

Crickhowell Circular (via Mynydd Llangatwg & Craig y Cilau)			Mynydd Llangatwg and Craig y Cilau (Extended Version)		
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Crickhowell Circular (via Mynydd Llangatwg and Craig y Cilau)

Start & Finish: Crickhowell Square Bus Stop.

Crickhowell Square Bus Stop, map reference SO 218 183, is 221 km west northwest of Charing Cross, 89m above sea level and in **Powys, Wales**.

Length: 18.9 km (11.7 mi).

Cumulative ascent/descent: 680m. For a shorter walk, *see below* **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 8 out of 10

Time: 6 hours walking time.

Transport: Crickhowell is served by lines 43/X43 (Abergavenny – Brecon) with 12 buses a day Mon-Sat and 5 on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Saturday Walkers' Club: This walk is doable as a daywalk from London, especially if you have motorised transport, but also if taking a train to Abergavenny to connect to above bus service.

OS Landranger Map: 160 (Brecon Beacons)

OS Explorer Map: OL13 (Brecon Beacons National Park – Eastern Area)

Walk Notes:

From the centre of the rightly popular town of Crickhowell, the route leads across the Usk River and the Monmouth & Brecon Canal up steeply through quiet pastures-with-views up to the easterly end of the Llangatock Escarpment and the fascinating limestone pinnacle of the Lonely Shepherd, overlooking the Clydach Gorge. From there you follow the escarpment westwards, past ex-quarries, surreal looking grassy spoil heaps, a couple of raised bogs and some extensive cave systems leading deep into the underlying limestone layers. The natural amphitheatre of the Craig y Cilau escarpment with its spectacular high limestone cliffs and extensive cave systems, is negotiated with some easy walking along a former tramroad contouring the dramatic grassy ledge with some superb sweeping views across the Usk Valley to The Black Mountains, from the Mynydd Llangorse and Mynydd Troed via Table Mountain and Pen Cerrig-Calch to Sugar Loaf. You continue through the Craig y Cilau National Nature Reserve, where the Eglwys Faen cave system allows for some optional caving and down the slope to the raised bog of the Waun Ddu.

A very scenic descent and re-ascent leads through the beautiful Cwm Onnau and across into the very lush Usk Valley, from where you contour through more pastures with extremely fine views of the Central Black Mountains back down to the canal and via Llangatock village to Crickhowell with its many tea options.

Walk Options:

A bus stop of line 43 at Hillside Road, Llangattock enables a start there (cut 1.0 km).

A Morning Shortcut cuts 1.5m and 40m ascent.

A rougher version of that shortcut, up a long and steep bouldery track, cuts another 1.4 km.

Cut out the out-and-back to the Lonely Shepherd limestone pinnacle with views: cut 1.4 km.

Caving (for beginners) can be done in the **Eglwys Faen** complex. Bring your headtorch and an extra layer or two! Good profile soles necessary, scrambling experience reassuring. And mind your head!

An Afternoon Shortcut, cutting the ascent out of the Cwm Onnau and into the Usk Valley, cuts 2.8 km.

An Extension of the route, higher up the Cwm Onnau adds 2.0 km and 35m ascent. This starts with 20 minutes along the grassy verge of a busy road though.

Lunch

Picnic. Best location: on the grassy ledge below the Llangattock Escarpment, with views across the Usk Valley.

Tea (details last updated 02/09/2020)

The Old Rectory Hotel Ffawyddog Road, *Llangattock, Powys, NP8 1PH (01873 810 373)*. The Rectory is located 1.2 km from the end of the walk.

The Horseshoe Inn Hillside Road, *Llangattock, Powys, NP8 1PA (01873 268 773, <http://thehorseshoe.wales/>)*. The Horseshoe is located 200m off route and 1.2 km from the end of the walk.

The Vine Tree Legar, A4077, *Llangattock, Powys, NP8 1HG (01873 812 277, <https://www.thevinetreellangattock.com/>)*. The Vine Tree is located 100m off route and 700m from the end of the walk. Open all day Wed-Sun.

The Bridge End Inn Bridge Street, *Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1AR (01873 810 338, <http://thebridgeendinn.com/>)*. The Bridge End Inn is located 450m from the end of the route.

The Dragon Inn 47 High Street, *Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1BE (01873 810 362, <https://dragoninncrickhowell.com/>)*.

The Britannia Inn 20 High Street, *Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1BH (01873 810 553)*.

The Bear Hotel Crickhowell, *Powys, NP8 1BW (01873 810 408, <http://www.bearhotel.co.uk/>)*.

Several Bars and Cafés in Crickhowell, 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/dŵr: *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:

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, Fforest Fawr, Central Beacons, the Llangattock & Llangynidr Hills, and the Black Mountains).

Mynydd Llangatwg/Llangattock Mountain

Mynydd Llangatwg or Llangattock Mountain in the Brecon Beacons National Park is named after the village of Llangatwg (or 'Llangattock') which sits in the valley of the River Usk to the north of it. The undulating plateau rises in the west to a height of 530m and in the east to 529m at Tŵr Pen-cyrrn (the area nearby between two Neolithic cairns was supposedly the site of a battle in 728AD between Ethelbald and Rodri Molwynog, Prince of north Wales), with the shallow pool of Pwll Gwy-rhoc sitting in a broad depression in between. The hill forms an impressive northern scarp overlooking the Usk Valley and commonly referred to as the Llangattock Escarpment. Its eastern end is defined by the drops into the Clydach Gorge. To the west the hill merges with Mynydd Llangynidr which has a similar character.

Particular features of note include 'The Lonely Shepherd', an isolated limestone pinnacle which stands at the eastern tip of the plateau, left there by quarry workers who removed great quantities of the surrounding rock. A couple of gas pipelines have been laid across the mountain and their courses can be traced variously by fences, vegetation changes and marker poles. The greater part of the length of the northern escarpment is scarred by limestone quarries which operated for much of the 19th century. The rock was removed by means of a series of tramroads or tramways.

Mynydd Llangatwg is formed from a layer cake of sandstones and limestones which dip gently southwards into the South Wales Coalfield basin. Imposing cliffs of Carboniferous Limestone occur along the northern escarpment and this rock hosts the extensive cave systems which lie beneath it, notably those of Ogof y Daren Cilau and Ogof Agen Allwedd, together with the shorter and more accessible cave of Eglwys Faen ('stone church'). The first two systems are amongst the longest in Britain.

Usk Valley/River Usk (AfonWysg)

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.

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/>

Usk Valley Walk/Llwybr Dyffryn Wysg

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.

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 belies 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.

WALK DIRECTIONS

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Llangattock Start: From the Hillside Road bus stop by The Horseshoe Inn (and from the direction of Crickhowell), *turn left* along Park Drive, in 160m pass a cattle grid on the right ('Park Farm – Private Road') and in 30m *turn left* through a wooden gate into a wood. In 40m *turn right* at a bend in a forest track. Continue below at the single asterisk *).
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After alighting from the bus on **Beaufort Street** (the A40) in the centre of **Crickhowell** (anglicised after the **Crug Hywel/Table Mountain**, the hillfort towering above the town) in the **Brecon Beacons National Park**, you walk in a westerly direction towards a four-way road junction by a **War Memorial** (i.e. in the direction of travel if arriving from Abergavenny, but back along the direction of travel if arriving from Brecon). At the junction with High Street to the left and with **The Bear Hotel** ahead on the right, *turn left* down **High Street**. In 30m pass a **deli** on the left, opposite **The Britannia Inn**, and then a grocer and a newsagent. Cross **Tower Street** (with the tower off to the left) and continue in the same direction past **The Dragon Inn**, signposted 'Castell y Bont/Castle, Bridge'.

The pavement continues on the right and you have first views of the escarpment of the **Mynydd Llangatwg** visible ahead. In 120m from the Dragon Inn, by Crickhowell Police Station/Gorsaf Heddlu Crucywel on the right, you *turn right* downhill along **Bridge Street**. In 50m *bear left* with the road, signposted 'Y Bont/Bridge' and in 130m you *bear right* with it, signposted 'Llangatwg/Llangattock'. [The area you are now walking through, all the way back along the row of cottages on the left, often gets flooded, last in Feb 2020 following Storm Dennis.] You pass **The Bridge End Inn** and *turn left* at a T-junction to cross **The River Usk** on the 13-arched 18th century Grade I-listed **Crickhowell Bridge**, the longest stone bridge in Wales. On the far side of the bridge, *turn left* at a T-junction along the left-hand side pavement of the **A4077**, signposted 'Gilwern 3, Y Fenni/Abergavenny 8'. In 75m ignore a right turn ('Llangatwg/Llangattock ½') and enter **Legar** hamlet. Cross over to the right-hand side of the road by **The Vine Tree** restaurant.

In 80m from the restaurant by a footpath signpost on the left, *turn right* along a tarmac drive this side of a house. Immediately go through a metal gate into a pasture with a footpath signpost. *Veer right* towards a metal gate 40m away and enter a wood through it and in 20m cross a gravel lane. [That gravel lane is the right-of-way through the wood, but although the wood is not shown as Access Land on the OS map, the route described here instead seems to be well-used by locals and is therefore **deemed to be a permissive route**. If challenged, you must walk along the gravel lane though.] In 25m, *turn left* with the path and in 120m *bear right* with the path, where a minor path joins from the left. In 40m *turn left* with the path and in 30m continue in the same direction at a bend of a wider gravel-and-earth path (205°) and in 100m *fork left* where the right fork leads to a wooden gate 40m away. The **Llangattock Start** joins from there.

*) In 150m the straight right-of-way route joins from the left and you leave the wood through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate and *turn left* along a car wide tarmac, then gravel lane, with a three-way public footpath signpost opposite. In 65m you cross a vigorous stream, this is the **Nant Onneu-fach**, draining the area below the Darren Cilau, walked along in a few hours' time. *Turn left* through a metal kissing gate left of a metal field gate into a large pasture at a signposted three-way footpath junction. On the left you have **views of Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl** (75°, SWC Walk 334) as well as its southerly flanks, Graig and Mynydd Llanwenarth, and (on 130°) of **Blorenge/Blorens** (SWC Walk 372). *Veer right* across the field towards the right-hand part of a plantation wood (165°), keeping clear to the left of a couple of mature trees in the field and just to the right of a single electricity pole. You go up some steps and through a metal gate and climb through

the wood on a clear path. At the upper end of the wood go through a metal gate and *turn left* along a car wide gravel lane at a bend.

In 160m you cross the **Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal** (the Mon & Brec) on the arched **Canal Bridge #112** and go over a stile or through a metal field gate into a pasture. Aim for a point about 50m to the right of the apparent top-left corner of this field (225°), initially staying to the right of the field boundary and then converging with it. You go over a short boardwalk section and leave the field over a stile to the right of a metal field gate (ignore another metal field gate earlier to the left). Head up this field along its left-hand boundary. In 230m (the wooded area on the right contains the remains of **Hen Castell, a well-preserved medieval moated homestead**, its keep is 15 x 10m in size), you go over a stile onto a lane at a bend. *Turn left* uphill along the lane and in 90m where the lane turns left, you *turn right* up a drive, in 40m passing **Ty Mawr** on the right. *Turn left* through a rusty metal field gate and follow (an often-overgrown section of) a car wide track between walls of greenery (a restricted byway). In 90m *turn right* with the track and in 50m ignore metal field gates on either side (fine views from here across the valley in the back). In 40m, by a stile in a fence on the left, the track narrows a bit and becomes boulder-strewn and steep.

Here you have a choice:

For the shortest (but not easiest) version of the Morning Shortcut (cut 1.4 km), continue in the same direction up the bouldery track – a streambed after heavy rain, in stretches also fighting your way through some low-hanging branches, and in 500m go through a metal field gate into an open area by a ruined barn on the right and another building 20m ahead on the left, an ex-chapel (**Laswern-Isaf** on the OS map). Both buildings are now **bat roosts** and protected sites. In 300m follow the track turning right. The Recommended Short Walk route joined from the left through a metal gate out of a pasture. Pick up the directions below under **Morning Shortcut** at the asterisk *) there.

For the Main Walk and the recommended route of the Short Walk, *turn left* over the stile in the fence into a pasture's corner and follow the left-hand field boundary for 60m to a large tree. Once there, *bear up to the right* of the steep field on a bearing of 165° to in 130m go over an initially unseen stile to the left of a metal field gate in the upper field boundary. *Turn left* in the next pasture, broadly along the boundary, but in 40m by a marker post *bear right* (either on the higher level of the field itself, this side of a line of trees, or along the fence at a lower level, where it's slightly overgrown though) and in 60m *turn down to the left* and over a stile and then cross a two-railed footbridge over the **Nant Wenllan** a little to the left. Head up a steep pasture with two markers and a marker post, initially towards the field boundary on the right, then a little to the left of it.

Higher up in 40m ignore a (locked) metal gate into the wood on the right and follow the fenced wood on the right (although the OS map shows the right-of-way inside the wood). In 60m pass another marker post and *curve around to the right* with the fence and in 70m in the top-right field corner go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and continue in the same direction along the fence on the right. In 30m by a marker on a fence post, *veer left* towards the left of two metal field gates visible at the top field boundary and leave the field through it in 70m by a footpath signpost. *Turn left* with a marker along the field boundary and in 80m go through a metal field gate and continue in the same direction through the next, larger field along a clear track, slowly rising towards some buildings (**Fedw** on the OS map). In 150m go through a rusty metal field gate onto a lane and *turn right* uphill along it. On the right you can see the first rock face on the **Mynydd Llangatwg: Darren**. In 250m go over a cattle grid or through the metal field gate to its

right and in 150m pass a white-washed farmhouse on the left (Penllangwilym). In another 300m you reach a right turning gravel drive, signed to **Wern Watkin Bunkhouse**.

Here you have a choice:

For the Morning Shortcut, *turn right* over the cattle grid down the drive and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Morning Shortcut**.

For the Main Walk, continue up the lane and in 350m pass a **Gas Pumping Station** on the left and in 60m at a T-junction with a road, *turn right* along it, entering **Access Land** in the process (you will only leave it long after having passed the Craig y Cilau NNR). In 40m *turn left* along a car wide stony track up the **Waun Watcyn** (250°, i.e.: not hard left along a tarmac drive) and in 65m *curve to the left* with the track. In 90m *bear right* with the track further uphill and in 270m the rocky track turns to the left by a wire-sling fastened primitive gate in the fence on the right (this may look like a gap in the fence if the sling isn't fastened and the post is lying on the ground).

Here you have a choice:

To cut out the highly recommended out-and-back to the Lonely Shepherd limestone pinnacle, *turn right* into the **Waun Watcyn** bog and pick up the directions below at the double asterisk **).

Else, *turn left* with the track, still uphill, and in 50m where the fences on both sides discontinue, you continue along a clear grass track through the open hillside. In 140m you start passing through an area of (now grassy) spoil heaps from former quarries and **[!]** *bear left*, off the ascending car wide track **[!]**, to continue along an **ex-tramroad** on a bearing of 110°, towards a rock face (a former quarry). You go through an area of gorse and grassy hummocks, with (half left ahead) views of **The Skirrid** (SWC Walk 347 Llanvihangel Crucorney Circular via Bryn Arw and The Skirrid). In 60m pass a former quarry on the right, the first of several, and in 230m ignore a left fork through bracken towards the large ex-quarry seen earlier. In 70m the tramroad goes through a cutting and in the following open area bears to the left in 40m.

You have a fence about 80m ahead, and in 20m you can see **The Lonely Shepherd** (and his Dog) 80m along the fence on the right. The lower part of SWC Walk 371 **The Clydach Gorge** (Brynmawr to Abergavenny or Vice Versa) lies below and **Gilwern Hill** opposite. You have fine views into the Usk Valley and to Abergavenny's hills. **Return the way you came:** along the fence then along the tramroad past quarries, through a cutting, past more quarries and then spoil heaps, *bear right* downhill along a grass path joining from the left above and continue between fences and on gravel to the bend in the track by the gate in the fence that may look like a gap. Continue through it into the **Waun Watcyn** bog.

****)** Follow a meandering path on a broad bearing of 330° and in 125m, where the terrain levels out, stay well to the right of a grassy boggy area to the right of some hawthorn trees and **[!]** *continue* more or less in continuation of the descent route (355° initially) along a **difficult-to-spot path** through the bracken (about 20m before the grassy area narrows with hawthorn trees on the left) and follow it across an unremarkable (but not boggy) rise, *bearing to the left* in 15m (310°). In 150m a minor path joins from the left and in 50m you go up a rise though the bracken. You then continue largely on the level under the rockface of the **Darren** (meaning 'escarpment') for about 400m, passing more hawthorns along a clear path, lately with some large slag heaps on the left above. At a fork, with a line of larger spoil heaps up on the left ahead, *fork left* up towards the heaps and in 25m *fork left* again to go higher up to the spoil heaps to the quarry level, reached in 100m.

The tops of the spoil heaps offer the best views across this visually fascinating area of **quarries, spoil heaps and scarps**, as you continue in the previous direction through, past or over the spoil heaps along the grassy plateau. Aim for a ruined building visible after 70m or so a little ahead to the right (part-covered by a large tree). There are **several cave entrances** up on the left along this escarpment, part of the **Ogof y Daren Cilau** cave system, with 27 km of passages one of the longest in the country ("Its awkward 517m entrance crawl is a natural barrier to any casual visitor..."). Just after the ruin (an ex-limekiln), a grassy track joins from the right below. The Morning Shortcut runs along it.

*******) In 70m you can spot some cottages down on the right below (one of them is **Whitewalls**, owned by the **Chelsea Speleological Society**, one of the foremost caving clubs in the UK, formed in 1956 by London cavers) and in 80m by a small concrete-with-breeze-blocks structure (a reservoir) another path joins from the right below. In 60m at a fork take either fork (the path to the left runs closer to the **Darren Cilau** rockface, the one to the right has views into the valley) and for the next 250m **find your preferred route** through the last of the (large) spoil heaps and in 80m by a boulder field join a grassy path that has run up from the right. In another 70m you descend along a clear narrow gravel path for 50m to continue along a grass path, still in the same direction.

Ignore all minor paths downhill and in 160m descend with the grass path for 120m to join a footpath that has been converging up to this level for a while, in a straight line. This is an ex-tramroad. *Turn left* along it. In 70m you *turn left* with the path and in 20m pass an info panel on the boundary of the **Craig y Cilau National Nature Reserve**. Continue along the tramroad under the cliffs of the **Chwar Mawr**, a stretch with several more ex-quarries and also some **famous caves**, and with dramatic views down into the **Cwm Onneu Fach** (with the nascent Nant Onneu-fach streaming down it, crossed very early on when leaving the wood by Llangattock village) and across it to the **Coed Dyffryn** wood (with a pre-historic hillfort site shown on the map on the hill above the wood). In 300m, just where the cliff and path turn right, by a memorial plaque on a rock for Bill Gascoine ("The man who followed the water"), on the left is the entrance to the **Ogof Capel Faen** (24m long). A little further along, up on the left, is the entrance to the **Eglwys Faen Fawr** (7m long).

Next up in 25m is **one of seven entrances navigable by humans to the Eglwys Faen** (= Stone Church), a **1.3 km long cave system**, ("The very accessible cave has numerous entrances and a variety of passages, from the large Main Chamber through to short crawls, making this cave a **great introduction to caving**", <http://www.ogof.org.uk/eglwys-faen.html>). Around a corner at slightly higher level is the **Waterfall Entrance**. You then pass the **Aven Entrance** high up and next the – yonic in shape – **Entrance 5** on the left, followed by **Entrances 4** (a low-level crawl), **3** (a.k.a. the '**Oval Entrance**') and **2**.

The Oval Entrance – with a little scrambling experience – is an **interesting caving experience for novices**. It leads after a scrambly climb to the entrance itself and a medium height drop into a minor chamber with the onwards route forking left via a crawl to a fine walkable stretch with light pouring in from the sides and above through various small holes. **Probably the best entrance for novice cavers (and at least as rewarding)**, comes in another 50m: **Entrance 1**, reached via a clear gravel zigzag path uphill. This leads to two easy-to-negotiate entrances (mind your head and the slippery rocks on the drop) to a 50m long high chamber (the name-giving 'stone church'). At its narrower end it leads to another 20m long chamber. Onwards routes from there connect to the other entrances. They are part walkable, but part crawls and squeezes and not necessarily recommended for novices.

In another 230m by a couple of footpath marker posts, **[!]** *fork right* downhill with a **Cambrian Way/Taith Cambria** marker, ignoring the level continuation of the grassy ex-

tramroad further up the scarp (leading in 350m to the **Ogof Agen Allwedd** (= Keyhole Cave), which – with over 32 km of passages – is one of the longest in the country; the entrance is blocked though). In 100m the path continues through bracken, still descending, and in 30m it levels out for a while. In 75m *fork either way* by a marker post:

- the right fork (a **public footpath**) continues downhill, curves to the right and in 200m enters a wooded area with impressive mossy boulders and walls; in 50m you *turn left* along a drystone wall, where another path joins from the right and in 60m start to ascend again. In 160m – over the brow – you have a barbed wire fence on the right and in 100m the permissive path joins from the left by a marker post.
- The left fork (a **permissive path**) meanders through the bracken and **avoids a bit of descent/re-ascent but has some rough and narrow stretches**, to meet the public footpath again in about 550m by a marker post, where you *turn left*.

In 30m at the corner of the fenced wood on the right, you enter an open area, still with bracken dominating initially. Ahead you can see a large marshy area, this is the **Waun Ddu** ('Dark Bog'), a rare raised peat bog, and beyond it the continuation of the path up a heathery hillside. In 75m pass a marker post and continue in the same direction to in 25m cross the infant **Nant Onneu-fach**, fed by five springs on the left, the **Waun Ddu Resurgences**. Cross the bog along the slightly higher ground to increase the chances of a firm surface (350°) and in 90m pass a small fenced area (un-grazed to see how the vegetation develops without continuous grazing: unsurprisingly it is doing rather well). In another 130m you cross another boggy strip (the 'lagg fen' stream typical for raised bogs, absorbing nutrients from around the bog) and start the ascent up the hillside by a footpath marker post. In 120m by a fence corner on the right you pass another (identical) info panel signalling the far boundary of the **Craig y Cilau NNR** and in 80m go over the brow of the rise and ignore a left fork. In 30m *turn left* at a T-junction with a car wide track by a metal field gate on the right and in 125m drop down to a busy road.

On the other side by a footpath signpost, you have a choice:

For the Extension of the route, *turn left* uphill along the road's grassy verge and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Extension**.

For the Main Walk, ignore a car wide gravel track bearing left and continue steeply downhill a little to the right with the signed footpath towards a stile 50m away and **leave the Access Land** over it into a large pasture. The exit from the field is in the bottom-right corner 180m away, through a metal field gate into the **Coedgae Du** (a wood) along a broad forestry track. In 70m *fork left* and in 100m you emerge from the wood into a pasture and follow the left-hand tree boundary downhill. In 110m pass a ruined farm building away on the right. *Bear left* steeply downhill and in another 80m you pass a marker post before a last line of trees and a short but very steep drop to a ford across the **Nant Onneu** by a three-way footpath marker post on the right, reached in 80m.

Here you have a choice:

For the Afternoon Shortcut, **[!]** *do not cross the stream* but *turn right* uphill with a broad track and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Afternoon Shortcut**.

For the Main Walk, *cross the stream* and head steeply up towards the buildings of **Cwm-Onnau Farm** along a broad track. In 100m *fork left* steeply up towards the farm buildings, ignoring the less steep right fork, and in 50m *turn left* through a metal field gate between some of the abandoned farm's buildings and cross its yard. In 60m go through a metal field gate and in 25m ignore a waymarked footpath to the right to continue steeply up the hillside along the grassy car wide farm track. In 180m – grand views back from here to the

Llangattock Escarpment – go through a metal field gate and continue higher up. In 120m go through another metal field gate and follow the car wide track to the left through the also abandoned **Ty-uchaf Farm**.

Immediately **[!]** *veer right* through a metal field gate into a pasture and *turn right* along its lower boundary, on the level. In the far-right field corner go over a late-seen stile in the hedge and *veer up to the left* through the next pasture (30°). In 110m go over a stile (with flat boulders providing the 'step') and continue in the same direction towards the top boundary of another pasture. In 70m, with **Table Mountain** ahead and **Sugar Loaf** away to the right, go over a stile in a hedge onto a lane and *turn left* along it. The lane rises gently up a whale-back shaped ridge, with the Usk Valley on the right and the Central Black Mountains beyond. In 110m, the farm track from Ty-uchaf joins from the left (not a right-of-way) and in 200m the lane levels out. Occasional breaks in the hedge on the left provide views up to the top of the **Cwm Onnau** (the route of the Extension). In 300m ignore a right turning Public Way through a rusty metal field gate (between two newer metal field gates, leading to **Ysgubor-neuadd** and **Ty-Rachel** as per the OS map).

In 170m, you reach a wooden footpath signpost on the right, just before a tarmac drive joins on the left by **Pencroeslan-isaf** (house) and about 100m before the lane ascends further. *Turn right* through a metal field gate into a pasture and follow its right-hand boundary. In 100m ignore a metal field gate on the right and in 30m go through a metal field gate to continue between fences. In 40m go through another metal field gate into a field and follow its right-hand boundary. In 65m ignore a gate on the right and continue in the same direction in the field to its far-right corner. In 80m go over a stile in a hedge and down a bank to cross the next field to its bottom-right corner. In 150m go over a stile (difficult-to-spot in high bracken) and in 30m emerge in a sloping grassy area. The Extension joins from the left through a metal field gate. *Turn right* downhill and in 30m at a fence corner on the left, *turn left* and continue downhill along a wide track between fences.

****) In 130 by the corner of the fence on the right, *turn right* with a marker post and enter a wood through a metal gate. The path enters a slightly overgrown area in 35m and winds its way through the steep wood, filled with bracken and Himalayan balsam. In 40m pass a footpath marker post on the right and in 60m an **Usk Valley Walk** (UVW) marker on an old redundant gate post and in 30m a marker post on the right, just before descending and bearing to the left. In 60m *turn left* through a metal gate and *turn right* to pass a ruined cottage (**Ty-Robin**) to its right in 30m. In 70m pass a marker post and cross a stream and in 70m *bear right* along some trees and in 50m you enter an open pasture through a metal field gate. You now cross a series of pastures, more or less on the level and in the same direction, **for 1.2 km until emerging on a tarmac lane at a bend**, almost always with very fine views on the left to the mountains opposite.

In more detail: in 100m cross a stream and continue in the same direction; cross the next pasture along its bottom-left boundary towards a farm building; in 130m cross a stream hidden under some boulders and 30m enter the abandoned farm yard through a metal field gate ('**Glanusk Estate** – Private – Keep Out') and continue between the two buildings and go through a metal gate; ignore a left fork downhill and in 100m go over a stepless stile or through a metal field gate and follow a left-hand boundary. In 100m go over another stepless stile or through a metal field gate and cross the next field a little to the right to in 150m leave it through a collapsed wooden field gate; you follow a left-hand field boundary and (with a large farm on the right above) in 220m go over a stile or through a metal field gate and in 10m another one; leave the next field in 150m over a stepless stile to the left of a metal field gate and follow a left-hand boundary; the **Iron Age Penffawyddog Gaer** is on the left behind a fence, this is a sub-oval (57m x 74m) bank-and-ditch defended earthwork enclosure; you have fine views on the right of the **Craig y**

Cilau cliffs and in 160m go through a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate **onto a tarmac lane at a bend** by a farm house drive on the left (Penffawyddog).

Continue in the same direction between hedges and in 100m *bear left* with the lane, ignoring a signposted bridleway ahead, and in 120m *turn left* along a minor tarmac lane (with the appearance of a private drive) to the right of a cottage (The Old Sunday School), still on the UVW – although unmarked and unsigned. Ahead are the **Table Mountain** and the **Darren** rock outcrop on **Pen-Cerrig-calch**. In 200m ignore a drive on the left to **Cae-College Farm** and continue in the same direction along a grass path between trees. In 140m pass the corner of **Coed Ffawyddog** wood on the left, ignoring narrow paths into the wood. In 40m ignore a right running byway and continue downhill along the marked bridleway. In 60m *bear right*, ignoring a left fork, and in 50m *turn left* with the path on the level. In 40m ignore a fork on the left and in 20m *turn right* at a T-junction, further downhill – in 20m between a wall and a barbed wire fence. In 120m the path curves to the left to cross the **Mon & Brec** on the arched **Canal Bridge #119**.

Turn right along the towpath on the other side, a public footpath but – confusingly – also a 'traffic-free cycleway'. In about 400m ignore a gap on the left with some steps leading onto a tarmac lane, just before going under **Canal Bridge #118** on the fringes of **Dardy** hamlet. You pass some **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, and follow the canal, as it bends to the left. In 450m from Dardy, you ignore a sign for **The Old Rectory Country Hotel** ('Entrance for customers only, next gate for public footpath'). Fork to the left of **Canal Bridge #117** and in 10m go through the 'next gate', a metal gate, to follow a fenced path downhill with some trees on the left. In 180m go through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate onto a tarmac lane and *turn left* into **Llangattock**. The Afternoon Shortcut has joined from the right down the lane.

*****) In 40m you pass the entrance of **The Old Rectory Country House Hotel** (non-residents welcome) away to the left and in 30m ignore a public footpath on the right into a pasture, as well as in 50m Church View residential road on the right and in another 50m a road from the left to continue towards **St. Catwg, Llangattock/Llangatwg** church's lychgate. For **The Horseshoe Inn**, *turn right* with the road and in 140m at a T-junction you find it on your left. **For the continuation of the walk**, go through the lychgate and follow a tarmac path between church and churchyard. In 70m go through a metal kissing gate and continue in the same direction along a narrow tarmac path through a meadow, in 40m crossing the **Nant Onneu** on a brick bridge (this stream you have crossed much earlier high up in the valley). Go through a metal kissing gate and *turn left* along another tarmac path at a T-junction. In 100m go through a metal kissing gate and follow the path towards the Usk River and the three-way road junction this side of **Crickhowell Bridge**.

In 200m go through a metal kissing gate and – with **The Vine Tree** away on the right – cross over the busy road to the bridge to cross the Usk into Crickhowell and **re-trace your steps** from the start of the walk past most tea options **to the bus stop**. **In more detail:** *turn right* along **Bridge Street** past **The Bridge End Inn** and follow signs for **Canol y Dref/Town Centre**, later along the **High Street**. **The Dragon Inn** is passed first, on the right, and **The Britannia Inn** is next on the left, followed on the same side by **Nicholls** (with its café), **Café at Book-ish**, and the **Courtroom Café** in the Market Hall, with **Treebeards Bar and Taproom** on the right and **The Bear Hotel** at the top end of the street. From there, the **bus stops** are to the right along the **A40** (Beaufort Street) as are the well-stocked **Tourist Information at the CRiC** (with its café), **Bacchus Off License**, **Latte-da Coffee and Kitchen** and **Café Le Gallois**.

Morning Shortcut

Follow the gravel car wide track downhill and in 350m cross a stream on the lane (the **Nant Wenllan** again). In 25m as you approach the bunkhouse buildings, *turn right* by a well-weathered marker on a tree on the right and cross a streamlet on a plank bridge and go through a wooden gate and *turn left* through a grassy area. Stay to the right of a pond, a garden shed and the house and in another 150m go over a stile in a fence and continue in the same direction through the next field (305°, about 20m to the right of an electricity pole) and in 200m leave it through a metal gate with a yellow marker and go down into a holloway at a bend, which you have left earlier much lower down the hillside.

*) Continue in the same direction between fences on the level and in 150m go through a metal field gate by **Laswern-fawr Farm** and continue along the farm's drive. In 160m you go through a metal field gate and enter **Access Land** (you will not leave it until after passing the Craig y Cilau NNR). The aim now is the top-left corner of the visible immediate slope on your left at the top of the wall by a road, but the direct ascent is very steep and overgrown, so *bear left* with a tarmac track and in 200m – at the road – *turn left* along it back on yourself. In 160m a path joins up from the left (the direct, steep route) and you *turn right* up a clear grassy path through the bracken-covered hillside.

Fork left immediately and curve to the right with the grass path and in 50m meet a tarmac drive up from the road to a car park. *Turn right* past the car park along a grassy track past a metal car barrier 20m away and ascend the hillside (due W initially). Visible up on the left is the **Darren rock cliff** with several sizeable grassy **spoil heaps** lined this side of it, while in the distance the continuation of the escarpment is part-visible. In 300m cross a path (grassy on the left, gravel on the right) and continue gently uphill. In 50m pass to the right of some ruined limekilns and follow the path around and up to the left to in 60m meet a path at a T-junction, with a quarry ahead and with spoil heaps on either side. The Main Walk joins from the left.

Turn right and pick up the directions above at the triple asterisk ***).

Extension

In 340m by a large layby on the right, the road levels out for a stretch and you can see a large (limestone) quarry in the distance at the top of the rise on **Blaen Onneu**. There are still some rockfaces ahead on the left (the **Craig y Castell**) on this far northerly end of **Mynydd Llangatwg**. In 1.1 km you pass a second layby on the right, opposite the rockface and several spoil heaps on the left. The aim eventually will be the corner of a drystone wall ahead and below on the right in the **Cwm Onneu**. In 30m pass a ruined limekiln on the left (with a tree growing out of its top) and in 130m the last of the spoil heaps and then in 90m a scree field, where there is a small group of hawthorn trees on the right. [!] In another 100m, at spot height 389m (and about 50m before a lone hawthorn tree on the right after which the road dips down a little), [!] you *bear right along an easy-to-miss faint path* through the bracken on a bearing of 320° (the right-of-way on the OS map is shown further along but there is no evidence of a path there).

In 200m a path joins from the left and in 50m you cross the nascent **Nant Onneu** and *bear right* along a clear path. In 50m pass the wall corner seen earlier from the road and continue along its left-hand side. In 350m at the far side of the wall, continue in the same direction and cross another stream in the **Cwm Waun-Ilech**. You re-ascend steeply and continue with a barbed wire fence away to the right. In 110m pass a drystone wall corner and keep ascending to a walled enclosure. On the right you have a couple of the prows of the **Craig y Cilau** in a rather fantastic sideview, with **Blorenge** visible beyond it. In 170m pass the ruined **Ty'r-eithin** away on the right between trees and in 40m pass the walled enclosure on its right-hand side (*not Access Land*). In 30m ignore a right forking unmarked public footpath leading to the right-hand corner of the walled **Bryn yr haul** farm.

In 25m you pass close to the far wall corner of the enclosure and soon cross a streamlet and ascend up some slightly boggy ground (20°) through tussocky grass, gorse and heather. Head for the left-hand corner of the walled farm, here a wooded area, and in 100m cross the gravel drive leading to the farm on the right. You continue in the same direction where the wall turns away to the right and in 150m the start of a descent marks the **watershed to the Usk Valley**. Aim to the left of a fenced farm house, cross a tarmac lane and pass the house to its left into a narrowing walled grassy area, with first fine views ahead to the giants of **The Black Mountains** across the Usk, and up the **Rhiangoll Valley** towards Pen Tir and **Mynydd Troed** (SWC 308 Bwlch Circular via Mynydd Troed and Llangorse Lake). In 140m from the tarmac lane you **leave the Access Land** through a metal field gate and continue in the same direction along a walled track, a **Public Way**.

On the left you have **Bwlch** village nestled in the pass that gives it its name and the long ridge of the **Mynydd Llangorse** rising to the right of it. In 60m a signed footpath joins from the left over a stile and in another 250m another public footpath joins through the hedge and over a stile on the left. In 60m by some metal field gates on the left and right, you *turn right* through the metal field gate with the **Usk Valley Walk** (UVW) which has joined from out of the valley. You will now follow it all the way to Llangattock. Follow a car wide grassy track through the sloping pasture, ignoring a right forking path, and in 150m leave the field through a ruined wall. Ford a stream and continue in the same direction along a clear track and in 75m by a medium height footpath marker post on the right, *veer right* to the right of a walled abandoned farm (**Pen-y-Fedw**) and in 80m go through a gate to *bear left* in the next field towards a fence gap to the right of a metal field gate (70°), ignoring the left turn to a gate, and in 100m continue in the next field by *veering left* towards its bottom-right corner. In 170m go through a metal field gate and follow a left-hand fence. In 30m at the fence corner *turn left* along a track between fences and a wooded area on the right, further downhill. The Main Walk has joined from the right. Join the Main Walk text above at the quadruple asterisk ********).

Afternoon Shortcut

Where the track curves to the right and the terrain levels out, continue in the same direction along the bracken and trees on the left towards the far-left field corner and in 140m go over a stile into the next field. You now go **through six pastures** (mostly using stiles to get from one to the other) with the **Coed y Cilau** wood on the left and the **Craig y Cilau** and the **Chawr Mawr** rock cliffs visible above on the right (that's where the cave entrances are located) until you get close to **Cilau Farm**. In the last of the six fields you already follow a clear car wide track and in the next field you continue along the now meandering track to the farm (meandering around some boggy parts). At the farm, ignore a stile between field gates in the right-hand field corner and go through a metal field gate near the middle of the boundary to pass a new corrugated iron barn on its right.

In 30m *veer left* along a concrete farmyard and *turn hard left* by a marker on a fence post, off the concrete and to a stile. Cross the stile and *turn left* to another stile in 30m leading into the wood and follow a clear path through it to in 90m *veer right* with the path to a ford across the **Nant Onneu** in 30m. Go over a stile and head up through the enchanting wood. In 30m you pass a footpath marker post and in 100m at the top of the wood another footpath joins from the left at a marker post. *Turn right* through a pasture, in 30m with some trees on the right and in 25m pass a marker post. In 65m *turn right* over a stile into **Coed Waen-dwrch** and follow a good path through the wood, gently downhill. In 70m go over a stile in a fence and in 60m *veer left* at a T-junction with a broad path. In 110m go over a stile in a fence into a different part of the wood, with the stream audible below on the right. In 90m a track joins from the left behind from a metal field gate.

In 150m you leave the wood over a stile onto a grassy area by some moorings on the **Mon & Brec**. *Turn right* along the canal, soon passing the **Canal House** and then one of the **Llangattock Limekilns** (with a picnic area on the top), after which you ascend to a road and *turn left* along it to cross the canal on **Canal Bridge #115**. On the far side of the bridge *turn right* down to the canal towpath and right again to go under the bridge and follow the canal on its right-hand side. In 50m pass an info panel on the limekilns and in 40m cross the **Nant Onneu** far below the canal. In 40m you pass the spot where – on the left – you exited from the wood, and in 160m ignore a right running footpath through a wooden kissing gate. In 260m by **Canal Bridge #116 (Pont Llangatwg** on the OS map), you *turn right* up to a road and follow it downhill into **Llangattock** village. In 50m the Table Mountain is in clear view ahead and in 110m a footpath joins from the left through a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate. The Main Walk joins along it.

Pick up the direction in the main text at the quintuple asterisk *********).