

# Proposed Events at Abergavenny Castle

## Historical Situation

The castle grounds have hosted public events since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Regular events taking place from the 1880s to 1930s include ongoing use of tennis courts (and lawn tennis parties), swing boats, a dancing platform, a photo studio, harpists, operatic and dance music, string bands and brass bands.

Community events included regular activities for men and women from the workhouse, including games for children, tea and cake for 100 plus and evening events.

Other activities included - steeple chasing, Punch and Judy shows, clowns, trapeze artists, fiery dragons, flying rings and band contests. There have been fruit banquets, promenade concerts and horticultural shows. Even a troupe of performing monkeys! A military night, roller skating club, wrestling championships, a children's eisteddfod, circus with trapeze artists, waltzing competitions and school visits.

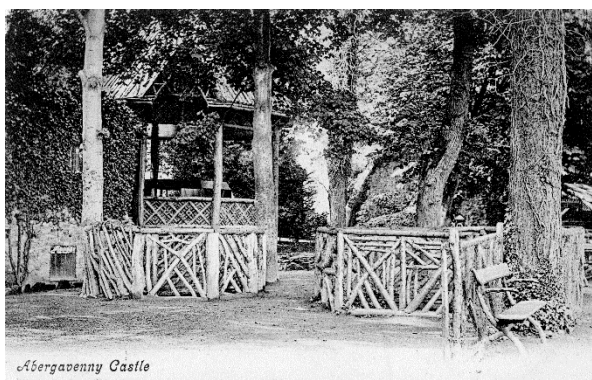
There were many processions and fetes with fireworks and even balloon ascents. There were open air balls, daylight fireworks and cannons to commemorate the defeat of Napoleon.

Numbers recorded include a fete attended by between 4000 and 5000 people and 5000 spectators at a fireworks event.

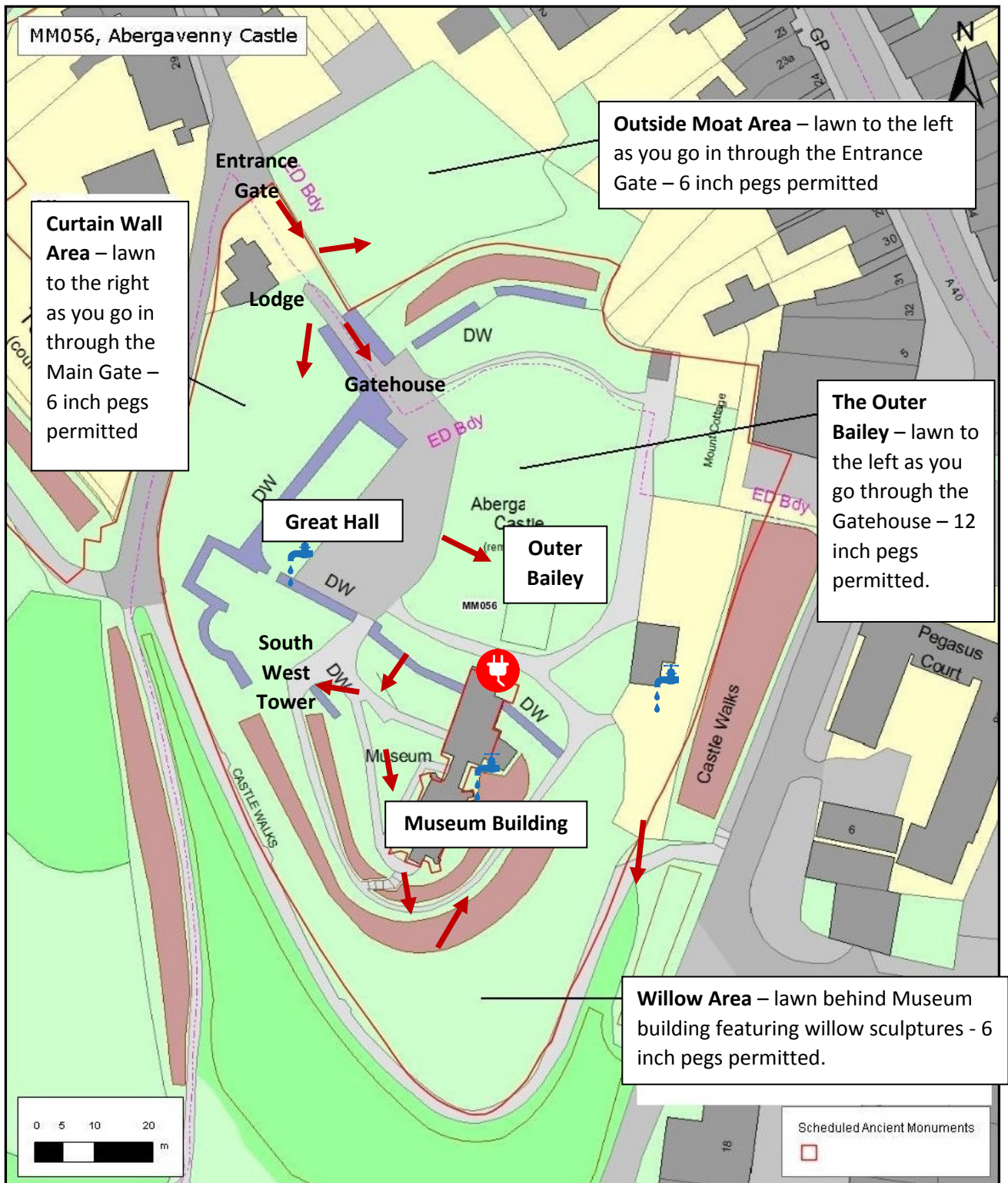
Many of these events dwindled during the 1930s but there was a revival in the 1950s when the museum was established. The Museum (via volunteers, the Borough Council and then the County Council) has operated the site and therefore any events since 1959.

Events were particularly prolific during the 1980s and included, folk days with country dancing, Young Friends groups using the grounds; re-enactments, living history and jousting; charity concerts, vintage motor cycles shows and guided tours.

It is our ambition, as set out within the Museums Forward Plan, to return Abergavenny Castle grounds to being a vibrant community asset.



# Abergavenny Castle Grounds – Main areas available for use



Water tap available here

Electrical power available here

Access point



## Current situation

In recent years (since 2001) events have taken place in the following locations:

	Whole Site	Outside Moat Area	Curtain Wall area	Outer Bailey	Great Hall	SW Tower	Willow Structures
<b>Regular events</b>							
Food Festival 10am -5pm 7-11 pm  (2 day and 2 eve event)	Day and Evening Includes music and large crowds of approx. 2000 at any one time.						
Re-enactments 11-4pm (1 or 2 day annual event)	Daytime Includes cannon fire and skirmishes						
Outdoor Theatre 4-7pm/ 7 – 10pm (approx. 7 events per year reduced to 4 over past 5 years due to GYPT closure)				Daytime and evening. Crowds of up to 350			
AM Festival 12-7pm (1 day per year since 2016)	Daytime (Includes music and large crowds of approx. 2000						
Weddings Day time 12-2/2-4 (ongoing)			6 – 10 drinks receptions hosted by Angel Hotel. (50-150 people)				Event in 2016 (Small daytime ceremony, approx. 10 people)
Weddings Day and Eve 2pm – 1am (2010) 2pm – 7pm (2014) Revised timings following event in 2010.		Event in 2010 (Day and evening reception with music. Approx. 150 people)		Event in 2014 (Day and evening reception with music. Approx. 150 people)			

Schools 10am – 2pm Approx. 6 days per year.	Self-led visits using castle themed boxes, approx. 30-90 children						
Schools folk dancing 10 am-1pm. One day per year.				Approx. 100 children folk dancing			
Rehearsal for community opera 10am -2pm One day per year					30 people vocals and music.		
<b>One off events</b>							
High Sheriffs Garden Party ?2002 12 – 4pm				Reception Approx. 100 people.			
Elvis Charity event. 12-7pm				Crowd of approx. 1000.			
Monmouthshire Seafood Festival 2007 4pm – 11pm				Crowd of approx. 200			
Jazz Festival 2014 Weekend Event Midday – Midnight (Please note there have been a variety of music events over the years)				Also some use of this area	Mainly in this area		
Silent Disco 2017 6-8pm 8-10pm		Gathering of crowds	Gathering of crowd	Show 86 people over 2 shows		Show	
Sculpture Trail 2017				Various exhibits Visitors during daytime over 1 month period.	Various exhibits Visitors during daytime over 1 month period.	Various sculptures. Visitors during daytime over 1 month period.	Various sculptures. Visitors during daytime over 1 month period.
Xmas Fayre	Daytime event approx. 300 people.						

Zimele Day – crafts/music/ Dance.				Daytime event approx. 300 people.			
Scouting Association Event				Evening event approx. 50-100 people			
Astronomy classes				Evening event approx. 20 people			

## Proposed Events

A feasibility study was carried out in 2017 to investigate how events should best be developed in the castle grounds. Consultation took place with local organisations (including the Town Council, Civic Society and Abergavenny Local History Society), local businesses (including the Angel Hotel) and community groups (such as Friends of Castle Meadows). We felt it was important that these discussions were held within the wider context of the community so we were not creating unnecessary competition. A separate survey was also carried out with users of the castle grounds.

Within the feasibility study, we included the idea of a covered structure within the castle grounds, which could be used to provide shelter during wet weather, thus improving our event infrastructure and making our events offer more flexible. Community groups could use such a structure more easily than the current option of hiring in a marquee. Please note a proposed structure is likely to be used most during wet weather. For this reason we have assumed there is a reduced likelihood of neighbours being in their garden therefore there is a reduced risk of disturbance for them.

Please note we have separated these proposed events into those that we currently do – with minor changes indicated in blue and those that are completely new, indicated in green.

	Whole Site	Outside Moat Area	Curtain Wall Area	Outer Bailey	Great Hall	SW Tower	Willow Structures
<b>Regular Events</b>							
Food Festival 10am -5pm 7-11 pm  (2 day and 2 eve event)	Day and Evening Includes music and large crowds of approx. 2000 at any one time.						
Re-enactments 11-4pm (1 or 2 day event)	Daytime Includes sound of cannon fire /skirmishes						
<sup>1</sup> Outdoor Theatre 4-7pm/ 7 – 10pm (Up to 10 events per year)		In wet weather a structure could be used to cover the audience		Daytime and evening. Crowds of up to 350.			
AM Festival (1 day per year) 12-7pm	Music approx. 2000						

<sup>1</sup> Proposed increase in theatre events from 7 to 10. In the case of wet weather the performance could be moved to in front of the structure and the audience sheltered underneath. If it rains, experience tells us the audience numbers will be reduced.

<sup>2</sup> Wedding ceremonies Daytime		Marriage or civil partnership Ceremony Approx. 120 people.					Small non legal ceremonies. Approx. 30 people.
<sup>3</sup> Wedding drink receptions Daytime			6 – 10 drinks receptions hosted by Angel Hotel. (50-150 people)				Drinks receptions
<sup>4</sup> Wedding receptions (catered) Finish by 7pm		Daytime/early evening reception Approx. 120 people.		Daytime/early evening reception 120 people.			
<sup>5</sup> Schools	Self led visits using castle themed boxes, approx. 30-90 children	Space to gather for lunch or discuss themed boxes, during wet weather					
<sup>6</sup> Schools folk dancing  1 day in June/July 10 am-1pm.		In wet weather could be used to dance under.		Approx. 100 children folk dancing			

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<sup>2</sup> If structure in place we can host civil ceremonies.

<sup>3</sup> Drinks Receptions to be daytime only with an encouragement to use local providers.

<sup>4</sup> Wedding Receptions day/early evening with encouragement to use local providers for eve event.

<sup>5</sup>The site is currently difficult for schools to use in wet weather. The structure would provide a space on these occasions. E.g. eating lunches and carrying out learning activities.

<sup>6</sup> If it has been raining and the grass is too wet to safely dance on, a structure could be used for children to dance under, with audience watching from outside. If it is still raining the group could use the Leisure Centre or remain at castle with the children under cover.

<sup>7</sup> Rehearsal for community opera  1 day in April/May		In wet weather could be used by the children to rehearse under			Approx. 30 people, vocals and music.		
<sup>8</sup> Silent Disco 2018		Gathering of crowds	Gathering of crowd	Show		Show	
<sup>9</sup> Sculpture Trail 2018				Various exhibits Visitors during daytime over 1 month period.	Various exhibits Visitors during daytime over 1 month period.	Various exhibits. Visitors during daytime over 1 month period.	Various exhibits. Visitors during daytime over 1 month period.
<sup>10</sup> Family focused games and activities	Traditional games e.g. giant chess, snakes and ladders & boules.			The focus will be in this area.			
<sup>11</sup> Music Events	Music events have taken place at the site in a variety of locations over the years.	For events where cover is required.		For large open air events.			

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<sup>7</sup> In the case of wet weather the school children could use this as a rehearsal area

<sup>8</sup>Previously indicated as one off event as had only happened once in 2018. We are discussing with provider it becoming a regular event.

<sup>9</sup> Previously indicated as one off event as had only happened once in 2018. We are discussing with provider it becoming a regular event.

<sup>10</sup> Although not indicated as an existing activity we have on a few occasions hired out games to site visitors, we would like to develop this.

<sup>11</sup> Although not indicated as an existing activity music events have taken place in different varieties over the years.



New Events in green

	Whole Site	Outside Moat Area	Curtain Wall Area	Outer Bailey	Great Hall	SW Tower	Willow Structures
Early evening events, until 9pm for young people (16-25) e.g. Outdoor Cinema and Silent Discos (see previous),		If there is a covered structure this area would be used in wet weather		This would be the principal area to use. The amphitheatre seating means this is the most practical space to use.			
Afternoon activities for older people e.g. nostalgic dances, acoustic music events, yoga, tai chi etc.	In dry weather anywhere on site could be used	If there is a covered structure this is the most logical focus for events. It would be used during wet weather.					
General hire of grounds by community and local interest groups. Daytime/Early Evening 4 hrs a week per use in Year 3 rising to 10 hrs per week Year 5.		For activities that require a focal point, and some infrastructure.		Where amphitheatre seating is required and in dry weather this is best space.			
Food related events year round in partnership with Abergavenny Food Festival Day and Evening events		For activities that require some cover and a focal point.		Where amphitheatre seating is required and in dry weather this is best space.			
Sporting events for example HQ for start of running event.				This would be the principal area to use.			

### Mitigation Strategies

We are mindful that events can cause nuisance to those people living and working close by. The activities outlined above demonstrate our intention to stage events in keeping with our role as a museum service and community asset and in many cases have strong historical precedent. We acknowledge that disturbance through noise for example is a potential risk and with that in mind we will put in place mitigation strategies, to minimise these risks. These strategies will be developed in consultation.