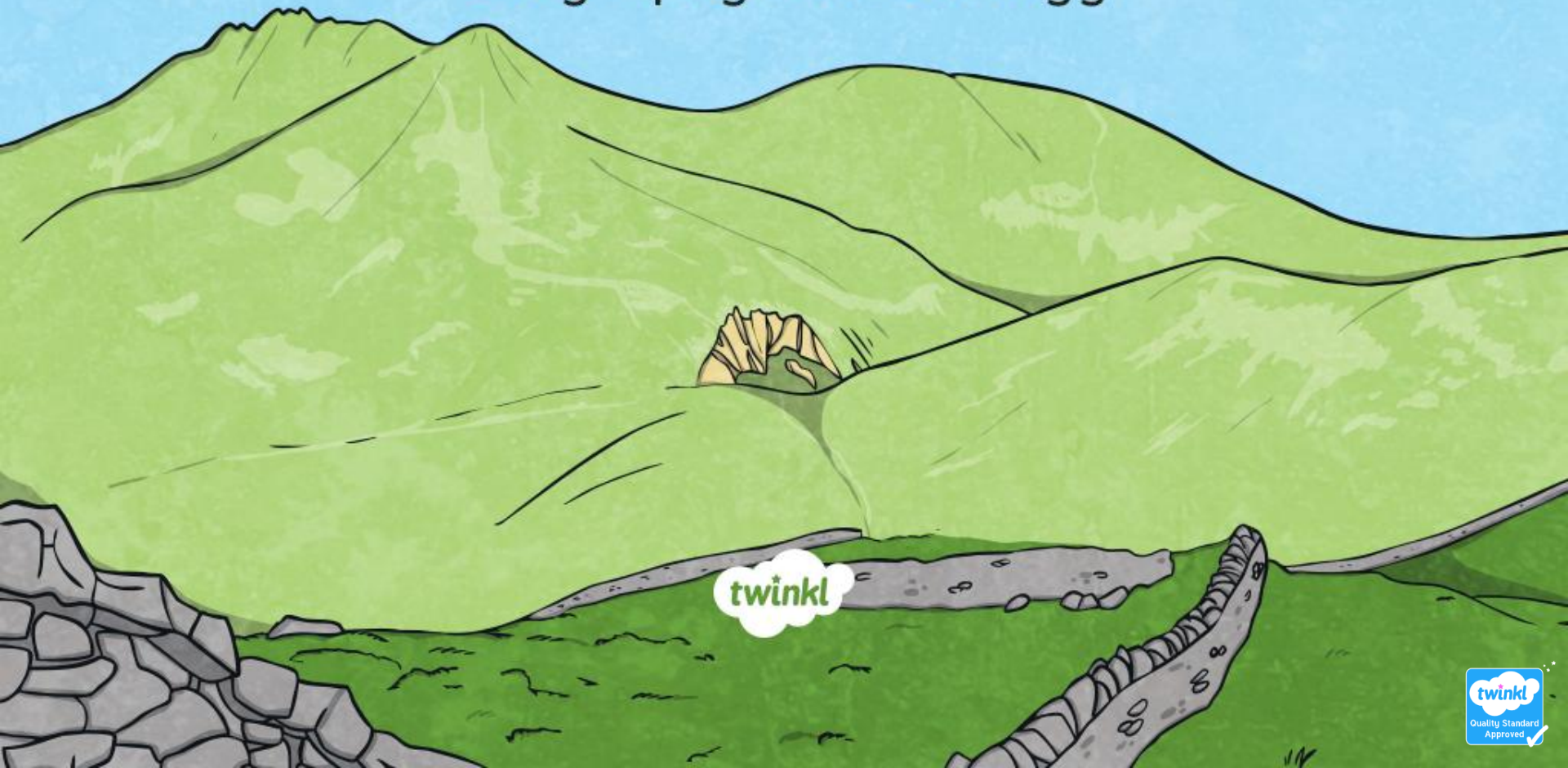


The Magical Mourne Mountains

Geography and Geology



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The Mournes

The Mourne Mountains are in County Down, Northern Ireland.

The stunning and special scenery in the area has led to it being recognised as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is not hard to see why!

The highest mountain in Northern Ireland, Slieve Donard, is in the Mournes.

A true mountain has a summit that is over 600 metres. Slieve Donard is 853 metres high.



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Key Vocabulary

Col – the lowest point on a mountain ridge between two peaks

Erosion – this is how land is worn away by water, ice or wind

Granite – a very hard type of igneous rock

Igneous – the word igneous comes from the Latin word 'ignis' meaning fire

Igneous rocks - formed when magma cools and becomes solid, either below or above the surface of the earth

Magma – the hot, runny (molten) rock found under the surface of the Earth

Lava- magma which has escaped to the Earth's surface

Scree – the pile of broken rock which lies at the bottom of a mountain cliff

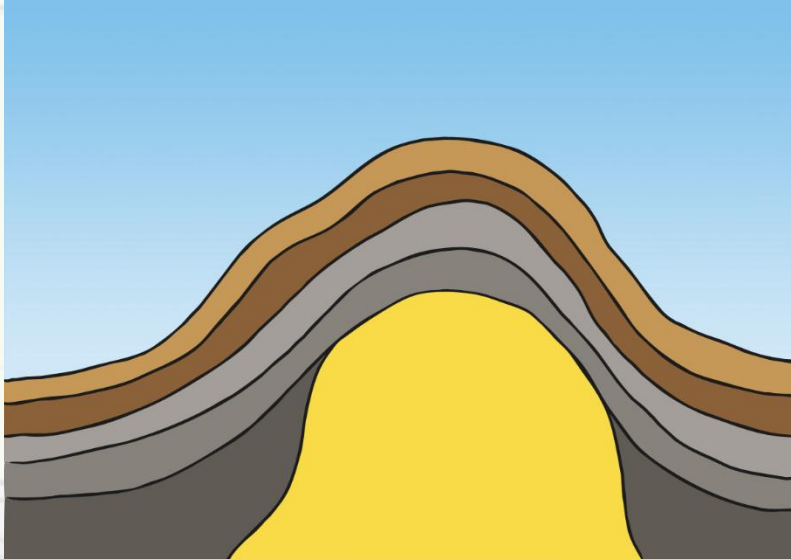
Shale – a soft, sedimentary rock

Tor – a hill or rocky peak, a pile of rocks on top of a peak

More about the Mournes

The Mourne Mountains were formed around 55 million years ago, more than 10 million years after the last dinosaurs disappeared.

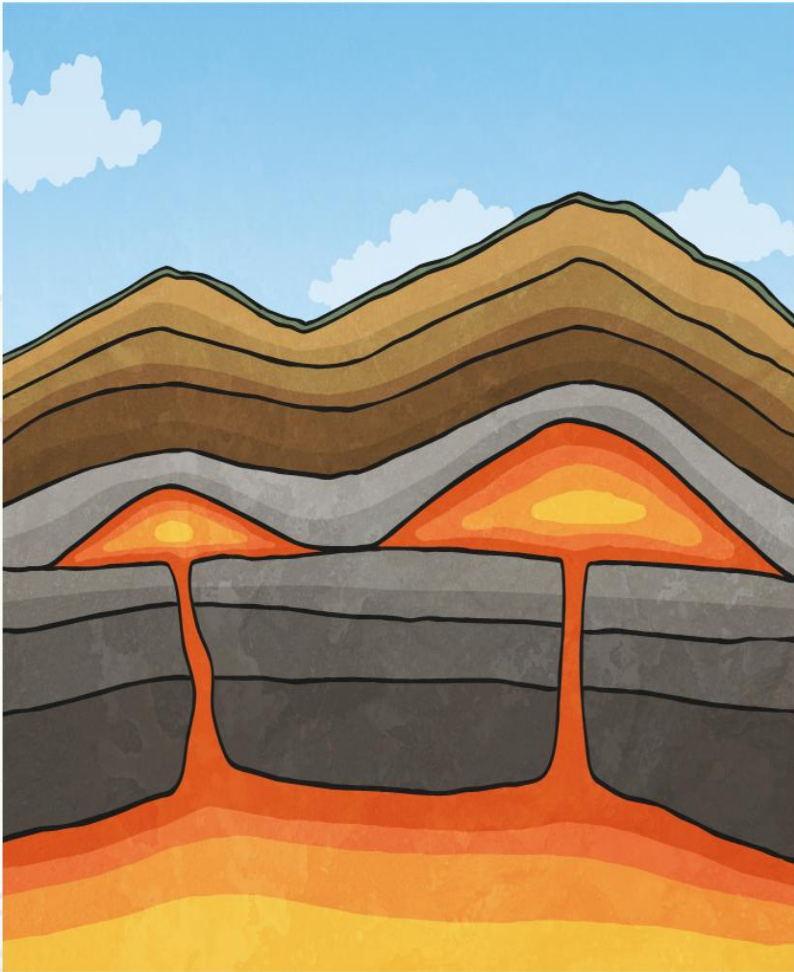
Believe it or not, this makes them youngsters in the mountain family! The Mournes are a great example of *dome mountains*.



Dome mountains are formed when magma from within the Earth pushes up and forces the crust to bulge into a domed shape.

This is called a batholith, 'bathos' meaning deep and 'lith' meaning rock. In the Mournes, a huge expanse of shale rock sank deep into the Earth and magma rose up to take its place.

Magma and the Mournes



When the domes had been created, the magma inside them cooled and hardened.

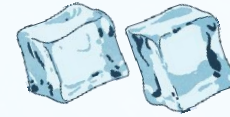
This formed igneous granite rock. Above this rock was a layer of shale. The shale was eroded by millions of years of weathering to reveal the hard granite beneath.

If the magma that formed the Mournes had broken through the crust rather than bubbled under it, there would be volcanoes instead of mountains.

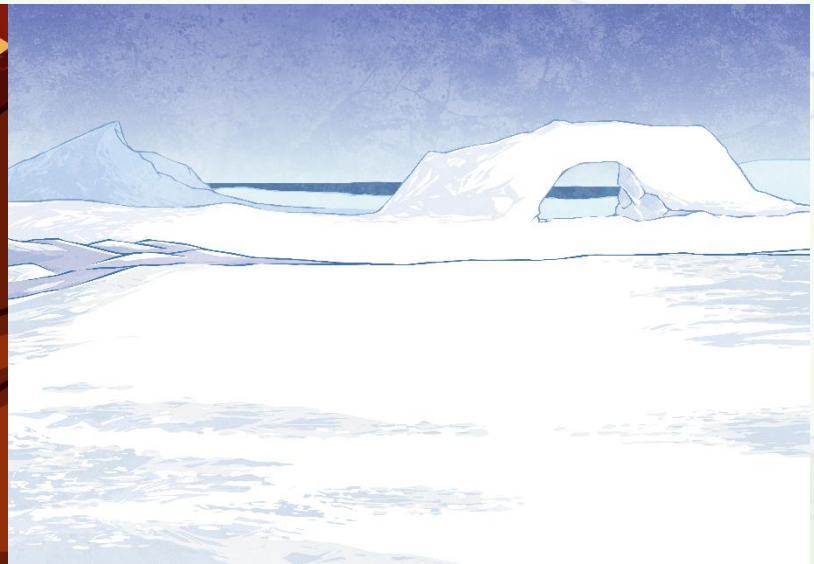
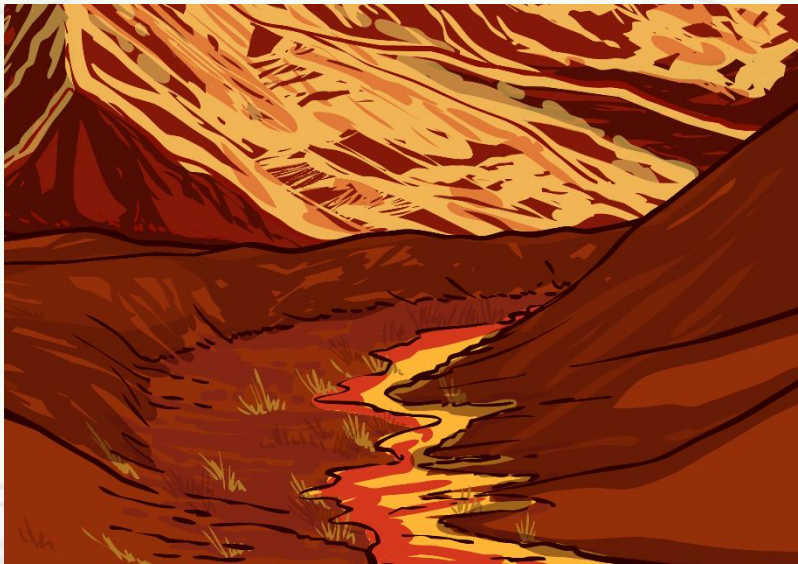
From Fire to Ice



After the heat of the magma, the next element to shape the Mourne's was ice. It took at least six ice ages before the granite was revealed.



Once it was exposed fully to the weather, huge ice sheets further carved, shaped and smoothed it.



Where are you Walking?

The Mourne Way is a walking trail that goes through the Mournes. It stretches between Newcastle and Rostrevor.



The Mourne Way and other walking trails take people past mountains with some very interesting names. Many of them begin with 'Slieve'.

This means 'The mountain of...' as slieve comes from an Irish word 'sliabh', meaning mountain.

The Eastern Mournes are sometimes referred to as the 'high' Mournes with the Western Mournes being called the 'low' Mournes.

Some Peaks in the East

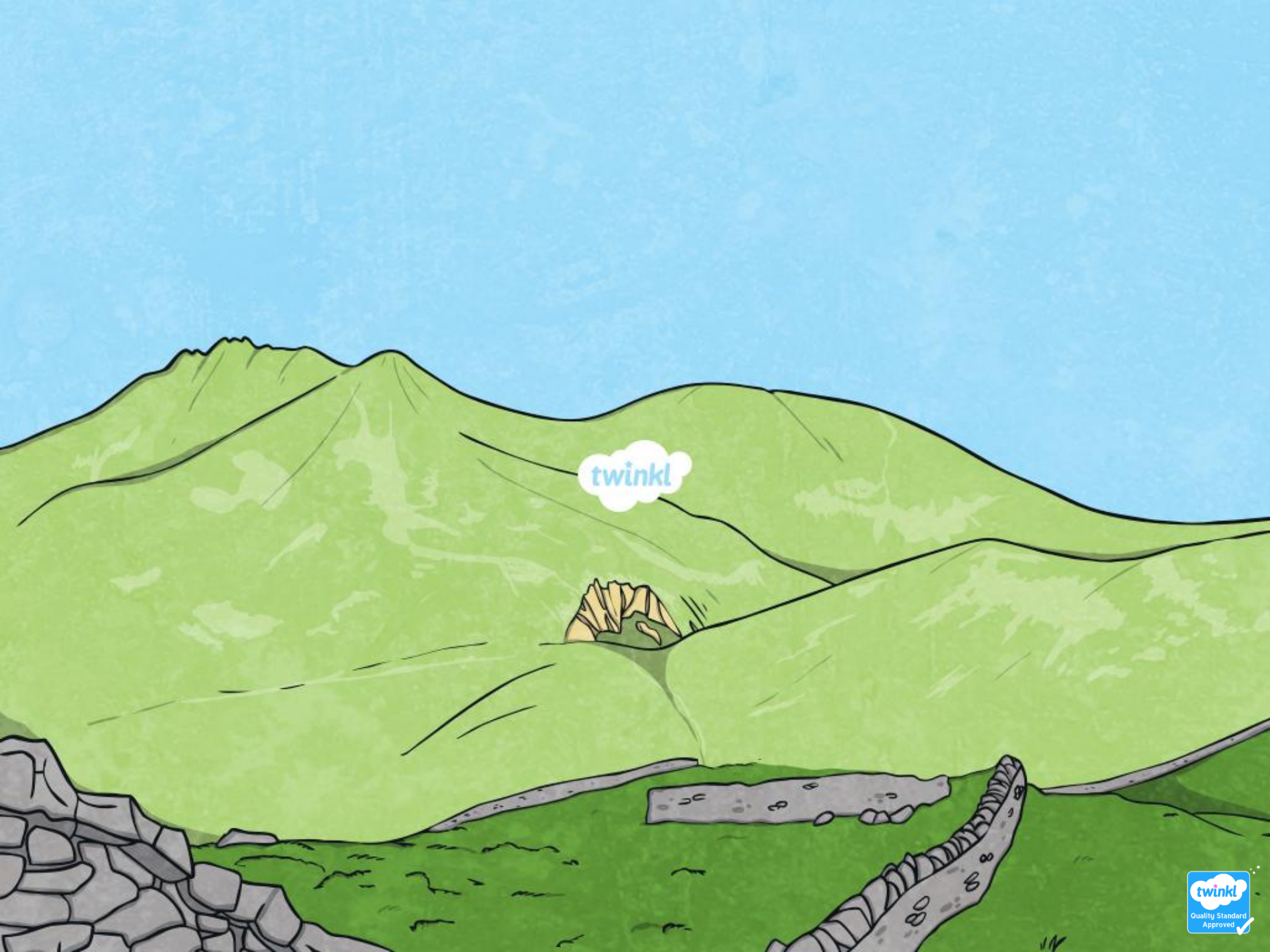
Mountain:	Name Origins:	Summit Height:
Slieve Donard	Named after St. Donard (Domangart), a holy man who built a cell for praying at the top.	853 metres
Slieve Commedagh	The mountain of watching/guarding.	765 metres
Slieve Binnian	Mountain of the little peaks. There are rocky tors on this mountain that some say look like little horns.	747 metres
Slieve Bernagh	Mountain of the gap. This is one of the most recognisable, with two big tors on top and a gap between them.	739 metres
Slieve Meelbeg	Little mountain of the ants.	708 metres
Slieve Meelmore	The big, bare mountain.	704 metres
Slieve Muck	Mountain of the pigs.	674 metres
Slieve Beg	The little mountain.	560 metres

More Peaks in the East

Mountain:	Name Origins:	Summit Height:
Ben Crom	Stooped peak.	526 metres
Butter Mountain	Mountain of the butter (Sliamhan Ime). People may have buried or stored butter here.	490 metres
Slieve Corragh	Rugged mountain.	640 metres
Slievenagloagh	Mountain of the stones (rocks).	445 metres
Slieve Loughshannagh	Mountain of the lake of foxes.	619 metres
Slieve Lamagan	Crawling (creeping) mountain.	704 metres

The Rest in the West

Mountain:	Name Origins:	Summit Height:
Altataggart Mountain	Mountain/glen of the priest.	420 metres
Finlieve	White mountain.	578–583 metres
Shanlieve	Old mountain.	626 metres
Tievedockaragh	Difficult slide/slope.	473 metres
Slievemartin	Martin's mountain.	485 metres
Hen Mountain	Mountain of the hen.	354 metres
Eagle Mountain	Mountain of the eagle.	638 metres



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