

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 'top, peak' + y 'the' + fan – a mutated 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.

While one old name that has been used by many was Cader or Cadair Arthur, this reference to Arthur was referred to by Giraldus Cambrensis in the 12th Century. However, the form of the name used by Giraldus was that of kaer [note also the use of kaer or kair for caer 'fort' in many other manuscripts 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). This passage by Giraldus may denote the period where the cadair 'chair' interpretation starts to take hold. Though it does seem that Giraldus was confused in his own attempt at an explanation and makes no mention of this high peak being referred to as a kaer/caer 'fort'. One should also note that even as an entry in the fairly late dictionary – Y Gymraeg yn ei Disgleirdeb, 1804 Thomas Jones, one still found: **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 Llŵch 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', while the various -deni, -denny elements 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 below, if the element does not refer to height. There has been an alternative suggestion that the -deni element is a mis-transcribed benni; ultimately derived from Y Fenni; even, a local form of 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 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. The initial element of Waun Rudd 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. The second element is the colour; rhudd 'red, brown', Old Welsh *rud* 'red, fallow'. Another name nearby, Carn Pica does seem to be a bit more of a contender for a peak name, but it is probably more of a descriptor for seeing the mountain shape from the east, which is much more of a pointed wedge in form.

Although the word carn 'cairn, barrow, tumulus or mound' can be used in the names of hills and mountains where there is (or may have been) a pile of rough stones stacked up to form a pre-Christian burial mound it is probable that this is not the case here, as what cairns there are are relatively modern. Pica 'little peak' a diminutive of the borrowed Old English word *pic* 'pike, spike, peak'.

Y Fan Las 754m SO 055204

Bwlch y Ddwyallt 'pass (of) the two slopes' is the name to be seen on today's OS maps; 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 (053197). The (g)las element in this instance could describe a shaded aspect as well as a glas 'grey-green' 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 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'. However, its use as a topographical descriptor for 'a heap of rocks' and 'a knoll' was probably a later development. The second element, glas is a 'green-grey' colour sometimes termed glaucous. Tor Glase 1816, Tor-glâs 1836 OS.

Fan y Big 719m SO 036206

Ban 'peak, summit' + y 'the' + big – the mutated form of pig 'pointed, spike' or 'beak' indicates a very pointed peak or one with a cairn and once again 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 and ending in a steeply sloping bluff. The word allt 'height, cliff, bluff', Cornish *alls*, Old Welsh *alt* + llwyd 'grey' linked to Old Cornish *luit*, Old Breton *loit*. One cannot expect colour names in the landscape to be consistent in their application. For example, changes of light due to time of day, distance, time of year and shade all affect the colours seen.

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 Brythonic word **mesalka* 'blackbird'. However, this could refer to one particular mountain bird, known in Welsh as Mwyalchen y Graig 'Rock Blackbird' (Ring Ouzel): *Turdus torquatus*.

Y Gyrn 619m SN 989216

Curn, cyn 'heap, mound; cone; stack' is often mistaken for a plural of the word corn 'mountain top, peak, horn'; this hill 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 a feminine word then felen, the feminine form of the word melyn 'sallow, pale, brown' has to be used. A number of cairns are found near the summit. 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 'mound, knoll, hump' + 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 the area. At one time the name for these hills, as well as those leading 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

Here is a descriptive name for a hill formed at the end of the ridge leading down from Waun Rydd, it means hill. The word bryn 'hill' is ancient, one can compare it with 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.

Y Garn Fawr 557m SO 123151

Carn 'cairn' + mawr 'large', but the cairn here 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, tylls '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

The name for this hill on the early Greenwood map, and early OS, is now over 1km away, at (114132). The meaning of Trefil is quite opaque in origin, 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, 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/Blorens 555m SO 273121

It is a challenge to be certain about this name; it has probably arisen from the word blawr 'grey, pale blue, pale', Middle Irish *blar* 'grey', derived from the Celtic **blāros*. This gives a sense of pale grey of slopes seen in shadows or the pale light of dawn/dusk. Other suggestions included a 'blue ridge' explanation as well as 'high exposed places'. Bloreng is the name commonly used in English for the mountain. Bloreis 1263 Calendar of Ancient Correspondence in Wales, Bloreys 1348 Conway Parish Registers, Blorench Hill 1610 Speed, Blorench 1781, Bloreng 1832 OS.

Twyn Ceiliog 552m SO 099129

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

Tor y Foel 551m SO 114195

The word tor here refers to a prominent hill, it is sometimes noted as Twr y Foel, twr 'heap, pile'; also Tir y Foel, and on the William Rees map 1933, as Tyr y Foel.

Allt Ddu 550m SO 027241

It is probable that the name here relates to an allt 'slope, bluff' that is 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 (124136); on the early Greenwood map this was the hill name. Here we have the term glas 'grey'; see Trefil Ddu above. In 1805 Thophilous 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'; see Trefil Ddu above. The colour in the term glas should be seen as 'glaucous' – a greyish-green; or, grey rather than the blue it now generally signifies.

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 *cùil*. However, the last part could very likely be rhew 'ice' denoting 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 or grey'. However, in the mountains it is probably the greyness that is being referred to and glaucous is the closest colour term for the word glas. 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 Cyn 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' + cyn 'heap, mound, cairn' name. It is probable that the initial name element is not tŵr 'tower, castle' [borrowed from Middle English tower] but twr 'heap, pile'.

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' and not tor 'rocky top' would suffice. The words mwnt and mwnd, both meaning 'heap, mound, hillock, hill' are both borrowed from the English word mount 'mountain' (- itself borrowed from the French mont). The name is noted as Gwaun Tormwnt on the 1828 Greenwood Map.

Y Garn Caws 516m SO 129168

Garn 'cairn' + caws 'cheese', perhaps named as being a wedge shaped hill; or, their being a cheese shaped carn 'cairn' at the top? A corruption of a form such as cawsai, cawse 'raised way over marshland, causeway'; or, '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 mutated form of the personal name Morgan; this would usually be given to the land associated with or owned by that person. Allt Vorgan 1639 Wynnstay 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. The cairn name is often found in Irish mountains, e.g. An Carn.

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?

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 (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 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'. Was there a secluded hermitage here, 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 croes 'cross'. As is seen in many cases of hill and pass names with the word croes 'cross' can denote the boundary of church land. Could the cross be linked to the Cil-sanws above?

Bryn Melyn 441m SO 199185

Bryn 'hill, hillock' + melyn 'yellow'. The term melyn in a topographic feature refers to a brown or fallow colour, rather than yellow now associated with the word melyn. Therefore, 'fallow hill' is the likeliest meaning behind this name, the hue of moorland vegetation is a rather fallow colour.

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'. The Welsh term for white 'gwyn' changes to (g)wen after a feminine noun. One sees the name Gilwern Hill (238129), named after the village below and also at (244125) one finds Carreg Gywir – cywir here may infer 'correct, precise' rather than 'staunch, genuine' as it references a stone boundary marker.

Coetgae'r Gwartheg 422m SO 023115

Coetgae 'hedge enclosure' + 'r 'the' + gwartheg 'cattle', 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 seen in the meaning of the term coetgae. Initially land enclosed with a hedge [coed 'wood' + cae 'enclosed'] the term 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 translates as (The) white slope or bluff; the word (g)wen is the female form of the word gwyn 'white'. In some areas the term is used to denote a hill or slope that is south facing or catches the first light of the sun. A hill fort can be seen on its top.