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# THE GARDEN OF REST, BANGOR

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**GAT Project no. G2036**

**Report No. 750**



**Prepared for Gwynedd County Council**

August 2008

By R.T.J. Evans



**Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd**  
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**THE GARDEN OF REST, BANGOR, GWYNEDD  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

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Cover: The Garden of Rest from the North

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# **THE GARDEN OF REST, BANGOR, GWYNEDD ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

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# **THE GARDEN OF REST, BANGOR, GWYNEDD (G2036)**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT**

### **SUMMARY**

*An archaeological desk based assessment was carried out on the Garden of Rest, Tan Y Fynwent, Bangor, Gwynedd. It had been open fields, the property of the Dean of Bangor until 1840 when a cemetery was opened on the site as an extension to the main Bangor Cathedral churchyard that was becoming overcrowded. Over the next 22 years the burial ground was heavily used, with over 300 burials recorded. It was closed in 1862, when the municipal cemetery was opened at Glanadda. In 1938 the graveyard was handed over to the civic authorities, and in 1951 the Garden of Rest was laid out. Road widening schemes and the construction of the bus shelter, Crosville Enquiry Office, and public conveniences on the Garth Road side of the graveyard between 1956 and 1959 resulted in encroachment upon the boundaries of the old burial ground, and the exhumation of 57 burials. This also involved the rebuilding of the boundary walls. The waiting shelter was extended in 1983. However at least 240 burials remain under the Garden of rest.*

### **Acknowledgements**

The assistance of David R. Price of Bangor who has carried out much research on the Bangor Cathedral burials is gratefully acknowledged.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) was asked by Gwynedd County Council to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment of the Garden of Rest, Bangor, Gwynedd.

### **1.1 The study area**

The study area consists of the former burial ground at Tan y Fynwent, Bangor, now the Garden of Rest.

## **2 SPECIFICATION AND PROJECT DESIGN**

The project conforms to the guidelines specified in *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment* (Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994, rev. 2001).

## **3 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

### **3.1 Desk-Top Study**

The study involved the consultation of maps, computer records, written records and reference works, which make up the Historic Environment Record (HER), located at

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Bangor. Estate maps, tithe maps and OS maps were examined at the County Record Offices in Caernarfon. A full list of sources is given in section 6 at the end of this report.

### **3.2 Site Visit**

A site visit was carried out on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2008, when a photographic record was made and notes taken. A geophysical survey had been attempted previously but the ground conditions were found to be unsuitable for such work.

### **3.3 Report**

All available information was collated and assessed, and the structures allocated to the categories listed below. These are intended to give an idea of the importance of the building and the level of response likely to be required for any proposed works. Descriptions of the features and specific recommendations for mitigatory measures, as appropriate, are given in the relevant sections of the report.

The criteria used for allocating features to categories of importance are based on those used by the Secretary of State when considering ancient monuments for scheduling; these are set out in the Welsh Office Circular 60/96.

## **4 RESULTS**

### **4.1 Description of Site**

The garden of Rest (NGR SH 58157217) consists of 0.375ha of land bounded on the north by Garth Road to the east by Tan y Fynwent and to the south by the former cathedral Canonry, built in 1862 to house resident canons of the cathedral (a Grade II listed building), now the Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery. To the west it is bounded by the old GPO building and a public car park and the Public Library (Grade II listed). The area has been laid out as a garden since 1951, and has been encroached upon in 1956 by road widening along Ffordd Gwynedd and Tan y Fynwent, the construction of a bus shelter and office along Garth Road in 1957, and public conveniences in 1959. The waiting area was extended in 1983. The garden area is crossed with paths and planted with mature trees, which were laid out in 1951 (Fig. 5). There are a number of listed buildings on the surrounding streets, all of which are noted on Figure 6.

### **4.2 Historical Background**

On John Wood's 1834 map of Bangor Tan y Fynwent is referred to as 'Deanery Lands', a 'proposed road', which became Garth Road, is marked to the east (Fig. 1). It appears to have been church land for some considerable time, being undeveloped before being opened as a cemetery in 1840 (Clarke 1969). The area that became Tan y Fynwent cemetery is recorded as an open field on the tithe map of Bangor of 1841, belonging to the church, Garth Road having been constructed by this time (Fig. 2). This is despite the fact that the cemetery opened the year before. Clearly the tithe survey was carried out before this happened.

The area around the cathedral to the south west of Tan y Fynwent formed the main burial ground in the parish of Bangor for many centuries. In addition, burials took place inside the cathedral until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, with burials taking place in the isles and western parts of the nave (Browne Willis, 1721, 2-10).

As the population of the town expanded rapidly during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the graveyard became congested, and an extension was opened at Tan y Fynwent in 1840 (Gwynedd Archives XPE 63/15). The cathedral graveyard was closed by Order of Council in 1855. Burials continued at Tan y Fynwent until Glanadda Cemetery was opened by the Bangor Burial Board in 1862 (Ellis Jones 1986, 55). In 1877 the headstones and box-tombs in the cathedral churchyard were laid flat (Hughes 1904, 13). In 1948 many of the gravestones were removed from the cathedral churchyard and probably Tan y Fynwent. Some of these survive in the cathedral grounds, although most of those, including some that were re-laid in front of the Bishop Rowlands' Almshouses appear on date evidence to have come from the cathedral graveyard itself.

Tan y Fynwent was presented by the Dean and Chapter to Bangor city Council in 1938, and by 1951 the area had been laid out as a garden, which became known as the Garden of Rest (Ellis Jones 1986, 207). Gravestones from both Tan y Fynwent and the Cathedral churchyard were disposed of, and it is suggested that many of them were buried in the ground on the land between the old Canonry, now the Gwynedd Museum, and the Public Library (Price, D. *pers. comm.*), although no clear evidence has been found to confirm this.

Prior to the removal of the gravestones a survey was carried out in 1948 on behalf of the Caernarfonshire Historical Society by J. Ingham and R.E. Jones of Bangor, a copy of which has been deposited at Bangor University Archives (Bangor MSS 7346). Over 300 gravestones were recorded in Tan y Fynwent, with a few of the dates of death on the stones pre-dating 1840 when the burial ground opened, presumably commemorating relatives of the deceased buried in the cathedral churchyard but with relatives buried here. Over the 22 years that it was operational the cemetery was very intensively used.

In 1956 the widening of Ffordd Gwynedd and Tan y Fynwent necessitated the removal of 41 graves along the southern edge of the cemetery, with the rebuilding of the boundary wall and gate. A licence was duly issued for this purpose. In 1957 a new Crossville Enquiry Office was built adjacent to the bus shelter on Garth Road. This necessitated the exhumation of eight graves, and a licence was issued for this purpose (Gwynedd Archives, Arfon Borough Papers 26/6/1957). In 1959 new public conveniences were constructed in the north-east corner of the Garden of Rest, which required the removal of a further eight graves, for which a detailed plan was drawn. This also indicated the position of previously exhumed graves (Gwynedd Archives XB9/18/1, Fig. 5). Thus 57 graves have been removed, leaving at least 240 under the current Garden of Rest (Fig. 5).

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The Garden of Rest, long the property of the church, was an open field until 1840, when Tan Y Fynwent extension to the cathedral churchyard was opened. It was intensively used for burials with more than 300 recorded during the 22 years that it was open until it was closed for burials in 1862. 57 graves have been removed since 1956 as a result of road widening and the construction of a transport ticket office and public conveniences, all of which have taken up land of the former burial ground. More than 240 graves remain below the current Garden of Rest. Although none is known about, if there were any medieval or earlier archaeology on the site, it would almost certainly have been destroyed by the 19<sup>th</sup> century grave digging.

None of the buildings constructed on the site in the 1950s can be categorised at higher than local importance, and would only merit rapid recording in advance of destruction. However any deep excavation works beyond the areas already disturbed in the 1950s are highly likely to encounter burials. Appropriate licences for removal would have to be obtained, and provision for re-internment made. The position of any graves noted should be recorded and an archaeological plan of their positions made.

## 6 REFERENCES

### 6.1 Published references

Browne-Willis, 1721 *A Survey of the Cathedral Church of Bangor* (London)

Clarke, M.L. 1969 *Bangor Cathedral*

Ellis-Jones, P. 1986 *Bangor 1883-1993: A Study in Municipal Government* (Cardiff)

Hughes, W. 1904 *Recollections of Bangor Cathedral* (Bala)

IFA 2001, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment* (1994, rev. 2001).

White, S.I. (ed.) 1994 *Bangor: From a Cell to a City* (Bangor)

### 6.2 Cartographic and unpublished references in Gwynedd Sites and Monuments Record, Gwynedd Archives, Caernarfon, and The National Library of Wales.

Davidson, A. 2007 *Historic Towns Survey of Gwynedd: Bangor* (Unpublished GAT Report Number 681)

Gwynedd Archives *Tithe Map of Bangor 1841*

Gwynedd Archives Arfon Borough Papers 27/6/1939 *Deed of grant of Disused Churchyard at Tan y Fynwent. Representative Body of the Church in Wales (1) Mayor Alderman and Burgesses of the Borough of Bangor (2).*

Gwynedd Archives XB9/18/1 *Tan-y-Fonwent: Bangor Layout of Garden of Rest and Plan Referred to, Showing Grave Positions and Graves Affected by Proposed New Building*

Gwynedd Archives XM Maps 10195/6 *Borough Map of Bangor 1934* (Taken from OS 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 6 inch map)

Gwynedd Archives XPE 63/15 *Terrier and Inventory of the Parish of Bangor- April 19<sup>th</sup> 1900*

Price, D. 2005 *Bangor Cathedral Burials*. Unpublished notes

UCNWB Bangor MSS 7346 *A Survey of the Inscriptions on the Monuments in the Lower Cemetery, Bangor*

John Wood's Map of Bangor 1834



Fig. 1 John Wood's Map of Bangor 1834. Tan y Fynwent is located at 'Deanery lands'. The 'Proposed Road' becomes Garth Road.

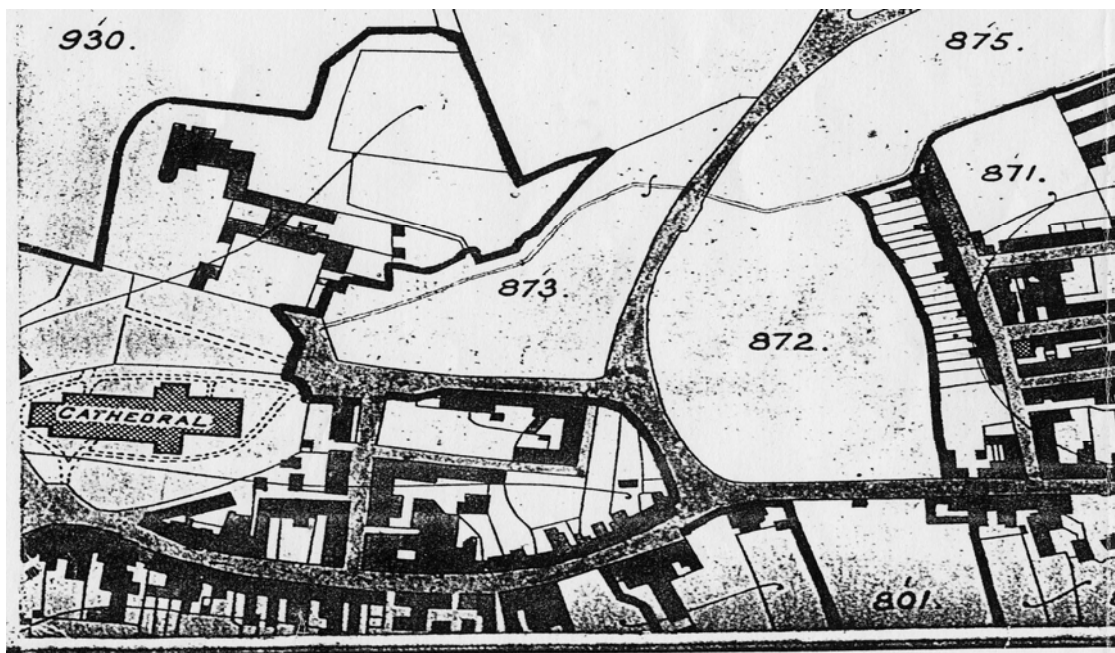


Fig. 2 Tithe Map of Bangor 1841. Tan y Fynwent is located in Field 873



Figure 3. Tan Y Fynwent ordnance survey. 1:500. Town plan of Bangor

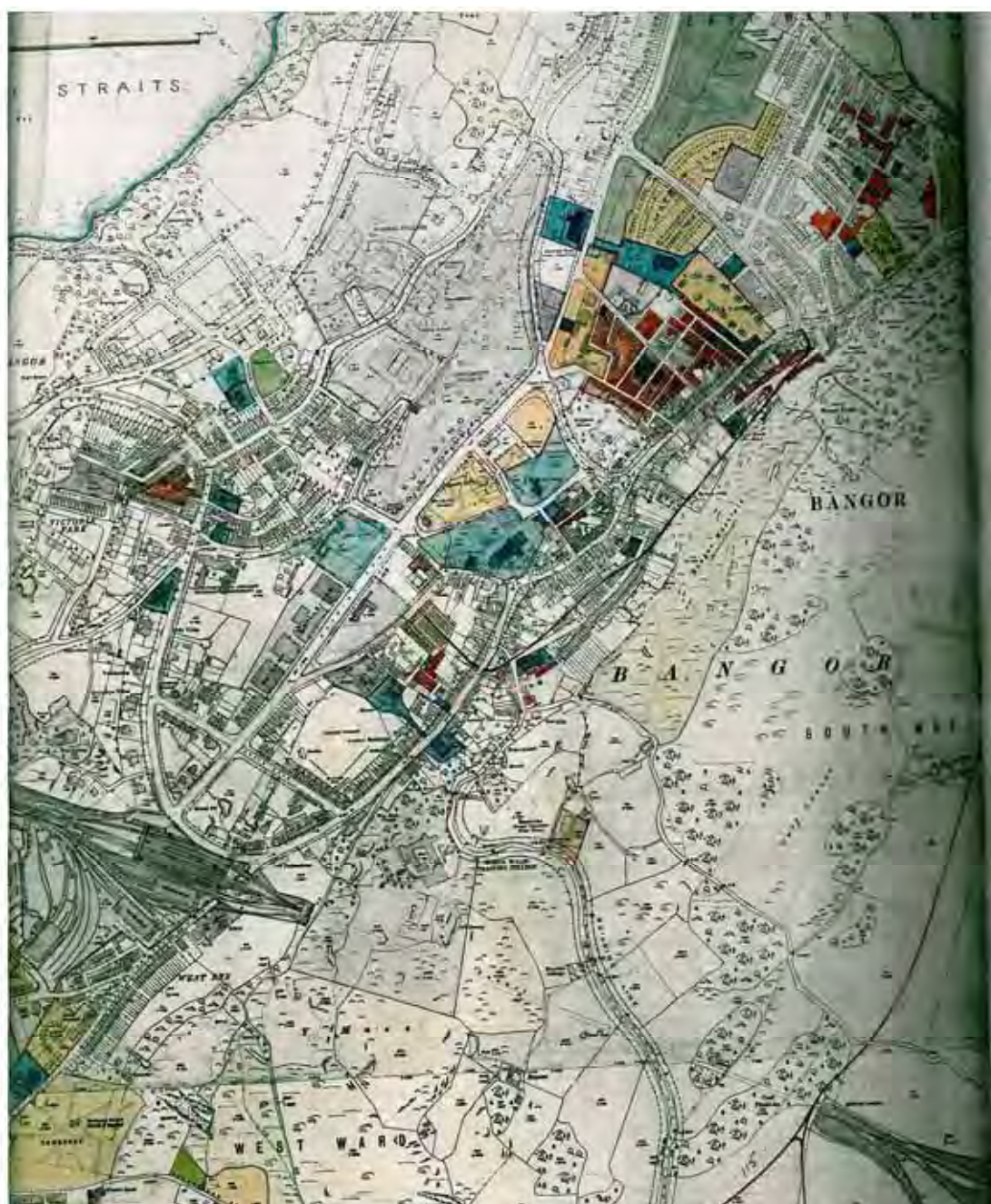


Fig. 4 Bangor Borough Map 1934 showing Tan Y Fynwent north east of the Canonry marked in Blue. Areas coloured Blue Indicate Church Land and Yellow Borough Land in 1934 (Gwynedd Archives XM Maps 10195/6).

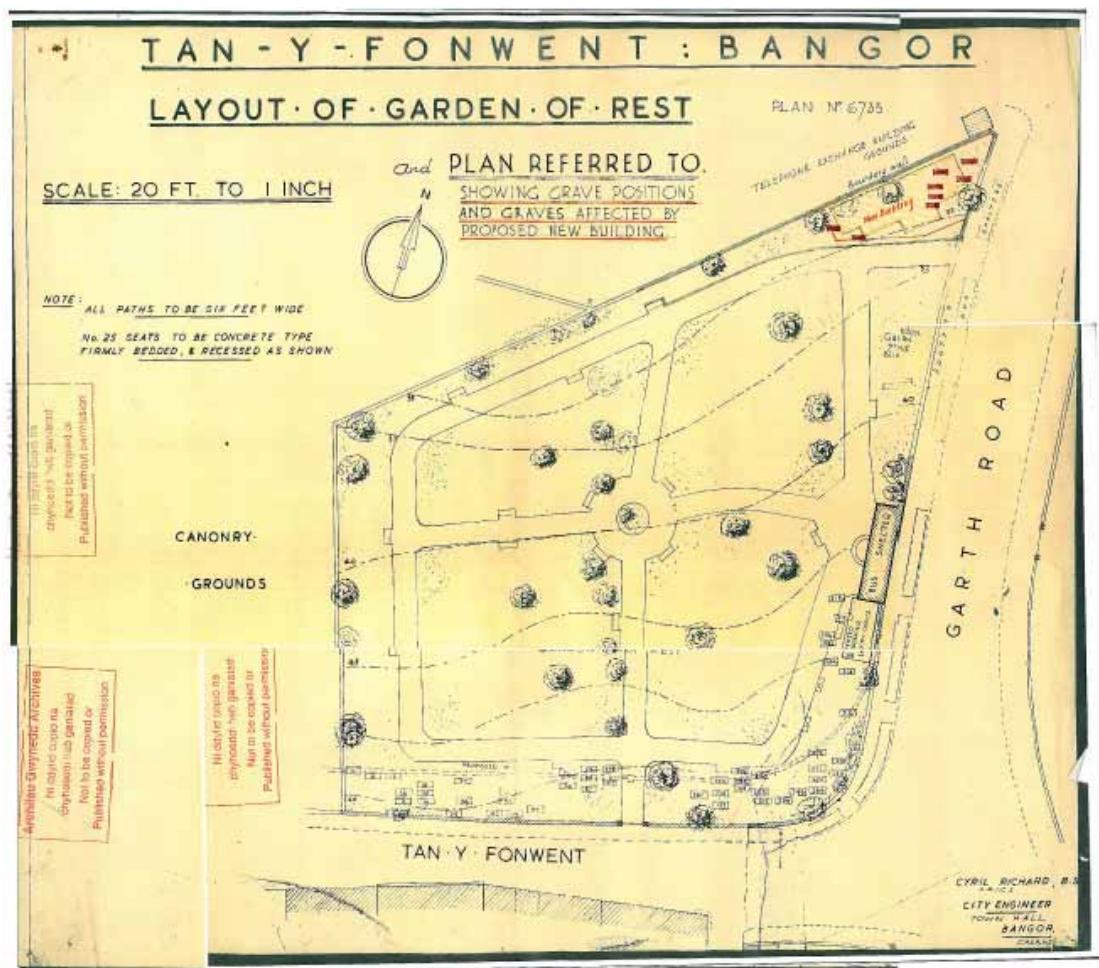


Fig. 5 1959 Plan by Bangor City Engineer Cyril Richard of the Garden or Rest, showing the location of graves exhumed between 1956 and 1959 (Gwynedd Archives XB9/18/1)





**Plate 1** The Garden of Rest looking South, with the Waiting Room to the east



**Plate 2** The garden of Rest from Tan y Fynwent