

Official records created by local bodies are by their very nature territorial, and to use them effectively it is necessary to work out where the boundaries are. This leaflet is intended as a guide to the various local government areas that have existed in West Glamorgan, with some brief notes on the nature and purpose of some of the types of authority or area.

Parishes began as areas belonging to a particular church and vicar, but they gained other functions as time went by, including poor relief from 1601-1837, and they were used in taxation and rating as well. Some of the larger parishes subdivided into *hamlets* or *divisions* which were used for taxation purposes. In 1894 civil parish councils were set up, based on the existing ancient parish boundaries. In Wales these were renamed Community Councils in 1974 and a major redrawing of boundaries took place in 1983.

Hundreds were ancient subdivisions of counties and were used for taxation and the administration of justice; for example, the land tax was levied by hundred, and hundreds form the basis of magistrates' court districts. Their boundaries often had ancient roots; for example, Swansea and Llangyfelach hundreds together made up the Marcher Lordship of Gower, and two hundreds were Welsh Gower (Llangyfelach Hundred) and English Gower (Swansea Hundred).

Poor Law Unions were formed under the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834. They were not subdivisions of counties, but districts of convenience, and many unions straddled county boundaries. Each had a workhouse and were governed by a board of guardians. They were abolished by the Local Government Act 1929.

Registration districts were established in 1837 for the registration of births, deaths and marriages. They had the same boundaries as poor law unions until 1929, when various rationalisations took place. The districts have changed many times since then, often reflecting current local authority boundaries.

District Councils were set up in 1894 and consisted of county and municipal boroughs, urban district councils, which were generally areas that had established themselves as local boards of health prior to 1894, and rural district councils. There were various subsequent local changes between 1918 and 1930. In 1974 the distinctions between the different kinds of district council were abolished and smaller councils were combined to make larger units which were simply called district councils. Then in 1996 district councils and county councils in Wales were abolished and unitary authorities were established, taking on all the functions that had previously been split between districts and counties.

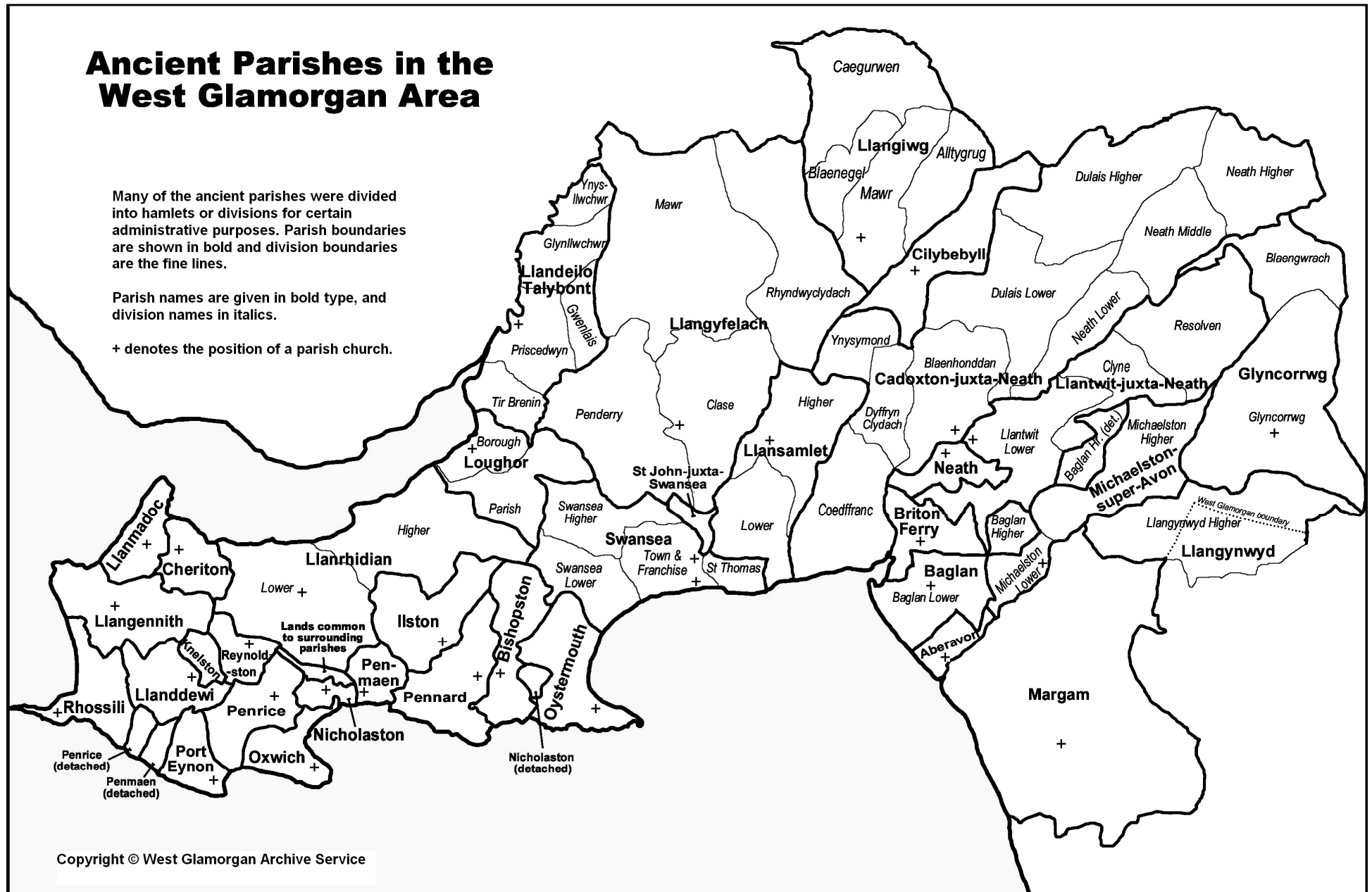
Parliamentary constituencies are the districts that are represented by a Member of Parliament or Assembly Member. The boundaries have varied over the years, as have the number of MPs. There are currently five constituencies in West Glamorgan.

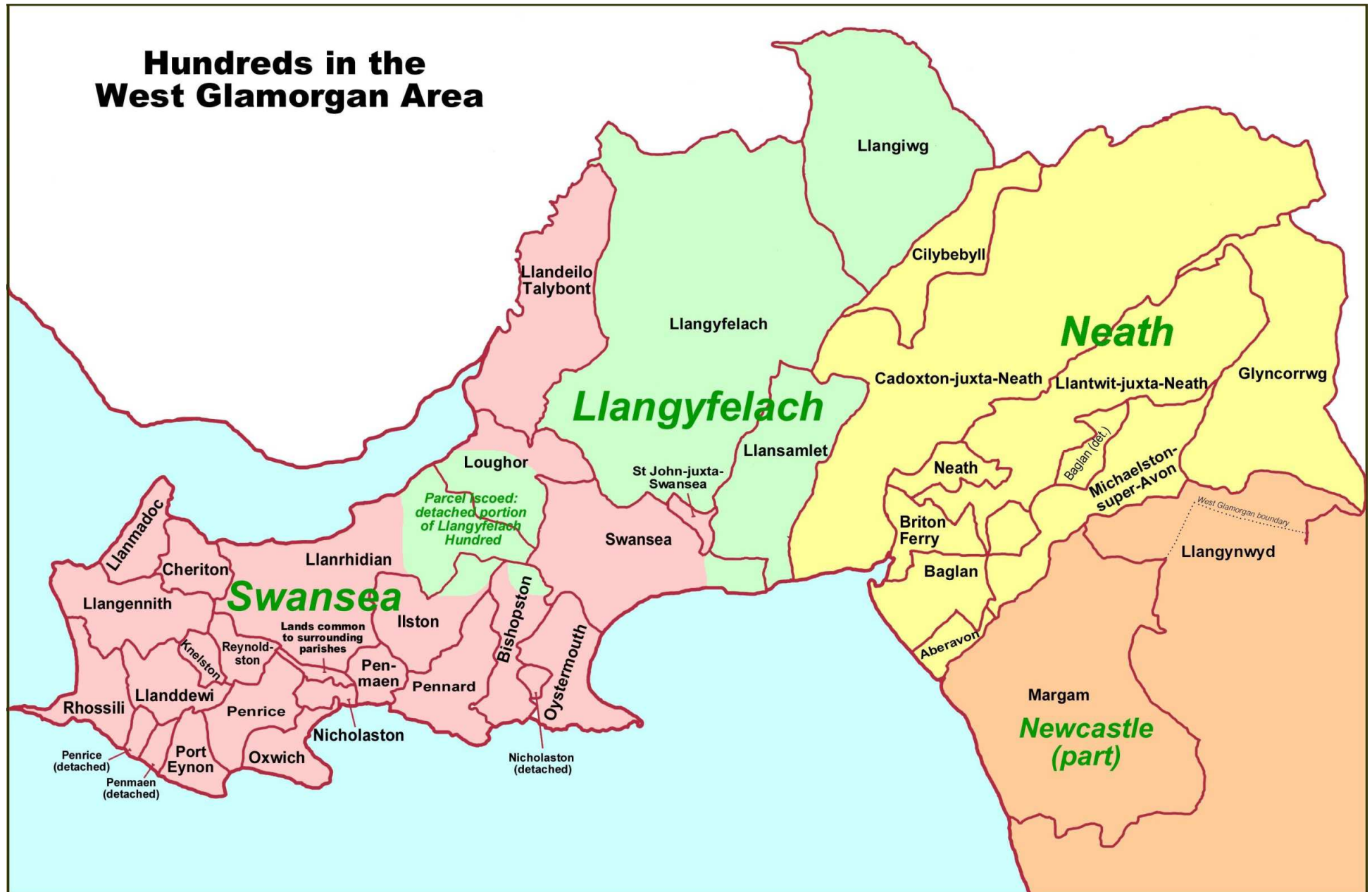
Ancient Parishes in the West Glamorgan Area

Many of the ancient parishes were divided into hamlets or divisions for certain administrative purposes. Parish boundaries are shown in bold and division boundaries are the fine lines.

Parish names are given in bold type, and division names in italics.

+ denotes the position of a parish church.





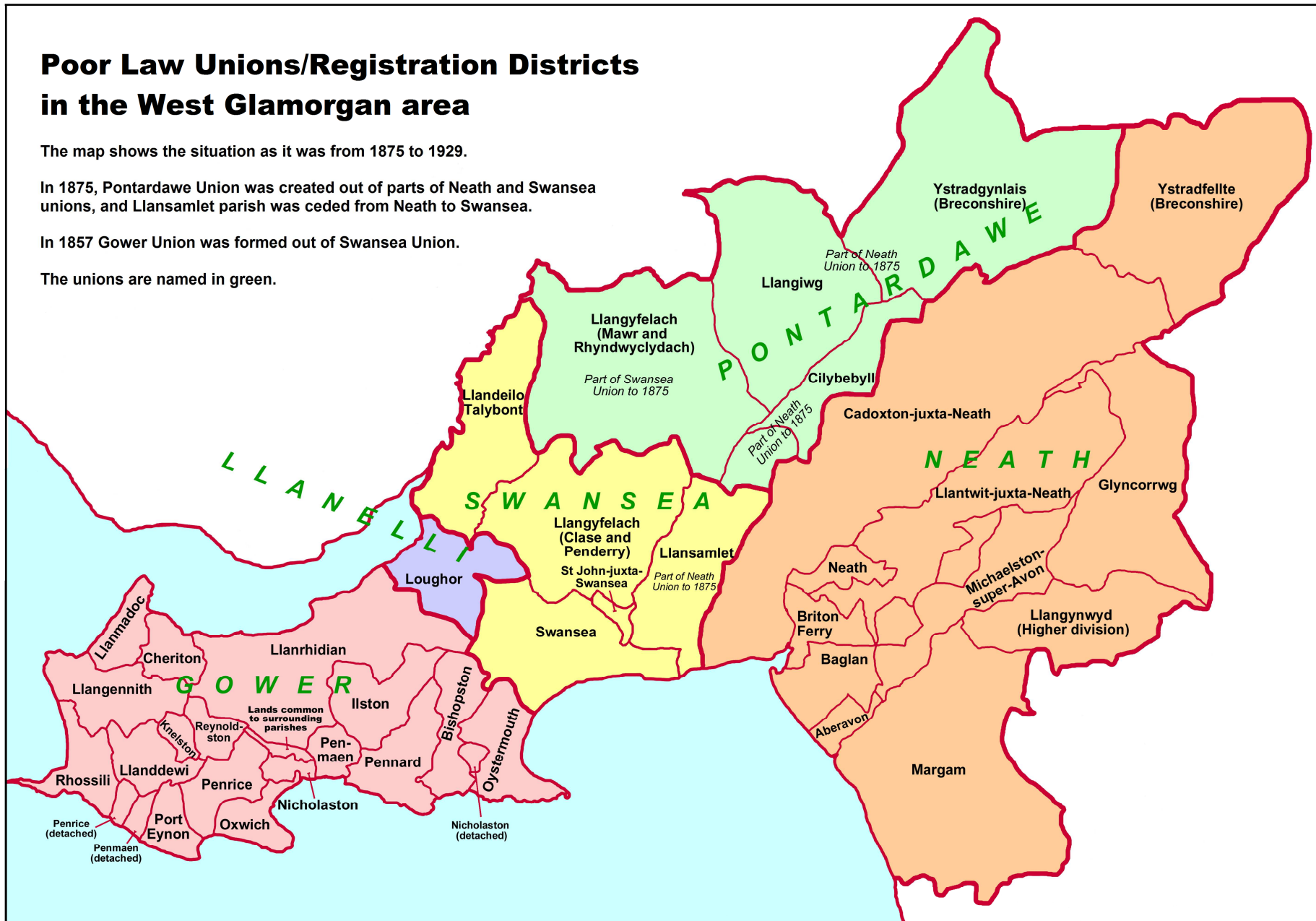
Poor Law Unions/Registration Districts in the West Glamorgan area

The map shows the situation as it was from 1875 to 1929.

In 1875, Pontardawe Union was created out of parts of Neath and Swansea unions, and Llansamlet parish was ceded from Neath to Swansea.

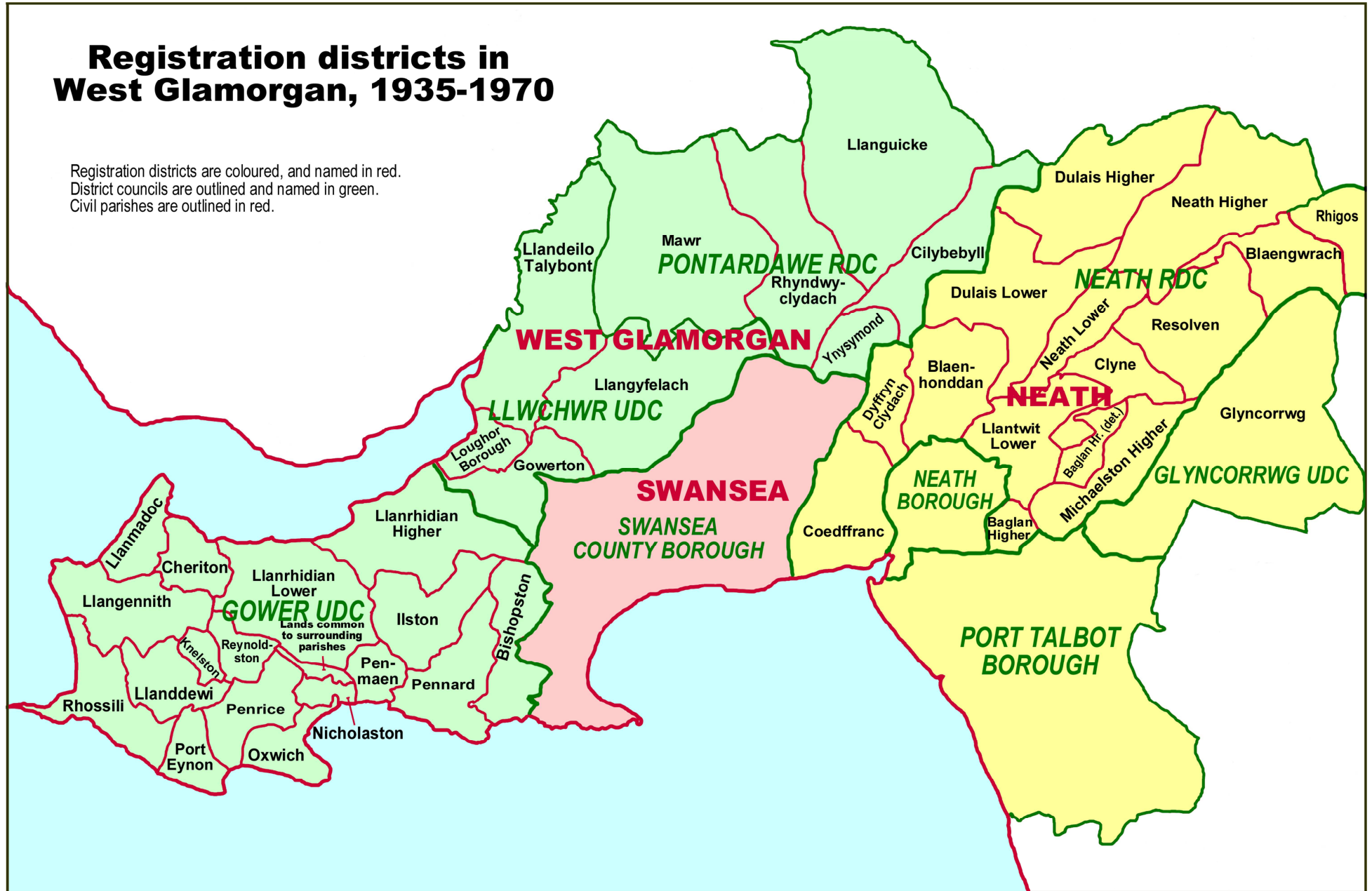
In 1857 Gower Union was formed out of Swansea Union.

The unions are named in green.



Registration districts in West Glamorgan, 1935-1970

Registration districts are coloured, and named in red.
District councils are outlined and named in green.
Civil parishes are outlined in red.



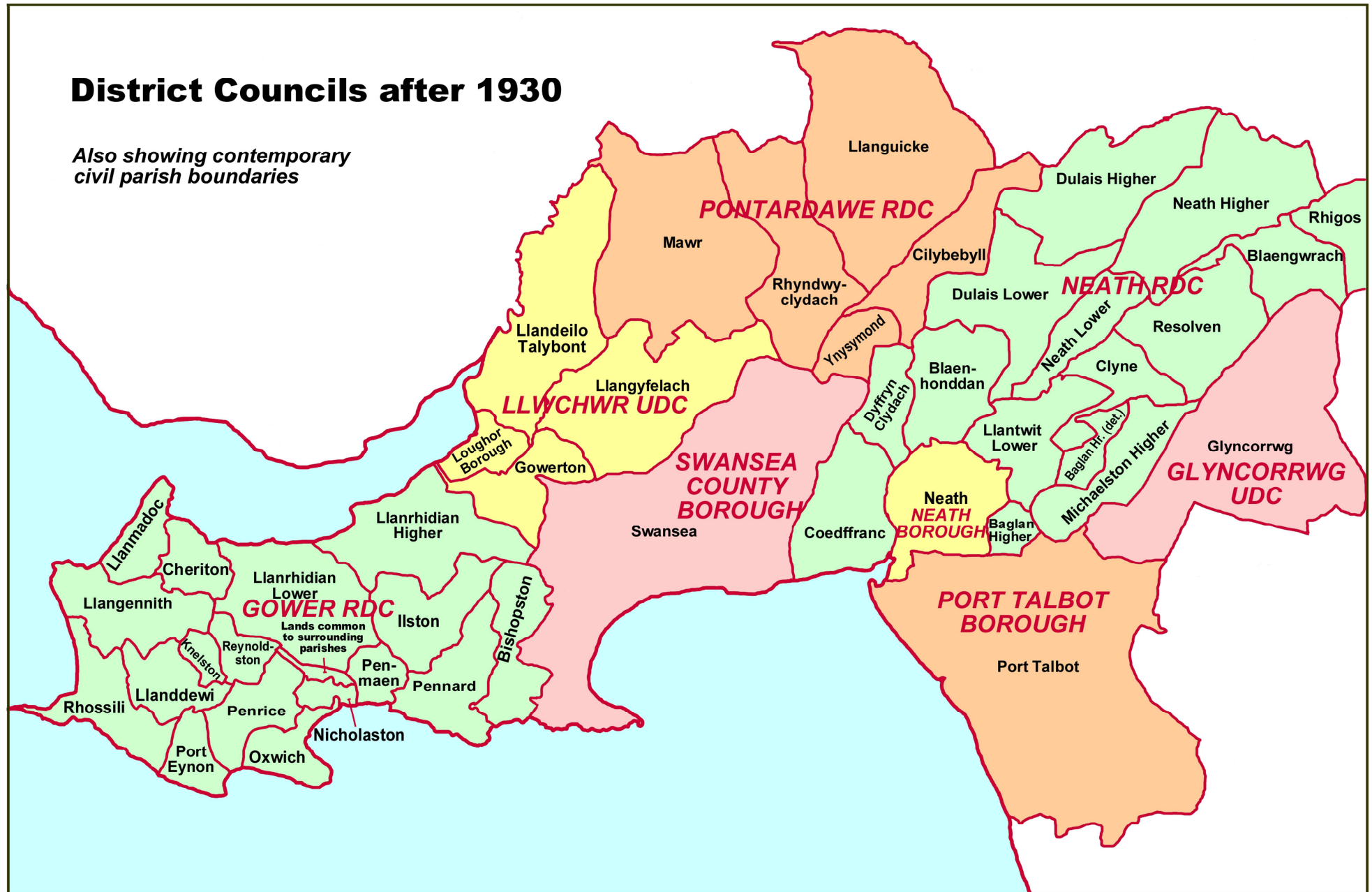
District Councils post-1894

Also showing contemporary civil parish boundaries



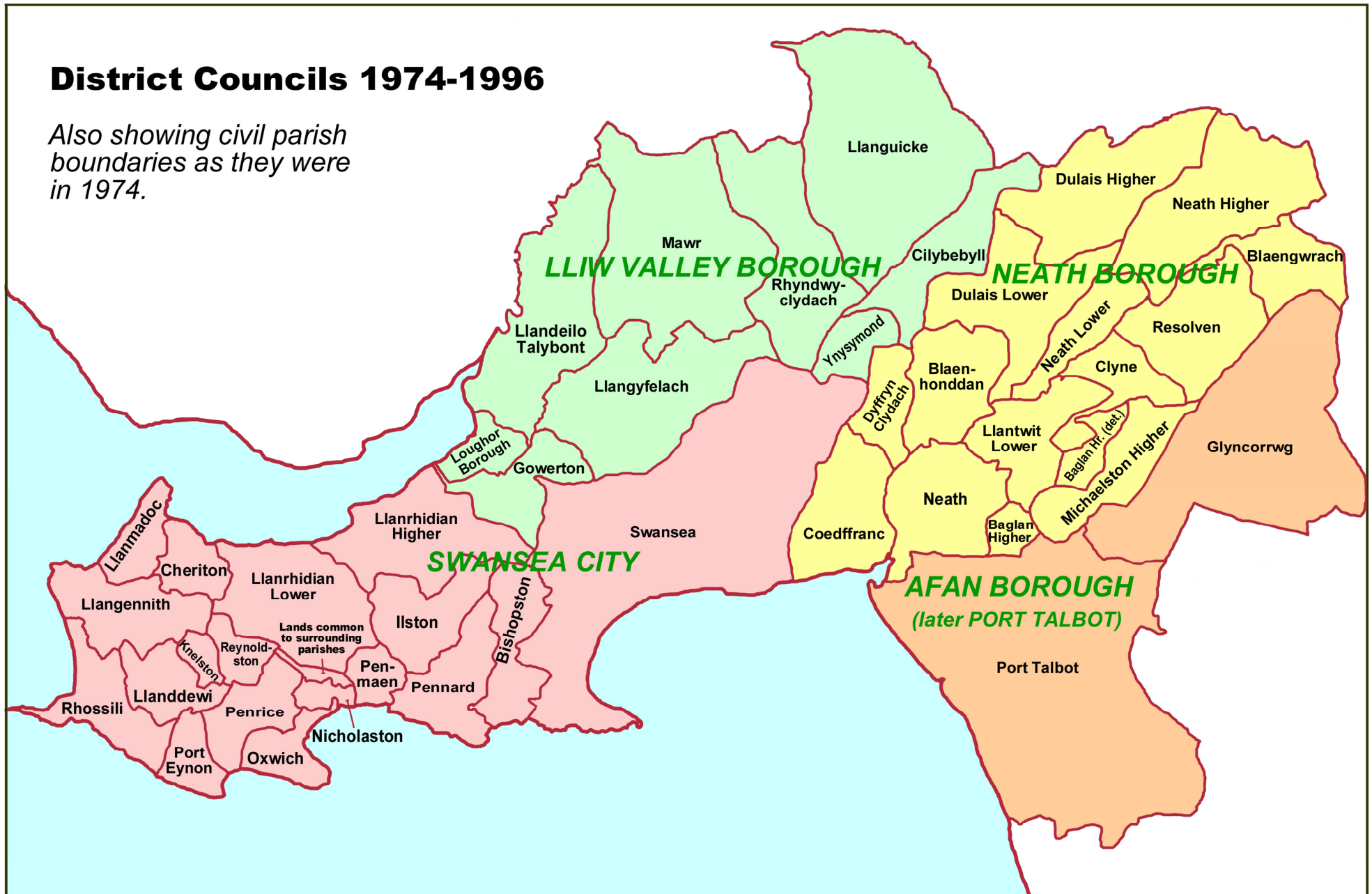
District Councils after 1930

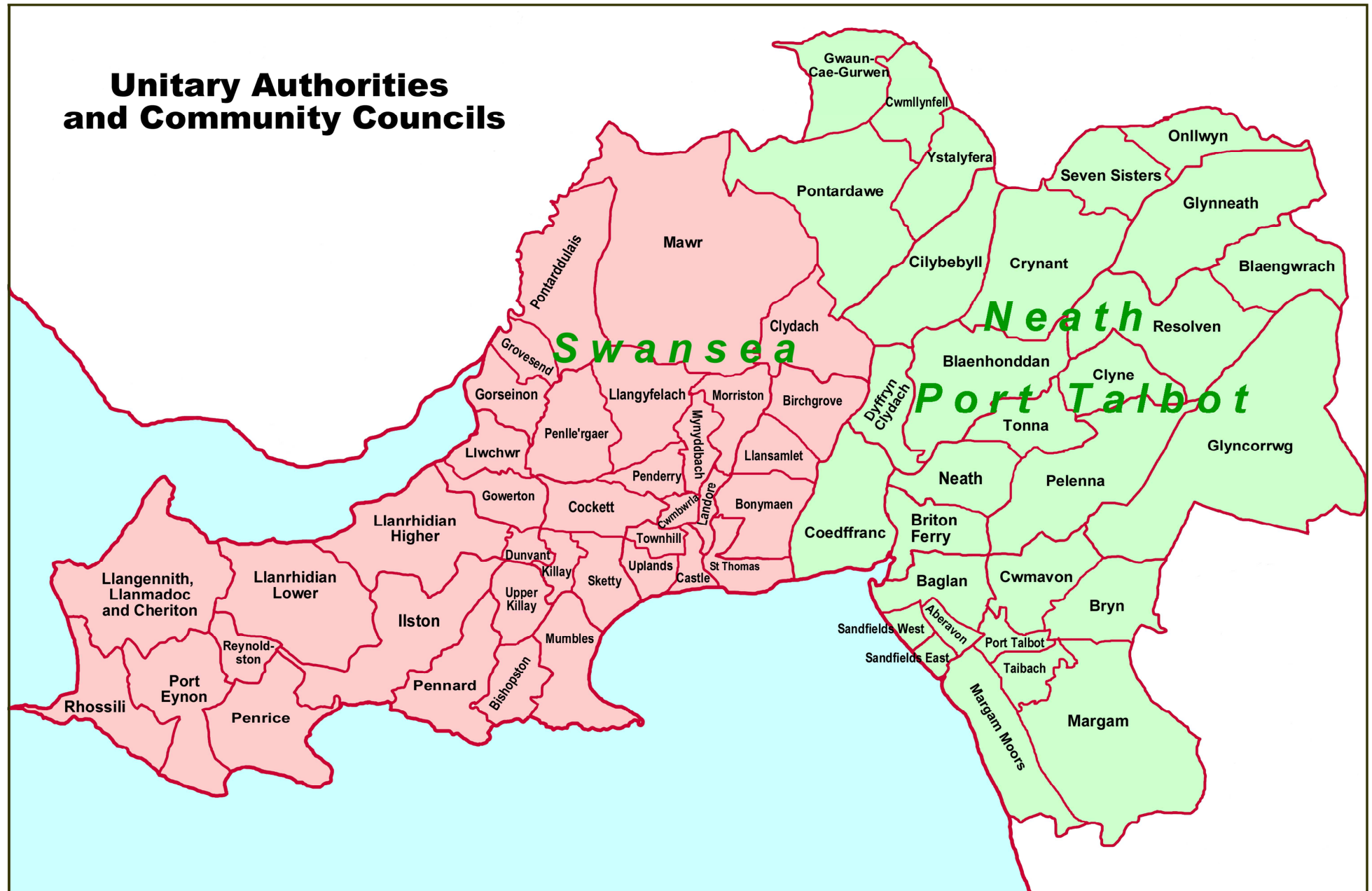
Also showing contemporary civil parish boundaries

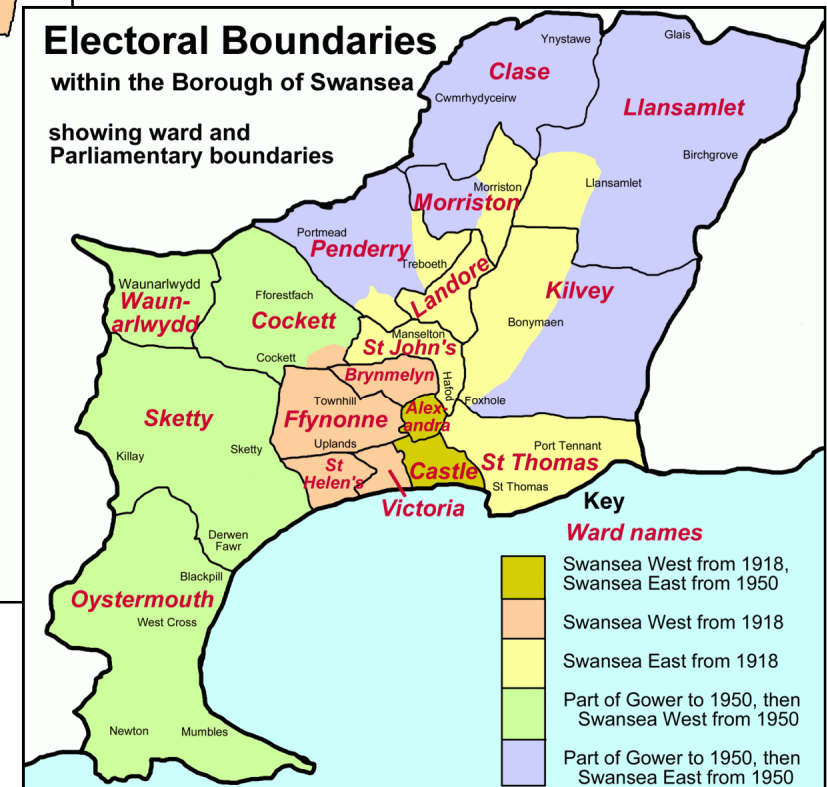
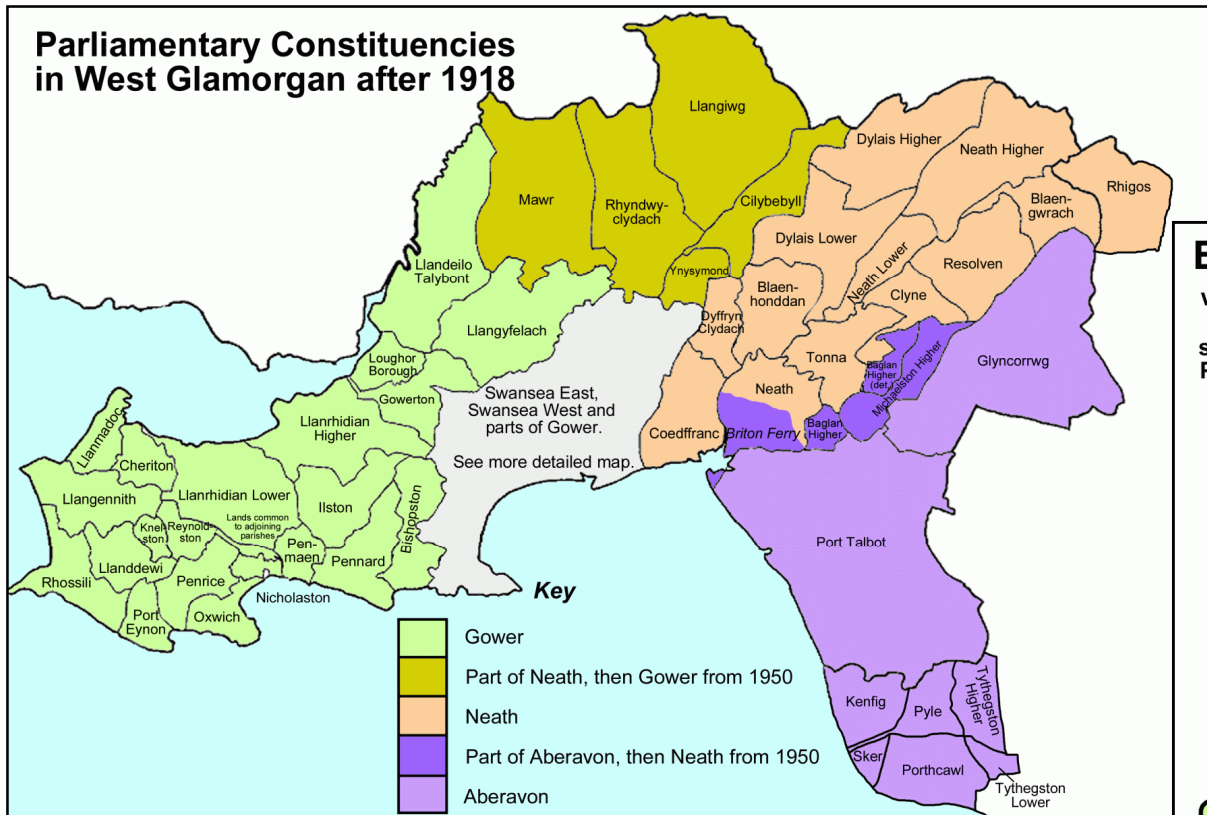


District Councils 1974-1996

Also showing civil parish boundaries as they were in 1974.







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