

Brecon Beacons Horseshoe			Brecon Beacons Horseshoe (northerly approaches)		
1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check	1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check
30 th April 2017			07 th May 2018	19 th July 2020	
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Brecon Beacons Horseshoe – Bannau Brycheiniog

Start & Finish: Neuadd Reservoir car park.

Or any of: Storey Arms Outdoor Centre (car park or bus stop), Llwyn-y-Celyn Youth Hostel (south of Libanus), Brecon Bus Interchange, Talybont-on-Usk or Upper Blaen y Glyn car park.

Neuadd Reservoir car park, map reference SO 036 170, is 9 km north of Merthyr Tydfil, 229 km west north west of Charing Cross, 401m above sea level and in **Powys, Wales** (as are all other start & finish points).

Length: 15.3 km (9.5 mi), of which 1190m are on tarmac or concrete.

Cumulative ascent/descent: 740m. For all alternative start points, resulting in a longer and tougher walk, as well as for opportunities to cut out some of the ascent and distance, see *below* **Walk options**.

Toughness: 8 out of 10

Time: 5 hours walking time.

Transport: Storey Arms Bus Stop is on line T4 (Cardiff - Pontypridd – Merthyr Tydfil – Brecon – Newtown), with 6 buses a day Mon-Sat and 5 on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Talybont-on-Usk is on line 43/X43 (Abergavenny – Brecon) with 7 buses a day Mon-Sat and 4 on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Saturday Walkers' Club: This walk is doable as a daywalk from London if you have motorised transport. Accommodation is available in Brecon, Merthyr Tydfil & Crickhowell, and in the Llwyn-y-Celyn Youth Hostel.

OS Landranger Map: 160 (Brecon Beacons)

OS Explorer Map: OL12 (Brecon Beacons National Park)

Walk Notes:

The ridge linking the four table-top peaks traversed on this walk (Corn Du, Pen y Fan, Cribyn, Fan y Big) forms the majestic core of the Central Brecon Beacons and contains the three highest tops in South Wales. As a result, this classic horseshoe walk around a steep sided glacial valley is amongst the best ridge walks in South Britain, featuring some spectacular views in all directions in good weather.

From a remote reservoir north of Merthyr Tydfil you climb steeply along an engineered path to reach the ridge, from where the gradient is mostly fairly gentle as you follow a sequence of steep escarpments to Corn Du and Pen y Fan. Pen y Fan is the southern-most mountain in Britain and a large glacial grassy mound with steep glacial sides. Continuing along the ridge up to Cribyn and Fan y Big requires some steep descents and re-ascents, but both tops can be circumvented. An out-and-back extension further along the ridge – to Waun Rydd alongside an upland bog – offers more superb views, lastly along the Usk Valley. Route finding is easy (in clear weather), as the whole of the horseshoe route is visible at all times. Despite some steep drops this walk is not scary or dangerous, but it is exceptionally exposed to the elements.

As the horseshoe walk starts from a remote car park, 8 more accessible ascents to the ridge are described.

Note: Corn Du and Pen y Fan are very popular peaks as they can be (relatively) easily accessed from car parks on the A470. Expect lots of walkers (experienced and not) on that short stretch, in any weather.

Walk options:

The drama of the ridge walk develops best when approached from the Neuadd Reservoir car park, slowly ascending to the ridge and then up to the tops along it, before gently descending back to the start, but the car park is very remote. Therefore 8 other approaches to the ridge are described, enabling a start from: car parks and bus stops along the A 470, Brecon, Talybont-on-Usk, a Youth Hostel south of Libanus, or a car park near the highest road pass in the Brecon Beacons (i.e.: with the least amount of ascent to the ridge). These starts inevitably add distance and ascent to the walk, making it a very strenuous walk if also completing the full horseshoe. On the other hand they enable numerous variations of the ridge walk, going up one route, completing some of the ridge walk and/or the extension, and descending a different route. For an overview of the various ascent and descent options check the route map on the SWC website and for all details see pages 8 and 15 of this file respectively.

Tea (details last updated 01/04/2019)

Old Barn Tea Rooms Ystradgynwyn, *Torpantau*, on road between Neuadd Reservoir and Talybont-on-Usk.
Kiosk in the car park by the Storey Arms Outdoor Centre **on the A470**

In Brecon:

Watergate Fish Bar & Café 13 Watergate, Brecon, Powys, LD3 9AL (07779 094 576)

The Boar's Head 14 Watergate, Brecon, Powys, LD3 9AD (01874 625 569)

Chang Thai Cuisine 50 High Street, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7AP (01874 622 330,
<http://www.changthaicuisine.co.uk/>). Open daily 17.00-22.30.

The Brecon Tap 6 The Bulwark, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7LB (01874 623 888, <http://www.breconinns.co.uk/>).

Owned by the Brecon Brewing Company. Open to 23.00 daily. Food served 12.00-15.00 and 18.00-21.00.

The Clarence Inn 25 The Watton, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7ED (01874 622 810, <http://clarenceinn.co.uk/>).

Food served 12.00-14.30 daily and 19.00-21.00 Thu-Tue.

Gurkha Corner 12 Glamorgan Street, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7DW (01874 610 871,
<http://gurkhacorner.co.uk/>). Closed Mon.

Bank Bar & Kitchen 37 The Watton, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7EG (01874 623 997,
<http://www.thebankbarbrecon.co.uk/>). A modern gastropub.

In Talybont-on-Usk:

The White Hart Talybont-on-Usk, LD3 7JD (01874 676 227, <https://www.whitehartinntalybont.co.uk/>).

The Star Inn Talybont-on-Usk, Powys, LD3 7YX (01874 676 635, <http://www.starinntalybont.co.uk/>).

Talybont Stores Talybont-on-Usk, Powys, LD3 7YJ (01874 676 663, <http://www.talybontstores.co.uk/>).

Welsh Glossary

aber: estuary, confluence, river mouth; afon: river; allt: hillside, cliff; aran: high place; bach: small; 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; cefn: ridge, hillside; castell: castle; 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/dden: black, dark; dwfr/dwâr: water; dyffryn: valley; -dyn: fortified enclosure; eglwys: church; eisteddfod: meeting-place, assembly; esgair: ridge; fach: small; fawr/mawr: big; fechan: smaller; ffald: sheep-fold, pound, pen, run; ffordd: 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:

Beacons Way

The Beacons Way is a 152 km (95 mi) linear waymarked long distance footpath running east to west across the Brecon Beacons National Park. It passes many of the most important landmarks and mountain peaks in the range, but has limited waymarking, especially on open hill and moorland sections, meaning navigation skills are essential. First established in 2005, the route was revised in 2016.

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).

Taff Trail

Launched in 1988, the Taff Trail is an 88 km (55 mi) cycle and walking route starting in the south in Cardiff Bay and travelling north to Brecon Theatre, largely following the course of the River Taff.

Brecon (Aberhonddu)

Brecon (Aberhonddu in Welsh, i.e.: mouth of the Honddu River, which meets the River Usk near the town centre), is a market town in Powys, Mid Wales. Historically it was known as Brecknock and the county town of Brecknockshire, and is now the third-largest town in Powys. It lies north of the Brecon Beacons mountain range, but is just within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The original Welsh name of the kingdom in whose territory Brecon stands was "Brycheiniog" (later anglicised to Brecknock or Brecon), and probably derives from Brychan, the eponymous founder of the kingdom.

Before the building of the bridge over the Usk, Brecon was one of the few places where the river could be forded. In Roman Britain Y Gaer, Brecon (*Cicucium*) was established as a Roman cavalry base for the conquest of Roman Wales and Brecon was first established as a military base. The confluence of the Honddu and the Usk also made for a valuable defensive position for the Norman castle which overlooks the town.

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.

Usk Valley Walk

The Usk Valley Walk is a linear 78 km (48 mi) waymarked Long Distance Path starting in the south from Caerleon and following the Usk (and the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal) upstream to Brecon.

Bryn Oer Tramway/Brinore Tramroad

The Bryn Oer Tramway (also known as the Brinore Tramroad) was a 13 km/8 mi horse-worked narrow-gauge railway built in 1814 as a feeder railway to transport freight to the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal for transshipment. It served the Bryn Oer collieries and the limestone quarries at Trefil, dropping 330m along its route to the canal at Talybont-on-Usk. An extension was built to serve the Rhymney ironworks in the Rhymney Valley. By 1860 most of the tramway's traffic was being sent by railways and it closed in 1865, although many stone sleepers are still in place and most of the route is now a public bridleway.

WALK DIRECTIONS

[For all alternative start points go to page 8 and pick up the directions under the respective heading.]

Getting to the Start

Drive north from Merthyr Tydfil, past Pontsticill, along the west side of the large Pentwyn reservoir. Where the road bends right along the top of the reservoir (near CF48 2UT), go straight on (north) along a single track tarmac lane (the Neuadd Reservoir's access road) and continue to a Brecon Beacons National Park car park.

You are in the middle of a steep sided glacial valley surrounded by the ridge which you are about to walk around. There is a reservoir in the bottom, and a car wide track heading up it (north) on its right hand side to a col (pass) between two of the peaks. The route is distinct and easy to follow. The valley bottom containing the car park, reservoir, and track is visible from the entire route (in clear weather).

Head north out of the car park along a narrow path and in 100m *bear left* along the reservoir access road to continue in the previous direction. In 200m a track joins from the right and in 30m you *fork left* with the tarmac road through a car barrier, ignoring the right fork car wide earthen track up the slope (this is the return route). In 300m ignore another right fork car wide gravel track. In 600m, just before the reservoir, you go through a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate over a cattle grid.

***)** *Turn down left* to continue to the right of some ruined building (a pump house), cross the reservoir outflow and climb up to the reservoir wall to *turn left* along it in a westerly direction. At the end of the reservoir wall you *veer right* and in 50m go through a metal field gate in a line of trees into the open boggy hillside leading to the ridge.

This is Open Access Land. Ignore a faint track veering left towards a wooded area as well as a left turning signed footpath.

In 25m ignore a faint path *forking right* on a bearing of 300° (this path is now closed to prevent further erosion) and *fork left*, in 50m ford a stream and follow an engineered path leading up in 100m to the edge of the wooded area on the left and then closely following it uphill. From the corner of the wooded area continue along the engineered path to reach the ridge line at a height of 635m above sea. *Turn right* along the escarpment and in 650m pass a cairn and continue in the same direction.

Follow the ridge (the **Graig Fan Ddu**) in a north westerly direction along a gentle and obvious route, initially with a gently sloping plateau on the left. In 1.3 km you pass the (not very prominent) top of **Cefn Cul** (with a cairn a little to the left) and in about another 400m you have the steep curving **Cwm Crew** (valley) on the left and continue over another (not very prominent) top, the **Rhiw yr Ysgyfarnog**. In 1.2 km you go over another top, the **Craig Gwaun Taf**, just before the ridge curves around to the right down to the Bwlch Duwynt ('Windy Pass') and in 230m a prominent path joins from the left up from the **Pont ar Daf National Trust car park** on the **A470** south of the **Storey Arms Outdoor Centre**.

This is the route of the **Beacons Way Long Distance Path** and a possible descent route (the car park is 2.2 km away, route finding is straightforward, at the bottom you can either ford the **Blaen Taf Fawr** [stream], or use a two-railed footbridge to the right, then go through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate).

******) The route forks, with the right hand lower fork offering an option to avoid the climb up to **Corn Du** by going straight to **Pen y Fan**. This cuts 90m distance and about 25m ascent. *Fork left* to walk up to **Corn Du** ('Black Horn' in English), whose cairned top (at 873m above sea) you reach in 400m. The cairn on the summit was a **Bronze Age burial chamber**. A path joins from the left up from a car park on the **A470** right by the **Storey Arms Outdoor Centre**.

This is a possible descent route **to the A470**, for details go to page 15 and pick up the directions under the heading **Descent to the Storey Arms from Corn Du**.

*******) *Turn right* from the previous direction (so *bear left* if you have come up from the Storey Arms car park) to continue in an initially easterly direction towards the obvious top 600m away. You descend to a saddle between the two tops and re-ascend immediately, to reach the cairned summit of **Pen y Fan** ('Head of the Place' in English, at 886m above sea the highest top in the Brecon Beacons and South Wales). The cairn on the summit was a **Bronze Age burial chamber** (when it was excavated in 1991 a bronze brooch and spearhead were found inside the chamber). **Brecon** can be seen to the north and on a good day **Cadair Idris** is just about visible. To the east you can make out the **Black Mountains** and the distinctively shaped '**Sugarloaf/Pen y Fâl**' hill between Crickhowell and Abergavenny), and to the south-west the **Bristol Channel**.

The ridgeline off the top of Pen y Fan in a northerly direction (the **Cefn Cwm LLwch**) is a possible descent route to Brecon, for details go to page 15 and pick up the directions under the heading **Descent to Brecon from Pen y Fan**.

********) *Turn right* from the previous direction (but *turn left* if you have come up from Brecon Bus Station) on an initial bearing of 135° to follow the obvious zig-zagging path along the steeply dropping escarpment of the **Craig Cwm Sere** (with the **Cwm Sere** [valley] on your left) in a south easterly direction down off the summit towards **the saddle between Pen y Fan and Cribyn** with its small pool.

In 700m, still descending and about 180m from the saddle, **you have a choice:**

To avoid the steep ascent up Cribyn, *fork right* with the Beacons Way downhill for a bit longer and then contour around Cribyn along an obvious path, curving to the left, and re-join the route over the top in 1.75 km **at the Old Roman Road in the saddle** between Cribyn and Fan y Big. This cuts 130m distance and about 100m ascent.

To walk up to Cribyn *fork left* down to the saddle (at 675m above sea) and re-ascend steeply on the other side, to the top of **Cribyn** ('Little Ridge' in English, at 795m above sea), 650m away.

The ridgeline off the top of Cribyn in a north easterly direction (the **Bryn Teg**, or 'Fair Hill' in English) is a possible descent route to Brecon, for details got to page 15 and pick up the directions under the heading **Descent to Brecon from Cribyn**.

*********) *Turn right* from the previous direction (but *turn left* if you have come up from Brecon Bus Station) to follow an obvious path along the **Craig Cwm Cynwyn** (with the **Cwm Cynwyn** [valley] on your left) in an – initially – southerly direction down off the summit towards **the saddle between Cribyn and Fan y Big**. The path drops gently and curves to the left and in 1.2 km reaches the saddle (the **Bwlch ar y Fan**, 'Gap between the Peaks' in English, at 599m above sea) at a multi-path and track junction. The car wide crossing track is an ancient trail, and a possible **Old Roman Road**.

Here you have a choice:

To avoid the steep ascent up Fan y Big (and also to cut out the optional out-and-back extension to Waun Rydd), *turn right* along the **Old Roman Road** and pick up the directions below at the septuple asterisk *********). This cuts 2.0 km and 100m ascent.

To walk up to and over Fan y Big ('Peak of the Beacon' in English) cross the Old Roman Road and ascend the engineered path to reach the summit and its storm shelter at 719m above sea, 500m away. [Notice the overhanging rock slab to the left of the summit, the 'diving board']. This peak is a **subsidiary top of Waun Rydd** and one end of an expanse of high altitude moorland with three other indistinct summits that make for a gentle ridge walk with dramatic views throughout (the extension leads along it). The ridgeline off the top of Fan y Big in a north easterly direction (the **Cefn Cyff**) is a possible descent route to Brecon, for details go to page 15 and pick up the directions under the heading **Descent to Brecon from Fan y Big**.

*********) *Turn right* from the previous direction (but *turn left* if you have come up from Brecon Bus Station) to follow the obvious path along the escarpment of the **Craig Cwm Oergwm** (with the **Cwm Oergwm**, or 'Cold Valley' in English, on your left) in a – initially – southerly direction down off the summit towards a shallow saddle at 685m above sea, 800m away at a multi-path junction.

Here you have a choice:

For an extension to Waun Rydd (either as an out-and-back, or to descend from there either to **Talybont-on-Usk** or to the **Upper Blaen y Glyn Car Park**), *veer left* with the escarpment to **Craig Cwareli** (hill) just ahead of you (at 730m above sea) and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Extension to Waun Rydd**.

To follow the main walk to the Neuadd Reservoir Car Park **avoid** the options described in some books: **do not** descend down the steep tussocky slope above the valley (**Tor Glas**) or continue in the same direction along the top of the slope to the distant wood and then descend along the **Nant y Gloesydd** (stream), as this leads along tussocky and uneven ground or boggy, slippery and uneven ground respectively. **Instead do turn right** on a dog leg (310°) downslope on a clear path. In 700m (about 200m before reaching the saddle between Cribyn and Fan y Big) *fork down left* along a grassy path towards the **Old Roman Road** and in 80m *turn down left* along it.

*********) Enjoy the gentle descent on a clear track with the **Upper and Lower Neuadd Reservoirs** down below on the right. In about 2 kilometres you reach a fork in the track just before crossing a deep gully.

Here you have a choice:

For a return to the car park at the Neuadd Reservoir *fork left* to cross the **Nant y Gloesydd** (stream) to climb up on the other side, go through a metal field gate or over a stile in a fence a little further along and follow a car wide track (the **Old Roman Road**) to the tarmac access road and then the Brecon Beacons National Park car park.

For a continuation of the horseshoe walk (i.e.: if you want to return to one of the other finishing points), *fork right* downhill and in 200m walk through a metal field gate and *turn left* along a car wide gravel track. In 90m walk through another metal field gate and *turn right* with some barbed wire fence remnants and the ruined **Filter House** on the right. In 50m, where a tarmac lane joins from the Reservoir car park away on the left, *turn right* through a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate over a cattle grid and pick up the directions at the start of this text at the asterisk *****).

Extension to Waun Rydd (add 7.5 km/4.7 mi and 288m ascent out-and-back)

From **Craig Cwareli** follow the fairly level ridge path all the way round to the left and in 1.3 km *turn right* at a right angle with the path and the escarpment. The path curves left again and in 530m you pass the (cairned) second top along, the **Bwlch y Dwyallt** ('bog of the grey rocks' in English), before descending in 320m to a shallow saddle this side of the **Waun Rydd** ('open bog' in English). *Turn right*, away from the escarpment, along a new engineered path through the saddle (80°), in 40m cross a path (the ascent from the **Upper Blaen y Glyn Car Park**) and in 20m **[!]** *turn right* at another crosspaths along a narrow track towards the prominent rock face about 700m away on the slope of Waun Rydd (145° initially). This is the **Cwar y Gigfran** ('quarry of the crow' in English, the top of a large landslipped area).

The track *veers right* and in 100m you *turn left* at a T-junction with another narrow track (115°). In 80m you go through a dip to cross a stream and in 50m through another, and in 500m reach the **Memorial for five Canadian aircrew** at the bottom of the rock face, killed here when their Wellington R 1465 bomber crashed into the hill on a training flight in 1942 (and a couple of heaps of aircraft debris left from the crash). *Turn around* at the memorial to face the saddle you came from and *turn right* past the upper heap of aircraft debris to ascend a clear narrow path that winds up the steep slope to the left of a stream gully and to the left of the rock face.

In 70m, at the top of the steep ascent at a T-junction with a clear path from the left along the top of the rock face, ignore the indistinct path ahead to **[!]** *turn right* **along the clear path at the top of the rock face**. In 40m **[!]** *turn left* along an indistinct path through the upland bog and follow a winding path (past another heap of aircraft debris) for 450m on a broad bearing of 70° **to a cairn to the right of, and a little beyond, a small lake** (on the OS map). On the right you have far views along the **Usk Valley** to the east (on a clear day – on a bearing of 95° – you can even spot the distinctively shaped '**Sugarloaf/Pen y Fâl**' hill between Crickhowell and Abergavenny).

Here you have a choice:

For a descent to Talybont-on-Usk, *turn right* along a clear sandy path on a bearing of 100°, go to page 18 and pick up the directions under the heading **Descent from Waun Rydd to Talybont-on Usk**.

For a continuation of the Extension back to the main horseshoe walk *turn left* on an indistinct path across the level terrain on an initial bearing of 300°.

***)** In 300m you pass to the right of another lake (also on the OS map) and *veer ever so slightly left* gently down the plateau (the **actual top of Waun Rydd** at 769m above sea is away on the right, but doesn't provide any different views) on a broad bearing of 290°, to then pick up and follow the engineered path along the flank of Waun Rydd seen earlier, **back to the shallow saddle** between Bwlch y Dwyallt and Waun Rydd.

Here you have a choice:

For a descent to the Upper Blaen y Glyn Car Park *turn left* at a crosspaths on a bearing of 190°, go to page 15 and pick up the directions under the heading **Descent from Waun Rydd to the Upper Blaen y Glyn Car Park**.

Else re-trace your steps back to the main walk route, by the saddle below Fan y Big, along the path hugging the rim of the escarpment.

Alternative Starts

(listed clockwise from west to east)

Ascent from the Pont ar Daf National Trust car park *south of the Storey Arms Outdoor Centre* to Corn Du (2.2 km/1.4 mi and 362m ascent)

From the southerly end of the car park go through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate and ford or cross on a two-railed footbridge the **Blaen Taf Fawr** (stream) to ascend up to the **Bwlch Duwynt** ('Windy Pass' in English) along an engineered path all the way to the escarpment at 815m above sea to a T-junction with a path running along it from **Craig Gwaun Taf** on the right. *Turn left* along the path and pick up the directions in the main text at the double asterisk **).

Ascent from the car park *right by the Storey Arms Outdoor Centre* to Corn Du (3.0 km/1.9 mi and 448m ascent)

With the A-road in your back, walk through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a wooden field gate and up an engineered path *to the left* of the **Storey Arms Outdoor Centre** (30°), signposted 'Pen Y Fan', initially with a wooded area on the right, to continue in the same direction in 280m at the corner of that wood, still uphill. In 600m the terrain levels out for a short while on a broad ridge (the rounded top **Y Gyrrn** is off to the left as you get some views of **Brecon Reservoir** behind on the right in the valley below) before dropping down to a saddle in front of the imposing prow of **Corn Du**.

In 200m walk through a wooden kissing gate and in 300m ford the **Blaen Taf Fawr** (stream) at the bottom of the drop and re-ascend up towards the top of Corn Du. In 1.2 km you reach an escarpment (the **Craig Cwm LLwch**) and *turn up to the right* along it. In 300m you reach the cairned top of Corn Du at 873m above sea. The cairn on the summit was a **Bronze Age burial chamber**. The main walk joins up from the right. Pick up the directions in the main text at the triple asterisk ***).

Ascent from Llwyn-y-Celyn Youth Hostel (4.3 km to the south of Libanus) *via Storey Arms Outdoor Centre* to Corn Du (5.8 km/3.6 mi and 610m ascent)

Turn left out of the **Youth Hostel** and at the corner of the building *veer right* towards a metal field gate 20m away, signposted 'Walking Route to Pen y Fan'. Walk through the gate into a grassy field sloping down into the **Glyn Tarell** (valley). *Veer right* with a vague path (105°) and in 110m *bear right* through a gap in the boundary tree line on the right, to ford a stream in this grass and bracken strip and in 40m walk through another line of trees to emerge into a larger field and *veer left* to its bottom. In 75m walk through a wooded strip to *turn right* at a T-junction and follow a clear path past a NT-marker post, with the **Afon Tarell** (river) and a boundary wall on your left below.

In 60m you go over a stile and a railed plank bridge over a stream, to soon pass by a waterfall and in 180m *turn left* at a T-junction with an unsigned permissive path to cross the **Tarell** on a two-railed wooden bridge. On the other side you *turn left* and in 60m enter a grassy field over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and cross it diagonally to its upper left corner (70°). In 100m you go over a stile to the left of a wooden field gate by a three-way signpost and *turn up right* on the **Taff Trail** along a car wide track, signposted 'The Storey Arms'.

The track ascends the **Tarell Valley** along a winding route, with the **A470** running noisily on the right along the opposite valley flank, up to the watershed with some grand views of some cascading waterfalls on the opposite valley flank, and in 2.1 km reaches the former inn, now an outdoor centre, **The Storey Arms** by an info panel on the left and a large car park with a tea kiosk on the other side of the A road.

Pick up further directions in the previous chapter: **Ascent from the car park right by the Storey Arms Outdoor Centre to Corn Du.**

Ascent from Brecon Bus Interchange to Pen y Fan (9.8 km/6.1 mi and 726m ascent)

From **Brecon Bus Interchange**, facing the bus stands with a metal railing behind you, a road running behind them and a brick building at the left end of the row of stands, *turn left* along the bus stands and to the right of the brick building along **Heol Gouesnou** (road), in a north westerly direction. **[!]** *Turn down left* immediately at a four-way junction with some traffic lights along **Free Street**. In 100m ignore **Little Free Street** on the left and in 50m *veer right* across **Bulwark** (street) at a T-junction and *turn right* along some metal railings on the left towards the Grade II*-listed colonnaded **Brecknock Shire Hall** (now a museum and art gallery).

At the end of the railings in 10m **[!]** *turn left* on a dogleg *in front of* the museum and walk along a tarmac path (**The Captain's Walk**, an explanatory slate plaque follows 150m further along on a wall on the right) past a site currently being developed, with **Danygaer** (road) running parallel below on the left. You pass **Dan-Y-Gaer mill** on the left across the road and then the info panel mentioned above before descending with the path and in 20m from the panel *turning right* at a T-junction with another tarmac path. In 70m the path *veers right* and you have **The Usk River** on your left, and in 200m you *turn right* with the path through a metal gate and up some steps to *turn left* across a road bridge over the Usk.

On the other side *turn left* immediately along **Dinas Road** with a high brick wall on the right and in 160m *fork right* away from the Usk to the right of a grey brick house (**Dinas Lodge**). Walk through a metal gate to the left of a car wide metal gate and continue along a private drive (public footpath only) between brick walls, then hedges and trees, soon passing a wooden signpost ('Llanfrynach'). You have the sports fields of **Christ College** and the remains of a **Priory** on your right. In 430m ignore a left turning gravel car wide track towards a wooden kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate but in 20m *veer left* uphill along a tarmac lane at a T-junction to in 170m cross the **A40 Brecon By-Pass** road on a high bridge.

[For the Ascents to **Cribyn** and **Fan y Big**, turn back to pages 11 or 12 respectively]

On the other side of the bridge, at a three-way signpost on the right, ignore the onwards route ('Cantref') and **[!]** *turn right* up a few steps and over a stile into a grassy hillside. As indicated by the waymarker on the stile, follow the right hand field boundary, high above the bypass-road, (the right of way on the OS map is obsolete) and in 120m in the field corner *turn left, steeply uphill* with the boundary, as indicated by more waymarkers. In 60m ignore a metal field gate on the right and continue in the same direction, now with a wood behind the fence on the right.

In 120m, where the fence *veers right*, continue in the same direction across a field corner towards a stile to the left of a couple of metal field gates. Over the stile you

follow a right hand field boundary (with **Pen-y-lan farm** on the left across the field) and in 100m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and cross a farm track a little to the left. In 20m go through a metal field gate to the right of two other metal field gates and take the right fork along a car wide farm track between hedges. In 100m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate into a pasture to follow its left hand boundary and in 200m go over another stile to the left of a metal field gate to continue in the same direction through the next field, cutting a small corner on the right.

In 120m go over a stile and follow a yellow marker *diagonally right* across the next field (with views ahead of [r-t-l]: **Pen y Fan, Cribyn** and **Fan y Big**) and in 120m leave it through a gap in the boundary hedge (a missing field gate) to *bear right* in the next field along its left hand boundary. In 160m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate onto a tarmac lane and *turn left* along it. Ignore a right turn towards The Held bunkhouse and left turns towards Cefn Cantref and Pencaefadog. After 1.1 km on the road, just where it starts a gentle descent, you pass **Twyn farm** on the right.

In 130m [!] *turn right* along a tarmac lane. In 200m you have a wood on the left and in 60m *turn left* through a metal field gate with a bridgeway marker on a gate post and go through the wood along a car wide track. In 80m ford a stream to leave the wood (there is a railed footbridge a little to the right) and *bear left* with a blue marker on a fence post along a left hand field boundary. In 120m go through a rusty metal field gate and continue in the same direction through the next field and in 125m ignore the right turning bridgeway to go through a rusty metal field gate and cross the next field diagonally to the right (220°) with a footpath marker on the reverse side.

In 200m leave the field through a metal field gate (the bridgeway joins from the right) and *bear left* through another metal field gate to continue in the previous direction (220°) towards the far field corner (i.e.: not to the obvious metal field gate halfway along the right hand field boundary). In 270m leave the field through a wooden gate and *veer left* between trees, following a rough stream bed by **Plas-y-gaer farm** (on the OS map). In 60m ignore a left turning bridgeway and in 10m walk through a metal field gate to in 20m *turn right* at a T-junction with a gravel car wide farm track.

In 200m *curve right* with the track by a metal field gate and in 40m *turn hard left* away from the now tarmac driveway along a track and in 30m go over a stile with a bridgeway marker and go up a grassy field to the left of a line of trees (the right of way may have run between the trees, but this is now impassable). In 180m you go through a wooden gate into **Open Access Land** by a three-way signpost. The route from the right comes from the **Cwm Gwdi car park**. The hill immediately ahead is **Allt Ddu**.

You continue in the same direction ('To Pen y Fan') through bracken and gorse on one of many tracks to eventually *veer right* towards a low birch tree and then aim to pick up a clear path along the right hand flank of **Allt Ddu** (240°). You follow the path for 3.5 km, as it slowly ascends Allt Ddu's flank and then continues up along the **Cefn Cwm LLwch** ridge, to the side of or over a couple of minor tops **to Pen y Fan**, the last steep stretch on an engineered path. The broad ridge gives grand views into and across the valleys on the left (**Cwm Sere**) and right (**Cwm Llwyd** with the pretty lake **Llyn Cwm LLwch** nestled in its fold) and back to **Brecon**. Pick up the main walk directions at the quadruple asterisk ****).

Ascent from Brecon Bus Interchange to Cribyn (9.8 km/6.1 mi and 702m ascent)

! For the start follow the text above, under 'Ascent from Brecon Bus Interchange to Pen y Fan', for the first three paragraphs up to the crossing of the Brecon By-Pass. !

On the other side of the bridge, at a three-way signpost on the right, ignore the right turn up a few steps and over a stile into a grassy hillside and continue in a south easterly direction along a tree-lined car wide track (signed 'Cantref'). In 350m the tarmac lane turns right to **Pen-y-lan farm** as you **[!]** continue in the same direction along gravel for 1.0 km (with occasional views to **Brecon** in the **Usk Valley** below on the left and – in the later stages – ahead to **The Black Mountains**, as well as through the trees on the right, to the **Brecon Beacons**, [r-t-l]: Pen y Fan, Cribyn, Fan y Big and Waun Rydd).

In 1.0 km continue in the same direction at a bend of a tarmac lane and in 700m ignore a bridleway forking left through a metal gate, as you pass **Tyr-y-groes** (house), and continue along the lane with the **proW of Cribyn** now dead ahead. In 430m, by **The Forge, Cantref**, you **turn left with the** tarmac lane very briefly, and immediately turn right over a stile and along a signposted footpath between wooden fences, past **Tylebrithos farm** (on the OS map).

You leave the fenced *path* over a stile on the left into a large field and *turn right* to follow its right-hand boundary. In 160m and in another 200m go over stiles to walk through two more fields along their right hand boundaries and then in 250m over a stile to the right of a metal field gate to cross a road at a three-way junction and continue in the same direction up a tarmac lane. In 200m you pass **Pontbregarreg** farm building and in another 80m ignore a right forking tarmac lane. In 60m cross the **Nant Sere** (stream) on **Pen-twyn bridge** and in 25m *turn right* at a three-way junction to (initially) follow the stream (down a cul-de-sac, signed 'Tircue').

In 550m you pass **Tir-ciW farm** (the spelling on the OS map) and continue in the same direction along a rough wide gravel track. In another 550m *turn right* with the now narrower track and follow what looks like a streambed. In 35m *turn left* along a narrow, bumpy, and often overgrown track (also a streambed after hard rain) and in 350m walk through a wide wooden gate and *turn left* at a four-way junction along a car wide gravel farm track through a usually open metal field gate. In 90m *turn right* with the track and in 150m, after passing a large barn on the right and going through a usually open metal field gate by **Cwmcynwyn farm**, *turn right* through the first of two metal field gates, up a car wide fenced bridleway between trees.

In 180m you continue in the same direction through a metal field gate, ignoring another metal field gate on the left into a field, and in 20m go through a wooden field gate (with a bridleway marker on the reverse side) into a large grassy hillside, fenced and narrow at the bottom, but widening out up along the ridge on the left. This is **Open Access Land**. *Turn up to the left* along the nose of the **Bryn Teg** ridge on a bearing of 220°, in about 1.0 km *veering ever so slightly to the left* with the clear path towards the impressive proW of **Cribyn**. The broad ridge gives grand views into the valleys on the left (**Cwm Cynwyn**) and right (**Cwm Sere**) and back to **Brecon**. In about 1.3 km the gradient gets steeper and in another 300m you reach the top of Cribyn.

Pick up the main walk directions at the quintuple asterisk *********).

Ascent from Brecon Bus Interchange to Fan y Big (10.3 km/6.4 mi and 653m ascent)

! For the start follow the text above, under 'Ascent from Brecon Bus Interchange to Pen y Fan', for the first three paragraphs up to the crossing of the Brecon By-Pass. !

On the other side of the bridge, at a three-way signpost on the right, ignore the right turn up a few steps and over a stile into a grassy hillside and continue in a south easterly direction along a tree-lined car wide track (signed 'Cantref'). In 350m the tarmac lane turns right to **Pen-y-lan farm** as you **[!]** continue in the same direction along gravel (with occasional views to **Brecon** in the **Usk Valley** below on the left and ahead to **The Black Mountains**, as well as through the trees on the right, to the **Brecon Beacons**, [r-t-l]: Pen y Fan, Cribyn, Fan y Big and Waun Rydd). In 1.0 km continue in the same direction at a bend of a tarmac lane and in 700m, by **Tyr-y-groes** (house) on the right, **[!]** fork left through a metal gate along a signposted footpath, downhill along a track, soon a holloway, in 90m go through a metal gate and in 150m walk through wooden posts (a missing gate).

In 200m you *veer left* out of the holloway, ignore an immediate left fork and continue in the previous direction to the left of the holloway, with a field on the left behind a fence. In 230m *turn left* with the fenced path at the end of the field and in 20m *turn down right* through a wooden field gate to a road at a T-junction by a signpost pointing back to **Tyr-y-groes**. *Turn left* along the road into **Cantref** hamlet, in 15m ignoring a lane on the left to **Cantref Adventure Farm & Riding Centre**. In 60m you pass **St. Cynidr and St. Mary** church and in 70m *turn down right* along a car wide track (signed 'Cantref Wood'). In 60m ignore the two-railed **Cantref Bridge** (on the OS map) on the left and in 40m ford the **Afon Cynrig** (river) [*if too dangerous*: retreat to the bridge and cross it to *veer right* through a grassy area to the left of a ruined cottage and over a stile down into a holloway in 65m]. Walk up along a holloway and in 110m ascend some steep railed steps on the right and go over a stile a little to the right into a pasture.

Walk up a right-hand field boundary, with a stream on your right below, and in 110m go over a stile and continue in the same direction through the next field and in 140m leave it over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and *turn right* along a tarmac lane. In 40m *turn left* over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and walk up along a right hand field boundary. In 110m you go over a stile in the upper right field corner and continue in the same direction along the next field's right boundary. In 130m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate onto a tarmac lane a five-way junction of footpaths and bridleways, opposite the entrance gate to **Tynllwyn farm**, and *turn right* along it. In 100m ignore a left turning tarmac lane and in 430m ignore a footpath turning left through a wooden field gate and continue in the same direction along the tarmac lane.

In 320m, by a three-way signpost ('Fan y Big'), *turn right* along gravel at a T-junction and in 20m go through a wooden gate by a farm house on the left (**Pen-yr-hoel**, on the OS map). Ascend along a stony car wide track between trees and ruined drystone walls and in 230m walk through a wooden gate with Access Land and footpath markers. You are in the narrow bottom of some fenced **Access Land** and *bear left* steeply uphill along a clear path up the **Cefn Cyff** ridge, first through grass then bracken, towards the top of Fan y Big for 3.9 km (and 390m of ascent). A few cairns guide you on the way and – once the gradient eases – the ground turns to an upland peat bog before a final steep ascent. The broad ridge gives grand views into the valleys on the right (**Cwm Cynwyn**) and left (**Cwm Oergwm**) and back to **Brecon** (not initially, but higher up), as well as – on a bearing of 60° – of the **Black Mountains – Y Mynyddoedd Duon**.

Pick up the main walk directions at the sextuple asterisk *********).

Ascent from Talybont-on Usk to Waun Rydd (6.3 km/3.9 mi and 670m ascent)

From the bus stop at the bridge over the **Caerfanell River**, between **The White Hart** pub and **The Star Inn** [i.e.: **not** the Canal Bridge/Post Office stop], turn up to the right of The White Hart and follow a tarmac lane left over a bridge crossing the **Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal**. *Turn right* on the other side with the lane and in 130m *turn left* with it to cross the dismantled **Brecon – Merthyr Tydfil Railway** line and *turn right* with the now gravel lane on the other side. In 60m you pass a couple of info panels by the **Vaughan Garden** and in about 600m you *turn right* by a **Brinore Tramroad** and **Taff Trail** signpost down into a wooded area.

Follow a fence and some trees on your left and in 100m *veer right* with the fence and continue *between* fence and trees. In 30m *turn left* with some yellow markers and in 35m go through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a wooden field gate to continue in the same direction. In 40m go through a metal field gate and then *turn right* under a bridge carrying the course of the dismantled railway line. On the other side cross a track and go through a wooden kissing gate into a wooded strip to go down a stepped path and in 40m go through a wooden kissing gate and *veer left* through a grassy field. In 60m go down to a lower level of the field and *turn right* (the (Henry) **Vaughan Walk** joins from the left) over a two-railed concrete bridge over the **Caerfanell River**.

On the other side go through a wooden gate and *turn left* and in 25m go through a wooden kissing gate with a yellow as well as an **Usk Valley Walk** marker into a grassy field. *Bear right* to ascend a small ledge to the left of a clump of trees to a higher part of the field and head towards its far right corner. In 110m go through a wooden kissing gate onto a road by a footpath signpost and *turn left* along it. In 250m you cross the **Clydach** (stream) on a road bridge and enter **Aber village**.

Ignore a left turning bridleway down a car wide lane and a road joining from the right in the centre of the village and in another 240m *turn up right* along a tarmac lane, signposted '**To The Hill – I'r Bryn**'. Follow the lane for 400m and continue in the same direction, signposted '**To The Hill – I'r Bryn**', where the tarmac lane turns right along a gravel track. In 25m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and in 140m *bear right* at a three-way signpost with the path, signposted '**To the Open Hill – Twyn Du/Carn Pica**', ignoring a footpath over a stile ahead.

In 60m you go through a wooden field gate and in 35m through a metal field gate. In 30m you ignore a bridleway turning left through a wooden field gate and continue uphill, now along a grassy track with a stream on the right. In 280m the path crosses over to the other side of the stream on an earth bridge and you continue steeply uphill along a clear path with a barbed wire fence on the right and the stream on the left. Go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate into the bottom of the fenced **Open Access Land** leading up to **Waun Rydd**.

Ascend along an obvious path through gorse, bracken and heather for 1.6 km (with views of **Talybont Reservoir** back down on the left), where the terrain levels out as you go over **Twyn Du**'s unremarkable top (at 533m above sea), or skirt around it to the left. The onwards route through partially boggy ground along the broad ridge of **Twyn Du** (260°) and up to a more than man-high cairn on the edge of the plateau is clearly identifiable (in all but the most atrocious weather). In about 1.0 km you start the steep ascent to the plateau edge where you pass **Carn Pica** (a recently restored **Bronze Age burial cairn**) on the right to continue along a clear path across the Waun Rydd plateau and in 360m reach a small cairn by a small lake (on the OS map).

An indistinct path from the left is the **Main Walk's Extension**. *Continue in the same direction* on an indistinct path across the level terrain on an initial bearing of 300° and pick up the directions on page 7 in the chapter **Extension to Waun Rydd** at the asterisk *).

Ascent from Upper Blaen y Glyn Car Park to Waun Rydd (add 3.5 km/2.2 mi and 340m ascent)

From the **Upper Blaen y Glyn Car Park** walk back along the access track across a cattle grid towards the **Pontsticill – Talybont** road and *turn right* immediately after the cattle grid up along an – initially stepped – steep path, with a fenced wooded area on the right. In 400m you continue in the same direction at the corner of the wood, with the gradient eventually getting a little easier as you *bear right* to the rim of the **Craig y Fan Ddu**. Walk over its unremarkable top (683m above sea) and *curve* around a craggy cleft to ford the infant **Blaen Caerfanell** (stream).

The **Beacons Way** joins from the left in this shallow saddle and you continue gently uphill along the rim of the **Graig Fan Las** above the **Caerfanell Valley** on the right to in 1.6 km reach a crosspaths in another shallow saddle at the head of the valley between **Bwlch y Dwyallt** and **Waun Rydd**. *Turn left* to the rim of a steep escarpment 30m away and *turn left* along it on a clear path for 2.6 km to the saddle between the **Craig Cwareli** and **Fan y Big**.

To pick up the main walk *turn left* (310°) downslope on a clear path. In 700m (about 200m before reaching the saddle between Cribyn and Fan y Big) *fork down left* along a grassy path towards the **Old Roman Road** and in 80m *turn down left* along it.

Pick up the directions in the main walk text at the septuple asterisk *********).

Alternative Finishes

(listed clockwise from west to east)

Descent from Corn Du to the Storey Arms Outdoor Centre (3.0 km/1.9 mi) and on to the Llwyn-y-Celyn Youth Hostel

Walk down along the rim of the escarpment (the **Craig Cwm LLwch**) and in 300m **[!]** *turn left* along a clear engineered path away from the rim (265°). In 1.2 km you ford a stream (the **Blaen Taf Fawr**) at the bottom of a broad saddle and re-ascend up to **Y Gyrn**, staying to the left of its rounded top in 500m. A steep descent from its plateau then leads you in 600m to the corner of a wood above the **A470** and you continue in the same direction to the right of the wood to reach the road to the right of the **Storey Arms Outdoor Centre** in another 280m.

To continue to the Youth Hostel, *turn right* by an info panel along the **Taff Trail** along a car wide track down the **Tarell Valley** along a winding route, with the **A470** running noisily on the left along the opposite valley flank, and in 2.1 km **[!]** *turn left* over a stile to the right of a metal field gate by a three-way signpost to *bear left* (250°) through a sloping grassy field towards its bottom left corner.

In 100m you leave the field over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and in 60m *turn right* and cross the **Afon Tarell** (river) on a wooden bridge. On the other side *turn right* and follow a clear path, with the **Tarell** on your right below. In 240m *turn left* through a wooded strip and *veer right* in a large field in its bottom corner. In 100m you *veer right* through a gap in the boundary trees and then a grass and bracken strip to *bear left* in 40m (285°) through a grassy slope with a faint path. In 120m you walk through a metal field gate and *turn up left* to the Youth Hostel.

Descent from Pen y Fan to Brecon Bus Interchange (9.7 km/6.0 mi and 31m ascent)

Facing Brecon, find the beginnings of an engineered path on the left hand flank of Pen Y Fan and descend steeply down to *turn right* at the bottom of the steep part along the **Cefn Cwm LLwch** ridge. The broad ridge gives grand views into the valleys on the right (**Cwm Sere**) and left (**Cwm Llwhch** with the pretty lake **Llyn Cwm LLwch** nestled in its fold) and ahead to **Brecon**.

You follow the path for 3.5 km, as it slowly descends along the ridge, to the side or over a couple of minor tops to pick up a clear path along the left hand flank of **Allt Ddu** (lastly on a bearing of 70°) to reach an area of bracken and gorse by a low birch tree. Stay to the right of the birch tree and *veer left* from the previous direction along one of many tracks the bracken and gorse (broadly 30°) and in 250m, at the bottom of the fenced area, you go through a wooden gate to leave **Open Access Land** by a three-way signpost (the route to the left goes to the **Cwm Gwdi car park**).

Head down a grassy field to the right of a line of trees (the right of way may have run between the trees, but this is now impassable). In 180m go over a stile with a bridleway marker to go down a track and in 30m *turn hard right* along a car wide farm track which in 40m *curves left*. In 200m, just before **Plas-y-gaer farm** (on the OS map), *turn left* off the gravel car wide farm track and in 20m walk through a metal field gate and in 10m ignore a right turning bridleway. Follow a rough streambed between trees and in 60m go through a wooden gate into a large pasture. *Veer right* (40°) towards the far

field corner. In 270m leave the field through a metal field gate and *bear right* through another metal field gate (ignore the bridleway continuing along the right hand field boundary) to cross the next field diagonally to the left in the previous direction.

In 200m in the far field corner you *bear left* through a rusty metal field gate with a footpath marker (the bridleway joins from the left) and go through the next field along its right hand boundary. In 125m go through a rusty metal field gate and continue in the same direction through the next field along a right hand field boundary and in 120m *bear right* with a blue marker on a fence post to ford a stream (there is a railed footbridge a little to the left) and go through a wood along a car wide track. In 80m leave the wood through a metal field gate and *turn right* along a tarmac lane, with the wood on your right.

In 260m you *turn left* along a tarmac lane at a T-junction, gently ascending. In 130m you pass **Twyn farm** on the left. Ignore right turns towards Pencaefadog and Cefn Cantref and a left turn towards The Held bunkhouse. 190m further along, after 1.0 km on the road, [!] *turn right* with a signpost to go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate into a pasture and walk along its right hand boundary. In 160m leave it through a gap in the boundary hedge (a missing field gate) and follow a yellow marker *diagonally left* across the next field and in 120m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate into a pasture and follow its left hand boundary, cutting a small corner on the left.

In 120m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate into the next field and follow its right hand boundary to in 200m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and walk along a car wide farm track between hedges and in 100m go through a metal field gate. In 20m cross a farm track a little to the left and go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate to follow a left hand field boundary (with **Pen-y-lan farm** on the right across the field) and in 100m go over a stile to the right of a couple of metal field gates and continue in the same direction across a field corner towards a fence corner, where you continue with a wood behind the fence on the left.

In 120m ignore a metal field gate on the left and continue in the same direction *steeply downhill* with the boundary (the right of way on the OS map is obsolete). In 60m in the bottom left field corner, follow the field boundary around to the right, as indicated by more waymarkers, high above the Brecon bypass-road, and in 120m leave the field in its far left corner over a stile and down a few steps onto a car wide track at a T-junction by a three-way signpost on the right. The route from the right ('Cantref') is the **descent route from Cribyn as well as from Fan y Big**. *Turn left* to cross the **A40 Brecon By-Pass** road on a high bridge and pick up the directions in the text below ('**Descent from Cribyn to Brecon Bus Interchange**') at the double asterisk**)

Descent from Cribyn to Brecon Bus Interchange (9.7 km/6.0 mi and 84m ascent)

Descend steeply along a clear path down the **Bryn Teg** ridge and in about 300m continue in the same direction where the gradient eases. The broad ridge gives grand views into the valleys on the right (**Cwm Cynwyn**) and left (**Cwm Sere**) and ahead to **Brecon**. In 2.3 km you reach the narrow bottom of the fenced **Open Access Land**. Ignore the wooden field gate dead ahead at the very bottom, as this leads to a 'mountain bike-only' byway, and instead *turn right* a little earlier through a wooden field gate on the right with a bridleway marker on it.

Walk in a north easterly direction down a car wide farm track between trees and in 200m *turn left* at a T-junction with another farm track, with **Cwmcynwyn Farm** on the

right. In 150m *turn left* with the track and in 90m *turn right* through a wide wooden gate along a narrow, bumpy, and often overgrown track, ignoring the tarmac lane turning right a little further along (although that is your **alternative route** should this path be too overgrown). In 350m you *turn right* with the track by a metal field gate ahead, along what looks more like a streambed than a path (and with fine views back to Cribyn and Fan y Big). In 35m you *turn left* with the now grassy track, with the **Nant Cynwyn** running parallel away to the right below. In 550m you walk through a wooden field gate and continue in the same direction by **Tir-ciw Farm** on the left (on the OS map) and follow its tarmac driveway further downhill. In another 550m *turn left* at a T-junction and in 25m *turn left* with the road to cross the **Nant Sere** on **Pen-twyn bridge**. In 60m a tarmac lane joins from the left (**the alternative route**).

In 80m you pass **Pontbregarreg** farm building and in 200m you cross a road at a T-junction and continue in the same direction into a field over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and follow its left hand boundary. Walk through two more fields along their left-hand boundaries and in 610m you go over a stile and along a fenced path past **Tylebrithos farm** on the left (on the OS map). Go over a stile onto a tarmac lane and *turn left* along it, immediately turning right with it. In 430m a bridleway joins from the right through a metal gate, as you pass **Tyr-y-groes** (house). This is the **descent route from Fan y Big**.

*) In 700m you continue in the same direction along a tree-lined car wide gravel track, where the tarmac lane turns left. Ignore all ways off, as you get first views of the easterly parts of Brecon below on the right in the **Usk Valley**, then also of the centre of town after the path has born left. In about 1.0 km the tarmac driveway from **Pen-y-lan** farm joins from the left and you continue in the same direction. In 350m a footpath joins from the left over a stile and down some steps (the **descent route from Pen y Fan**), just before you cross the **A40 Brecon By-Pass** road on a high bridge.

***) In 150m from the bridge you *veer right* away from the lane, ignore a footpath joining from the right through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate and head towards the houses of **Brecon**, with the sports fields of **Christ College** and the remains of the **Priory** on your left. In 430m you walk through a metal gate to the right of a car wide metal gate by **Dinas Lodge** and in 20m *turn left* along a tarmac lane, with **The Usk River** on your right. Continue along **Dinas Road** and in 160m *turn right* along **Bridge Street** at a T-junction with the **B4601** to cross the river into **Brecon**.

On the other side, at a multi-way road junction, *veer right* with **Ship Street** past **Watergate Fish Bar & Cafe** and **The Boar's Head** pub, ignoring **St. Michael Street** to the right. In 90m continue in the same direction along **High Street** where **Wheat Street** joins from the right, pass **Chang Thai Cuisine**, and in 70m *turn left* at the corner of the **Guildhall** (just before the recommended **Brecon Tap** on your left), in 30m cross **Lion Street**, and continue through a pedestrianised shopping area (**Bethel Square**) and then a car park to in 180m *turn right* in front of the **Tourist Information Centre**. Follow a paved path through a superstore car park and then around the left of the superstore building itself to eventually *turn left* onto **Heol Gouesnou** (road), where you *turn right* to the **Brecon Bus Interchange**, 80m away across a four-way junction.

Descent from Fan y Big to Brecon Bus Interchange (10.2 km/6.4 mi and 118m ascent)

Descend steeply along a clear path down the **Cefn Cyff** ridge (20°), where the ground turns to an upland peat bog once the gradient eases. The broad ridge gives grand views into the valleys on the left (**Cwm Cynwyn**) and right (**Cwm Oergwm**) and ahead to

Brecon, as well as – on a bearing of 60° – of the **Black Mountains – Y Mynyddoedd Duon**. A few cairns guide you on the way and in 3.9 km you reach the narrow bottom of the fenced **Open Access Land** and walk through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate with a bridleway marker.

Descend further along a stony car wide track between some trees and remnants of drystone walls and in 230m go through a wooden gate by a farm house on the right (**Pen-yr-hoel**, on the OS map) and in 20m *turn left* along a tarmac lane at a T-junction and by a three-way signpost ('LLanfrynach'). In 320m ignore a footpath turning right through a wooden field gate into a pasture and continue in the same direction along the tarmac lane. In 430m ignore a right turning tarmac lane (also a bridleway) and in another 100m, by the entrance gate to **Tynllwyn farm** on the right, you come to a five-way junction of footpaths and bridleways.

Turn left along the **[!]** *second of two* footpaths over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and continue along a left hand field boundary (330°). In 130m you go over a stile in the left field corner and continue in the same direction along the next field's left boundary. In 110m leave the field over a stile to the left of a metal field gate onto a tarmac lane and *turn right* along it. In 40m *turn left* over a stile to the right of a metal field gate with a signpost along a left hand field boundary with a stream on your left. In 140m go over a stile to continue in the same direction through the next field, leaving it in 110m over a signposted stile to descend some steep railed steps a little to the right.

You continue *down to the left* along a steep holloway and in 110m ford the **Afon Cynrig** (river) [*if too dangerous*: retreat for 30m and go over a stile on the left onto a higher level grassy area to *veer left* through it and in 65m find the two-railed **Cantref Bridge** (on the OS map) to cross the river]. *Turn up right* to emerge on a road in 80m, where you *turn up left* into **Cantref** hamlet, in 70m passing **St. Cynidr and St. Mary** church and in 60m ignoring a lane on the right to **Cantref Adventure Farm & Riding Centre**.

In 15m **[!]** *turn right* with a signpost for **Tyr-y-groes** through a wooden field gate up a bank and *turn left* along a wooden fence, with a grassy field on the right, in 20m *turning right* with the fence. Continue in the same direction at the end of the field on the right in 200m and in another 30m *veer left* with a marker post to continue in the same direction uphill along a holloway. In 200m you walk through wooden posts (a missing gate) and in 150m through a metal gate and in 90m through another to *turn right* with a footpath signpost along a tarmac lane opposite **Tyr-y-groes** (house).

The route from the left is the **descent route from Cribyn**. Pick up the directions in the text above ('**Descent from Cribyn to Brecon Bus Interchange**') at the asterisk*).

Descent from Waun Rydd to Talybont-on Usk (6.3 km/3.9 mi and 41m ascent)

In 360m you pass a more than man-high cairn, **Carn Pica** (a recently restored **Bronze Age burial cairn**), on the left and start the steep descent from the plateau edge, with fine views ahead of **Mynydd Llangorse** and the higher tops and ridges of **The Black Mountains**. The onwards route through partially boggy ground along the broad ridge of **Twyn Du** (80°) is clearly identifiable (in all but the most atrocious weather) and the destination **Talybont-on-Usk** is visible. In about 1.0 km the terrain levels out and you go over Twyn Du's unremarkable top (533m above sea), or skirt around it to the right and continue the descent to the bottom-left corner of the fenced **Open Access Land** in 1.6 km, through heather, bracken and gorse (with views of **Talybont Reservoir**).

Go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and continue steeply downhill along a clear path with a barbed wire fence on the left and a stream on the right. The path crosses over to the other side of the stream on an earth bridge and in 280m you ignore a bridleway turning right through a wooden field gate. In 30m you walk through a metal field gate and in 35m through a wooden field gate, and in 60m ignore a footpath turning right over a stile at a three-way signpost to *bear left* with the path (signposted '**Aber**').

In 140m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and in 25m continue in the same direction along a tarmac lane at a bend. Follow the lane for 400m to a T-junction with the road running down from the reservoir and *turn left* along it into **Aber village**. A road joins from the left in the centre of the village and in another 50m you ignore a right turning bridleway down a car wide lane, just before you cross the **Clydach** (stream) on a road bridge.

In 250m you *turn right* along a signposted footpath and immediately go through a wooden kissing gate into a pasture. Broadly follow the left hand field boundary but *veer away from it a little* to in 110m descend a drop to the right of a clump of trees to a lower part of the field and *bear left* towards its bottom left corner. Go through a wooden kissing gate with a yellow as well as an **Usk Valley Walk** marker and in 30m *turn right* through a wooden gate across a two-railed concrete bridge over the **Caerfanell River**.

On the other side continue in the same direction up to a higher level of the field and *veer left* (the (Henry) **Vaughan Walk** joins from the right) towards a wooden kissing gate 60m away. Go through the gate into a wooded strip and in 40m up a stepped path and through a wooden kissing gate to cross a track and go under a bridge carrying the course of the dismantled **Brecon – Merthyr Tydfil Railway** line. On the other side *turn left* and then go through a metal field gate and in 40m continue in the same direction through a wooden kissing gate to the right of a wooden field gate but in 35m **[!]** *turn right* uphill with yellow markers between a row of trees and the right-hand fence.

In 30m you *veer left* with the fence and trees and in 100m emerge on a broad track where you *turn left* with a **Brinore Tramroad** and **Taff Trail** signpost. In about 600m you pass a couple of info panels by the **Vaughan Garden** and in another 60m *turn left* with the track over a bridge across the dismantled railway line to *turn right* on the other side along tarmac. In 130m *turn left* over a bridge over the **Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal** and *turn down right* around **The White Hart** pub to a road through Talybont-on-Usk. A **bus stop for services to Brecon or Abergavenny** is on the left, as are **The Star Inn** and – a bit further along – the **Talybont Stores** (with its canalside café) and another bus stop.

Descent from Waun Rydd to the Upper Blaen y Glyn Car Park (3.5 km/2.2 mi)

Follow the clear path gently down the hill along the rim of **Craig Fan Las** above the valley of the **Blaen y Glyn** on the left. In 1.6 km – in a shallow saddle – you *curve right* around a craggy cleft to ford the upper **Blaen Caerfanell** (stream) [the **Beacons Way** joins from the right] and then gradually *curve left* with the rim along the **Craig y Fan Ddu** and over its unremarkable top (683m above sea).

The gradient increases as you descend towards the corner of a fenced wood and continue to the right of it, eventually down a stepped path. In 400m you reach a car wide drive at a T-junction with the **Upper Blaen y Glyn Car Park** on your left beyond a cattle grid and the **Pontsticill – Talybont** road on the right.