

# Trails and Tales for families

Start from the Tourist Information Centre from the main door on the side. Cross over the entrance road to the car park & bus station.

Walk down the pavement by the busy A40 into the Park on the left. Take the left hand path to the standing stones. ❶



The standing stones mark where the ring of stones from the last National Eisteddfod in Abergavenny now stand.

The inserts on the stones show scenes from the life of Lady Llanover, who promoted the Welsh way of life. She employed harpists and all her servants had to wear traditional Welsh costume. Can you find the Bee? She helped to bring the Eisteddfod to Abergavenny and was known as the Gwent Bee.

The River Gavenny gives Abergavenny its name.

After looking at the stones, cross to the other path and turning right, return to the entrance, alongside the River Gavenny. Retrace your steps to the Tourist Information Centre, walk along the front to the right and up into the upper car park.

Walk on through on the left side to the Priory Centre and St Mary's Priory Church (right) and Tithe Barn (left).



When the Tithe Barn was restored, fire damage was found. The town was burnt by Owain Glyndŵr in 1404. The monks at the Priory stored the tithes (one tenth of a man's produce) here.

The Priory Church became the Parish Church after Henry VIII took over Church properties – known as the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Walk past the end of the Tithe Barn to Monk Street, turn right to cross at the pedestrian lights. Go left back along Monk Street and turn right up Cross Street.

Look at the buildings as you pass. Some of them are very old. Can you work out where the Cibi Brook passes under Monk Street?

Opposite you is the Angel Inn, an old coaching inn where passengers from London to the West of Wales stopped overnight.



Go up Cross Street to the top. The Market Hall is on the right. Cross the road into the pedestrianised area and take the first turning left.

Can you see the copper top of the Market Hall tower?

It is a landmark for miles around.

Perhaps, visit the Market Hall and look at the decorations hanging from the roof, left over from the annual Food Festival.

Walk along this street, now called Flannel Street. Look for the plaque on the left. ❷

Abergavenny Flannel was fine and soft. It was made here – the remains of a loom were found in the roof of the building behind during alterations. Flannel was also brought into the town from the countryside to be sold at fairs and markets.

This street used to be called Butcher's Row (where all the meat stalls were, and the animals killed). It led into Chicken Street at the top.

Why do you think the street was called Chicken Street? Look up on the right.



Turn right as soon as you reach the end of the narrow street, and go right again down St John's Street. A small lane goes off on the left. On the corner is St John's Church. ❸

Once the Parish Church at one end of the medieval market place, now a Masonic Temple.

Henry VIII founded the grammar school here by giving the old parish church of St. John's to house the school and some of the taxes (tithes) from the closed down priory to fund it.

Go along St John's Street to rejoin the High Street.

On the corner is the Millennium Mural. Can you see the castle? And the railway?

Turn left, go along the High Street to the corner with Nevill Street and turn left.



Go along Nevill Street looking at the very old houses here. Can you see the Town Wall at the back of any of them? Find the plaque of The Wig Maker on the left. ❹

Wigs were popular from the 1500's onwards because you could shave off your hair to keep free of nits! In Abergavenny, wigs were made from goats hair bleached with a special recipe invented here.

When they excavated here, the wig curlers were found!

At the end of the street, cross to the Post Office.

Find The Market plaque on the wall half way along. ❺

Around 1600 there were markets on Tuesdays and Fridays, with three fairs a year at Abergavenny. There are still markets and fairs nowadays.

Markets were set up by the Lord of Abergavenny to make money. The tiles show some of the market trades which would have been here at that time. What are they doing to the pig? Is it a hare or a rabbit in the corner?

Cross over the square to the King's Arms, a very old pub.

Then cross the road to the Old Court House and find the plaque ❻ at the West Gate.

The West gate is between Tudor Street going out of the town and Castle Street leading to the castle.

Jasper Tudor was Lord of Abergavenny 1486-95. He was the great-uncle of Henry VIII.

Produce & goods passing through were taxed and the walls marked out the trading area, as well as being for defence. Cattle, sheep and other animals would be kept in Castle Meadows or in the Grofields (which were fields then) and brought through the gate to market, or for safety if the Welsh were attacking.

Abergavenny received grants for building town walls from 1241-6 and 1259-64. The grants reinforced the ditch and bank enclosure and later the town was walled in stone with the help of more grants.

Turn left to go along Castle Street.

Look carefully amongst the bushes for the next plaque. ❶

This was the site of the Roman Fort.

The excavations here showed that two barrack blocks faced each other across a street. The barracks had glass windows. A big granary for wheat storage was also found. Remains of metal working and pieces of harness suggest this was a smaller auxiliary fort with cavalry.

Walk further along Castle Street and into the Castle grounds.

The Museum is free to enter and sits on top of the Motte on which the original wooden castle was built.



Abergavenny Castle is most famous for the Christmas Day Massacre in 1175, when the Norman Lord of

Abergavenny, William de Braose, tricked and murdered Seisyll ap Dyfnwal and many other Welsh chieftains. The Welsh got their revenge a few years later when they attacked the castle and captured most of William's men, but de Braose himself was not at home.

It's thought to have been in the Great Hall which was probably a timber building on that site. On Christmas Day, the Norman Lord of Abergavenny, William de Braose, murdered Seisyll ap Dyfnwal and many other Welsh chieftains.

The Welsh got their revenge in 1182 when the castle was attacked. Most of William's men were captured, but de Braose was not at home.

Returning from the Castle.

From the gate, you can walk around to the left, outside the walls, down steps to Mill Street, where an old mill wheel can be seen and the Cibi Brook rushing under the road.

Go past Tan House, the house of the Master Tanner when this was smelly tanning pits. Turn right to reach the pedestrian crossing and return up the road to the Tourist Information Centre.

Alternatively, if you want to revisit the town or the Tithe Barn, retrace your steps into Castle Street. At the first junction turn right and down the narrow pavement to the corner by the Angel Hotel.

Turn left at the bottom for the town. Or turn right, cross over the pedestrian crossing, back up Cross Street and turn right into Monk Street for the Tithe Barn.

# THE *Heritage* PLAQUES

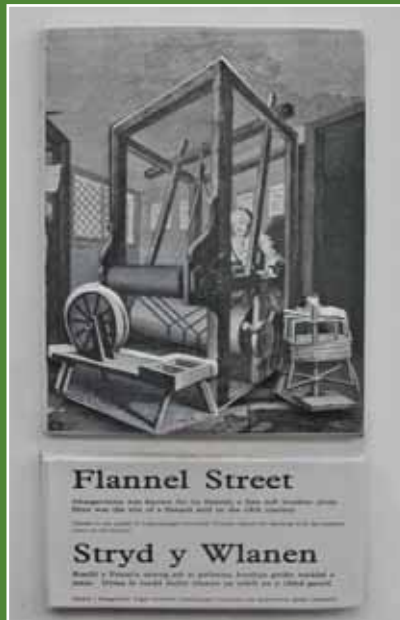


**Plaque 1**

Images on the standing stones show scenes from the life of Lady Llanover promoting the Welsh way of life.

**Plaque 2**

Abergavenny was once known for its flannel, a soft woollen cloth. Flannel Street was the site of a flannel mill in the 18th century.



**Plaque 3**

The former St John's Church; Site of the first King Henry VIII Grammar School which was established in 1542.

It was supported for many years by tithes gained from the dissolved St Mary's priory and other properties. In 1898, a new grammar school was built in Pen y Pound, and St John's became a Freemasons' Lodge. This school was replaced by the King Henry VIII Comprehensive School on Old Hereford Road.



**Plaque 4**

10-12 Nevill Street: Site where a hair bleacher lived circa 1740. Abergavenny was known for the manufacture of fashionable white periwigs made of goat hair, sometimes sold at 40 guineas each. A method of bleaching the hair was said to have been invented in the town.

**Plaque 5**

St John's Square: Site of Abergavenny's medieval market place.



**Plaque 6**

Tudor Street: Abergavenny was a walled town with four main gates. This is what the medieval West Gate looked like.



**Plaque 7**

Castle Street car park. Site of the Roman fort of Gobannium.



# Time line

- 50-150:** Roman Fort known as Gobannium; the place of the ironsmiths
- 1090:** After the invasion of the Normans, Hamelin de Ballon built a castle and a Norman town
- 1100s:** Hamelin de Ballon gave money and land for Benedictine monks to build a priory at St Mary's Priory
- 1175:** Sisyllt, the local Welsh Prince, and his followers were murdered by William de Braose, Lord of Abergavenny, after being invited for Christmas dinner at the castle.
- 1182:** The castle was attacked by the sons of Sisyllt in revenge.
- 1241:** New walls were built around the bigger town.
- 1256:** Castle accounts refer to the markets in the town.
- 1400s:** St Mary's Priory church rebuilt on its present site.
- 1403:** Owain Glyndŵr burnt much of Abergavenny, still a mainly non-welsh town, but failed to take the castle, which had recently been strengthened
- 1542:** Henry VIII gave St Mary's Priory church to the town and the previous parish church, St John's, became King Henry VIII Grammar School, supported by some of the tithes previously paid to the Priory.
- 1645:** The castle was ordered by Charles 1st to be partially destroyed to prevent it being used in the civil war.
- 1658:** Oliver Cromwell granted permission for Abergavenny to hold two markets a week and three fairs a year.
- 1863:** The cattle market was opened and animals were no longer sold on the streets of Abergavenny
- 1870:** The present market hall, replacing the previous one on the same site, was completed.
- 1898:** King Henry VIII Grammar school moved to a new building on Pen-y-Pound.
- 1913:** Abergavenny hosted the National Eisteddfod
- 1959:** Abergavenny Museum was opened.
- 2008:** The restored Tithe Barn was opened by the Prince of Wales.

# Follow the Trail...

...for a taster of some of the history of Abergavenny. Find the images which show the research by local schools and the Abergavenny Local History Society, illustrated by local artists on stunning ceramic and stone plaques. The trail takes about an hour and follows an easy route. You can add to it by visiting Abergavenny Museum at the Castle, which has activities for children, or St Mary's Priory Church with its internationally famous monuments. You might want to visit the Market Hall and surrounding shopping areas or end up at the beautifully



restored Tithe Barn with its Millennium Tapestry, historical displays and Taste of Wales food and drink.

Abergavenny Local History Society supported the project, co-ordinated it and raised the money. The leaflet is being

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Research assisted by pupils of: Llanvihangel Crucorney Primary School, Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary School, Govilon Primary School, Gilwern Primary School, Deri View Primary School and Cantref Primary School.

Plaques designed and created by Ned Heywood (ceramics) and Jane Turner (stone).

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## ABERGAVENNY

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## Wigs, Flannels and Romans