

Rare cathedral library collection goes on display for historic Welsh anniversary

Tuesday 10 June, 2025

An exhibition at Bangor University will mark 1500 years of Bangor Cathedral with rare manuscripts and archival treasures.

Curated by the Archives and Special Collections at Bangor University, this major exhibition marks 1500 years since St. Deiniol founded his monastery in Bangor in 525 AD. The city's name comes from the fence, called a 'bangor,' that Deiniol built to enclose his community of prayer. 1500 years later, the cathedral continues to serve the city that grew up around this original settlement.

The exhibition showcases rare and significant items from the University's archival collection alongside precious materials from the Cathedral Library. This remarkable collection has been in the care of Bangor University for several decades. Visitors will discover illuminated manuscripts, rare printed books, and archival documents that tell the story of this ancient Welsh ecclesiastical centre.

The exhibition is now open and will run until 19 December 2025 online and at the Main Arts Building at Bangor University.

"This exhibition offers a unique opportunity to explore 1500 years of continuous religious and cultural heritage," says, Elen Wyn Simpson, Archives and Special Collections Manager at Bangor University. "The materials we're displaying reveal the important role Bangor Cathedral has played in Welsh history and the broader story of Christianity in Britain.

"It's an honour to be part of the celebrations of the Cathedral and City of Bangor and a great opportunity to showcase the rare and significant items within the Cathedral Library."

Bangor Cathedral stands as a testament to the legacy of Deiniol's vision. From its beginnings as a secluded monastery, it has witnessed centuries of Welsh history, surviving Viking raids, Norman conquest, and the changing tides of religious and political upheaval.

Reflecting on the 1500 anniversary year, David Morris, Bishop of Bardsey and Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Bangor, says, "For fifteen centuries, Bangor Cathedral has been a beacon of faith and community in Wales. This exhibition captures the fascinating history of our cathedral and its vital role in Welsh spiritual life throughout the ages."

Bishop David adds, "St Deiniol's vision of creating a place of worship and learning continues to inspire us today. Each week, we serve a growing worshipping community with daily services, outstanding choral music, and civic and national events. The Cathedral attracts thousands of visitors each year, and as we continue our 1500 year celebrations, this exhibition will surely attract many more."

The Cathedral's anniversary programme includes a series of high-profile events throughout 2025, including:

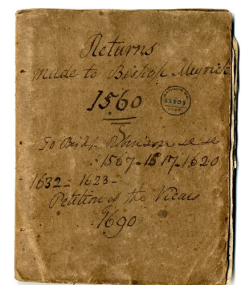
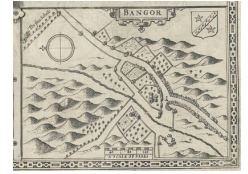
- A live broadcast of BBC Radio 4's Sunday Worship.
- A brand new musical production by Choir of the World winners Côr Glanaethwy called Dinas Noddfa / City of Refuge
- The launch of New Welsh Church Music CD recorded by Saint Deiniol's Cathedral Choir.
- The installation of a new icon of Saint Deiniol.

The Bangor Cathedral 2025 Exhibition reflects the Archives and Special Collections' commitment to making their resources available to all researchers and the wider community at no charge.

Visit the exhibition at Council Chamber Corridor, Main Arts Building, Bangor University or online

<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/archives-and-special-collections/exhibitions>

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1, Earliest Deed: The earliest deed which relates to Bangor dates from the year 1306. Deed of Sale of Gwilym ap Kuhelyn of Bangor, with the consent of Anian, Bishop of Bangor, to Hycheyl, Canon of Bangor of one parcel of land at Roskelynen in Bangor (1 May 1306). This document proves that Bishop Anian, one of the most famous of the Bishops of Bangor, was still ruling the see in 1306.

2, Visitation Reports: Visitation Returns of the Dean and Chapter of Bangor Cathedral. Late 16th - Early 17th century

3, Map: Inset map of Bangor from John Speed's map of Caernarfonshire, with Bangor Cathedral in the centre and 'The free schoole' located on the outskirts of the city, 1610

Company Contact:

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Esgobaeth Bangor

T. 07586469556

E. mattbatten@cinw.org.uk

W. <https://bangor.eglwysyngnghymru.org.uk/>

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