
2 Introduction

St Giles' Cathedral lies the heart of Edinburgh's medieval Old Town and, as the parish kirk since the 12th century, has dominated the urban and religious landscape of the burgh for almost a thousand years (illus 1; illus 2). Little structured archaeological investigation had been carried out, either inside the church or in its immediate environs, until 1981, when plans for the construction of a staircase in the South Choir Aisle leading down to rooms below offered opportunity for detailed archaeological excavation.

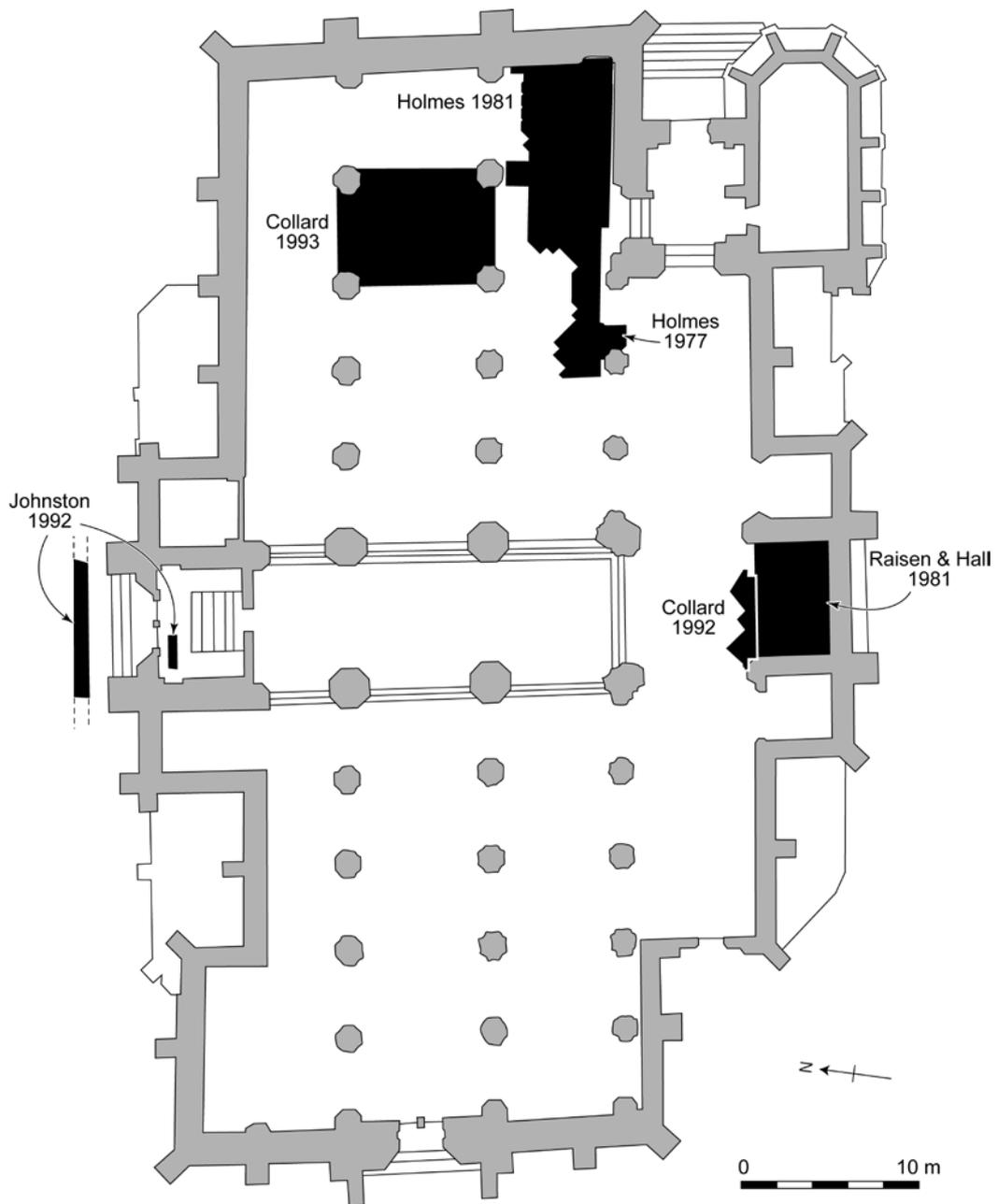
At the invitation of the Minister and Kirk Session of St Giles', excavations (Holmes 1981), in advance of the construction of the new staircase, were directed by Nicholas Holmes on behalf of Edinburgh City Museums and Galleries, and financial support was provided by the Scottish Development Department (Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments) and by the

St Giles' Renewal Fund. The results of this excavation, and the finds from it, form the bulk of this report.

In addition, in the years while the report on these excavations was in preparation, a number of smaller investigations were carried out. Later in 1981, a limited excavation was carried out in the South Choir Vestry below the South Transept by Peter Raisen and Derek Hall (illus 3). During the early 1990s, several small interventions below the floor of the cathedral and outside the northern side of were either carried out directly or monitored by staff from the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service (illus 3) (Collard 1991; Johnston 1992; Collard 1993). While these areas were small, they have provided useful supplementary archaeological and topographical information about the medieval development of the site of St Giles'.



Illus 2 St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, from the east



Illus 3 Location of archaeological investigations, 1977–93