

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/HI STORIC 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

				<p>Cymru, 2012)</p> <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 Castle (siege)	1404-05	Morgannwg Glamorgan	545701	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) 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) /	1797	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	308824	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical

Carregwastad Point – Fishguard (invasion)				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	Sir Gaerfyrddin	545245 545341 545436	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)

	1644		545746	
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	1287-8	Sir Gaerfyrddin	545606	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)

Emlyn (siege)		Carmarthenshire		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 Archaeology, 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 Pembrokeshire	405188	Ymchwil ddogfenol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Pwll Melyn	1405	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402320	Ymchwil ddogfenol 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 ddogfenol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Sain Ffagan / St Fagans	1648	Morgannwg Glamorgan	307776	Ymchwil ddogfenol 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 Caernarfonshire	403421	Ymchwil ddogfenol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) 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

Bryn Derwin - 1255

County: Caernarfonshire

Community: Clynnog

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Date: February 2013



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Bryn Derwin (1255):

Introduction

The battle of Bryn Derwin was a battle for, in effect, the unity and independence of Gwynedd born out of the division and dissension born out of the situation following the deaths of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth (d. 1240) and Gruffudd ap Llywelyn (d. 1246). It was a short and decisive battle which resulted in the victory of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and his forces over forces led by two of his brothers, Owain and Dafydd. At the end of the battle, Owain and Dafydd were captured and imprisoned and Llywelyn achieved dominance over all Gwynedd. After the battle, through diplomatic agreements with other native Welsh rulers, Llywelyn was able to take quick advantage from the victory and within two years had achieved influence, if not outright control or overlordship, over much of native Wales. The battle was the catalyst for this process although its precise date and scale is unknown; its location can be given with surprising accuracy.

Context

The thirteenth century in Europe was pivotal in shaping ideas of royal power, authority and kingship. In France, the reign of Louis IX (1226-1270) – venerated as Saint Louis after 1297 – redefined the rites surrounding kingship within France. The French crown exerted a hitherto unprecedented dominance over the affairs of its great lords through the exercise of law and royal justice. One of the French crown's chief lords, the duke of Aquitaine, was also king of England and French 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 personal authority of the king or prince assumed a new importance.

The death of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, Prince of Gwynedd, in 1240 was only a single but important landmark in a period of strife for native-ruled Wales. Between 1240 and 1247, Gwynedd had been weakened and after the death of Dafydd ap Llywelyn in February 1246 the process of disintegration was seemingly inevitable. The principality was, 'by the counsel of the wise men of the land', divided between Dafydd's two nephews, Owain and Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.¹ While the partition may have averted civil war in the short term it only succeeded in weakening still further the already weak

¹ *Brut y Tywysogion* sa 1246, cited by Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 308.

position of Gwynedd relative to the kingdom of England. The situation was not helped by the existence of two other brothers, Dafydd and Rhodri, who might have pressed their own claims for a share of the principality. Their ambitions – with those of other pretenders in various parts of Gwynedd – were exploited and encouraged by Henry III of England. By 1250, native Wales appeared to have been reduced to ‘a collection of pliant and fragmented protectorates of the English Crown and the process of the effective subjection, if not the military conquest, of the country seemed now to be set on an inexorable course.’²

In 1246, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had no option but to share Gwynedd with his brother Owain and to conclude a humiliating treaty with Henry III at Woodstock in 1247. This treaty ceded Gwynedd Is Conwy – the four cantrefs between the rivers Dee and Conwy – to the king and, by being party to the treaty, the partition of the remainder of Gwynedd made in 1246 was given tacit endorsement.

The battle of Bryn Derwin was the culmination of a series of events by which Llywelyn ap Gruffudd emerged as the most powerful of the claimants to the principality of Gwynedd and rescued the principality from apparently terminal decline. A key development came in November 1250, when Llywelyn concluded a secret alliance of mutual aid with Gruffudd ap Madog, Welsh lord of northern Powys. A year later, this time with his brother Owain, Llywelyn concluded a similar agreement with Maredudd ap Rhys Gryg and Rhys Fychan ap Rhys Mechyll of Deheubarth promising to act together as if they were ‘sworn brothers’ (L. *fratres conterini*). This alliance of native Welsh rulers was an essential development to face opposition from the English and from other Welsh lords but it did not resolve the difficulties facing Gwynedd.

After at least 1253, and in all likelihood earlier, Llywelyn and his brothers had been in dispute over the partition of Gwynedd to make provision for the youngest brother, Dafydd, who was ‘already casting himself in the role of arch-troublemaker, a role which he consistently played throughout the rest of his life.’³ By the beginning of 1254, at the latest, Llywelyn knew that Henry III was proceeding with his declared course of action of securing for Dafydd the portion of his inheritance which he considered was the prince’s right. These intentions were given substance by the appointment of a commission consisting of Alan la Zouche, justice of Chester, John Lestrangle, Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys and Gruffudd ap Madog of northern Powys on 26 April 1254. The king empowered the commissioners to hear disputes between the brothers and, based upon the evidence presented, the king’s council would then do them justice.⁴ The rejection of this process

² Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 308.

³ Davies, *The Age of Conquest*, 309.

⁴ *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1247-58*, 362.

which was transparently designed to subordinate the native rulers of Gwynedd was to culminate in a struggle for outright control.

Primary Sources

The principal sources are well-known and understood and have been assembled and analysed most recently by Jenkin Beverley Smith in his biography of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales. Understandably, the most significant sources are the Welsh annals; the various versions of the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Brut y Tywysogion* as it survives in NLW Peniarth MS 20 and in the Red Book of Hergest.

Secondary Accounts

The earliest comprehensive historical commentary on this battle is found in J.E. Lloyd's two volume *History of Wales*. Inevitably, such a pioneering work has been refined by later scholarship and, like much else in the career of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the standard work is J. Beverley Smith's *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales* (first published, in Welsh, as *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Tywysog Cymru*). This comprehensive study draws together all of the recent scholarship and considerable amounts of antiquarian and traditions associated with the period

Prelude

The author of the monastic annals of Chester was of the view that the dispute was fundamentally about the division of lands.⁵ From the nature of the commission assembled by Henry III, it was evident that the king perceived opposition to the dissection of Gwynedd as an issue between Dafydd and Llywelyn. Their elder brother, Owain, had made clear his acceptance of the principle of making provision for Dafydd and was invited to present any charge against Llywelyn as part of the same process while doing nothing to disturb the peace.⁶ The dispute and provision for each of the brothers – with the permanent division of Gwynedd that this would bring – was naturally going to result in conflict; the memory of the dominance achieved by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, Llywelyn Fawr (the great) and the attempts he had made to reform the governance of Gwynedd was too recent.

⁵ *Annales Cestrienses*, 70.

⁶ Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 71.

The battle of Bryn Derwin marked the conclusion of Henry III's attempts to impose an internal territorial settlement upon Gwynedd but it did not end the challenges to the rule of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.

Location and Date

The clearest evidence concerning the site of the battle comes from a praise poem directed toward Llywelyn by Llygad Gŵr following his victory:

Cad a wnaeth, cadarn ymgerydd
 Am gyfoeth an Cefn Gelowydd.
 Ni bu gad hwylid hefelydd-gyfred
 Er pan fu weithred Waith Arderydd.
 Breisglaw Mon mwynfawr Wyndodydd
 Bryn Derwin! Clo byddin clodrydd!
 Ni bu edifar y dydd – y cyrchawdd
 Cyrch eofn esillydd.
 Gwelai wawr ar wŷr lluosydd
 Fel gwr yn gwrthladd cywilydd,
 A welai Lewelyn, lewenydd – dragon,
 Yng nghymysg Arfon ac Eiddionydd.
 Nid oedd hawdd, llew aerflawdd lluydd,
 Ei dreisiaw ger Drws Daufynydd.

He waged war, [that] steadfast rebuker,
 For a kingdom around Cefn Gelorwydd⁷
 No attack was as swift
 Since the exploits of the battle of Arthuret.
 The sturdy lion of Anglesey [among] Gwynedd's generous men
 Bryn Derwin! He was the stay of a celebrated army!
 There were no regrets the day he withstood
 The shameless attack of his own stock;
 He who saw Llywelyn, the jubilation of warriors,

⁷ This location has defied identification.

On the borders of Arfon and Eifionydd,
 Would see a lord over men in hosts
 Like a man dispelling dishonour.
 It was not easy, a lion in a host and fearsome in combat,
 To vanquish him by Drws Daufynydd.⁸

The poem places the battle on the boundary of the commotes of Arfon and Eifionydd near Bwlch Dau Fynydd (the pass of the two mountains – Drws Daufynydd/the door of the two mountains). Lloyd confidently interprets this ‘near the modern Bwlch Derwyn and Derwyn Fawr... on the borders of the parishes of Clynnog and Dolbenmaen. Bwlch Dau Fynydd is a little to the west.’⁹ The narrative given in the *Brut y Tywysogion* provides no additional geographical detail.

The site identified by Lloyd lies in a pass around 250 metres wide between Mynydd Cennin and Y Foel, named Bwlch Derwin, though the name Bryn Derwin suggests a site at the summit of the pass. If this were the case, Llywelyn would have enjoyed the advantage of height though since nothing at all is known of the weapons or tactics employed, we cannot be sure what effect this might have had. If this is the site, we may speculate that – based on the evidence of the poem – Llywelyn’s forces barred the way of Owain and Dafydd coming from the south east: the poet clearly imagines Bwlch Daufynydd as a backcloth to the battle and this would accord with what is known of the relative disposition of the lands of Llywelyn, Owain and those of particularly Dafydd within Gwynedd. This is discussed below.

The dating of the battle is problematic. Even Lloyd was unwilling to provide a specific date, going no further than ‘in the summer of 1255’. The evidence is thin. The B manuscript of the *Annales Cambriae* states that the battle was fought ‘hisdem diebus’ (in these days) as an event ascribed to the neighbourhood of 24 June.¹⁰ An entry in the English Close Rolls, an enrolled letter to the justiciar of Chester by Edmund, earl of Cornwall, and others dated at Woodstock on 20 June indicates that the battle was fought several days earlier.¹¹ The available evidence therefore narrows the date no further than to the first half of June 1255.

Narrative

⁸ *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd ac Eraill*, ed. R.Geraint Gruffydd (Cardiff, 1994), 24. 94-102, translation by Ann Parry Owen cited Beverly Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 72.

⁹ Lloyd, *History of Wales*, ii, 715, n. 127.

¹⁰ Lloyd, *History of Wales*, ii, 715, n. 126.

¹¹ *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1254-56*, 204.

"Llywelyn awaited the armies of his brothers at Bryn Derwin, in the mountain pass which leads from Arfon to Eifionydd, not far from the battlefield of Bron yr Erw, and there in the space of one hour inflicted upon them a signal defeat, taking both Owain and David prisoners."

(Source: J.E.Lloyd, A History of Wales, 1912, Vol.2, p.715.)

"The next stage in the history of Caernarvonshire was reached when in 1255 the nephews quarrelled, and at Bryn Derwyn, in the pass which leads from Llanllyfni to Dolbenmaen, the abler of the two, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, won a signal triumph which was the beginning of a long and honourable career."

(Source: Cambridge County Histories: Carnarvonshire, 1911; p. 92.)

The preliminaries to the battle are far from clear but Llygad Gŵr implies that it was Dafydd and Owain who initiated hostilities: *Ni bu edifar y dydd – y cyrchawdd/Cyrch eofn esillydd* (There were no regrets the day he withstood/The shameless attack of his own stock). We do not, unfortunately, know from which direction they marched or where their forces assembled.

The partition of Gwynedd made in 1246 may be relevant here. Beverley Smith tentatively suggests a division of Gwynedd as a whole based on the division which is observable in Anglesey. Here, Llywelyn held the northern and eastern commotes of Talybolion, Twrcelyn and Dindaethwy; the southern and western commotes of Llifon, Malltraeth and Menai were held by Owain. Beyond Anglesey, it seems that Owain held the Cantref of Llŷn (the Llŷn peninsula) and possibly Eifionydd. From these lands, Owain appears to have granted the Commote of Cymydmaen to Dafydd in lieu of a patrimony. Jenkin Beverley Smith notes that it is certain that Llywelyn held the commote of Penllyn to the east of Eifionydd as well as at least part of Arfon the coastal commote on the west of post-conquest Caernarvonshire. This south-west/north-east division may well have been reflected across Gwynedd. Such a division would have given Llywelyn more land – much of it mountainous – but territories which were more or less discreet and of roughly equivalent *economic* value. Although Owain, as elder brother, held the symbolic and politically important centre of Aberffraw on Anglesey in 1255 it would be possible that Owain and Dafydd advanced from their territory in the south towards Llywelyn's in the north. If this were the case, we may speculate that Owain and Dafydd's forces advanced from Llŷn into Eifionydd and north towards Arfon where Llywelyn and his forces were waiting for them.

The basic outline of the battle is given in the *Brut y Tywysogion* (Red Book of Hergest version):

1255: In those days great strife was bred at the instigation of the Devil between the sons of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, namely, Owain Goch and Dafydd, on the one side, and Llywelyn, on the other side. And then Llywelyn and his men, trusting in God, awaited unafraid on Bryn Derwin the fierce coming of his brothers, and a mighty host along with them. And before the end of one hour Owain Goch [Owain ap Gruffudd] was captured and Dafydd fled, after many of his host had been slain and others had been captured and the remainder had fled. And then Owain was imprisoned, and Llywelyn gained possession of the territory of Owain and Dafydd without opposition to him.¹²

The battle was short, sharp and fought quickly to a conclusion. Llywelyn and his forces stood at Bryn Derwin, in the pass, and awaited the attack of the opposing army led by his brothers Owain and Dafydd. Owain was captured and Dafydd fled, their army being either killed, captured or fleeing with Dafydd. The Red Book of Hergest version of the *Brut y Tywysogion* is alone in suggesting that Dafydd fled. All other accounts: The *Annales Cambriae*; Peniarth MS 20 version of the *Brut y Tywysogion* and the *Cronica de Wallia* indicate that Dafydd was taken in the aftermath of the battle.¹³

Troops and Casualties

The available sources have nothing specific to say about the forces that faced each other at Bryn Derwin. Clearly the armies were of a reasonable size; they are described as hosts, implying forces above and beyond the *teuluoedd* (Military Households) of the brothers themselves. It is probable that those captured and taken prisoner were of elite status but no idea is given of numbers or any named captives beyond Owain and Dafydd ap Gruffudd.

Aftermath

The immediate effects of the battle, and the disposal of the dead and wounded, are unknown. The fate of the Owain and Dafydd, however, differed sharply. Owain, the elder brother, and thus the greater threat to Llywelyn, was to remain in captivity until 1277. Dafydd, however, was released relatively shortly thereafter. The account of the *Brut* suggests that the battle was decisive and that,

¹² Jones (ed.), *Brut y Tywysogion, Red Book of Hergest version*, 246-7.

¹³ Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, 73.

with two of his three brothers in his custody, Llywelyn's hold over Gwynedd Uwch Conwy was unchallenged and for sixteen months afterwards, he paused before sweeping across the river Conwy into *Perfeddwlad* (Gwynedd Is Conwy or the Four Cantrefws) towards the end of 1256.

It should be noted that the fourth brother, Rhodri, seems not to have been involved in the conflict of 1255, nor in the disputes that led up to it. Beverley Smith notes that a Rhodri ap Gruffudd is found as a hostage in English royal custody between 1250 and 1254, possibly as a pledge for the faith of Llywelyn; it is more than likely that this Rhodri was the fourth brother. His role in future conflict was a minor one; he eventually asserted his hereditary right, but possibly only to secure some recompense for ceding it to Llywelyn in 1272 when he accepted a sum of 1000 Marks in exchange for yielding it. It is not known whether Llywelyn's plans or proposals made to Henry III 'concerning his brothers' mentioned Rhodri. The consequences of Bryn Derwin for the elder brother, Owain, were to be imprisonment lasting twenty-two years while Dafydd was released before Llywelyn advanced into *Perfeddwlad* in November 1256. Dafydd is found in Llywelyn's service in the next years, participating in a campaign in south-west Wales in 1258 when he is described as 'a young man most splendid in arms'.¹⁴ In the same year he appears second to Llywelyn in a record of an agreement between the princes of Wales and a group of Scottish magnates, and in 1260 he and Llywelyn put their seals to an agreement for the prolongation of the truce with Henry III.¹⁵

Assessment

The effects of Llywelyn's victory at Bryn Derwin were far more important than a mere military victory. The defeat of his brothers gave him – for a time – hegemony over Gwynedd. The secret alliances concluded with other native rulers in 1250-1 could be activated and the homages of Welsh magnates, hitherto reserved to the English king were covertly transferred to Llywelyn.

The basic outline of the battle appears unambiguous from the available narratives. Llywelyn's forces overwhelmed those of his brothers who appear to have attacked him and his forces quickly and decisively. The location appears to be securely established and well-known even several generations after the event. Unusually in praise poetry, the geographical location provided in Llygad Gŵr's poem is precise and other references to the battle are consistent in the name given to the site. Allowing for the geography of the area, the site of the battlefield must have been relatively small and clearly

¹⁴ *Annales Cambriae*, 96.

¹⁵ J. B. Smith, 'Dafydd ap Gruffudd (d. 1283)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7324>, accessed 10 Jan 2013]

defined between Mynydd Cennin and Y Foel though detail is lacking. If the poem is correct, Llywelyn would have had choice of the ground and could have taken advantage of the height available especially if Owain and Dafydd's forces were approaching from the south. The available evidence, however, suggests that this was not a highly tactical battle; Llywelyn's men possessed the high ground and presumably used this to their advantage; the battle was over quickly. The date can only be loosely given. There is no doubt that it occurred in early June 1255, but it is impossible to narrow the date further on the evidence available.

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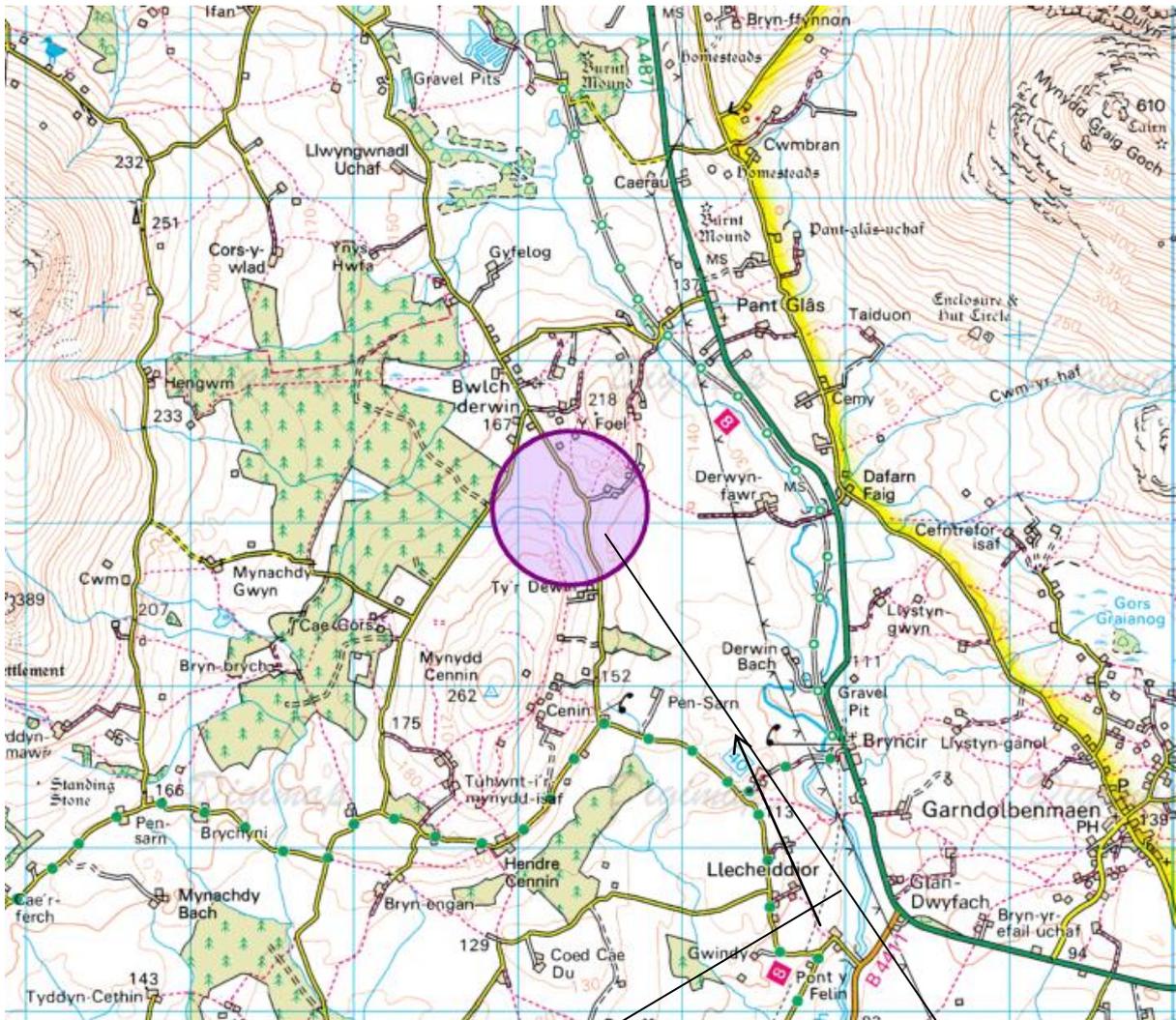
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Bryn Derwin (1255)

by Dr Adam Chapman, 2013

Based on the possible distribution of the brothers' lands – Llywelyn in the north and east of Gwynedd Uwch Conwy Owain's in the south and west with Dafydd's in Llŷn it is likely – but by no means certain – that their forces approached from the south.

Probable Battle site in Bwlch Derwin, a pass between Ty'r Dewin and Y Foel. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's forces met those of his brothers Owain and Dafydd in the pass. The implication of the poetic description of the engagement is that Llywelyn was waiting for his brothers and therefore had choice of the ground.