

Assessment 2:

Examine the place-names of one area in Wales. What does their study bring to an understanding of the topography, history and language of the area?

The objective of this essay is to undertake a place-name study from one area of Wales and to provide an understanding of the topography, history and language of that area. A total of sixty place-names were used for this essay, they are all taken from an area north of the town of Brecon, in the country of Powys. They have been sourced from a contemporary Ordnance Survey (OS) map and the area used is shown below, outlined in green. One thing that is obvious from the place-names selected, is that they are predominantly Welsh, with very few in English. It should be noted that this is not due to selection bias, almost all of the names that appear within the designated area have been analyzed. The area belongs to what was previously known as Breconshire (taking its name from the ancient kingdom of Brycheiniog) where English did not make a significant appearance until the late 12th century ¹. From this time, up until the mid-14th century, English and Anglo-French became more common, especially as the languages of administration, as more and more Anglo-Norman castles were built ². However, during the 15th to mid-16th centuries Welsh replaced the use of English with the English population being assimilated into the local population ³. As a result of this assimilation, Welsh English bilingualism developed becoming quite common in the larger towns, such as Brecon ⁴. Bilingualism later progressed into anglicisation which was initially restricted to towns and had less impact on the rural areas at which point place-names were mostly stable (no new invaders) and in Welsh.

¹ Richard, Morgan, *A Study of Breconshire Place-Names* (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 1999), p. 9.

² Ibid. p. 9.

³ Ibid. p. 13.

⁴ Ibid. p. 13.

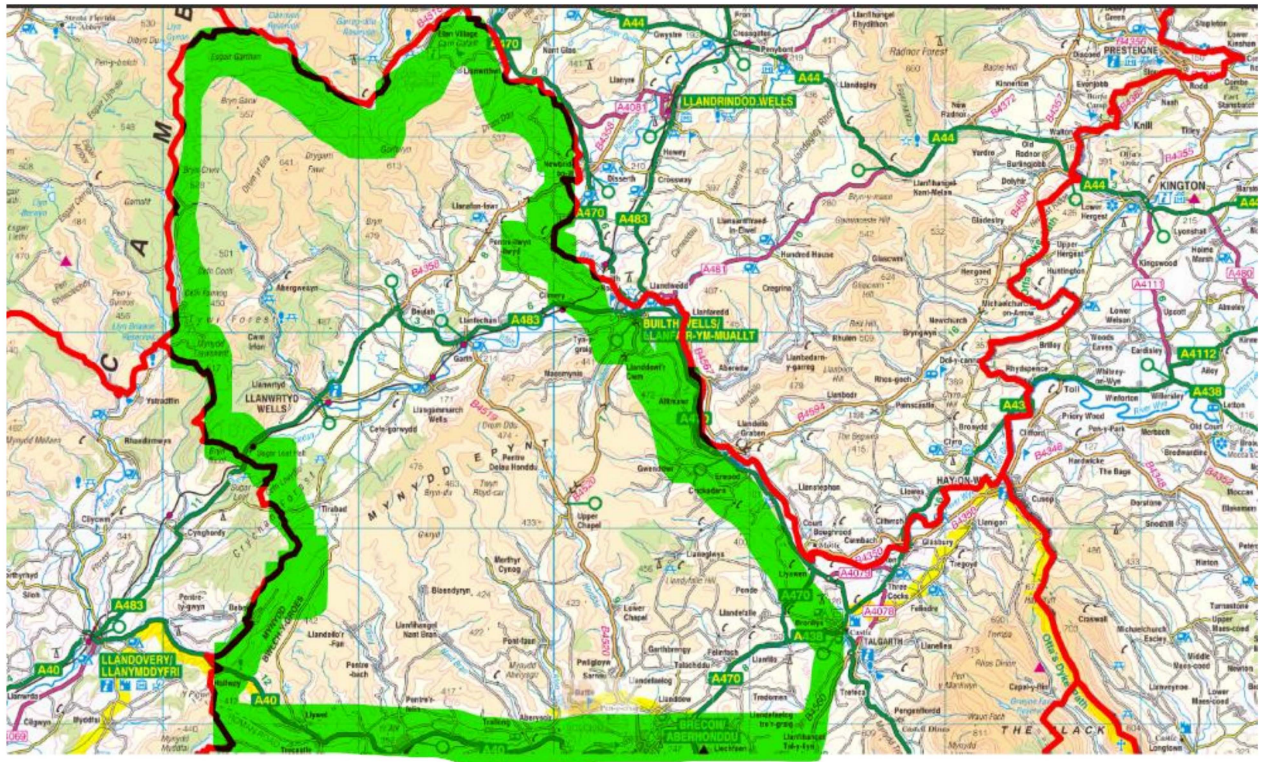


Fig. 1. OS 1:250000 for northern Breconshire showing the area of Wales used for the assignment

The origin of place-names often pre-dates written records. Where references are found in ancient documents the non-standardized nature of the spelling and the fact that they might have been recorded by non-Welsh speaking scribes means that there is often a substantial variation in the way that a place-name appears in writing. Additionally, the Welsh language has also evolved over time, giving even more variations in both spoken and written to place-names. By careful analysis of the available documents, combined with an understanding of historical linguistics, scholars have been able to build chronologies that document the changes and development of these names. This essay draws on that existing work to provide the information needed to undertake a place-name study of the selected area.

In the Welsh language words are subject to mutation (also known as lenition). This is where the letters in a word are changed according to a set of rules, although there are exceptions. The history of these linguistic changes dates from a time before primitive Welsh had evolved (c.550 CE) when the common language of Britain was Late Brythonic ⁵. Early mutation softened the internal consonants *b*, *c*, *d*, *g*, *m*, *p* and *r* to *v*, *g*, *th*, *y*, *v*, *b* and *d* respectively depending how that occurred between vowels. Over time these 'changes' have become accepted as a natural part of speech but

⁵ Lias, Anthony, A Guide to Welsh Place-Names. (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 1994), p. 9.

what also happens, and still happens in modern Welsh, is a lenition known as soft mutation. This type of mutation, and one which can frequently be found in place-names, is responsible for changing the initial consonant in a particular set of circumstances as follows:

b - f
c - g
d - dd
g - is dropped
ll - l
m - f
p - b
rh - r
t - d

This mutation happens in specific circumstances but for the purpose of this essay it is sufficient to be aware of the actual mutation and not the reason why they happen. Soft mutation can be seen in several of the place-names included in the sample. In these cases, the mutation will be explained as each individual name is analyzed in turn.

The construction of placenames in Welsh can be allocated to several groups viz. 'Ownership' and 'n-Elements' (according to the number of elements compounded in the name). Within these multi-element groups, further subdivisions exist which for the purpose of this essay will not be used.

The topography of the selected area is closely related to the types of names that occur, in fact, a high percentage of the names sampled have some link with the landscape. This high correlation is most likely because this is a very rural area where the natural features would have been used by local people when describing a place, these descriptions then evolved into actual place-names. Although there will have been some variation over time from usage and language shift, the names generally appear to show little outside influence. However, it is possible that this did occur, and the names reverted to their original Welsh name at a later date. The names in the sample that are related in some way to the topography can be further categorized by type of topography i.e. water course, elevated area, valley etc. In Welsh, as in most languages, there can be more than one word to describe these features, and this variation is naturally occurring in the sampled area.

Hills and mountains: There are 10 place-name in the sample (Appendix A) that relate either directly to a hill or mountain, or which refer to some aspect of one. Interestingly, all of these are Welsh language names, which supports the idea that

rural names were less likely to be influenced by other languages. The place-names in this group describe a landscape which is predominantly hilly or mountainous and over which several streams and rivers flow. The image that is created is of a mainly rugged terrain described by strong and powerful names such as *Alltmawr* which informs us that it is a big slope, not just a regular slope. It is the same with *Crickadam*, where the mound is mighty. Summits, ridges and promontories related names are common, for example, *Bryn-du*, *Drum ddu*, *Pen-y-crug* and *Talgarth*. Only one colour is used to describe these high places, and that is black, *-du*, *-ddu*, making them sound dark and foreboding. The place-names also provide information that might be useful to travelers in the area, such as, *Mynydd Bwlch-y-groes*, which translates to 'Mountain at the pass of the cross' (in this case cross refers to a crossroad). *Gwryd* too provides practical information, this time regarding distance as *Gwryd* translated to a 'fathom' (the distance between two outstretched arms, but it may also be used for other measurements) and *Mynydd Epynt* describes itself as a 'mountain with a horse path' It is interesting to note that there is no sentimentality of romanticism in these names, they are purely functional.

Streams, rivers, lakes and ponds: There are 12 place-names in the sample (Appendix B) that relate either directly to a body of water or which refer to some aspect of one. As with the hill and mountain names, all of these are Welsh language names. Most of the names in the sample provide information, such as *Abergwesyn* and *Aberyscir*, both of which mark the mouth or confluence of a named river. *Blaendyrn*, marks the place in a valley where the river Dyryn rises. *Afon Ysgir* is harder to interpret but could describe a river that has small tributaries, or a place where some type of branches was cut, maybe willow? *Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn*, provides a location for 'The church of St Michael near the lake'. *Pentre Dolau Honddu*, also provides a location, 'Village in the meadows by the river Honddu'. Unlike the hill and mountain place-names, which were very much unadorned and practical, there are several names in this category which are softer and more evocative in nature. These are *Cilieni* and *Cilmery*, that 'retreat, nook' - often a hidden place. *Nant Bran* is a Raven's hollow (although Bran could also be a personal name) and an alternative interpretation of *Blaendyrn* is a 'river which dips and weaves like a bird'. In contrast to the black of the hills and mountains, there are two examples in the sample where the name speaks of something that is bright or shining. These are, *Gwenddwr*, which translates to 'white water' (this could mean water that is moving over rocks or is fast flowing) and *Pwllgloyw*, which may come from Middle Welsh and describes a 'Shining Pond'

Settlements: There are 9 place-names in the sample (Appendix C) that relate to a settlement, but which do not include references to hills, mountains or bodies of water. In contrast to the previous two categories, this group of names is a less cohesive group. Here the names are derived (or taken directly) from Welsh, English, Hebrew

and Old English. They are associated with an ancient kingdom, a historical event, a religious movement, individuals, geographical features, a mill and an ecclesiastical community. *Brecon* (Welsh) is derived from the ancient kingdom once ruled by Brychan; *Battle* (E) is linked via an abbey in Sussex of the same name to the Battle of Hasting 1066; *Beulah* is taken directly from the Bible (Hebrew) and was part of the trend that happened in Wales in the mid-19th century to name villages after chapels; Personal names appear in *Bronllys* (W), 'the court of Brwyn', in *Garthbrengy* (W), 'mountain ridge of Brengi' and in *Trefeca* (W), 'town of Becca'; Geographical features are described in *Garth* (W), 'mountain ridge'; *Tredomen* (W), 'Settlement by a mound' and *Tyn-y-graig* (W), 'Small farm at the rock'; *Felinfach* (W), 'little mill'. Finally, one of the most complex settlement names in the sample, *Glasbury* (W, OE), 'enclosure with a monastic community on the river Wye' which provides a wealth of information. The most probable reason that *Glasbury* is derived, in part, from OE is because there was a strong English presence in the neighbouring town of Hay-on-Wye. However, it is very clearly a hybrid name being part English and part Welsh, perhaps indicating equal status of both languages at some point.

Churches and religion: In this group, 15 place-names that have been taken from the sample (Appendix D) relate to a church or to religion. An additional 3 place-names, *Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn*, *Beulah* and *Glasbury* which have already been discussed above, would also qualify for inclusion in this group. This means that almost a third of all the place-names in the sample are linked to churches or religion, and of these, all are related to Christianity. The references are to churches, God, saints, graveyard, martyrs, and Abbots. Two references are to God, *Llanddew* and *Llanddew'r cwm*. As might be expected, the names of Saints appear frequently in this group, *Llandefaelog* (W), 'St. Tyfaelog'; *Llandefaelog tre'r graig*, (W) 'St. Tyfaelog'; *Llandefalle* (W), 'St. Tyfalle'; *Llandeilo'r Fan* (W), 'St Teilo'; *Llanfihangel Nant Bran* (W), 'St Michael'; *Llanwrtyd Wells* (W, E), 'Gwrtud - possible saint'; *Llywel* (W), 'St. Llywel'; *Merthyr Cynog* (W), 'St Cynog'. *Merthyr Cynog* also references *Merthyr* (W), which can mean graveyard or martyr. Of the remaining four place-names in this group, one may have been incorrectly documented in the past, *Llaneglwys* (W), 'church church', which make no sense. However, using an earlier name *Nanteglwys* (W) (1524), it would mean 'stream near a church' which seems more likely. The second, *Llanfechan* (W), 'Little Church' seems to describe either the physical church or a minor church. The third, *Llangammarch Wells* (W, E), 'Church by the river Camarch' gives a geographical reference. And the last of these four is *Lower Chapel* (E), which has changed completely since it was first referenced in 1578 when it was known as *Llanyhangle uachab*, 'Little Llanfihangel'. It has dropped its reference to St. Michael and changed from church to chapel. *Tirabad* (W) is named for land owned by an Abbot (of Strata Florida). One final point regarding early references to place-names in this group. It

is reasonable to suggest that as most are linked to physical churches, some form of written records about them would have been created. The earliest reference to a place-name in this group is 1150, *Llanddew*. The place-name in this group that was first referenced most recently is *Llanddew'r cwm*, 1776-1798. This could be because the church was built at a later date, but it could also be equally possible that this is because earlier manuscripts referencing the church have not survived.

Miscellaneous: The final 13 place-names that have been taken from the sample (Appendix E) do not fit readily into the previous groups and are therefore documented as a miscellaneous group not having a common theme. There are two place-names related to mills, both of which appear to be water mills. *Pentre'r felin* (W) and *Ponde* (?W) which, from an earlier name of *Melin Pandy*, would be a specific type of water mill, known as a 'fulling-mill or tucking-mill' that was used in the cleaning stage of cloth-making. There are two references to different types of stone *llechfaen* (W) and *pontfaes* (W); one to a valley, *Cwm Irfon* (W); two are linked to wet or boggy areas *Sarnau*, meaning causeways and *Trallong*, meaning a soft place; *Erwood* (E) is a difficult word to interpret based on the available records; *Maesmynis* (W) probably started life as a way of denoting ownership of a field before becoming a place-name. And that just leaves the final place-name, *Pentre-llwyn-llwyd* (W) which not only paints a beautiful picture of a village near a grey grove, but it also makes a lovely sound, as does *Maesmynis* (W).

In conclusion, despite the relatively small sample of place-names, certain key points stand out. These are the influence of the Church and Christianity on the area and the number of saints names that occur; the way in which echoes of the 5th century ruler of the area, Brychan Brycheiniog and his family, remain in 21st century place-names; the description of the hills and mountains using strong and descriptive language. What is also very clear is that the vast majority of the place-names are Welsh. A lot of them date from before the 12th century and remain in constant use up to the current day, albeit with multiple spelling variations over time. This suggests that in the area sampled, the Welsh language has retained a strong presence. Even if the people became bilingual Welsh-English speakers, the influence of English was not sufficient to change a significant number of place-names. The sample also shows that the area has been populated for a very long time, given the early dates in the references for the settlements. What the sample has failed to do is tell us very much about any commerce in the area. Two place-names refer to watermills, one of which is linked to cloth making, and two other place-names gained the suffix -Wells, which is thought to reflect the discovery of mineral waters in the area. But other than these limited examples no further information has survived in the place-names, maybe it never existed. The sample is somewhat mute on agricultural references, which, given the very rural nature of the geography, is surprising.

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Appendix A: Hills and Mountains

Abbreviation: W – Welsh

E – English

L – Latin

H – Hebrew

OE – Old English

OW – Old Welsh

Alltmawr: Earliest reference is *gallt-mawr* c.1566 ⁶

From: W *all* 'slope, wooded slope' and *mawr*, 'big, great'

Note: This may be a very ancient name. The date of 1556 is the first accredited date, but the name will most likely have predated this date.

The loss of the leading letter 'g' may indicate a Brythonic name. Under the rules of mutation, it would be expected to see *Allt-fawr*.

Bryn-du: Earliest reference is 1832 ⁷

From: W *bryn*, 'hill' and *du*, 'black'

Crickadarn: Earliest reference is *Cruckadan* 1443 ⁸

From: W *crug*, *cadarn*, 'mightly mound'

Drum ddu: Earliest reference is 1833 ⁹

From: W *trum*, 'ridge or summit' and *ddu*, 'black'

Note: *trwm* is usually masc. but the mutation of *du* to *ddu* suggests it was sometimes fem.

Gwryd: Earliest reference is 1832 ¹⁰

From: W *gwryd*, 'fathom, the distance between two outstretched arms'

Note: It has also been interpreted to mean other distances e.g. finger-tip to finger-tip and a man's height

Mynydd Bwlch-y-groes: Earliest reference is 1832 ¹¹

⁶ Morgan, *A Study of Breconshire Place-Names*, p. 38.

⁷ Ibid. p. 47.

⁸ Hywel Wyn, and Richard Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 2007), p.102.

⁹ Morgan, *A Study of Breconshire Place-Names*, p. 72.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 89.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 118.

From: W *mynydd*, 'mountain', *bwlch*, 'breach, gap, pass, *croes*, 'cross - here it indicates crossroads'. 'Mountain at the pass of the cross'

Note: Mutation of *croes* to *groes*.

Mynydd Epynt: Earliest reference is 12th century ¹²

From: W *mynydd*, 'mountain', *eb*, 'horse (as in *ebol*, foal), *hynt*, way.

'Mountain with a horse path' There is an alternative interpretation where *Epynt* is a personal name, *Epint* appears in the Black Book of Carmarthen (13th C)

Pen-y-crug: Earliest reference is *Pen y Kreg* c.1700 ¹³

From: W *pen*, 'head', *y*, def.art, *crug*, 'hillock, knoll, cairn, heap', 'hill characterized by a heap or mound'

Talgarth: Earliest reference is *Talgar* c.1163-1174 ¹⁴

From: W *tâl*, 'forehead, front, end, brow of a hill' and *garth*, 'mountain-ridge, promontory', 'end of a ridge'

Yr Allt: Earliest reference is 1832 ¹⁵

From: W *all* 'slope, wooded slope'

¹² Ibid. p. 119.

¹³ Ibid. p. 129.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 139.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 37.

Appendix B: Streams, rivers, lakes and ponds

Afon Ysgir: Earliest reference is Ischir 11cent., 1832 ¹⁶

From: W *afon*, 'river', *ysgwr* pI. *Ysgyr*, '?branch/es

Note: The interpretation is not at all clear. Branches could refer to small tributaries, or it could mean a place where staves were cut or even 'fragments, bits', maybe of land

Abergwesyn: Earliest reference is 1343-9 ¹⁷

From: W *aber*, 'mouth of a river, confluence', *Gwesyn* (*gwas*), 'youth, young servant, page' with suffix *-yn*

Note: The use of *gwas* may be intended to denote a minor river or tributary

Aberyscir: See reference above to *Afon Ysgir*

From: W *aber*, 'mouth of a river, confluence', *ysgwr* pI. *Ysgyr*, '?branch/es

Blaendyrn: Earliest reference is *Blaen-derin* 1817 ¹⁸

From: W *blaen*, 'upper part of a valley where the main stream rises, *Dryyn*, 'Name of the river

Note: *Deryn* may refer to *aderynm ederyn*, 'bird, young bird'. Giving rise to 'river which dips and weaves like a bird'

Cilieni: Earliest reference is early 12th century ¹⁹

From: W '*cil*, 'retreat, nook' - often a hidden place

Cilmery: Earliest reference is *Kilmery* 1712 ²⁰

From: W '*cil*, 'retreat, corner, nook' - often a hidden place, *mieri*, 'brambles', but *Meri* or *Mieri* could also be a personal name

Gwenddwr: Earliest reference is (land of *Wentorth*) 1204-1214 ²¹

From: W *gwen*, 'white, fair', *dwr*, 'water, 'white water'

¹⁶ Wyn, Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, p. 105.

¹⁷ Morgan, *A Study of Breconshire Place-Names*, p. 35

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 41.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 63.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 63.

²¹ Ibid. p. 87.

Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn: Earliest reference is *villa Sancti Michael* early 12th century ²²

From: W *llan*, 'church', *Mihangel*, 'Michael, *tal*, 'front, end' with def.art *y* and *llyn*, 'lake', 'The church of St Michael near the lake'

Nant Bran: No reference found

From: W *nant*, 'hollow', *bran*, 'raven'. 'Ravens' hollow'

Note: *Brân* can also be a personal name

Pentre Dolau Honddu: Earliest reference is *Pentre Dolhonddu* c.1817 ²³

From: W *pentre*, 'village', *dolau* (*pl. of dol*), 'meadow, dole, field, with the river name *Honddu*, 'meaning uncertain, could mean easy, happy, pleasant', 'Village in the meadows by the river Honddu'

Pwllgloyw: No reference found

From: OW *pwyll*, 'pond', *gloyw* (from Middle Welsh *gloyw*), 'bright, shining, sparkling', 'Shining Pond'

Note: *gloyw* can also be a personal name

Talachddu: Earliest reference is *Talachtu* 1263 ²⁴

Note: It should be noted that this is a very difficult name to interpret. It may arise from very corrupt spellings of W *Tuchlarduveleys*, *Tucklar Duueleys* 1241. Or it may be a shortened form of the combination of *Talachddu(f)lais*, with *Du(f)ais* being taken from the nearby river *Dulais*. *Talach* may come from *tâl*, 'front, end' and *ach*, 'scar, line' but this does not readily match the landscape

²² Ibid. p. 102.

²³ Ibid. p. 128.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 139.

Appendix C: Settlements

Brecon: Earliest reference is *Bricheniauc* 895 ²⁵

From: E derived from *Brycheiniog*, 'land of Brychan' (5th century ruler of the area)

Note: The Welsh name is *Aberhonddu*, 'the mouth or confluence of the river Honddu'

Battle: Earliest reference is 1527 ²⁶

From: E

Note: Named after Battle abbey in Sussex which held the advowson.

Beulah: Earliest reference is 1851 ²⁷

From: H taken from the Bible, *Issiah* 62.4. '... and they land Beulah

Note: Named after a Congregational chapel established in the locality in 1851-1852. For a village to take its name from a chapel is frequently found in Wales

Bronllys: Earliest reference is *Brenlais* 1200 ²⁸

From: W *Brwyn* (personal name), *llys*, 'court, palace, hall', court of Brwyn'

Felinfach: Earliest reference is *Velin Vach Inn* 1798 ²⁹

From: W *melin*, 'mill' and *bach*, 'little', 'little mill'

Note: both words are subject to mutation

Garth: Earliest reference is *Garth Ho.* 1798 ³⁰

From: W *garth*, 'mountain-ridge, promontory, hill'

Note: There is an alternative interpretation, 'field, close, fold; fort'

Garthbrengey: Earliest reference is *Garth bryngi brynn dewi* 1180 ³¹

From: W *garth*, 'mountain-ridge, promontory, hill', and *Brengei* (personal name)

²⁵ Ibid. p. 43.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 39.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 39.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 46.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 77.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 80.

³¹ Ibid. p. 80.

Glasbury: Earliest reference is *Clastbyrig. 1056* ³²

From: OE/W *clas*, OE *burh* dat. *byrig*, W *y*, *clas*, *ar*, and the river name
Gwy, 'enclosure with a monastic community on the river Wye

Tredomen: Earliest reference is 1595 ³³

From: W *tref*, 'in the earlier sense of house, dwelling place', *tomen*,
'mound', 'Settlement by a mound'

Note: *tomen* often means a castle mound

Trefeca: Earliest reference is *Tre Vecca* c.1590-1610 ³⁴

From: W *tref*, and possible personal name *Becca* (OE), 'Becca's town'

Tyn-y-graig: Earliest reference is *Ty'n-y-graig* 1817 ³⁵

From: W *tyddyn*, *tyn* (def.art.), 'farm (diminutive), *craig*, 'rock or cliff', '
Small farm at the rock'

³² Wyn, Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, p. 167.

³³ Morgan, *A Study of Breconshire Place-Names*, p. 145.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 146.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 152.

Appendix D: Churches and Religion

Llanddew: Earliest reference is *Lando c.1150-1175* ³⁶

From: W *llan* 'church' and Dwy 'God', 'God's Church'

Note: This was a site of a palace of the bishops of St. David's

Llanddew'r cwm: Earliest reference is (church of) *Sancti Davidis in Buelt* 1776-1798 ³⁷

From: W *llan* 'church' and Dwy 'God', with def.art. 'r and *cwm*, 'deep, narrow valley, coomb. Glen etc which refers to *Cwm Duhonwy*, 'God's Church in the Valley'

Llandefaelog: Earliest reference is 1398 ³⁸

From: W *llan* 'church' and *ty* 'thy, maelog, 'prince', 'Church of St. Tyfaelog'

Llandefaelog tre'r graig: Earliest reference is *Llandevaylok Tref Crayg* 1535 ³⁹

From: W *llan* 'church' and *ty* 'thy, maelog, 'prince', with def.art. 'r and *craig*, 'rock, cliff, crag, 'Church of St. Tyfaelog on the rock'

Llandefalle: Earliest reference is *Landewathlan* 1263 ⁴⁰

From: W *llan* 'church' and *dyfalle* 'person name - Tyfalle', 'Church of Tyfalle' St.

Llandeilo'r Fan: Earliest reference is *Llandeilo Gornagh* 1513 ⁴¹

From: W *llan* 'church' and *Teilo* (*mutated to -deilo*) 'Teilo', *ar*, 'on', *Fân* (river name), 'Church of St Teilo on (Nant) Fawen'

Llaneglwys: Earliest reference is *Nantegliis* 1524-1525 ⁴²

From: W *llan* 'church' and *eglwys* 'Church'

Note: From the 1524 name, this would be *nant*, 'stream', *eglwys*. 'church', 'stream near a church'. This would make a lot more sense than two words both meaning 'church' This may have happen if *Nant* was incorrectly mixed up with the common *llan*

³⁶ Ibid. p. 93.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 94.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 95.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 95.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 96.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 95.

⁴² Ibid. p. 96.

Llanfechan: No reference found

From: W *llan* 'church' and *fechan* (*may come from bechan* 'denoting *little*',
'Little Church')

Llanfihangel Nant Bran: Earliest reference is *parochiam Sancti Michaelis de Nantbrân* 1503 ⁴³

From: W *llan* 'church' and *fiangel* 'personal name – St. Michael, and river
name *Nant Brân* 'Church of St Michael by (the river) Nant Brân'

Note: W Brân means raven, crow, rook' but can also be a personal name

Llangammarch Wells: Earliest reference is *Langamarch* 1249 ⁴⁴

From: W *llan* 'church' and *Camarch* – *river name*', 'Church by the river
Camarch'

Note: The discovery of a mineral well and the development of the town
of Llanwrtyd Wells in 1732 explains the latter addition of 'Wells'.

Llanwrtyd Wells: Earliest reference is *Llanworted* 1554 and as *Llanwrtyd Well*
1778 ⁴⁵

From: W *llan* 'church' and *Gwrtud* (*personal name – possible saint*),
'Church of ?Gwrtud'

Note: The discovery of a mineral well and the development of the town
of Llanwrtyd Wells in 1732 explains the latter addition of 'Wells'.

Llywel: Earliest reference is (Saint) *Luhil* 12thC ⁴⁶

From: W *Llywel* (*personal name – St. Llywel*)

Note: This was a village named after a saint

Lower Chapel: Earliest reference is *Llanyhangle uachab* 1578 ⁴⁷

From: W *llan* 'church' and *fiangel* 'personal name – Michael', *uachan* (early
sp. Of *vechan/fechan*, mutated from *bechan*, 'Little Llanfihangel'

Note: This is now generally known as *Lower Chapel*

Merthyr Cynog: Earliest reference is (grave of) *Kynauc in Merthyr*
Kynauc 13thC ⁴⁸

⁴³ Ibid. p. 101.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 103.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 111.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 115.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 101.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 117.

From: W *merthyr* 'grave of a saint – derived from Latin, or a martyr' and
Cynog '*personal name*', 'Graveyard of Saint Cynog '
Note: Cynog was a son of Brychan Brycheiniog

Tirabad: Earliest reference is 1623 ⁴⁹

From: W *tri*, '*land*' and *abad*, 'abbot', 'Abbot's land'

Note: At one point it was owned by the abbey at Strata Florida

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 141.

Appendix E: Miscellaneous

Cwm Irfon: Earliest reference is *Cwm Yrfon 1820-1821* ⁵⁰

From: W *cwm*, 'valley' and *Irfon*, 'river name'

Note: *trwm* is usually masc. but the mutation of *du* to *ddu* suggests it was sometimes fem.

Erwood: Earliest reference is 1616-1620 ⁵¹

Note: *Difficult to interpret, could be E meaning, 'eagle wood'. Or may from the W Erwd, erwydd, 'rods, rails or poles'*

Llechfaen: Earliest reference is *Leghvaine 1593* ⁵²

From: W *llech*, 'slate' and *maen*, 'rstone, large stone, rock that can be flat or lying flat, 'slate, slab, flag, tablet'

Note: Other interpretations as possible. It may have *llech* and 'man', loosely meaning 'place'. Also '*llech*' can mean a league (distance)

Maesmynis: Earliest reference is *Maisminuth 1280* ⁵³

From: W *maes*, 'field, uppermost field' and *Mynys* – *personal name, 'Open land of Mynys*

Note: There is no evidence to suggest that *Mynys* was the name of a saint

Pentre'r felin: Earliest reference is *Pentryr Velin 1754* ⁵⁴

From: W *pentre*, 'village' and y def.art. and *melin* (*mutated to felin*), 'mill', 'The mill village'

Note: This is the site of a mill over the river Cilieni, so it would have been a watermill

Pentre bach: Earliest reference is 1832 ⁵⁵

From: W *pentre*, 'village' and *bach*, 'little'. 'Little village'

Note: *bach maybe to denote that it is smaller or lesser than nearby Pentre'r felin*

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 69.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 74.

⁵² Ibid. p. 112.

⁵³ Ibid. p. 116.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 126.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 128.

Pentre-llwyn-llwyd: Earliest reference is *llwyn-llwyd* 1752 ⁵⁶

From: W *pentre*, 'village' and *llwyn*, 'grove', and *llwyd*. 'grey'. 'Village near the grey grove'

Ponde: Earliest reference is *Melin Pandy* c.1817 ⁵⁷

From: W *pandy* 'fulling-mill, tucking-mill'

Note: Alternate interpretation based on the modern sp. *Ponde* is possible. Both interpretations imply some form of mill. Note a fulling-mill (also known as a tucking-mill) was powered by a watermill and used in the cleaning stage of cloth-making

Pont-faen: Earliest reference is *Melin Pandy* c.1817 ⁵⁸

From: W *pont* 'bridge, and *maen*, 'stone, 'stone bridge'

Sarnau: There is no reference for Sarnau in Breconshire. ⁵⁹

From: W *sarn*, pl. *Sarnau*, 'causeways'

Note: References to places called Sarnau in other parts of Wales are interpreted as causeways, raised pathways over boggy or marshy ground or roads

Three Cocks: Earliest reference is to W name, *Aberllynfi* 1234 1754. E *Three Cocks* earliest reference is 1754 ⁶⁰

From: E Name derived from the coat-of-arms of the Williams family of Gwernyfed⁶¹

Note: It is also suggested that the three cocks come from the arms of Einion Sais, but there is no substantive link

Trallong: Earliest reference is *Tratlan* 1290 ⁶²

From: W *tra*, and *llwng*, 'wet', 'a soft (wet/boggy) place in which to sink

⁵⁶ Wyn, Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, p. 379.

⁵⁷ Morgan, *A Study of Breconshire Place-Names*, p. 130.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 130.

⁵⁹ Wyn, Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, p. 346.

⁶⁰ Morgan, *A Study of Breconshire Place-Names*, p. 35.

⁶¹ William Family, of Gwernyfed <<https://archifau.llyfrgell.cymru/index.php/williams-family-of-gwernyfed>> [accessed 23 January 2025].

⁶² Morgan, *A Study of Breconshire Place-Names*, p. 142.