

**BANGOR CITY LINKS  
MEMORIAL SQUARE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING & WATCHING  
BRIEF**

**REPORT NO. 315**

**Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust**

Event  
PRN  
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# **BANGOR CITY LINKS MEMORIAL SQUARE**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING & WATCHING BRIEF (G1586)**

**Report No. 315**

By Richards, A.

**Prepared for  
Cyngor Gwynedd Council  
February 1999**

**Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Richard Broun Associates, on behalf of Cyngor Gwynedd, commissioned Gwynedd Archaeological Trust to undertake a watching brief during the excavation works in Memorial Square, Bangor at SH57957210.

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AIMS

The aims of the watching brief were to investigate and record all archaeological features which were revealed during the construction works. It was anticipated that the work would provide information concerning earlier land use, particularly of the medieval period, and also identify the line of Afon Adda, both in its present culverted form and its earlier location.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Recording

A basic record, consisting of a photographic survey and written description, was carried out for each of the features identified.

### 3.2 Watching Brief

A watching brief was undertaken during the excavation work at the site between the 18<sup>th</sup> January and the 17<sup>th</sup> February 1999. A number of features were identified including several drainage culverts and an agricultural phase of use.

## 4 TOPOGRAPHY

Bangor Mountain and the Aethwy ridge on which Upper Bangor stands are composed of very old Pre-Cambrian rocks with the valley between containing younger Ordovician strata. Afon Adda was a swift flowing river c. 3 miles long rising just east of Pont Tygolchi from where it flowed under Coed-mawr towards Bangor Station. The river then began to meander through the flatter valley to a wide outlet in Hiracl Bay. The largest of these meanders took the river around the public house at the junction of Glanrafon with Sackville Road and between the Deanery and the Bishop's Palace (Vaynol 1777). A gently sloping terrace of alluvial soil built up in this region on which the original settlement of Bangor developed.

## 5 RESULTS

### 5.1 Archaeological background

Memorial Square lies close to the early monastic settlement at Bangor which was founded by a monk called Deiniol on the southern bank of the river between 525-550AD. The Cathedral at SH58087205 and the Bishop's Palace at SH58027216, which subsequently became the Town Hall, represent the ecclesiastical centre. Memorial Square lies at the northern edge of the medieval town that developed in Bangor. John Speed's sketch map of Bangor from 1610 shows the river running between the Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace and the area now occupied by Memorial Square is shown as an enclosed field. Engravings of Bangor in the 18<sup>th</sup> century show a small settlement centred on the large Cathedral and Bishop's Palace surrounded by a rural landscape (Lewis 1740, Sandby 1776). From the

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beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bangor grew rapidly as a centre of trade and communications. In the 50 years between 1801 and 1851 the population of Bangor increased from 1,770 to 9,564.

According to Roberts (c. 1990) the river was originally called Tarannon which later became Teranon and then Toronnen. The Welsh form of this name may signify a 'fast flowing river' and the original Celtic form suggests a river that 'frequently overflows its banks' (Roberts c. 1990). The name Afon Adda, taken from a farm called Cae Mab Adda near the source, seems to have originated around 1817. The river was gradually culverted from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through to 1950 beginning with the stretch from Glanrafon to the south of Memorial Square to the Police Station just off Deiniol Road. Maps of the 19<sup>th</sup> century show remnants of Afon Adda which were not culverted at that time. The same maps also show that there was no building development around Memorial Square. The section of culvert between Glanrafon and the Police Station was repaired and enlarged in recent years.

## 5.2 Features identified

The area to the south of Bishop's Walk (the site of the car park) was found to consist of rubble infill to a depth of at least 1m. To the north of Bishop's Walk between the War Memorial and the Bowling Green the natural subsoil was exposed below a few centimetres of top soil. The subsoil consisted of an orangey clay with grey silt inclusions and lenses overlying pockets of grey river gravel. The subsoil was excavated to a depth of up to 1.8m and plastic Geotec Terram sheets were laid on the exposed surface. Slate waste was then spread on the Terram and the cavity was filled to the surrounding surface level with small stones. Beneath the retaining wall, running north south from the edge of Deiniol Road to the north side of the War Memorial, a water source was exposed during excavation which produced a constant flow of greyish water. This water source was presumed to be natural and was subsequently channelled into a drainage pipe running along Bishop's Walk.

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A stone culvert was identified and exposed by machining in the old car park a few metres to the south of Bishop's Walk. A 16m length of this feature was exposed running east west roughly parallel to Bishop's Walk and curving slightly to the south. It was located 1m below the present ground surface and consisted of a stone built culvert 1.1m wide externally and 0.5m wide internally. A small section of the culvert was cleared of accumulated silt by hand and found to be 0.43m deep with a slate base. The side walls of roughly built stone were cemented using a lime mortar. The culvert was capped using dressed slate slabs 1.1m long by 0.4m wide and 3-4cm thick. This feature, which is illustrated in Plate 1 and Fig 1, was not disturbed during the refurbishment work. From the position and direction of this culvert it is likely that it was constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to drain into Afon Adda.

Another section of drainage culvert was excavated a few days later to the north of Bishop's Walk located between the War Memorial and the bowling green. A 4m length of narrow culvert, 0.25m wide, was exposed during machining 3m to the south east of the War Memorial steps. It was overlain by 1m of mid-brown stony soil and ran north south. The sides were roughly built of mortared stone and slate and the top was capped with flat stones of irregular shape which were mostly of slate. There was water in the culvert running in a northerly direction and sediment to a depth of c. 0.6m but it was not excavated further. Originally Geotec Terram sheeting was laid on top of this feature and the area back-filled but the area had to be excavated to a greater depth later in the scheme and this feature was destroyed. The culvert is illustrated in Plate 2 and its location is indicated in Fig 1.

A very similar short 3m section of narrow culvert was exposed by machining to the north of the War Memorial. It was 0.25m wide running north-south and on a similar alignment to the feature to the south although here it was dug into the natural subsoil. It was not possible to establish if this culvert was a continuation of the feature to the south as it appeared to underlie the steps of the War Memorial, which were not affected by the refurbishment work. This section of culvert was completely destroyed during further excavation to the north and east of the War Memorial.

During the refurbishment it was possible to ascertain the alignment of various features traversing Memorial Square. This was achieved through observation and from the study of a topographical survey produced by Digital Mapping Surveys which was supplied by Cyngor Gwynedd. Chris Burns of Cyngor Gwynedd supplied a tracing of the culverted river and the slate-capped drainage feature which were superimposed on the topographical map. These were then digitised and redrawn to produce Fig 1 which shows the location of significant features.

The alignment of the culverted Afon Adda was confirmed to run slightly east of due north from Glanrafon at the southern corner of the car park to Bishop's Walk in the northeast corner. From here the culvert for the river turned

towards the east although the exact angle has not been established. The alignment of a 22m section of the 0.23m diameter pipe carrying the culverted Afon Adda is illustrated in Fig 1.

It was also established that the current main sewer ran north from a man hole in Glanrafon, under two man holes to the west of the War Memorial and on towards Ffordd Deiniol. Under Ffordd Deiniol it joined another main sewer running south-west to north-east in the direction of Theatr Gwynedd. The approximate alignment of this feature, consisting of a large brick-lined tunnel at a depth of c. 8m, is shown in Fig 1

## 6 SUMMARY

From this refurbishment work it has been possible to establish that the underlying natural slope runs down towards Bishop's Walk from the north. Features in the northern part of the site, including the War Memorial, the wall to the north of it and the footpath along the west side of the bowling green, were constructed directly onto the subsoil. The whole area to the south of Bishop's Walk had been levelled using rubble infill.

It has been possible to confirm the line of the culverted Afon Adda along a 22m section from Glanrafon to Bishop's Walk where it then turns towards the east. Previous archaeological excavation 80m to the east, just to the south east of the Bishop's Palace, had established the presence of a former course of Afon Adda running parallel and slightly to the north of Bishop's Walk (GAT 1996) and present work seems to confirm this alignment. An earlier alignment of Afon Adda to the north east of the War Memorial is suggested by the alluvial deposits found below the subsoil.

The orientation of the stone lined culverts which were excavated would suggest that they originally drained the surrounding slopes into river. They are therefore likely to have pre-dated the culverting of Afon Adda in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The area to the south of Bishop's Walk may retain archaeological features preserved below the infill but any archaeological potential that may have existed in the area to the north, between the War Memorial and the Bowling Green, has been completely destroyed by the present refurbishment.

## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust would like to thank all those involved in this refurbishment scheme for their help and co-operation. Particular thanks go to Tudur Slaven of Richard Broun Associates and to Chris Burns and Brynmor Hughes of Cyngor Gwynedd for their interest and for keeping us informed of the scheme's progress. We are also grateful to Eric Wallis, the project engineer, for supplying the topographical survey produced by Digital Mapping Surveys.

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Fig 1: Location of features at Memorial Square - Bangor

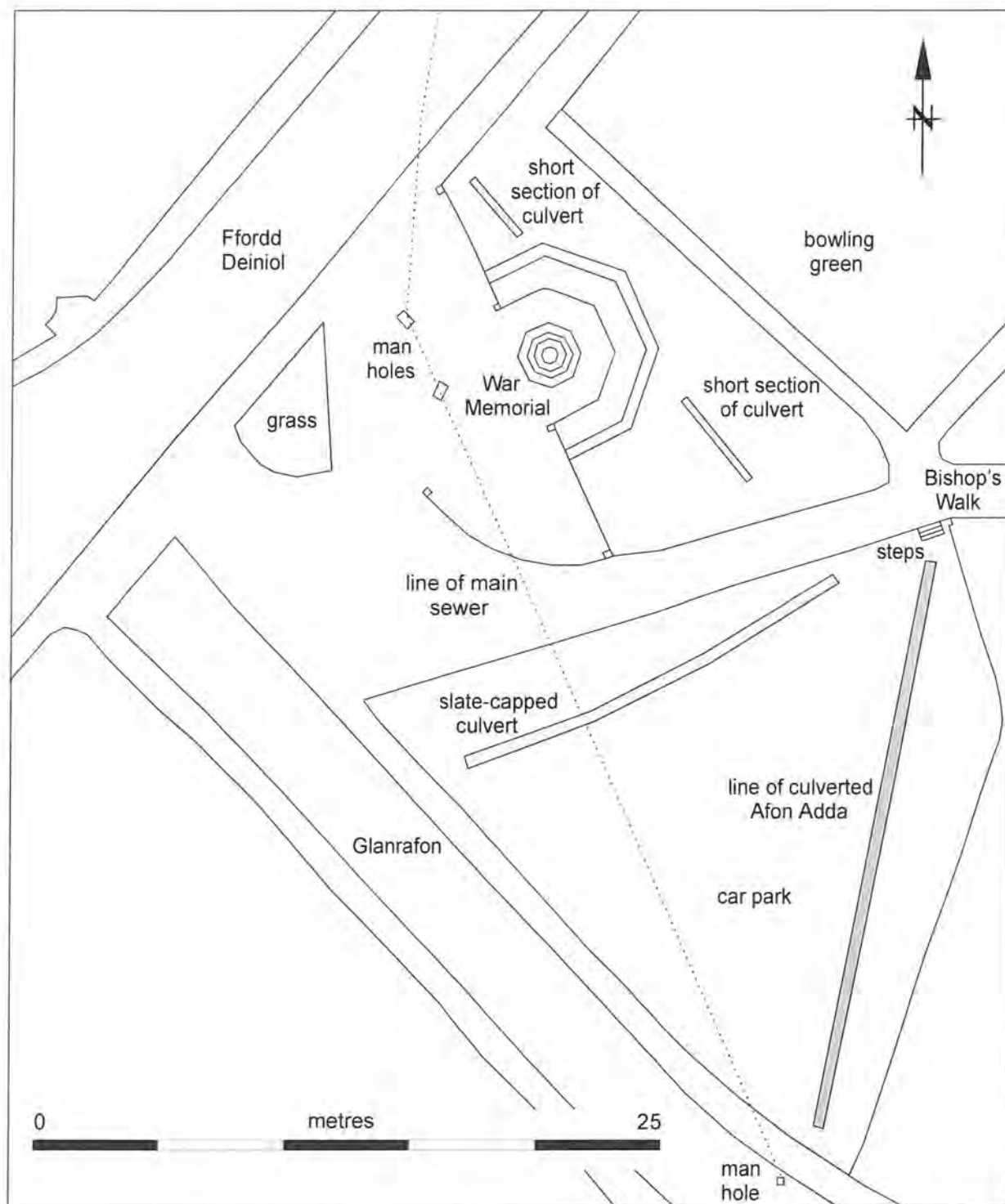




Plate 1: Slate-capped culvert viewed from the west



Plate 2: Interior construction of slate-capped culvert





Plate 3: Natural subsoil below path to the west of the Bowling Green

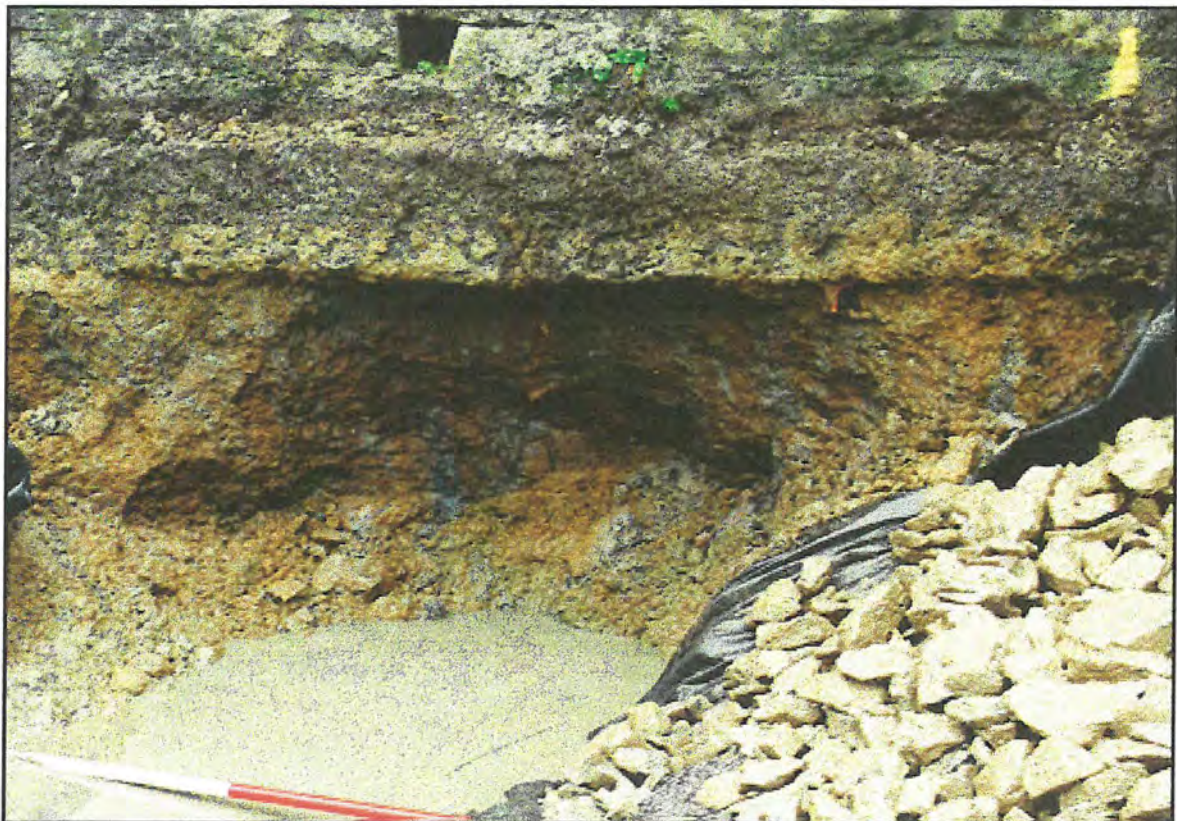


Plate 4: Natural subsoil and water ingress below the retaining wall to the north of the War Memorial

