

## BANNAU BRYCHEINIOG

This is the area that was originally termed the Bannau Brycheiniog; the long soaring ridges ending in high peaked tops give the reasoning behind the name bannau. Their generally good access make these peaks some of the most popular for walkers in the National Park. However there are some quiet tucked away places if needed. The mountains are located between Afon Taf and Afon Wysg and the contrast between the agricultural northern valleys and the scarred southern slopes give them another dimension of interest.

*'Artures Hille is iii. good Walsche (almost v. Englisch) miles south west from Brekenok, and in the veri toppe of the hille is a faire wellespring. This hille of summe is countid the hiest hille of Wales, and in a veri cleere day a manne may se from hit a part of Malvern Hilles, and Glocestre, and Bristow, and part of Devenshir and Cornwale. Ther [be] other diverse hilles by Artures Hille, the wich, with hit, be comunely caullid Banne Brekeninuc. (1536-9) Leland*

### Pen y Fan 886m SO 013216

The present name *pen* 'summit, top' + *y* 'the' + *fan* – a lenited form of *ban* 'point, peak, mountain' linked to Cornish *ban* 'height', Irish *binn*, *benn* 'peak, promontory'. The other ban/fan names also found on the maps are Y Fan and The Vann on the Bowen 1729 Map of South Wales, and Pen-y-van 1840-80 OS.

One old name form for this mountain was often written as Cader Arthur or Cadair Arthur [note that there are other Arthur's Seat/Chair names in Britain]; however, although this name was used by Giraldus Cambrensis in the 12th Century it was probably much older. What is interesting is that Giraldus initially used the element *caer* 'fortification' in the name, as in Kaerarthur (a *kaer/kair* spelling was common e.g. kairdif for Cardiff).

*'..... quorum principalis Kaerarthur dictus, id est, cathedra' Arthuri, propter gemina promontorii cacumina in cathedra modum se preferentia .....'* (of which the principal is Kaer Arthur, or the seat of Arthur, because of the twin peaks of the promontory, preferring the manner of the seat).

It is only as a secondary part of the explanation that Giraldus describes a link to a chair/seat. Was there a misunderstanding of a *\*cader* 'fort' and *cadair* 'chair/seat' meaning at the time of Giraldus. It is likely that he knew the area well and would not have mistakenly used the *Kaerarthur* reference in his description. Does this the period hint at a time when the *cadair* 'chair' interpretation starts to take hold. Even as late as 1804, in the dictionary: Y Gymraeg yn ei Disgleirdeb, one could still find the defenition: Cader (Castel) diffynfa - A strong or fortified place.

Another old name is to be found in the writings of Lewis Glyn Cothi 1420-90 as Ban Uwch Deni; then there is a later version of the same name recorded by Sion Dafydd Rhys 1534-1609 as 'at the head of Cwm Llwh near the foot of Bannuwchdeni'. These show the elements *ban* 'peak' + *uwch* 'above' + *deni* - a rather obscure term. However, this final *-deni* element is similar to that found in the later map versions of the name.

There are Monythdenne and Monuchdennye hil/Monughdenny hill 1578 Saxton, Monuchdeiny Hill 1610 Speed, Monuchdeny Hill 1729 Bowen. The initial element is a corrupted form of *mynydd* 'mountain' + *-deni*, *-denny* elements, in various forms. These may be derived from a Brittonic *\*dinn* term, Welsh *din*, *dinas* 'fort', linked to Middle Irish *dinn* genitive *denna* 'fortress, height', often anglicized as *-denny*, *-dinnie* or *dinny*: as seen in Dunnicaer & Auchindinny, Aberdeenshire; Baldinnie, Fife. There are a number of forts to choose from if the element does not refer to the impressive 'defensive' height of the mountain. In the past, there has been an alternative suggestion in that the *-deni* element is a mis-transcribed *benni*; a possible river name, ultimately derived from Y Fenni Otherwise there has even been a suggestion that it is a local vocalised form of the word

*tenau* 'thin'.

### **Corn Du 873m SO 008213**

*Corn* 'horn, antler' + *du* 'black, dark'. The corn element is linked to Cornish and Breton *corn*, Old Welsh *corno*- 'horn', whether an animal horn, a drinking horn; or, in general topographic terms any horn shaped or conical feature. At a later stage the Middle Welsh variant *curn* was used to denote conical or pyramidal hill-shapes. Once again a topographical name that has arisen because of the effect of aspect; the northern slopes would be very dark as they would be in the shade all day, and be very dark on a bright day. Therefore, this *corn* 'horn' has been given the adjective *du* 'black, dark' due to the northerly and shaded slopes. Noted as Y Fan-corn-du on the 1832 OS. The double peaks of Pen y Fan and this top, viewed from Brecon, gave rise to the name Bannau Brycheiniog for these hills in the first instance rather than the broader range.

### **Cribyn 795m SO 024213**

This name is a diminutive on the word *crib* 'ridge', though, neither the mountain nor the ridge is that small; however, it is shorter in comparison to the two flanking ridges of Cefn Cyff and Cefn Cwm Llwh recorded as Y Gribyn 1833 OS.

### **Y Waun Rudd 769m SO 062206**

Written on the maps as Waun Rydd, the word *rhydd* 'free' is easily mistaken for the colour term *rhudd* 'red, ruddy'. Also, there is the possibility that the *rydd* element is derived from a corrupted *yr 'the' + hydd* 'stag, hart'. The lenited *waun* element reflects the rather flat topped nature of this mountain. The word *gwaun* 'high and wet level ground, open moorland'; Old Welsh *gouon*, Old Cornish *guen*, Breton *gueun* 'marsh', is not usually used for the tops.

Another name nearby, Carn Pica could be an alternative name for the peak, but it is probably a descriptor for seeing the mountain shape from the east, which is much more of a pointed wedge. Here the word *carn* 'cairn, barrow, tumulus or mound' is probably used to describe the shape of the whole mountain. The *pica* 'little peak' is a diminutive of the borrowed Old English word *pic* 'pike, spike, peak'.

### **Y Fan Las 754m SO 055204**

The name to be seen on today's OS maps is Bwlch y Ddwyallt 'pass the two slopes', but this is the name of a pass and not a hill; however, Y Fan Las was the name to be seen at this location on the first OS maps. One sees the name, somewhat hidden, in Y Graig Fan Las, at (SO 053197). There could be (*g*)*las* 'grey, pale' colouring; or the element could describe a *glas* 'grey-green, glaucous' area of vegetation.

### **Cefn Cul 742m SO 014194**

Topographically, a great name for this particular mountain; *cefn* 'ridge' + *cul* 'narrow'; it is linked to Corn Du by a very narrow ridge. Cornish *cul*, *kul* 'slender, lean'.

### **Tor Glas 730m SO 041196**

This is the name given to the mountain on the 1832 OS map, this name is now quite a distance away and down the hill. The root sense of Brittonic *\*torra*- 'bulge, protrusion', Old Welsh *torr* 'belly, stomach'; has been maintained in Breton *teur*, *tor* Cornish *tor*, and Modern Welsh *tor* 'belly, stomach'. Its use as a topographical descriptor for 'a heap of rocks' and 'a knoll' was probably a later development. The second element, is probably *glas* 'green-grey' colour sometimes termed glaucous rather than grey. Tor Glase 1816, Tor-glâs 1836 OS.

### **Fan y Big 719m SO 036206**

*Ban* 'peak, summit' + *y* 'the' + *big* – the lenited form of *pig* 'pointed, spike' or 'beak' indicates a very

pointed peak or one with a cairn. The word *pig* is a borrowed form of the Old English *pic* 'pike, spear'. When one looks at the mountain one can see a distinct wedge shape to this mountain. Otherwise, there could be another sense, in that the *pig* 'beak' could be referring to the sandstone rocks at the top of the hill jutting out.

#### **Allt Lwyd 654m SO 079189**

A good topographic name for this truncated spur leading down from Waun Rydd that ends in a steeply sloping bluff. The usual meaning in North Wales for the word *allt* 'height, cliff, bluff' may be in place here, rather than the general usage in the area of *allt* 'wooded slope' + *llwyd* 'grey' linked to Old Cornish *luit*, Old Breton *loit*. Once again the actual colour the word *llwyd* is describing is difficult to ascertain.

#### **Twyn Mwyalchod 642m SO 022176**

Not a striking peak, gentle slopes lead up to a triangulation pillar and this is the nearest name. This *twyn* 'hill' has been named after the *mwyalchod* 'blackbirds'. This word is the plural of *mwyalch* 'blackbird'; Old Cornish *mowlh*, Breton *moualch* from the Brittonic word \**mesalka* 'blackbird'. However, this could refer to one particular mountain bird, known in Welsh as *Mwyalchen y Graig* 'Ring Ouzel': *Turdus torquatus*.

#### **Y Gyrn 619m SN 989216**

The element *curn*, *cyrn* 'heap, mound; cone; stack' is often mistaken for a plural of the word *corn* 'mountain top, peak, horn'; this hill certainly does have a cone shape when viewed from the South. The definite article *y* makes this a special feature noted by the local population. Written as Green Hill on the Greenwood map of 1828.

#### **Y Garn Felen 617m SO 087137**

As *carn* 'cairn' is feminine then *felen*, the feminine form of the word *melyn* 'sallow, pale, brown' has to be used. There are a number of cairns are found near the summit; therefore, this could support a suggestion that the *carn* refers to the whole hill. The other name to be seen here, which was the name for the summit on the 1832 OS map was *Carn y Bugail* (bugail 'shepherd').

#### **Twynau Gwynion 570m SO 0812**

*Twynau* 'mounds, knolls, humps' + *gwynion* – the pluralised form of the word *gwyn* 'white'. The rocks here are limestone and therefore look quite white in comparison to the rest of the landscape in this particular area, which is generally red sandstone. At one time the name for these hills, as well as those leading to the East above Dyffryn Crawnnon was *Cefn Hir* 'Long Ridge'; this name has disappeared off the maps.

#### **Yr Allt 565m SO 056162**

This location is noted by some as *Corlan yr Allt*; *corlan* 'sheepfold, enclosure' + *allt* 'slope, wooded slope, bluff, rise'.

#### **Bryn 562m SO 072227**

A descriptive name for a hill formed at the end of the ridge leading down from Waun Rydd, to most *bryn* just means 'hill'; however, as here, it could sometimes have a sense of 'bank, upland'. The word *bryn* 'hill' is comparable to Old Irish *bruinne* 'rise', from the Indo-European word \**bhreus* 'rise, hill, small mountain'. It must be noted that even on the early OS maps, 1832, the name for the hill is also just *Bryn*. *Cefn y Bryn* and *Pen y Bryn* are also recorded names for the hill.

#### **Y Garn Fawr 557m SO 123151**

*Y* 'the' + *carn* 'cairn' + *mawr* 'large', it does have a very large cairn, but even this big cairn is very disturbed. To the east, there is an interesting cave for speleologists quite near the summit, known as

the Ogof Fawr 'Big or Great Cave'; however, the old name was Tylles Fawr, *tylles* 'den, lair'. It is also known as the Chartist's Cave when in 1839 Chartist's Rebels stockpiled weapons in the cave entrance before their march to Newport.

#### **Trefil Ddu 557m SO 104141**

This is the name for this hill on the early Greenwood map and also on the early OS, this name is now over 1km away, at (SO 114132). The meaning of Trefil is quite opaque, some have recorded *tir* 'land' + *foel* 'bare, hill' + *du* 'dark'; others suggest: *tref* 'place' + *mil* 'animals'; *tref* + a personal name such as Eiliw; also, *tref* + *vil(lain)* 'feudal serf'. However, if there is no link to *tref*; there may be a corruption of *trwfwl*, *tryfwl* 'pile, heap'; or, for the fork in a stream, with a *tryfal* 'triangle'. In the Badminton Deeds one sees Trevelde 1646, Truvill 1704, Trevill 1766 and Trevil Du 1807; Theophilus Jones 1805 had the name as Tir voel ddu.

#### **Bloreng 555m SO 273121**

It is a challenge to be certain about this name; known in Welsh as Blorens. It has probably arisen from the word *blawr* coupled perhaps to *ais* 'rib', a variant on *asen* 'rib'. Usually *blawr* is generally translated as 'grey, pale blue, pale' and is linked to Middle Irish *blar* 'grey', derived from the Celtic \**blāros*. However, *blawr* can also infer a 'pale grey, white' as well as a 'brownish, ruddy' colouring. If not a frosty pale grey of the tops it could even be linked to bracken covered slopes in winter. Bloreis 1263 Calendar of Ancient Correspondence in Wales, Bloreys 1348 Conway Parish Registers, Blorech Hill 1610 Speed, Blorech 1781, Bloreng 1832 OS.

#### **Twyn Ceiliog 552m SO 099129**

The meaning *ceiliog* 'cockerel' could be a reference to the male grouse, known as Ceiliog Du'r Mynydd. However, if the term is actually *cil* 'coner, nook, recess' + *-og* 'associated with', it refers to the landscape with hollows, niches and corners. Twyn Cilog 1832 AO.

#### **Tor y Foel 551m SO 114195**

Here, the *tor* 'top, belly' element refers to a prominent *moel* 'summit, conical hill'. It is sometimes recorded as Twr y Foel [*twr* 'heap, pile'] but also as Tir y Foel, and on the William Rees historical map of 1933, as Tyr y Foel.

#### **Allt Ddu 550m SO 027241**

It is probable that the name here relates to an *allt* 'wooded slope, bluff' + *du* 'black, dark'; however, *du* 'bitter' is also used in some areas to describe poor ground or even an exposed windy area.

#### **Trefil Las 541m SO 123145**

The name for this hill is now about 1km away at (SO 124136); on the early Greenwood map this was the hill name. Here we have the term *glas* 'grey'; see Trefil Ddu above. In 1805 Theophilus Jones suggested in his History: '*Upon the hills of this Parish there are three or four Carneddau, particularly upon Trevil glas, or rather Tir voel glas*'. The colour in the term *glas* should probably be seen as being 'glaucous, greyish-green'; or, a 'pale grey'.

#### **Twyn Cil Rhew 540m SO 017242**

This *twyn* 'ridge' is not really a hilltop as such, more of a spur extending down to the north from Pen y Fan. The element *cil* 'recess, nook, corner' is fairly straightforward; Breton *kil*, Cornish *kyl* 'nook, back part', Gaelic *cùl*. Coupled with *rhew* 'ice' it probably denotes a cold north facing recess that keeps its frostiness or snow cover far longer than other slopes; rather than a corruption of *rhiw* 'slope, ascent, hill'. Killyrew 1729, Killyrhiw 1797.

#### **Bryniau Gleision 538m SO 084161**

*Bryniau* 'hills' + *gleision* - the plural of the the word *glas* 'greenish grey, grey'. However, in the

mountains, if there is limestone in the area, it is probably the greyness that is being referred to. The word is cognate to Cornish *glas*, Old Irish *glas* 'gray, green, gray-green'; all are derived from the Brittonic *\*cunglase*. Brinne Gleision 1816 Report of the Royal Commission.

#### **Twyn Du 533m SO 082204**

This *twyn* 'hillock, pile, banc or knoll' + *du* 'black, dark' is on a spur leading down from Waun Rydd.

#### **Tŵr Pen Cynr 529m SO 203145**

There are a number of cairns, stone piles and hut circles in the area around this summit; their presence is reflected in the *pen* 'head, top' + *cynr* 'heaps, mounds' name. It is possible that the initial name element is not *tŵr* 'tower, castle' [borrowed from Middle English *tower*] but *twr* 'heap, pile'. *Mynydd Pen Cynr 1832 OS*.

#### **Tormwnt 528m SO 039154**

The name *Tormwnt* is to be seen on the OS maps today; on the original maps one finds *Tor Mwnt*. The top is a rather flat moorland, but the lower slopes are steeper, so here the word *tor* 'heap, pile' may be preferable and not *tor* 'rocky top'. The element *mwnt*, *mwnt* 'heap, mound, hillock, hill' are both borrowed from the English word *mount* 'mountain' (- itself borrowed from the French *mont*). Also recorded is a *Tarren Tormwnt*, and the name is noted as *Gwaun Tormwnt* on the 1828 Greenwood Map.

#### **Y Garn Caws 516m SO 129168**

*Y* 'the' + *carn* 'cairn' + *caws* 'cheese', named as being a wedge shaped hill; or, their being a cheese shaped *carn* 'cairn' at the top perhaps? Although a corruption of a word such as *cawsai*, *cawse* 'raised way over marshland, causeway, a paved way' might be a link to a possible trackway nearby? A much depleted Bronze age cairn is found near the summit and a stone row is found on the northern slopes.

#### **Allt Forgan 513m SO 066177**

*Allt* 'slope, wooded slope' + *Forgan* - the lenited form of the personal name *Morgan*; this would usually be given to the land associated with or owned by that person. *Allt Vorgan 1639 Wynnstey Manuscript*, *Allt vorgan 1644 Brondyffryn Manuscript*.

#### **Bryn Cefnog 510m SO 086159**

*Bryn* 'hill' + *cefnog* 'humps, ridges', a very good description of the humps and bumps on this hill.

#### **Mynydd y Garn Fawr 503m SO 270099**

This *mynydd* 'mountain' + *y* 'the' + *carn* 'cairn' + *mawr* 'large' does have a large cairn named *Carn y Defaid* 'Cairn (of)the Sheep', there is also another cairn in the area.

#### **Twynau Gwynion 498m SO 067108**

As *twynau* 'ridges' + *gwynion* 'white' in a plural form, there is a similar name further north at 081126. *Twyneu Gwynion 1832 OS*.

#### **Twyn y Llyn 486m SO 108161**

*Twyn* 'hillock, pile, bank, top' + *y* 'the' + *llyn* 'pool'; was there a pool in the marshy area to the east of this little top? In marshy areas, pools and lakelets often disappear as they become filled with sediment and/or peat growth infilling from the sides.

#### **Y Garn Ddu 462m SO 027124**

Looking at the OS maps, one can see a number of cairns in the area; however, the cairn marked as *Garn Ddu* 'black or dark cairn' is to be found about a kilometer away, at (SO 036126).

### **Cefn Cil Sanws 461m SO 024103**

This *cefn* 'ridge' may have a *cil* 'nook, recess'; or, denote *cil* 'a remote place'; however, one should also note the Gaelic *cil, kil* 'church' meaning. The element *sanws* may well be a corrupted form of the Latin *sanctus*; however, some have proposed Sanws as a personal name. Latin *sanctus* also gave Welsh *sant* 'holy' and Cornish *sans* 'holy, sacred'. The name could infer a secluded hermitage, some early christian monks did seek out of the way places. It is noted as Tir Kil Sanws 1614 and Tire Kilsaunws 1664/5 Penpont Manuscripts, Cilsanos 1849 Samuel Lewis.

### **Twyn Croes 452m SO 038129**

This is probably *twyn* 'knoll, hummock' rather than one of the many other meanings to the word, coupled to the term *croes* 'cross'. There are many examples of hill and pass names with *croes* 'cross', these can denote the boundary of church land; although sometimes there were crosses used at the tops of passes, as places to be thankful..

### **Bryn Melyn 441m SO 199185**

*Bryn* 'hill, hillock' + *melyn* 'yellow'. However, the term *melyn* in a topographic sense can refer to a fallow or even brown colour rather than yellow. The pale tan or brownish colouring seen in winter grassland could be the likeliest meaning behind this name.

### **Twyn Wenallt 441m SO 244125**

Twyn Wenallt is the name found on the old maps, *twyn* 'hillock, pile, bank or knoll' is a fairly common descriptor in the hills around here, with (*g*)*wen* 'white' + *allt* 'bluff, slope'. The Welsh term for white 'gwyn' changes to the feminine form (*g*)*wen* after a feminine noun. One sees the name Gilwern Hill (SO 238129), this is named after the village below. At (SO 244125) one finds Carreg Gywir; the *cywir* here may infer 'correct, precise' rather than 'staunch, genuine' as it references a stone boundary marker. Twyn y Wenallt 1832 OS.

### **Coetgae'r Gwartheg 422m SO 023115**

*Coetgae* 'hedge enclosure' + *r* 'the' + *gwartheg* 'cattle', cognate with the Cornish *gwarthek* 'cattle'. The area around this hill shows the presence of much prehistoric land use and one form of animal husbandry used in the wilder areas was to bring the livestock from a pasture into an enclosure at night. Sometimes made of a scrub or thorn hedge, these could later become more permanent with walls and/or banks strengthening the enclosure. This change and development is also seen in the meaning of the term *coetgae*. Initially, the term described land enclosed with a hedge [*coed* 'wood' + *cae* 'enclosed'] this later developed to denote any enclosure or field. The importance of the *gwartheg* 'cattle' to various societies from the prehistoric up to the Middle Ages cannot be underestimated; cattle were a measure of wealth and social standing.

### **Y Wenallt 356m SO 113215**

This *Y* 'the' + (*g*)*wen* 'white' + *allt* 'slope, bluff, woodland'; as usual the element (*g*)*wen* is often used to describe a brightness or sunny aspect in many locations. For others the use of the term describes a bright area of ground because it is open i.e. without tree cover,