

CADW/ICOMOS REGISTER OF LANDSCAPES, PARKS AND
GARDENS OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN WALES

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME Abergavenny Priory deer park

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 55

OS MAP 161 CENTRAL GRID REF. SO 285180

FORMER COUNTY Gwent UNITARY AUTHORITY Monmouth B.C. COMMUNITY
COUNCIL Abergavenny

DESIGNATIONS
SSSI

TYPE OF SITE

Medieval monastic deer park

PERIOD

Medieval

REASON FOR DESIGNATION AS HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

Well preserved medieval deer park, with much of boundary bank and
ditch and some of boundary wall still in place

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/September 1991

SITE HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

CENTRAL GRID REF. SO 285180

SITE HISTORY

The deer park belonged to the Benedictine priory of Abergavenny, of which only the church, now St Mary's church, Monk Street, survives. The priory was founded soon after the Norman Conquest by Hamelin de Balun, as a daughter house of the Abbey of St Vincent at Le Mans. At exactly what stage in the priory's history the deer park was formed is not known.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The deer park is an area of 5-600 acres situated on the south-east flank of the Sugar Loaf mountain, between the Rholben and Deri ridges. It lies at the head of the steep-sided valley of the Afon Cibi. Its boundary bank, ditch and in places wall run near the summit of the ridges, round the top of the valley at the north end, and across it at the south end. The area enclosed is roughly rectangular, and consists of open moorland on the highest parts, with open oak woodland (unmanaged), scattered trees, and permanent pasture fields below. There are a few areas of recently planted managed plantations near the south-east corner.

The park is surrounded by a bank and inner ditch. In places the bank is surmounted or revetted with a drystone wall. The southern side runs straight across the valley, from SO 283167 to SO 293174. In the fields of the valley bottom it has been reduced to a field boundary, visible only as a slight bank (topped by field hedges). Above the bank is more prominent, c. 1-1.5 m. high, with an internal ditch. At the south-west end the bank is topped by a low ruinous drystone wall on its outer side, which is better preserved towards the top of the ridge. On top of the bank are ancient oaks and beech trees.

The west side of the park runs from SO 283167 to SO 285188. It forms the boundary between open moorland on the W and N and pasture fields and woodland on the E and S. For most of its length this side is very well preserved, with a flat-topped bank revetted with a drystone wall on its outer side, and a steep-sided inner ditch. The revetment wall is up to 1 m. high, and the top protrudes above the level of the bank. In the centre of this side the ground is much disturbed on both sides of the boundary by quarry holes, and the inner ditch has gone. To the north the revetted bank and inner ditch continue, and are well preserved. At intervals just inside the bank are single old larch trees. Half-way along the W side, N of a more recent cross field wall, the boundary becomes a steep-sided bank, c. 1-2 m. high, covered with bracken and bilberries. A low bank runs parallel to it, c. 3-4 m. inside it, as far as the wide gap where a track comes in from the W. This bank is clearly related to the main bank, and one possibility is that it is the remains of an earlier boundary. There is a wide break in the bank at SO 277179, where a track enters the park from the W. It is unclear if this is a contemporary track or not. Just to the N, inside the bank, is a short stretch of wide cross bank with a drystone revetment wall on its S side and a slight ditch to the N. This appears contemporary with the park boundary, but its relationship to it is unclear. The boundary continues as a steep-sided bank to the N end of the park, where there is a further gap through which a track from the moorland into the park runs. The bank continues along the E side, at the N end of which it runs through woodland, and is very overgrown. In the middle of this side the bank is topped by a later field wall.

The park is traversed by a number of stony tracks, some of which are probably contemporary with the deer park. Two come into the park from the S side and lead to Park Lodge, with branches up to the boundary at the gaps in the W side and at the N end. The western track

passes Porth-y-parc (gateway to the park) just S of the boundary. Porth-y-parc (SO 288167) is a small farmhouse (later) with a few farm buildings including a stone barn, which is probably medieval or slightly later. It is well preserved and stands to the E of the track. The track continues N to Park Lodge (Parc Farm) (SO 285180), another, older farmhouse at the head of the valley, next to the stream. It is set into the hillside, and has two stone barns similar to that at Porth-y-parc, set at right -angles, to its east. Above the barns is a small wedge-shaped pond, now much silted up and full of reeds, with a dam on its S side. A track enters the farmyard from the W via a deeply sunken way to the S of the house.

SOURCES

(Primary and secondary. For primary, give location. Aerial photos
(AP): ref. no and collection)

Secondary

J. Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire, Part II* (1906)

To be appended: 1:10,000 map of site, marked with boundaries; colour
photographs of site, photocopies of relevant material, where
available.
