**Place names – more. 3**

As spring approaches we all seek signs of greenery in the countryside. So do the names Pantglas {Blue hollow), Nantglas {blue stream), Llwynglas (Blue bush] and Bancynglas (Blue hillock] suggest a distinct element of colour blindness? Not so! For whereas *glas* in modern Welsh means blue originally in Old Welsh it meant green. So it all makes sense, as does *glaswellt* which means grass.

Place names are not always what they seem. The most famous faux pas happened when someone rushed to his dictionary in pursuit of the meaning of *Amlwch* in Anglesey. *Aml* (many or frequent) and *hwch* (sow), he deducted meant a place where a lot of pigs were kept. True many of those animals are bred on Ynys Mon, but Amlwch means something quite different. *Am* (to encircle) and *lwch* (llwch) coming from the same base as loch means a place surrounded by water. Note the local Llanllwch near Carmarthen, meaning a church by a lake, which later became a bog.

The 19thcentury writer Brutus {born in Llanpumsaint village) long argued that his home area, alongside Anglesey, was once one of the chief centres of Druidical power in Wales. Since the oak tree and the holly lay at the centre of their beliefs, he quoted local place names in support of his theory. Thus Llwyncelyn (Holly bush), Llwynderi (Oak bush), and Deri mysg (Oak water – uisc and whiskey come from that same base too) provided evidence, and he reckoned the main H.Q. to be at Pantydriw (Hollow of the Wren) We know that Christianity adopted Druidical sites for their own purposes, so Dderwengroes (Oak Cross) and Llwyncroes ( bush of the Cross) come into the reckoning.

Much of that lies way back in antiquity but Bettws farm in Nebo holds a real authenticated site of an old church. Bettws comes from the English Bede house meaning a house of prayer where beads were counted during devotion. That church was in use till the 18th century. Note Bettwsycoed, Bettws Ifan and Bettws near Ammanford as other examples.

Many trees were sacred to the Celts and the survival of place names reflects those locations as centres of long forgotten religious beliefs and practices. You’ll find plenty of examples in the parish of Llanpumsaint. Llwynbedw (Birch bush), Pantyfedwen (Birch hollow) and simply Bedw near Ffynnonhenri. Llwynhelyg brings the willow into contention and the alder is represented in the name of Cwmwernen. Penllwyniorwg (the main ivy bush) and Penllwynuchel (head of the tallest bush) indicates that these locations were at one time chief centres of power in the Nebo (Ystum Gwili) part of the parish.

Pantymeillion (Clover hollow), Brynmeillion (Clover hillock) and Clover itself are of a different era. But beware again, Pantycelyn and Celynos are neither ancient Druidic nor Christian sites. The former dates from the early 19thcentury and reflects a connection to William Williams Pantycelyn, the famous Methodist hymn writer from Llandovery. When David and May Evans retired just across the road from Pantycelyn in the mid 20th century, Celynos was a totally appropriate for their twilight home.

Arwyn2015