

YR ARAN

A very large and remote area, apart from the large crags of Cwm Cywarch and the glaciated cwms of the Aran, the cliffs are generally quite small. The geology of the area is different to that found on the other side of the Bala Fault and the rocks are not generally resistant to erosion. The use of *tap*, probably borrowed from an old obscure English usage of *tap* 'top', it is also quite peculiar as a cliff name, but here it is seen a number of times. Once again one can note that there is no use of the word *clogwyn* 'cliff' as a term to be found for any cliff names in this area.

Craig Cwm Du SH 879230

The *craig* 'cliff' probably gets its name from the dark northerly aspect of this cwm. However, not only is the word *du* associated with the actual colour of the rock or if an area was shaded and gloomy; the word *du* could also be used to convey foreboding.

Craig Cwm Lloi SH 910154

The *Craig* 'crag' name is taken from the name of the cwm; the use of *lloi* 'calves' in the name may represent a good sheltered valley, an area for them to be nurtured.

Craig Cywarch SH 8418/8419

The *Cywarch* 'hemp' was at one time, a very useful plant, it was mainly used in the making of ropes and sacks. A great deal of water was required for its treatment and whether this valley was a location for hemp processing or if the plant also grew in the valley is difficult to decide. Hemp was once known as Gallow Grass because of the ropes used for hanging people on the gallows.

Craig Pymylau SH 921199

This may be a corruption due to the mis-spelling of *panylau*, *pan(h)ylau* 'hollows, small valleys' (also seen in the name *Moel y Panylau*), the plural of *panawl*. Otherwise, perhaps a corruption of the plant name *Pymystl* neu *y Cegyr/Cegid Mawr* 'Cowbane, Water Hemlock': *Cicuta virosa*.

Craig y Ffynnon SH 833198

Craig 'crag' + *y* 'the' + *ffynnon* 'spring, fountain', the word *ffynnon* is linked to Old Cornish *funten*, Old Breton *funton*.

Craig y Geifr SH 874269

Another cliff named after *geifr* 'goats'; the animals were supposedly brought into Britain in the Neolithic period, around 3000 years BCE. They cause a lot of damage to natural vegetation, as they can reach ledges and clefts on the mountains that are too awkward and dangerous for other grazers.

Craig y Pant SH 915223

This *craig* 'crag' + *y* 'the' + *pant* 'hollow' is the first cliff one comes to after the relatively flat moorland.

Craig yr Ogof SH 914247

This *craig* 'crag' + *yr* 'the' + *ogof* 'cave' may not have a cavern, any form of depression or cleft could be defined by the word *ogof*; an overhang in the cliff or a niche at its base would be a reasoning for the term.

Creigiau Brithion SH 839204

The *creigiau* 'rocks' here are in an area of rocks, scree and differing patches of vegetation; this mixture is what the term *brithion* is describing, the plural of *brith* 'mottled'.

Creigiau Camddwr SH 849199

This area of *creigiau* 'rocks' is above a stream named *Camddwr*; although the stream does dry out at

times the reference in the name is probably *cam* 'step, leap' + *dŵr* 'water' to describe a stream tumbling down a steep hillside such as this. The *cam* 'bent, crooked' interpretation could apply to the upper course of the stream.

Esgair Felen SH 847193

Esgair 'ridge, spur' + *felen* 'yellow' – feminine form of *melyn*; however, it denotes a sallow or pale brownish colour rather than true yellow. The term *esgair* is quite often referred to being *melyn* 'yellow' because a commonly used phrase or reference to an *esgair* was as a descriptive term - Esgair Geiliog 'Cockrel's Spur'; the feet and spur of the cockerel are yellow.

Ffenestr y Graig SH 847195

Named as *fffenestr* 'window' + *y* 'the' + *grraig* 'crag' because at a certain spot on the opposite hillside, a hole or *fffenestr* 'window' could be seen in the skyline. This is formed by a fallen block across the top of a gap.

Gallt Ceiniogau SH 914216

Gallt 'bluff, slope' + *ceiniogau* 'pennies'; the *ceiniogau* plural of the word *ceiniog* 'penny' is probably a comment on the common mountain plant named Ceiniog y Gors or Dail y Geiniog 'Pennywort': *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*. Most other *ceiniog* or *ceiniogau* names to be found refer to the worth or some form of payment relating to a field or the land. However, one explanation given was that the small fine scree perhaps resemble coins; or, that the tinkling noise of the scree when walking across it, resembles the noise of coins landing on the ground.

Graig Ty Nant SH 898218

Named after the farm Ty Nant, one also sees the name Gallt y Maen 'Rock Cliff' for this area of rocks. The track below was part of a popular way through for drovers and shepherds at one time.

Llam y Lladron SH 756136

Llam 'leap' + *y* 'the' + *lladron* 'thieves, robbers'; the cliffs overlook the pass and could have provided a hidden spot, a good lookout for bandits to then rush down onto unwary travellers below.

Ogof Ddu SH 894214

The word *ogof* can denote a variety of features: a cleft in the rocks, an overhang in an area of cliff, not just a cave or grotto.

Pared yr Ychain SH 847226

Pared 'precipice, cliff; wall' + *yr* 'the' + *ychain* 'oxen'. *Pared*, sometimes seen as *parwyd* 'cliff', is quite a rare word. It is usually used as a term for walls and features in a building; borrowed from the vulgar Latin *paret*, it is also seen as a cliff name in France as well as Spain as *paret(e)*. The word *ychain* is one plural form of *ych* 'ox'. Pared yr ychen c.1700 Parochialia, Pared-yr-ychain 1838 OS.

Sawdl y Graig SH 848194

The *sawdl* 'heel' + *y* 'the' + *grraig* 'crag' probably denotes the big change in direction of the cliff at this point. The named section forms an outward corner or prow, where it changes from being a south-facing cliff to a steep and darker north-easterly aspect.

Tap Hafn Mawr SH 848193

This particular *tap* 'crag' does have a *hafn* 'gash, cleft, chasm' + *mawr* 'large'; here, the name refers aptly to the huge gully running up the rock face. *Tap* 'projecting cliff' may have been derived from the English *tap* 'top'; or, it may be a local corruption of the word. A similar use is found in the name Mither Tap, Aberdeenshire; where the meaning has remained for a summit or top.

Tap Mawr SH 845188

Tap 'projecting cliff, ledge' + *mawr* 'large'; the word *tap* is quite common in southern Meirionnydd and into the north western area of Montgomery. The cliff does not have to be projecting over its base, just to seem to be so is enough; the alternative meaning is for a ledge in a steep area.

Tap Nyth yr Eryr SH 906217

An eagle's nest would have been an obvious feature at one time; though, a mythological eagle would be equally possible. Each area would have its own set of legends and stories; stories that would be similar if not the same as those in neighbouring areas, it would just be the 'named' locations of the stories that would change. The word *tap* here would probably refer to a ledge or shelf in a small cliff. Yr Eryr 1838 OS.

Tap Pant Cae SH 844185

Tap 'cliff, ledge' + *pant* 'hollow' + *cau* 'enclosed', rather than a *cae* 'field'; this is the result of local pronunciation of the word *cau*.

Tap Rhygan Ddu SH 843189

The original name for this cliff was Yr Huga Ddu. *Huga* 'hood, cloak' is derived from the Latin *huca*, seen in Cornish *hug(k)*, English *huke* 'cow'. The rock is certainly reminiscent of a cloaked or hooded figure.

Tapiau Gwlybion SH 841184

Tapiau is the plural of the word *tap* 'projecting cliff'; because the feature being described is in the plural, it is usual that the following descriptor is also a plural, *gwlybion* is the plural of *gwlyb* 'wet'.

Tap y Gigfran SH 844188

Tap 'cliff' + *y* 'the' + *cigfran* 'raven'. The raven's nest would be quite obvious and in a favoured spot high up over the valley, if there were ravens there. A potentially dangerous cliff where animals could fall to their deaths could also be denoted by a name such as this as a warning to children, a place to where bones were taken.

Tap y Graig SH 847189

Tap 'cliff' + *y* 'the' + *craig* 'rock'. One wonders what the particular feature was here.

Y Gist Ddu SH 873270

This large and remote cliff is named *cist* 'chest, coffin' + *ddu* 'black dark'; very similar forms are seen in: Latin *cist-a*, Old Norse *kista* and many other European languages; it can be used for any general box shape. One would suspect that the name refers to the tall rectangular central buttress, above the stone wall leading up from the lake, resembling a coffin.