

YR WYDDFA

The passes here are nearly all high, the only one that was regularly used for travel rather than for sometimes moving livestock was Bwlch Maesgwm between Llanberis and Rhyd Ddu.

Bwlch Carreg y Gigfran SH 580562

Carreg 'rock, stone' + *y* 'the' + *cigfran* 'raven'; one often sees ravens on a prominent rock or crag in the mountains. Ravens were seen as birds of wisdom and prophecy; it was also the bird favoured by the solar deity Lleu (Lugh).

Bwlch Ciliau SH 620537

This is the plural of the word *cil* this has two meanings: 'corner, angle', or 'recess, nook'. Any gully, *hollow* or *recess* in a mountain slope could be termed *cil*; there are a great many on either side of this bwlch 'pass'.

Bwlch Coch SH 621552

Although the usual use of the colour term word *coch* 'red' is usual today, it could at one time be used to describe various reddish to brown to orange tints.

Bwlch Cwm Brwynog SH 591558

A *cwm* 'valley' + *brwynog* 'full of rushes' rather than *brwynog* 'sorrowful, sad'. Mentioned by William Bingley c. 1798 in his book *Tour Round North Wales* and later by 1819 Thomas Evans in his *Walk Through Wales*.

Bwlch Cwm Cesig SH 558572

A *cwm* 'cirque, valley' where *cesig* 'mares' gathered. Although the horse had differing symbolic aspects, mares were generally seen as symbols of fertility and bounty. Even until quite recently, the ownership of horses, especially mares with foals, was seen as a sign of wealth and prestige.

Bwlch Cwm Llan SH 605522

Cwm Llein on the early maps; one can have *llain*, *llein* 'sword' or 'narrow strip of land'; however, in the Aberconwy Charter the river was called the *Llem*. One must then decide between *llem* 'sharp' or a corruption of *llam* a descriptive term for a river 'leaping' down.

Bwlch Garw SH 643552

The term *garw* has two possible meanings here: 'craggy, rough, rugged'; or, 'dire, perilous, terrible'. It could certainly refer to the difficulty in getting to or over the bwlch 'pass' because of the rocky ground. In fact the spot has found the rather ridiculous name *The Horns* appearing, but only on the modern series of maps; when and why this tedious imposition appeared is not of interest, it should just be removed.

Bwlch Geifr SH 626557

This could give a sense of only where *geifr* 'goats' would usually use; they stay further up than sheep and graze on areas not usually accessible to sheep. Another important point in assessing this location is to realise a slightly different meaning to the term *bwlch* 'break, notch, gap'.

Bwlch Glas SH 608549

In many places, the colour described by the term *glas* is a greenish grey or glaucous tint. *Bwlch-glas* 1838 OS.

Bwlch Gwynt SH 606565

A very apt name for a *bwlch* 'pass'; however, by using the term *gwynt* 'breeze, blow, gale' for this

pass, it would tend to show that this was a very windy spot. The cwm below has the local name of Cwm Hetiau 'cwm (of the) hats' [actually Cwm Ffynnon Coeg], because in the early days of the railway here, the carriages were open. On reaching this particularly open area, a gust of wind would often blast the hats off the head of an unsuspecting passenger and into the cwm below.

Bwlch Llechog SH 606566

Llech 'slate, flagstone, flat rock' + *-og* 'pertaining to, association with'; this gives the sense of a slabby area of rock which is a good description of the cliffs here when seen from the valley.

Bwlch Maenderyn SH 605530

Maen 'rock' + (*a*)*deryn* 'bird'. The bird associated with high rocky places is the raven; however, peregrines are found high up on valley sides looking out for potential prey.

Bwlch Maenllys SH 604570

The *maen* 'rock, stone' is straightforward; however, one has to decide whether one has: *llys* 'slime, scum': *llys* 'plants, vegetation': or, a corruption of *llus* 'bilberry'. Any interpretation as to the final element of the name would be possible.

Bwlch Maesgwm SH 572559

Maes signifies a tract of land of no particular size + cwm 'valley'. However, the original name for the pass was Bwlch Adwy'r Waen 1838 OS; *adwy* 'entrance' + 'r' 'the' + *waun* 'moor'.

Bwlch Main SH 606539

The *bwlch* 'pass' is indeed *main* 'narrow'; however, it must be remembered that the word *main* was an old plural form for *maen* 'stone, rock'. Bwlch-y-main 1838 OS.

Bwlch Moch SH 633553

Another pass with the descriptor *moch*; it is perhaps easier to accept *moch* 'pig, swine' here, rather than the obscure *moch* 'soonest, swiftest', cognate to Old Irish *mó*, *mos-*, *mus-*, Middle Irish *moch* 'early'.

Bwlch Nudd SH 618552

The *bwlch* 'notch, gap' here is very high, where the *nudd* 'mist, fog' reference is probably due to the broken wisps of cloud often to be seen here. Nudd is also a Middle Welsh form of the name Nodens, a 'Celtic' god; Nudd was the father Gwyn ap Nudd who was the king of the Tylwyth Teg 'fair folk' and the ruler of the Annwfn 'underworld'.

Bwlch Uffern SH 611553

This particular *bwlch* is quite small so the sense 'notch, gap, groove' would be better for the top of this large gully. The word *uffern* 'hell' is probably used figuratively here to describe a very difficult and dangerous place to find oneself in, if having to go there to retrieve sheep.

Bwlch y Saethau SH 614542

This col led to what was, according to legend, the site of the supposed King Arthur's last battle. In the battle he was slain by a volley of arrows, a story linked to many other sites around Britain. Perhaps the word *saethau* 'arrows' refers to the vertical rock formations in the area. Bwlch y Saethau 1775 Bangor Manuscripts.

Bwlch yr Wyddfa SH 610557

Not a pass in a through valley sense, more of a broad shoulder, this is the only way through between some big cliffs to the upper part of the mountain and as such it is used by both the railway and the Llanberis Path.

Bwlch yr Eisteddfa SH 647557

Bwlch 'pass' + *yr* 'the' + *eisteddfa* 'chair, seat', perhaps due to shape of some mediaeval seats or a saddle shape; although it could also infer a resting place generally. One should note that the old hotel at the top of the pass was called *Gorffwysfa* 'resting place'; the name on the map is now Pen y Pass. There is also an *eisteddfa* as a pass name in the upper *Rheidiol*, namely *Eisteddfa Gurig*. According to legend, a local giantess was carrying a heap of white rocks in her apron to decorate her husband's grave; unfortunately a string on the apron broke and the quartz rocks fell to the ground. The name for the pile of white rock, one of two cairns close to the top, was *Barclodiad y Gawres* 'Giantess's Apronful'; this, or very similar forms of the story is linked to a number of sites.

In the book *Beddgelert: its facts, fairies and folk-lore* (1899) DE Jenkins, WB Jones, we find *'there used to be two large heaps of stones, one of which was completely scattered when the houses were built, and the other was partly destroyed in order to get the stones that were in it'*. A cist and some artefacts were found in the first one destroyed. A little below, on the *Llanberis* side, were some seven or eight long graves that are now gone. The whole area must have retained a mystical importance for a long time, as Edward Lhuyd c.1700 mentioned that his guide to the area walked nine times around one of the cairns *'repeating the Lord's Prayer as rapidly as he ever could'*.

sedem peris 1198 Aberconwy Charter, *Bwlch yr eisteddfa* c.1700 *Parochialia*, *Bwlch yr Eisteddfa* 1795 John Evans Map of North Wales.