

**ELECTRICITY SUPPLY TRENCH, GLANRAFON ROAD,
BANGOR**

• **ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF (G1423)**

REPORT NO. 213

**Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust**

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prepared for Manweb
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INTRODUCTION

In June 1996, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was notified by the Dean of Bangor Cathedral that a Manweb service trench to the south west of the Cathedral had uncovered human bone, identified by the coroner as Medieval. The trench was located on the northern pavement of Glanrafon Road running parallel to the kerb from the Bishop's Close to the south west gateway of the churchyard. Due to the proximity of the trench to the Cathedral and therefore the potential for recovering information relating to the extent of the Cathedral precinct, a watching brief was carried out during the excavation of the remainder of the trench.

BACKGROUND

John Speed's map of Bangor of 1610 shows the Cathedral located at the south western end of an 'island' of land thought to represent the extent of the pre-Norman enclosure which encircled Deiniol's monastery and gave the town its name, Bangor meaning 'wattle fence'. This 'island' can still be traced today, bounded by the High Street to the south as far as the clock tower and by Tan-y-Fynwent and the precinct wall of the Cathedral to the north. To the north east development has been considerable, particularly in recent years with the construction of the Deiniol Shopping Centre and car park during which over seventy graves were excavated. The south western part which forms the current Cathedral precinct has remained largely unchanged since the seventeenth century.

On John Wood's map of the city of 1834 the road leading from the market place past the south west gate of the Cathedral is marked as Bridge Street although by the time of the first Ordnance Survey map in 1889 it appears as Glanrafon Road. A plan of the Bishop's Palace drawn up in 1900 also shows the road, bordered on one side by the Cathedral precinct and on the other by the former Castle Hotel. By 1966 however, the modern Ordnance Survey 1:1250 scale map clearly shows that Glanrafon Road has been widened along its north eastern side, clipping the south western edge of the Cathedral grounds. This may have occurred shortly after 1900 when the Bishop, Watkin Herbert Williams, sold some of the Cathedral land including the Bishop's Palace and grounds to Col. Henry Platt and a group of local business men who later sold it to Bangor City Council.

METHODOLOGY

The excavation of the trench was monitored by GAT staff between 18 and 24 of June 1996. The sections were cleaned and recorded by written description, and both black and white photographs and colour transparencies were taken. Features of interest within the sections were planned at a scale of 1:10 and the heights of the top and bottom of the trench and the features within it were surveyed and related to the bench mark on the Cathedral.

RESULTS

The trench, 0.60m wide and a maximum of 0.80m deep, was located approximately 0.60m from the wall of the Cathedral grounds on the pavement adjacent to Glanrafon Road. The first 0.15 - 0.20m of the trench consisted of the pavement tarmac and hardcore. Below that lay a mixed deposit of brown clay with brick, slate and mortar inclusions. This deposit also contained bone which was encountered between 0.40m and 0.80m.

The majority of the bone recovered from the trench appeared to be redeposited. However, a cut 0.80m wide and 0.60m deep visible in the section 2.2m south east of the Cathedral gateway and associated with bone at the bottom of the trench may represent an *in situ* grave. The feature appeared to have been cut from immediately below the present ground surface and a sherd of modern pottery was found in the fill. A second cut was observed in the north west section but was not visible in the south east side and could not be traced further west. Another grave may have existed where the trench turned to cross the road but it was impossible to investigate this further as it was located directly under the pavement kerb which was not removed. Four structures were also revealed, probably culverts or manholes, about 0.80m wide built of mortared brick and covered or roofed with slate, (fig 1).

The excavation of the trench across Glanrafon Road itself took place at night to avoid disruption to the traffic and consequently was not observed. However, the contractors reported the presence of stones approximately in the middle of the road, directly underneath the tarmac and hardcore, which they believed to be the remains of a wall.

SUMMARY

A large quantity of human bone, mostly redeposited, was revealed by the excavation of the trench along with two possible graves and four brick built structures, thought to be manholes or culverts. The quantity of bone recovered suggests that the churchyard formerly extended further south west than it does today, with its boundary wall somewhere underneath Glanrafon Road. This is confirmed by the cartographic evidence which suggests that sometime between 1900 and 1965 the road was widened, possibly for the construction of the pavement, and encroached upon the churchyard. The disturbance of the deposits observed in the sections and the redeposition of the bone could also have occurred at this time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Speed J, 1610 *Map of Bangor*

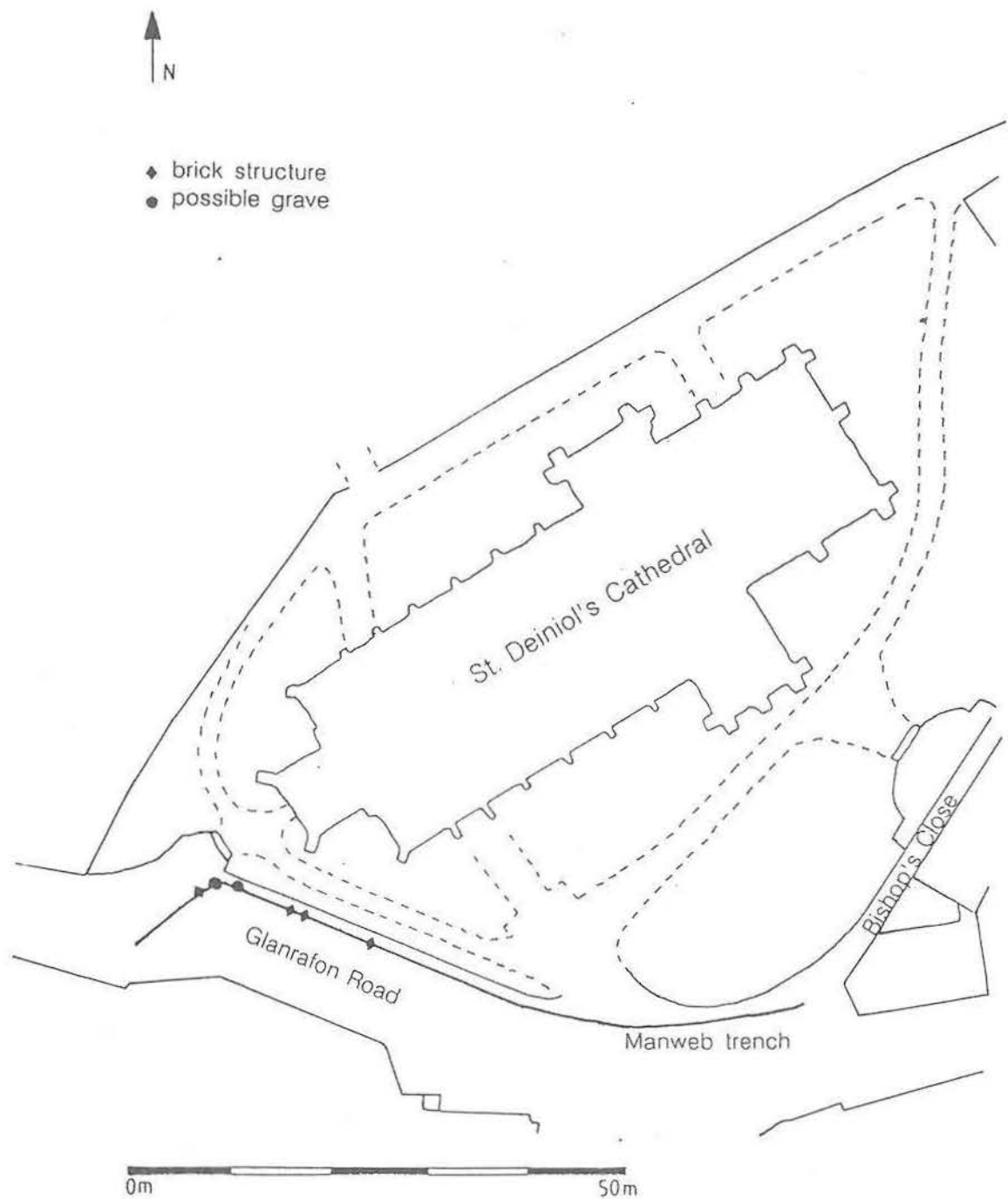


Fig 1 Location map

