

**St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen, AB24 1RQ**  
**Data Structure report**  
**Cameron Archaeology CA407**



**Dr Robert Lenfert**  
**Cameron Archaeology**  
**28 May 2018**

## CONTENTS

1	BACKGROUND .....	3
2	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND .....	4
3	THE WATCHING BRIEF.....	5
4	CONCLUSIONS.....	8
5	REFERENCES.....	8
6	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	8
	APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SITES .....	9
	APPENDIX 2 MAPS.....	11
	APPENDIX 3 PHOTOS.....	14

## ILLUSTRATIONS

*Cover Illustration: Interior of St Machar's Cathedral during a pause in the watching brief; facing E*

Illus 1	Location plan .....	3
Illus 2	Plan of top of foundational wall located on S (right-hand) side of seating area (see also Illus 3).....	5
Illus 3	Plan showing area of pew and concrete removal.....	6
Illus 4	Sections of current and proposed floor showing stone make-up.....	6
Illus 5	Section of walling exposed during the pew-removal works. The walling was not visible on the N (left) side of the cathedral. ....	7
Illus 6	View of St Machar Cathedral interior during pew-removal works, with walling visible just beyond the workers on S (right-hand) side of the main aisle. ....	7
Illus 7	James Gordon 'Description of new and of old Aberdeens, with the places nearest adjacent' 1661 (copyright National Library of Scotland) .....	11
Illus 8	Slezer's Image from Theatrum Scotiae by John Slezer, 1693 (copyright National Library of Scotland).....	12
Illus 9	Wood's Plan of the Cities of Aberdeen 1828 .....	12
Illus 10	First Edition OS map showing site (copyright National Library of Scotland) .....	13
Illus 11	Second Edition OS map showing siteAberdeenshire LXXV.3 (Aberdeen; Old Machar) Publication date: 1901 Revised: 1899 .....	13
Illus 12	Third Edition OS map showing site outline in red.....	14

## SUMMARY

ON May 23rd and 24th, 2018 a watching brief was carried out during pew-removal works at St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen. While the works were limited in depth to 180mm below the former surface, an uppermost section of foundational walling on the S side of the seating area was exposed along the top course only, revealing a coarse stone wall with lime mortar slightly off N-S alignment. No other finds or archaeological features were noted and the works are now complete.

# 1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The site (Illus 1) is located within St Machar's Cathedral. It is centred on NGR NJ 93914 08778, at 15-20m OD in the parish of Aberdeen.
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by Alan Grant, Session Clerk, Cathedral Church of St Machar. The cathedral is Listed Category A and a watching brief is required during the removal of the concrete plinth and any excavation beneath for the new flooring.



Illus 1 Location plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018)

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Canmore (HES) was consulted online within 200m of the proposed development. All numbers relate to HES.

2.1 St Machar's Cathedral graveyard is a Scheduled Monument. The area comprises those elements of St Machar's Cathedral that are not in ecclesiastical use as the parish church of Old Machar, the surrounding graveyard, excluding lairs for which burial rights survive at the date of scheduling. The parts of the cathedral that do not form part of the present parish church comprise the transepts and the foundations of the eastern piers of the great central tower, which collapsed in 1688. These elements appear to date from the later 14th century onwards, but probably overlie buried remains of the first cathedral, begun between c.1130 and 1165, the choir of which was substantially rebuilt by Bishop Henry Cheyne (1282-1328). The walls of the transepts now stand to a height of about 3m. The N transept, or St John's aisle, was built in 1424 by Bishop Henry Lichten and contains his tomb. The S transept was remodelled in 1522 by Bishop Gavin Dunbar (1518-32), whose tomb remains there. The choir, which Dunbar also began to rebuild, was left incomplete at the time of his death and was destroyed after 1560; but structural remains and archaeological deposits may be expected to survive beneath the present land surface.

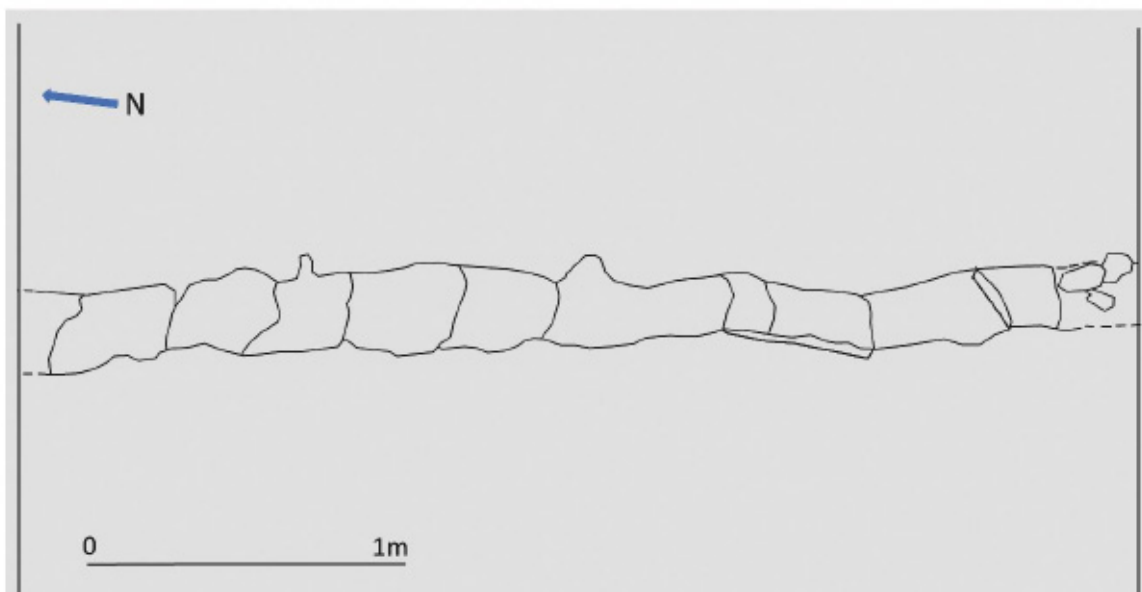
2.2 St Machar's Cathedral is Listed A (NJ90NW 9). The standing building is dated 1422-40; the ceiling is by James Winter, 1518-31, with the spires added to towers at same period. There were alterations by John Smith in 1832, restoration by James Matthews in 1867 (with advice from Sir G.G. Scott which were not entirely followed and the ceiling was largely renewed). The building is granite-built, mainly ashlar with 8 bays with clerestory and aisles, circular piers, flat ribbed ceiling with coats of arms, a south porch, twin tower west front with machicolated parapets and spires, 7 narrow windows and large round-headed double doorway. There is a 17th century monument to Bishop Scougal and other memorials. It was restored in 1926-9 by A. Marshall Mackenzie & Son, with material further removed. The east window is by A.G.R. Mackenzie dated 1947 (Brogdén 2012, 17; Fawcett 2002, 11, 14, 16, 22; Shepherd 1996, 122-3). Other associated buildings including the location of former manses and structures are:

NJ90NW 9.01 93 08 and 94 08 precinct wall  
NJ90NW 9.02 9383 0878 Bishop's Hospital  
NJ90NW 9.03 9398 0877 Bishop's Palace  
NJ90NW 9.04 94046 08661 Chaplain's Chambers  
NJ90NW 9.05 93930 08705 Dean's House, 14 The Chanonry  
NJ90NW 9.06 9410 0876 Girth Cross  
NJ90NW 9.07 9395 0882 Cross  
NJ90NW 9.08 93959 08730 Wall  
NJ90NW 9.09 93915 08545 Aberdour Manse  
NJ90NW 9.10 939 087 Auchterless Manse  
NJ90NW 9.11 93826 08671 Banchory Devenick Manse  
NJ90NW 9.12 93896 08685 Belhelvie Manse  
NJ90NW 9.13 93972 08720 Birse Manse  
NJ90NW 9.14 93864 08777 Clatt Manse  
NJ90NW 9.15 93843 08640 Cruden Manse  
NJ90NW 9.16 93896 08685 Daviot Manse  
NJ90NW 9.17 93849 08608 Deer Manse  
NJ90NW 9.18 93843 08640 Ellon Manse  
NJ90NW 9.19 93896 08685 Forbes Manse  
NJ90NW 9.20 938 084 Kincardine Manse  
NJ90NW 9.21 93764 08777 Kinkell Manse

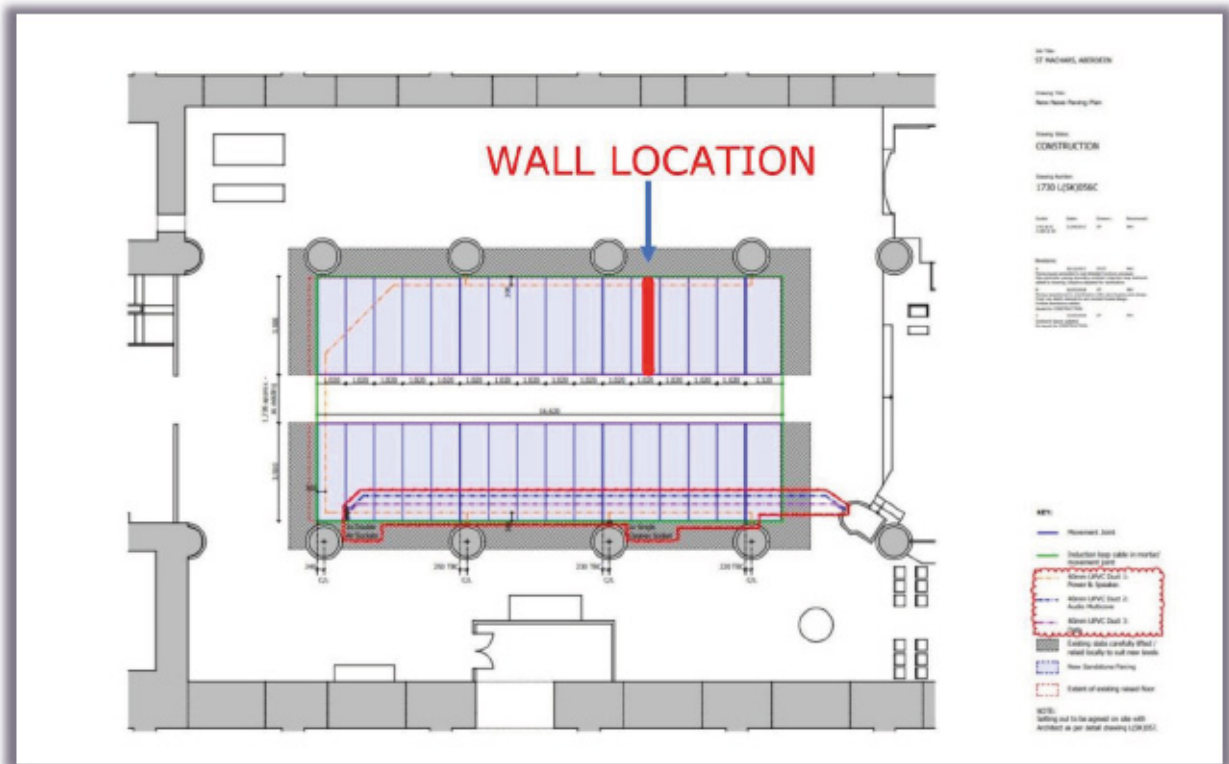
NJ90NW 9.22 938 084 Methlick Manse  
 NJ90NW 9.23 937 088 Monymusk Manse  
 NJ90NW 9.24 93764 08777 Mortlach Manse  
 NJ90NW 9.25 93726 08685 Oyne Manse  
 NJ90NW 9.26 93905 08563 Philorth Manse (5 The Chanonry)  
 NJ90NW 9.27 93804 08718 Rayne Manse  
 NJ90NW 9.28 93921 08511 St Katherine's Manse  
 NJ90NW 9.29 938 084 Strathdon Manse  
 NJ90NW 9.30 937 088 Tullynessle Manse  
 NJ90NW 9.31 938 084 Turriff Manse  
 NJ90NW 9.32 937 088 Westhall's Manse  
 NJ90NW 9.33 938 086 Natural features  
 NJ90NW 9.34 93873 08717 Chanonry Arch  
 NJ90NW 9.35 9398 0875 Cancelled Site  
 NJ90NW 9.36 93935 08707 Dean's House, 14a The Chanonry  
 NJ90NW 9.37 93903 08576 Philorth Manse (6 The Chanonry)

### 3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

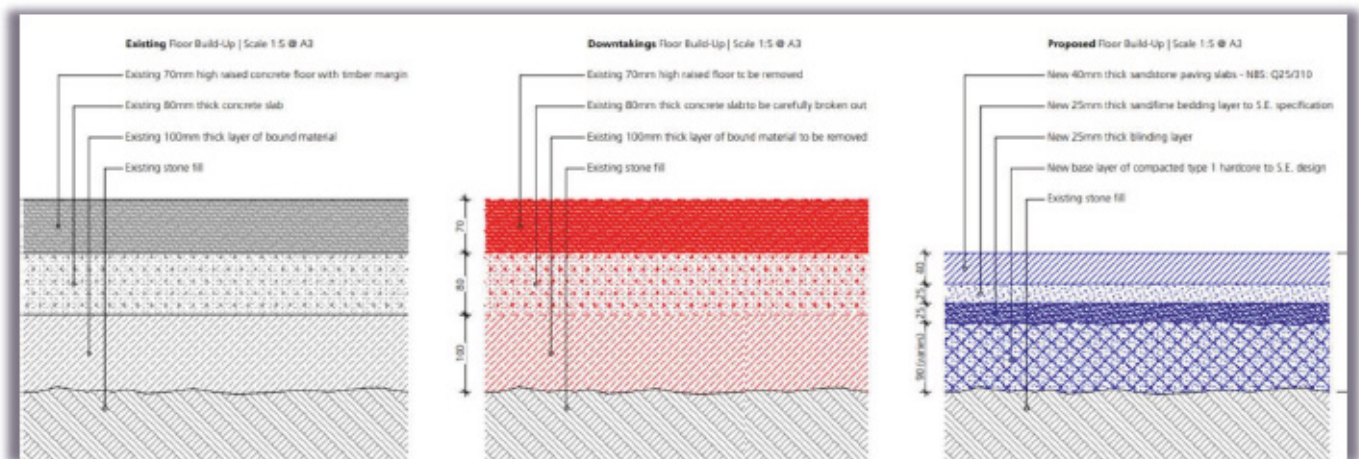
On May 23rd and 24th, 2018, Cameron Archaeology carried out a watching brief during the removal of the lower concrete slab and any materials located below this surface during the ongoing pew replacement works. Works did not extend below the existing stone fill (please refer to Illus 4, grey and red images) and therefore revealed a uniform layer of moderately well-sorted river gravels imported as fill during renovation works in the 1920s. As the overall depth below the concrete slabs only extended to 180mm, little was revealed in the way of underlying archaeology, with the sole exception of the uppermost area of a foundation wall or support wall (Illus 2). The wall was only exposed along the top surface – the sides were not exposed during levelling works, although several loose stones sat atop the wall and were removed to reach the desired level. From the visible area, albeit limited, the wall appears to comprise a flat/tabular stone construction with probable lime mortar between. The wall was only located on the S side as one enters the cathedral and was not located on the N side. It extended the width of the former pew area on the south, and was 0.23-0.25m wide, while being located approximately 4.3m from the rear of the pew seating area, running parallel to the back and perpendicular to the sides of the gravel area. It is slightly off N-S alignment suggesting a more ephemeral wall such as might be required for flooring in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century renovation works.



Illus 2 Plan of top of foundational wall located on S side of seating area (see also Illus 3).



Illus 3 Plan showing area of pew and concrete removal and location of exposed walling in red (copyright LDN Architects)



Illus 4 Sections of current and proposed floor showing stone make-up (bottom) concrete base to be removed and replaced with sandstone (copyright LDN Architects)



Illus 5 Section of walling exposed during the pew-removal works. The walling was not visible on the N of the cathedral.



Illus 6 View of St Machar Cathedral interior during pew-removal works, with walling visible just beyond the workers on right-hand (S) side of the main aisle.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

The small area of walling exposed along the uppermost course can only be interpreted to a limited extent. Given the location of the wall, at a relatively high level and running slightly off N-S alignment it would appear that this is a relatively recent construction, possibly dating to the 19th century alteration and restoration works. However, the possibility remains that the style of the construction – comprising a coarse construction technique using minimally dressed stone, may hint at an earlier phase in the cathedral's history. Without more intrusive investigation, little more information can be reliably added to this picture regarding the chronological origin or original purpose of the wall. It is recommended that any future works that would potentially re-expose this area, or indeed any other areas under the cathedral floor, be monitored by an archaeologist, as it remains highly probable that earlier phases of the cathedral remain *in-situ*.

## 5 REFERENCES

**Brogden, W A.** (2012) *A City's Architecture: Aberdeen as 'Designed City', Studies in Architecture*. Surrey, England.

**Fawcett, R.** (2002) *Scottish medieval churches: architecture and furnishings*. Stroud.

**Shepherd, I.** (1996) *Aberdeen and North-East Scotland, Exploring Scotland's Heritage series, ed. by Anna Ritchie*. 2nd. Edinburgh.

## 6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Alan Grant for initiating this project, staff on site and to Bruce Mann, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service for his advice during this work.

Cameron Archaeology  
45 View Terrace  
Aberdeen  
AB25 2RS  
01224 643020  
07581 181057  
cameronarch@btinternet.com  
www.cameronarchaeology.com  
Company registration no 372223 (Scotland)  
VAT registration no 990 4373 00



**APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SITES (within 200m of the proposed site - HES online)**

Dataset	Name	OS NGR	Classification
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, 45 Don Street	NJ 93995 08623	House (19th Century)
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, 51 Don Street	NJ 94010 08640	No Class (event)
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, The Chanonry, Ellon Manse	NJ 93843 08640	Manse (period Unassigned), 8 The Chanonry
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, The Chanonry, Cruden Manse	NJ 93843 08640	Manse (period Unassigned), 8 The Chanonry
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, 55 Don Street, Boundary Wall	NJ 94045 08648	Boundary Wall (period Unassigned)
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, 20 The Chanonry, Chaplain's Chambers With Boundary Wall	NJ 94046 08661	House (period Unassigned), Manse (period Unassigned), Wall (period Unassigned), Chaplain's Court, Chaplain's House
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, The Chanonry, Banchory Devenick Manse	NJ 93826 08671	Manse (period Unassigned), 9 The Chanonry, Mitchell Hospital
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, 9 The Chanonry, Mitchell Hospital	NJ 93826 08671	Almshouse(s) (period Unassigned), Mitchell's Hospital
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, 13 The Chanonry, Daviot Manse With Boundary Walls	NJ 93896 08685	Manse (period Unassigned), Wall(s) (period Unassigned), Chanonry Lodge, Treasurer's Manse, Treasurer's House, Treasurer's Mansion
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, 13 The Chanonry, Forbes Manse With Boundary Walls	NJ 93896 08685	Manse (period Unassigned), Wall(s) (period Unassigned), Chanonry Lodge
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, The Chanonry, Belhelvie Manse With Boundary Walls	NJ 93896 08685	Manse (period Unassigned), Wall(s) (period Unassigned), 13 The Chanonry, Chanonry Lodge, Marquis Of Huntly's House
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, St Machars	NJ 94000 08700	Wall (period Unassigned), Well (medieval), Dunbar Halls
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, The Chanonry, Dean's House	NJ 93930 08705	Manse (period Unassigned), 14 Chanonry, Dean's Manse
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, 14a The Chanonry, Dean's House	NJ 93935 08707	Manse (period Unassigned), Dean's Manse
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, 15 The Chanonry, Auchterless Manse	NJ 93944 08710	Manse (period Unassigned), Castleton House, Chantor's House
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, St Machar's Cathedral Gateway	NJ 93873 08717	Gateway (period Unassigned), Chanonry Arch

RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, The Chanonry, Rayne Manse With Boundary Wall	NJ 93804 08718	Manse (period Unassigned), Wall (period Unassigned), 11 The Chanonry, Archdeacon's Manse
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, The Chanonry, St Machar's Cathedral, Gate Lodges	NJ 93868 08720	Gate Lodge (period Unassigned), Wall (period Unassigned), Chanonry Port, Cluny's Port, Chaplain's Port
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, The Chanonry, Birse Manse	NJ 93972 08720	Manse (period Unassigned), 16 The Chanonry, Chancellor's Manse
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, 18 The Chanonry, Boundary Wall	NJ 94003 08722	Wall (period Unassigned)
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, 16 The Chanonry, Boundary Wall	NJ 93959 08730	Wall (period Unassigned)
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, The Chanonry, General	NJ 93930 08730	General View
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Chanonry, 'wallace Memorial'	NJ 93980 08750	Architectural Fragment(s) (period Unassigned), Stone (period Unassigned)
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, St Machar's Cathedral, Girth Cross	NJ 94100 08760	Cross (period Unassigned)
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, St Machar's Cathedral, Bishop's Palace	NJ 93980 08770	Bishops Palace (14th Century)
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, The Chanonry, Mortlach Manse	NJ 93764 08777	Manse (period Unassigned), 12 The Chanonry, Tillydrone House
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, The Chanonry, St Machar's Cathedral, Bishop's Hospital	NJ 93830 08780	Almshouse (period Unassigned), Hospital (period Unassigned), St Mary's Hospital
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, The Chanonry, St Machar's Cathedral And Churchyard	NJ 93920 08785	Burial Ground (medieval), Cathedral (14th Century), War Memorial(s) (20th Century), Old Aberdeen, War Memorial Plaques
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, St Machar's Cathedral, Cross	NJ 93950 08820	Cross (period Unassigned)
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Seaton Park, Pillbox	NJ 94087 08829	Pillbox (20th Century)
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, St John's Well	NJ 93900 08900	Holy Well (period Unassigned)
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, The Chanonry, Deer Manse	NJ 93849 08608	Manse (period Unassigned), 7 And 7a The Chanonry
RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, The Chanonry, Kinkell Manse	NJ 93764 08777	Manse (period Unassigned), 12 The Chanonry, Tillydrone House

RCAHMS	Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, The Chanonry, Clatt Manse And Boundary Wall	NJ 93764 08777	Manse (period Unassigned), Wall (period Unassigned), 12 The Chanonry, Tom Framper's House, Tillydrone House, Tillydrone Road
--------	---	-------------------	--

## APPENDIX 2 MAPS



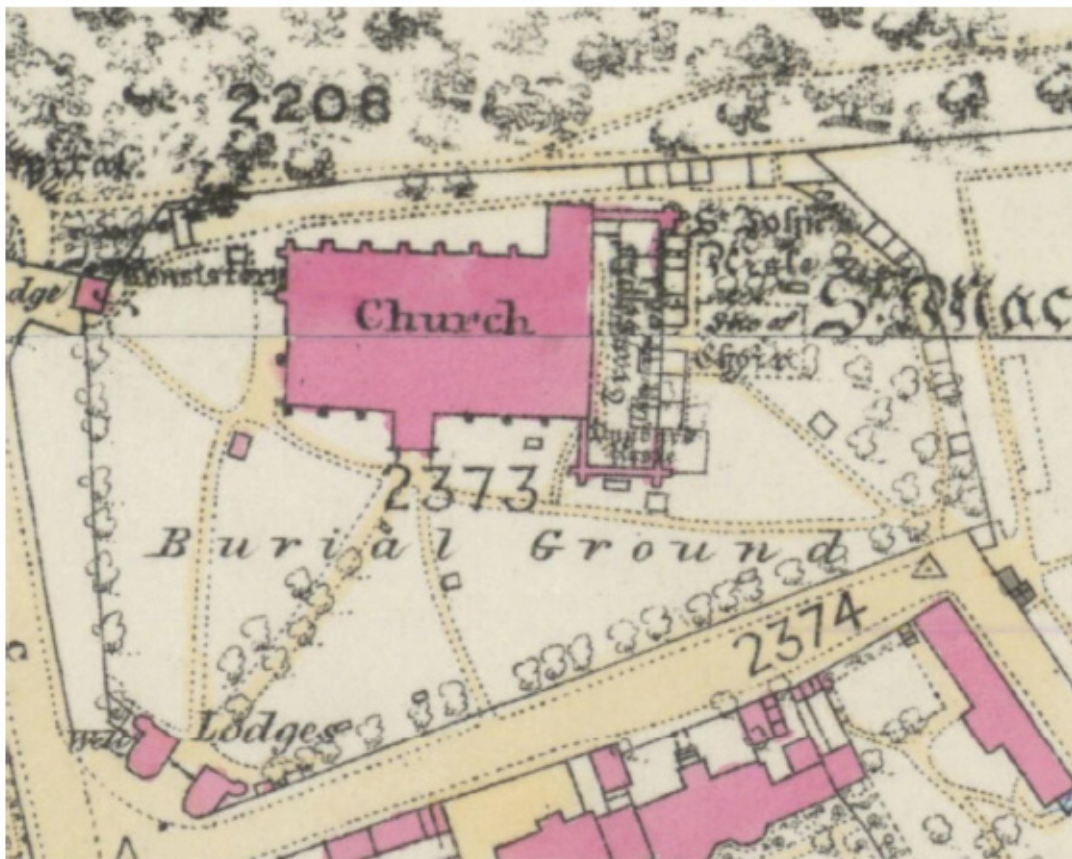
Illus 7 James Gordon 'Description of new and of old Aberdeens, with the places nearest adjacent' 1661 (copyright National Library of Scotland)



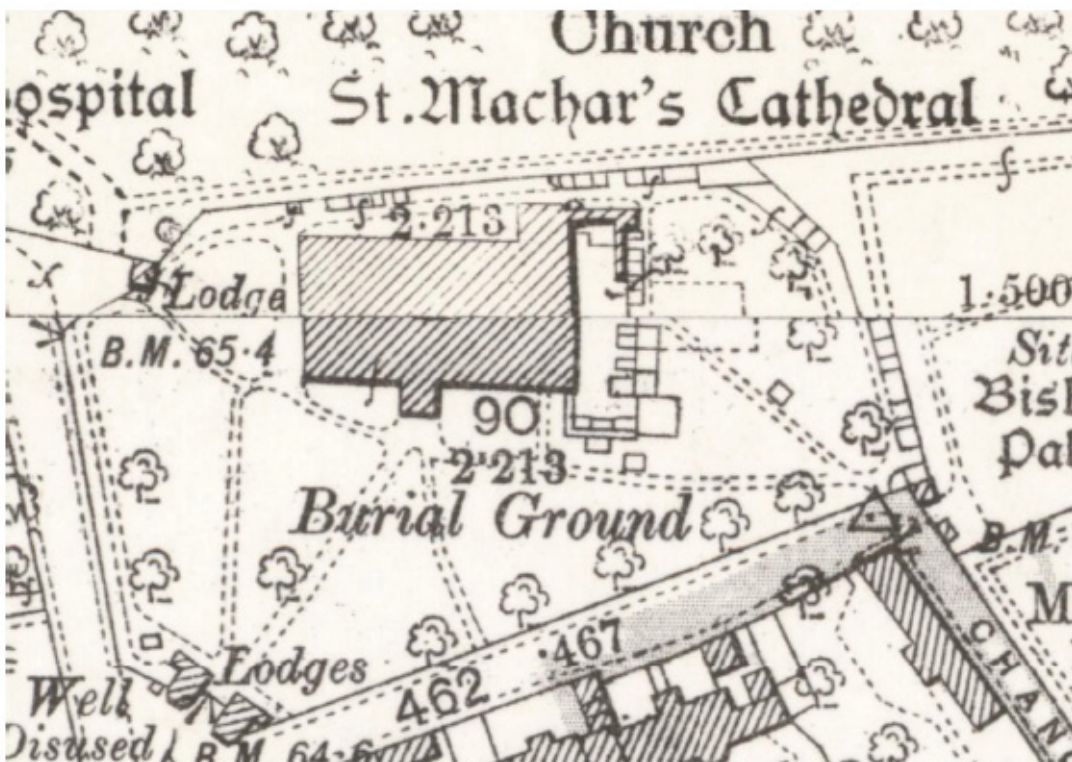
Illus 8 Slezer's Image from *Theatrum Scotiae* by John Slezer, 1693 (copyright National Library of Scotland)



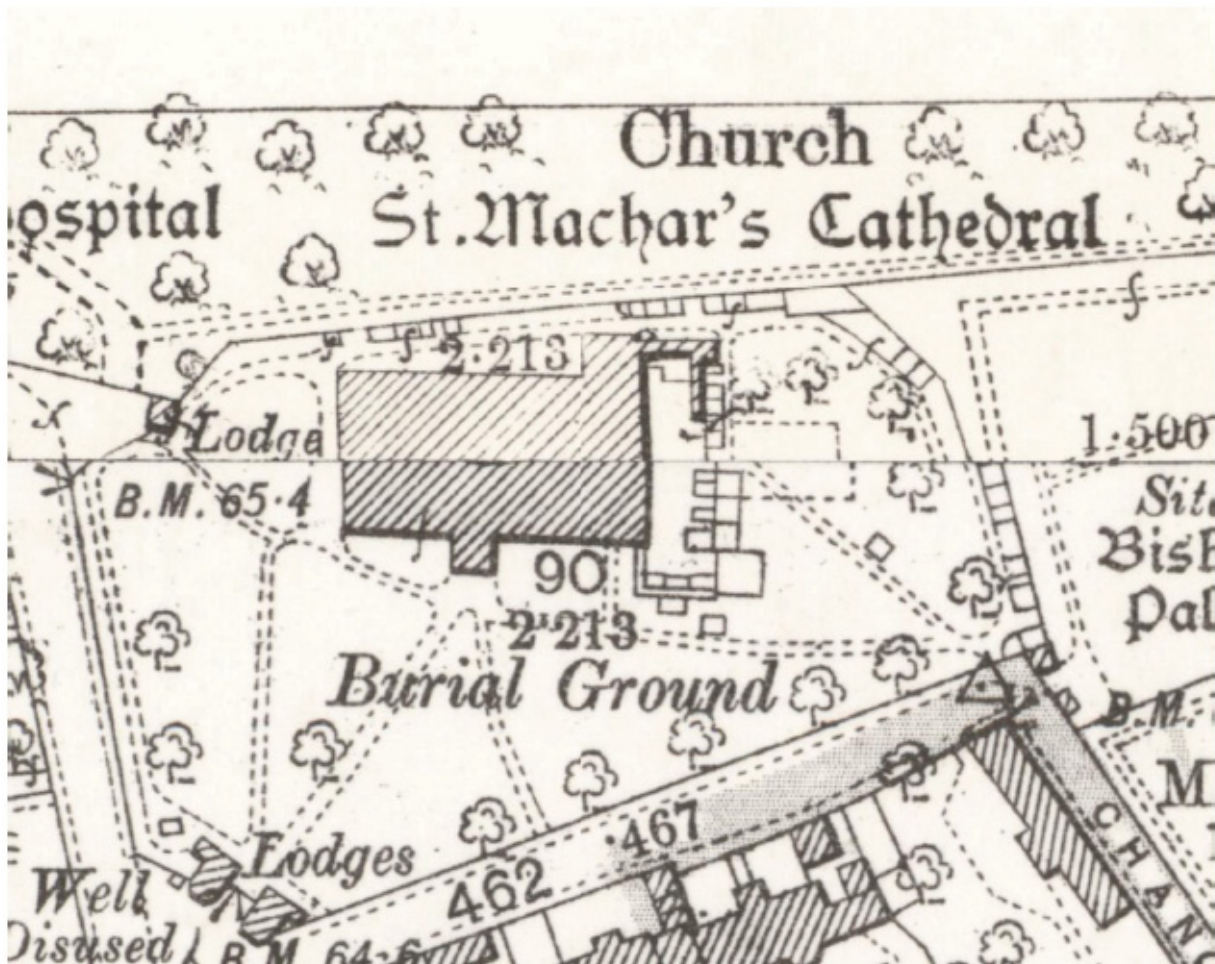
Illus 9 Wood's Plan of the Cities of Aberdeen 1828 (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 10 First Edition OS map showing site (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 11 Second Edition OS map showing site (copyright National Library of Scotland)  
 Aberdeenshire LXXV.7 (Aberdeen) Publication date: 1901 Revised: 1899/  
 Aberdeenshire LXXV.3 (Aberdeen; Old Machar) Publication date: 1901 Revised: 1899



Illus 12 Third Edition OS map showing site outline in red (copyright National Library of Scotland) Aberdeenshire LXXV.7 (Aberdeen) Publication date: 1926 Revised: 1924 Levelled: 1899/ Aberdeenshire LXXV.3 (Aberdeen; Old Machar) Publication date: 1926 Revised: 1924 Levelled: 1899

### APPENDIX 3 PHOTOS

Photo ID	Direction Facing	Comments
DSC5900	E	Interior of cathedral during pew-removal works
DSC5903	E	N side of pew-seating area during works.
DSC5964	E	S side of pew area showing location of exposed foundational walling.
DSC5966	E	Detail of area containing exposed foundational walling
DSC5975	W	Close-up of section of exposed walling
DSC5978	NE	General view of area during works
DSC5981	E	Elevated view of cathedral interior during renovation works
DSC5900	E	Elevated view of cathedral interior during renovation works



\_DSC5900.jpg



\_DSC5903.jpg



\_DSC5964.jpg



\_DSC5966.jpg



\_DSC5975.jpg



\_DSC5978.jpg



\_DSC5981.jpg



\_DSC5983.jpg