

7 Dan y Deri

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.

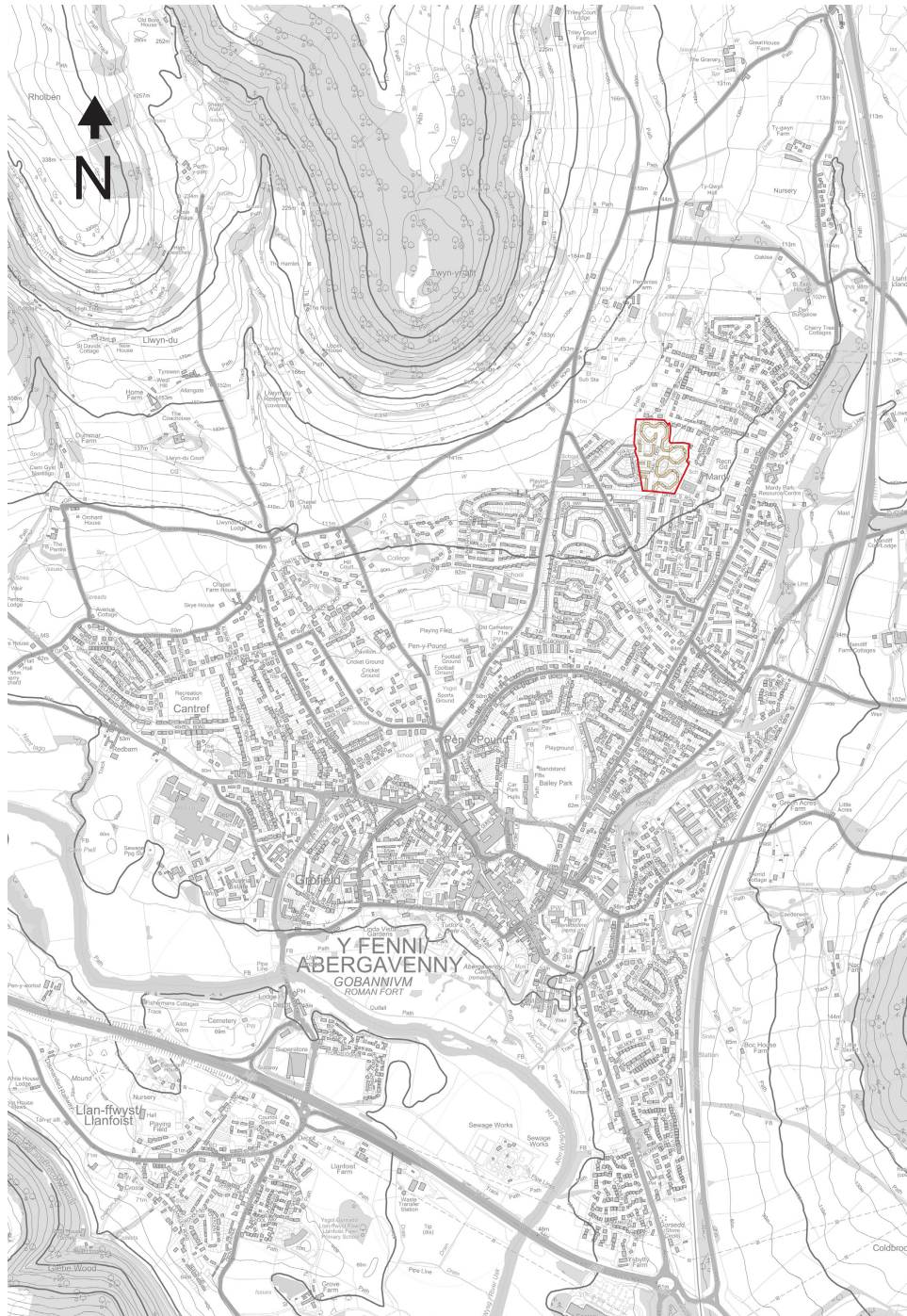
Acknowledgements and copyright information

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>



DAN Y DERI

THIS UNUSUAL ESTATE NORTH of St David's Road, Mardy, was built as council housing. The layout and architecture contrasts remarkably with other housing in the town. It was probably something of a showpiece when built but the sale of council homes and subsequent personalisation has not served the designers well as the overall consistency has been substantially lost.





Figure 2: Personal choices at Dan y deri

Historical Background

The estate was built in the 1970s following the large estate to the south. All but the St David's Road boundary are field boundaries on the 1881 Ordnance Survey map.

Setting, Streets and Spaces

Like the rest of Mardy, this area, 110m above sea level, is situated on the gently sloping shelf between the incised Gavenny valley and the Deri. No trace remains of the field boundary that crossed the site east-west at about one-third of the way into the site, but mature trees survive on the northern and eastern boundaries. A number of small play areas have been designed into the layout, but these lack the supervision of overlooking. There is an extensive network of footpaths between the houses and spaces.

The Dan y Deri estate is laid out in a very different way from the other estates

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



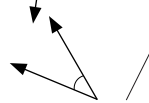
Terminated street view



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



of Mardy, making it worthy of a separate character area. The houses, arranged as an almost continuous serpentine terrace, enclose three turning and parking circles centred on a small green with a tree or two. Most front gardens are now used for parking, others are variously enclosed, and it is difficult to establish the original treatment, possibly grass and a low wooden rail. Though more recent than the 'Saints' estate, Dan y Deri's variety of front fencing/parking choices has led to a less managed appearance. High brick or 'hit 'n miss' timber gated fences separate back gardens from play areas, some with equipment.

Building Character

Most of the 135 homes are in an almost continuous ribbon-like terrace imposed on a sloping site, with single and double pitched roofs. Many houses now appear to be in private ownership. The walls are predominantly facing brick with tile hanging and between the windows of the upper storeys. The tall sides of the mono-pitch roofed blocks are over 3 storeys tall with large tile-hung panels above the windows. The roofs are finished with flat concrete tiles, many now with photovoltaic panels (probably installed by the housing association). The inner faces of the cul-de-sacs are punctuated with small functional window openings whilst the private side has larger areas of glazing. Most of the window frames are white painted timber or white uPVC but some have been changed to wood grain uPVC and other personalisation is appearing. A group of mono-pitch bungalows with community facilities completes the development.

Heritage Assets

The strong articulated form of the Dan y Deri estate is quite unusual, apparently influenced by the Richard MacCormac housing scheme at Duffryn, Newport, and it would be interesting to know who designed this, though much of its architectural idiosyncrasy has now been undermined.