

A photograph of a residential street in Abergavenny, Wales. The scene shows a row of terraced houses with light-colored brickwork and dark brown tiled roofs. A tall, grey street lamp stands on the right side of the road. In the center, a small tree is planted in a grassy area, with a 'For Sale' sign visible behind it. The sky is filled with large, white clouds. The overall atmosphere is calm and suburban.

Exploring Abergavenny

6 Croesonen

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?*

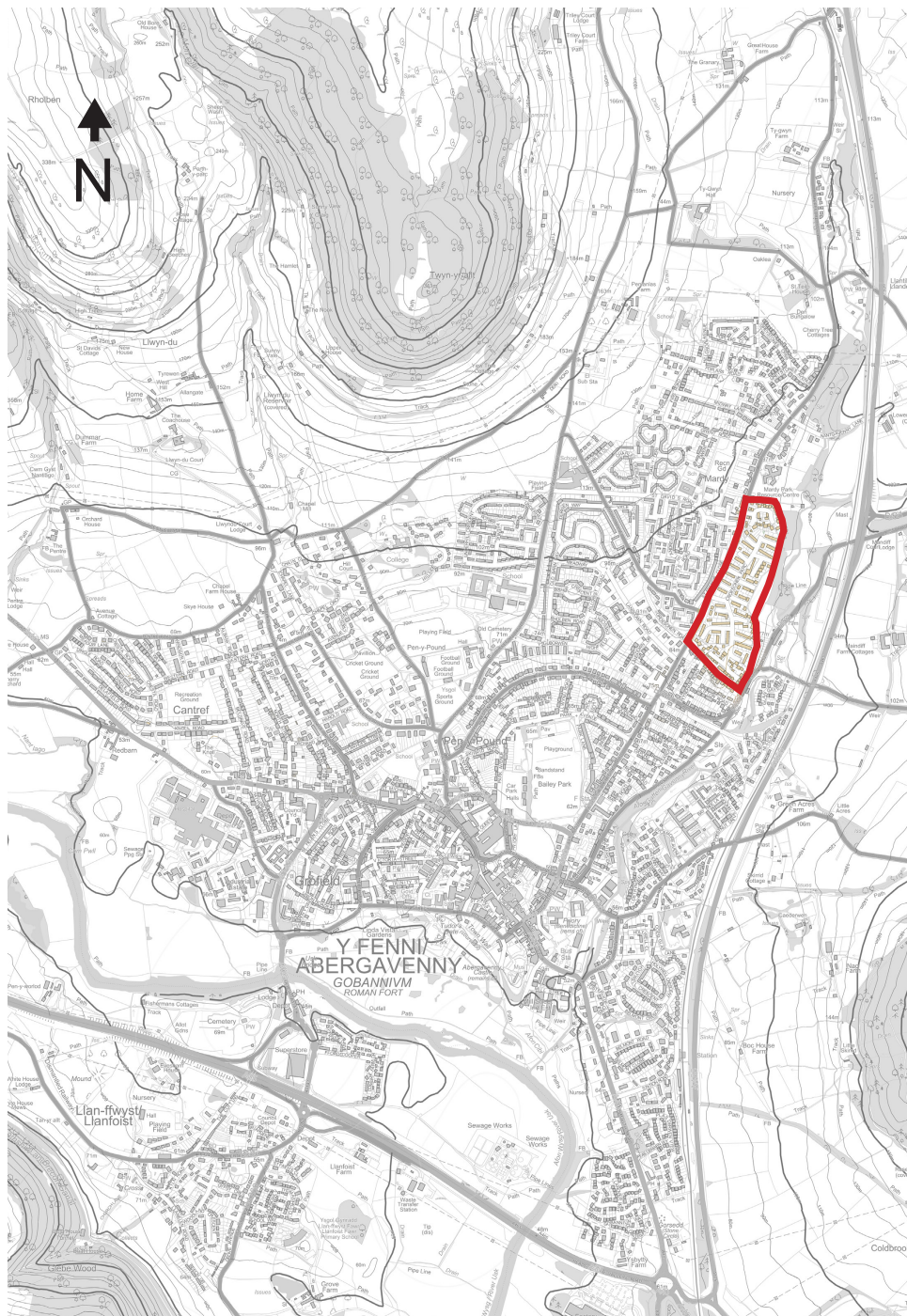
All the reports are available at <https://abercivsoc.com> and comments may be sent to abercivsoc@gmail.com or recorded when the reports are exhibited.

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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CROESONEN

CROESONEN PARK IS A development of private homes east of Hereford Road at Mardy. Two smaller subsequent private developments, north and south of the Park estate, complete the character area.

The area is generally well cared for and appears largely problem-free. Croesonen Park is a rather repetitive estate in a vaguely 'Georgian' style that was common at the time that it was built, but it is perhaps creditworthy that the considerable amount of replacement doorways and windows has maintained the period character. The darker shades of brickwork are more successful. The layout with a spine road and cul-de-sacs appears to work well, but the variety of fencing abutting the spine road is a little untidy. The visual rhythm of many of the rows



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: Croesonon Gardens

of houses off the spine road is also typical of the period, and opinion of this may vary.

The Newlands and Croesonon Gardens are more recent developments that illustrate the progress that has been made in housing estate design, being more interestingly varied and characterful. Croesonon Gardens is a particularly successful interpretation of traditional details worthy of a conservation area, with a distinctive 'sense of place'.

Historical Background

Croes-onen was the name of a property at the southern end of the area that probably originally farmed the four fields to the north that were developed in the early/mid 1970s. The southernmost was an orchard and the northernmost was allotments from at least the 1840s to the 1960s. The farmhouse, which is named on the 1813 Ordnance Survey map, survived until cleared in recent years to enable the Croesonon Gardens development to take place. The field now



Figure 4: Croesonon Park spine road

occupied by The Newlands, probably developed about 1990, was in a different ownership.

The 19th century tramroad ran along the eastern border of the area until superseded by the railway.

Setting, Streets and Spaces

The area is a fairly level shelf about 90m above sea level and immediately west of the incised Gavenny valley, which has the railway and modern trunk road on its eastern flank. A substantial piece of ground has been provided as a pleasant informal open space accessible from the estate cul-de-sacs, edged by trees at the break of slope to the river. There is no evidence of the old field boundaries within the housing areas, the last traces, along a footpath, having been lost when Croesonon Gardens was built. In the four decades since Croesonon Park was built some back garden trees have matured, and there are a few substantial trees in Croesonon Gardens and at the southern end of the north-south footpath (see



Figure 5: rhythm in pale brick

below). Garden sizes vary but are generally quite small.

There are pleasant prospects of trees in the Gavenny valley from several of the eastern cul-de-sacs, and the Blorengie is prominent from the spine road. Otherwise the area offers glimpses of the Deri, Blorengie and Ysgyryd Fach.

Croesonen Park is laid out as a series of cul-de-sacs off a wide spine road that therefore has very few driveway accesses. Low brick walls, some with concrete coping stones, enclose front gardens, which have the usual lawns or paving, small trees and shrubs. Rear gardens abutting the spine road are enclosed in a variety of ways, some with neat low brick walls and piers plus timber fencing, many others with clipped hedges, and in a few cases variously stained fencing. Visually, the southern end of the spine road is now closed by the Gardens development. After some years of neglect, an unfinished house at the northern end has now been completed and closes the street view here. Some residents have been allowed to extend their gardens at the expense of a former wide grass margin to Hereford Road, the new fencing being stained green.

Properties in The Newlands have neat open front gardens, though some



Figure 6: gable-fronted 'Georgian'

hedges, small trees and shrubs have been introduced.

Croesonen Gardens has a denser, more urban, layout; houses have little or no front garden and c2m side and rear walls of stone or brick. Five-bar field gates, steel railings and period lamp columns have also been used. The roads are 'shared space' with margins in stone block paving. Additional trees and shrubs have been planted and there is a small play area with equipment.

A well-maintained north-south footpath runs along the eastern edge of the built-up area from The Newlands to Croesonen Road on the Mardy/Abergavenny boundary. This replaced an old right of way along the route of the tramroad referred to above.

Building Character

Croesonen Park consists of about 170 homes in the pseudo-Georgian style that was popular at the time, the early 1970s. The 'Georgian' details include doorcases, often with pediments, ground floor curved bays, and multi-paned casement

windows, but no chimneys or side windows. All are detached, though most are linked by their garages, and most are gabled to the front, a feature that is inconsistent with the Classical effect. However, there is near consistency of Classical detailing and white 'woodwork' even in the nearly universal uPVC replacements; one or two porticos have even appeared. Repetitive rows of staggered homes have an intended rhythm. Many have uPVC conservatories but the conversion of garages to rooms seems rare. Where space allows several houses have been considerably extended. Several shades of brickwork were used.

The Newlands is a visually interesting group of forty-five detached, semi-detached and terraced houses in brick, some with white-rendered first floors, and dark brown window frames and doors. A satisfying variety of house types makes use of pitched tiled roofs on garages, door canopies and porches.

The architecture of the more recent *Croesonen Gardens* development is a much closer reproduction of 18th- and 19th-century styles. Sandstone, dark red-brown brick and cream rendering are used, often with quoin and window surround details in cream, plus steeply pitched slate roofs (some with third floor gabled dormers, others with parapets) and chimneys, all echoing period developments elsewhere in the town. The intricate layout has been carefully considered to maximise interest, with each cul-de-sac terminated by an attractive house.

Heritage Assets

None, though the Croesonen Gardens development may be regarded as a quality example of the current fashion for traditional styles.