

## Blue Plaques Trail (including the Ceramic Plaques)

### **Start: The Bus Station & car park**

*Cross over the road and walk past the supermarket to Mill Street. Turn left into Mill Street and you will see Tan House on your left. The waterwheel is a little further along.*

#### **1. Tan House on Mill Street, the original way into**

**Abergavenny:** The present main road to the Swan Hotel was only built across Swan Meadows in 1830. The house shows an early use of brick in this tanner's house. It must have been smelly with the tanning pits behind it. The tannery used to stand outside and downwind of the town. A little way past the Tan House is the Cibi Brook. It is joined by the mill leat (channel) from the Gavenny River which operated at least one of the mills in this area. The waterwheel was moved across the road after a fatality and is behind the industrial estate sign.



*Return to Cross Street and walk up to the corner with Lower Castle Street.*

**2. Corner of Cross Street & Castle Street** (the plaque is on the opticians): This was the site, until 1865, of one of the many local leather boot and shoe manufacturers, part of Abergavenny's long history of leather working.

**3. The Angel Hotel:** This was the most well-known coaching inn in town during the 19th century serving the coach route between London and Pembrokeshire.



*Walk up Lower Castle Street (narrow pavement). At the T-junction at the top, you can divert left to visit Abergavenny Castle and the Museum.*

*To continue the blue plaque trail, cross to the opposite pavement, turn into the public car park and walk to the rear wall. The view over Castle Meadows shows the importance of this defensive spot.*

**4. Plaque on the back wall of Castle Street car park:** Site of the wall around the Roman barracks and granary, and the line of the 1241 Norman town wall. The Usk River used to run closer to this steep slope, down which the Roman Army threw their rubbish, some of which is now in the Museum. Excavations found remains of glazed windows and the outline of two barrack blocks, granaries and a central road; a typical Roman auxiliary fort.

*Walk back to the car park entrance and turn left along Castle Street past the **ceramic plaque** set in the border, one of the series erected by the Abergavenny Local History Society assisted by local schoolchildren and the marvellous designs of two local artists, Ned Haywood and Jane Turner. Walk along the road noticing several old religious buildings, as well as:*

**5. Castle Street car park** (plaque on the back of the toilet block!): There was a sheep market on this site from 1825 to 1863. It was then moved to the livestock market site in Lion Street. The site was created by the Town Commissioners (forerunners of the Town Council) to take some of the animals off the streets where they were previously sold.

*Continue along Castle Street to:*

**6. The Old Court:** Site of the medieval West Gate, also known as Tudor Gate after Jasper Tudor, great uncle of Henry VIII who was, at one time, Lord of Abergavenny. It marks the end of Castle Street within the town walls and Tudor Street outside. Look at another of the **ceramic plaques** here illustrating the gate and the goods coming through – all paying a levy to the Lord of Abergavenny. The animals would often be kept on Castle Meadows and the Grofields outside the gate and brought in to be sold, or to protect them from the marauding Welsh.

*Cross over to the King's Arms and then go across the paved area to the **ceramic plaques** on the wall of the 1960's Post Office opposite.*



**7. Kings Arms on the corner of Nevill Street:** One of town's oldest inns with a royal coat of arms on the front.

**8. The Bull Inn, Nevill Street:** The plaque is on the Post Office which has been built on the area where the rear of the premises stood. It was one of the many inns around the medieval marketplace here. The **ceramic plaques** below show some of the activities that went on in the Medieval Market.

*Look in the opposite direction from Castle Street. You can just see the tower of St John's which you will reach later. Walk in that direction and take the LEFT hand pedestrianised road now known as Nevill Street. It was previously Cow Street, and before that Rother Street (after horned cattle), giving you a clue as to what was sold here in the market. The next two blue plaques are on the right, with another one opposite.*



**9. The Cow Inn, Nevill Street** (now a wool shop): The town house of Thomas Vaughan of Tretower. In the 1600's it was half-timbered and jettied (a post can be seen inside). When the third storey was added, the ground floor was built out, and the jetty bressemer beam was re-used above the windows. You can see Catherine of Aragon Pomegranates, Tudor Roses, and the Vaughan Arms of chevron, 3 children and a snake. Cows' heads were added perhaps when it was used as a Temperance Inn 1873-80.

**10. Just beyond on Nevill Street:** both a blue plaque and a **ceramic plaque** illustrate that Abergavenny was known for the manufacture of white periwigs. A method of bleaching was said to have been invented in the town. Curlers were found here during excavations.

**11. Opposite on Nevill Street:** Georgian facade from 1750 with a wide doorway, which fronts a house of Tudor build.

*Walk to the end of Nevill Street, looking left at the Georgian frontages to earlier Tudor buildings on the original burgage plots of the Norman town. Turn left and walk a little way to the bank on the right.*

**12. Site of the North Gate** (plaque on the bank): the medieval gateway leading from what is now Frogmore Street into High Street. The distance between the West and North Gates gives you an idea of the compact nature of medieval towns.

*If you wish to follow a shorter walk then omit plaques 13 and 14 in Extensions A and B and go straight to the directions to plaque No 15, St John's Church.*

**Extension A:** From here you can walk the full length of Frogmore Street and turn left after the War Memorial and the junction with the busy A40. The next Blue Plaque is set inside the barber's shop entrance.

**13. 37 Frogmore Street was the birthplace of Ethel Lina White:** One of her books The Wheel Spins (1936) was adapted for the 1938 Hitchcock film, The Lady Vanishes. Another, Some Must Watch, was adapted for the film The Spiral Staircase in 1946.

*Walk back to the North Gate or follow Extension B by turning left off Frogmore Street into Cibi Walk.*

**Extension B through Bailey Park:**

*If you have not followed extension A, cross Lion Street and turn right off Frogmore Street into Cibi Walk. Look at the Statue of the Shepherd in the middle of Cibi Walk, which links the old with the new. At the far end, cross by the pedestrian crossing, turn right and in through the entrance to Bailey Park.*

*Walk straight ahead to the next gate through the avenue of old trees, admiring the views to the left of the Sugar Loaf and its foothills. The plaque is on the main gate exiting the park.*



**14. Bailey Park:** In 1883, Crawshay Bailey II, the iron master, leased the Priory Meadows and allowed the town to use it as a park. In 1894 the town purchased the park for £5,000. It hosts many events like the Annual Steam Rally. The band stand is still used but the open-air swimming pool was closed in 1996.



*Turn right, cross the road by the pub and, with the petrol station on your left, walk down to the next junction. Turn right into Lion Street and walk to the end, past the site of the old livestock market which is now Morrisons.*

*At the end of Lion Street turn left to find the North Gate.*

*From North Gate, with your back to Frogmore Street and Nevill Street to your right, walk along the High Street (look up at the ornate Victorian & Edwardian decorations and the replica fire insurance plate), before taking the first turning right into St John's Lane. Take a look at the Millennium wall painting on the corner before walking to the wall with the blue plaque on the left and a stone children's plaque low down on the right.*

**15. St John's Church: King Henry VIII Grammar School:** This was the original parish church of the medieval town. The building became a grammar school in 1542 and was supported by tithes gained after the dissolution of St Mary's Priory. A new school was built in Pen-y-pound in 1898, and St John's then became a Freemasons' Lodge.



*Keeping the church on your right walk to the end, turn left, then left again into Flannel Street. Opposite the Hen and Chickens (marking the poultry area of the market) find the blue and ceramic plaques.*

**16. Site of 18th century Welsh flannel making:** A loom found here in a loft and the name Flannel Street suggest Abergavenny flannel was woven here. Previously this street was known as Butchers' Row and was part of the medieval market.

*Walk to the end of Flannel Street. Turn right (High Cross) and stop opposite the end of Market Street and the Town Hall.*

**17. Junction of High Street and Cross Street:** High Cross. Below here at the beginning of Cross Street, the street is wide where the original Market House stood in the middle. It caused such congestion that it was demolished and the first of the Market Halls on the present site built. The plaque is on the butcher's shop.

**18. Market Street:** A jettied row of shops, with a raised pavement, 16th century in origin, remodelled around 1800. This was originally a lane leading to the small postern gate in the medieval town wall out onto the Cibi Brook meadows. The plaque is a short distance down Market Street.



**19. Abergavenny Town Hall:** This Town Hall was built in 1870/71 to replace the Market Hall on this site designed by John Nash – there is a picture of that attractive Market Hall in the Museum. The clock has a black face on the north side.

*Walk down Cross Street and turn left into Monk Street. Look up to see the plaque on the restaurant on the right. The Cibi Brook runs under Monk Street here just outside the medieval Town Wall.*

**20. Site of the East Gate:** leading to St Mary's Priory outside the town wall. The Priory was built and endowed around 1100 by the first Norman baron of Abergavenny, Hamelin de Ballon.

*Cross Monk Street to see St Mary's Priory Church, saved by being given to the town as its parish church by Henry VIII when the Priory was closed. The church is well worth a visit and has some remarkable monuments and an almost complete carved Jesse Tree. Turn right to look at the Tithe Barn.*



**21. St Mary's Priory Tithe Barn:** A place where the tithes (taxes in goods and produce) for the Priory were kept. A mainly 14th century building on a 12th century site which has been imaginatively restored. The Abergavenny Millennium Tapestry is displayed here with an exhibition of Abergavenny's history, also well worth a visit.

*Retrace your steps to the corner of Monk Street and Cross Street and turn left down Lower Cross Street. Stop to look at the plaques on the site of the South gate and Gunter Mansion*

**22. Site of the South Gate:** The South Gate stood just beyond the Coach & Horses Inn.

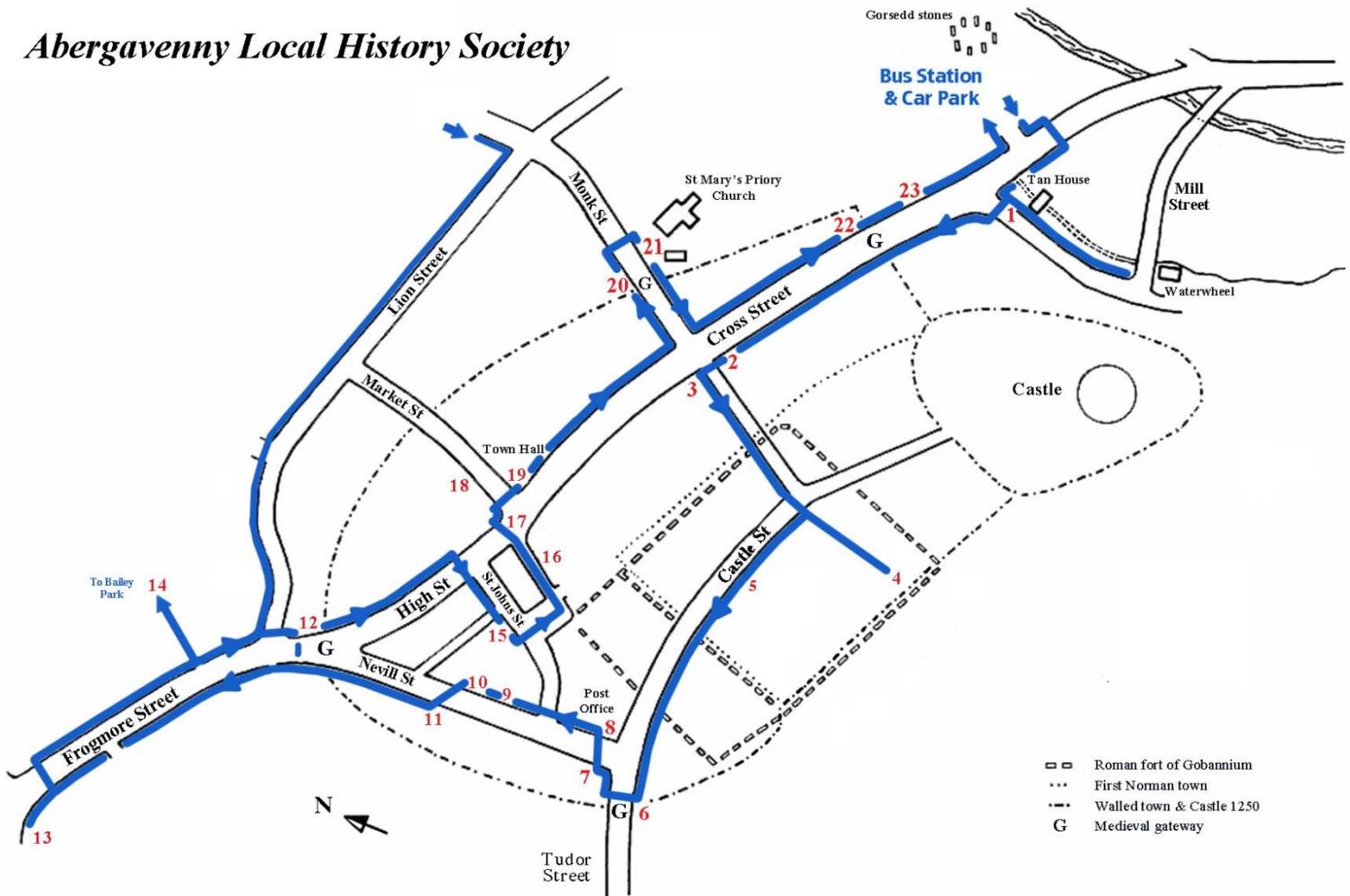
**23. The Gunter Mansion, Cross Street:** This was a C17th house owned by Thomas Gunter, a local Catholic. At the time when Titus Oates had stirred up anti-Catholic feelings during the reign of Charles II, the local vicar complained that there were more people at the illegal Catholic services in the chapel in the roof space here than were at the St Mary Priory Church services and this was reported in Parliament. John Arnold, a local MP and passionate anti-Catholic, arranged the arrest of the two priests involved, Fathers David Lewis and Phillip Evans. They were imprisoned, put on trial, executed for treason and later were made saints by the Catholic church.



During alterations in 1907, a painting of the Adoration of the Magi on the ceiling of the chapel was found, framed and is now in Abergavenny Museum. The house had a business entrance onto Cross Street (Thomas Gunter was a lawyer) and a grander arched entrance from the garden at the rear, reached from the lane that runs from the Tithe Barn opposite St Mary's Church. An upper floor room has a richly decorated 17th century plaster ceiling.

*Continue down the road to the starting point at the Bus Station. By going into the adjoining park you can complete your walk by visiting the Gorsedd stones and **ceramic plaques**, or you may like to return to some of the other attractions you passed on your way.*

# Abergavenny Local History Society



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| 1. Tan House and site of tannery                          | 12. Site of the North Gate             |
| 2. Site of a boot and shoe manufacturer                   | 13. The birthplace of Ethel Lina White |
| 3. The Angel Hotel  | 14. Bailey Park                        |
| 4. Site of the wall around the Roman barracks and granary | 15. St John's Church                   |
| 5. Castle Street sheep market                             | 16. Site of Welsh flannel mill         |
| 6. The Old Court, site of the medieval West Gate          | 17. Site of the original Market House  |
| 7. Kings Arms   | 18. Market Street                      |
| 8. The Bull Inn   | 19. Abergavenny Town Hall              |
| 9. The Cow Inn  | 20. Site of the East Gate              |
| 10. Periwig makers  | 21. St Mary's Priory Tithe Barn        |
| 11. Georgian facade Nevill Street:                        | 22. Site of the South Gate             |
|   | 23. The Gunter Mansion                 |