

## SUMMARY

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| <b>Ref number</b>                  | PGW (Gt) 60 (MON)   |
| <b>OS Map</b>                      | 161   |
| <b>Grid ref</b>                    | SO 300 146  |
| <b>Former county</b>               | Gwent   |
| <b>Local authority</b>             | Monmouthshire   |
| <b>Community Council</b>           | Abergavenny   |
| <b>Designation</b>                 | Listed buildings: Structure of gates, gate piers and attached walls with railings to main entrance to Bailey Park (Grade II).   |
| <b>Site Evaluation</b>             | Grade II  |
| <b>Primary reasons for grading</b> | A late Victorian public park, surviving in its entirety, which makes an important contribution to the townscape of Abergavenny. The park was laid out for the town by the prominent local ironmaster, Crawshay Bailey. The park has both ornamental and sporting components and its main entrance is particularly imposing. |
| <b>Type of site</b>                | Urban public park.  |
| <b>Main phases of construction</b> | 1884  |

## Site description

Bailey Park is a small urban public park situated just to the north of the central district of Abergavenny, on the west side of the Hereford road. It is the main public open space in Abergavenny. The park was laid out in 1884 on land called Priory Meadow; the land belonged until then to a family called Roberts, who had a house in Frogmore Street. In 1884 Crawshay Bailey (1841–87), the prominent ironmaster, who lived at Mairdiffe Court, leased the site. His intention was to lay it out as a public park 'for the purposes of recreation'. This he negotiated with the Abergavenny Improvement Commissioners, who gave him permission to close public footpaths across the site in return for free public access to the intended park. On special days 'when fetes or matches were proceeding', a charge for admission would be made. The park was to be managed by a committee and the Improvement Commissioners gave enthusiastic endorsement to the scheme, particularly as it was to cost the town nothing. At a meeting on 6 February 1884, between Crawshay Bailey and the Improvement Commissioners, Mr Bailey stated that 'Mr Johnson [architect] has my orders to proceed at once and I am in hopes that by the first of May all may be completed'. Work must have proceeded rapidly because the park was in use from May onwards. On 29 May there was a firework display celebrating the marriage of Crawshay Bailey's eldest daughter and on 12 September a 'Grand Military Tournament' was held in the park, attended by about 4,000 people.

After Crawshay Bailey's death in 1887 the park continued to be managed by the family estate until 1890, when it was taken over by the Improvement Commissioners. They purchased the freehold soon afterwards and the park has continued in local authority ownership and management ever since. Some glimpses of the appearance and running of the park appear in the minutes of meetings of the Improvement Commissioners. On 8 January 1890 the trustees of the estate explained that they could no longer employ a park keeper 'to look after the Park and see to the due opening and closing of the gates and other matters'. The committee drafted an agreement at this meeting, in which, among other matters, 'The Commissioners [agreed]

to maintain the Park, the railings, masonry, hedges, fences and shrubs and to take charge of the Park and the entrances generally'. On 5 February there is reference to 'new painting the whole iron boundary fencing' and on 4 June the management of the park was formally transferred from the Bailey trustees to the Board of the Improvement Commissioners.

Two further references to the park throw light on its management: in 1895 there was an agreement between the council and Edwin Hampten, ironfounders, for an unclimbable fence on the west side of the park, and in 1890–91 £26 was charged for the letting of grazing for sheep in the park. A photograph of the park in 1908 shows the main entrance gates and the avenue, very recently planted. Trees on the edge of the park look more established, as they also do in a photograph of 1910, which records the historic event of the 'First flying machine' at Abergavenny; a monoplane piloted by Mr J. Radley, of Bedford, landed in the park, watched by a large crowd.

The park is rectangular and lies on ground sloping gently to the south. The central part is largely open, taken up by sports pitches and a bowling green. Around the perimeter are trees, paths and small areas of garden. The main entrance lies towards the south end of the east side, set back from the Hereford road. In the centre are double wrought-iron gates, about 3m high, which are flanked by massive stone piers, about 4m high. The gates have ornate upper halves, with central circles and scrollwork. The piers are of roughly coursed blocks in bands of grey, yellow and red stone. Their bases are wider and they are topped with inwardly curving and pedimented coping stones, on top of which are ornate, brass finials. Flanking the piers are wrought-iron pedestrian gates, similar in design to the main gates, and slightly lower piers, identical to the main ones except that they are topped by heraldic beasts holding shields. On either side of the entrance are outwardly splayed, coursed stone walls, about 1.2m high, with bevelled coping topped by iron railings with spearheads. The railings are about 2.2m high and are punctuated by more elaborate, scrollwork panels at intervals. The walls and railings then flank the pavement on the Hereford road for about 25m on each side and terminate in stone piers, about 3.5m high, of the same design as those at the entrance. These are topped with simple, stone 'knob' finials.

Behind the wall are large cypress trees: one to the north of the entrance and four to the south. The entrance itself is flanked on the inside by aucuba bushes. To the south is a small, stepped, stone building, with an entrance on the north side. This is now disused, but was probably originally a public lavatory. To its west is a square, raised bed with revetment walls of roughly coursed, mortared stone blocks, about 1–1.2m high.

The east side of the park is bounded by simple iron railings and an informal belt of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees, including pines, horse chestnuts, holm oaks and a large cut-leaf oak. A tarmac path winds down this side and leads to a children's playground. To the south of the playground are three birch trees and on the west side of the path there is a row of young sycamore trees. Towards its south end the path runs close to the park boundary and is flanked by field maples, lime, beech and birch trees. Near the boundary are public lavatories and next to these is a large holm oak.

The south side of the park is bounded by iron railings on a stone footing and a belt of evergreens, including yew, holly and cypress. A wide tarmac path, flanked by beech trees, leads from the main entrance to the entrance in the south-west corner of the park; towards its west end the avenue includes some oaks. The south-west entrance follows the same pattern as the main one but is smaller and simpler. The central gates are quite simple, with spearheads. They are flanked by piers, about 3m high, with pedimented stone finials. There is

a single pedestrian gate, of chunky iron verticals with no spearheads, on the north side; its outer pier is square, about 2.2m high, with a plain, concrete slab top.

The west side of the park follows the same pattern as the east, with a path winding up through informally planted mixed trees, including pine, Irish yew, horse chestnut, birch, holly and lime. A stone-lined, narrow water channel, parallel to the boundary, carries a small stream southward. Small concrete bridges lead over it to buildings within the park. The boundary is modern, with housing beyond it. A short row of pines and horse chestnuts flanks the east side of the stream in the middle of the west side. A short distance to the east of this is a small, octagonal bandstand. It has a brick plinth, with concrete steps leading up to an entrance on the north side. Its tiled roof is supported on fluted iron columns, between which are low, simple iron railings. Immediately to the east is a group of horse chestnut trees.

To the north a small area of the park extends westwards, beyond the water channel. This is laid out as a formal garden, with island beds and a few specimen trees. It is bounded on all sides by iron railings and by hedges on the north (privet) and south (cypress). A wide tarmac path, edged with stones, leads along the south side of the garden. There is also a gate, with an iron post on its west side, in the south boundary of the garden, leading to a car park. On the east side of the gate is a kissing gate. At the east end of the area is a lawn with rose beds cut into it in a fan shape. To the west are three conifers and a beech tree, beyond which is a banked grass slope with three beds cut into it; this has stepped ends, edged with stone. The slope is backed by a wall of squared stone blocks, about 1.3m high, with concrete coping. Behind is a slightly sunken area revetted with a concrete-capped stone wall about 0.7m high, with concrete steps leading down to it at the east and west ends of the north and south walls. In the centre is a rectangular bed with inward-curving corners. To the west there is a narrow border next to the west wall of the sunken area, then a small lawn with three beds cut into it; the central one has a Chusan palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) in it. In the corners are two blue-leaved cypresses.

To the north of the garden is a small compartment with derelict glasshouses in it. North of this is a small, disused and derelict lido. It has a concrete façade on the east side — with the date 1939 over the entrance — and is surrounded by high concrete walls. On the west side of the pool are concrete changing rooms and on the east is a café. Conifers flank the west boundary to the north. To the east is a rugby pitch with a small, modern stand on its north side.

The north side of the park is laid out with a belt of mainly evergreen planting along the boundary and two bowling greens: one in use and the other disused. A tarmac path runs parallel with the boundary, on the edge of the planted area. In the centre is the main entrance on this side. It consists of a pair of simple iron gates, with spearheads, flanked by square stone piers, about 3m high, with triangular tops. On either side are splayed stone walls, about 1.1m high, with rounded coping topped by iron railings. The walls end in simple stone piers about 2.2m high. The park is bounded on the north side by a privet hedge.

West of the entrance is a bowling green; another older and now disused one lies to the east. This has a disused, single-storey pavilion on its north side, with two flights of concrete steps leading up to the verandah running the length of its south side. To its west is a stone-edged path leading to derelict toilets. The active bowling green has cypress hedges along its east and south sides, and trees and shrubs to its north and west. It has a narrow tarmac path around it and a low terrace, about 0.4m high and which is revetted with a drystone wall, on the north side. This is planted mainly with formally clipped

evergreen shrubs. At intervals there are flights of two concrete steps leading to five recesses in the terrace; these have modern benches in them, facing the bowling green. In the centre of the terrace is a semicircular area of lawn backed by clipped shrubs.

To the east of the disused bowling pavilion are some maintenance sheds, screened by a privet and holly hedge. Further east is an informal belt of mature trees, dominated by conifers and including yew, pine and holly. The path leads to a small kissing gate in the north-east corner.

## Sources

### Primary

Information from Abergavenny Museum.  
Abergavenny Improvement Commissioners' Minutes, 1884–90: Gwent Record Office, D.874.7–9.

### Secondary

A. Lyons, *Abergavenny 900: A Pictorial Celebration* (1990).  
A. Tucker, *Abergavenny in Old Photographs* (n.d.), 51.