



31 South Mardy

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.

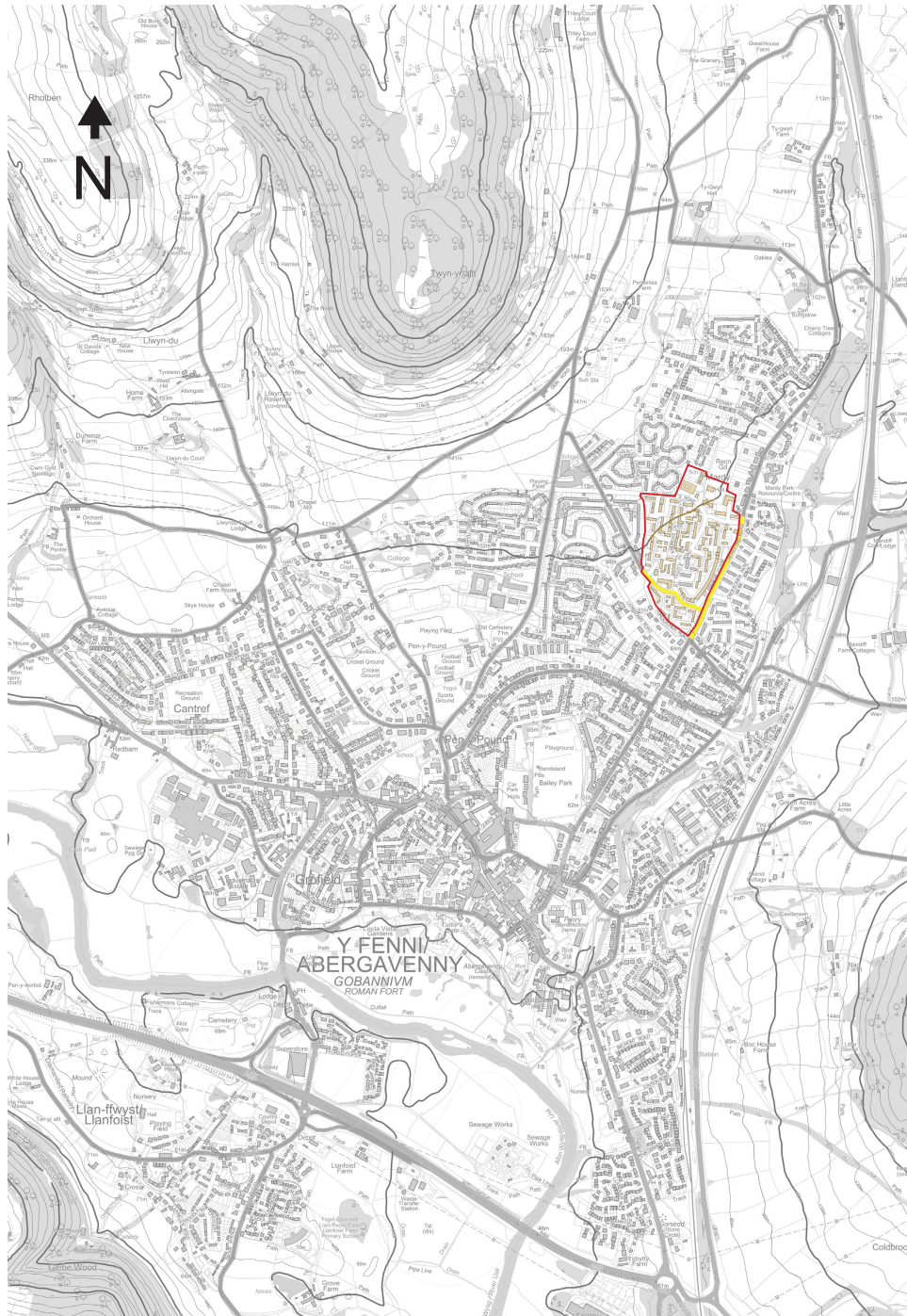
Acknowledgements and copyright information

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 Lermont 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>



SOUTH MARDY

THIS AREA LIES WEST of Hereford Road between the northern limit of Abergavenny at Croesonon Road and the older parts of Mardy.

The majority of the area is occupied by a substantial estate built around 1970 with the housing, built for rent, arranged to create linked spaces through which roads are threaded. The arrangement of housing, loosely on a grid pattern, provides interesting spaces with numerous examples of visual enclosure and





Figure 2: St Andrew's Crescent

rhythm, qualities often lacking in earlier and later housing. The layout particularly contrasts with slightly earlier council estates where the housing followed the line of the roads, set back by a building line. There are a few small examples of the 'Radburn' development pattern that originated in the USA before the war and was much used in post-war UK new towns, putting the car at the rear of the houses with only pedestrian access to front doors.

Architecturally the housing could be anywhere in Britain, and the tile-hanging and boarding might suggest the Home Counties rather than Gwent. On the other hand, this reduced the usual look of a council estate and it remains much as when built, with little obtrusive personalisation despite much use of the 'right to buy'. Garage courts can be shabby and the fencing to the track on the western edge is particularly untidy on the Llwynu side. There is little space available for play and the traffic calming measures met a need that was not envisaged forty years ago.

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



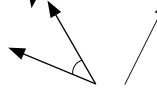
Terminated street view



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

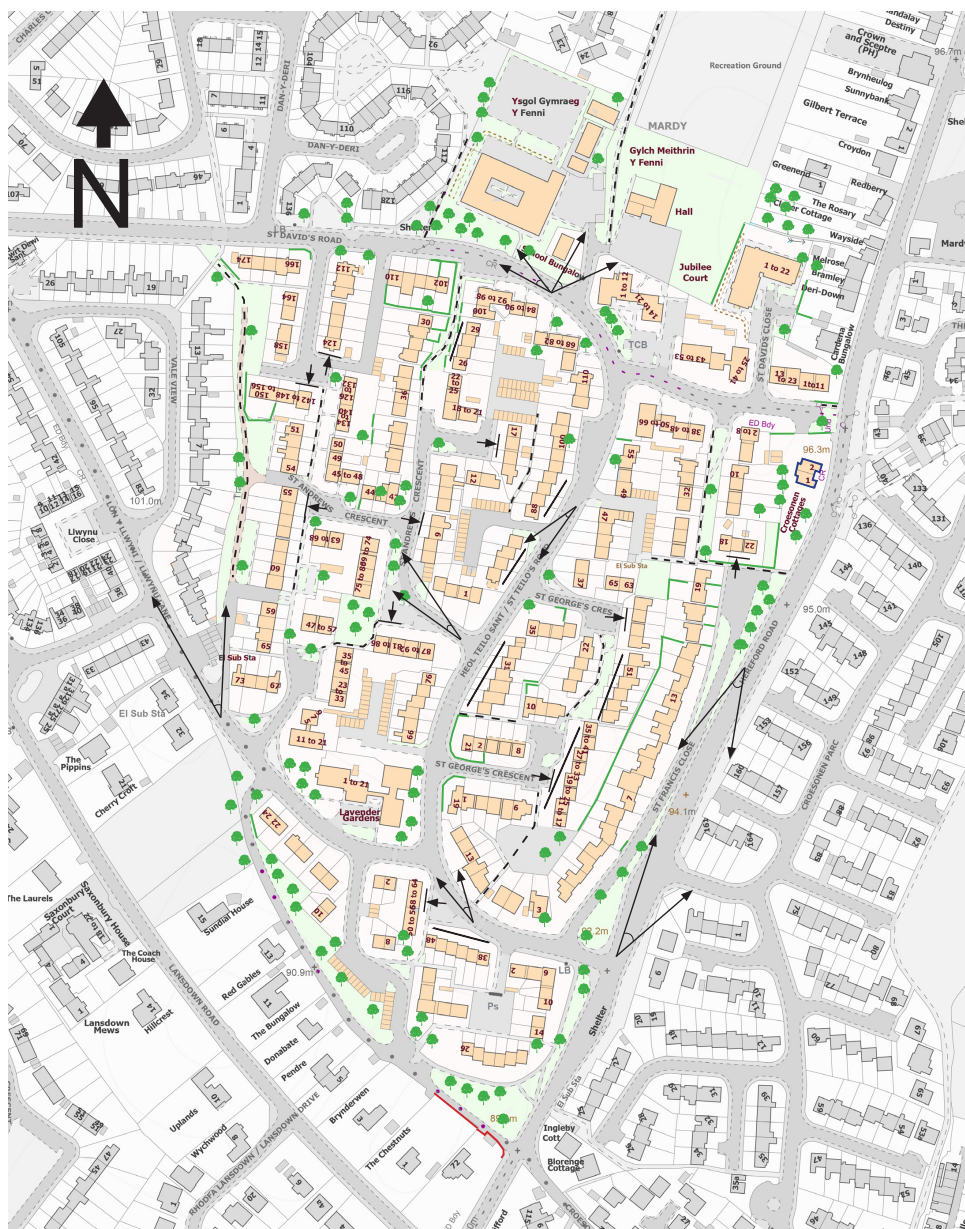


Figure 4: St Andrew's Crescent

Historical Background

The 1881 Ordnance Survey map shows seven fields in this area, averaging about 2ha (5 acres) each. There was no farmstead, though a small copse by a spring in the centre of the area (where St Andrew's Crescent is today) may indicate an earlier one. The copse had disappeared by 1901. The field between this and the Hereford Road was used for allotments until about the 1960s, with Croesonen Cottages (which could be 18th or early 19th century) on the road frontage. By the early 1960s the Llwynu council housing estate to the west had been completed, straddling the Mardy/Abergavenny boundary. Provision had been made for Llwynu Lane and St David's Road to open up the remainder of Mardy for more council housing. This was almost complete by 1970 south of St David's Road, and the Dan y Deri estate, north of St David's Road was built in the following decade.



Figure 5: A Radburn walkway

Setting, Streets and Spaces

Like the rest of Mardy, this area is situated on the gently sloping shelf between the incised Gavenny valley and the Deri. The highest part of the area is just above the 100m contour. A few mature trees in the area can be related to the former field boundaries, but the housing developments have otherwise paid no heed to these. An exception is the western edge where the boundary between these developments and the earlier Llwynu estate, probably once a farm boundary, is clearly evident as a neglected track bordered by a variety of fencing. Trees planted in green areas at the time of building are now over 40 years old and contribute well to the street scene.

Travelling towards Abergavenny and leaving the old part of Mardy, Hereford Road widens markedly with a wide verge to the west. This opens up a wide view including the Bloreng. In the south west of the area the view up Llwynu Lane focuses on the wooded Deri. Otherwise the layout of roads and buildings offers only glimpses of the Deri and Ysgyryd Fach at street level.

In contrast to the loose sinuous layout of the Llwynu estate, the housing



Figure 6: A Radburn roadway

south of St David's Road is denser and more rectilinear, though the main roads curve gently between the houses. This new approach to housing layout created a number of pleasant small urban spaces. In some parts of the estate only pedestrian access is possible to the front of houses, the footpaths linked to parking or garaging courts. Front gardens generally have low brick walls, now often supplemented by hedges, shrubs, picket fences or railings, or cleared for parking access. Low-rise flats have open fronts. There appears to be little space provided for play. St Teilo's Road and St David's Road have traffic calming measures in the vicinity of the school.

Building Character

The 'Saints' estate consists of about 450 homes, predominantly in short two-storey terraces, but including a substantial scatter of two- and three-storey flats and a group of bungalows on the southern boundary opposite the more recent Lavender Gardens flats, both accommodation for the elderly or disabled. Semi-de-

tached homes with individual garages on St Francis Close, facing Hereford Road, may have been built for sale, but the rest were originally council houses, many of them now privately owned.

The housing is substantially brick, in several shades, with gable pitched tiled roofs (except one mono-pitched block of flats), but extensive use of panels of green and dark-brown tile-hanging or white boarding and some white/cream rendering provides ample variety, albeit with little relevance to local traditions. Front doors have simple canopies with metal supports and most window frames, but not bargeboards, are still white. A few houses have been extended. The rectilinear arrangement of buildings is made more interesting by devices such as the rhythm of en echelon staggered terraces, and the overall effect is of a pleasant well-maintained area of mixed housing where by design interesting spaces have been created. A more recent complex for the elderly has been added at St David's Close.

A simple grey primary school has been built on the north side of St David's Road, now Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni.

Heritage Assets

Croesonen Cottages appear much modernised but could merit further investigation.