YR ARAN

The Aran range is a large group of hills that follows one side of the Bala Fault line, trending SW-NE towards the Berwyn range of hills. At 905m Aran Fawddwy is the highest mountain South of Yr Wyddfa and has fantastic views out over central Wales. Away from the main ridge line it can be a difficult area in which to navigate in periods of bad weather.

Aran Fawddwy 905m SH 863224

The first element of the name aran is derived from *ar(d)-* with a number of possible meanings, namely (i) high (ii) height, (iii) point, promontory. The term is similar to *ardd* 'upland' and one also finds Cornish *arth* 'height', Old Irish *aird, ardd* 'upland, high land'. The *-an* ending is thought to derive from Gaelic and is generally a diminutive. Although not as high as some of the other mountains in Eryri; this peak, or rather a series of peaks on a long ridge is certainly prominent. The term Mawddwy is the name of the local area; originally a mediaeval commote.

The slopes of the mountain are curiously bare of names; it is certain that features have lost their names. For example, there was a cliff or rocky area known as Y Graig Dapiog on the northern slopes; its location now lost. Raranuaurhill 1580 Saxton map, Yr Arran 1598 & montem yr aran 1599 Wynnstay Manuscripts, Yr Aran c.1700 Lhuyd, Aran Fonddy 1795 John Evans Map, Aran Fowddy 1834 Greenwood Map.

Aran Benllyn 885m SH 867243

This particular aran 'height, ridge' has the descriptor penllyn in its lenited form; however, which meaning is in place here, whether: *pen* '[at the] head'; *pen* 'top summit'; or, *pen* 'end' + *llyn* 'lake'. It could also be a corruption of *(uwch)ben* 'above' + *llyn* 'lake'. The meanings are all so similar it is difficult to be certain which is correct. At one time there was only one term for the whole ridge, namely Aran, only later did the differing tops develop names; usually through ownership and a need for demarcation. For example, Edward Lhuyd in his Parochialia c.1700 named the whole mountain mass as Yr Aran.

Erw'r Ddafad Ddu 872m SH 865234

This is the top of a ridge extending down past Creiglyn Dyfi. The name is *erw* 'acre' + *'r* 'the' + *dafad* 'sheep' + *du* 'black'; although the form seen in the Edward Lhuyd's Parochialia c.1700 is Erw'r dhavad ar yr Aran. The word *erw* 'acre' did not denote the same size of land as it does today, at one time the actual size varied from one part of the country to another. Here *erw* probably has a more generalised meaning of 'the area'. Erw'r Ddafad Ddu 1838 OS.

Glasgwm 774m SH 835194

This is probably *glas* 'grey-blue, grey' + *cwm* 'valley', to infer the 'darkness' of the deep cwm 'valley' of Cwm Cywarch; rather than *glas* 'green' + *cwm* 'valley'. Comparable to the deep valley of Glasgwm, Penmachno.

Y Drysgol 745m SH 869213

Walking, riding or driving livestock across differing forms of generally awkward terrain was a problem in many parts of Wales. Travelling through thick tussocky grass or areas of heather could be described as rough going, as could broken and rocky ground. Not surprisingly, this word, or corruptions of it, derived from *trwsgwl* 'rough, difficult' is quite a common name in the landscape of Wales. Dyrysgol 1838 OS.

Moel Hafod Fynydd 689m SH 877227

His *moel* 'upland pasture' was associated with the farm Hafod Fynydd. The *hafod* term is from *haf* 'summer' + *bod* 'dwelling'; this was originally used for an upland location where shelters were only occupied during the summer months. The fact it was on high ground is strengthened by the second

element *mynydd* 'mountain'. The shelters became far more substantial over time and eventually permanent residences.

Pen y Brynfforchog 685m SH 818179

Fforchog 'forked' could denote a hill with twin peaks, as there is here; early forks usually had two pointed tines, rather than the three or four usually seen today. Other features could have resulted in the name, perhaps a V shaped stream on the flanks of the hill or any V-shaped cut or cleft. Pen-bryn-fforchog 1836 OS.

Pen Main 680m SH 857204

Seen from the upper reaches of the valley of Cwm Cywarch, South West this *pen* 'head, peak' can seen to be *main* 'narrow', as there is a thin ridge leading down to the south west. However, *main* is also the old plural of the word *maen* 'stone', giving a sense of a craggy or stony top, which would also fit the location. Another name seen is Gwaun y Llwyni; *llwyni* being the plural of *llwyn* 'grove, wood'. Gwain y llwini 1638 Wynnstay Manuscripts. Pen-maen 1838 OS.

Esgeiriau Gwynion 671m SH 889236

Esgeiriau is one of the plurals of the term *esgair* 'ridge, spur'; the descrptor then has to be pluralised, *gwynion* is a plural of *gwyn* 'white, greyish-white, pale' or 'bright, sunlit'. Yr yskeyrye ginnon c.1592 PRO.

Curniau Nod 667m SH 988279

This undulating upland would not usually be termed *curniau* 'horns, cairns, cones'; and neither with the word *nod* 'obvious, marked, notched' were it not for the cairns at the summits. Marked on the OS maps as 'piles of stones', there was a whole line of cairns in this area, as they denote an old boundary.

Y Foel Rhudd 666m SH 886239

Sometimes the word *rhudd* 'red, purplish, brown; scorched' is used to denote vegetation, such as bracken in its winter colour; Middle Welsh *rud* 'red, ruddy'. The descriptor can be seen in place-names with the old form *rud* and also *rudd*. Once again, there may also be hidden complications sometimes when a location is so named. As the name may be hiding a reference to the presence of deer; *yr hydd* 'the deer' and *rhudd* sound very similar when vocalised. Y voel rudd c.1700 Parochialia.

Y Groes Fagl 659m SH 989290

The hill name is taken from the pass of Bwlch y Groes Fagl, which was probably denoted by a boundary marker with a *croes* 'cross' marked with a *bagl* 'bishops crozier'; a word derived from the Latin *baculum* 'crozier'.

Y Foel Cedig 659m SH 982284

The word *cedig* 'angry, wrathful, indignant' and it is probable that the name was derived from the river Afon Cedig. With less certainty, if the hill gave its name to the river, it could perhaps have been used to denote an area of poor open ground; it is close to a ridge named Cefn Gwyntog 'windy ridge'. Moel-cedig 1838 OS

Moel Cwm Sian Llwyd 648m SH 996314

One would expect that this *moel* 'hill' is named after the *cwm* 'valley' of Sian Llwyd; this would seem to be a personal name. However, if one was to look at the 1838 OS map, both the moel and the cwm were given the descriptor Sarn Llwyd. This would give *sarn* 'path, road, highway' + *llwyd* 'grey'; which may well be a reference to the turnpike road [post 1769]. This is now the B4391 between Bala and Llangynog and heads down along the Eastern side of the Cwm. There is a large

Bronze Age cairn in a commanding position on the top of this hill and although it is much disturbed it is still about 15m in diameter. There are probably two other cairns near the summit.

Pen y Boncyn Trefeilw 646m SH 962284

The word *boncyn*, or the corrupted form *boncin*, is the masculine diminutive of the word *bonc* 'hill, hillock, knoll', a term borrowed from Middle English *bonk* 'bank'. The *tre(f)* 'dwelling' is probably connected to a personal name; perhaps a variant form on Meilo, Meilew. Pen y Boncyn 1838 OS map.

Gwaun Lydan 632m SH 881212

The *gwaun* 'marshy upland' is quite flat and reasonably wide, hence the term *llydan* 'broad, wide, flat'. Note the forms seen in Old Welsh *guoun;* Old Cornish *guen,* recent Cornish *goon* 'flat land'; Middle Breton *gueun* 'marsh'.

Stac Rhos 630m SH 968278

A fairly straightforward name, with *stac* 'heap, pile' [borrowed from the Middle English *stac* 'pile, heap'] + *rhos* 'moorland, open upland', Old Welsh *ros* from Brittonic **rossa-*. There has been an interpretation of the root meaning of the word *rhos* being linked to 'promontory, ridge', which could apply here.

Moel y Geifr 626m SH 937276

The term *gafr* 'goat' has two plurals, one is *geifr* and the other is *gafrod*; *geifr* is the commonest of the two. Although there are some herds of goats still on some of the mountains of Eryri, most of them are not quite as ancient as some suppose. The first goats, along with cattle and sheep, came with the earliest farmers around 5000 yrs ago.

Moel y Cerrig Duon 625m SH 924242

This *moel* 'summit or perhaps bare top'; it is probably described as having *cerrig* 'stones' that are *duon* 'black, dark', because of the outcrops of sopping wet rock, usually black, to be found on its flanks. The colour does not always have to infer a black colour, dark green pines and fir trees were sometimes known as coed duon 'dark trees' in Welsh.

Llechwedd Du 614m SH 894224

A varied landscape term, *llechwedd* 'hillside, breast of hill, slope' + *du* 'dark, black'. An apt name for the shadow cast by the steep slope, such as the one found on the western side of this hill.

Y Waun Camddwr 620m SH 848207

This is the *gwaun* 'upland marsh' of the Camddwr; a very apt stream name '*cam*' bent' + *dŵr* 'water', wending its way down the rocky hillside.

Llechwedd Du 614m SH 892224

The rocky ribs on its southern flanks coupled with the shaded west facing slopes probably account for the name *llechwedd* 'slope' + *du* 'black, dark'.

Y Foel Goch 613m SH 913291

A common hill name in Eryri; a *moel* 'rounded hill' with *coch* 'brown(ish)' vegetation.

Trum y Sarn 613m SH 993303

A fairly straightforward combination of *trum* 'ridge, crest' + *sarn* 'causeway, stepping stones, path, road'; there is an ancient track heading up from Cwm Rhiweirth past a prominent cairn of Carnedd Wen towards Llyn Tegid. Trim y Sarn c.1700 Parochialia.

Trum y Gwrgedd 612m SH 941284

This top is part of a long *trum* 'crest, ridge' running in a Northerly direction from Foel y Geifr. Is it a misspelling of the word *gwragedd* 'women' rather than a link to the term *grugedd* 'harshness, roughness'; or, the word *cwr* 'tapering, ending in a point'. Trum y Gwragedd 1838 OS map.

Pen yr Allt Uchaf 610m SH 872197

Here is the contrasting name to Pen y Allt Isaf; the hill is seen to be uchaf 'further up' the valley than Pen yr Allt Isaf.

Moel y Pawl 605m SH 919267

This name is not on the modern OS maps, the hill also has the name Foel Tyn-y-Fron after the farm. This *moel* 'hill' probably had some form of boundary marker, hence the *pawl* 'pole, post'.

Waun Goch 605m SH 875202

Gwaun 'high and wet level ground, usually open moorland', Old Welsh *gouon;* Old Cornish *guen;* Breton *gueun* 'marsh'. The lenited form of *coch* 'red' denotes the sallow to brown vegetation typical of upland areas, especially in winter.

Moel Ffenigl 603m SH 873261

Edward Lhuyd in his Parochialia c.1700, explains that the plant here was the fennel named Ffenigl Elen Luyddog in English it is known as Meu or Spignel: *Meum athamanticum*, a highly aromatic perennial. It is a plant of mountain pasture found in a few localities in North Wales and Northern England; it is a little more plentiful in Scotland. Fennel was a very important medicinal plant for early inhabitants; the plant was used up to the Middle Ages for a variety of conditions. Moel y Ffenig [sef Fenig Elen Lyedhog] c.1700 Parochialia, Moel-phenic 1838 OS.

Y Gribin 602m SH 844177

The word is made up of *crib* 'rake' + -in 'a diminutive ending'; the term could denote a ridged or ribbed or an area of scraggy ground. This is part of a narrow ridge running South East towards Dinas Mawddwy. On the old 6" OS map, the name at the top was Pen Waen Wen, this can still be seen a little lower down on modern maps.

Carreg y Big 589m SH 927202

The first part of the name is *carreg* 'rock'; while the final part, namely *pig* 'pointed, spiked, spur'; this probably refers to the cairn to be found at its top. *Carreg* 'stone, lump of rock' is similar to the Cornish *carrog* and Breton *karrek* 'stone'; from the Brittonic **carreci-* 'stone'. Also, the Irish word *carraig* has been borrowed from the Welsh. Karreg y Big 1635, Karreg y bid (sic) c.1700 Parochialia.

Maenaidd 585m SH 877195

This is a straightforward term, *maenaidd* 'full of stones', to describe stony or rocky ground. The other name is that of Pumryd from *pum* 'five' + *rhyd* 'ford'. Maenydd 1836 OS.

Clipiau Duon 580m SH 904227

Named after the *du* 'black, dark' north facing craglets at the head of the cwm. The *clip* 'bluff, cliff, steep slope', the plural of which is *clipiau*, is derived from the English *clip* 'cliff' itself from the German *klippe* 'cliff'.

Y Foel Fignenau 580m SH 907284

Mignenau is the plural of the word *mign* 'marsh, mire'; a good name for a boggy area. In this area of hills there are many peat cutting areas to be found. Many of the old tracks that lead down from the marshy uplands were usually created by sleds carrying the turf down from the mountain.

Ochr y Bwlch 564m SH 809173
This is the only name for this hill on the present OS maps; a name derived from its position on the *ochr* 'side, flank' + *y* 'the' + *bwlch* 'pass' of Bwlch Oerddrws.

Carreg y Frân 560m SH 976182
The *carreg* 'rock' + *y* 'the' + *brân* 'crow, raven, rook' is the general term for these birds of the family corvidae; in the mountains one usually finds ravens nesting among the rocks. Usually found in pairs, seeing just one was bad luck.

Llechwedd Ieirch 560m SH 859256
The word *llechwedd* 'cliff, slope, rise' can denote a number of features here; while *ieirch* is one of the plural forms of the word *iwrch* 'roe-deer, roe-buck'. However, *eirch* is an adjectival form of *erch* 'dappled, mottled'; or, of *erch* 'dire, horrible', the plural of which is eirch. Leland wrote of the great abundance of deer in the woodlands of Eryri. Llechwedd-eirch 1838 OS.

Pen yr Allt Isaf 557m SH 874181
The name can be translated as *pen* 'top' + *yr* 'the' + *allt* 'bluff + *isaf* 'lower'; although the word allt can also be used to denote a number of other features, including woodland or hill. This is the lowest *allt* 'bluff, slope' down this valley, with a number of other bluffs formed by glaciation.

Y Foel Benddin 543m SH 854165
The benddin element is probably the corrupted combination of *(uwch)ben* 'above' + *ddin(as)* 'fort'; the dinas in question is Dinas Mawddwy. Although it is unlikely that there is a *dinas* 'fort' at its summit, a summit resembling a defensive site could be termed dinas. Moel Benddyn 1575 and Moel Benddyn 1590 Wynnstay Manuscripts, Moel Benddu 1838 OS.

Y Drum Ddu 538m SH 932168
The lenited form of both the word *trum* 'ridge, crest' and the word *du* 'black, dark'.

Llechwedd Llyfn 535m SH 892251
This name refers to the striking hillside forming the *llechwedd* 'hillside, slope' + *llyfn* 'smooth, even'. Llechwedd-llyfn 1838 OS.

Lledwyn Mawr 527m SH 904287
The word *lledwyn* 'gray, pale' could be a simple descriptor of the colouring of this hill. There could also be an element of the term *lled* 'breadth, broadness' in the name, although this would be difficult to confirm. There is also a Lledwyn Bach. Lhedwyn c.1700 Parochialia, Lledwyn Mawr 1838 OS.

Bryn Ronwydd 525m SH 939305
The word *bryn* 'hill' can be compared to Old Irish *bruinne* 'hill, rise'; they are derived from the Indo-European word **bhreus* 'rise, hill, small mountain'. The elements in the main descriptor, ronwydd, are *bron* 'breast, crest' + *gwydd* 'wood, woodland'. However, note *gŵydd* 'wild, uncultivated ground'. Bryn-bronwy 1838 OS map.

Moel y Bryn 515m SH 916199
Although this is more of a spur rather than an actual top, it certainly looks like a *pointed* 'peak' from the valley; therefore, a *moel* 'conical summit' meaning to the name.

Pen Foel y Ffridd 514m SH 892188
Fridd 'intake, rough mountain pasture, sheep-walk' borrowed from the Middle English *frith*, Old English *fyrhoðe* 'a wood, woodland' but also 'enclosed land'. *Pen* 'end, head, top' and *moel* 'hill' are

common elements in mountain names.

Moel Lluestbadlon 514m SH 920171
Badlon is the name of the stream that flows past the sheepfolds and old dwelling of Hafodty Lluestbadlon. *Lluest* 'shelter' is a term that would have been given to a temporary shelter such as a shepherds hut.

Craig Ddu 512m SH 935296
Craig 'cliff, rock' from the Brittonic **cracjo-* 'rock' + *du* 'black' from the Brittonic **dubo-* 'dark, black'.

Y Gadfa 512m SH 838214
The word *cadfa* has two meanings: either i) 'struggle, battle, tumult, battlefield'; or, ii) 'crowd, throng, troop, group'. This is usually used in the hills for a place where a group of cattle or sheep are kept. There is indeed a large sheepfold at the top of this hill.

Moel Cae Howel 508m SH 978331
This *moel* 'hill' is named after the farm Caehowel below; cae 'field' + the personal name Howel. The word *cae* 'field' has developed from the Indo-European **kagh-* 'catch' to give Celtic and Brittonic **cago-* which led to Middle Welsh *kay*; the Cornish *kee*, and Breton *kae* are also linked.

Moel y Geifr 504m SH 957304
It is probable that the initial element *moel* 'bare hill' rather than the other *moel* meanings are to be found. Geifr is the plural of *gafr* 'goat', Old Welsh *gabr*, Brittonic **gabro-* 'goat'.

Moel y Ddinas 489m SH 953304
There is no archaeological *dinas* 'defensive site' at the top; however, the hill could have been a place of refuge at one time; when raiding was taking place herds of cattle were driven up to remote hilltops and corraled. One meaning of the Irish equivalent to dinas '*dùn*' has the meaning of 'refuge, haven'

Moel yr Hydd 489m SH 879174
The name is some distance from the hilltop; the 1838 OS map has the top named as Moel Rhûdd. There are a number of instances where *yr hydd* 'stag, hart' and *rhudd* 'red, ruddy' are interchanged in landscape names due to their similarity when vocalised. This is another example.

Cefn Perfedd 486m SH 980318
The two elements here are *cefn* 'back, ridge' + *perfedd* 'middle, amid; remote'. This ridge is among a group of other ridges.

Bryn Pîg 486m SH 933316
The term *pig* 'pointed, spiked, spur'; generally refers to a rocky tor or a cairn to be found at the top; however, the site is under a conifer plantation today.

Llannerchfydaf 485m SH 907176
The element *llannerch* 'open land, pasture' is straightforward; from the Brittonic **landercā*. However, as to the second element is either from *mydaf* 'arch shaped, covered with an arch'; or, *bydaf* 'swarm or nest of wild bees'. Llanerch vyda 1598, Llanerch-bydaf 1887 OS 6".

Moel Cae'r Hafotty 483m SH 920304
The *hafod* or *hafotty* 'summer dwelling' was located on the mountain and was the place where the family went to in the spring with their livestock; the *hendref* 'old dwelling, permanent residence'

was located down in the valley. The trackways used to move the stock up and down in this transhumance can still be seen in some areas. At a later stage, when sheep were the main stock, it was only the shepherds that went up to the hafotty.

Craig yr Allor 478m SH 927322

Allor 'altar' could describe a flat feature in the landscape rather than an actual place of sacrifice or of communion. Kraig yr Alloir c.1700 Parochialia.

Y Foel 475m SH 903162

One of the few hill-names with just the lenited form of the word moel; the later use of the word moel was a general term for 'upland grazing, sheepwalk'.

Moel Ddu 474m SH 873273

Du 'black or dark' + *moel* 'hill'; whether the darkness of the rocks or the shaded nature of the hill, either be the reason for using the term du. However, it should also be noted that *du* 'angry, bitter' might sometimes also be behind a name for a very poor area of land could in effect be a bitter place to farm.

Y Foel Fach 455m SH 843246

Moel 'hill, conical hill' + *bach* 'small'.

Y Foel Dugoed 439m SH 894133

There is also a slightly lower Dugoed 437m to be found at (SH 886135). Both the valley and river below are called *du* 'black, dark' + *coed* 'woods' because it was a deep, dank and dark site and full of trees at one time. The alternative name for the Gwylliaid Cochion Mawddwy; the brigands who terrorrised the area for several centuries, was Gwilliaid Cochion Dugoed.

Cefn Gwyn 433m SH 907309

Cefn 'ridge, back' + *gwyn* 'bright, pale, white'.

Mynydd Copog 433m SH 884148

The name has crept a little way away from this top. One has to decide which sense of the word *copog* 'tufted, crested'; or, 'high-topped, pointed' is to be found. Mynydd Coppog 1838 OS.

Moel Maes y Llech 430m SH 897273

It is probable that the meaning here is *maes* 'open land, rather than 'field' + *y* 'the' + *llech* 'rock, slab'. There is no particularly stony or rocky area here; therefore, there may have been some form of marker or standing stone which later disappeared. Maye Elleigh 1568 Calendar of Patent Rolls. Mayes y llech c.1592 PRO.

Bryn Maenmawr 413m SH 964345

Here, the *bryn* 'hill' is noted for its *maen* 'stone, crag' + *mawr* 'big'. Mawr is linked to Middle Welsh *maur;* Cornish *meur;* Breton *mor;* and are derived from Brittonic and Gaulish *māro-/ā-* 'big, great'.

Pen y Gyrn 366m SH 891292

There is also a possible ring cairn near to this hilltop which might account to the name; *pen* 'head, top' + *y* 'the' + *curn, cyrn* 'heap, pile, pyramid'. Part of a Roman road, probably from Caersws to Caer Gai, skirted past quite close to the top of this hill.

Tarren Fawr 361m SH 874171

This is the larger of a pair of hills named *tarren* 'bluff, cliff, rocky ground'. The rocky ground is to

be seen on the western and northern slopes above Y Ceunant (The Gorge).

Y Foel 343m SH 773180
The little *moel* 'summit' is pointed and rather conical from some angles. It is here that Yscydion, one of the three giants associated with Idris was supposed to dwell, with Moel Esgidion as one old form of the name. Moel Caerynwch was another name for the hill, with *caer* 'fort' + Ynwch - a personal name. Caerynwch is seen as the name of a mansion below. Foel y Sendian 1837 OS.

How Maelgwn became King: And there Maeldav the elder, the son of Ynhwch Unachen, chief of Moel Esgidion in Meirionydd, placed a chair composed of waxed wings under Maelgwn; so when the tide flowed, no one was able to remain, excepting Maelgwn, because of his chair. *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales*, Vol. II. ed. Aneurin Owen. 1848. pp 48-51

Mynydd Cefn-ddwygraig 340m SH 937341
This *mynydd* 'mountain pasture' is given the name Cefnddwygraig from the farm name [*cefn* 'ridge' + *dwy* 'two' + *craig* 'rock, stone'].

Garth Fawr 332m SH 875284
With the main element of this name, one has to choose between *garth* 'mountain ridge, promontory, hill'; or, *garth* 'field, enclosure'. This small hill and a lower Garth Fach 290m (SH 877289) form the end of a long mountain ridge.

Tarren Fach 259m SH 872166
The *tarren* 'cliff, rocky hill' is quite small, the term tarren is given here because of the rocky ground near the summit of the hill. Tarren Bach 1887 OS.