

Bloreng (Abergavenny Circular)			Bloreng (extended version via Blaenavon)		
1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check	1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check
28 th Sept. 2021			12 th April 2024		
Current status	Document last updated Wednesday, 17 th April 2024				
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Bloreng (Abergavenny Circular)

Start & Finish: Abergavenny Station

Abergavenny Station, map reference SO 305 136, is 30 km south east of Brecon, 202 km west northwest of Charing Cross, 74m above sea level and in **Monmouthshire, Wales**.

Length: 19.6 km (12.2 mi).

Cumulative ascent/descent: 723m. For a shorter or longer walk, see below **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 7 out of 10

Time: 6 hours walking time.

Transport: Abergavenny Station is served by the Welsh Marches Line (Newport – Hereford), connecting at Newport to Paddington, with mostly two trains per hour (total journey time from 135 mins). Abergavenny Bus Station is passed early on, bus lines with regular and useful connections are: X3 (Hereford – Cardiff), X4 (Cardiff – Abergavenny), 43/X43 (Brecon – Abergavenny), 83 (Monmouth –Abergavenny).

Saturday Walkers' Club: Take a train no later than 09.45.

OS Landranger Map: 161 (The Black Mountains)

OS Explorer Map: OL 13 (Brecon Beacons NP East)

Walk Notes:

This expedition through parts of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site up to one of Abergavenny's mountains, features some stunning views and interesting industrial heritage elements. From the pretty town centre of Abergavenny walk along the curtain wall of Abergavenny Castle and through the Castle Meadows along the River Usk to cross over into Llanfoist and start the ascent up the Bloreng. You go through the Llanfoist tunnel under the Monmouthshire & Brecon canal and commence the quite brutal ascent up through Glebe Wood to the Cwm Craf along the three former Llanfoist Inclines of the tramway linking the canal to some ironworks and quarries on the side of and beyond the Bloreng. From the top of the inclines, a further, very gradual ascent around the side of the Bloreng and through the fascinating former site of the Garnddyrys Forge leads you up a tightening Cwm to the hill's summit plateau, on a fine weather day with superlative views to the Bristol Channel, the Malverns and Cotswolds and – across the Usk Valley – to the Black Mountains.

The descent follows clear – but at times steep – paths across the heather moorland and down bracken-covered slopes past The Punchbowl pond, set serenely in a very picturesque glacial bowl. From there, follow footpaths through pastures-with-views down to and along the canal for a short stretch back to Llanfoist Wharf, from where you retrace the outbound route to Abergavenny and its many tea options.

An interesting but long extension leads down the far side of Bloreng into the Cwm Lwyd and past many core sites of the Blaenavon Industrial Heritage site.

Walk Options:

A start/finish at Abergavenny Bus Station cuts 750m each way and 30m ascent at the end of the walk. Pick up the directions at the end of the second paragraph.

A start/finish from the Llanfoist Crossing car park on the outskirts of Llanfoist/Llanffwyst cuts 3.1 km each way and 50m ascent/descent.

The same start point can be reached by taking buses 3 or X4 from Abergavenny, direction Brynmawr, to the Llanfoist Inn stop and continuing for a few hundred metres along the road.

An Extension dips down the far side of Bloreng into the Cwm Lwyd to the core part of the **Blaenavon World Heritage Site**, famous for many relics of the heavy industrial history of the Welsh Valleys, including The Big Pit National Mining Museum. This highly interesting detour adds 9.9 km and 250m ascent though (**9/10**)!

A Shortcut on the Extension cuts 3.6 km and about half of the ascent.

A Short Diversion off that Extension leads to The Whistle Inn tea stop.

Buses from Blaenavon take you to Cwmbrân or Newport for the train line back to Abergavenny.

Lunch

Picnic.

Lunch/Tea Blaenavon Extension (details last updated 20/04/2021)

The Whistle Inn & Campsite The Whistle Inn is located 12.6 km into the walk.

The Fireman's Shovel Tearoom (<https://www.bhrailway.co.uk/the-firemans-shovel-tearoom>). The Fireman's is located 13.3 km in to the walk. With changing opening hours, check the website.

The Castle Hotel The Castle Hotel is located 16.7 km in to the walk.

The Lion Hotel & Restaurant (<https://www.thelionhotelblaenavon.co.uk/>). Located 16.9 km into the walk.

Tea all walk options (details last updated 17/04/2024)

The Bridge Inn Merthyr Road, Llanfoist, Abergavenny, NP7 9LH (01873 854 831, <https://www.thebridgeinnllanfoist.co.uk/>). The Bridge Inn is located 2.2 km from the end of the walk and 1.5 km from Abergavenny Bus Station.

Plenty of places in Abergavenny's Town Centre. See the walk directions for details.

Welsh Glossary

aber: estuary, confluence, river mouth; afon: river; allt: hillside, cliff; aran: high place; ban/fan/bannau (pl): peak, beacon, crest, hill, mountain; big: peak; blaen: source of river, head of valley; bod: dwelling; bre: hill; bron: hill-breast; bryn: hill; bwlch: gap, col, pass; cadair: chair; cae: field; caer/gaer: stronghold, fort; capel: chapel; carn/garn/carnedd/garnedd: cairn/heap of stones, tumulus; carreg/garreg: stone, rock; castell: castle; cefn: ridge, hillside; celli: grove, copse; cerwyn: pot-hole; cist: chest; clwyd: hurdle, gate; clog/clogwyn: cliff; clun: meadow; clydach: torrent; coch/goch: red; coed: wood; craig/graig: rock; crib/cribyn: crest, ridge, summit; crug: mound; cul: narrow; cwm: hanging valley, corrie, bowl, dale; cyfrwy: ridge between two summits (saddle); ddinas: fort; dibyn: steep slope, precipice; diffwys: precipice, abyss; dim: no; din: hill-fortress; disgwylfa: place of observation, look-out point; dôl: meadow; du/ddu: black, dark; dwfr/dwâr: water; dyffryn: valley; -dyn: fortified enclosure; eglwys: church; eira: snow; eisteddfod: meeting-place, assembly; esgair: ridge; fach/bach: small; fawr/mawr: large; fechan: smaller; ffald: sheep-fold, pound, pen, run; ffordd: way, road; ffridd: pasture; ffrwd: stream, torrent; ffynnon: spring, well; gallt: wooded hill; ganol: middle; garth: promontory, hill, enclosure; glan/lan: river-bank, hillock; glas: green, when referring to grass, pasture or leaves; or blue, when relating to the sea or air; glyn: deep valley, glen; gors: bog; gorsedd: tumulus, barrow, hillock; gwyddfa: mound, tumulus; gwylfa: look-out point; gwyn/gwen: white; gwynt: wind; hafn: gorge, ravine; hafod: summer dwelling; hen: old; hendre(f): winter dwelling, old home, permanent abode; heol: road; hesgyn: bog; hir: long; is: below, lower; llan: church, monastery; llawr: level area, floor of valley; llech: slab, stone, rock, rock; llther: slope; lluest: shieling, cottage, hut; llwch: lake, dust; llwybr: path; llwyd: grey, brown; llwyn: bush, grove; llyn: lake; llynwyn: pool, puddle, moat; isa(f): lower, lowest; maen: stone; maes: open field, plain; mawn: peat; mawnog: peat-bog; melyn: yellow; merthyr: burial place, church; moel/foel: bare, bald/bare hill; mynydd: mountain, moorland; nant: brook, stream, dingle, glen; neuadd: hall; newydd: new; ogof/gogof: cave; pant: hollow; parc: park, field, enclosure; pen: head, top, end, edge; penrhyn: promontory; pentre(f): homestead, village; perfedd: middle; perth: bush, brake, hedge; plas: hall, mansion; pont/bont: bridge; porth: gate, gateway, harbour, bay, landing-place, ferry; pwll: pit, pool; rhiw: hill, slope; rhos: moor, promontory; rhudd: red, crimson; rhyd: ford; sarn: causeway; sgwd/rhaeadr: waterfall; sticill: stile; sych: dry; tafarn: tavern; tâl: end, top; talar: headland (of field); tan/dan: below; tarren/darren: escarpment; tir: land, territory; tor: break, gap; tre/tref: settlement, hamlet, town; twlch: tump, knoll; twll: hole, pit; tŵr: tower; tŷ: house; twyn: hill; uchaf: upper, highest; uwch: above, over; waun/gwaun: moorland, meadow; wen/wyn: white; y, yr, 'r: the; ynys: island, holm, river-meadow; ysgol: ladder, formation on mountain-side/school; ysgwydd: shoulder (of mountain); ystafell: chamber, hiding-place; ystrad: wide valley, holm, river-meadow.

Notes:-

Abergavenny/Y Fenni, Abergavenny Castle/Castell y Fenni

Abergavenny (Welsh: *Y Fenni*, archaically *Abergafenni* meaning "Mouth of the River Gavenny") is a market town in Monmouthshire, Wales, about 10 km from the border with England. It is located at the confluence of the River Usk and a tributary stream, the Gavenny and on the A40 trunk road and the A465 Heads of the Valleys road and is promoted as a Gateway to Wales.

Originally it was the site of a Roman fort, Gobannium (after Gobannia, Brythonic for "river of the blacksmiths"). Abergavenny is almost entirely surrounded by mountains and hills: the Blorenge, the Sugar Loaf, The Skirrid/Ysgyryd Fawr and Fach, Deri, Rholben and Mynydd Llanwenarth, with Sugar Loaf being the highest. During September the town holds the Abergavenny Food Festival.

Abergavenny Castle (Welsh: *Castell y Fenni*) is a ruined castle, established by the Norman lord Hamelin de Balun ca. 1087 to overlook the River Usk and its valley, and so guard against incursions into the lowland areas south and east of the town by the Welsh from the hills to the north and west. It was the site of a massacre of Welsh noblemen in 1175, and was attacked during the early 15th century Glyndŵr Rising. The high, formidable curtain wall, dating from the 12th century, is now the most impressive part of the ruin. A lodge was built on the top of the motte in the 19th century and now houses the town's Museum (open daily except Wednesdays).

Usk Valley/River Usk (Afon Wysg)

The River Usk (Afon Wysg in Welsh) rises on the northern slopes of The Black Mountain (Y Mynydd Du in Welsh), in the westernmost part of the Brecon Beacons National Park, initially forming the boundary between Carmarthenshire and Powys. It flows north into Usk Reservoir, then east by Sennybridge to Brecon before turning southeast to flow by Talybont-on-Usk, Crickhowell and Abergavenny after which it takes a more southerly course. Beyond the eponymous town of Usk it passes the Roman legionary fortress of Caerleon to flow through the heart of the city of Newport and into the Severn estuary at Uskmouth at Newport Wetlands. Its total length is 102 km/63 mi.

The name of the river derives from a Common Brittonic word meaning "abounding in fish" or "water", which also appears in other river names such as Exe, Axe, Esk and other variants.

The whole river downstream of Usk Reservoir has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and has long been a noted salmon and trout fishing river.

Brecon Beacons National Park

Home to spectacular landscapes, a rich variety of wildlife and fascinating cultural and geological heritage, the Brecon Beacons National Park in Mid-Wales boasts a magnificent array of Old Red Sandstone peaks, open moorland and green valleys, spanning 1,344 km² (520 mi²). Pen y Fan within the Central Beacons is perhaps the best-known summit but there are many others in the five distinct parts of the National Park (Black Mountain (Y Mynydd Du) in the far west, Fforest Fawr, Central Beacons, the Llangattock and Llangynidr Hills, and the Black Mountains to the east).

Blorenge/Blorens

Blorenge is situated in the southeastern corner of the Brecon Beacons National Park and also within the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site. It overlooks the Usk Valley. The summit plateau reaches a height of 561m, offering fine views of Abergavenny's other mountains: Sugarloaf and The Skirrid, as well as the Black mountains. It drops away steeply to the northwest into Cwm Llanwenarth, while to the south gentler slopes falls away to Blaenavon at the head of the Lwyd Valley. The high heather moorland ridge continues to the south and assumes the name Mynydd y Garn-fawr. The cairn referenced in the title of this shoulder of Blorenge is Carn y Defaid which sits on the county boundary at 503m above sea. It is one of a handful of Bronze Age burial cairns on the ridge.

The summit plateau is formed from coarse sandstones that lie at the boundary of the Millstone Grit and the Coal Measures, while below lie mudstones, limestones and sandstones and the shape of the hill was modified during the ice ages by the Usk Valley glacier. A smaller glacier carved out the hollow on the eastern side of Blorenge known as The Punchbowl. Small landslips affect Blorenge's slopes, the best-known is the Tumble. Sir Harry Llewellyn's famous show-jumping horse, Foxhunter, who won Britain's only Gold medal in the 1952 Summer Olympics, is buried on the summit plateau near to the Blaenavon to Llanover road on Blorenge. Hill's Tramroad extends around the western flanks of the hill and drops steeply down to Llanfoist by means of a series of inclines beneath Cwm Craf. There are extensive abandoned workings for limestone around the northern and eastern rim of Blorenge and some abandoned sandstone quarries.

Usk Bridge (or Abergavenny Bridge/Pont y Fenni)

The bridge crosses the River Usk at the boundary between Abergavenny and Llanfoist, carrying the A4143. It is probably of mid-15th century origin but was substantially reconstructed in the 19th century, to support a tramroad, and again when the two bridges were combined. The tramway, which originally ran parallel to the bridge, carried the horse-drawn Llanvihangel Railway from the Monmouth & Brecon canal at Llanfoist.

The bridge was the subject of two paintings by JMW Turner dating from the 1790s. The first, *Abergavenny Bridge, Monmouthshire, Clearing Up after a Showery Day*, is held in the collection of the V&A and the second (*Abergavenny Bridge*) by The Tate. It is a Grade II* listed building and a Scheduled Monument.

Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal (The Mon & Brec)

The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal/Camlas Sir Fynwy a Brycheiniog is a small network of canals following the line of the Usk Valley through the Brecon Beacons National Park. It is currently navigable for 56 km and with only 6 locks (5 of them in Llangynidr). Its rural character and tranquillity belie its original purpose as an industrial corridor for coal and iron, brought to the canal by a network of tramways and/or railroads.

The "*Mon and Brec*" was originally two independent canals – the Monmouthshire Canal from Newport to Pontymoile Basin and the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal from Pontymoile to Brecon, before joining in 1812. Both canals were abandoned in 1962, but the Brecknock and Abergavenny route and a small section of the Monmouthshire route have been reopened since 1970. Much of the rest of the original Monmouthshire Canal is the subject of a restoration plan, which includes the construction of a marina at Newport.

Cambrian Way/Taith Cambria

The Cambrian Way ('The Mountain Connoisseur's Walk') is a very challenging 479 km (298 mi) linear long-distance high-level footpath traversing much of the highest and wildest parts of Wales. It runs coast-to-coast from Cardiff Castle to Conwy Castle over the Black Mountains, Brecon Beacons, Carmarthen Fan, Plynlimon, Cadair Idris, the Rhinogs, the Snowdon massif and the Carneddau and is unmarked in the higher mountain areas. Navigational skills are therefore of paramount importance. <http://www.cambrianway.org.uk/>

Garnddyrys Forge and Rolling Mill & Pen-ffordd-goch pond

Garn Ddyrys (=tangled cairn) foundry processed the 'pig' iron from Blaenavon Ironworks, producing a less brittle, more malleable product, the wrought iron, which was then transported on to Llanfoist and the Monmouthshire & Brecon canal. Built in 1817, the site was only productive for about 50 years and in the 1860's its machinery was dismantled and moved to a new site at Forgeside, Blaenavon. The railway to Blaenavon had made this a much more economic site. Despite its long idleness, the site of the forge is impressive to walk through with its overgrown foundations of the furnaces, forges and other buildings, as well as the silted up lower and higher ponds and numerous iron slag heaps.

The Pen-ffordd-goch (or Keeper's) Pond on the summit plateau of the Blorenges was the last of three ponds installed to supply the forge.

Iron Mountain Trail/Llwybr y Mynydd Haearn

The Iron Mountain Trail is an 18 km (12 mi) circular walk around the Blorenges Mountain. The walk, starting from the Pen-ffordd-goch pond and incorporating former tramroads, inclines, footpaths and the Monmouthshire & Brecon canal, encompasses the wealth of historical and natural features which give the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape its unique identity and enjoys views across the Usk Valley to the Black Mountains and into the Torfaen Valley.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Leave the station in **Abergavenny** in the **Usk Valley** on the fringes of **The Brecon Beacons National Park** through the station building (past the **Whistle Stop Café**) or to the left of it out to the top end of **Station Road** and *turn right* along it with a sign for **Canol y dref/Town centre 1 ¼**. You have the platforms and the railway line on your right and in 60m continue through a small industrial yard, also used as a car park and in 40m along a tarmac path with views ahead of **Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl** (SWC Walk 334). In 50m continue along a cul-de-sac residential road with some of the church towers in the town centre visible ahead to the left. In 30m *turn right* with the road, to the right of a small green strip between it and another road. In 60m you *curve left* with the road and continue along **Holywell Crescent** and in 75m reach the top of this gentle rise.

Ignore all ways off and descend into the valley of the **Gavenny River**, soon with views on the left to **Blorenge/Blorens**, today's aim. In 200m at the bottom of the drop at a T-junction, *turn left* along **Holywell Road**. In 130m *turn right* at a T-junction with the **A40 Monmouth Road** and cross **the river**. In 40m by a set of lights, ignore a path bearing right past a bollard into **Abergavenny Bus Station** unless you want to go to the **Oasis Sandwich Bar** 40m away. Continue towards the town, along the **A40**, using a pedestrian crossing to cross both the access road to the bus station and a drive to a car park and *turn left* across the busy road at a convenient point. In 50m **[!]** *turn left* along **Mill Street** to continue along its right-hand pavement. In 80m *turn up some steps to the right* and continue ascending with the high stone curtain wall around **Abergavenny Castle/Castell y Fenni** to your right. In 65m *turn right* with the wall and tarmac path with a steep wooded drop on the left. In 25m you have fine views ahead to **Sugar Loaf** and in 30m on the left to **Blorenge**.

In 50m, by a metal field gate and where the wall turns to the right, you *turn hard left* almost back on yourself, downhill along a gravel path (part of the National Cycle Network Route 42). In 80m continue in the same direction at a metal NCN 42 three-way signpost ('Brynmaur 9 mi'), in 15m passing another metal signpost ('Llan-ffwyst 1 ½'), while ignoring a wooden gate on the right into a small nature reserve as well as a left fork. In 20m go through a metal gate into the **Castle Meadows/Dolydd y Castell**, a floodplain of the **River Usk**, and continue in the same direction along a paved path through the meadows towards the river. In 130m *turn right* at a T-junction of paths, now with the river on the left behind trees. Abergavenny's town centre can be distinguished on the right by the **Market Hall's** tower above the tree tops.

Deri, one of the hills flanking Sugarloaf, rises behind the town. About 2/3 down the meadows you have good views on the right behind over the shoulder to **The Skirrid/Ysgryd Fawr** (SWC Walk 347). Just before leaving the meadows through a wooden kissing gate and up some steps onto the road leading to the left across **Usk Bridge**, you pass an info panel about the meadows, including details of the **Llanvihangel Railway** (or Tramway) that until 1962 used to run, initially above and to the side and later along, the bridge. *Turn left* across Usk Bridge (or Abergavenny Bridge/Pont y Fenni) along the A4143's left-hand narrow pavement and on the other side enter **Llanfoist/Llan-ffwyst**.

Just after crossing the bridge *turn right* across the busy road and follow a tarmac lane, signposted 'Llanfoist Cemetery', through some abutments of the former **Llanfoist Viaduct**. In 40m you pass the **Cemetery Lodge** on the left and in 50m the lychgate into the burial ground and in 60m the car gate. You keep ascending with the lane and in 70m continue on the level between trees. In 75m at the end of the cemetery, allotments take over on the left and in 65m you *turn left* with a public footpath through a gap to the right of a metal field gate, with a **Cambrian Way/Taith Cambria** marker on a gate post.

You follow this tarmac path between trees gently downhill, eventually with views of Blorengé ahead and in 110m go through a subway under the **A465 Heads of the Valleys Road**. In 30m go through a set of wooden gates to the right of a metal field gate and continue in the same direction along a gravel lane, leading to the right of a tree nursery and then gently uphill, now along tarmac and with a stream on the left. Ahead, high up Blorengé's steep slope, you can see some rockfaces, you will see them again in a few hours' time, but then below you! In 300m you pass the **Llanfoist Crossing** car park on the right ('Crossing' as this used to be the track bed of the Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway, via the Clydach Gorge), with its memorials to the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal Company, the Llanvihangel Tramroad and the railway.

You cross the **B4246** and pass a signpost ('Blorengé 5.2 km') to keep ascending along **Church Lane**, but more steeply than before. You pass another signpost ('Blorengé 2.4 km', referring to the punishing direct route up the hill) and have a churchyard on the left behind trees and in 80m go over a stone slab gate on the left into the churchyard of **St. Faith's, Llanfoist** church, for an excellent view of the pretty church and across the valley to **Ysgyryd Fach & Fawr**, to then continue up the lane. The continued steep ascent is shaded between mature trees and you have a stream on the left of the road all the way. In 180m ignore a left turning private drive to **Beacon Park Cottages** and continue in the same direction towards the high stone wall of the **Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal** (the 'Mon & Brec'), with a sign for '**Access for Footpath up Blorengé through tunnel**'.

Consequently, in 20m you ignore a signposted right running footpath up some steps to the canal towpath (with a 'Routes & Roots/ Llwybrau a Gwreiddiau' marker) and go through the **Llanfoist Tunnel** under the canal (no fear: you can always see the light at the end of the tunnel, but it may be **slippery**). On the far side keep ascending past **Drydock Cottage**, one of the accommodation options here at **Llanfoist Wharf**, past a footpath signpost ('Blorengé/Blorens 4.8 km'). You pass an info panel on the left, complete with a replica (laden) tram and start the relentless steep ascent along an earth/gravel path **through Glebe Wood up to the Cwm Craf**. The path travels along the (three) former **Llanfoist Inclines** of the tramroad down from the Blorengé. You will now ascend from spot height 121m above sea level for nearly a kilometre and up some 233 height metres at an **average gradient of 25%** to the point where the tramroad assumes a more-gentle gradient (and from where the trams were horse-drawn).

In more detail: in about 300m you go over a stile with a Cambrian Way marker; in 50m you pass some brick huts on the left (a ruined water cistern by a spring) at a path crossing (indistinct on the left), the second tramroad incline started from here; in 70m go over a stile in a fence line by a two-way signpost ('Cwm Craf' ahead); the tree cover now lightens and you can glimpse the grassy hillside ahead and in a short while ignore a metal field gate on the left and a track turning right to further ascend the path, passing a footpath marker post; higher up go over another stile into the open hillside in the **Cwm Craf**, the third tramroad incline started from here. Ignore a metal field gate on the left and walk up the left-hand side of the steep grassy field, in 20m passing a low footpath marker post. In the top-left field corner you *turn left* over a stile into **Access Land** (you won't leave it until way into the afternoon descent) and at a three-way signpost, *turn right* very steeply uphill ('Garnddyrys 2.8 km') along the fence on the right on a clear path through the bracken-covered hillside. A public bridleway joins from the left and you *bear right* with it further uphill until in about 125m the **path levels out for a while**.

You have fine views from here back to Abergavenny and its hills to the North and East. Follow **Hill's Tramroad** (occasional **stone sleepers** tell you where the rails for the trams would have been) gently ascending around the lower slopes of Blorengé for 2.3 km to the B4246 by the **Garnddyrys** ruins, as signposted earlier. In high summer some stretches will

be between bracken high enough to obscure views, but else you can enjoy fantastic long views up the Usk Valley towards Crickhowell, across to the Black Mountains and down to the villages at the foot of Blorenge (Llanfoist, Govilon and Gilwern).

At a point where the path goes over an insubstantial rise, you can spot a 50m long 'cut & shut'-tunnelled section of the tramway on the left. After 1.0 km along the tramroad ignore a right forking path along a wall and in 140m a staggered path crossing (a signposted footpath joins from Govilon on the right and in 30m the bridleway forks up to the left to Keeper's Pond while you continue in the same direction along the grassy footpath). You have the tightening **Cwm Llanwenarth** on the right with **Gilwern Hill** and its transponder mast on the far side of the valley and in 350m by a large birch tree on the right you have fine views of the disused **Pwll Du limestone quarry** ahead at the valley head with its slag heaps and works buildings. Gorse, bilberry and heather now start mixing into the bracken.

In 600m, with the B road already visible below, you pass the corner of a boulder wall, the walled area is the site of **Garn Ddyrys Row**, the settlement for the up to 450 workers of the forge passed in a minute. Continue in the same direction along the wide grassy path past it. In 150m you pass a marker post with an **Iron Mountain Trail** (IMT) on the reverse and in 30m (The Queen Victoria Inn stood here on the right) you cross the road towards **[!]** *but not through* a metal field gate and *turn left* along the road along its grassy verge, while also ignoring a public footpath through a gate some way to the right. In 60m you have some crash barriers on the right and in another 65m, halfway through a layby, you *veer right* along a grassy track. In 15m pass another IMT marker post and in 10m you continue to the left of an electricity pole.

You have entered the former site of the **Garnddyrys Forge**, heavily scarred by the forge activities with slag heaps, overgrown foundations of the forge buildings (housing, furnace and mill), the former mill ponds, random iron slag heaps, ridges and knolls (some with fine views) and several good paths. [The tramroad did run in a 150m long tunnel under parts of the site.] This is still **Access Land** and in principle you can pick any route through the area, but stay close to a fence on the right initially while avoiding a car wide track leading up to the road and in 300m at a cluster of piles of misshapen but picturesque iron slag avoid a route taking you downhill to the right and *fork left* (170°) along a grass path gently uphill. In 30m *bear left* to the left of some bracken and in 40m you join a car wide grassy track on the upper left-hand side of the area at a T-junction and *turn right* along it to continue along the tramroad along the steeper hillside of the upper valley (200°).

The gradient of the grassy ledge increases and the drop on the right gets steeper as well, as you ascend over 700m towards the valley head of the **Cwm Ifor**, a tributary valley of the Cwm Llanwenarth, with a landslipped area known as **The Tumble** below, and at the top of the rise you cross a two-railed footbridge (with a **Forging History/Hanes Gofannu** marker) over the infant **Cwm Shenkin Brook** running down the valley and *turn right* with the path (the right of way indicated straight ahead on the OS map has no evidence on the ground). In 50m on the right you get glimpses of **Hatterrall Hill** (SWC Walk 335 Pandy Inn to Llanvihangel Crucorney) to the right of Sugarloaf (20°). In 40m at an unmarked four-way path junction, **[!]** *turn up hard left* back on yourself (165°) along a rocky path steeply uphill, ignoring the level continuation as well as a right fork steeply downhill.

In 250m the path levels out in a grassy area at a T-junction and you *turn left*. In 80m *veer left* towards the road and in 40m pass an IMT marker post and cross the road and continue a little to the left along a gravel-and-earth path. In 100m you reach a path at a T-junction just to the right of a wooden bridge by the northerly end of the **Keeper's Pond** (on the OS map as **Pen-ffordd-goch pond**). There is a fine info panel 10m to the right from where you can see the Keeper's Pond car park at the pond's far end.

Here you have a choice:

For the Extension to Blaenavon, *turn right* along the path to the far end of the pond and pick up the directions below under **Extension to Blaenavon**.

For the Main Walk, turn back to cross the wooden bridge and follow a gravel path curving to the right, gently uphill. To the left you get views along the Usk Valley now all the way to the **Central Beacons, including Pen y Fan** (on 295°). In 165m the path continues as a part-cobbled wide track (30°) and in 50m reverts to a gravel path again. In 40m **[!]** *fork right* along a gently rising minor grass path (60° initially), leaving the main contouring gravel path. Heather and whinberries dominate the vegetation as you start the crossing of Blorengé's upland plateau. In 80m the path *bears to the right* (110°), in 140m to the left and in 120m you *bear right* at a T-junction (110° again) with a wider grassy track coming up from the left. In 100m – in a boggy section – you curve to the right with the track towards some transmission masts (160°).

You now have the gritstone outcrop on Blorengé's top away on the left (still about 40m higher up) and in 200m (in good weather) get views through the masts of the coast east of **Newport** and of the **Bristol Channel**, with Somerset and **the Mendips** beyond. You pass a rocky outcrop on the left and in 30m can see another car park ahead, this side of the transmission masts, and in 60m you reach (the 1952 Olympic gold medal show jumper) **Foxhunter's Memorial** on the left by an IMT marker post, 80m from the car park (there is an info panel on the horse's history in the car park). *Turn left* by the memorial along a clear gravel path and in 50m *turn left* with the path towards Blorengé's top on a general bearing of 25°.

***)** In 1150m you reach the Bronze Age **Carn Blorengé** (a robbed burial cairn of 15m in diameter and 2.0m height) and its nearby **trigpoint at 559m above sea level** (the real high point is at 561m). In the distance you can see **The Cotswolds** (the middle of the range on 75° is in line with Winchcombe and Moreton-in-Marsh villages, the left-hand end of the range near Evesham is on 65°) and the **Malvern Hills** (the Worcestershire Beacon is on 50°). You continue in the previous direction and in 350m pass an IMT marker post. In 100m ignore a left fork to a likely **clearance cairn** 40m away and the path starts to descend, while bracken gives way to grass and whinberries before you reach an area of small grassy hummocks, overgrown slag heaps, and a small brick hut with antennae and a solar panel on its top: a **Mountain Rescue Radio Repeater System**. Continue to the sheer drop of the hill into the valley to admire the view. You have some of the rock faces of the Blorengé away on the right, seen much earlier from below. A little to the left you can see the **Cwn Craf** and the wall you walked along some hours ago.

Turn right and pick up a clear car wide track, initially sunken between low earth banks. You *veer right* with the track (130°) and in another 100m it starts to descend noticeably. In 150m it veers to the right and continues as a grassy path between bracken. In 120m at a distinctive fork at spot height 480m, **[!]** *fork left* along a minor path to gently descend (185°), ignoring the level broader path straight ahead. In 220m pass an IMT marker post on the left and in 130m you *curve to the left* with the path, steeply downhill towards a drystone wall corner. You pass another IMT marker post near the wall corner and follow the wall with the path. Further downhill, *turn right* with the path and wall and in 90m at the far wall corner, *turn left* with the path to in 40m reach a tarmac lane at a T-junction.

You ignore the signposted bridleway opposite through a wooden gate and *turn left* along the lane to immediately *veer left* along the wall on the left towards a wooden field gate (signed 'The Punchbowl', i.e. ignore the lane crossing a cattle grid). Go through the field gate along a signposted car wide bridleway (with No Motor Bikes, No Cars signs) into a

Woodland Trust/Coed Cadw-owned area. In 70m go through a metal field gate and ignore a wooden field gate on the left into a pasture. You follow the track between an intermittent crumbling drystone wall on the left and a fence on the right, and with fine views down the part-wooded flank of Blorengel into the **Lower Usk Valley**. In 280m by a wooden bench on the right you *bear left* with the fence on the left (the hummocky area by the drop on the top of Blorengel is visible up on the left) and in 70m **[!]** you *turn left* through a metal gate with a marked bridgeway, ignoring the steep continuation ahead.

The descent through the wood is steep and slippery but the route never in doubt. In 100m you go through some gate posts in a fence line (a missing gate) and in 60m *turn left* with the path, along remnants of a drystone wall with trees growing out of it. In 100m you get first views through the foliage of **The Punchbowl** and in another 100m reach the man-made lake in its lovely setting, a large wooded hollow carved out by a small glacier. Pass the lake to its right and in 90m at the far end of the lake *turn right* with the path. In 230m pass a wooden bench on the left with some fine views to the right through a gap in the trees and 140m – just where the path bears to the left steeply uphill – **[!]** you *turn right* over a stile with a footpath marker into a pasture and follow its left-hand boundary downhill. You have finally **left the Access Land**.

In 50m ignore a metal field gate on the left and in 15m – by a medium height marker post – *bear left* with the marker, broadly along the left-hand boundary (i.e. ignore the prominent animal track ahead!). In 80m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and in 30m reach a three-way signpost on the left. Ignore the left turn uphill ('Lower Pen-y-graig') and *turn right* over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and walk downhill along a tarmac lane through a very scenic cwm (the marked right-of-way in this stretch differs from what the OS map shows). The lane curves to the left and in 250m you *turn left* away from the lane with a footpath signpost. In 25m **[!]** ignore the right turning track through a metal field gate and continue through the grass to a signposted stile 10m further and *turn right* over it into a large sloping pasture.

Follow the right-hand boundary and walk to the right of a corrugated iron shed and past a footpath marker post (now with **sudden open views** on the left to the Skirrids and into the Usk Valley) to leave the field at its bottom-right corner over a stile and past a footpath signpost ('Blorengel 2.8 km' backwards) onto a shaded tarmac lane and *turn left* downhill along it. In 80m ignore a drive on the right to **Hendre Cwrt** and **Castell Cwrt Farm Shop** and in 60m the grand entrance gate and drive to **Castell Prydydd**. You continue along the lane between high earth banks and multi-stemmed tall trees growing out of them and in 140m a break in the hedge affords fine views to the right. In 120m ignore a footpath turning left into a wood over a stile to the right of a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate and in 60m one joining from the right over a stile, just before you cross the **Mon & Brec** on the arched **Canal Bridge #95**.

Turn left with the lane and in 20m *turn left* off the lane onto the canal towpath through a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate and *turn right* along it for 950m to **Llanfoist Wharf** (the towpath also serves as **National Cycle Route 49**). About 80m before reaching the buildings at the Wharf, you pass a stack of five planks with metal handles either end: these are **Stop Planks** (or Stanking Planks), used to wedge into slots at pinch points of the canal to create temporary dams (stanks) and enable dewatering of a canal stretch either for repairs or in case of an existing breach to control water loss. You can see some such slots nearby. You go under **Canal Bridge #95A**, the private driveway to the cottages on the left and in 20m – where the canal widens out at the former wharf site – you *turn right* down some railed steps back onto the outbound route with the **Llanfoist Tunnel** on the right. *Turn left* downhill and retrace your route to the Usk Bridge.

In more detail: in 300m cross the B4246 (a **bus stop for services to Abergavenny** can be found away to the right by the long-closed Llanfoist Inn) and continue past the **Llanfoist Crossing** car park down the lane to **Abergavenny Nursery** in 400m and past it and under the **A465 Head of the Valleys** road, then back up to a T-junction with a tarmac lane in 130m from the subway. *Turn right* to pass allotments and **Llanfoist Cemetery** to the A4143 in 380m by **Usk Bridge** on the left. **The Bridge Inn** is away on the right, but you *turn left* across **Usk Bridge** and at the far end *turn right* through a metal kissing gate and down some steps into the Castle Meadows. Go through a wooden kissing gate and continue in the same direction along a grassy path (70°), i.e. do not *bear right* along the paved path along the river!

In 150m you can see some fine coloured cottages on the left and in 40m go through a belt of trees and continue in the same direction along a clear path. Continue with some trees on the left and in 220m at a T-junction of gravel paths, you pass **a side entrance to the Linda Vista Gardens** (well worth a visit if still open; leave through the main entrance away to the right and pick up the route there). In another 50m go through a wooden kissing gate and *veer left* along the wall on the left to the left of a car park at higher level. In 90m you pass the main entrance to the **Linda Vista Gardens** (open 7.00-20.00 in summer and to 18.00 in winter) and cross the car park exit and entrance lanes a little to the right to continue up a railed tarmac path to a higher level. In 50m *turn right* through another, smaller, car park and in 30m at a T-junction with a main road, *turn right* along it. In 30m by the corner of **The King's Arms**, you *turn left* along **Nevill Street**. You pass **Coffee Pot**, **Gurkha Corner** and **Coffee No. 1**, before reaching the **High Street**.

The route continues to the right, but you find many tea stops away to the left along High Street: **Annette's Café and Diner** (down Lewis's Lane on the left), **Portico Lounge Café Bar** and **The Coliseum** (Wetherspoon) on the right, then **The Little Treat**, **Café Nero**, **Mezze Me**, the **Victorian Tea Rooms** and **Casa Bianca** and **Amo's Restaurant**. **The Grofield Inn** is down Baker Street on the left and further down Frogmore Street you have **Nicholls' Restaurant**, **The Codfather** Fish Bar & Café, **Tapas Twist** (currently closed) and **Auberge** Bar & Lounge Restaurant.

Turn right along **High Street** to pass a **Costa Coffee**. **The Hen & Chickens** pub is away in a side street on the right and in a further 160m you continue along **Cross Street**: pass **The Art Shop & Chapel** and **Bean & Bread** (down the left along Market Street), **Cwtch Café**, **Kings Head Hotel**, **Luigi's** Café Ristorante and **The Angel Restaurant & Bar**, with its **Angel Bakery** opposite. Continue in the same direction along **Monmouth Road** to pass a **Thai Restaurant**, **The Coach & Horses**, **Cinnamon Tree** and **Anatolian Meze Bar**. In 220m pass the **Bus Station**. **The Abergavenny Hotel** with its bar is just beyond the Gavenny river on the right, as you continue along the **A40 Monmouth Road**. In 230m, just after **The Belmond**, *turn left* along Belmont Road and in 30m *turn right* along **Belmont Close**. In 80m continue in the same direction along a residential tarmac lane where the road turns left and in 70m *turn left* uphill along **Station Road**. You pass **The Great Western** en route to **Abergavenny Train Station**.

Newport bound trains depart from the far platform, reached via the overbridge.

Blaenavon Extension (adds 9.9 km and 250m ascent)

At the far end of the pond, where the tarmac path turns to the left by a metal signpost on the right ('Llanfoist 4.8 km' backwards), you *turn right* and cross the **B4246** and continue in the same direction. In 30m cross a tarmac lane, leading to the **Pwll-du quarry** far away on the right. Go under some electricity lines and head up a gravel path through the heathery ground, **towards the slag ridge** looming ahead (240°). In 220m at a three-way junction of wide dirt tracks (with a couple of minor paths forking off as well), and on the fringes of a large disused quarry tip ahead, you *turn right* along the right-hand wide dirt track and in 20m ignore a minor fork on the left to ascend the slag ridge. In 100m the track levels out and you continue in the same direction with views ahead across the ridge of the vast spoil area, with deep erosion channels running down to the right. You have fine views back on the right to **Keeper's Pond** and **Blorange's top** and of **the coast near Newport** on the left, with the Somerset hills visible beyond the Mouth of the Severn.

In 50m ignore a rough, wide left turn downhill and in 80m another left turn by a reed-filled pond on the left. In another 60m **[!]** *turn sharp left* along a wide track (165°) and in 30m *turn left* at a T-junction, still with the pond on the left. In 40m *fork right* and in another 40m at a five-way junction of tracks, you *turn hard right* uphill (260°) and in 60m cross a track to continue uphill more steeply. In 40m the terrain levels out and you *turn right* along a track, with a large quarry on the left and some fine views up to the head of the **Afon Lwyd Valley** on the far left, as well as across the **Usk Valley** on the right, to the **Skirrid, Sugar Loaf** and the **Black Mountains**. The track descends to in 120m join a wider track and you *bear left* along it (310°). You are now broadly heading for a ruined brick building in the middle distance, with **Pen y Fan** visible far beyond it (in clear weather) and in 170m ignore a left turn uphill. In another 220m a couple of tracks join on the right through a shallow valley from the end of the spoil ridge walked along earlier.

In 210m, where the track starts to curve down to the right, you **[!]** *bear left* along a narrow path through a band of grass and heather to in 10m *turn left* uphill along a car wide dirt track (due S), by a pond on the right (on the OS map). The track curves around to the right and in 160m you pass the ruined red brick building seen earlier. In 50m, at a T-junction, you *turn left* (235°) along a clear straight car wide track, the **Dyne-Steel Incline**, an unmarked public bridleway. [The double-incline was built for a steam-powered tramroad used to transport cast iron across the hill between the Blaenavon Ironworks and Pwll-Du. From there the trams continued along Hill's Tramroad to the Garnddyrys Forge and on to the canal at Llanfoist. Due to it being faster and cheaper, in 1850 the incline replaced the Pwll-Du Tunnel, which at the time of its build in 1817 at 1,875m length was the longest horse-drawn tramway surface tunnel in Britain. But the incline ceased operation after only 10 years in 1860 when the Forge was closed.]

In 40m continue in the same direction at a crosspaths (you are leaving the Brecons Beacons National Park and the track is now a restricted byway) and follow the clear and straight track through the heathery ground, with more slag heaps and tips visible in various places, and in 40m continue gently downhill into the **Afon Lwyd Valley** along the track now running in a heather covered cutting. The long hill range on the other side is the **Mynydd Coety/Coity Mountain**, rising to 578m towards the half left and with several subsidiary tops, one of which – **Mulfran** on the far right – overlooks Brynmawr (SWC Walk 371 – The Clydach Gorge). In about 600m you proceed through a boggy area for about 100m, and after that you have **one of the many reservoirs** scattered about the hillside on the left. These were necessary **for operating the mines** that extracted iron ore, limestone, fire clay and coal from underground. The reservoir here served **New Pit**. You cross or pass three large boulders on the track and in 40m reach a four-way junction of tracks by a fenced off former mine shaft on the right.

Here you have a choice:

For the Shortcut on this Extension, *turn left* along a track (also a restricted byway), to pass the reservoir on its right-hand side. In 60m, halfway along the reservoir, a break on the right provides views across the valley and some of the prominent old industrial buildings located in it, including the **Big Pit colliery, now the National Mining Museum** with some more large spoil heaps next to it. In 90m you cross a stream on a plank bridge and in 200m another one on an earth bridge. In 130 pass another fenced mine shaft and then you reach *the chimney of the winding engine* that worked the **Hills Pits** below.

Fork right along a gravel track descending to the right and over the next 150m ignore a couple of right forks. Over another 800m the track descends to the **B4248 Garn Road**. *Turn left* along the road. Ignore all roads and ways off and continue for 800m almost to a T-junction with the **B4246 Abergavenny Road**. By a bus stop 150m before that junction, *turn up left* along a tarmac path and continue past a car park across **Rifle Green**. On the far side of the green, with **The Rifleman's Arms** (B&B) opposite, carefully cross the Abergavenny Road and continue up **Rifle Street**. In 20m *fork left* along a gravel car wide track to the left of a row of houses and pick up the directions below at the asterisk *).

For the Full Extension, *turn right* at the fenced mine shaft and in 40m *curve to the left* with the car wide track around the head of an infant valley. In 100m – at the base of a spoil heap – *fork left* to curve around the heap and in 110m cross a streamlet on the path. In 90m *turn left* downhill at a T-junction with a tarmac lane and follow it for almost 500m to the junction with the **B4248 Garn Road**. Cross the road and walk down a lane signed for **The Whistle Inn & Campsite**.

Here you have a choice:

For a route via the Inn, continue down the lane for 300m, and re-join the walk route from there as shown on the route map.

For the Full Extension, in 40m *turn left* into the **Whistle Road car park**, pass an info panel on the **Garn Lakes** site and continue along a tarmac path. In 130m *bear left* at a T-junction with a gravel path and in 90m cross a stream on a wide two-railed footbridge. You have open views on the right now to the first of the picturesque Garn Lakes (a **Wildlife Lake**) and pass a 'No Swimming' sign. In 130m ignore a right turning path over another footbridge across a stream and in 25m *fork right* to follow the stream, in 15m ignoring another footbridge on the right to descend along the stream to the second of the lakes (a **Fishing Lake**). In 90m, at a T-junction, *turn right* to cross the stream on a wide bridge and in another 30m *turn left* at a three-way tarmac path junction to keep the lake on your left. In 110m another path joins from the right (this is **National Cycle Route 492** and **the route from The Whistle Inn**) and in 150m *turn left* with the path to re-cross the stream.

At a four-way junction, *turn right* with the stream on your right and in 125m go through a squeeze gate onto a road and *turn down to the right* along it. You cross the **Afon Lwyd** (culverted around here) and in 50m ignore a left turning tarmac track (the NCN Route 492). In 70m you enter the grounds of the **Blaenavon Furnace Sidings Station** of the **Pontypool & Blaenavon Railway**, with its **Fireman's Shovel Tearoom**. Go through a wooden gate to the right of a metal car gate to cross the tracks and in 60m ignore a right turn uphill. The tarmac lane continues parallel to the railway line and in 200m (20m before an info panel on the Coity Tip Trail) you *turn right* through a metal kissing gate with a **Coity Tip Trail** marker. You follow a boardwalk zigzagging up the hill side along a stream, later continuing along gravel, and in 150m *turn left* at a T-junction, now on the level.

You pass a marker post in 100m and in another 60m can **either** continue in the same direction to contour around the tip, **or** turn up to the left with a Coity Tip Trail sign to follow a path **to a higher vantage point** (*turn right* at the top of the rise and follow the ridge past occasional marker posts). In either case you reach the far side of the fenced tip area overlooking **The Big Pit**, a former colliery, now the **National Mining Museum**, and its car park. *Turn left* along the perimeter fence, with the Big Pit on your right and leave the fenced area through a metal kissing gate by a footpath signpost and *turn right* along the tarmac lane left earlier. You go through a squeeze gate and in 30m by a 'Car Park for Walkers' on the right, *turn left* downhill towards an access road, with the **Big Pit Halt** of the railway on your left. *Turn left* along the access road, signed for 'Heritage Town' and in 250m *turn left* at a T-junction with a road. You go under a railway bridge and in 20m, with **Rhymney Brewery** ahead, *turn right* along NCN Route 492 along a tarmac path.

Pass a large industrial unit on the left and in 150m continue in the same direction through a metal kissing gate, where the cycle route turns right. You walk along a tarmac path to the left of a fence and pass a second large industrial unit. In 140m go through a metal kissing gate and continue with the culverted river on the right. The path veers away from the river and enters trees to gently descend through the wood. In 160m from the gate *turn hard left* with the path which now zigzags down the wooded hillside. In 170m *turn hard right* to cross a stream (coming out of a mine) on a footbridge and *fork left* to stay to the left of several fenced ponds (a mine-water treatment scheme). In 250m you leave the area past a car park and in 40m go through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and *turn right* along a road at a bend. In 110m, where the road turns right to cross the river, you continue in the same direction along a minor tarmac lane (signed 'Heritage Town'), in 40m ignoring a tarmac path from the right from **Aaron Brute's Bridge** (one of the earliest iron bridges in Wales), and in 50m *bear up to the left*, ignoring a right turn downhill.

This is the start of the more or less **relentless ascent to Blorenges top** (from 314m above sea to 561m). You rise steeply to the main road through Blaenavon and in 80m *turn right* along its right-hand pavement. Pass several buildings that are part of the **World Heritage Site** (library, workman's hall, heritage centre, St. Peter's Church) and in 250m *turn left* at some pedestrian lights to cross the road and *turn up left* along a minor road, signed 'Heritage Town'. In 60m the road converges with **Broad Street**, opposite **The Castle Hotel**, and you *turn left*, steeply uphill. You pass the former **Market Tavern** and later **The Lion Hotel & Restaurant**. Keep ascending steeply and at the top of the rise *turn left* with the road, immediately ignoring a first right turn (Ellick Street). In another 50m **[!]** *turn right* up along **Phillips Street** (later called Maxworthy Road). Ignore all ways off and in 250m and at the top of the rise, *turn left* along **Rifle Street** at a T-junction. You have **The Rifleman's Arms** (B&B) on the left and **[!]** *turn hard right* immediately along a gravel car wide track to the left of a row of houses.

***)** In 100m the track turns left then right (ignore a steep track ahead) and in 60m you continue in the same direction uphill along a narrow grass path along some garden fences. You curve to the left with the fences and in 75m level out by a metal kissing gate and the **Ball's Pond** on the right. *Turn right* through the gate **into Access Land** and left along the fence (i.e.: continue in the previous direction) to the left of the pond and then to the right of a fenced sports field. The twin **transmission masts on Blorenges top** plateau are visible ahead on the half right (55°). In 50m ignore a stile on the left in the fence and in another 25m *bear right* along a grass path (60°), initially aiming slightly to the right of the transmission masts. The path curves to the left a little in 40m and heads up towards a fenced reservoir 140m away. Pass the reservoir to its right and then continue in the same direction a little to the left along the line of an audible submerged stream and past some concrete reservoir covers (i.e.: ignore the car wide service track).

In 60m ignore a right fork and follow the path between some overgrown slag heaps. In 50m you wind your way up to a T-junction with a clear track and *turn right* along it, with the transmission masts dead ahead. In 130m follow the main track curving up to the left, ignoring a right fork to the right of more overgrown slag heaps (although this is marked as the right-of-way on the OS map). In about 130m you pass redundant stone gate posts away on the right, in the line of a collapsed wall (on the OS map), and you follow the path meandering up the hillside of the **Darrenfellen** towards the masts. In about 700m you pass the transmission masts and cross a road by the **Foxhunter Car Park** and proceed through the car park along a path to the **Foxhunter Memorial**.

Turn right at a three-way path junction and pick up the directions in the Main Walk text at the asterisk *).