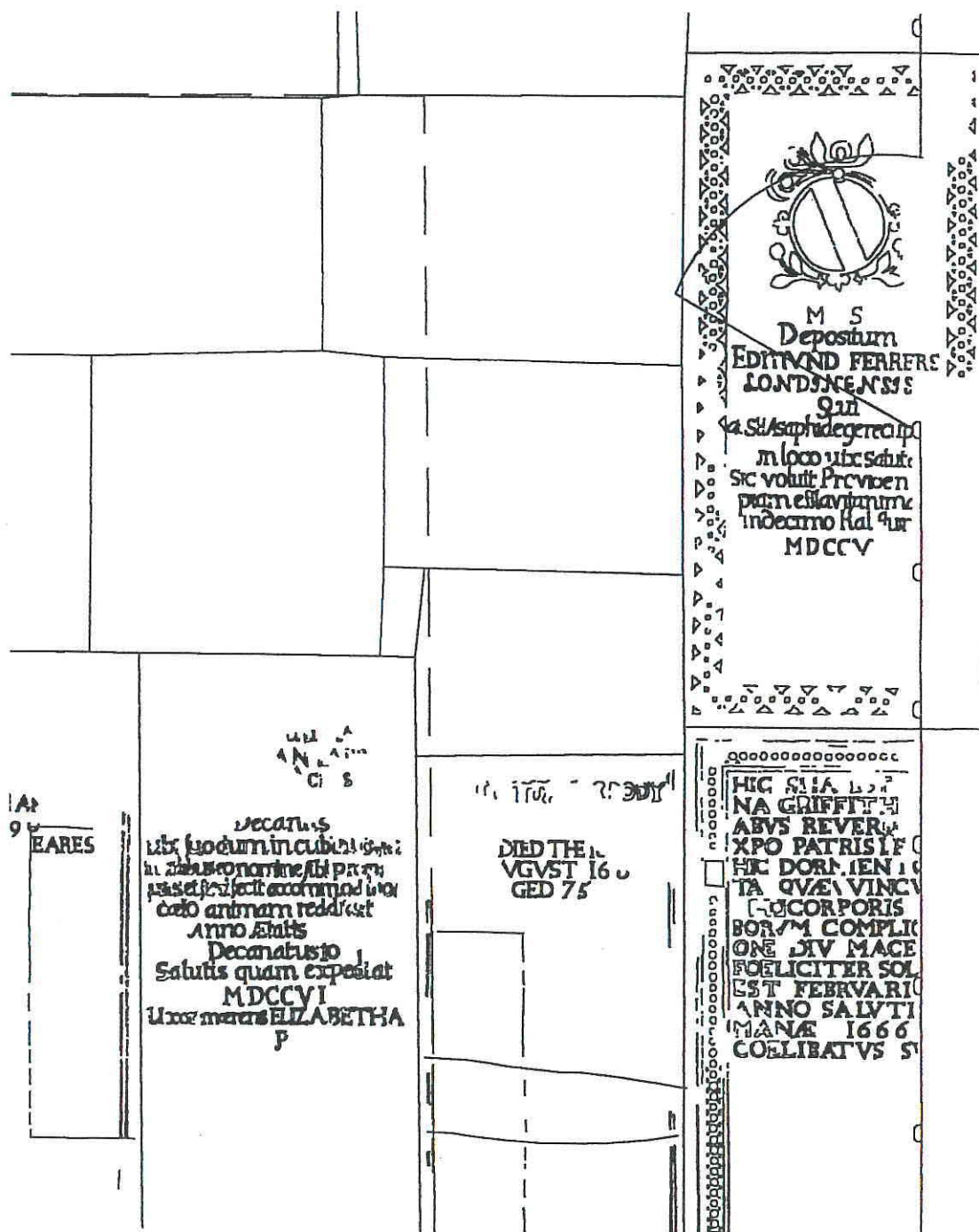


# St Asaph Cathedral

## SURVEY OF SOUTH TRANSEPT FLOOR



CPAT Report No 331

# *St Asaph Cathedral*

**SURVEY OF SOUTH TRANSEPT FLOOR**

**by W J Britnell and N W Jones**

October 1999

Commissioned by Bartosch & Stokes, Cathedral Architects,  
on behalf of the Dean and Chapter of St Asaph Cathedral

CPAT Project No 827

**The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust**

7a Church Street Welshpool Powys SY21 7DL

tel (01938) 553670, fax 552179

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### Introduction

- 1 A survey of the stone slab floor of the south transept of St Asaph Cathedral was commissioned by the Cathedral Architect, Mr Michael Bartosch, on behalf of the Dean and Chapter. The survey was carried out by CPAT on the 24–25 August 1990 following the temporary removal of pews and carpets in three areas towards the centre of the transept. The survey was undertaken in order to assist in the development of proposals to repair or replace the floor, the surface of which has become uneven due to wear.

### Survey methods

- 2 The basic plan of the south transept floor shown in the accompanying drawings was undertaken with an EDM and portable computer with PenMap software. The following were recorded by this means: the floor slabs; wall bases and parts of the bases of the two southern piers of the crossing and the pier to the south of the steps leading up from the south aisle; the two altar bases and the foot of the metal screen dividing them; the timber partition and door between the south transept and the choir; a number of wooden cupboards; the line of heating pipes around the base of some of the walls; and the approximate position of the three sets of pews before they were removed.
- 3 Seven late seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century memorial slabs and a fragment of a medieval cross slab were drawn separately, tracings of the inscriptions and decorations being subsequently digitized and combined with the floor survey in AutoCAD.
- 4 Note that the survey shows the intersections between adjacent floor slabs rather than the outlines of individual slabs. Some, but not all cracks in individual slabs are shown.
- 5 Spot height data was recorded at close intervals across the area of the floor as part of the survey but is not presented as part of this report. The survey datum has been related to the bench mark on the external east wall of the north transept but the spot height data has not at this stage been converted to readings above Ordnance Datum.

### Comments on the floor

- 6 A study of the condition of the floor and evidence of its composition, dating and history of repair were beyond the scope of the present survey. However, superficial examination suggests the following points. The floor appears to be principally composed of limestone slabs, and is possibly of late seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century date, and broadly contemporary with the memorial slabs on its northern side. The general arrangement of slabs may have been designed to facilitate additional interments in a band running north-south across the middle of the transept. Irregularities in the arrangement of slabs near the two piers of the central crossing on the north side of the transept and along part of the south wall suggest that parts of the floor in these areas have been taken up and replaced, probably during the course of structural repairs in the early twentieth century. Other minor repairs have been made on an *ad hoc* basis.
- 7 A slab towards the north-west corner of the floor has a worn incised design of a floriated cross. Comparison with other examples in North Wales (cf. Gresham 1968, no 21) suggests that it is part of a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century sepulchral slab. The slab lies in part of the floor which appears to have been replaced (para 6), and is in any case unlikely to lie *in situ*.
- 8 The seven memorial slabs in the northern side of the floor have dates of 1680, 1661, 1690,



1706, 16[. .], 1666 and 1705. Most of the slabs appear to be of limestone or sandstone, though the two northernmost slabs which partly underlie the screen between the transept and the choir are possibly of slate. A drawn record only has been made of the visible inscriptions and decoration, four of the inscriptions being in English and three in Latin, some of which are badly worn and barely legible in places. No attempt has yet been made to research the individual memorials or to verify or translate the transcription of the three Latin memorials. Legible names on the inscriptions include those of W T Thomas, Elizabetha, Griffith and Edmund Ferrers.

- 9 Most of the memorial slabs appear to be *in situ* although similar rectangular though slightly offset less-worn areas on the north side of the third stone from the south and the southern side of the fifth stone from the south appear to have resulted from a common cause, probably having been overlain by a semipermanent fixture at some period, suggesting that the two stones (which are the same length) have been moved part at some date.
- 10 The memorial slab on the north-west side of the group has two rectangular slots cut into its surface. These are about 70mm by 50mm across and about 1.2m apart and are approximately in line with the middle of the two piers of the central crossing on the north side of the transept. The vertical faces of the two piers show vertical discolourations indicating that there was formerly a screen or partition here between the choir and the south transept. It therefore seems probable that the two slots represent the foundation for the jambs of a door through a screen or partition in this position.
- 11 Apart from physical wear it is evident that a number of the memorial slabs and their inscriptions have suffered from dampness in the carpeted areas below the pews, which appears to have softened the stone, as well as from the scree holes used to fix the pews.

#### **Future archaeological considerations**

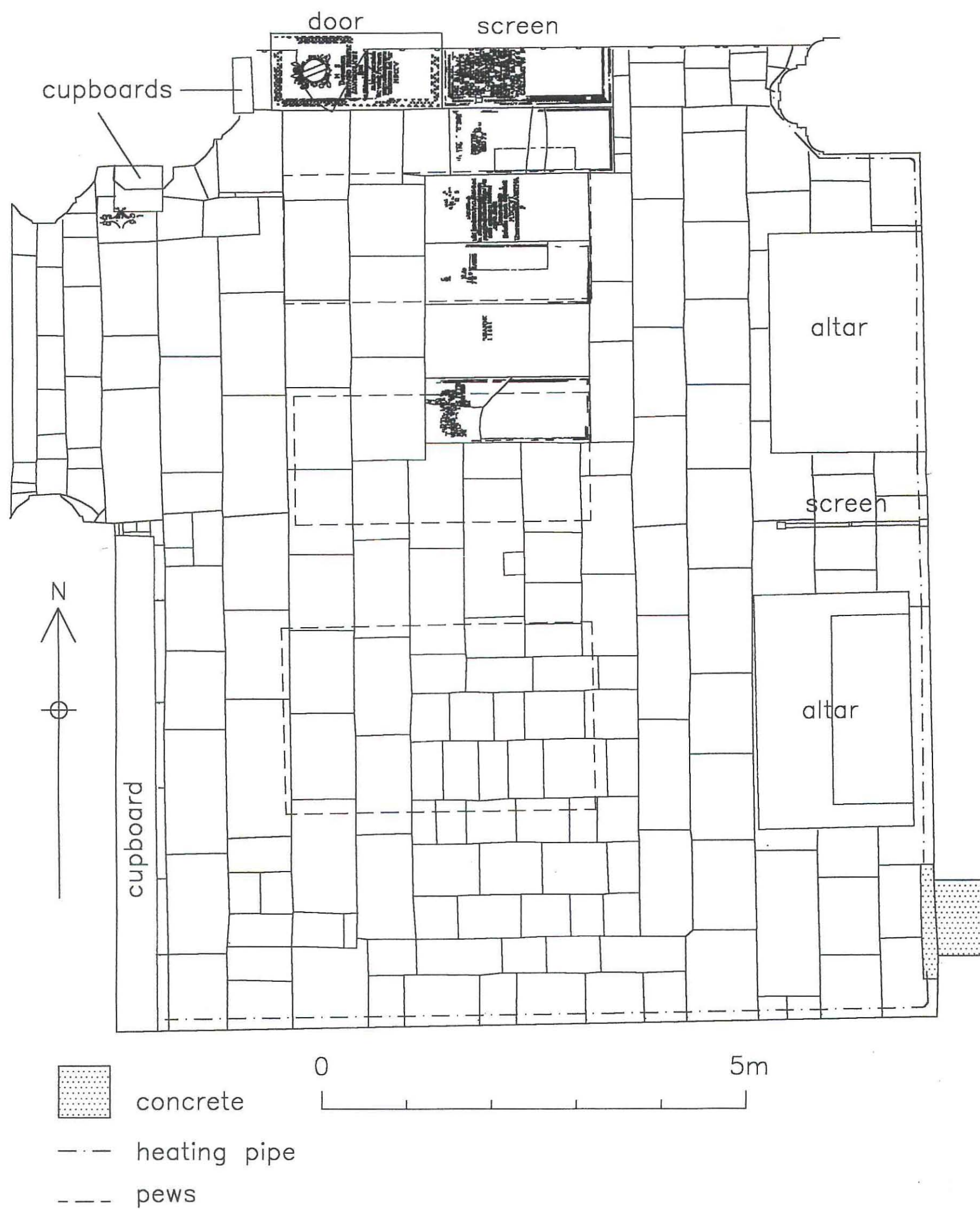
- 12 When the floor is repaired or replaced consideration should be given to the preservation *in situ* or by record of buried archaeological deposits which might be affected. Parts of the floor adjacent to the central piers of the crossing and along part of the south wall of the transept were evidently disturbed during the course of structural repairs carried out in the early twentieth century, but it can be anticipated that earlier foundations and traces of earlier, possibly earthen, floor levels survive elsewhere below the present floor. An unknown number of medieval and post-medieval burials can be anticipated, in addition to those indicated by the late seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century memorial slabs, some of which might be quite shallow.
- 13 Consideration should be given to the preservation of the fragment of the medieval sepulchral slab and the late seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century memorial slabs either *in situ* or elsewhere within the precincts of the Cathedral, and to reduce if possible their deterioration. These stones should be protected during the course of any work on the floor and if any of the individual stones are to be moved a photographic record of the stones *in situ* should be made in advance.
- 14 It would be desirable to retain a sample of the unfigured floor slabs within the precincts of the Cathedral for future reference if the floor is to be replaced.

#### **References**

Griffiths, C A, 1968. *Medieval Stone Carving in North Wales*. Cardiff, University of Wales Press.

# *St Asaph Cathedral*

## SURVEY OF SOUTH TRANSEPT FLOOR



Scale 1:50  
CPAT September 1999



## SURVEY OF SOUTH TRANSEPT FLOOR: DETAIL OF MEMORIAL SLABS

