

## MYNYDD Y GADER/BLACK MOUNTAINS

This area of high mountains and striking ridges has created a number of problems over the years regarding the confusion of names. There are no early references to a Black Mountain or Black Mountains in the eastern areas of the Bannau. The earliest names to be found are recorded as Talgarth (Forest), Mynydd y Gader and Ewias/Ewyas in various forms. The names are seen in the *Itinerarium Cambriae* (1191) Giraldus where he noted the area around Brecon: '*His igitur obstaculis ad meridiera appositis, a phoebeo patriara fervore frigidior aura defendit, et insita aeris salubritate temperatissimam reddit. Ab euro vero de Talgarth et Ewyas montana prsetendit.*' This translates as [..... Being thus sheltered on the south by high mountains, the cooler breezes protect this district from the heat of the sun, and, by their natural salubrity, render the climate most temperate. Towards the east are the mountains of Talgarth and Ewyas. ]

The first reference to a Black Mountain(s) name by Leland, is in his Itinerary (1536-9). These were an incomplete collection of notes and observations which was not published in his lifetime. His use of the term was generally for Mynydd Du out to the West, though one could infer that he meant the whole ridge line. There could have been a local use of the term Black Mountain(s) in the area; or, it may have been a simple misunderstanding, to be edited out later. In another section of notes Leland only mentions Mynydd y Gader; for this area. A later reference to a Black Mountain, is the one found far to the West: '*The hilles caullid in Walsch Mennith e gader appere in Talegarth about Dinas, and so to the places about Nanthonddy, and with sum part of thes montaines meate the greate hilles caullid Banne Brekeniauc, and renneth in lenght to the Blake Montaine to my estimation apou an xviii. miles.*'

The eastern area of these hills, which continue into what is now Herefordshire were in an area named in the 12C *Liber Landavensis* as Ewias or Ewyas; in Welsh texts it has the name form Euas. The name is to be seen in the poem *I Harri Ddu o Euas* by Guto'r Glyn (c.1412 – c.1493), perhaps the best of the so called 'praise poets'. Euas may have been a small post-Roman 'kingdom', perhaps linked to the hiwicce territory, but was later reduced to being a commote. The terms Forest Hen and Forest of Monow have also been used for this area.

Unfortunately, it was in this area of ridges, that the Hatterell term was also used. This was another name that moved about quite a bit, almost as much as the term Black Mountains. At one time the whole area was given the name Hatterel Hilles (or variations of that name). At a later stage, the ridge running southwards from Trwyn Llech above Hay (now marked as Hay Bluff) was recorded as Black Mountain and Hatteral Hill/Ridge on the early maps, this is still known to some as Hatteral Ridge. Although the main area of hills was sometimes known as Talgarth, even Fforest Dinas and Talgarth Forest at times, the mountains were generally termed Mynydd y Gader. This Mynydd y Gader definition, with perhaps Euas/Ewias for the eastern hills, probably has greater historical substance to its usage.

### Y Waun Fach 810m SO 216300

*Gwaun* 'moorland, mountain' + *fach* 'small, lesser' - the lenited form of *bach*; although there is no Waun Fawr on the maps. When viewed from the South, Pen y Gadair Fawr seems to be the highest mountain in the area. Also, the whole ridge line was named Mynydd y Gader or Gadair at one time, the topographer and historian William Rees has this on his 1933 map of the area.

### Pen y Gader Fawr 800m SO 229288

The name on the early OS maps was Pen y Cader Fawr OS 1832 and a little later Pen y Gader Fawr. At one time the whole ridge was termed Mynydd y Gader as in the 1729 Emanuel Bowen Map of South Wales, The Gadair Mountain 1828 Greenwood Map. Previously, the whole area had been termed in English as the Hatteral or Hatterel Hills, though that has shifted well to the East by now.

John Leland refers to the mountain as both a *cadair* as well as a *cader* spelling in his notes (1536-9). *Cadair* when describing Afon Llynfi (Lleueni) '..... *Lleueney that cummeth owf of Atterel Hylles, the wich be cawled in Walsch Meneth e Cadair, id est montes alti instar cathedrarum,*' [which is the seat of the high mountains]. In another part of his notes Leland refers to the mountain with a *cader* spelling, as: *The hills caullid in Welsch Mennith e gader appere in Talegarth about Dinas, .....*'

Edward Lhuyd provides an interesting descriptor: *'In the utmost corner of the County southward, call'd Ewias, stands the ancient Abbey of Lantoni, not far from the river Mynwy, amongst Hatterel-hills; which, because they bear some refemblance to a chair; are call'd Mynydh Kader. [For Kader is the name of many mountains in Wales; as Kader Arthur, Kader Verwin, Kader Idris, Kader Dhinmael; Kader yr Ychen, &c. which the learned Dr. Davies supposes to have been so call'd, not from their refemblance to a Kadair or Chair; but becaufe they have been either fortified places, or were look'd upon as naturally impregnable, by such as first impos'd those names on them, for the British Kader (as well as the Irith word Kathair) fignify'd anciently a Fort or Bulwark; whence probably the modern word Kaer of the fame fignification, might be corrupted.]'* Edward Lhuyd.

It is hard to decide which meaning is present in the name of this mountain. Is it the main dictionary form *cadair* 'chair, throne' there in the name to support a sense of an eminent place of honour; or, supposedly describe a hill with the shape of a chair on its flanks. Otherwise, could it be the secondary *cadair* 'fortress, defensive site' definition that is to be found. Alternatively, has there always been *\*cader* 'fort, defensive site' element in this and similar names and with this spelling; that was later taken in to the *cadair* form.

AG James in the *The Brittonic Language in the Old North* (2017) [Scottish Place-name Society Website] writes: 'Ekwall in *Place Names of Lancashire* (p. 50) and in early editions of *Dictionary of English Place Names*, proposed for Chadderton Lanc a British cognate of OIr *cathir*, *\*caterā* - > neoBrittonic *\*cader*, but he abandoned this in the 4th edition of *Dictionary of English Place Names*, 1960. There is no evidence for such a word in Brittonic, but, again, that a loan-word meaning 'a chair' came, apparently quite quickly, to be used as a place-name for 'a fort' is perplexing.'

#### **Pen y Manllwyn 775m SO 213309**

This is the end of a spur and not a true summit; the name might reference a *man* 'place, region' or *mân* 'small, fine' + *llwyn* 'grove, woods'. However, a *manllwyn* form in the name could be a corruption of the word *manllwdn* 'a sheep, small animal'. Pen y Manllwyn 1832 OS.

#### **Pen Allt-Mawr 719m SO 207244**

*Pen* 'end, head, summit' + *allt* 'slope, cliff, height or wooded slope' + *mawr* 'large'; the mountain forms a gently undulating ridge. Pen-allt-mawr 1832 OS.

#### **Pen Rhos Dirion 713m SO 212334**

The early OS maps show the name Pen Rhos Dirion right on the top; today, the name is lower down as a name for a slope. The Rhos 'upland, heath, moor; marshland, plain' + *tirion* 'gentle, mild' could be used to give the impression of a gently undulating moorland (or an area that rises slowly) rather than good ground. Otherwise, there may be a rather romanticised corruption to the element *rhosdir*, with *rhos* 'moor' + *tir* 'land' changing with time to form Rhos Dirion could have occurred. The *rhos* 'upland' element is comparable to Cornish *ros* 'hill-spur, promontory; moor' and Breton *roz* 'upland, side of a valley; all from the Brittonic *\*rosto-* 'promontory, headland; moor'. Pen-rhos-tirion 1832 OS.

#### **Twyn Llech 703m SO 256351**

This *twyn* 'hill, peak' + *llech* 'slab, stone, rock' is not really named as such on the present OS map, though it is noted on some digital maps. The Twyn Llech name is only to be seen on the flanks of

the mountain on the present OS maps. However, this may have been core area of what has been termed Black Mountains on early OS maps; this was a label scattered about as much as Hatterall Hill. The 6" OS map 1840-80 has the name Black Mountains in a number of places while the 1832 map gave the name Hatterall Hill to the whole ridge-line leading South East towards what is now Hatterall Hill. Some still want the whole ridge named as Hatterall Hill.

#### **Pen y Trumau 707m SO 204294**

*Pen* 'end, head' + *y* 'the' + *trumau* - one plural of *drum*, *trum* 'mountain crest, ridge, peak'.

#### **Twyn Tâl y Cefn 702m SO 221325**

On the William Rees historical map 1933, this was the name for the ridge leading all the way to what is now Pen Rhos Dirion. *Twyn* 'hillock, pile, banc, knoll' + *tâl* 'end, head' + *y* 'the' + *cefn* 'ridge, back'.

#### **Pen Cerrig Calch 701m SO 217224**

The *cerrig* 'rocks' + *calch* 'limestone' refers to a remnant layer of rocks found high up in the area. This thin layer of carboniferous limestone was so out of keeping with the other tops in the vicinity that it gave its name to the mountain. Either derived from the Latin *calx*; or, the Middle Welsh word *calch* from the Brittonic *\*calco-*, linked to the Irish term *cailc*.

The name Cefn Digell Hill is seen on the 1831 Greenwood map, the *cefn* 'back' element refers to the ridge. What is interesting is the term *digell*; probably from *di-* is a negative prefix meaning 'devoid of, without, dis-, -less' + *cell(i)* 'groves, woodland', as a term to signify an area bare of trees. There are other obscure elements which may have relevance: a *di-* + *cell* 'stag' - an obscure form of *cellaig* 'stag' [*cell* + *gi* 'dog' is a staghound]. Pen-cerrig-calch 1832 OS.

#### **Twmpa/Rhiw Wen 682m SO 225350**

Unnamed in the First Series 1" OS map, the term *Twmpa* is secondary to *Rhiw Wen* in the first 6" OS maps; however, the name *Rhiw Wen* disappears off the next series of 6" OS maps.

*Twmpa* is a shortened version of the word *twmpath* 'hillock, heap, pile'; however, in some areas it shows the same meaning as the term *begwn* 'beacon'. Here the term *twmpa(th)* probably refers to the distinctly rounded or heaped feature found at the top of this ridge. It is not the usual jutting peaked promontory associated with the term *ban* 'point, promontory' as seen in many of the other mountains in the range. It therefore stands out as being different. Another name that may be connected to this top, but which moves around a bit on the maps, is *Rhiw Wen*. The name of the ridge is seen as *Y Darren Lwyd*; it was also recorded as *Twyn y Tal* and has also been denoted as being Lord Hereford's Knob in the past. The South East end of the ridge has been marked as *Trwyn y Tâl* in the past on the 1831 Greenwood Map, this is still seen today at SO 252323; was this an early name for this high ridge? The area around this summit had been named as *Black Mountains* in the Greenwood map of 1831 and OS 6" map of 1832. *Rhiw Wen/The Tumpa* 1840-80 6" AO.

#### **Y Das 680m SO 201327**

More of a spur than a peak; the *das* is a lenited *tas* 'heap, pile, (hay)rick, stack', cognate with the Cornish *das* 'stack, rick', Irish *dais* 'corn rick'; is once again a term denoting a peaked heap. Using the definite article makes the word, and so the hill, a special location. *r Das* 1832 OS.

#### **Cwarel y Fan 679m SO 259294**

*Cwarel* 'quarry' + *y* 'the'+ *fan* 'peak, promontory', because of the quarry at its summit the name *Y Fan* (SO 246303) is also seen on the slope. *Cwarel y von* 1830 Greenwood map.

#### **Trwyn Llech/Hay Bluff 677m SO 244367**

Trwyn Llech is the only name seen for this mountain on the earliest OS maps of 1832; this is very similar to the name Twyn Llech first seen just to the south on the 1840-80 6" map. This other form is also on the present day OS map, now about a kilometre away, at (SO 247256). If the term *trwyn* is correct rather than *twyn*, it is a very apt descriptor for the landscape feature here; *trwyn* 'ridge, promontory, nose' + *llech* 'slab, stone, rock' Old Welsh *lech* 'flat stone, slab'.

Hay Bluff is a late name on maps, prior to this, Pen y Begwn and Pen y Beacon were also used for this mountain top. The *begwn* 'beacon' is a heap of fuel (usually gorse) built up on hilltops to be set alight as a warning, signal or celebration. A hill or mountain which would be a good site for such a beacon could be named as such; or, hill shapes that look like a beacon would also be a reasoning for such a name and many hills in this area do have that pointed form.

Previously the mountain was denoted as being, Hatterel hil 1578 Saxton, Haterell Hill 1610 Speed. Away to the South of this hilltop, the First Series 1" OS map named the ridge Black Mountain; but this name did not reach the top. There might have been an even earlier name than a Trwyn Llech. The episcopal boundary description for this area in the Book of Llandaf c. 1120-34 has the description: '*..... dyr uyncul dyr brydell dy hal ruma dy main y bard ynlycat nat y bard. nant y bard nihyt yr guayret hyt pandyscein yn dour. ....*'. This would translate as: '*..... to Vyncul, to the Brydell, to Hal Ruma, to Maen y Bardd, at source of Nant y Bardd, Nant y Bardd along it down till it falls into Dour ....*'

The Vyncul, later Bwlch y Fingul, is the pass now marked on the map as Gospel Pass, while the source of Nant y Bardd now seen as Nant y Bar is at SO 275402 and the nearby standing stone Maen y Bardd; the Dour is the River Dore. Therefore, one has Brydell and Hal Ruma as probable hill names in between these known locations. JG Evans and Sir John Rhys have the Brydell as the top of this hill and Hal Ruma as Cussop Moor in their *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 1893.

If Brydell, given as bridell in the Mellville Richards Archive, it is a variant form on *priddell* 'a mass, clump or clod of earth'; which could be used as a name a mountain. A similar name, also for a mountainous feature is probably seen in North Wales as Y Briddell-arw, today known as Tarren y Gesail. If the Brydell name is for Cnapiau, at (SO 238352); a plural of *cnap* 'lump, mass' probably from Irish *cnap* 'lump, heap', Old Norse *knapp* 'boss, knob'. This could leave the name hal ruma as the name for the mountain; from *hâl* 'moor, upland', linked to Cornish *hal* 'moor' and *ruma* 'belly, paunch; abdomen'; both of these are rare terms. Another obscure term is the *ruma*, this is not in the dictionaries now but in the Welsh dictionary *Dictionarium Duplex* (1632), one sees it in the definition: **Rhummen**, Rumen, ruma, abdomen. This Latin derived term would probably be used in the landscape to describe a 'belly' or 'paunch' feature.

### **Pen Gloch y Pibwr 674m SO 206233**

Not really a hill as such but part of a spur leading down from Pen Allt Mawr, but it looks like a top when viewed from below. There are a cluster of Bronze Age cairns near the summit, showing its importance to those dwelling in the valley one time. The element *pen* 'head, summit' is straightforward while the word *pibwr* 'piper' is very unusual as a mountain name. The difficulty comes with the word *cloch*: if *cloch* 'bell', does it signify a bell shape, one of the cairns at one time; or, the shape of the mountain? However, *cloch* may be a variant of *clog* 'rock, crag', linked to Cornish *clog*, *clugh* 'crag', Irish *cloch* 'rock'.

However, on the Greenwood map one sees the name Briannog Hill for this part of the ridge and one would assume that the Bryniog name (SO 199224) is a remnant of this. Unfortunately, the long gradual ridge line could not be described as being *bryn* 'hill' + *-og* 'tending to, prevalence of, association with', giving the impression of a hilly area. However, *bryn* 'bank' + *-iog* could imply steep slopes, of which there are many.

### **Y Fan 671m SO 259314**

One can see the name Y Fan 'The Height' about a kilometre away to the north west; while at the summit one finds Chwarel y Fan, similar to Cornish *ban, van* 'height'. However, the name of this ridge was at one time Cefn y Capel; *cefn* 'back, ridge' + *y* 'the' + *capel* 'chapel'; probably relating to Capel y Ffin.

### **Mynydd Llysiâu 663m SO 207278**

The word *llysiâu* 'plants, vegetation' may be quite correct as it could also be used to denote grassland or moorland vegetation. However, *llysiâu* could be a corruption of *llusau*, the secondary plural of the word *llus* 'bilberries'; linked to Cornish *lus*, Breton *lus*. The Greenwood map of 1823 has this area as Waun Fain, with a possible *main* 'narrow' or *main* as a corruption of the word *maen* 'rock'.

### **Pen Twyn Mawr 658m SO 242267**

*Pen* 'top' + *twyn* 'hill, pile, heap' + *mawr* 'large'. The term *twyn* or *tywyn* is usually found as a descriptor of forms closer in size to a sand dune or knoll in many other parts of Wales. In the Bannau, region the term is often used for far larger landscape features.

### **Pen Twyn Glas 646m SO 213257**

The word *pen* 'head, end' + *twyn* 'heap pile' + *glas* 'gray-green' seem to be straightforward.

### **Crib y Garth 640m SO 275348**

The elements *crib* 'ridge' + *garth* 'promontory' can both be used separately to denote a 'spur, mountain ridge'. However, another meaning for *crib* 'crest' is probable here, denoting the ridge top cliff-line. Black Hill is the other name for the mountain; however, it is doubtful if this was the original Mynydd Du or Mynyddoedd Duon. One sees the form Gripesgarth as the name on the William Rees South Wales and the Border in the XIV Century map (1933) and Crib'r-garth 1832 OS. Crib y Gath is a very late back formation of the name and has led to the misconstrued English name for the feature, the Cat's Back.

### **Cefn y Gaseg 637m SO 267322**

*Cefn* 'back, ridge' + *y* 'the' + *caseg* 'mare' is unnamed on the OS maps over many years, this little summit on the ridge top to the East of Llanthony, is noted as Cefn y Gasseg by Henry Price in his A New Map of Monmouthshire 1823; a name that is also seen on the Greenwood, Monmouthshire Map of 1830 but never made it to the OS maps. The name Kevencassec is seen in the 1324 Calendar of the Charter Rolls which records the gift as: '*Whereby, Walter de Lacy, son of Hugh de Lacy, gave .... all the valley in which the said church is situated to wit on the side of Kevencassec and Askaresweye and along the Ruggesweye up to Antefyn and on the side of Haterel from the land of Seisel son of Gilbert by the Ruggesweye to the bounds of Talgarth.*'

One would then assume that the Charter information would link to the surveyed maps of Price and Greenwood perfectly; unfortunately, there is a discrepancy. The historian William Rees, in his South Wales and the Border in the XIV Century (1933) map; has Y Cefn Cassec written along the ridge to the West of Llanthony, exactly where Chwarel y Fan is located today. There is a Rugge(s)weye (= ridgeway) written further South on this ridge; the other Rugge(s)weye is written on the ridge to the East of Llanthony. Unfortunately, the names Askaresweye (probably Esgair + way?) and Antefyn (? Antefin/Y terfyn?) given in the text of the charter are very difficult to locate without further research. However, as the Hatterel ridge and lands of Seisel/Cecil (around Oldcastle) are to the East one would suspect that Cefn Caseg is an old name for Chwarel y Fan to the West. More research is needed.

### **Mynydd Troed 609m SO 173283**

To many, the word *troed* 'foot' is a reference to the rather odd hill shape, which from some angles, especially on the higher slopes to the East, may resemble a gigantic foot. However, the word *troed* may have been taken from an unrecorded location 'at the foot' of a hill [such as from an Allt Troedrhiwfelen 233m SO 786355 type of name]; or, it may reference to the mountain pasturage of a farm with the element *troed* in its name. There is indeed such a farm name nearby, *Troed yr Haearn* at (SO 168323). Other suggestions are that the name is derived from a corruption of *troad*, *troead* 'a turn', as in a change in direction of the mountains. Also, being at the foot of the higher hills and with much less conviction a corruption of the old word *troeth* 'urine'.

In the boundary description of the Book of Llandaf c.1120-34 one finds that after the ridge of '*cecyn y pennypynmarch*' and before the probable stream name '*rytnant*' one finds the term '*guornoyd*' or '*guornoid*'. The Melville Richards Archive has this name as Gornoeth; this may give *gor* 'very' or 'big, high' + *noeth* 'bare' and as such may be the old name for this hill? This is what is suggested by JG Evans and Sir John Rhys 'to Guornoid, the ridge of Mynydd Troed' in their book: *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav* 1893. While the Williams Rees map does not locate the name on this hill; probably because his Bryn Eital is mis-placed as the name for Mynydd Llangors and thus he would have to bypass this hill. Gornoeth is found in two other sites as hill names in Wales.

### **Bal Mawr 607m SO 267271**

The Dictionary GPC has a rather uncertain *bal* 'bare' entry, as well as a *bâl* 'summit, peak' meaning that they have as being the last element of the Pen y Fal, but have qualified it with a statement 'the meaning and source of the element is uncertain'. While in Alan G James', *The Brittonic Language in the Old North*: (Scottish Place-name Society Website) one finds: '\*bāl (f.) Brittonic \**bal-m-ā*->Middle - Early Modern Welsh *bâl*, Modern Breton *bal*. The meaning in Welsh is 'summit', in Breton 'steep beach or slope': the root sense may be inferred from Welsh *balog*, Cornish *balek* '[something] projecting, sticking up or out'.

However, there is a probable connection to an anglicised corruption of the *moel/foel* to the *bal/fal* elements in these names is quite strong. The development of a lenited form of the word *moel* (i.e. *foel*) to give a *vale* spelling, which later became *fal/val*. This change was espoused by many over the years. In his *Parochialia*, Edward Lhuyd's comment c.1700: *Moel* - '*The people about Abergavenny in Monmouthshire, having lost the true notion of this word, call a sugar-loaf-hill near the town, the Vale*'. Then one finds in: *A Welsh and English Dictionary* (1793) William Owen (-Pughe): '*Bal A prominence, or what juts out. It is applied to mountains that terminate in a peak, in some parts of Wales, for which moel is used in other parts*'. Also, it must be noted that in the area, the lenited form *foel* is pronounced closer to a *fôl* (in English 'vole') sound.

### **Loxidge Tump 605m SO 288297**

This was recorded as *Loxy Tump* in the 1832 OS map quite close to the top. The name is a corruption of *llochi* 'shelter' or *lloches* 'shelter, refuge, cover, dwelling'; there is a pre-historic enclosure high on the hill (SO 286295). The farm below the hill was also recorded as *Loxy* and *Loxid* on early maps. However, some have tried to move the cliff name *Red Darren* up the hillside as the name for this hill. *Tump* is a corruption of *twmp* 'hillock, knoll, mound, pile'.

### **Mynydd Pen y Fal/Sugar Loaf 596m SO 273188**

The name seen on the OS maps today is *Sugar Loaf*, as well as *Y Fal* in brackets; *Mynydd Pen y Fal* is still seen about a kilometre away (SO 263192). On the early OS maps of 1832, the name *Mynydd Pen y Val* was at the summit. The *Sugar Loaf* is a good descriptor of the shape of the mountain as it is reminiscent of the solid cones of sugar that were bought by households before granulated sugar became popular. However, the pointed cone was also a shape linked to the word *moel*, as in the *Antiquae linguae Britannicae* Thomas Richards ed. 1753 '*Moel or Y Foel, doth also signify*

*metaphorically a towering hill on which grows no wood. Hence, Moel came to be the name of many such hills as have no woods growing on them. Moel 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 or summit of the vessel in which it is contained.'*

The forms *bal*, *fal* and *val* are only used here and in the nearby hill name Bal Mawr and nowhere else in Wales. Also, there is no corresponding topographic term in use in Irish, Gaelic or Cornish. Looking at the early map names, the forms seem to hint that there has been a corruption of moel/foel, through an anglicised vale to arrive at val; this then being 'corrected' back to a fal form. Only on the Henry Price map of 1823 does one see Pen y Voel. One should once again note the Edward Lhuyd statement in the Parochialia, c.1700 Moel: The people about Abergavenny in Monmouthshire, having lost the true notion of this word, call a sugar-loaf-hill near the town, the Vale'. Also in his Parochialia one finds the name forms Fforest Moel and Y Mynydh Moel for this hill.

The 1933 historical map by William Rees, shows two other names for the hill Moel y Fan Forest with a bracketed Moel Fannau; here the forest refers to hunting ground. In the Moel y Fan form, the elements may be: *moel* 'bare, bare top' + *y* 'the' + *ban* 'summit, point'; or, perhaps *moel* 'pointed or conical top' + *y* 'the' + *ban* 'mountain, hill'. If Moel Fannau was used it could refer to the many ridges that extend down from the summit by using the sense similar to the Irish, Gaelic *benn*, 'headland, spur' rather than *ban* 'summit, point'. Penuaiel Hill 1579, Penuatell 1611 Speed, Penuaiell Hill 1645 Janz, Pen y vale 1785 Snell map, Pen y voel 1823 Henry Price map, OS Pen y Fan 1840-80.

#### **Pen Gwyllt Meirch 580m SO 250250**

This would seem to be a fairly straightforward set of elements in a name; a *pen* 'summit' where you would find *gwyllt* 'wild' + *meirch* 'horses'. The elements in the name could denote a wild tract of land, Middle Welsh *gwyllt* 'wild'; a place where the horses would roam freely and use as pasture. Even today in certain upland areas of Wales, semi-wild ponies are found roaming the mountains. However, if the name is as seen on the 1832 OS map Pen-gwellt-march, this could give a totally different meaning, as *gwellt* 'grass, pasture' + *march* 'horse' probably denotes an area of better ground.

#### **Cwrwm 552m SO 304279**

The actual top of this hill has not been named on OS maps, though the name Rhiw Arw is seen some digital OS maps for the summit, but not elsewhere. There seems to be a trend in digital maps to pluck a name from the surrounding terrain and use it if there is no actual name to be seen for a hilltop.

However, the boundary description for the Merthyr Clydog charter in Book of Llandaf c.1120-34 has the following description: '*Finius illius est, lapis iniguoun breith i cecin inihit di rui i curum. dirmain icecin iralt arhit cecin diuinid bet i mein arcuier nant trineint diguairret ar i hyd bet elchon .....*'. This translates as: 'The boundary of it is, stone in **Guoun Breith** to ridge, along it to the acclivity of **Curum**, to the stone to ridge to slope along ridge up to stone opposite vale of **Trineint** down its length to **Elchon**'.

It is likely that the Guoun Breith - Gwaun Brith is what is now on the OS maps marked as Hatteral Hill. The stone or cairn opposite Trineint is at SO 296286, the Trineint 'three streams' [seen in the farm names Turnant] are those flowing down to the Elchon [now the Olchon].

What of the Rui Curum – Rhiw Curum? The old OS 6" 1840-80 series map shows the name Rhiw Cwrw for the small farm/dwelling (SO 309271) directly below the top; the area is still known

locally as Rhiw Cwrw. The name for the path leading up the very steep eastern side of the ridge is Rhiw Arw; *rhiw* 'slope, rise' + (*g*)*arw* 'difficult, hard', the form Rhiw Garw is seen in the 1832 OS as the name for the steep path. It may be that the use of (*g*)*arw* 'difficult' is an attempt to somehow explain away or to concile the word *cwrw* 'beer' to this location. However, there is an old word that agrees with the early spelling and also corresponds with the landscape form of the ridge, namely *cwrrwm*, *cyrrwm* 'bending, bent back, curved'. In the 1688 dictionary, *Cymraeg Yn Ei Ddisgleirdeb* one finds the definition: *Cwrrwm* – *gwyriad* 'a lumpish shape'.

There may be a rather dubious possibility to link another word to this location; particularly for those struggling to find a 'black' mountain in the area, with a very tentative link to the word *gwrwm*. In the GPC (University of Wales Dictionary) *gwrwm*, *gwrwm* 'greyish-brown, dark-grey, dark, black, dark-blue' is shown, linked to Old Irish *gorm* 'dark blue, green, red; dark, black' there are some references to it; unfortunately, the usage is mainly in 13&14C poetic language. Furthermore, there seem to be no other instances of any name forms with a *gwrwm*, *gwrwm* form to be seen in the Melville Richards Archive for the whole of Wales.

### **Crug Mawr 550m SO 262227**

The term *crug* can denote a number of topographical features 'hillock, knoll, mound, cairn or stack' and it is a challenge to sometimes decide which meaning is being used. If one looks at the OS map one sees that the hill forms an end of a long ridge, but looking at the hill 'end on' it would resemble a large (hay) stack or rick.

### **Disgwydfa 541m SO 258234**

This hill name is made up of: *disgwyl* 'expectation, watch' + *-ma* 'place, site', to denote 'a good watching place, look-out, place of observation'. One has to decide whether this was for defence or when looking out over grazing flocks on the hillside.

### **Hatterall Hill/Gwaun Brith 531m SO 308257**

This name, or the similar Hatterel Hill, is the name seen on the OS maps of 1838, confusingly, it is a name that has been used in a number of other locations in the past, such as Trwyn Llech/Hay Bluff. The early OS maps also show the name of this hill as *Cwarau'r Waun*, this was a reference to the quarries rather than an overall name. However, on an 1823 map by Henry Price, entitled *A New Map of Monmouthshire*, the name of the hill is given as *Twyn Sych*. *Twyn* 'hillock, peak, top' is a fairly common term in South Wales; while the word *sych* 'dry' could denote a hill with few streams, no source of water; or, a tendency to become scorched in periods of drought. The various hatterall to hatterel forms are probably derived from the Old French *haterel* 'apex, crown of the head'.

It should be noted that past muddiness/confusion over the location and/or naming of the Black Mountains and the Hatterel Hill(s) has meant that there has been a great deal of confusion; some have even given this mountain the supposed Welsh name of *Mynydd y Gadair*. This was probably done in an attempt to explain away the previous problems of mis-location; *Mynydd y Gader* is to the West; see *Pen y Gader Fawr* 800m SO 229288.

One of the charters in *Book of Llandaf* c.1120-34 has a boundary descriptor for church land around *Merthyr Clydog*, now part of Herefordshire. The start of the boundary is recorded as being '... *lapis iniguoun brith, icecin* ...' and then coming back round to finish at this start point i.e. back on top of the hill; this time given in the manuscript as '.. *iuinid diurchu irguoun breith ar cecin*..'. The latter part of the boundary is very similar to the boundary seen today between Herefordshire and Gwent.

The statement '*iniguoun brith*' could be translated as *yn* 'at' + *y* 'the' + *gwaun* 'moor, upland' + *brith* 'mottled'; while *irguoun breith* would be *i'r* 'to' + *gwaun* 'moor, upland' + *brith* 'mottled'. Capital letters for names was not generally used in the text, neither was much punctuation. The early OS

map forms of Cwarau'r Waun, waun being a lenited gwaun, would also support this.

### **Bal Bach 520m SO 276264**

The element *bal* is probably an old corruption of *moel* 'bare or conical hill', see Bal Mawr above; with the term *bach* 'little'. Bal bach 1830 Greenwood map.

### **Mynydd Llangors 515m SO 159267**

The present name for the hill has been taken up from the village/parish name. The name of a Bryn Eital in a local boundary description for Llangors in Book of Llandaf c.1120-34 was associated with this spot on the 1933 William Rees map. However, this seems to be an error as the original text in the charter mentions a stream connected with this hill as Tael and not a mistranscribed afel as is sometimes given; the actual Nant Tael is on the other side of the valley, it flows through Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn and Bryn Eital is what is now named Pentwyn.

However, this may be the upper part of the ridgeline denoted as *cecyn y pennypynn* in the Book of Llandaf; '..... *llech bychlyt dy cecyn y pennypynn dy guornoid* .....'. William Rees may not have marked this on the map because of the mis-placed Bryn Eital; he located this *cecyn* [a variant on *cegin* 'ridge'] further South, on what is now Cefn Moel. However, the name may have included the whole ridge from Cefn Moel to what is now Mynydd Llangors; others have also located the name in this area. Other 13<sup>th</sup> century spelling form of the term *cegin* include *kekyn* and *kegyn*.

The *cecyn* 'ridge' y 'the', followed by *penn* 'source, head, top' + *pynn* or *pynfarch* 'packhorse' could suggest a ridge shaped like a loaded packhorse as the name for the ridge. However, despite the dictionary meaning of *pyn/pynn* 'load, pack, pile' + *march* 'horse'. However, there is another meaning that could also be inferred here. *Penfarch* or more usually *pynfarch* in South Wales can be a term for a leat or millrace; something that provides the 'horse-power' to a mill? The sea was also seen as a figurative packhorse (i.e. carrying goods) and a *pynfarch* was regarded as one of the main royal revenues in Welsh Law.

### **Y Graig Ddu 503m SO 285267**

The lenited *craig* 'rock' + *du* 'black, dark' is the name applied to the steep little cliff and is the nearest named feature to this spur top. The cliff is in the afternoon shade but is probably also named as a counterpoint to Y Garn Wen (SO 281255).

### **Blaen yr Henbant 498m SO 218225**

This is not the *blaen* 'end, head, source' meaning usually seen in this part of the country; instead one has *blaen* 'top, summit'. The *hen* 'old, original' + *pant* 'hollow, valley' would usually be seen to refer to a well established or early settlement (or a land-holding) in a valley or lowland location rather than a hilltop. One can see the name Hen Bant below. Blaen-yr-hen-bant 1832 OS.

### **Bwlch Bach ar Grib 490m SO 184330**

There is a Bronze Age cairn at the summit of this little hill overlooking Castell Dinas. Although it is not named on the maps the hill and the sharp ridge line of *Y Grib* 'the crest' do stand out. It is here that the Llandaf boundary description '..... *dy ol y gabr dy bron cateir*' has been placed by William Rees in his 1933 map. *Ol* 'path' + y 'the' + *gabr* 'goat' probably describes a track through or up the mountains, while the crest of Y Grib is *bron* 'brow' + *cateir* [cader] 'stronghold, chair'.

### **Ysgyrd Fawr 486m SO 331183**

It is probable that the name does derive from *ysgyrd* 'rough, difficult', a name similar in meaning to Y Drosogl or Yr Arw; note that a name on the flanks of this hill is given as The Arwallt (SO 337186). Some have the name being connected to *ysgyrion* 'pieces, chips'; or, even a term

ultimately derived from *ysgwrn* 'ice, slipperyness, area of wet ground hardened by frost' linked to Breton *scourn*, *scorn*? Iscirit c.1120-34 Book of Llandaf. The mountain was noted as *iscirit mawr* by Leland wrote in his itineraries (1536-9), *Skyred vaure* 1538 Valor Ecclesiastent, *Skiridvaure Hill* 1610 Speed; later on in 1700 one sees *Skerid fawr* and in 1794 *Skirid Vawr*, *Skirrid Fawr* 1828 Map Greenwood.

### **Crug Hywel 482m SO 226207**

If it is the personal name Hywel that is applied to the hill, it is hard to decide which, of many with this name, is commemorated. It might even be a mythological link, as there was a giant of the same name. The name is derived from Middle Welsh *Higuel*, comparable to the Breton *Hoël*. from the Brittonic *\*Suwelos* 'well seen' as in the sense of 'respectable'. Otherwise, if not a personal name, the word *hywel* 'prominent, conspicuous' would certainly be a good topographic name for this hill, flat and capped as it is by an Iron Age Hillfort. Crecowell Saxton 1578, Crecowell 1611 Speed, Krick Howel c.1700 Parochialia, Crug Hywel 1832 OS.

### **Y Garn Wen 475m SO 281255**

The 'bright, fair' or sunny aspect of these South-facing slopes are probably the reason for the hill being described as (*g*)*wen* - the feminine form of *gwyn* 'white'; the *carn* 'cairn' could also have an association with benevolence because of the word *gwyn/gwen*.

### **Castell Dinas 444m SO 179302**

*Castell* 'castle' + *dinas* 'stronghold' is a fairly straightforward name for this hill; it is named as such because of the ancient and impressive defensive site overlooking one of the most important and ancient North-South routes through the mountains. This defensive site was used over a very long period of time and is noted on the earliest maps of the area. *Dinas* 'stronghold' from the Old Welsh *din* 'a fort', Cornish *dynas*, Brittonic/Gaulish *\*duno*; whereas the word *castell* 'castle' is far later, Brittonic *\*castellon* 'castle' from the Latin *castellum*. Dinas Castel 1536-9 Leland, Cast. Dinas 1645 Jansz Map.

The complex of defensive earthworks at Castell Dinas covers an area of about 360m by 280m and represent what is left of a masonry castle constructed over the site of an Iron Age stronghold. The castle is thought to have been constructed in the later twelfth century as it is first mentioned in 1234. It is described in a survey of 1337 and is thought to have passed out of use not long after, as Leland reported that the castle had been destroyed in the reign of Henry IV.

The Book of Llandaf c.1120-34 has the boundary of the diocese in this area as '*dyrytnant dy hanher din marchlythandy ol y gabr*'; one must filter out the *dy* 'to' element to get the names. In his 1933 map, the historian William Rees had the name as *din marchlytan* [*din(as)* 'fortification' + *march* 'horse' + *lythan* probably a corrupted - (*l*)*lydan* 'sturdy; obvious, important'] as the name for this stronghold. Others are not as convinced of this.

### **Pen Tir 432m SO 175254**

*Pen* 'head, end' + *tir* 'land, ground'; forms the end of an area of high ground. There is a much disturbed bronze age round cairn to be found at its top and a larger cairn at the 'col' before Mynydd Llangors.

### **Twyn y Gaer 427m SO 294219**

Here one has *twyn* 'bryn' coupled with *caer* 'defensive site, stronghold'. Once again a superb defensive site with a great outlook over the surrounding land. *Caer* is linked to Cornish *ker* 'town', Breton *kêr* 'village, town' but originally 'city, fort'; from the Brittonic word *\*cagro* 'a settlement within an enclosure'. Twyn-y-gaer 1832 OS.

### **Allt yr Esgair 393m SO 126244**

*Allt* 'bluff, slope, wooded slope' + *yr* 'the' + *esgair* 'ridge, spur'. The word *esgair* is quite often found in 'Celtic' topographic names; Breton *esker*, Old Cornish *escher*, Middle Irish *escir*. The word describes a long ridge of a mountain similar to a *braich* 'ridge' and this hill does have a long thin form. The hillside was once known as Allt yr Ysgrin, the slope of the *ysgrin* 'coffin, shrine'. There is an elongated Iron Age hill fort along the hilltop and a Bronze Age cairn at the very top. The hill fort is a large complex of banks and ditches over 700m in length. Allt yr y skin 1658 Monmouthshire Records Office, Allt yr yskyn 1695 Tredegar Manuscripts, Allt yr yskrin 1745 Lloyd Deeds, Allt-yr-ys-grin 1832 OS.

### **Bryn Arw 384m SO 302207**

*Bryn* 'hill' is derived from the Old Welsh *brinn* from the Brittonic *\*brunnjo-/ā-*, ultimately from the Indo-European *\*bhreu-* 'swelling'. The *arw* element in the name is simply a lenition of the word *garw* 'rocky, rough, uncultivated'. The ubiquity of the word *garw* in the landscape is reflected in its use in other 'Celtic' languages and the fact that its meaning in the landscape has hardly changed, such as Cornish *garow*, Middle Breton *garu*, Old Irish *garb* 'rough, rugged' from the Celtic *\*garuo* 'rugged, craggy, uncultivated'. Brynarw Com. 1823 Price map, Bryn 1828 Greenwood Map, Bryn Aro 1832 OS, Bryn Arrw 1840-80 6" OS.

### **Deri 376m SO 273176**

A small outlier of Pen y Fal, connected to it by a narrow ridge named Cefn Minog; there may be a corruption of the word *miniog* 'sharp, keen edged', this word would then give a meaning denoting a sharp or narrow ridge. The meaning of *Deri* is quite straightforward, namely one plural of the word *dar* 'oaktree' from the Indo-European *\*doru* 'wood, tree'. Pen Derwen 1823 Henry Price map.

### **Cefn Moel 365m SO 154229**

*Cefn* 'back, ridge' + *moel* 'bare'; *cefn* is a common term in the mountains Middle Welsh *kefen*, Brittonic/Gaulish *\*cemno* 'ridge'. However, this ridge is the likely start location of what recorded as 'cecyn y pennypynn march' in the Book of Llandaf c.1120-34, the historian William Rees has the name *Cecyn Pen y Pynmarch* for this ridge on his *South Wales and the Border* in the XIV Century map (1933). *Cecyn* is a variant form of *cegin* 'ridge'; *pen* 'source, top' + *y* 'the' + *pynmarch* 'mill-stream'; the name may also include *Mynydd Llangors* as part of a long ridge.

### **Allt Lwyd 316m SO 139213**

*Mynydd Buckland* is the name seen on the early OS maps for this hill, though this is not to be seen on the present day 1:25,000 map. However, one can see *Buckland House* and a *Buckland Hill* at (SO 141214); the present map also reveals the name *Blaenbychlyd*, at (SO 144216). There is an obscure form of the word *bach*, namely *bych* 'little', seen in the placename *Dinbych*. However, a corruption of the plural *bwch* 'buck, male deer', namely *bychod* or *bychau* is likelier + *-lyd* is an adjectival ending which generally strengthens a term is probable, giving a sense of an area abounding in deer.

On the 1933 William Rees historical map one also finds the name *Bychlyd*; however, the hill name is given as *Allt Lwyd*. This is because the Book of Llandaf has a reference to a boundary '..... *truy uysc dycilydris dyr all luyt dy lech bychlyt* .....'. This translates as: '....through **Wysg** to **Cil Idris** to **Allt Lwyd** to **Llech Bychlyd**....'. Therefore, *Allt Lwyd* was probably the name of the hill, as the *Llech Bychlyd* was a stone marker near *Blaen Bychlyd*, probably the Standing Stone at *Bwlch*, and that *Bychlyd* was the stream and vale name.

### **Myarth 292m SO 171208**

The name is linked to *meiarth* with *mei-* 'middle' + *garth* – this is probably the 'ridge, promontory' meaning rather than *garth* 'enclosure'. The *mei-* 'amid, in the middle of' element could also give the

sense of a hill being among other, usually higher tops. Myarth 'commons' Badminton Manuscripts 1612 & 1704, Penmyarth Hill 1828 Greenwood Map, Miarth 1832 OS.

**Ysgyryd Fach 271m SO 316136**

See Ysgyryd Fawr above.

Mynyddoedd.co.uk