

i6 Llwynu

Exploring Abergavenny



EXPLORING ABERGAVENNY

For several years the Abergavenny and District Civic Society has been studying the streets, spaces and buildings of Abergavenny and Mardy outside the town centre. This process is known as 'characterisation', defined by the Welsh Government as 'capturing the local distinctiveness by identifying how places have been shaped over time.'

This record of what makes each part of the town distinctive, and often rather special, increases our awareness of the qualities that need to be considered and respected when new development is proposed. We hope that the planning authority will share our impressions and take account of our views. We also hope that our studies will increase residents' understanding and appreciation of their town, encouraging them to take an active interest in how change is managed in the future, or to conduct more research into aspects of the town's development.

The survey started in partnership with the Civic Trust for Wales as a pilot project to test whether community groups could carry out urban characterisation. The outcome was the Trust's *Exploring your town* manual and toolkit (2013). A County Council conservation area appraisal adopted in 2016 has also been taken into account, and this also covers the town's commercial centre¹.

We have divided the town into thirty-six character areas. This report presents the history and character of one of those areas.

Now we would like *your* contribution:

- *Have we made any mistakes?*
- *Can you add to the history of the area?*

- *Do you agree with our impressions of the area?*
- *What have we missed that should have been recorded?*

All the reports are available at <https://abercivsoc.com> and comments may be sent to abercivsoc@gmail.com or recorded when the reports are exhibited.

Acknowledgements and copyright information

The Society is especially grateful for the survey contributions of Clive Bransom, Dick Cole, Tony Konieczny, Nigel Patterson, Anna Petts, Duncan Rogers and Jay Shipley. Dick Cole has carried out much of the research and final report writing, and accepts responsibility for any errors. None of the team had prior experience of heritage studies; all have learned much from the project.

We also thank Anna Leron and Dr Matthew Griffiths of the Civic Trust for Wales for their early support. Matthew Griffiths, now of the Open University, has also helped to present the project for the education and participation of residents, including the design of these character area reports.

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¹ <http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/abergavenny-conservation-area-appraisal>



LLWYNU

THIS AREA NORTH of the old railway line was developed as council housing shortly after the Second World War. It straddles the boundary between Abergavenny and Llantilio Pertholey, between the Urban and Rural Districts at the time when the estates were built.

This, together with the Major's Barn area, is a large concentration of similar housing for a town of the size of Abergavenny, and the community that lives in this part of the town has more than its share of employment, health, social





Figure 2: Rholben Road

and other problems. Yet caring private ownership and good management of the rented housing has given much of the Llwynu area a tidy appearance. In places such as Rholben Road, short in length with a range of house types and plenty of privet hedges, the appearance of the street is notably pleasant. Unfortunately that quality was not fully continued as the estate extended northwards.

When built, many of the rows of semi-detached houses would have had a repetitive rhythm, but changes made by the owners and their garden vegetation have made this much less evident.

Historical Background

Prior to development the area contained two farmsteads: Ysguborwen on the southern edge and Llwynu where Llwynu Close is now. Old Hereford Road was the main route from Abergavenny to that town until the 1820s. A lane running north west from Ross Road through the area joined (new) Hereford Road and Old Hereford Road, as it still does – Llwynu Lane, the town boundary. The 1813

Key to map

Conservation area boundary



Listed Building



Building of special local interest



Building of local interest



Metal railings



Local landmark building



Good sense of place



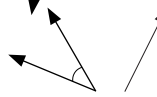
Terminated street view



Deflected street view



Vista, long view



Visual pinch point



Building rhythm



Important walling



Important trees or shrubs



Important hedges



Footpath



Improvement opportunity



Figure 3: character analysis



map also shows the lane running north from Llwynu Lane, separating this character area from South Mardy, and that it extends north along the upper edge of the rest of Mardy, now only as a public footpath. A cemetery was established west of Old Hereford Road in the 1850s and development of the Lansdown Road area to the south east had begun towards the end of the same century, but otherwise this was a rural area until the 1940s.

Development of the farmland was being considered before the Second World War, but a 1943 plan for the town rejected this because of the agricultural value of the land and its function as a 'green wedge'. Nevertheless building north of the railway started in 1945 and the Monmouthshire County Development Plan of 1953 allocated the entire area for housing.

By 1950 fifty 'prefab' bungalows had been built in the Ysguborwen character area to the south and council housing extended to the lower side of Bishop Crescent. The need for social housing at the time must have been substantial as the entire area was developed by about 1960. Local employment growth and, from 1957, slum clearance in the town contributed to the demand.

Setting, Streets and Spaces

This large area extends nearly a kilometre north from the line of the old railway, climbing at an average slope of about 1 in 14 between the 70m and 125m contours, steepening with the climb.

No trace remains of the many field boundaries that crossed the site and which might have provided greenery and broken up the mass of the estates.

The layout of council housing between Old Hereford Road and Llwynu Lane is much the same as in the Park West character area built in the 1920s, and closely resembles the Park East character area, mostly built in the late 1940s. Pairs of semi-detached homes and a few terraces are arranged necklace-like along a rather formal pattern of roads and occasional green spaces. Old Barn Way and Hillcrest Road are the primary roads, coming together at a roundabout and a parade of shops. North of Llwynu Lane and St David's Road the design has more terraces and no internal public open space.

Whether by design or not, the placing of buildings often closes the view along a road or steers the eye around a bend.

Building lines are usually set back about 6m from the highway and rear gardens are up to 20m in length, generally somewhat less generous in the later housing. Inevitably after sixty years and with much owner occupation, the treat-



Figure 4: Meadway

ment of front gardens is very varied. Original low brick boundary walls often survive, but many have been reduced to provide car access.

A significant proportion of the family homes have been unable, or not wished, to create an off-road parking space, often because of the slope. Many houses backing on to St David's Road, a service lane parallel with Old Hereford Road, and the lane on the boundary with the South Mardy area, have been able to create rear access with parking space, though the appearance of these areas is of poor quality.

There is no on-street tree planting, even on corners where space exists, so the street scene relies on front garden shrubs and, often, neat privet hedges. There are a few trees on some of the public open spaces. Otherwise the area has only a row of trees on the east side of Old Hereford Road and a few glimpsed in back gardens.

An area behind nos 5-15 Old Barn Way, probably intended for allotments, has been absorbed into gardens. Seventeen housing association apartments are planned for this land.



Figure 5: Hillcrest Road shops

All the roads in the area have speed-calming measures, including a chicane and 20mph limits past the secondary school on Old Hereford Road and at the Llwynu junior school. Tarmac roads and footways are in good condition, with many footways used partly for parking. Old Hereford Road is in a cutting, with a light-controlled crossing at the school and a shared use cyclepath south of here on its eastern side.

There is a footpath link to Park Crescent at the bottom of Hillcrest Road, from Old Barn Way and Derwen Way to Old Hereford Road, and from Vale View and Charles Crescent to St David's Road.

Unsurprisingly at this elevation, with a relatively low building density, there are wide views south to the Bloreng and/or Ysgyryd Fach throughout the area, and many parts of the area have glimpses of the Deri of Ysgyryd Fawr to the north. Llwynu Lane is aligned almost exactly between the Deri and Ysgyryd Fach.

The east-west line of St David's Road, free of frontage development, and the position of the northern boundary of the Major's Barn estate suggests that this



Figure 6: Llwynu Lane and Ysgyryd Fach

may once have been intended to be part of a northern town by-pass. Clearly any such intention was abandoned when development took place to the east in the 1970s.

Building Character

This large area of council-built housing is not all of precisely the same character, but has sufficient in common to be considered as a single character area. It can be divided into two sub areas:

1 The large area north of Ysguborwen bounded by Old Hereford Road, St David's Road and, on the eastern side, South Mardy estates and Lansdown. There are about four hundred 1940s or 1950s homes in this area, all two-storeyed and mostly semi-detached. About a dozen different designs help to relieve the repetition of the simple arrangement of homes on building lines. The mixture of types is greatest in the earlier southern part of the estate. Some of these repeat a design

used in the Park East area. There are variations between brick and rendering, in doorway location and treatment, in chimney positioning, and some have gables to the front while others have bay windows. A small number on Highfield Crescent are rendered with brick quoins. All have hipped roofs, mostly dark brown tiles, but some red. In Old Barn Way and Highfield Crescent (where a few are flats) there are 58 'Cornish' homes with tiled mansard roofs and brick, the latter replacing the original pre-reinforced concrete.

2 The somewhat similar area north of Llwynu Lane with Dan y Deri to the east contains nearly a hundred homes. Charles Crescent, probably built in the late 1950s in red brick, appears somewhat severe and does not have the variety of the housing to the south, possibly reflecting less generous funding arrangements. Charles Close has more variety with bay windows and rendering, some colour washed. The Close and Deri View also have twelve pleasant semi-detached and two detached houses built around 2000 in brick with paler brick banding, gabled upper windows and door canopies.

Heritage Assets

The area is quite typical of many areas of similar housing built across Britain in the years either side of the Second World War. It shows the influence of Garden Cities and evolving council housing standards and fashions, but has no particular qualities of heritage value.