



Exploring Abergavenny

5 Chapel Road

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?*

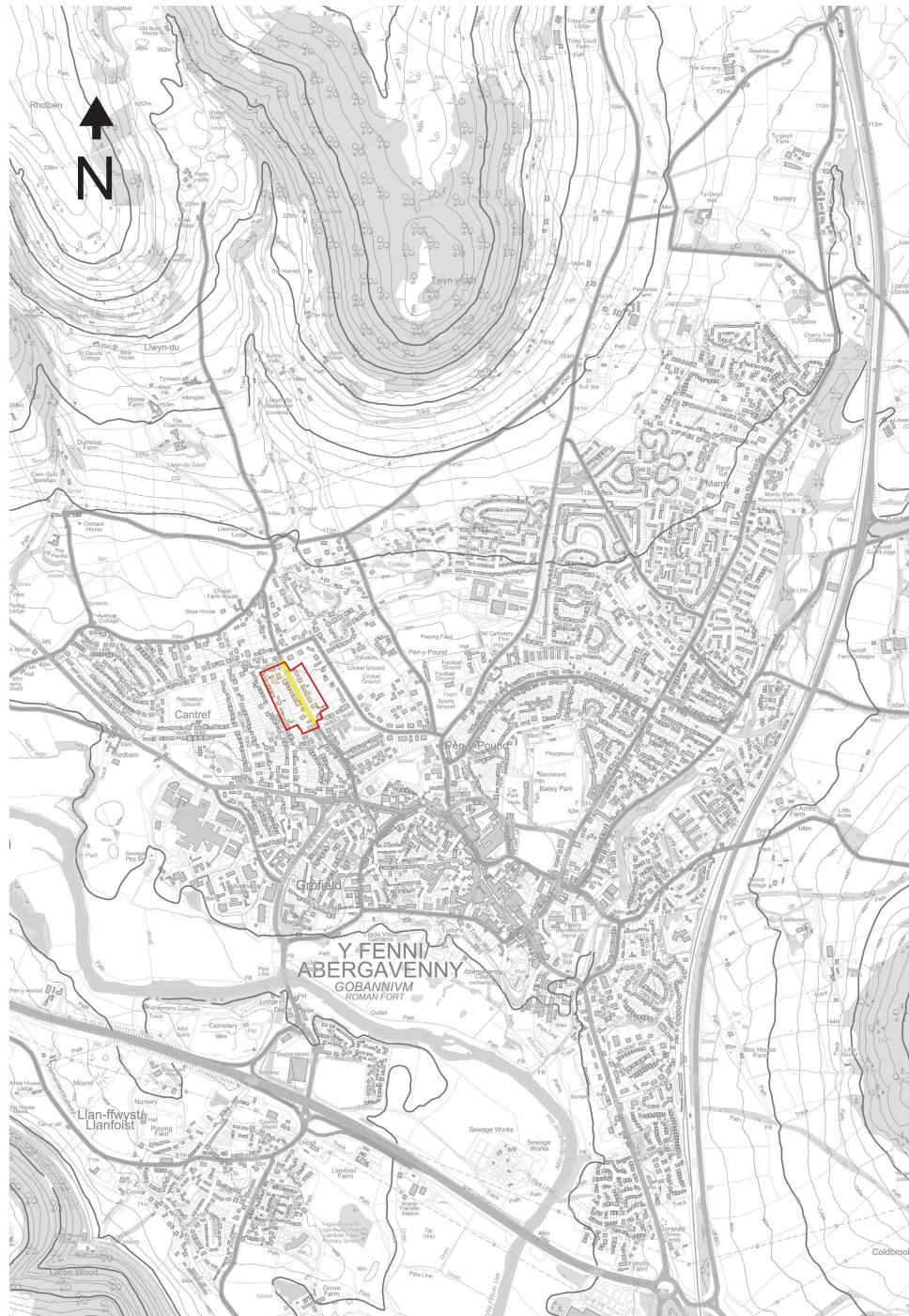
All the reports are available at <https://abercivsoc.com> and comments may be sent to abercivsoc@gmail.com or recorded when the reports are exhibited..

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 Lerman 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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CHAPEL ROAD

THE CENTRAL SECTION of Chapel Road has a different character from both the compact Victorian suburb of Cantref to the south and the scattered housing to the north. It extends from Harold Road almost to Linden Avenue and Western Road. The character area also includes the adjoining eastern side on North Street.

This is an area of middle-class housing, some built in the Victorian period, always in stone with slate roofs and usually with decorative quoins and surrounds to the openings, but most built between the wars or in the 1960s using a wide variety of materials including much brick. The main interest in the area is the history of its development, especially linked to Derristone, the stone boundary walls of which have largely survived development. The consequent contrast between the east and west sides of North Street is also worthy of note.



Historical Background

Chapel Road has ancient origins, part of a lane that extended from Tudor Street via Pant Lane and today's Commercial Street towards Llwyn-du and the medieval deer park between the Deri and Rholben. The Avenue character area report elaborates on the history of the upper part of Chapel Road.

This part of Abergavenny was set out with roads to enable development at some time in the mid 19th century. There is no sign of development on the 1844 tithe map; the Duke of Beaufort owned a field fronting Chapel Road and extending to include today's North Street (both sides) as far south as the rear of Orchard Street properties. One of the first houses to be built between Chapel Road and North Street was Derrystone, now Derristone, a large house with grounds extending at least to the boundary of no 62 North Street (Rose Villa), and on Chapel Road to the boundary of today's no 97, which replaced an earlier house. The 1881 map shows the main entrance on the site of today's nos 99/101 Chapel Road. *Kelly's Directory* for 1895 tells us that E A Johnson, architect of several buildings in the town, occupied Derrystone, but more research is necessary to establish whether he built the house and made land available for development.

Two houses on Chapel Road, nos 81 and 87, are abutting or very close to the footway and could pre-date the improvement of the lane, though the only building on the 1829 and 1844 maps was much further south.

The eastern side of Chapel Road was fields in 1881 except that Tŷ-lan Villa (no. 40 – in the Cantref character area) had carved a plot from the field. Little had changed by the turn of the century except that fields to the east of Chapel Road had been parcelled ready for development including Avenue Road. The rear boundary of Chapel Road development had thus been determined but only a pair of houses (nos 52/54) had been built. By 1920 only nos 48/50 had been added.

During the inter-war period several houses were added to the eastern side of Chapel Road and infilling was completed here by the 1960s. On the western side nos 95/97 could be pre-war, but the remainder of the houses, all in the grounds of Derristone, are *ca* 1960. Derristone had been provided with an access from the section of North Street running east-west before the end of the 19th century, and its grounds here were also now released for house building. Similarly, the eastern side of North Street also became fully developed by about 1970.

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 2: character analysis





Figure 3: 1930s development, Chapel Road

Setting, Streets and Spaces

This section of Chapel Road together with North Street rises from about 65m to about 73m at an average gradient of 1 in 30. Chapel Road has a very slight bend to the left; North Street is straight with a sharp right-angled turn at the northern end to join Chapel Road. This turn in North Street, where it might have continued north to join Western Road, is a consequence of field boundaries (see the Tithe Map) and different phases of development.

The most striking feature of the area is probably its walls. Those on Chapel Lane extend north to its Pentre Road end. Many of the walls are those in randomly coursed local sandstone formerly enclosing Derristone land, now fragmented by the driveways of houses, sometimes lowered, sometimes overshadowed by vegetation, but still a dominant feature of the street scene. Victorian houses often have gate piers with moulded caps and the wall coping is often 'cock and hen'. There is a Gothic arched doorway to Derristone grounds on Chapel Lane similar to others in this part of the town. The walls of more recent



Figure 4: A touch of Arts and Crafts

houses on the eastern side of Chapel Lane are more often in red brick, some neatly curved inwards for drive entrances. In the lower part of North Street tall clipped hedges are more common than walls.

On the west side of Chapel Road the building line is irregular, though at about 8m for post-war houses. Two early houses that abut or are close to the footpath add interest. On North Street the building line is at about 6m, but on the east side of Chapel Road it is at a generous 14m, allowing a greater provision of garden trees. Plot widths vary throughout the area but most are about 10m, many on the east side of Chapel Road separated by trim hedges. Front gardens on the west side and in North Street tend to be devoted mainly to car parking.

Tall mature trees almost hide Derristone from Chapel Road and, together with those on the boundary of Rocklands opposite, provide a gateway effect where this character area ends and a leafier area begins. Otherwise mature trees are on the rear boundary of the plots.

Chapel Road appears slightly wider than North Street, though both have adequate footways, and Chapel Road has two 'speed humps' and, unusually in



Figure 5: Derristone

Abergavenny suburbs, footways of paving stones. The eastern side of North Street seems to be favoured for on-street parking associated with houses opposite. Traffic levels in this part of both streets appear to be manageable.

The area offers no good distant views at street level but the surrounding hills may be glimpsed from upper floors.

Building Character

As described above, Derristone is the largest house in the area and the key to much of the subsequent development. Unfortunately the house is not easily seen. Now no 109 Chapel Road, the property is reached from North Street, and is a large mid-Victorian stone house with some Tudor details and a complex arrangement of gables and tall chimneys (with decorative terra cotta pots on the late 19th century northern extension). An extensive outbuilding is to the west of the house.

Other early buildings on this section of Chapel Road are nos 77-93, all

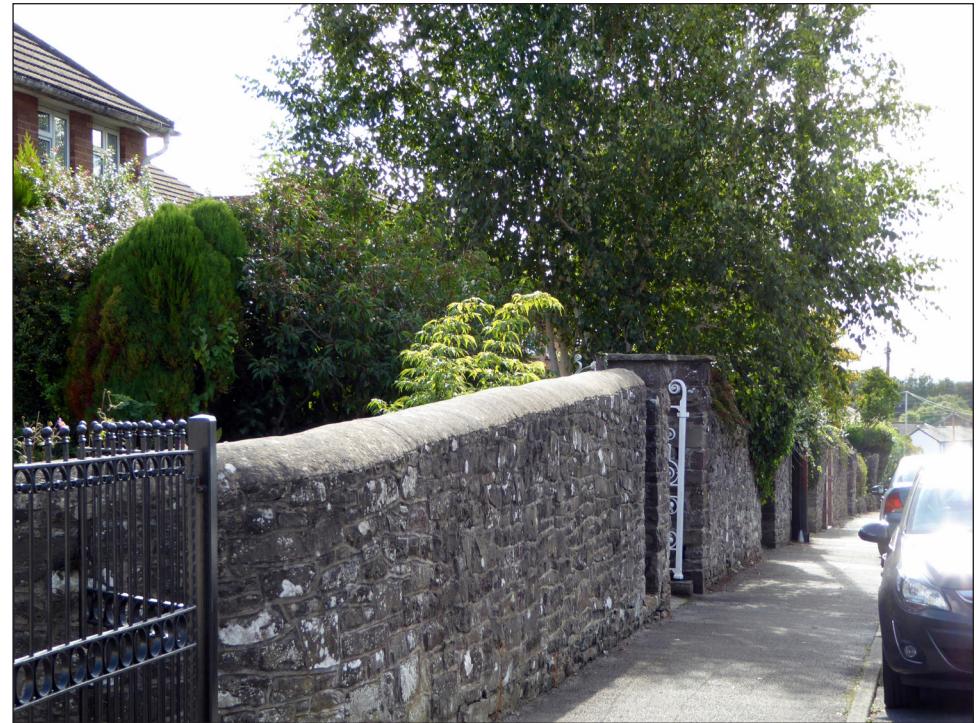


Figure 6: Derristone walling, , North Street

shown on the 1881 map. no 87 (Rose Cottage), close to the road, could be the oldest, pre-dating the lane improvement but radically altered, but no 81, plain stone, hip-roofed and facing south but with an unusual bay window invading the pavement, is also mid 19th century. nos 77/79 are *ca* 1880 with the central doorways and windows above unusually closely spaced; nos 83/85 are tall 2½-storey stone villas, joined but different, with limestone details and decorative bargeboards. There is a sympathetic modern conservatory at the rear of no 83. Nos 91/93 have ground floor slate-roofed bays, arched doorways and windows above the bays, plus buff detailing; no 93 has a blending modern side extension.

Nos 95/97 Chapel Road are 1930s-style semi-detached, similar to nos 54/56 North Road and replacing an earlier house that was close to the pavement like no 81. Nos 99-107 are *ca* 1960 and varied in pale red brick with some dark red vertical weatherboarding and considerable alteration since built. Nos 99/101 are on the site of the original gateway to Derristone.

On the east side of Chapel Road, starting at Harold Road, the corner plot is occupied by The Gables, a large early 20th-century house that we have included



Figure 7: 81 Chapel Road (listed)

in the Avenue character area. No 40 is a dormer bungalow of *ca* 1980, inserted in the grounds of The Gables, No 42 is *ca* 1960 but almost invisible behind trees and shrubs, and nos 44/46 are a pair of pre-war houses with a hint of Arts and Crafts character. Nos 48/50 are white-rendered Edwardian houses with two-storey bays in front gables with some decorative timberwork. Nos 52/54 are late Victorian, fronted in stone with Bath stone detailing, ground floor bays and some decorative timber in the gables; no 54 has a side garage extension with a circular window above. Nos 56-68 are inter-war, nos 56 and 58 with semi-circular bay windows (no 56 the better), nos 66/68 with extensive mock Tudor vertical timbering.

The eastern side of this part of North Street has four Victorian sandstone houses: the detached no 48 and a pair of 2½-storey gabled houses, nos 50/52, plus the south-facing no 62. It is interesting to compare the usual randomly coursed stonework of the front of no 48 with the uncoursed rubble used on the side walls. Nos 54/56 are a classic pair of 1930s/40s semi-detached houses with two-storey bays below pronounced eaves and brick edged entrance recesses; nos

68/60 (and the similar nos 70/70a) are equally typical of the 1950/60s in pale red brick. No 64 is set back, probably 1950s. Nos 66/68 and the hip-fronted no 72 are brick, no 74 is rendered with a double garage extension shared with no 74a, a remodelled bungalow on the site of Derristone outbuildings – all probably 1960/70s. Around the corner at the top of the street is a pair (one much extended) and two detached white-rendered houses, each different but of similar character and period (1960s).

Heritage Assets

The area has no listed buildings, though the case for listing Derristone might be worth considering, as might that for no 81 Chapel Road. Proposals to extend the Conservation Area to include all the area have been agreed. Previously the east side of Chapel Road was thus protected together with Derristone and, curiously, nos 77/79 Chapel Road.

The area's stone walls, and some in brick, are very important elements of its character, requiring protection.