

Pentre-poeth vs Treforgan: A Discussion Paper

Introduction

This discussion has arisen as a result of the need to move a sign at our community boundary, at the south end of Heol Isaf, as part of the roadworks needed to prepare for the construction of Plasdwr

Cardiff Council sent us their drawings for the new sign. The current sign refers to Treforgan, the drawings refer to Pentre-poeth.

This reflects the fact that two Welsh language names have been used, over the years, for Morganstown.

The Current Situation

When there is some uncertainty about which Welsh language name should be used for any place, the matter can be considered by the Welsh Language Commissioner's Place-names Standardisation Panel. The panel has published a short document setting out how it approaches its task: <https://tinyurl.com/ydh9mfha>

The guidance refers to the fact that the panel takes the following, as its starting point:

As a starting point, forms recommended in Elwyn Davies, Rhestr o Enwau Lleoedd/A Gazetteer of Welsh Place-Names (3rd edn; University of Wales Press, 1967) should be acknowledged, alongside the previous recommendations of the Welsh Language Board's Place-Names Standardisation Team. The Gazetteer is the standard reference work for Welsh place-names. One should not deviate from its recommendations without good reason. However, as many settlements, suburbs and towns have developed since 1967, and today's linguistic climate in Wales is different, the Panel must interpret the forms given in the Gazetteer. The remainder of this document is an attempt to formalise and interpret the conventions used in the Gazetteer.

That Gazetteer recommended Pentre-poeth as the Welsh language name for Morganstown.

That view was supported by the Welsh Language Board place names team in 2006 and the Welsh Language Commissioner's panel in 2015.

As such, Pentre-poeth is the name recognised today by the Place-names Standardisation Panel, the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council as the one that should be used. Indeed, Barrie Crompton - Cardiff Council's official in charge of signage confirmed, in an email dated 21 November:

"With the matter of Treforgan or Pentre-poeth, I can confirm that the Council will only proceed with the recommendation of the Welsh Language Commissioner, as they are responsible for arbitrating in such matters. Therefore, the Council will be utilising Pentre-poeth on any new highway directional signs".

Although there is evidence that Treforgan appears on some documents published by Cardiff Council (which may reflect the fact that old stock, or old translations, have not been updated), the fact remains that with regard to key issues, such as the name of the Morganstown ward, Cardiff Council refers to it as Pentre-poeth (<https://tinyurl.com/ybz6tybr>)

As such, this is *not* a question of asking that Treforgan should *remain* as the recognised Welsh language name for Morganstown. The question is, should the Community Council ask that the recognised name should be changed, from Pentre-poeth to Treforgan?

This is a field where expert opinion can be useful. As such, we have sought the views of people who understand how to research the origins of the names Pentre-poeth and Treforgan - and who are well versed in the history of this area, and Cardiff as a whole. The key experts in this case have been:

- Mr Allan Cook - a well know and respected local historian
- Dr Dylan Foster Evans - recommended to us by the Welsh Language Commissioner. Dr Evans is a member of the Place-names Standardisation Panel; an expert in the history of the Welsh language in Cardiff - and head of the School of Welsh at Cardiff University. Given that Dr Evans is a member of the Place-names Standardisation Panel, he has confirmed that in researching this issue further, he was not tied to the panel's previous pronouncements with regard to Pentre-poeth and Treforgan - and approached the task with an open mind, unearthing as much evidence as he could find.

Options

As a council, we have a number of options. they are:

- a) Do nothing. Simply let Cardiff Council proceed with the new sign and make no comment.
- b) Ask that the name on the new sign be altered to Treforgan.
- c) Agree that the new sign should refer to Pentre-poeth.
- d) Ask Cardiff Council (and we may have to ask the Welsh Government as well) to let us decide whether Pentre-poeth or Treforgan should be the recognised name (in all its uses, including the name of the electoral ward).

With regard to **option a**: it would seem curious for Radyr and Morganstown Community Council not to have an interest in a sign to be placed at the community's boundaries, especially when the sign will refer to Pentre-poeth, which is referred to as Treforgan in the council's own name. We *should* have a view about this

With regard to **option b**: Cardiff Council (via Barrie Crompton) have said that this would be possible, but that the community council would have to deal with any complaints from the public - and defend its decision to opt for Treforgan. This, however, would result in all of the directional signs erected by Cardiff Council referring to Pentre-poeth (as most of them do at present) only for the sign at the community boundary to refer to Treforgan. This, of course, would be inconsistent - and possibly confusing for those unfamiliar with the area. Also, people who live (according to the signage) in Treforgan, would, in fact, be voting in the Pentre-poeth ward - and receiving correspondence from Cardiff Council referring to Pentre-poeth. Again, this would be inconsistent. In addition, were we to be asked (by, for instance, those who voted for Pentre-poeth in the polls referred to elsewhere in this document) why we think Treforgan should be the recognised Welsh language name, we would need to defend that decision - and do so in the light of the available expert advice.

With regard to **option c**: This, in effect, would be an acceptance by Radyr and Morganstown Community Council that Pentre-poeth is the recognised Welsh language version of Morganstown. This would bring us in line with the Place-names Standardisation Panel, the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council.

With regard to **option d**: This would certainly enable consistency with regard to signage and documents etc. However, it would still require the community council to defend its view that Treforgan should be the recognised Welsh language name, in the light of the available expert advice. It is also uncertain whether or not Cardiff Council or the Welsh Government would allow this to happen (although, of course, we could ask).

The expert advice

a) Allan Cook

Mr Cook suggests that there is no easy answer to this problem - and that any final decision will be a *political* one to a greater or lesser extent. It is not clear, however, why Mr Cook believes that this should be a **political decision**. It should be made on the basis of expert advice, based on evidence that can be used in support of the decision. Personal preferences or political issues should not hold sway.

Mr Cook discusses, at some length, **whether old references to Pentre-poeth did, in fact, refer to the area which is today's Morganstown**. However, he also states that he has no proof to support this view. (In the meantime, Dr Evans does offer proof in his paper that Morganstown and Pentre-poeth are one and the same. This includes a notice of baptism in the Radyr parish records from 1878 that refers to 'Morganstown else Pentrepoeth'). In addition, at paragraph 7 of his paper, Mr Cook notes that *'This settlement has been known by a variety of names, none of them official or recognised. Ty'n y Berllan, Pentre, Pentre-poeth, Pentrepoeth, Treforgan, Morganstown, Pentyrch Halt'*. This would seem to contradict his point about the location of Pentre-poeth (although we would need to discuss this apparent contradiction with Mr Cook in order to be clearer about it). He also notes, at paragraph 8, that Pentre-poeth is recorded twice in the Radyr Parish registers in the last decade of the 19th century.

At paragraphs 12 to 14 Mr Cook refers to a discussion he had with **Karen Whitecross, the clerk who created the community council's Welsh name**. However, whatever she was told by Cardiff Council and the Welsh Assembly Government at the time (around the year 2000) - and she says that she was told to use Treforgan - we know that the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council are now of the view that Pentre-poeth should be used.

At paragraph 18 Mr Cook refers to the **Dictionary of Place Names in Wales** (which he considers to be an 'excellent volume'). Although, as Mr Cook points out, it gives only half a page to Morganstown, it does give, as the Welsh language version of the name, 'Pentre-poeth'. It does refer to Treforgan as 'also very common', but there are more reference here to Pentre, or Pentre-poeth - and it is Pentre-poeth which is included, in bold letters, next to Morganstown at the head of the entry.

At paragraph 22 Mr Cook seems to question a reference in the Dictionary of Place Names to *"Pentre-poeth (poeth "hot") probably in the sense of one built on land cleared by burning or in an area notable for industrial activity"*. But, again, there is no evidence to support how links between Morganstown and areas of industrial activity actually related to the name Pentre poeth.

At paragraph 23 Mr Cook again refers to **other places (ie not Morganstown) as more deserving of the name 'hot'**. However, as mentioned above, there is no evidence to support the view that Pentre-poeth was not the same place as Morganstown.

At paragraph 35 Mr Cook refers to the Welsh Language Commissioner's guidance that **'pedantic or revived antiquarian forms should be avoided'**. This does not seem relevant in this case, however, where Pentre-poeth was identified as the preferred name in the 1967 Gazetteer, by the place name panels in 2006 and 2015; is recognised as such by the Place-names Standardisation Panel, the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council - and was the preferred name (by quite a margin) in two recent (albeit small) polls.

At paragraph 40, Mr Cook suggests that **Pentre-poeth has never had any official status** and might not even refer to Morganstown. It is clear, however, that Pentre-poeth is the name accepted by the Place-names Standardisation Panel, the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council - and, as such, it does have some status (it is not clear what

'official' status might mean, in law, with regard to place names). The location of Pentre-poeth has been discussed above - and in Dr Evan's paper.

At paragraph 4, Mr Cook states ***'I cannot find a point at which Cardiff City Council started to use Pentre-poeth and this is the reason for the the discrepancy in the signage at the two ends of the villages'***. However, the point at which Cardiff Council began to use Pentre-poeth is not the issue here. The council *does* use it now.

Mr Cook does not provide any specific evidence in support of Treforgan.

Dr Evans

Dr Evans's paper presents the evidence he has found in relation to Pentre-poeth and Treforgan. He also provides a link to a Wikipedia page where his source references can be found (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morganstown>).

I cannot find any obvious discrepancies, or points made without supporting evidence, in the paper.

Dr Evans concludes as follows

'Based on the evidence presented, it is clear that the names Pentre-poeth and Morganstown refer to the same place. There is also clear evidence that Pentre-poeth was the usual Welsh name for the village in the local Welsh dialect in the 19th and 20th centuries. The evidence we have of use amongst Welsh speakers today is also clearly in favour of Pentre-poeth. On that basis, there seems to be no reason to ask Cardiff Council to consider changing the Welsh name of Morganstown to Treforgan'.

Conclusion

It would seem that Pentre-poeth should be the name recognised by the community council, based on the evidence that we have received - including the (albeit limited) evidence with regard to current usage amongst Welsh speakers.

That level of usage could be investigated further, but advice from the Welsh Language Commissioner about how that could be done would require a substantial amount of work to be undertaken.

In addition, Treforgan sounds, to the ear, like a 'calque', which is a word borrowed from another language, by literal translation (thus Morgans-town becomes Tre-forgan). It could be argued that borrowed words, or names, such as these are less attractive than words, or names, which have their own pedigree.

If the council agrees with this view, then we would need to consider what steps should be taken as a result.

Huw Onllwyn Jones
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