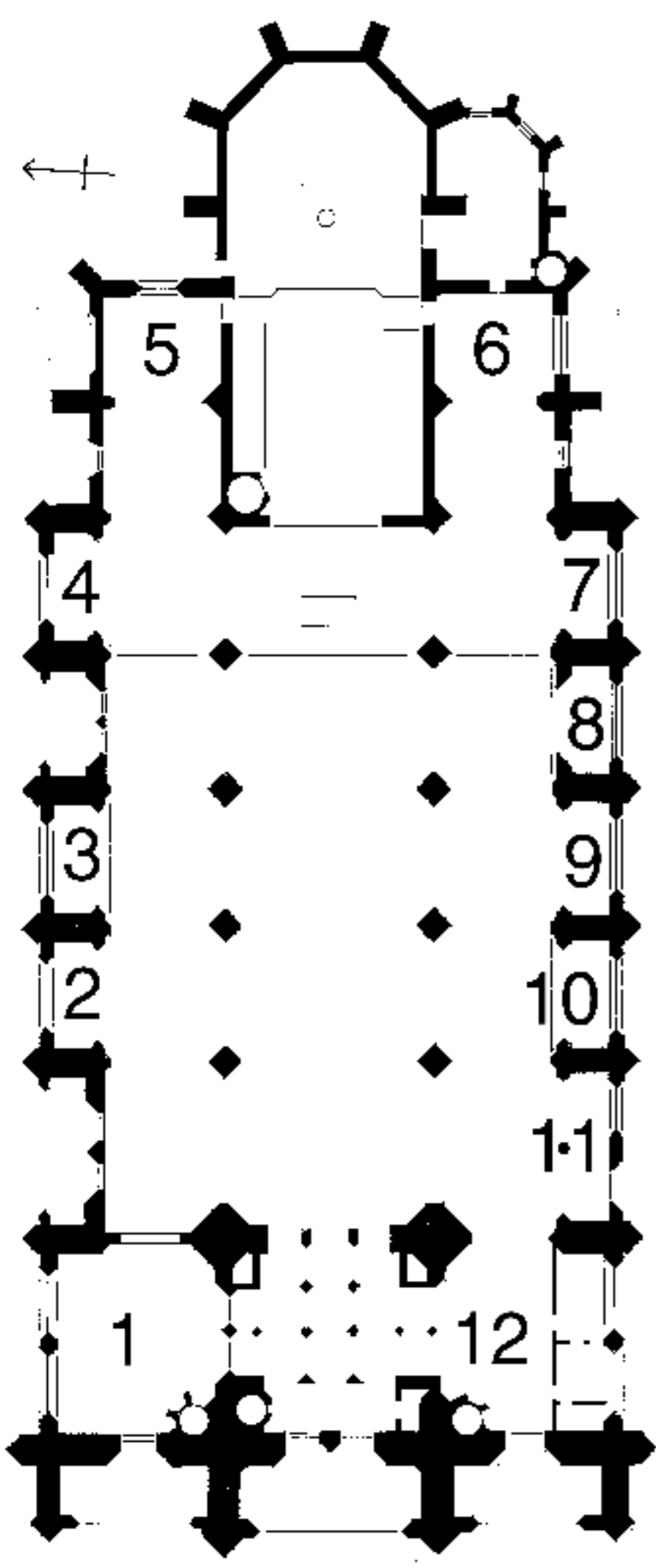


CHAPELS



The chapels

Berne Cathedral's unusual features include its side - or family - chapels, none of which are easily recognisable as such since their abolition during the Reformation in 1528. They include the narrow rooms between the buttresses on the sides of the aisle (N and S), as well as the Gerbern Chapel which now accommodates the main entrance and information centre, and its counterpart on the opposite side of the tower area. It is not their form or their situation that distinguishes these chapels, but rather the fact that from the outset, wealthy families and guilds were given the opportunity of reserving certain areas for their private requirements through donations during the first years of construction. Thus most of the chapels are not independent parts of the building but part of the compartments divided by the massive walls and buttresses and which, as is shown by various examples, could also be used as porches for the side portals. In a symbolic sense, the chapels "founded" and "supported" the construction of the church just as the buttresses do in a technical sense. Up to the time of the Reformation, the chapels were partitioned off from the main area of the church and equipped with altars at which private masses were read and services of remembrance, known as "seasons", celebrated in the late Middle Ages. They were, so to speak, small "churches within the church". The attentive observer will not overlook the fact that the donor families and guilds decorated "their" chapels in all sorts of ways with their coats of arms: on the backs of the seats, some of which still bear the names of their last "owners", colourful stained glass, often also in the vaults on the keystones, and frequently on bronze plaques, grave slabs (now no longer in their original location on the floor) or on other works of art.

Seen as a whole, the chapels may be interpreted as an illustration of the political and social elite of 15th century Berne. They bear witness to many "extinct" lineages, thus continuing to fulfil the role allotted to them by their donor families over half a millennium ago: to revive and preserve memories.

Captions:

1. Gerbern Chapel
2. Schopfe Chapel (also known as Michel Chapel)
3. Bulzinger Chapel (later Metzger Chapel)
4. Krauchtal Chapel (later von Erlach Chapel)
5. Bubenberg Chapel (now known as Steiger Chapel)
6. Matter Chapel (also known as von Roll Chapel)
7. Brüggl Chapel
8. Lombach Chapel (before 1473 porch, until 1500 Chapel the Brotherhood of the Immaculate Conception)
9. Diesbach Chapel
10. Ringoltinger Chapel (also known as Bonstetten Chapel)
11. Schütz Chapel (also known as Boer Kirchthür Chapel)
12. Erlach Ligerz Chapel

Text: Christoph Schläppi, Berne; picture: Die Kunstdenkmäler der Schweiz, Luc Monjon, Basel, 1960

Further information: Gesamtkirchgemeinde Bern / Münsterkirchgemeinde /
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