

EXPLORING YOUR TOWN

SURVEY DETAILS

(SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS)

The Civic Trust
for Wales

Ymddiriedolaeth
Ddinesig Cymru

Name of street/building/space surveyed

Fosterville, Abergavenny - MR1

Names of surveyors (& contact details):

- Dick Cole (DandLCole@aol.com)
- Stephen Kaye
- David Sheers
-

Date: 18 July 2012

Time: Evening

Weather: Sunny

Area information: designations covering the street/area/space:

Scheduled ancient monument

Listed Building, grade I, II*, II - **5 Grade II Listed Buildings**

Conservation area

Parks & Gardens Register

Locally Listed Building

AONB

SSSI

Other:

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

Please use this section to compile your thoughts on the area/street/space you have explored.

When making observations, stick to the facts and try not to allow your personal views to influence the perceptions, and remember to evidence base your answers, for example 'this plot has a wooden boundary fence while others have stone walls with some detailing'.

Name of street/area: Fosterville, Abergavenny - MR1

1 Please list the main defining features of the area/street/space you have been surveying:

- End of 19thC/early 20thC socially mixed housing development by single builder and possibly architect
- Includes crescent rising about 8m from Monmouth Road giving main homes commanding presence and view over town and to Blorenge etc; most older houses approached by steps
- Tangential terrace (sharing Crescent name) has very narrow access road and no footway
- Architectural integrity lessened by contrasting style of houses from 1960s/70s

2 Please list the main defining architectural/building features:

- Massive detached or semi-detached early 20thC homes – some listed, all making special contribution to urban character
- Interesting variety of details including balconies, decorative bargeboards, stained glass, house names carved in stone, and a belvedere to Asthal House (see Additional Notes); many original doors, windows and iron gates survive
- Remarkable variety of early 20thC building materials – Pennant sandstone, yellow and red brick, terra-cotta, slate and tile roofs (see Additional Notes)
- Modern homes pleasantly designed but only no.14 harmonises well with original development; nos.16/17 do not unduly impede view from 11/12/13

3 Please list the main defining landscape features:

- Mature trees, some in/damaging pavements on northern section of Crescent, some in gardens, especially copper beech
- Pennant stone boundary walls to street, usually capped with yellow brick, and gateways with good pillars, some topped with pineapples (Crescent 18/19) or balls – timber fencing to nos 16/17 in Crescent
- Asthal House closes view into northern end of Crescent from Monmouth Road
- Gardens, generally well-maintained, not large for size of original properties; buildings take up centre of plots
- Site of nos 16/17 formerly gardens – accessible to Fosterville residents? Margaret Giles refers to these as kitchen garden and orchard
- Only Asthal House among older houses has a driveway – no rear accesses; considerable on-street parking

4 Does the area/street/space appear to have one contained character or does it split into different character areas? (If yes please define).

All one character area, possibly extending beyond into MR2 and MR3

5 How does this area compare with others nearby, in terms of buildings, density, spaces, green-ness, views in/out, links to nearby areas etc.?

Yet to be surveyed – revisit Q

6 Are there similar areas within the town/village (or perhaps even in other towns/villages)?

Some will be similar but perhaps not with the same variety and distinctiveness – revisit Q

7 Are there any characteristics or areas/streets/spaces that are unique to this town/village? If there are why is this and what is that makes it/them unique?

Too early to assess

8 Do any parts of the area/street/space/buildings require attention, for example restoration, refurbishment, or rebuild? Are any buildings at risk?

All buildings seemingly in good condition and unlikely to require major attention for many years (Google Streetview shows no. 12 in Crescent being reroofed by housing association quite recently);

Parking and garaging areas unkempt; some stone walls need attention.

Current controversial planning application to develop house on garage plot between nos. 13 and 14

Modern lighting columns; road surfacing and footway poor

9 Do you know if there are there any buildings/spaces that are particularly valued by local people or the wider public?

Residents aware of, and value, interesting history of Fosterville, researched by Margaret Giles. Perhaps less well-known in town – a backwater.

10 Which elements continue to fulfil the needs for which they are originally intended?

Despite some commercial uses in the past, now residential (no ready evidence of multi-occupation – check electoral roll) apart from dental surgery at 10 Monmouth Road

11 What local stories/memories are you aware of about this area/street or some of the buildings?

See Margaret Giles's Foster family history

12 Having undertaken the work now try to sum up the character of the area in a few brief sentences, picking out the most significant positive and negative features of its character and appearance.

A somewhat unique area - a small, leafy, quiet (apart from Monmouth Road frontage) enclave of large and smaller early 20thC homes created by the Foster family, the integrity of which has been affected by more recent houses of a very different appearance. The maintenance of parking and garage areas and some fencing detracts from the overall quality of the area.

13 Is there any potential for change (good or bad) e.g. public or private maintenance issues, character erosion or development?

Unlikely to change apart from one questionable infill site and the possibility that owners of garage areas will carry out improvements

14 Please include any additional information/detail, for example additional local history or research of relevance to this area, including observations from the desk based study.

Monmouth Road appears in its present straight alignment from Mill Street to the Hardwick roundabout on an 1813 map, and Mill Street was by-passed in 1847. A 1760 map shows only a road to 'The Passages' (Severn crossings) from the end of Mill Street apparently curving to fit an old route between Coldbrook and the Skirrid Fach that is still evident from the positioning of 16 Monmouth Road and traces beyond. The route to Llanellen Bridge and Clytha/Raglan would then have forked from this; the present bridge was built in 1821. The original Monmouth road was, of course, via Monk Street.

A 1901 map shows nothing of Fosterville Crescent apart from the first three houses at the Holywell end of the terrace (which is dated 1901 in situ). The semi-detached pair fronting Holywell Road (one of which has a Fosterville address) and two more architecturally similar pairs fronting Monmouth Road were also complete (same field but less terra-cotta etc – first part of the Fosterville development? Use of same iron gates may support this). The 'old' part of Fosterville was complete by 1922, and postwar houses and garages by map dated 1965 (though 16 and 17 look a little later)

According to a family history compiled by Margaret Giles, Edwin Foster, builder, later architect and surveyor, probably leading partner of Foster Brothers (based in Radstock Yard, Regent Street) purchased the 5 acre field in 1888. Edwin lived at Bella Vista, Monmouth Road by 1901 (not in MR1). In 1904/07 Edwin sold the land to his son Thomas, by which time nos 9/10 (Wilcot and Henley) and

14 Continued

no 11 (Asthal House) had been built, the latter as Thomas's home (but there is evidence that no 11 was not built until 1910/11). The history states that the land for the terrace was also later sold to Thomas and suggests that this and the remaining houses (including those fronting Monmouth Road) were built subsequently when other work was short. This conflicts with map evidence referred to above. All properties were let until about 1975. Thomas Foster took Charles Hill into the partnership in about 1909. The history and Listed Building records also attribute all the properties to Edwin Foster as architect. Newman (Buildings of Wales) wonders whether these are the crescent of nine villas in Monmouth Road for which E.A. Johnson called for tenders in 1886, but this seems unlikely. There is clearly scope for more research.

1919 map evidence cited by Stephen Kaye shows that the southern arm of the Crescent, connecting to Monmouth Road, was not completed (and there is evidence of a possible turning area on the ground at no 14), but it is shown on the 1922 OS map. (The use of OS maps for precise dating is unwise)

Early 20thC buildings use a remarkable mixture of materials. Local resident suggested this arose from practice of builder using spare materials from other contracts when other work was scarce. Nos 18/19 are yellow (Ebbw Vale?) brick with terra-cotta dressings and tiled roofs; (Monmouth Road and Holywell Road semis are Pennant sandstone with yellow brick dressings and slate roofs, inferior brick to rear); nos 9/10 are red brick with cream terra-cotta dressings and slate roofs; central no 11 (Asthal House) is Pennant with cream terra-cotta dressings and tiled roof; nos 12/13 are as nos 18/19 (recently re-roofed); the terrace (nos 1-8) is Pennant with yellow brick dressings and slate roofs (tiled bay roofs).

Modern no 14 is buff brick with tiled roof; no 15 is paler brick and tiled; nos 16 and 17 are buff brick with tiled roofs and render and timber details

The early houses present an eclectic selection of architectural details including deep iron-railed first floor balconies (18/19), elaborate carved gable bargeboards, interesting carved house names in stone dressings (9/10), an iron-railed rooftop belvedere (11), stained glass top windows;

The terrace has six houses with unusual tile-roofed shallow ground floor bays bracketed at the ends by two with more conventional two storey bays and transverse gables; carved red terra-cotta details.

Modern no 14 is L-shaped and simple with steeply pitched roofs, quite sympathetic with older houses; the other modern houses (one a bungalow), while creditable examples of their period, are less sympathetic in style and materials in this otherwise rather special early 20thC development.

15 Source/reference material used during survey/research into the area (please list).

- OS maps;
- www.britainfromabove.org.uk;
- unpublished history of the Foster family by Margaret Giles.