

HEBOG & NANTLLE

This area of hills to the west of Beddgelert and Rhyd Ddu boasts two fine ridges, what are known as the Hebog ridge and the Nantlle ridge, almost enclosing the magnificent valley of Cwm Pennant. To the North, across the Nantlle valley is the outlying Mynydd Mawr with its little group of hills. The whole area is rather quieter than the main walking areas of Eryri and provide spectacular views of Yr Wyddfa and the coasts.

Moel Hebog 782m 564470

The generally accepted sense now associated with the term moel 'bald, bare, blunt' in the landscape, is that of hills that are rounded, smooth and bare of trees. Unfortunately, this is far too simplistic and very often wrong, as there are far more meanings than this associated with the word. Apart from the *smooth rounded mountain, treeless hill* definitions, the Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru (GPC) also has '*top of a hill or mountain, summit*' as well as '*heap, mound*' with an inference to a conical form. A good deal of care must be taken to assess the form of the feature with the term moel as in a large number of cases the term moel has the other more complex set of meanings. Meanings that are generally ignored in a large number of articles and books.

Moel Hebog is certainly bare topped and fairly smooth from some angles; however, what is striking about this mountain is that it mainly presents a large conical form, so it probably is a usage that denotes moel 'summit, conical heap'. This idea was to be seen in an early Welsh dictionary, with: '*Moel or y Foel doth also signify a heap of corn, butter and of other things of the like sort, when raised up like a pyramid above the brim of the vessel in which it is contained*' 1753 **Antiquae linguae Britannicae**.

The first form of this name, recorded in 1269, was Morleheadauc; namely moel 'conical hill' + ehedog, ehedawg 'birds, flight', Cornish *edhen* 'bird'; rather than hebog 'hawk'. This suggests that the mountain name should perhaps be interpreted as Hill of the Birds rather than Hill of the Hawk. The hawk interpretation is probably due to the form highlighted as Moel Happock in 1781. This is a corruption of the is the word hebog 'hawk'; and it is this version which continues in use today. Hebog is derived from the Old English word *heafoc* 'hawk' which was confused with the original Welsh *ehedog*. However, in his book *Tours of Wales* 1810 Thomas Pennant has Moel Hedog, thus linking it back to the earliest form. The mountain could be associated with birds; whether real or legendary; or, when viewed from the West, the ridge seems to be shaped like a bird with outspread wings. Moel Hebog 1838 OS.

A stunning bronze shield made up of concentric rings, about 1m in diameter and dated to the late Bronze Age, was found on the slopes of Moel Hebog during peat cutting in 1784. This may hint at some form of sacred significance linked to the mountain at one time.

Craig Cwm Silyn 734m SH 526503

If the craig 'crag' and mountain is named after the lake, the first part of the name may be sil 'young fish, fry' is borrowed from the Irish *sil* 'seed'; Old Welsh *hil* 'to breed'. This gives sil + llyn 'lake of spawning', 'lake of the small fish'; or, 'the source lake'. However, for most, it is merely the usage of a personal name Silin, Silyn seen in a number of names, such as Carn Silin and Llansilyn. On the first OS map of 1838, the form Craig-cwm-silyn is seen.

Trum y Ddysgl 710m SH 545517

Topographically a very descriptive name; due to the bowl shape of the cwm below the term dysgl 'a round or oval dish, bowl' is apt. Whereas the meaning of drum, trum 'a ridge or spur reaching out from a hill'; Old Welsh *drum*, Cornish *trum, drum*; Irish *druimm* 'ridge, slope, mountain'. Trum y Ddesgil 1781 Myrddin Fardd, Trum-y-ddysgyl 1838 OS.

Y Garnedd Goch 700m SH 511495

The word *garnedd* is derived from *carn* 'cairn, barrow, tumulus or mound' + *-edd* ; common in mountain names, the *garnedd* mutation shows that there should be a definite article, namely 'y', before the word. However, the term *carn* can indicate more than just a man made feature. In the landscape the term can also refer to a rocky top, a crag strewn hill or scree features or even a cairn shaped mountain. One finds the incorrect form *Garnedd Goch* 1887 OS, the definite article 'y' needs to be in the name for the mutation to take place, this continues incorrectly in the present OS map series. *Y Garnedd goch* 1838 OS.

Mynydd Mawr 698m SH 540547

Mynydd Mawr is simply 'large mountain'; here the meaning of *mynydd* as 'mountain, hill' rather than 'mountain pasture, sheepwalk'. This is a prominent mountain when viewed from the coastal lowlands and because of its nearness to Caernarfon looks larger than others. The word is linked to Cornish *meneth*; Old Breton *mened*; and Old Welsh *minid* from the Brittonic **monedo-*. The meaning of *mynydd* has altered with usage; initially the term meant 'a prominent hill or ridge'. It is at a later stage that the word extended to indicate 'tracts of upland, moorland, heathland'; later still the term came to be used for 'common unenclosed pasture', not necessarily on high ground. There is a 22m wide Bronze Age cairn on this summit, much disturbed over the years, that can be seen from quite some distance. *Mynydd Mawr* Thomas Pennant Tours of Wales 1810, *Mynydd mawr* 1838 OS.

Mynydd Drws y Coed 697m SH 549518

As a topographical term *drws* 'mountain gap or pass' is very descriptive and is seen in a number of areas; Old Irish *dorus*, Brittonic **drust*; both words probably developed from the Celtic **duorestu* 'pass or gap in the mountains'. This one denotes the presence of *coed* 'woodland' in the area of the pass at one time. The name was taken from a couple of the farms in this area and then transferred to the mountain as the *mynydd* here refers to the mountain pasture or sheepwalk. The name does not need the archaic hyphenation sometimes used by the OS.

Moel yr Ogof 655m SH 556479

Moel 'conical hill' + *yr* 'the' + *ogof* 'cave' - comparable to Cornish *gogo, fogo, ogo* 'cave'; the name is seen on the first OS maps in 1838. Apart from its rather conical form, there is a prominent feature high up on the face of the cliff below the summit; this damp cleft is the *ogof* 'cave, cleft'. One early name may have been *Moel Ogof Elen*, that of Elen (Helen), the wife of Maccsen Wledig. The cave at 559478 may not have been that of Owain Glyndwr, his may be one on the crag called *Y Diffwys* on the northern spur of *Moel Hebog*.

Mynydd Tal y Mignedd 655m SH 535514

The valley of *Dyffryn Nantlle* was far wetter at one time, with more than one lake and an area of boggy ground above the lakes. The farm name is *Tâl y Mignedd*; so one finds *tâl* 'end, edge' + *y* 'the' + *mignedd* 'bogs, marshes'; the singular is *mign*. This mountain is again a reference to sheepwalk or upland pasture of a farm, the name does not need to be hyphenated. *Tal Mignedd* 1781 Thomas Pennant.

Moel Lefn 638m SH 553485

A *moel* 'rounded hill' + *lefn* 'smooth' (*lefn* is the mutated feminine form of the word *llyfn*) and this is certainly a *moel* with smooth slopes and a rounded top when viewed from the South, and most of the valley of *Cwm Pennant*. Some of its other aspects does not conform to its name being rough and craggy, *Moel Lefain* is the form of the name seen on the early 1840-80 6" OS maps; however, this is probably an error. The term *llefain* 'cry, shout', is sometimes seen in landscape names such as *Carreg Lefain* 'echo rock'.

Y Garn 633m SH 551526

The meaning of *carn* 'cairn, barrow, tumulous or mound', however, in landscape meanings it usually refers to a rocky hill, similar meanings are found in Breton *karn*; Cornish *karn*; Irish *carn* 'pile of stones'. Although the term does not always represent a place where a cairn; a pile of rough stones stacked up to form a pre-Christian burial mound. They are present here, there are indeed two Bronze Age cairns to be found.

Mynydd Craig Goch 609m SH 497486

This mountain is probably given the name because of *craig* 'rock' + *coch* 'red'; this could be due to the presence of iron or other mineralisation. Otherwise, the southern and western slopes of this hill are covered in bracken, giving way to bilberry then tawny mountain grasses higher up; any one of which would be viewed as *coch* 'brown' in the autumn and winter. A little south of the summit, on the south facing slopes there is a scattered complex of ruined structures and enclosures. This shows that at one time this area, even at this height, was occupied. *Craig goch* 1838 OS, *Mynydd Craig-coch* 1887 OS.

Y Foel Rudd 573m SH 549544

Rudd is the mutated form of the word *rhudd* 'red, crimson', linked to Old Cornish *rud*, Middle Irish *ríuad*; that developed from Celtic **roudos* and ultimately from the Indo European **reudh-* 'red'. However, on the OS maps, ever since the 6" 1888-1915 edition, the name is given as *rûdd*; this does not exist as a word in Welsh.

Unfortunately, although *rhudd* 'red, crimson' is likely, the corruption of the words *Yr Hydd* 'the stag' could be an alternative. With a later *rudd/rhudd* concealment of the real meaning. It is a difficult choice and there is no certainty; the spelling given on the OS maps is not an answer to this *rhudd/yr hydd* conundrum; these conflicting forms are recorded in a number of locations in Wales. *Moel y rhudd* 1838 OS, *Moel Rhudd* 6" 1840-80 OS, *Foel Rudd* 1888 6" OS.

Moel Ddu 553m SH 579443

The slopes of this *moel* 'conical hill' are *du* 'black, dark' because of the rock colour as well as the shaded slopes.

Bryn Bannog 519m SH 576456

Bryn 'hill' is a relatively rare name, cognate with Cornish *bren*, from the Brittonic **brunnjā*, which is similar to Old Irish *bruinne* 'breast, brow'. The accepted interpretation for the term *bannog* is 'high, elevated, eminent'; although relatively low in height this is certainly a fairly obvious feature with some steep slopes rising to its long crest. Cornish *ban* 'height', Irish *benn* 'mountain, horn, peak'. *Brynbannog* 1641 Wynn Papers.

Moel Tryfan 427m SH 516563

In many places it is difficult to see the original form of the hill, due to the quarrying and the dumping of waste slate. However, when viewed from the north, the hill is quite smooth and rounded; it would seem to be a good example of the descriptor *moel* 'rounded hill' rather than a *moel* 'conical hill'. One would then think that the *tryfan* 'crested ridge' term is an anomaly, on closer inspection, this bare and rounded hill can be seen to have a rocky tor along its top; therefore, the name is probably a reference to *moel* 'summit, top'. *Moel-y-Tryfan* 1838 OS.

Castell 388m SH 562495

The meaning of *castell* 'castle' is fairly straightforward for a buttress that reminds one of fortifications or battlements. However, the name on the 1838 OS map was *Y Graig Ddu*; this would have served as a counterpoint for the sunnier *Y Graig Wen* on the other side of the valley, at 594507.

Mynydd y Cilgwyn 347m SH 498543

In its use in the landscape, the word *cil* 'nook, recess' + *gwyn* 'white' could denote a frosty hollow or conversely a hollow facing the sun. Cornish *kyl* 'nook, back part', Old Irish *cail* 'corner, recess'. Pen y Cilgwyn is the other term on the OS maps. Cilgwyn Common 1813 & Mynydd gilgwyn 1821 Porth yr Aur Manuscripts, Mynydd y cilgwyn 1838 OS.

Moel Smytho 343m SH 521577

Locally, the name used is either Smytho or Smythaw, a personal name to some; although in the past a derivation from the Middle English *smothe* 'smooth' has been put forward. If the term used in the name is (e)smwythau 'to ease or abate, make easy', this may have been as a descriptor of an easier ascent to the upland. Moel smythaw 1838 OS.

Clogwyn y Garreg 336m SH 557538

The term *carreg* 'stone' is comparable to Cornish *carrag* 'stone, rock'; Breton *karrek*: while the Irish *carraig* is borrowed from the Welsh. A very common word in the landscape and this little hill is covered with rocks, as well as many steep little crags. Although rather low, it is still quite striking, especially when viewed from Dyffryn Nantlle. On an old Estate map of 1777 the hill is shown as being called Carreg Lefain 'echo rock'.

Bryn Bugeiliaid 306m SH 483497

This bryn 'hill' has the straightforward name *bugeiliaid*, which is the plural of *bugail* 'shepherd'; this is cognate with Cornish *bugel*, the Middle Welsh *bugeil*. The *bugelydd* spelling in the first series of the OS maps is a rather old form of the spelling. Bryniau-bugelydd 1838 OS.

Bryn Ffynnon 303m SH 477493

This is a straightforward name, the bryn 'hill' is the location for a *ffynnon* 'spring, well'; it can be seen on the maps.

Moel yr Erw 290m SH 561449

The *moel* element is followed by a reference to *yr* 'the' + *erw* 'acre, area', which is the name taken from the farm Erw Suran. This is probably a late stage of usage of the word *moel*, where the meaning is either 'hill' or 'mountain pasture'. The name has been written on the OS maps as Foel yr Erw since the 1888 6" series.

Moelfryn 277m SH 569512

This little hill is now covered by forestry does have a seeming *moel* 'bare, rounded hill' form; although right at the summit it becomes a bit more pointed with a rocky knoll, so *moel* 'peaked, summit' might be supposed. However, close by, on the present OS map is the name Y Gader, a name which was much closer to the actual top in the early OS maps. Furthermore, the hillside below was called Parc y Gader (now Parcygadair) and it is likely that the name Y Gader was this hill name at one time.

This may mean that this top is one of the **cader* 'stronghold' locations and there are stone walls to be found around the rocky knoll or top. The stone walls can be seen on the old OS 6" maps and some are still shown on the present 1:25,000 OS maps. Some of the walls around the knoll are similar to those seen as field boundaries in the area; other, stone walls have been built up against the rocky knoll. It is difficult to see why a rocky knoll would be used for a stock enclosure, these are not typically the walls of a sheepfold, with the rocky top taking most of the space. This would be a good location for a defensive site as it would control North-South movement between Beddgelert and Rhyd Ddu, as well as the ancient track over to Cwm Pennant. However, as the area is deep in a forest one cannot be certain, much has been changed with huge uprooted trees affecting the site and

destroying some walled areas. Was there some form of stronghold here; or, was this just a buarth or corlan that looked like a old stronghold? It would not be impossible to accept that multiple uses would be possible; it would be an easy matter to convert a stock enclosure into a defensive site and vice versa.

This spot has been referred to many times over the years: 'Linne dan cader erechiugui a quarter of a myle every way' **The Itinerary in Wales 1536-9 J Leland**; 'Llyn Cadair yr Aur Vrychyn, near Quellyn pool, on the road from Caernarvon to Beddgelert' **The Cambrian Register 1818**; also as 'Llyn y Gader gynt Cadair-yr-Eurwrychyn' **Y Llenor 1938 WJ Gruffydd**. It is given as Llyn Cadair yr Eurwrychyn in the Melville Richards Archive.

'Tradition speaks of a fortress which stood on the highest point of the hill, now turned into a plantation, which is on the left-hand side of the road, and a little way from it. This hill is called "Y Gadair", and the lake immediately beyond it has received its name from it — Llyn y Gadair. Edward Llwyd, the learned antiquary of Oxford, was of opinion that "Caer" was only an abbreviation from "Cadair". If so, and it is likely enough, we have here the Welsh word for fortress in its unabbreviated form. As the old Roman road passed this way, it is quite probable that this fort guarded this portion of it.' **Bedd Gelert - its facts, fairies and folk-lore 1899 DE Jenkins, WB Jones**.

Craig y Gesail 273m SH 545443

The cesail 'nook, corner' is a dogleg corner in the cliff, the hill has taken the name from this cliff.

Y Bengam 267m SH 555444

The hill has a curved top hence the name pen 'head' + cam 'bent'.

Moel y Gest 262m SH 544389

It is difficult to decide which form of the word moel is in place, if it is reasonably early, then moel 'conical hill' is probable because of its shape, otherwise it may be a later generalised 'upland' meaning. The earliest name to be found for the hill was Y Gest; the term cest 'belly, paunch' is a good descriptor of this hill rising up from the estuary flatlands. There is a pre-historic hillfort at the summit. There was a description given [Kest, the Belly, as y Gest in Merionethshire, Hergest (an legendum Hir-gest), i.e. Long Paunch in Herefordshire.] 1719 Glossarium Antiquarium Britannicum.] Gest 1306/7, Gest 1352 Revue Celtique, Gest 1562 Brogyntyn Manuscripts, Gest 1569 Tanybwlch Manuscripts, Y Gest c.1600 Llyfr Baglan, Moel-y-gest 1838 OS.

Clogwyn Melyn 235m SH 486537

When looking at landscape names with colours in their name, it is difficult to now decide why that colour was chosen or even what colour was being described. The colours in the landscape change with the seasons; also, colours change through the day. The differences in farming and farming practices also makes it harder to decide on what was being referred to. The term melyn 'yellow', has a range of colours going from pale yellow through to brown. Here, the word clogwyn 'cliff, crag' probably refers to rocky outcrops rather than a cliff.

Bryn Ystymcegid 190m SH 514419

A name taken from the original farm/dwelling: ystym 'bend, turn' + cegid 'Hemlock, Keck': *Conium maculatum*. Ystymkegid 1601 Dolfriog Manuscripts, 1627/8 Brogyntyn Manuscripts, Ystumcegid 1765.

Bryn Du 184m SH 592466

The word bryn 'small mountain' is fairly common landscape name; seen in Cornish *bren*, Irish *bruinne*. The du is a reference to darkness of the rock or its aspect; though there is no need for the

circumflex on the letter u as is seen on the present day OS map name.

Bryn Hywel 159m SH 515418

The name is probably bryn 'small hill' + Hywel a personal name; it has also been suggested that the hill was used as a mariners mark and that hywel 'visible, conspicuous' can be inferred.

Moel Ednyfed 136m SH 503393

This prominent little top, also known as Mynydd Ednyfed, suggests moel 'pointed, conical hill' + Ednyfed, a Welsh personal name. The name was in fairly common usage at one time; the Middle Welsh forms *Iutnimet*, *Idnyuet*, *Edynyuet* from the Brittonic **Jüdonemetos* 'noble lord' or 'lord of the sacred place'. Ednyfed Fychan, for example, was the ancestor of the Tudor Dynasty. There is an enclosure around the summit.

Moel y Gader 67m SH 522392

There are a number of hilltop locations with the possible term **cader* 'defensive site' and in the chaos and of the late Roman occupation and the early Middle Ages, even a lowly hill such as this might have had some form of defence built upon it to repel raiders. However, there does not need to have been an actual hillfort there, the resemblance to a fortified site is enough. This little hill certainly has a summit that resembles a hillfort, with rocky scarps and steep banks; though without archaeological investigation it is difficult to be certain about what might have been there. One should note that John Davies wrote in his *Dictionarium Duplex* 1632 '**Cader, Septum, Castrum, locus munitus; ut Cader Idris, Cader Ddinmael*'. **Cader** (Castel) diffynfa. A strong or fortified place. *Y Gymraeg yn ei Disgleirdeb*, 1804. Thomas Jones.

The 1837 OS map shows the nearby farm named as Bron y Gader, another farm close to is noted as Ysteddffa i.e. eisteddfa 'seat, throne'. In the Mellville Richards Archive one finds a Bron y Gader recorded here in 1448 and the Eisteddfa in 1582. Is the eisteddfa 'seat, throne' name an erroneous back linking; or, does it refer to the original reasoning behind the hill name. One now has a decision to make: was there an initial pre-historic **cader* 'defensive site', was there a post-Roman fortification, has a later interpretation of the hill shape as having been fortified taken place, has there been a mistaken back interpretation; or, has the hill always been associated with a cadair 'seat, throne'?