

MEYSYDD BRWYDRO HANESYDDOL YNG NGHYMRU

Mae'r adroddiad canlynol, a gomisiynwyd gan Grŵp Llywio Meysydd Brwydro Cymru ac a ariennir gan Lywodraeth Cymru, yn ffurfio rhan o raglen archwilio fesul cam i daflu goleuni ar yr ystyriaeth o Gofrestr neu Restr o Feysydd Brwydro Hanesyddol yng Nghymru. Dechreuwyd gweithio ar hyn ym mis Rhagfyr 2007 dan gyfarwyddyd Cadw, gwasanaeth amgylchedd hanesyddol Llywodraeth Cymru, ac yr oedd yn dilyn cwblhau prosiect gan Gomisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru (RCAHMW) i bennu pa feysydd brwydro yng Nghymru a allai fod yn addas i'w nodi ar fapiau'r Arolwg Ordnans. Sefydlwyd y Grŵp Llywio Meysydd Brwydro, yn cynnwys aelodau o Cadw, Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru ac Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru, a rhwng 2009 a 2014 comisiynwyd ymchwil ar 47 o frwydrau a gwarchaeau. Mae hyn yn bennaf yn cynnwys ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol, ac mewn 10 achos, gwaith maes heb fod yn ymyrryd a gwaith a oedd yn ymyrryd.

O ganlyniad i'r gwaith hwn mae **Rhestr o Feysydd Brwydro Hanesyddol yng Nghymru** (<http://meysyddbrwydro.cbhc.gov.uk/>) yn cael ei datblygu, dan arweiniad Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru ar ran Cadw. Bydd yn adnodd deongliadol, addysgol ac ymchwil ar-lein, yn anelu at gynyddu gwybodaeth a chodi ymwybyddiaeth o feysydd brwydro yng Nghymru, yn ogystal ag ysgogi ymchwil bellach. Gobeithir ei lansio yn ystod gwanwyn 2017.

HISTORIC BATTLEFIELDS IN WALES

The following report, commissioned by the Welsh Battlefields Steering Group and funded by Welsh Government, forms part of a phased programme of investigation undertaken to inform the consideration of a Register or Inventory of Historic Battlefields in Wales. Work on this began in December 2007 under the direction of the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Service (Cadw), and followed the completion of a Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) project to determine which battlefields in Wales might be suitable for depiction on Ordnance Survey mapping. The Battlefields Steering Group was established, drawing its membership from Cadw, RCAHMW and National Museum Wales, and between 2009 and 2014 research on 47 battles and sieges was commissioned. This principally comprised documentary and historical research, and in 10 cases both non-invasive and invasive fieldwork.

As a result of this work **The Inventory of Historic Battlefields in Wales** (<http://battlefields.rcahmw.gov.uk/>) is in development, led by the RCAHMW on behalf of Cadw. This will be an online interpretative, educational and research resource aimed at increasing knowledge and raising awareness of battlefields in Wales, as well as a prompt for further research. It is due to be launched in spring 2017.

Mae'r tabl isod yn rhestru'r brwydrau a'r gwarchaeau a ymchwiliwyd. Bydd adroddiadau ar gael i'w llwytho i lawr o'r Rhestr ar-ein yn ogystal ag o Coflein (<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>), y gronfa ddata ar-lein ar gyfer Cofnod Henebion Cenedlaethol Cymru (NMRW).

The table below lists the battles and sieges researched. Reports will be available to download from the online Inventory as well as from Coflein (<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>), the online database for the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW).

ENW/NAME	DYDDIAD /DATE	SIR HANESYDDOL/ HISTORIC COUNTY	NPRN	YMCHWIL/RESEARCH
Aberllech	1096	Sir Frycheiniog Brecknockshire	404446	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Pont Cychod (Menai ac Ynys Môn) Bridge of Boats (Menai and Anglesey)	1282	Ynys Môn Anglesey	404319	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Bryn Derwin	1255	Sir Gaernarfon Caernarfonshire	402322	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
Bryn Glas (Pillth)	1402	Sir Faesyfed Radnorshire	306352	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012)

				<p>Cloddfa (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2013)</p> <p>Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)</p> <p>Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012)</p> <p>Excavation (Archaeology Wales, 2013)</p> <p>Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)</p>
Campston Hill	1404	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402328	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)</p>
Cilgerran	1258	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	405201	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)</p>
Coed Llathan	1257	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	403587	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)</p> <p>Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)</p> <p>Non-invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)</p>
Castell Coety (gwarchae) /Coity	1404-05	Morgannwg	545701	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)</p>

Castle (siege)		Glamorgan		Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Coleshill	1157	Sir y Fflint Flintshire	402325	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (2009) Documentary and historical research (2009)
Craig y Dorth	1404	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402327	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
Crug Mawr	1136	Sir Aberteifi Cardiganshire	402323	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
Castell Cymaron (gwarchaeau) / Cymaron Castle (sieges)	1144 1179 1195 1215	Sir Faesyfed Radnorshire	545328	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Cymerau	1257	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	404717	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)

				Non-invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1282	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545687	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1294-5	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545613	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1460	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545718	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1468	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545720	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1646	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545789	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dryslwyn (gwarchae) / Dryslwyn Castle (siege)	1287	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545605	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Carregwastad - Abergwaun (ymosodiad) / Carregwastad Point - Fishguard (invasion)	1797	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	308824	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)

Gŵyr/ Gower	1136	Morgannwg Glamorgan	404856	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Grosmont	1405	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402333	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012)
Hyddgen	1401	Sir Drefaldwyn Montgomeryshire	402310	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Pont Irfon (Llanganten) / Irfon Bridge /	1282	Sir Frycheiniog Brecknockshire	403411	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Cydweli / Kidwelly	1258	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	404729	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Castell Talacharn (gwarchae) / Laugharne Castle (sieges)	1189 1215 1257-8 1644	Sir Gaerfyrddin	545245 545341 545436 545746	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)

Maes Gwenllian	1136	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	402324	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012)
Maes Moydog	1295	Sir Drefaldwyn Montgomeryshire	403416	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
Trefaldwyn / Montgomery	1644	Sir Drefaldwyn Montgomeryshire	405168	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Mynydd Carn	1081	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	300319	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
Castell Newydd Emlyn (gwarchae) / Newcastle Emlyn (siege)	1287-8	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545606	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical

				research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Newydd Emlyn (gwarchae) / Newcastle Emlyn	1645	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545768	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Gwrthryfel y Siartwyr, Casnewydd / Newport Chartist Uprising	1839	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	405003	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Achaeology, 2009)
Painscastle	1198	Sir Faesyfed Radnorshire	402326	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012) Cloddfa (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012) Excavation (Archaeology Wales, 2013)
Pennal	1472/4	Meirionnydd Merioneth	403495	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Pentraeth	1170	Ynys Môn Anglesey	404315	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Pwllgwdig	1078	Sir Benfro	405188	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol

		Pembrokeshire		(Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Pwll Melyn	1405	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402320	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
Castell Rhaglan (gwarchae) / Raglan Castle (siege)	1646	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	545797	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Sain Ffagan / St Fagans	1648	Morgannwg Glamorgan	307776	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2013)
Twthill	1461	Sir Gaernarfon	403421	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)

		Caernarfonshire		Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
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Grŵp Llywio Meysydd Brwydro, Hydref 2016

Battlefields Steering Group, October 2016

WELSH BATTLEFIELDS HISTORICAL AND DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH

Bridge of Boats [incorrectly named 'Moel-y-Don']

– 6 November 1282

County: Gwynedd (formerly Anglesey and Caernarfonshire)

Community: Llandegfan and Bangor

NGR: SH582735

NPRN: 404319

Report Author: Dr Adam Chapman

Date: February 2013



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



The Battle of the 'Bridge of Boats' [incorrectly named 'Moel-y-Don'] (6 November 1282)

Summary

The battle now generally known as 'Moel-y-Don' was known to contemporaries as the battle of the bridge of boats and was the single most significant reversal suffered by the English in Edward I's final war of conquest against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282.

Despite being known as 'Moel-y-Don' both commonly and by historians, recent historical opinion has rejected the name. In light of Beverley Smith's comprehensive reassessment, the identification with Moel-y-Don on Anglesey should be disregarded. The sources are clear that the engagement took place on the mainland rather than on Anglesey which, in itself, is a major cause for doubt. Added to this, the name seems not to have been used before the late sixteenth century. A.J. Taylor's description of the structure, 'The Bridge near Bangor', reflecting contemporary financial accounts of those who built the bridge, is the name that should be used henceforth.¹

Medieval sources refer to a bridge of boats and make clear that it was between Anglesey and the mainland. Royal financial accounts are also explicit that Edward I's main camp and logistical hub was at Llanfaes some 7km north east of Moel-y-Don which is situated at the southern end of the Menai Straits. A bridging point across the straits north of Bangor across the Traeth Lafan sandbank, a medieval ferry point near to Bangor, is to be strongly preferred. The name 'Moel-y-Don' is therefore wholly inappropriate.

The pontoon bridge from Anglesey, where Edward had established a base, was intended to secure a bridgehead on the mainland. Either through impetuosity, or the turning tide, Edward's forces found themselves stranded on the shore of the mainland where they were either drowned in their attempts to escape or slaughtered by Welsh forces in fierce hand-to-hand combat. Unusually, a significant number of the knightly elite were among the dead together with a large number of infantry. Despite this disaster this is also an indication of the power of the English crown and the resources of the English realm. The bridge, despite its failure on this occasion, was a significant logistical achievement and it, or a replacement was employed successfully to establish a bridgehead

¹ Taylor, *The King's Works in Wales*, 354-7.

for the final phase of the invasion and conquest of Gwynedd and, despite its ephemeral nature, it is significant in understanding the sophistication of elements of the English military machine at the end of the thirteenth century.

Context

The thirteenth century in Europe was pivotal in shaping ideas of royal power, authority and kingship. In France, the reign of Louis IX, the pious – later Saint Louis – redefined the rites surrounding kingship, and the French crown exerted a hitherto unprecedented dominance over the affairs of its great lords through the exercise of law and royal justice. This was a model with widespread influence throughout Europe. One of the French crown's chief lords, the duke of Aquitaine was also king of England and these developments in royal power were to have wide-reaching practical consequences. Sincere flattery was due to the French kings by imitation: in England, Scotland and in the principalities of Wales the person and authority of the king or prince assumed a new importance.

The balance of power in Anglo-Welsh relations was determined by the sword, the bow and the spear, but in the thirteenth century, in Gwynedd in particular, the expanding formality of royal authority had these power relationships defined by diplomatic treaties and their terms confirmed, to an increasing extent, in terms of money. In Edward I, England had a ruler determined to discover the extent of his rights and, having identified them, to exploit them to the full. This was expressed through law: he held inquisitions into the English, Welsh and Gascon laws and customs and used their findings to amend, control and contradict. As David Stephenson has shown, Llywelyn ap Iorwerth and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd sought to extend their reach through formal as well as military means; the two often hand in hand and essential to this was the creation of a new elite who owed their land and position to the Prince rather than to their kindred.² A rapid process of political change in which new offices in the Prince's court had emerged and old ones took on different roles, stone castles were built and large armies assembled.

Llywelyn ap Gruffudd managed to bring unity to Gwynedd under his leadership and with it, military success and expansion of a distinctly feudal nature. His aim, expressed in the terms of the Treaty of Montgomery following his victory over Henry III's forces in 1267 were expressed in feudal terms: the native rulers of Wales were to do homage to Llywelyn and he in turn would do homage to the

² D. Stephenson, *The Governance of Gwynedd* (Cardiff, 1984) and 'From Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to Edward I: Expansionist Rulers and Welsh Society in Thirteenth-Century Gwynedd' in D. Williams and J. Kenyon, *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles in Wales* (Oxford, 2010), 9-15.

English crown. It remains a matter of debate as to how achievable Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's aspirations were. His financial resources were sorely stretched and, as a conqueror of much of Wales, his political power was subject to defections and English influence. The difficulty Llywelyn faced after the accession of Edward I in 1272 is best expressed by the late Rees Davies: 'Edward I's imperious, even imperial, concept of the nature of overlordship could not be squared with Llywelyn's concept of a native principality of Wales. Collision was well-nigh inevitable. And so was victory for the one, defeat for the other.'³

Prelude

The conflict between Edward and Llywelyn had first been sparked following Llywelyn's failure to do homage to Edward in August 1275. This had eventually led to war and defeat and with it, peace of Edward's terms which reversed Llywelyn's territorial gains, re-established Llywelyn's brothers and made the prince himself no better than one of Edward's own tenants-in-chief, an equal to the earls of Gloucester or Hereford rather than a man of independent royal dignity. Further conflict was inevitable. The events of the winter of 1282 are far from simple to reconstruct. Edward had invaded Wales following the rebellion of Llywelyn's brother, Dafydd. Dafydd, as a result of the Treaty of Aberconwy in 1277 had been Edward's vassal and thus his rebellion, which drew his brother in its wake, was against the king, his lord. By mid-October, Edward's forces had held Anglesey for several months and were pressing upon Gwynedd from the south. The king himself was making inroads into the north east of Wales and Llywelyn's magnates were conspiring against their prince: negotiations between Llywelyn and John Peckham, the archbishop of Canterbury had taken place and failed in late October and the first days of November.

Primary Sources

The English army's movements and the chronology of the construction of the bridge may be deduced, to an extent, by the surviving financial accounts. That said, the movement of Edward's forces are not their primary concern, the accounts give far more precise and consistent information on the movement of supplies and equipment rather than the advances of troops. More confusing still is that the dates given in association with payments are those on which the expenditure was authorised rather than those on which it was incurred.

³ Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 330

The key archival sources are the military accounts for the campaign which are preserved in The National Archives, E 101/4/6 and C 47/3/48 m. 34. These have been extensively analysed by historians, notably A.J. Taylor and J. Beverley Smith.

These financial records make only passing reference to the battle itself, but that is not their intention. The calamity that befell Luke de Tany and his forces, however, has survived in a number of narrative accounts found in chronicles and in other records. The fullest of these is given by Walter of Guisborough but his account is supplemented in fact and detail by both English and Welsh chronicles and by royal correspondence.

Secondary Sources

The construction, use and importance of the bridge has most recently been assessed by Jenkin Beverley Smith in his comprehensive biography of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales (first published as *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Tywysiog Cymru*). His excellent and detailed assessment builds on the pioneering work of A.J. Taylor and the editors of *A History of the King's Works* and Taylor's ground-breaking assessment of the building works of Edward I in Wales during and after the conquest. The first modern account of Edward I's Welsh wars by J.E. Morris made pioneering use of financial records to examine English armies. The picture he drew has been extensively developed since, notably by the recent biographer of Edward I, Michael Prestwich.

Site and Date of the Battle

The battle of 'Moel-y-Don' is the name that tradition has granted to a famous disaster which befell forces led by Luke de Tany crossing a pontoon bridge across the Menai Straits on St. Leonard's day, 6 November 1282. Moel-y-Don is located on the Anglesey shore of the Straits at a narrow point where the Menai ferry operated throughout the later Middle Ages.⁴ The earliest references to this site as the location for the battle only occur in the sixteenth century, in David Powel's 'Historie of Cambria' (1584) and in the writings of Humphrey Llwyd. The site by this name is on the Anglesey shore of the straits opposite Port Dinorwic/Felinheli around 6.5km south west of Bangor on the mainland side and around 7km south west of Llanfaes on the Anglesey side where a large camp for Edward's forces, which acted as the focus of Edward's military and naval activities had been established. Contemporary records, notably the accounts for the construction of the bridge, refer to 'the bridge near Bangor'.⁵ For this reason, and on the basis of practical considerations, Beverley Smith suggests

⁴ H.R. Davies, *The Conway and Menai Ferries* (Cardiff, 1942), 63-71.

⁵ J. Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 538-9.

therefore that the bridge may actually have been erected either at Bangor or still further to the north. The name 'Moel-y-Don' therefore is misleading and quite probably misplaced.⁶

Prelude

Throughout the summer of 1282, Edward I made preparations for a decisive encounter in Gwynedd. There were two main objectives. The first was an assault on Anglesey and second to provide a bridgehead for his forces to attack the mainland. To mount an invasion of Anglesey in the summer would deprive Gwynedd of the harvest from its best arable land thereby reducing the capacity of Llywelyn and his forces to resist. Second was that Edward had probably realised in 1277 that an assault on the mainland from Anglesey was likely to have been essential for the conquest of Gwynedd Uwch Conwy. The difficulty presented by Edward's strategy was crossing the Menai Straits. Llanfaes became Edward's centre of operations and a substantial camp was made there. Although full details have not survived the scale of operations was vast. Ralph de Broughton answered for expenditure of £3,540, with a further £590 for the protection of ships, not including the wages of men from the Cinque Ports of the south east of England.

Building the Bridge

It is possible that Edward took as his inspiration the Roman military manual attributed to Vegetius, *De Rei Militari*. Vegetius suggested that a bridge of boats lashed together could, for a time, match the solidity of a stone bridge. Edward certainly had a copy of this manual in his possession but whether this was his inspiration – or whether it was the result of his body of well-organised and experienced military engineers – is impossible to say. Vegetius recommended a bridge of boats hollowed out of one piece of timber and lashed together; Edward appears to have used shallow draughted barges of relatively small size. In the case of the Menai crossing there is a second alleged classical antecedent; the Roman general Agricola had crossed the water by a bridge of boats when he had invaded Anglesey in AD 77. This comparison is first recorded in Powel's *Historie of Cambria* (1584).⁷ Hollowed logs were clearly not the method used by Edward's engineers, but the construction of the bridge was planned from the earliest stages of Edward's expedition.

⁶ Ibid., 539.

⁷ Cited by Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 539, n. 112: Powel, 372 'they made a bridge of boates and plankes ouer the water where Iulius Agricola did the like, when he subdued the Ile to the Romans.' *Cornelii Taciti De Vita Agricolae*, ed. R.M. Ogilvie (Oxford, 1967), 104-5, records an unplaced crossing by men who had to swim across the straits.

Naval forces were alerted on 10 April for service on 24 June. Sailors from the Cinque Ports – who were obliged to do fifteen days unpaid service to the crown entered royal pay at the end of this period on 25 July and continued until 15 September though preparations to build the bridge were probably complete by 18 August.⁸ Discussions with the men of the Cinque Ports may have included not only the provision of ships, but supply of suitable flat-bottomed boats referred to elsewhere in the records.

Clearly transport of such boats was deemed too difficult owing to their instability at sea and the king was advised to summon men from the Cinque Ports to construct them at Chester. Stephen of Pencaster was ordered to find the carpenters necessary to Chester by 23 June. These flat-bottomed boats having been constructed, they were linked together to form pontoons with a deck between them on which horses and troops could safely walk. These constructions were taken first to Rhuddlan and thence to Anglesey.

On 18 August, Luke de Tany onetime seneschal of Gascony, who had served as admiral on Edward I's crusade in 1270 was despatched to Anglesey to 'provide and make a bridge there'.⁹ The construction of the bridge was a substantial logistical exercise, supervised by the king's engineers, Master Bertram and Master Richard the Engineer. Master Richard's role was to establish a construction camp and bridgehead on the Anglesey shore near Llanfaes with a team of 60 men, later joined by a further 100 men under Master Henry of Oxford.¹⁰ The shipping employed is detailed in two surviving accounts (TNA E 101/3/26, E 101/351/9) and reveals that ships were sourced from Chester and ports as far away as Hastings and Winchelsea. It is likely that work was completed on the bridge by late September and de Tany and his senior leaders awaited their orders to launch their assault.¹¹

Narrative of the Battle

By the beginning of November, de Tany and his forces had been awaiting their orders in Anglesey with their bridge apparently ready to use, for around a month under explicit instructions not to advance without his order. The fullest narrative account comes from the chronicle of Walter of Guisborough although this was compiled later. Guisborough relates that, after a long wait - the king was still not ready to order a crossing, having been detained in the north east of Wales in the vicinity of Denbigh and Duffryn Clwyd - English knights and armed men crossed the bridge at low tide.

⁸ Wages of Sailors: TNA E 101/3/26; E 101/3/30; *Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, 235-47.

⁹ TNA E 101/3/29 para. 10, cited Taylor, *The King's Works in Wales, 1277-1330*, 356.

¹⁰ Turner, *The Life and Career of Master Richard the Engineer*, 47.

¹¹ The above taken from Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 526-7.

Guisborough thought that Luke de Tany acted incautiously, in the hope of fame and renown; the Hagnaby chronicler, blamed the younger Roger Clifford, over eager to rescue his father from captivity in Gwynedd. Wykes thought that the English forces were attacking during peace negotiations led by Archbishop Pecham in the hope of catching the Welsh off their guard.¹² The frustration of the men in Anglesey is understandable; clearly there were gains to be made in the Welsh wars – as the rewards received by Reginald de Grey, and Henry de Lacy, newly created lords of Duffryn Clwyd and Denbigh demonstrate – and had Pecham’s negotiations been successful, however unlikely that now seems, their hopes of gain and glory were receding. As Prestwich notes, however, their difficulties were in part self-inflicted. The chronicler Pierre de Langtoft rightly blamed the English for failing to employ scouts or spies to warn them of movements among the Welsh defenders.¹³

As for the battle itself, the chronicles present two possibilities which are not wholly compatible with each other. Guisborough’s account states that de Tany and his men crossed the bridge from Anglesey and advanced inland. The Welsh swooped, and drove them into the sea, where many drowned.¹⁴

While the king was still at Conway, and had not yet made arrangements for crossing the bridge of boats, which was not as yet strong enough nor quite finished, some of our army, about seven bannerets and 300 men-at-arms, to acquire glory and reputation, crossed at low water.

Morris noted that there were several errors in the narrative: Edward was at Rhuddlan or Denbigh rather than at Conwy at the time and the bridge was clearly complete. He also quibbles about the description of the number of men, noting that seven bannerets to 300 men-at-arms [*homines ad arma*] was far from usual. In this he is correct, but Guisborough, as a chronicler was less concerned with the minutiae of this sort than would be a royal clerk concerned with what these men were paid. ‘Armed men’ would be a better reading of the original text in any event.¹⁵ Despite this, Guisborough’s account may have been informed by first-person testimony: William le Latimer, whose horse swam him to safety when the bridge broke, was a Yorkshireman who held lands in the immediate vicinity of Guisborough Priory.¹⁶

¹² Guisborough, 219-20, BL Cotton. Vespasian B xi f. 28; Wykes, 290, all cited Prestwich, *Edward I*, 192.

¹³ Langtoft, ii, 178, cited, Prestwich, *Edward I*, 192.

¹⁴ Guisborough, 219-20.

¹⁵ Morris, *Welsh Wars*, 179-80.

¹⁶ *Walter of Guisborough*, 219-20.

When they had reached the foot of the mountain and, after a time, came to a place at some distance from the bridge, the tide came in with a great flow, so that they were unable to get back to the bridge for the depth of water. The Welsh came from the high mountains and attacked them, and in fear and trepidation, for the great number of the enemy. They went into the sea but, heavily laden with arms, they were instantly drowned.

The alternative narrative tradition in English chronicles is that the English force was retreating to the bridge, having been surprised by the Welsh and, in their haste to get to safety, the structure became overloaded, was weakened and then broken by the tide; the pontoons or barges then sunk and the men drowned. Both these possibilities are plausible, though Prestwich prefers the second which appears in several chronicles. The Welsh accounts, give both possibilities. The *Brenhinedd y Saesson* writes of a bridge made 'of boats' (*o ysgraffav*) breaking 'with the flow of the tide' (*gan ffrwd y llanw*).¹⁷ The continuation of the *Brut y Tywysogion* in NLW Peniarth MS 20 begins with a record of the king coming to Rhuddlan and the taking of Anglesey by English forces and continues:

And they desired to gain possession of Arfon. And then was made a bridge over the Menai; but the bridge broke under an excessive load, and countless numbers of the English were drowned and others were slain.¹⁸

All agree, however, that the bridge broke and many drowned among them at least sixteen knights, an extraordinarily high number of casualties for medieval warfare. Other evidence, however, suggests that some may have died in the course of fighting. The accounts for the construction of the bridge make no mention of the destruction of the bridge, but the tidal flow of the straits may well have disturbed its integrity and rendered it difficult, if not impossible to use it to cross back to Anglesey on the day in question. Since not all the English force was killed and none seem to have been captured it seems unlikely that the bridge was broken in the earliest phases of the retreat. William Latimer and the Savoyard, Otto de Grandson were among the lucky ones. Latimer's horse is said to have had the strength to have swum through the waves. De Grandson's horse must have fared similarly: the chances of a fully armed knight of the late thirteenth century clad mostly in chain mail and with the associated undergarments swimming their own way to safety must be classed as remote in the extreme.¹⁹

The Site of the Battle

¹⁷ *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, 258-9.

¹⁸ *BT Pen. 20*, 128.

¹⁹ *Guisborough*, 219; *Annales Cestrienses*, 110-12.

One thing that the narrative accounts make very clear is that the crossing was made at low tide and that the bridge was broken or at least severely damaged by the turn of the tide cutting off or drowning at least some of the forces concerned. This indicates two things: first that the bridge did not cross the entire strait – had it done so and had all de Tany's forces been cut off, it is unlikely that any of them would have survived. Although the casualties seem to have been heavy, it is known that some, both infantry and mounted men, did make it safely back to Anglesey. The second thing the narratives establish is that the crossing was only possible at low tide which indicates that reaching one side or other of the crossing was covered by water at high tide. In view of the fact that the mainland was hostile territory, this was a sensible precaution for the security of both the bridge and English forces. The fullest analysis of the possibilities is given by J. Beverley Smith.²⁰

It has been noted that the traditional name for this encounter has been the 'Battle of Moel-y-Don', a point on the Anglesey shore where the straits narrow to a point that was used as a ferry crossing throughout the Middle Ages.²¹ Beverley Smith suggests that a re-examination of the traditional accounts indicates that a point to the north of Moel-y-Don should be considered and thus the name Moel-y-Don, not recorded before the sixteenth century in any event, should be rejected.

As already noted, Edward's centre of operations on Anglesey was at Llanfaes in the north east corner of the island and in the summer of 1282, troops and supplies were despatched from Rhuddlan to Llanfaes where a large camp was established. The topography of the situation was obviously important for both sides. Before Llanfaes, extending from the mainland at Aber, where the Menai Straits broadened, lay the sandbank of Traeth Lafan over which the tide passed. Aber itself was an important point on the east-west route from lowest short crossing of the river Conwy at Tal-y-Cafn from Perfeddwlad, known commonly as the Four Cantrefs, through the pass at Bwlch y Ddeufaen then descending to the coast for the crossing to Anglesey. This route had been used since Roman times and the crossing from Aber to Llanfaes across the sandbanks on the mainland side at low tide and by ferry across the remaining channel.

The precise location of the bridgehead from Anglesey, essential to the success of Edward's own advance from the east is not clear. When a successful landing was made in the very last days of 1282 it was described as 'near Bangor'. Beverley Smith identifies two possible positions. One is at a point very close to Bangor, either near the present pier, where the straits are narrow or just over a few

²⁰ The following draws heavily on J. Beverley Smith's assessment in his *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 538-42 and
²¹

hundred metres to the north where a broad rocky outcrop, visible at low tide stretched towards Anglesey, while the second lies further north, close to Llanfaes on the Anglesey shore.

The appeal of the shorter crossing at Bangor is obvious, but came with the obvious risk that the bridge could be disturbed at the mainland end, particularly if it ran directly from shore to shore. The narratives of the disaster suggest that this was unlikely. The Llanfaes-Aber crossing, while hazardous, would be at a lesser risk from attack by the defenders and would have used a tried and tested – if risky – route, particularly as the heights of Fridd Ddu rose steeply from the mainland shore. As both Guisborough's chronicle and the *Brenhinedd y Saesson* suggest, the position of de Tany's crossing was certainly subject to the tides, specialist analysis of the likely condition of the tides is included by Beverly Smith in his study courtesy of Professor J.H. Simpson of the University of Wales, Bangor. Professor Simpson's analysis indicates that, on the day in question, 6 November 1282, the tidal range would have been relatively large and the currents would have varied between Bangor on the east and Llanfaes on the west. High water would have been around 1 pm, the current on the ebb at Bangor up to 2.5 knots, reaching its maximum at around 1.30 pm. At Llanfaes, the currents would have been weaker, at less than 1.5 knots. A bridge at Llanfaes therefore would have been less exposed to the damaging effects of tidal flow than one positioned at the shorter crossing at Bangor.

Forces crossing by a bridge at Llanfaes, however, would have faced the secondary challenge of crossing the sandbank of Traeth Lafan and, while they may have managed to make their crossing at low water, making a retreat at a time not of their choosing when tidal conditions were not optimal – as seems to have occurred - following the resistance of the defenders could easily have caused a disaster such as that known to have occurred. The difficulty is that, with the greater tidal flow at Bangor, similar consequences could be envisaged just as easily. That a fortified bridgehead was established at Bangor, at the second attempt suggests that it is possible that both attempts were made at the same place. Beverley Smith ultimately judges that the historical evidence is inconclusive and the intervention of modern science does little to help and, on balance, this view should be accepted.

Participants and Casualties

So far as the numbers of those involved are concerned, we have a variety of estimates to draw upon. Guisborough offers 'seven bannerets and 300 armed men'. This seems a relatively small number – Morris estimates that de Tany might have had twice that number of men at his disposal on

Anglesey.²² If accurate, this may suggest that de Tany's attack was intended as an exploratory expedition rather than as a full assault. The numbers of casualties on the English side cannot be established precisely, though the higher status victims are known. The fullest list, and perhaps this is not surprising, is found in the Chester Annals.²³

In addition to the leader of the force, Luke de Tany, the Chester Annals record the death of fifteen knights. Most are identifiable though it seems likely that one is an error and if present, survived the encounter:

- Roger Clifford junior, whose father had been captured by Llywelyn
- William Audley, whose remains were interred at Hulton Abbey, Cheshire and reveal signs of a gruesomely violent death. His probable remains, unearthed and identified in the course of archaeological excavations, show numerous cut marks, the head had been cut off and the body split down the middle.²⁴
- The sons of Edward I's chancellor, Philip and William Burnel.
- The annals of Peterborough Abbey confirm the death of Peter de la Mare, one of the abbey's tenants whose son Geoffrey entered the abbey's custody and whose affairs were then the subject of litigation.²⁵
- William de Lindsay. William de Lindsay was appointed attorney of the affairs of Thomas de Multon the younger during his service in Wales at Rhuddlan on 20 August 1282. His lands were in the hands of the king on account of his death by 24 November 1282. By January 1291 when his daughter and heir had married Ingram de Gyes.²⁶
- Henry Tyes. A Henry de Tyes, presumably his son, served with Hugh le Despenser in Wales in 1294-5.
- Amari de Burdet – not identified
- Howel, son of Griffin. He can be identified as [Sir] Hywel ap Gruffudd ab Ednyfed, a member of the elite of Anglesey known to have been involved in the operation since he was the uncle

²² Morris, *Welsh Wars*, 177.

²³ *Annales Cestrienses*, 110-12

²⁴ He remains were identified as genetically related- determined by DNA testing – to two others excavated in the chancel and carbon 14 dated to the thirteenth century. The Audley family were the principal benefactors of the abbey in the period and Sir William is the most likely candidate. W.D. Klemperer and N. Boothroyd (eds) *Excavations at Hulton Abbey, Staffordshire 1987-1994*, 133-4.

²⁵ *Chronicon Peterburgense*, 57-8, cited L. Beverley Smith, 'The Death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd: The Narratives Reconsidered', *WHR* (1982), 207, n. 30.

²⁶ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1281-91*, 35, 51, 417.

of Sir Gruffudd Llwyd of Tregarnedd, Anglesey (d. 1335).²⁷ Hywel's widow, Gwenhwyfar received compensation for his death.²⁸ His presence also indicates the probability that a number of Welshmen were also among the infantry who died in the course of the battle. It should be noted that one of the reasons that Edward I was able to gain control of Anglesey in 1282 was the antipathy of members of the elite there towards Llywelyn.

- William le Butiler, son of Richard le Butiler – not identified
- Thomas de Halton – not identified
- William de Odingsels. Though it is entirely possible that he was present, William seems to have survived. He was granted the lands of William de Mohun in Ireland during the latter's minority as 'reward for his service in the last expedition to Wales' on 18 June 1285 and, presumably in connection with this, was granted a letter of protection while he was in Ireland for one year on 24 February 1286 where he remained until at least the end of 1288. This prolonged absence may be the source of the annalist's apparent error.²⁹ He is also named in the Osney Annals among those drowned, but so too is William la Zuche who is extremely unlikely to have been present having been born c. 1277.
- Peter de la Quarere – not identified.
- Walter Jay, superintendent of the masons at Flint during the works there in 1277. Lands he held at Bedeston, Herefordshire, of one of the king's wards had returned to the king's hands and were regranted on 24 February 1283.³⁰

Another casualty seems to have been Bartholomew Godard, the 'warden' of the bridge, though whether he was the victim of enemy action or natural disaster is impossible to say.³¹ Edward I's friend and lieutenant, the Savoyard Otto de Grandson extracted himself only with difficulty while another, William Latimer was saved only by his warhorse swimming to safety.

The size and composition of the Welsh forces is not recorded in the chronicles or in any other sources. It is probable that they outnumbered the English and had the advantage of higher ground but whether they were mounted, which is unlikely but not impossible, or on foot is not known. It is clear, however, that the armies engaged and that the results were bloody. Sir William Audeley's violently dismembered body provides a vivid testimony of the risks of medieval warfare.

²⁷ His death is also noted in a later petition regarding the advowson of the church of Llanrhystud, Cards. Contested by Sir Gruffudd Llwyd and the bishop of Bangor dated c. 1299-1300. *Cal. Anc. Pet. Wales*, p. 265

²⁸ Edwards (ed.), *Littere Wallie*, 122-3

²⁹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1281-91*, 174, 224, 268, 301.

³⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1281-91*, 57.

³¹ Taylor, *The King's Works in Wales, 1277-1330*, 356

Aftermath

Taylor summarises the aftermath – as regards the bridge itself – using surviving accounts. Between 23 November and 28 December, quantities of ‘clays’ and stockading were shipped near-continuously from Rhuddlan to Anglesey either for repairs to the bridge or in preparation for a more secure bridgehead on the Bangor side. The timber was sourced from woodland near St Asaph and, on 4 December, Master Henry of Oxford sailed for Anglesey with a team of 20 carpenters. The royal forces must have secured their fortified bridgehead between 28 December and 3 January, by which time Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was dead, but it is clear that further work, of a substantial nature, was required to render the bridge fully serviceable. Cargoes of boards from Rhuddlan were landed at Bangor and further ‘clays’, for the construction of gangways for the embarking of horses were being supplied as late as 14 February as were various pieces of ironwork and nails ‘for the works of the Bangor Bridge’.³² The continued usefulness of the bridge, which was not dismantled until midsummer when initial works for the castles at Harlech and Caernarfon were underway, indicates something of the precariousness of the position of Edward’s forces on Anglesey in the autumn and winter of 1282.

That the attack was launched in the course of negotiations between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Archbishop Pecham is a matter of importance. The effects of the disaster and defeat upon these negotiations are difficult to gauge but are unlikely to have been of overwhelming significance: Beverly Smith suggests that they had almost certainly have concluded before de Tany’s forces struck and that it is possible that Edward knew of his failure before Pecham presented him with the results of the negotiations. The strategic position was unaltered; Edward’s forces retained control of Anglesey and the king’s resolve to secure his opponent’s surrender unconditionally was likely reinforced.³³

Assessment and significance

Regardless of the difficulties faced by Edward’s forces and the problems of the approach, it appears that his engineers used similar bridges of boats again and built a bridge, in like manner, across the river Forth in Scotland.³⁴ The location of the battle on the shores of the Menai Strait cannot be confirmed with sufficient accuracy from the available sources though Beverley Smith’s assessment gives two convincing possibilities. The course of the battle is at least clear: Luke de Tany’s forces

³² TNA E 101/4/6

³³ Beverly Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 542.

³⁴ Barrow, *Bruce*, 178 cited Beverly Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 542,

advanced across a temporary but well-planned bridge across the Menai Strait without leave of King Edward and encountered Welsh forces. These forces evidently engaged with the English army and forced them into retreat. In the course of this retreat, whether by changes of the tide or by panic of the men overwhelming the bridge or of a combination of the two, the bridge broke and a great many men of high and low status were drowned. These men included the commander, de Tany and several experienced knights.

The effect of this reversal on the outcome of the war, however, was short-lived. In part this was because Edward retained Anglesey and was able to reconstruct the bridge, though perhaps not in the same place, to reinforce the bridgehead and to use it to secure his hold on the area around Bangor apparently unmolested. Edward I was, no doubt, aided by the fact that Llywelyn's supporters were divided at the time of the calamity and that by the time the bridge was repaired, Llywelyn had been killed.

Conclusions

This is a battle that appears to have been mis-named and consequently mis-located. Beverley Smith's reassessment, with its careful consideration of primary sources and tidal dynamics should be accepted in full. The name 'Moel-y-Don' does not appear in any contemporary record but only in historical works from the sixteenth century and later. That Edward I's main base was at Llanfaes should cast significant doubt on such identification in any event. Logistically, moving the supplies an additional 6-7km overland to build a bridge at a point to the south of the modern Menai bridges which would require an additional 6-7km detour over high ground to reach Bangor and to connect with Edward's own forces approaching from the direction of Conwy makes very little sense and we would expect to find significant payments to carters and other labourers to move the material required for its construction. A crossing at Moel-y-Don would also be subject to a significantly faster tidal flow and an increased risk, higher even than that which was clearly inherent with a crossing at a point further north. Since Edward's engineers were clearly capable and experienced men with access to significant local knowledge it is hard to understand what factors could have inspired such a choice. The fact that the fortified bridgehead that was established after the disaster is always described as being 'near Bangor' mean that the location must surely be one of the two suggested by Beverley Smith: an area near the modern pier or, a few hundred metres to the north where a rocky outcrop protrudes into the strait. Moel-y-Don should be disregarded.³⁵

³⁵ Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 542.

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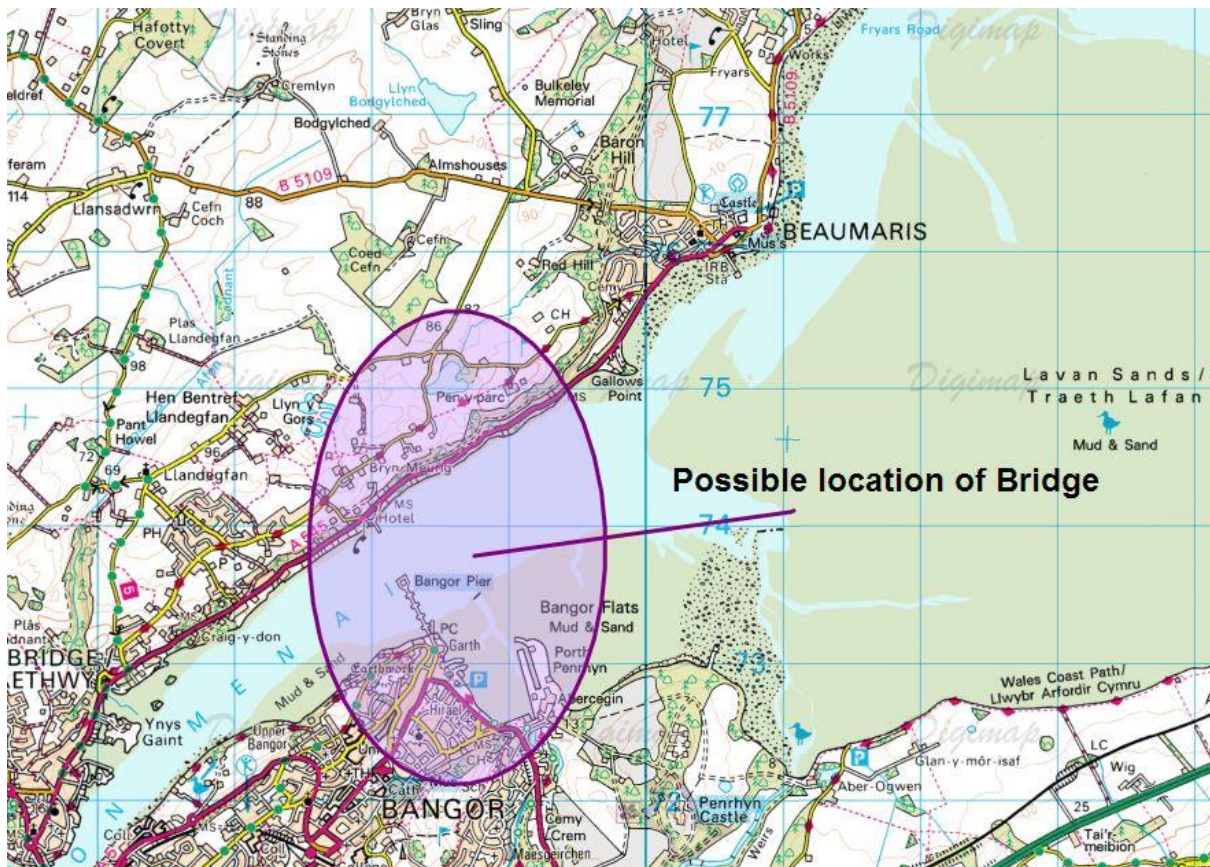
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The English forces approached from a camp at Llanfaes (cleared to make way for Beaumaris) and took to a bridge 'near Bangor'. The most likely location for the bridge, and thus the vicinity of the battle, is near the modern pier. The precise location of the battle is not known, but has probably been obscured by the growth of Bangor.