

Crickhowell Circular (via Table Mountain and the 3 Pens)			Crickhowell Circular (via 3 Pens and Waun Fach Route)		
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Crickhowell Circular (via Table Mountain and the Three Pens)

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: 20.4 km (12.7 mi).

Cumulative ascent/descent: 973m. 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, within minutes you rise up steeply (with an 12% average gradient) for 3 km – mainly through pastures – to the excellent viewpoint that is the eponymous Iron Age hillfort site of Crug Hywel (or Table Mountain), which gives its name to the town and towers above the Usk Valley. You ascend further up the flank of the main mountain range above the town to Pen Cerrig-calch, the first of three high tops along the ridge. Continue to the slightly higher second top, Pen Allt-mawr and down to the third top, Pen Twyn Glas. The further descent now follows the easterly spur of the range with a gentle gradient and some fantastic views to the valleys either side and out to Sugarloaf/Y Fâl. A short stretch of road walking is followed by a re-ascent up to the col between Table Mountain and Pen Cerrig-calch and then follows the Beacons Way contouring the hill for a while before dropping down to town through the ancient woodland of the Cwm Cumbeth, with the bubbling Cumbeth Brook never far away. The route finishes through the heart of Crickhowell past most of its tea options.

Shorter walks, descending back to town on westerly loops from either Table Mountain, Pen Cerrig-calch or Pen Allt-mawr, are described.

An out-and-back extension to Waun Fach, the highest top in the Black Mountains, or a variation past it and down its main easterly spur, are described.

Walk Options:

A Very Short Walk leads back down to town from the Table Mountain/Crug Hywel, on a westerly loop along the Beacons Way and down the wooded Cwm Cumbeth (7.5 km/4.6 mi, 389m ascent).

A Short Walk leads in a westerly loop from either Pen Cerrig-calch or Pen Allt-mawr (the latter route partly map-led) and down the lower part of the wooded Cwm Cumbeth (11.5 km/7.2 mi, 658m ascent; or 16.5 km/10.3 mi, 741m ascent).

A Variation of the Ending continues along Llanbedr Lane, entirely on tarmac, cutting out the re-ascent to the Crug Hywel and the descent down the wooded Cwm Cumbeth (cuts 1.5 km and 217m ascent).

A Variation of the Variation diverts to a pub in Llanbedr for refreshments (add 530m and 26m ascent).

An out-and-back Extension from the last of the Pens to **Waun Fach**, the highest top in the Black Mountains, results in a 31.0 km/19.2 mi walk with 1323m ascent/descent, **10/10**.

A Longer Route, out to Waun Fach and then along its easterly ridge to Llanbedr village and along roads to Crickhowell, has 31.5 km/19.6 mi and 1127m ascent/descent (**10/10**).

A sheltered dropout route avoiding the final ascent to the Waun Fach and Pen y Gadair Fawr ridge in the event of the weather turning, is described.

Lunch

Picnic

Tea (details last updated 19/09/2019)

The Red Lion Llanbedr, Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1SR (01873 810 754). The Red Lion is located 3.3 km from the end of the variation of the variation of the ending. Open Tue-Fri evenings, all day Sat-Sun.

The Swan Inn 10 Llanbedr Road, Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1BT (01873 810 858). The Swan is located 400m from the end of the walk on the alternative (road) ending. Open daily from at least 15.00.

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

The Bridge End Inn Bridge Street, Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1AR (01873 810 338, <http://thebridgeendinn.com/>). The Bridge End Inn is located 360m off route.

The Bear Hotel Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1BW (01873 810 408, <http://www.bearhotel.co.uk/>). The Bear is located at the end of the walk and a former coaching inn with 500 years of history. Large and welcoming.

Several Cafés in Crickhowell, see the walk directions for names and locations.

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/dwŵr: 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:

Crug Hywel/Table Mountain

Crug Hywel (or Table Mountain) is a flat-topped mountain at the southern edge of the Black Mountains. It rises to 451m above sea, from the southern flank of Pen Cerrig-calch (701m), and overlooks the town of Crickhowell, to which it gives its name. Crug Hywel's summit is entirely taken up by an Iron Age hillfort, with a clearly visible earth and stone ditch and rampart.

The hill is formed from Old Red Sandstone originating in the Devonian period, specifically the sandstones of the Brownstones Formation, topped by rocks of the Quartz Conglomerate Group. The whole mass of rocks forming this outlier of Pen Cerrig-calch can readily be seen to dip more sharply to the south than nearby strata and is considered to be an excellent example of a translational (or planar) landslide.

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).

Pen Cerrig-calch

Pen Cerrig-calch is the southernmost 2000ft (609.6m) summit in the Black Mountains and a subsidiary summit of Waun Fach. It reaches a height of 701m, sits high above the Usk Valley where it narrows above Crickhowell and is a very fine viewpoint, with the views extending as far as the Beacons to the west, but mainly along and across the Usk Valley to the Llangattock/Llangynidr hills and down to the Blorenges and Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl by Abergavenny. A ridge runs off to the northwest and the shoulder of Pen Gloch-y-pibwr then turns north to the secondary top of Pen Allt-mawr whose peak is higher, at 719m above sea.

Like all of the hills in the Black Mountains, Pen Cerrig-calch is formed from mudstones and sandstones of the Old Red Sandstone laid down during the Devonian period but it is unusual in having a band of Carboniferous Limestone outcropping around the summit and giving rise to a few shakeholes. A classic example of an outlier, the name of the hill reflects this situation: it translates as 'top of the limestone rock'. It is believed to have been part of the same landmass as the Llangattock/Llangynidr Hills before the Usk Valley separating them now was carved out by glaciers. There are ancient cairns on each of the main tops and small disused quarries once worked for the Old Red Sandstone across the hill's lower slopes.

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/>

Beacons Way/Ffordd y Bannau

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.

The Black Mountains/Y Mynyddoedd Duon

The Black Mountains (Welsh: *Y Mynyddoedd Duon*) are a group of hills spread across parts of Powys and Monmouthshire, and extending across the border into Herefordshire. They are the easternmost of the four hill ranges that comprise the Brecon Beacons National Park. The Black Mountains may be roughly defined as those hills contained within a triangle defined by the towns of Abergavenny in the southeast, Hay-on-Wye in the north and the village of Llangors in the west. Other gateway towns to the Black Mountains include Talgarth and Crickhowell. The highest mountain in the group is Waun Fach at a height of 811m above sea.

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.

WALK DIRECTIONS

After alighting from the bus in the centre of **Crickhowell** (anglicised after the **Crug Hywel** or **Table Mountain**, the hillfort walked up to soon enough) in the **Brecon Beacons National Park** on **Beaufort Street** (the A 40), 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). Cross the junction (High Street to the left, Standard Street to the right) and continue along the A road in the direction of Brecon past **The Bear Hotel** on the right. In 100m cross over to the right-hand side of the road at a pedestrian crossing (if not already on it), as you pass a service station, ignoring a left turn to Llangattock and Gilwern. In another 70m *turn right* uphill along the residential **Llanbedr Road**. In 140m pass **The Swan Inn** on the left and in 180m by **Oakfield Drive** on the left, you get first views up on the left of the **Crug Hywel** and the first of the three Pens higher up and to the left: **Pen Cerrig-calch**.

In the back you see the **Llangattock and Llangynidr Hills** across the Usk Valley and **Gilwern Hill** and the **Bloreng** to the left of them. Over the shoulder on the left in a westerly direction, you have **Tor y Foel** near Bwlch (SWC Walk 332 Llangynidr to Bwlch or Circular) and the **Waun Rydd** upland peat plateau behind it (SWC Walk 278 Pen y Fan Horseshoe). The pavement ends in another 170m by the last residential road on the left (**Gerddi'r Mynydd**) and in 40m you ascend further along a short steep narrow section of the road between earth banks (mind fast moving traffic). In 110m *bear left* at a T-junction with **Great Oak Road**, still uphill, and in 200m where the road veers to the right by an electricity substation on the right and where a car wide track joins from the left (a Public Way), you *turn left* in a northerly direction through a metal field gate (signed '**The Wern Farm**') with a wooden footpath signpost along the farm's gravel-and-tarmac drive.

At the farm go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and walk across the concrete yard towards the farmhouse. In 40m *turn right* just before the house and go through a metal field gate into a pasture and walk along its top boundary. In 120m go through a metal field gate and *turn left* at a T-junction with an earthen path between trees (a public footpath). In 130m go through a metal gate (with a wooden '**Table Mountain**' sign) to the left of a metal field gate with footpath and **Cambrian Way/Taith Cambria** markers and continue in the same direction up a right-hand pasture boundary. In 125m go through another metal gate and continue in the same direction up a right-hand boundary (a footpath has joined from the left). You can see **Ysgubor-newydd** farm away on the right across a field with **Sugarloaf/Y Fâl's** flank to the right and behind of it and in 250m, just short of the top end of the field, go up some wooden steps and through a metal gate and *turn left* with a yellow marker along a car wide farm track coming up from the farm.

On a clear day you can now see **Pen y Fan**, the highest top in South Britain on the left in the distance on a bearing of 280°, to the right of the Waun Rydd plateau, as well as the broad ridge of **Fan Fawr** in the Fforest Fawr on 265° to the left of it. In 40m *bear right* with a marker and go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate into another pasture. Follow the right-hand field boundary uphill and in 200m leave it amongst some trees over a stile and *turn right* with a marker and a hand-written sign in the tree ahead ('**To Mountain F.P.**') along an earthen path. In 15m rise gently through a hanging wood (ignore the metal field gate into a pasture) and in 125m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate into **Access Land**, a bracken-covered steep slope with the **Crug Hywel hilltop fort** above on the left (some 115m of height above, to be precise). Continue in the same direction staying to the right of a muddy area and in 15m ignore a left turning clear grassy path going steeply up the slope in a northerly direction. Instead continue in the same direction (55°) along a gently rising grass path through the bracken, towards some solitary trees.

In 40m and in another 30m you cross some streamlets and in 100m the first of those trees. Away on the right you have the iconic (and conic) **Sugarloaf/Y Fâl** towering above Abergavenny across the **Vale of Grwyne**. In 210m at an oblique crossing, fork up to the left (340° initially) and in 170m at a three-way fork *turn steeply up to the left* (260°). In 140m you walk through the hillfort entrance up through the ditch-and-bank ramparts and in 60m reach the flat (if sloping) top of the **Crug Hywel or Table Mountain**, at 451m above sea. There is a cairn 50m away half right. The views from the top of this outlier of Pen Cerrig-calch, guarding a part of the Usk Valley, are superlative. Leave the hillfort site back the way you came, through the entrance down through the ramparts and in 25m *turn left* along the grassy track at the base of the hillfort. In 25m *keep left*, ignoring a right fork downhill. In 160m, on a ridge and where a faint path comes down from the Crug, the path forks. A left fork leads to a drystone wall 70m away, the right fork continues in a northerly direction towards the ascent up to Pen Cerrig-calch.

Here you have a choice:

For the very short version of this walk, cutting out any further substantial ascent, *bear left* towards the drystone wall and in 70m continue along the wall and pick up the directions below at the asterisk *).

For the continuation of the walk, *veer right* (due N) along the clear path. In 80m **The Beacons Way** crosses from the right unmarked, continuing along a faint left fork towards the drystone wall 40m away, the afternoon return route crosses here. Continue in the same direction to start the ascent up the first Pen. In 160m at a fork take either fork (the right-hand one is recommended after wet weather, although being longer, as the left fork passes an area with several springs and streams, which will be muddy, and has a very steep finish). This area is dominated by bilberries. In 400m the paths re-join (after the right-hand path has turned sharply left and up) at about spot height 540m, as you keep to the left of a rocky outcrop (**Trwyn Ysgwrfa** on the OS map = 'Scoured Nose').

In 100m a grassy path joins from the right behind (at spot height 570m) and you continue uphill on a broad grassy path. Take the right fork in another 100m (spot height 585m), staying on the more prominent path and in 200m cross a stream. In 30m *bear right* to keep ascending towards the top, broadly along the stream while avoiding boggy parts. The growth now is a mixture of heather and bilberries. In 460m you pass a large cairn (at spot height 680m) where you reach the plateau at the top of **Pen Cerrig-calch** ('Top of the Limestone Rock', as evidenced by some shakeholes and scattered surface limestone). In 270m you are parallel to a very large historic cairn away on the left and can spot the trig point dead ahead. You reach the trig in another 120m, at 701m above sea.

Here you have a choice:

For the second shortest version of the walk, cutting out any more substantial ascent, *turn hard left* (175° initially) from the previous direction **towards the** right-hand side of the **very large historic cairn** seen a few minutes ago and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Short Walk Finish from Pen Cerrig-calch**.

For the continuation of the walk, continue in the same direction along the clear path on a bearing of 320° past a prehistoric cairn in 75m. In 250m go down a grassy drop and commence the gentle descend towards the shallow saddle between the top of Pen Cerrig-calch and the second Pen of the walk, **Pen Allt-mawr**. The plateau narrows towards the bottom of the saddle and in 400m you pass a cairn on your left and the path now runs along the right-hand edge of the plateau, with views down on the right into the **Cwm Banw** (valley) and across it to the long descending ridge of the third Pen of the walk: **Pen**

Twyn Glas ('Top of the Green Hill'). In 450m you pass a **pile of stones** and start the gentle re-ascent, still along the right-hand edge. In another 730m pass by a large area of rocks with a storm shelter built from them and in 500m reach the trig point and storm shelter at the top of **Pen Allt-mawr** ('Top of the Big Slope') at 719m above sea, the **highest point of the main walk**.

Here you have a choice:

For a (initially map-led) shorter version of the walk, cutting out any more substantial ascent, *turn hard left* and follow the edge of the plateau **to Pen Gloch-y-Pibwr** in 1.3 km and *turn hard left* there with the edge and in another 2.0 km (not long after passing a **Pile of Stones** (on the OS map), at about spot height 580m, the descent route from Pen Cerrig-calch joins from the left (pathless and unmarked). Continue along the edge and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Short Walk Finish from Pen Cerrig-calch** at the asterisk *).

For the Main Walk, descend from the mountain along the nose of the ridge in a northerly direction along a – initially steep – clear path, and in 400m (after an 85m drop) you pass a pile of rocks on the right (an ex-quarry?). The hills on the left are Mynydd Llangorse and Mynydd Troed (SWC Walk 308 Bwlch Circular). In 270m take either fork just before a minor hillock (the left one goes over the top, the right one skirts it) and in 360m the forks re-join and you curve to the right with the path. In another 400m *fork right* (65°, just when you are starting a gentle ascent) and in 300m reach the top of **Pen Twyn Glas** at 646m above sea at a junction of paths by a very small cairn. You are looking down into the valley of the **Grwyne Fechan** river and across to the highest spur of the Black Mountains, leading on the left up to the highest top (due N): **Waun Fach** at 811m above sea. [The more obvious table-top shaped top to the right of Waun Fach on 30° is the slightly lower **Pen y Gadair Fawr**, at 800m above sea]

Here you have a choice:

For an out-and-back to Waun Fach or the longer return route past it, then via Pen y Gadair Fawr, Crug Mawr, Llanbedr, *bear left* (330° initially, then bearing right) along a grass path and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Waun Fach Route**.

For the Main Walk, *turn right* from the cairn (135°) along the gently descending ridge of the hill along the **Tal Trwynau** (= 'Lofty Nose'), which drops off steeply enough to the sides to afford good views into the valleys to both sides at all times. You follow a broad bearing of 145°, **in the direction of Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl** for 2.7 km to the end of the Access Land. **In more detail**: in 200m pass by some small ponds and in 1.6 km walk through some disused quarries. In 180m you pass some more quarries on the left and in another 320m go through another large area with disused quarries. At the end of this area, where the terrain gets steeper, you pass a large cairn and *fork left* to pick up a car wide grassy track and follow it downhill towards a plantation's upper boundary. In 320m in the bottom left corner of the walled **Access Land** go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate with a footpath marker and follow the plantation's boundary along the farm track.

In 125m you pass a footpath marker post (inscribed 'Ffordd/Road') and in another 125m by the plantation's corner continue in the same direction with a two-way signpost along the track, still along a ridge, still through the pasture. In 230m pass a two-way signpost on the right and continue in the same direction along a drystone wall on the right. In 220m in the narrow bottom field corner go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and in 25m over another and continue downhill along a fenced wide track. The track is partly a streambed and can be muddy or overgrown, but there is a good path to the right a little higher up for

most parts. In 350m, where the farm track leads to the left to a farm (Neuadd-fawr, on the OS map) and by three metal field gates into pastures, you **[!]** *veer right* over a stile to the right of the middle of the three metal field gates with a signpost ('To Road') into a pasture along a **Permissive Footpath**.

In 40m by a marker post *turn left* down the steep pasture, heading on a bearing of 225° to a yellow-topped marker post a little to the right of a solitary oak tree. In 130m *turn left* with the marker on the post along a farm track and in 50m leave the field over a stile to the left of a metal field gate onto a tarmac lane at a tight bend **at the bottom of the Cwm Banw** (valley) by a small walker's car park. *Turn right* along the lane to cross the **Cwm Banw stream**. You *turn left* gently uphill with the lane, ignoring a permissive footpath up some steps and over a stile, signed 'Pen Allt Mawr', and in 650m, by **Penhoelmeirch Cottage**, continue in the same direction where a lane joins from the left and a drive from the right, now following the valley of the **Grwyne Fechan** river. In 200m you pass **Penhoelmeirch Farm** on the left and in another 220m the **Beacons Way** joins from the left over a stile by a metal field gate, just before a cobbled drive on the right. In 140m you pass **Cae-Ffynon** on the right-hand side and in another 60m **Green Cottage**. 20m after that the Beacons Way turns right along a signposted footpath with a 'Table Mountain' sign on it, up a narrow path between trees.

Here you have a choice:

For a shorter ending (entirely on tarmac) **and a possible diversion** past **The Red Lion** pub in Llanbedr (add 530m and 26m ascent for that), continue along the lane and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Road Ending and Pub Diversion**.

For the main walk, *turn right* with the Beacons Way and follow it to Crickhowell (the waymarking is patchy though on the higher ground). In 180m you go through a metal field gate and *turn right* with the path between a drystone wall on the left and a barbed wire fence on the right, passing on the left the ruins of **Graig-lwyd** (on the OS map). In 150m you get nicely framed views on the left of **Sugarloaf/Y Fâl** and the (closer and lower) wooded ridge of **Blaen yr Henbant** (the descent route of the long version of the walk). In 90m go through a metal field gate in a drystone wall into **Access Land** and *bear up to the right* (335°) along a clear grassy path through the hillside. In 80m *turn up to the left* at a clear four-way junction of grassy tracks (225°). In 250m and in 40m you cross some streamlets. In 100m you cross a stream and continue in the same direction with a drystone wall on the left. In 60m cross a streamlet and in 20m continue in the same direction (235°) uphill where the wall and a clear grassy path (an unmarked public footpath) *veer left*.

In 50m you cross a stream and in 40m at a path junction, *bear right* uphill (265° initially, i.e. **do not turn right**). In 60m, on a steeper stretch, *turn left* with the path and in 80m a stream runs down the path for about 20m. In 60m ignore a right fork uphill to the flank of Pen Cerrig-calch. You continue towards the now visible **Table Mountain**, en route crossing more streams (some under soil, i.e. audible but not visible), going through a few dips but keeping the same direction (210°). In 300m cross a grassy path and continue in the same direction. In 100m you reach a wide grassy path running on the left to the Crug and on the right up to Pen Cerrig-calch. **This is the outbound route**. Cross it a little to the right along a faint path (290°) to the drystone wall 40m away and *turn right* along the wall. The Very Short Walk has joined from the left.

***)** You follow the wall on the left and over the next 200m ford four small streams. In another 50m by a more major stream (its ultimate source was passed on the ascent up Pen Cerrig-calch and you'll walk along it again in a short while, further downstream), where the wall turns down to the left, you **[!]** *turn left* with the main path **this side of the stream**,

ignoring a faint continuation across it. In 40m ford the stream. **Crickhowell** is visible on the left below and **Darren**, the large rocky cliff-face, up on the right. In 70m cross another stream and *curve right* with the path, away from the wall. In 80m you cross the first of several boggy areas with a streamlet running through it, with the wall on your left again. You cross several other boggy areas with streamlets over the next 200m and in another 40m *turn left* steeply downhill with the path (220°). The path curves to the right and you cross another streamlet in 60m and in 70m you pass the remnants of a WWI shooting butt (on the OS map) as the path levels out for a stretch. In 25m ignore a faint left turning path through an overgrown area and in 10m cross a stream (the nascent **Cumbeth Brook**) and then in 15m another one. In 15m you have the wall on your left again and in 60m *turn left* with wall and path and in 40m enter a sheep pen through a metal field gate.

Ignore metal field gates on the left and right with 'Private – No Access'-signs and *turn left* with a handwritten 'Footpath'-sign and a Beacons Way marker to follow a car wide grassy track between walls. In 20m go through a metal field gate and in 50m cross the Cumbeth Brook and follow its left-hand side, for a 40m stretch along a narrow rocky causeway. After that you follow a grassy path veering left away from the brook through a wide clearing amongst trees. In 190m a tributary stream runs on the left of the path. In 100m *turn left* to ford the stream and *turn right* through a metal gate into a wood with Beacons Way and bridleway markers. In 100m you have a drystone wall on the right and the stream 20m away to the right of it. In 150m a streamlet crosses the path from a pasture on the left (but ultimately from the flanks of Pen Cerrig-calch). The path follows the stream to the right and then again to the left where the stream joins the **Cumbeth Brook**. In another 350m you pass a two-railed footbridge over the brook on the right. The Short Walks from Pen Cerrig-calch or Pen Allt-mawr join across the bridge. Continue in the same direction.

****)** Ignore a left turning footpath up some steps. The path veers away from the brook and in 160m you go through a wooden gate and ford a tributary stream (not on the OS map). In 250m ignore a left fork through a metal field gate and *veer right* over a stile with the Beacons Way and down some flagstone steps into a pasture and follow its right-hand boundary, with the brook just away to the right. In 150m pass a marker post and in 60m go under an electricity line. In 140m go over a stile to leave the field and descend through one more pasture and in 170m leave it through a double metal field gate and past some farm buildings. In 30m go over a stile 10m to the right of another double metal field gate and drop down to a tarmac lane, where you *turn right* downhill. In 40m you cross the **Cumbeth Brook** on the lane and rise to a road. In 25m *turn left* along the road, signed 'Crickhowell Town Centre'. In 40m **!!** *turn left* along a narrow tarmac path (an unmarked public footpath) between **Nanteos** (house) on the left and a stone cottage on the right.

In 20m cross the audible brook and *turn right* with the path between fences. In 25m *turn left* with the path and in 40m *turn right* at a T-junction of paths and in 30m reach a residential road at a bend. Continue downhill along the road (**Oakfield Drive**), a little to the right. In 80m you pass **Allsorts Nursery**, then **Crickhowell Primary School** and continue in the same direction along a tarmac path where the road ends. In 50m by the **A 40** *turn right* down some steps and through bike barriers and cross the road to continue opposite along **Everest Drive**. In 70m *curve to the left* where Brookfields turns right, and in 150m at the end of the road continue in the same direction along a tarmac path, soon crossing a stream. You ignore a right turn and walk past **Crickhowell High School** along a road's pavement. Ignore a right turning drive to a **Sports Centre** and in 15m *fork right* away from the road along a paved path through a meadow, in 30m *veering left* with a public footpath signpost towards the church tower. In 90m cross the A 4077 **New Road** and *turn right* along the opposite pavement. In 20m by **Church Lane** on the left enter the churchyard through an arched stone gateway and continue in the same direction to the right of **St. Edmund King and Martyr Church**.

In 30m *turn left* towards the church entrance and *turn right* out of the churchyard through a metal gate and *turn left* along a tarmac path between churchyard and cemetery. In 50m go through the lychgate and continue in the same direction along **Church Street** between houses. In 70m you reach the highly-rated **High Street** with its many independent retail outlets at a T-junction. **The Dragon Inn** is 30m away on the right and **The Bridge End Inn** down on the right 360m away (in 130m *turn right* down **Bridge Street** all the way to the 18th century Grade I-listed **Crickhowell Bridge** over the Usk River, the longest stone bridge in Wales). **The Britannia Inn** is on your left, followed on the same side by **Nicholls** (with its café), **Café at Book-ish** and the **Courtroom Café** in the Market Hall, with **The Bear Hotel** at the top end of the street. Near the top, on the other side of High Street, is **Treebears Bar and Taproom**. 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** and **Latte-da** café.

Short Walk Finish from Pen Cerrig-calch (cut 8.9 km/5.5 mi and 286m ascent)

In 50m you pass to the right of a small limestone boulder field and in 90m reach the cairn at a junction of paths. *Turn right* along a clear path (220°) to commence the gentle descent from the top plateau. In 20m you pass to the right of the top end of a boulder stream and in 25m *fork right*, staying with the boulder stream and in 65m ignore a faint right fork. In 20m the path leads through some boulders and in 40m you *take the right fork*. In another 40m *fork left* and in 5m pass a small shake hole on your left to continue on a bearing of 235°. In about 60m (at about spot height 645m) the path becomes indistinct and there is every chance you lose it, while there are numerous animal tracks criss-crossing the slope. Continue pathless in the previous direction for 450m (the ground is covered by bilberries and grass in the main, so walking is not arduous) to the edge of the slope, crossing a couple of wider grassy paths en route. At the edge (at about spot height 575m) there is a clear wide footpath running right-to-left and a **Pile of Stones** away to the right by a junction of minor paths with the main edge-path (at spot height 580m). The slope is boulder-strewn, the valley below is the **Cwm Mawr** and you can spot **Tretower Court and Castle** and **Bwlch** up the Usk Valley. *Turn left* along the path.

*) In 250m you reach a pile of stones to the right of the path (at spot height 560m) and continue in the same direction. In 50m, 25m before a cairn/storm shelter, the path forks and you *take the right fork* (225°), passing to the right of the cairn. In 150m a minor path joins from the right behind (it comes down from the left forking path) and you *veer right* (235°) to start the descent off the top along a clear grassy path, in 25m briefly between low earth banks. In 220m ignore a left fork by a pile of rocks on the left. In 250m a broad path joins from the right behind (and continues on the left as a faint track). In 25m, at spot height 430m, *turn left* with the broader grassy path (220° initially), ignoring the narrower continuation in the same direction. There is some higher ground on the left as you curve gently with the path around its base through the bracken covered ground. In about 100m you can see a stretch of the **River Usk** at the bottom of the valley and in 75m you pass by a couple of trees to the right.

The village visible across the valley is **Llangattock/Llangatwg**. In 140m, close to the start of a drystone wall to the left (at spot height 380m), a grassy track joins from the right. **The Beacons Way** runs along it. *Turn left* along the grassy track, somewhat to the left of the wall (105°). You cross a couple of streamlets as the path continues along the

wall. In about 400m you pass a Beacons Way ('**Ffordd y Bannau**' in Welsh) marker post on the right, where the wall turns right downhill, and where you can see the **Darren** rockface up on the left, the **Crug Hywel** up on the left ahead and **Crickhowell** down in the valley below. Continue in the same direction with the marker on a clear descending path through the bracken and in 60m *turn right* downhill by a Beacons Way marker post on the left. In 80m *turn left* with the path. In 70m pass a Beacons Way marker post. The path becomes boggy for 30m where a stream shares the route and in another 120m you *turn right* with a marker post this side of a stream, steeply downhill. In 30m the stream veers away to the left and you follow a fence along a wood. In 50m go through a wooden gate, then a metal gate and continue along a broad grassy track between drystone walls.

In 70m the area widens as you pass another marker post. *Bear left* in 30m and in 20m go over a stile and continue between drystone walls. In 125m pass another marker post on the left and in 25m go through a metal field gate, leaving the **Access Land**. In 70m by a marker post ignore the right turning Beacons Way and continue in the same direction with the public footpath. In 80m the stream you walked by earlier joins from the left down a 1 metre-drop and you ford through the wide streambed to leave the field in 20m through a wooden gate. Cross the next pasture along the left-hand upper boundary and in 120m leave it through a metal field gate by another stream into a concrete farmyard by **Middle Barn** (on the OS map). You *turn left* along the barn and continue in the same direction up a pasture along the stream on the left. In 50m go through a metal field gate and *turn right* in the next pasture along its lower boundary. You have **Table Mountain** ahead and in 220m go through a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate and *veer right* (120°) across the next pasture towards a stile in a fence around a wood. Follow a path downhill through the wood and in 50m cross a two-railed footbridge across the **Cumbeth Brook** and in 10m you reach a T-junction. The Main Walk joins from the left. *Turn right* downhill.

Pick up the directions in the Main Walk text at the double asterisk **).

Road Ending and Pub Diversion (cut 1.5 km and 217m ascent or 1.0 km and 191m ascent)

In another 220m you have a choice:

- **For the pub diversion**, *turn left* over a stile along a signposted footpath along a narrow earth path between trees and in 40m *turn right* through a metal field gate into a pasture and follow its left-hand boundary. In 80m where the field boundary turns left, continue in the same direction across the pasture and in 100m leave it over a stile to the right of a field gate. In 150m go through a metal field gate and *turn left* downhill along a lane which in 800m ends at a T-junction in **Llanbedr** by **The Red Lion** on the left and **St. Peter's Church** to its left around the corner with some very old yew trees. *Turn right* at the T-junction gently uphill and in 550m *turn left* at another T-junction with the lane left earlier.
- **For the direct route** to Crickhowell, continue in the same direction along the lane, in 260m ignore a left turn and in another 1.0 kilometre another left turn.

In another 1.5 km you pass on the right the farm track leading up to **The Wern Farm**, your outbound route up to the Crug. In another 240m *fork right* steeply downhill. In 500m pass **The Swan Inn** and in 140m *turn left* along the **A40**. In 150m pass **The Bear Hotel** and continue ahead for the bus stops, or *turn right* by the War Memorial down **High Street** for other tea stops (see the main walk directions for details).

Waun Fach Route (add 11.2 km and 154m ascent)

In 340m, just after another path joins from the left behind, you go over the first minor top on this ridge at 640m above sea, marked by two boundary stones. [See note below] Follow the clear – and mostly good to walk despite some boggy sections – path over another minor top in 600m (at 630m above sea), with no sign of the boundary stone here that is marked on the OS map. The path dips down a little before its long and gentle ascent up to **Mynydd Llysiâu**, bearing left en route after about 800m. In another 600m you pass the low cairn at the top on the right (at 663m above sea). Continue along the elongated top of the Mynydd and dip down through a shallow saddle to in 850m from the cairn pass a clear **five-way path junction**, three of which are public bridleways, by a large cairn on the left. Continue uphill. [The right fork downhill, soon turning hard right back on itself along the flank of the hill, is a **relatively sheltered dropout route** if an incoming bad weather front makes the upcoming exposed ridge walk an unwise choice (take a right fork en route and eventually the bridleway joins the main walk route near Neuadd-fawr farm).]

In 440m fork left further uphill **Pen Trumau** (the paths will re-unite in 500m, but the left one follows the ridge and provides for better views). From this stretch, you get a good appreciation of the stepped structure of the top of Waun Fach (created by the quicker erosion of mudstone layers within the prevalent sandstone). On the left – on a good weather day – you can see as far as to **The Black Mountain/Y Mynydd Du** at the westerly end of the Brecon Beacons. From the point where the two paths re-unite, it is another 1.2 km to the top of **the highest mountain in the Black Mountains** (and the second highest British mountain south of Snowdonia), **Waun Fach** (translating as 'small moor') at 811m above sea. Another path joins from the left (this path leads to and along the northerly scarp of the hills, all the way to Hay Bluff). Turn right with the engineered path and follow it for 2.1 km **between the valleys of the Grwyne Fechan and Fawr** all the way to **Pen y Gadair Fawr** (at 800m above sea, translating as 'top of the large chair'), a subsidiary top of Waun Fach. En route there are good examples of efforts to 're-wet the bogs', by assisting water retention in various ways. The ridge to the left, the other side of the Grywne Fawr valley, separates it from the **Vale of Ewys** (SWC Walk 335 Pandy Inn to Llanvihangel Crucorney).

The Pen is a more remarkable mountain top than Waun Fach and also shows the same stepped appearance. You'll find a large pre-historic cairn on its top plateau, where a couple of paths join from out of the valleys. Veer a little to the left along the third from left path on a bearing of 140°, aiming somewhat to the right of a small plantation and to the left of **Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl** in the distance. In 60m the grass path starts to descend while veering left, but then veers to the right again, now aiming again to the right of the plantation, the first scattered remnants of which you pass in 160m from the bottom of the descent. You follow the right-hand side of what on the OS map looks like a solid large fenced plantation, but is now mostly clear-felled. **The Skirrid/Ysgryd Fawr** mountain is visible dead ahead. In 1.2 km, you pass a small cairn on the right, and in 30m the path bears to the right (165°). In another 1.0 km you reach the smaller plateaued hilltop of **Pen Twyn Mawr** (a top of Pen y Gadair Fawr, at 658m above sea) with its cairn. A little further along, you can see the tops of some trees in the **Mynydd Du Forest** on the left, and you continue with Sugar Loaf now visible ahead, before the grass path veers to the right (185°).

[There are two of about a dozen such stones in this area and some are engraved with the name 'Mrs Macnamara'. Mary and John Macnamara owned Llangoed Hall in the Wye valley north of the Black Mountains. One of the stones is dated 1821 and 1825 when Mary – as a widow - managed the estate with her son Arthur. The other one is engraved with 'Dinas' and dated 1847: these mark the sale of the Llangoed estate to Joseph Bailey of Dinas, the first Lord Glanusk. http://www.ewyaslacy.org.uk/-/Mary-s-Stones-investigating-the-Mrs-Macnamara-Boundary-Stones-in-the-Black-Mountains/1820s/nw_lty_1002]

Continue through heathery ground and in a good 200m *veer to the left* with the path and descend for a stretch. In 600m from the bottom of the descent you pass a small rise to its right-hand side (spot height 610m on the OS map) and curve to the left with the path and in 500m you *bear right* along a car wide track at a T-junction). In 40m by a large cairn on the right, continue in the same direction across a faint path (an unmarked public footpath), with the fenced forest away on the left. In 850m you pass the **Pile of Stones** marked on the OS map (5m away on the right) and in another 300m you continue in the same direction at a crosspaths (another public footpath joins from the left over a stile out of the forest). In 200m ignore a left forking car wide track. In 300m, by a corner of the fenced forest, you pass another **Pile of Stones** on the left (marked on the OS map), and in 380m – just after a corner of the fenced wood – you cross a path by a cairn on the right. In another 90m ignore a path joining from the left (an unmarked public footpath).

In 200m you pass another boundary stone 20m away on the left (marked on the OS map) and you then pass the minor top of **Disgwylfa** on its left-hand side. In 90m a minor path forks up to the right to its nearby ancient cairn. In another 300m, by the far corner of the fenced, more boundary stones are visible 30m away on the left (marked on the OS map). A public bridleway joins out of the forest. In 50m *fork left* and ascend the obvious top of **Crug Mawr**. Its trigpoint is 480m away, and stands at 550m above sea. The **Beacons Way** crosses the top. Continue in the same direction along a clear grass path along the elongated top plateau of the Crug, in 130m ignoring a first right fork. In another 80m, *fork right* along the top and in 120m *fork right again* to start to gently descend. In 90m the gradient increases and in 60m you bear right at a T-junction, In 30m *bear left* at a T-junction (250°). In another 180m *bear left* again at another T-junction (215°), now on the Beacons Way. You gently descend to stay to the right of the subsidiary summit of **Blaen-yr-henbant** and in 280m ignore a left fork. In 900m you follow a wall on the left for 220m. *Turn left* at the far end of the wall (which here has a short piece of fence replacing wall) and in 50m *curve to the right* with the grass path through the bracken-covered slope.

Walk steeply downhill and in 280m *turn left* along the wall at a path T-junction. There is a fenced wood behind the wall on the left and the steep valley on the right. [!] In 340m **by a Beacons Way marker post**, *turn right* downhill ('Ffordd/Road') to a wooden gate with a Beacons Way marker and a 'Permitted Bridleway' sign and go through it into a wood. You have **left the Access Land** and *turn left* downhill through the wood. In 120m ignore a right turn, just before a marker post, and in 50m *curve to the right* with the path and in 40m *bear left* with the path and a marker. In 80m go through a wooden field gate onto a road (ignore the 'Footpath Closed' notice, it refers to the continuation of the BW not on this route). *Turn left* along the valley road, with the **Grwyne Fechan river** below on the right. In 350m a car wide drive joins from the right behind and in 250m you *turn* right over a stile with a footpath signpost. Follow a right-hand pasture boundary (skirt a muddy stretch en route) and in 100m go over a stile into a wood and continue steeply down through it.

In 80m *turn right* at a three-way footpath junction to zigzag further down and in 40m cross the river over **Upper Cwm Bridge**. Re-ascend on the far side along a car wide track (a restricted byway). In 160m *turn hard left* with the track and *then right again* to emerge in the centre of **Llanbedr** village, soon with **St. Peter's Church** on the right (with some very old yew trees) and with **The Red Lion** 30m further along. Continue in the same direction (250°; i.e.: ignore a right turn by the pub) and in 550m *turn left* at a T-junction. In a 1.5 km you pass on the right the farm track leading up to **The Wern Farm**, your outbound route up to the Crug Hywel. In another 240m *fork right* steeply downhill. In 500m pass **The Swan Inn** and in 140m *turn left* along the **A40**. In 150m pass **The Bear Hotel** and continue ahead for the bus stops, or *turn right* by the War Memorial down **High Street** for other tea stops (see the main walk directions for details).