

36 Ysguborwen

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>

Figure 1: location plan and aerial



YSGUBORWEN

THIS AREA IS NORTH of the old railway line and accessed via Old Hereford Road. It has a distinctly different character from the rest of this part of the town because its social housing is mainly in the form of flats and bungalows for the elderly or disabled.





Figure 2: Old Hereford Road

A 1960s housing complex is the main element of the area, and is an unexceptional collection of structures. Wellfield Close has a particularly pleasant feeling of privacy and enclosure. The creditable recent traditionally styled block of apartments on Old Hereford Road seems somewhat inconsistent with its modern surroundings.

Historical Background

Ysgubor-wen farmstead was located approximately where Ysguborwen now joins Hillcrest Road. Two fields were taken at the end of the Second World War to deal with an urgent need for temporary housing, and fifty prefabricated Arcon bungalows met that need.

A block of 8 flats was built on Old Hereford Road during the 1950s. This was squeezed between the road and the railway, which did not cease use until the early 1970s. Wellfield Close was built on the opposite side of the road, south of the 1850s cemetery, at about the same time. The 'prefab' bungalows did not

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



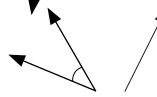
Terminated street view



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: Wellfield Close

last as long here as in many other towns. All were replaced in the 1960s by a substantial development of flats, houses and bungalows. After the railway closed some railway land became available for building plots on Hereford Road, the remainder being used to extend Park Crescent gardens (missing an opportunity to create a cycleway between the old and new Hereford Roads).

Setting, Streets and Spaces

Old Hereford Road is wide, with a shared use cycle path, central refuges for pedestrians, traffic calming humps, and a grass verge on the eastern side. It has no footway on the opposite side where there is only the stone wall of the cemetery, which contains many mature trees. A footway starts south of the cemetery, with a wide grass verge with trees screening Wellfield Close, which has grass forecourts, a few trees and parking bays, backed by the Deri beyond – a pleasant enclosed space.



Figure 5: Cemetery Lodge

The cycle path, part of national route 42, connects with Park Crescent by a path at the south-western extremity of the area, and there is a footpath link to the same road at the eastern end of the area.

Wide views of the Blorengie are enjoyed to the south from the main road and many of the homes in the area.

The mixed social housing complex that constitutes most of the area has extensive grass areas, with mature tree and shrub planting. However, the arrangement of diverse buildings has not created any useful spaces; such areas have sometimes been called 'space left over after planning – SLOAP'. An exception is the green pedestrian access area between each row of bungalows.

The demand for car parking is low from this type of social housing and appears to be met by a garage court off Old Hereford Road, a parking area at the rear of the three-storey flats, and a bay on Ysguborwen.

Building Character

On Old Hereford Road, the area has a recently built traditionally gabled rendered block of four apartments, two individual late-20th-century private houses, a terrace of eight social housing flats typical of the late 1950s, and three pairs of homes from the late 1960s (with a garage court at the rear). There are five more pairs of these on Ysguborwen.

On the south side of the entrance to Ysguborwen there is a large complex of one and two-storey blocks with flat roofs and some ramped access. Buff brick and white weatherboarding are mixed. North of the junction there are three-storey flats (28) in a similar brick with white panels below windows and balconies. Twenty-two red or buff brick bungalows for the elderly, with low-pitched tiled roofs, follow on the south side of Ysguborwen. Each has a private enclosed patio. Monmouthshire Housing Association has approval to build six flats in a three-storey block on former railway land accessed from Ysguborwen. The proposal is for a traditional style that may not sit happily with its neighbours. The Association also has permission for seventeen apartments in a traditional style off Old Hereford Road north of the three-storey flats on extended Old Barn Way gardens.

Wellfield Close, on the opposite side of Old Hereford Road, provides 28 homes for the elderly similar to the 1960s social housing facing them, plus a hall. The cemetery lodge is an interesting early Victorian Gothic cottage with a tiny oriel window and a more recent upper window that mars the elevation. The simple Gothic cemetery chapel, now Bethany Apostolic Church, has had to have security shutters fitted to the windows. The flat-roofed youth and community education centre (and former Welsh school) from the 1960s has a skate park at the rear.

Heritage Assets

The walled cemetery clearly has heritage value; its lodge is unusual and, even though altered, a valuable feature of an otherwise architecturally undistinguished area. The former cemetery chapel may have some value. Otherwise the 1960s mixed housing project is unique in Abergavenny and an example of social housing from that period.