Fforest Fawr Traverse (Craig y Nos to Llwyn-y-celyn)			Fforest Fawr Traverse (Beacons Way Route)		
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Fforest Fawr Traverse (Craig y Nos to Llwyn-y-celyn)

Start: Craig y Nos Bus Stop **Finish:** Llwyn-y-celyn Bus Stop

Craig y Nos bus stop, map reference SN 840 153, is 249 km west of Charing Cross, 209m above sea level and in the Tawe Valley (Cwm Tawe), Llwyn-y-celyn bus stop, map reference SN 972 226, is 15 km north east of Craig y Nos, 10 km south west of Brecon and 326m above sea level. Both are in **Powys, Wales**.

Length: 21.4 km (13.3 mi), of which 520m are on tarmac or concrete.
Cumulative ascent/descent: 947/830m.
For an alternative finish at the Storey Arms Outdoor Centre bus stop, see below **Walk Options.**

Toughness: 8 out of 10

Time: 6 ½ hours walking time.

Transport: Craig y Nos Bus Stop is on line T6 (Swansea- Neath - Ystradgynlais – Brecon), with a roughly hourly service Mon-Sat and 6 on Sundays and Bank Holidays, and a journey time of 40 mins from Neath (and 35 mins from Brecon). The journey time by train from London to Neath is from 2 ½ hours. The Llwyn-y-celyn and Storey Arms bus stops are on lines T4/T14 ([Cardiff - Pontypridd –] Merthyr Tydfil – Brecon [– Newtown]), with between them 12 buses a day Mon-Sat and 6 on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Saturday Walkers' Club: This walk is not recommended as a daywalk from London, but when based in the area for a longer stay. Accommodation is available in Craig y Nos, nearby in Glyntawe or Pen y Cae, and further along the bus lines in Ystradgynlais and Sennybridge or Brecon and Merthyr Tydfil.

OS Landranger Map: 160 (Brecon Beacons)
OS Explorer Map: OL12 (Brecon Beacons National Park)

Walk Notes:
This is a traverse of the dramatic massif of the Fforest Fawr ('The Great Forest', with 'Forest' here denoting a former Royal Hunting Ground, rather than an area full of trees), one of the least frequented parts of the Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park, linking the Black Mountain to the west with the Central Brecon Beacons to the east. From the Craig y Nos Country Park, an idyllic spot on the banks of the Afon Tawe (River Tawe) with its Victorian Gothic building, the route follows the Tawe Valley for a short stretch to rise steeply up a hillside to the Penwyllt Quarry, from where you follow old tramways up through the limestone terrain of the Ogon Ffynnon Ddu NNR, a large area of shakeholes and caves. You rise further along a good track and then trackless on up the slopes of Fan Gyhirych to its summit, the highest point of the walk, from where you have stupendous views of the surrounding upland moorland, the giants of the Beacons, the Black Mountain and of the Tawe Valley. Follow a steep glacial escarpment above the Senni Valley down to a saddle and ascend Fan Nedd and then Fan Dringarth, from where the route turns to another dramatic glacial bowl in the Craig Cerrig-Gleisiad a Fan Frynych NNR for a descent to the A470.
An alternative finish at the Storey Arms Centre bus stop follows the Craig Cerrig-Gleisiad in a southerly direction and then the Craig y Fro escarpment high above the A470.

Walk Options:
An alternative route through the high plateau (adds 0.9 km, cuts 140m ascent) follows the Beacons Way between Penwyllt Quarry and Fan Dringarth, through the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu National Nature Reserve of Shake Holes and caves and along Sarn Helen (an old Roman Road), then past an ancient standing stone (Maen Madoc) and an old Roman Camp.
A 1 km out-and-back from the main route leads to **Maen Llia**, an impressive Bronze Age standing stone.
The main walks' finish links up with one of the alternative starts for **SWC 278** (Brecon Beacons Horseshoe).
An alternative finish at the Storey Arms Outdoor Centre bus stop adds 800m, cuts out the very steep descent of the main route and **links up with** the start of **SWC 85** (Pen Y Fan and Corn Du from Storey Arms) and with one of the other alternative starts for **SWC 278** (Brecon Beacons Horseshoe).

Lunch:
Picnic

Tea (details last updated 20/10/2023)
YHA Brecon Beacons Llwyn y celyn, *Libanus, Brecon, Powys, LD3 8NH (0345 371 9029, https://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/brecon-beacons)*. The Youth Hostel is located 200m down a lane opposite the bus stop at the walk's finish and its reception is open and sells hot and cold drinks daily 07.30-10.00 and 17.00-22.00. It is licensed. Meals are served in the evening.

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.*

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Notes:

Craig y Nos Castle and Country Park

Craig y Nos Castle ('rock of the night' in English) is a Victorian-Gothic country house built on parkland beside the River Tawe in the upper Swansea Valley, it is located on the southern edge of Fforest Fawr. The main building was built (of grey limestone) in 1841–43 by Captain Rice Davies Powell, who became a county magistrate and a High Sheriff of Brecknock. The opera singer Adelina Patti purchased the castle and surrounding park land in 1878 to develop it (using pink sandstone) as her own private estate. After Patti's death in 1919 it was reconstructed as a sanatorium to combat tuberculosis. After a period as a hospital for the elderly, part of the complex is now used as a boutique hotel, catering, conferencing and entertainment venue. http://www.craigynoscastle.com/

The castle grounds are surrounded by a designated Country Park, which is part of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. https://www.breconbeacons.org/discover/easier-access/attractions/craig-y-nos-country-park

Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park

Home to spectacular landscapes, a rich variety of wildlife and fascinating cultural and geological heritage, the Bannau Brycheiniog (ˈbanaɨ̯ brəˈχəɨ̯nɨɔg') National Park in Mid-Wales boasts a magnificent array of Old Red Sandstone peaks, open moorland and green valleys, spanning 1,344 km^2 (520 mi^2). Pen y Fan within the Central Beacons is perhaps the best-known summit but there are many others in the five distinct parts of the National Park (Black Mountain (Y Mynydd Du) in the far west, Fforest Fawr, Central Beacons, the Llangattock and Llangynidr Hills, and the Black Mountains to the east). https://bannau.wales/

Cwm Tawe/Afon Tawe

The River/Afon Tawe flows for some 48 km (30 mi) from its source below Moel Feity in the Old Red Sandstone hills of the western Brecon Beacons to the Bristol Channel at Swansea. Its main tributaries are the right bank Upper and Lower Clydach Rivers and the Afon Twrch. The Tawe Valley (*Cwm Tawe* in Welsh) is more commonly known as the Swansea Valley. The lower part of the valley was intensely industrialised in the 18th and 19th centuries and was especially impacted by metal refining and working. The quality of the river has now greatly improved. Large salmon swim up the river to spawn, whilst trout are in abundance.

Beacons Way/Ffordd-y-Bannau

The Beacons Way is a 159 km (99 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.

Shake Holes and Swallow Holes

Shakeholes (or sinkholes or dolines) are a depression or hole in the ground caused by some form of collapse of the surface layer. Some are caused by karst processes, for example, the chemical dissolution of carbonate rocks or suffusion processes. They tend to occur in karst landscapes, which can have up to thousands of sinkholes within a small area, giving the landscape a pock-marked appearance. These sinkholes can drain all the water, so that there are only subterranean rivers in these areas.

Maen Llia/Maen Madoc

Maen Llia is a standing stone which sits on moorland. The stone is from Old Red Sandstone and measures 3.7m high by 2.8m wide by 0.6m. It is roughly diamond-shaped and is partly moss-covered. Its age and original purpose are unknown though it is thought to date from the Bronze Age. There is a low heather-covered henge nearby. Another significant standing stone, Maen Madoc, lies just off the old Roman road known as Sarn Helen about 3.5 km to the south. Whilst this latter stone bears legible writing, there is none visible on Maen Llia though some faint lettering was reported still to be visible in the mid-20th century. Legend has it that the stone goes down to the river– the Afon Llia– to drink on occasion. This tale is likely to be an allusion to the fact that its shadow is cast as far as the river when the sun is low.

Sarn Helen

Sarn Helen refers to several stretches of Roman road. The 260 km (160 mi) route, which follows a meandering course through central Wales, connects Aberconwy in the north with Carmarthen in the west. Academic debate continues as to the precise course of the Roman road. Many sections are now used by the modern road network while other parts are still traceable. However, there are sizeable stretches that have been lost and are unidentifiable. The route is named after Saint Elen of Caernarfon, a Celtic saint. She is said to have ordered the construction of roads in Wales during the late 4th century. Alternatively, it may be a corruption of the Welsh Sarn y Leng ('Causeway of the Legions').

Craig Cerrig-Gleisiad a Fan Frynych National Nature Reserve

This upland reserve lies in the heart of the Brecon Beacons National Park and dramatically illustrates the glacial processes that carved the landscape around 20,000 years ago, creating steep sided crags, sharp escarpments and huge lumpy moraines and hillocks that are clearly visible in the bowl beneath Craig Cerrig-Gleisiad's dark crags. The latter are the tide marks left by the melting ice. The area also contains the remains of an Iron Age village and a Roman road and tollhouse.

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WALK DIRECTIONS

Alight from the bus in Craig y Nos by **Craig y Nos Castle** in the **Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park** and walk in a southerly direction along the road's pavement (i.e.: against the direction of travel if coming up from Swansea/Neath, but in the direction of travel if coming down from Brecon). In 70m you pass **Pentre Riding Stables** (and B&B) on the opposite side of the road. In another 60m *turn left* at a corner of the wall on your left, following a signposted footpath through a double wooden field gate and in 20m through a wooden gate then along a gravel path. In 50m go through a metal kissing gate and *turn right* along a railed stepped path zig-zagging down into the **Cwm Tawe** (the Tawe – or Swansea – Valley) and in 100m – at the bottom of the steps – you emerge into a grassy area.

Turn right to a lime-washed timber cottage (part of the Craig y Nos estate and built in the 1880s for the then owner, the opera singer **Adelina Patti**). But **[!]** then turn *away from the cottage* across the grassy area to the left (35°). In 70m you reach the banks of the **Afon Tawe** (Tawe River) by a T-junction with a gravel path and *turn left* along it. In 90m *turn right* to cross the river over a two-railed metal footbridge (notice Adelina Patti's initials in the middle of the wrought iron railing (in red)). *Turn right* on the other side of the bridge and follow a gravel path along the river. Ignore a left forking path in 80m and in another 120m *turn left* with the path over a two-railed plank bridge and *turn right* at a T-junction of paths (to soon *turn left* with the path).

In 40m again *turn left* with the path along a lake. In 50m ignore a stepped path down to the left. In 125m *fork right* along a railed boardwalk and in 50m – where the boardwalk ends – continue along a winding path through a wooded area. In 70m you cross a stream on a plank bridge and in 20m *turn left* over a ditch to emerge back on the path at a T-junction. *Turn right* along the path and in 30m *bear right* at a T-junction with another – more prominent – path with the river again on your left. In 50m, by a ford on the left and 20m before a high two-railed bridge over the river, you **[!]** *turn right* at a three-way junction of paths with a **Beacons Way** marker post, uphill into a wood. In 30m you walk through a wooden gate at a T-junction of paths with a Beacons Way marker on the gate. *Turn right* along the bridleway.

You walk initially between fences and trees, then have a dry-stone wall on the left with a field visible behind the trees and on the right the **Tawe River** at times audible below and the **Cribarth** mountain plateau visible on the opposite side of the valley. In 600m you pass a house on your left (**Rhongyr-uchaf** on the OS map) and in 50m walk through a metal field gate. In 25m *turn right* along a tarmac lane leading away from the house and in 60m**[!]** *turn left* off the right turning lane through a gap to the left of a metal field gate to follow the Beacons Way along a signposted bridleway ('Penwyllt') through an open area. In 40m you enter trees and follow a steep narrow path uphill (the path turns to a streambed after heavy rain). You go through a stony section and through a metal gate at the end of it, and eventually emerge from the trees and continue along a dry-stone wall on the left, bending right with the path.

After 650m of ascending the hillside, you walk through a wooden gate onto a tarmac lane by a bridleway signpost and continue uphill along the lane. In 75m ignore a right turning signposted footpath through a metal field gate and in 250m at the top of the rise enter **Penwyllt Quarry** through a metal kissing gate to the right of a cattle grid and continue along a gravel track (notice the **Craig-y-Nos Station** on the Neath – Brecon railway on the right; the station building was funded by Adelina Patti). In 40m *turn right* with the track along a barbed wire fence on the left. In 40m ignore a double metal field gate on the left. In 160m *turn left* with the fence but then turn right with the track to stay to the right of a large car park, aiming for some cottages ahead (although there is **an interesting info panel** about the Ogof Ffynon Dhu NNR away on the left).

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The cottages belong to the **South Wales Caving Club**, standing on the boundary of the **Ogon Ffynnon Ddu National Nature Reserve**, a large area of shake holes and caves, containing **the deepest caves in Britain**. About 30m before a car gate into the grounds of the caving club, *turn left* towards a wooden kissing gate to the left of a wooden field gate and in 30m go through the gate by a post inscribed 'Taxi Point 4/Pwynt Tacsi 4' and with a Beacons Way marker. In 10m pass a marker post with a violet marker and follow a grassy track towards a limestone crag ahead (due E). In 200m ignore a right fork towards the limestone crag and *curve left* along the more prominent path, steadily uphill towards a solitary hawthorn tree ahead on the ridge (40°) and in 75m go through a gap in a dry-stone wall and a metal gate in a fence line beyond it by an info panel on the NNR. You are now in **Access Land**. In 10m pass a marker post and in 80m you *bear right* with the path between earth banks with another one, still uphill, and in 140m reach a **Dismantled Tramway** by a violet marker post.

Here you have a choice:

For the Alternative Route following the Beacons Way, you continue in the same direction gently uphill along a broad grassy path on a bearing of 70° and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Beacons Way Route**.

For the main walk, you *turn left* along the tramway (30°), **leaving the Beacons Way**, towards a gash in a limestone crag with that solitary tree to the left of it. You will notice the many sleepers of the tramway still in place on this stretch. In 250m walk through the gash and in 200m the track levels out temporarily, where you have good views on the left of **The Black Mountain** (Y Mynydd Du) and the **Cwm Haffes** gorge (SWC 279 The Black Mountain (Y Mynydd Du) from Glyntawe), as well as the **Cribarth Plateau** and the **Tawe Valley** (Cwm Tawe) (SWC 280 Henrhyd Waterfalls (Sgwd Henrhyd) from Craig y Nos). You continue along the elevated tramway past a disused quarry on your right and then some remnants of a red brick structure. Ahead you get glimpses of the highest point of the walk, **Fan Gyhirych**, and then walk through a metal kissing gate (with a **Taith Cambria/Cambrian Way** marker) to the left of a metal field gate and continue in the same direction.

As along the previous stretch, the location of the sleepers on the tramway is still clearly visible, and they are a reminder of how busy the area would have been with people toiling away in the quarries. You have a plantation ahead some way away and when the tramway curves to the right, after 50m you get full views of Fan Gyhirych again, sloping down to the right. In about 1 km the track veers to the right a little. In another 140m or so you **[!]** *fork left* (60°) at a clear junction along a descending car wide track, where the tramway continues towards an area of large **Shake Holes**. In 110m *turn left* at a T-junction with a car wide gravel track and in 40m cross the **Nant Byfre** on it. In 150m you *turn right* with the track, gently uphill, ignoring a track ahead towards a metal field gate 50m away. The track curves up around an unnamed top on the left, with the valley of the **Byfre Fechan** down on the right (this stream rises on Fan Gyhirych and Fan Fraith and flows into one of the shake holes on the right below, the **Pwyll Byfre** (on the OS map), which is therefore a **Swallow Hole**).

In about 1.4 km, by a metal field gate over a cattle grid in a fence line, you get superb views of **The Black Mountain's Fan Hir escarpment** rising on the left (300°). Go over a stile to the left of the field gate and continue along the track. In 550m (at 675m above sea level), where the track turns right and is nearly levelling out, and with first views of **Pen y Fan and Corn Du** ahead on the right, **you [!] *turn up left*** along a narrow grassy path up the slope of **Fan Gyhirych**. [This is where a drainer crosses the track, which channels a ditch on the left across to the valley on the right, and 180m **before** crossing the Upper Byfre Fechan stream.] Continue up the hill in a broadly northerly direction and in you 600m reach **the trig point** at the summit, at 725m above sea level

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the highest point of the walk. Inscriptions on two of the sides read '**Yma o hyd**' and '**Cymru am byth**', which translate as 'We are still here' and 'Long Live Wales', phrases used in songs by supporters of the Welsh Football and Rugby teams respectively.

Continue in the same direction for 80m **to a large cairn** for better views though. You have **The Black Mountain** and the **Cribarth Plateau** on the left with **Swansea Bay** in the far distance at the bottom of the Tawe Valley (210°), the **Cray Reservoir** down below in the valley with **Sennybridge** village far beyond it and **Pen y Fan and Corn Du** away on the right. From the cairn *turn right* from the previous direction (95°) along a distinct grassy path and in 250m *turn right* along the rim of the escarpment (ignore a right fork just before the rim), with a dramatic bowl-shaped glacial valley on the left, forested at the bottom, and running towards the **Cray Reservoir**. [You have Fan Fraith dead ahead, and Fan Nedd, Fan Dringarth and Fan Frynych hills away to the left]. The path curves to the left with the rim and then steadies on a bearing of 60°, continuing at a little distance from the rim down the broad boggy ridge.

You can see the car wide track you were on earlier away on the right and/or ahead and eventually the path fords the **Nant Gihirych**, 1.5 km after joining the rim. In another 140m you join the car wide track at a T-junction by a rusty metal field gate over a cattle grid and some sheep pens to the right of those. Cross the track and go over a stile opposite with a Taith Cambria marker (to the right of the sheep pens). The aim now is the clear path that ascends **Fan Nedd** towards a cairn on the top of the rise on the other side of this valley. To get to that path you have a choice, but in both cases **watch out for deep mud holes** en route: either head downhill through the spongy ground on a bearing of 105° towards where a farm track from the left runs through a dry-stone wall, or initially follow a path along a fence on the left and in 500m by a double metal field gate on the left *turn right* along the farm track to that point.

In either case go through the part-collapsed dry-stone wall on the farm track and ignore a first path turning left off it on a bearing of 80° towards a wall on the left, but *do turn left* along a second path (110°) which in 20m *veers left* and continue through the soggy bottom of the drop and then start the long ascent up **Fan Nedd** (120°). Ignore ways off and stay on broadly the same bearing until in 1.25 km you reach the man-high cairn on the top of the rise at 652m above sea level. The hill's summit and trig point are 400m away to the right though, at 663m above sea level. In the valley below, you can see **Maen Llia**, a very impressive ancient standing stone in a field, just beyond the valley road, on 65°. *Turn left* from the cairn (30°) along a clear path towards a dry-stone wall corner 600m away and then descend further, with the dry-stone wall on the left. In another 650m you go over a stile in the lower fence corner of the field onto the Ystradfellte/ Heol Senni & Brecon road.

Maen Llia is about 500m off to the right along the road. But cross the road a little to the left to continue through a grassy boggy area to the left of a dry-stone wall. In 180m it is advisable to curve clear to the left around a particularly boggy stretch (an infant tributary stream to the Senni river) and after that, where the dry-stone wall turns hard right, you *veer right* uphill (due E) up the **Bryn Melyn** (hill). The terrain levels out for a while, and in another 300m you cross a car wide track (**Sarn Helen**, a Roman Road, on the left leading to **Y Gaer**, a Roman Fort near Brecon [see SWC 306 Brecon Circular]). In 400m continue ascending up the ridge ahead (**Fan Dringarth**). In 750m you reach the sharp drop of the escarpment by a rockface on the right facing the valley ahead, at 607m above sea level, with **Fan Fawr** on the other side of the valley. Fan Dringarth's and **Fan Llia**'s summits are off to the right along the ridge. *Turn left* along the ridge.

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***)** The path veers left a little and continues in a northerly direction. Ignore all ways off for 1.3 km and then, at a minor summit (point 570m on the OS map), *bear half right* along a broader path (50°), gently descending. In 450m you cross some deep groughs (an infant stream) and in another 150m the path forks.

Here you have a choice:

For a finish at the Storey Arms Centre bus stop, you *fork right* further up the slope of **Craig Cerrig-gleisiad** and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Storey Arms Ending**.

For the main walk finish at the Llwyn-y-celyn Youth Hostel bus stop, you *take the left fork* (30°) towards a wire fence and a steep escarpment 250 meters away on the left. Continue with a fence and the steep drop of the escarpment (**Craig Cwm-du**) on the left through a little dip. The **Nant Cwm-du** (stream) runs along the bottom away to the left towards the **Afon Senni**. You reach a plateau and continue straight ahead with views of **Pen y Fan and Corn Du** directly ahead, and with **The Black Mountains/ Y Mynyddoedd Duon** in the distance to the left of them (in good weather). After 1.3 km along the fence, you reach a path and fence T-junction by a sign for the **Craig Cerrif Gleisiad a Fan Frynych National Nature Reserve** on the left, with a steep drop directly ahead and by a couple of stiles (one ahead and one to the left).

Turn left to cross the stile into the Nature Reserve (**leaving the Beacons Way** for a last time, which heads off to the right) and continue gently uphill, now with a fence and a drop to your right. You have **Fan Frynych** ahead (its summit stands at 629m above sea level) and can see **Brecon** down in the valley below far away to the right. In 250m *turn right* through a wooden kissing gate and head to the right, gently downhill on a clear path (80°) past a brown wooden post. In 20m follow this path around to the left as it contours along the side of a steep slope (20°). In a further 30m you pass a grey wooden post on the right to continue following the path along the hillside (ignoring a right fork downhill). In 250m at a well-made cairn and a grey wooden post with blue arrows, you *turn sharply right* to continue steeply downhill on a clear grassy path. You will pass a few more marker posts with some dramatic cliffs ahead and around to the right (the **Craig Cerrig-gleisiad**, result of massive post-glacial rockslides).

In 400m, after the path has levelled out for a while, *fork right* as asked for by a low sign, ignoring a faint path heading up a small hill on the left, point 464m on the OS map and **a moraine**, left behind by a melting glacier. The path eventually makes a gradual curve to the left. In 550m you go through a stepped wall gap to the right of a wooden gate to continue in the same direction and in another 340m go through a metal gate into a lay-by on the **A470** to *turn left* along its grassy margin. In 300m on the right you reach the **bus stop for services to Merthyr Tidfyl and Cardiff, and in another 130m on the left the one for services to Brecon**. If you have time, cross the road and pay a visit to the **Llwyn-y-Celyn YHA Brecon Beacons** 200m down the track 30m before the bus stop. They are open to the public and have a small bar area inside and some tables outside **for a post walk beverage or snack**.

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Beacons Way Route (add 1.0 km but cut 146m ascent)

In 70m *bear right* with the path (100°) and in 40m *bend left* with it. In 190m *bear right* by remnants of a small drystone wall enclosure. In 100m – near at the top of the rise – you *turn left* along a car wide grassy track (40°). In 120m go through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate into a fenced area and continue uphill along the fence on the right with some limestone pavement on the left. In 220m you pass an info panel about the limestone pavement and in 400m leave the enclosure through another wooden kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate. You *bear left* along a grass path – briefly on the level – and in 40m *bear right* to continue in the previous direction (50°), with views (weather permitting) on the left of **The Black Mountain** and the **Cwm Haffes** gorge (SWC 279 - The Black Mountain/Y Mynydd Du), as well as the **Cribarth Plateau** and the **Tawe Valley** (SWC 280 - Henrhyd Waterfalls/Sgwd Henrhyd).

On the right you pass several shake holes, while gently rising with the path for another 250m. From the top, to the left you can see the highest point of the main walk, **Fan Gyhirych**, and half left ahead **Fan Nedd**, also crossed on the main walk. Continue along the clear grassy path, on the level for a while, and in 190m pass a metal post, on the brow of this rise. In another 40m the path curves to the right to a gap in a fence line with a Beacons Way marker (a missing field gate) and in another 70m you *turn left* with the path through boggy ground. In 60m *bear right* through a dip and in 430m the path starts to descend, opening up views to a lightly wooded area in the distance. The route will lead through it before ascending Fan Llia. On a bearing of 65° (on a clear day) you can see **Corn Du** in the Central Beacons. In 70m you pass a hole on the left, covered with wooden planks, possibly a cave entrance or former mine shaft, and in 150m go through a wooden kissing gate in a fence line to leave the **Ogon Ffynnon Ddu National Nature Reserve** through a drystone wall by an info panel.

You now follow a clear path through heathery, partly boggy ground mostly gently downhill into the valley of the **Nedd Fechan**. You pass a few former agricultural structures: in 400m a large walled enclosure on the left (for 100m, where you pass a yellow-topped pole); in 250m a smaller walled structure away to the right; in 140m pass a marker post at the top of a small rise and 180m another enclosure close by on the right with a large walled structure visible ahead away to the left; you pass another yellow-topped pole, when level with the near corner of the walled enclosure on the left and in 150m *bear right* with the path. In another 130m pass a large walled structure close by on the right and in 100m pass its far corner. In 800m you reach some large ruined farm buildings and walls on the left by a two-way signpost (the signs are broken off though, at time of writing). The path veers to the right then curves to the left and in 300m from the two-way signpost you *turn right* at a T-junction with a car wide gravel track. You can see **Sarn Helen**, an old **Roman Road**, on the opposite side of the valley, bearing up the left along the flank of the hill and through a wood, in a straight line.

In 450m where the track bears to the right to a metal field gate, **[!]** you continue for 20m to go over a stile with a Beacons Way marker, to the right of a rusty metal field gate (**leaving the Access Land**), and then ignore a right turning car wide gravel track (a byway, by a broken signpost) and in 10m go through a metal field gate in a drystone wall. *Bear left* with the car wide track to the right of a fenced plantation, ignoring the signposted footpath down to **Blaen-nedd-Isaf**. In 350m ignore a car wide track turning hard right to the farm below (a Public Way) and in 15m *fork right* with the track across a stream, ignoring the track ahead fording the stream. In 120m go through a metal field gate. In 100m you reach a ford through the **Nedd Fechan River** by a two-railed footbridge on the right and a very nice **picnic spot** on its bank on the left.

On the other side of the bridge *turn left* down a ramp and right through a metal field gate with a Beacons Way marker and cross a farm track to follow markers up another

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car wide track away from the river, gently uphill – with **a small waterfall** visible below to the left on a Nedd Fechan tributary. In In 180m go through a weighted metal field gate, with the track now running to the left of **Access Land**. You curve left then right and left again to continue in a straight line for 2.0 km along **Sarn Helen**, with only one right veer at the highest point diverting from the straight direction. **In more detail**: new saplings have been planted most everywhere in this area and in 250m you have a fenced plantation with saplings on the left; in 650m you pass **Maen Madoc**, an inscribed standing stone just to the right, 50m before the highest point of this stretch and in 30m the track continues over a cattle grid (into Access Land) and then past a wood on the left for 500m (with saplings on the right). In another 300m go through a metal gate to the right of a cattle grid and ignore a left forking track uphill and in 120m go through a gap to the left of a metal field gate. In 20m *turn hard right* along a road.

In 140m *turn left* over a stile at a fence corner and follow a path bearing right then curving left to continue downhill through the tussocky slope towards a car park on a gravel lane at the bottom of the drop, leading on the left to a two-railed bridge over the river (the exact route seems to change over time based on usage). By the car park, there are some info panels and a map and you cross the **Afon Llia** on a wide two-railed bridge. On the other side, immediately *turn left* along a grass path. In 80m *turn right* uphill with the path and in another 40m *turn left* through a metal gate with a Beacons Way marker on the reverse. You go over a railed footbridge across a stream and – with **a small waterfall** visible below to the left on an Afon Llia tributary – *bear right* uphill on a broad bearing of 40° along a not always obvious path up through the rolling moorland with plenty of stream crossings to the ridge of **Fan Llia**. This is initially hard work, but higher up the path is clearer and mostly grassy.

In 1.7 km you **pass a large cairn on the ridge** at 614m above sea level, where the gradient eases considerably and you have the **Ystradfellte Reservoir** down below on the right in the **Cwm Dringarth** and **Fan Fawr** rising on the other side of the valley. In 100m you pass a couple of small lochs and in 430m go over **the top of Fan Llia** at 632m above sea level and continue along the clear ridge path (5°). Half left ahead you can see the scenic **Cwm Senni** dropping down from the Fforest Fawr all the way to **Sennybridge** on the **River Usk**. In 700m go over the top of **Fan Dringarth** at 617m above sea level and in another 250m you a short stretch where the sharp drop of the escarpment is just to the right of the path, by a rockface back on the right, at a height of 607m above sea level. The main walk comes up the slope from the left.

Continue in the same direction and pick up the text above at the asterisk ***)**.

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Storey Arms Ending (add 0.8 km, but cut out a very steep descent)

In 400m the gradient eases and you continue in the same direction, more gently ascending. In 400m or so (at 600m above sea level) you reach a cairn (the 'Pile of Stones' on the OS map) and *fork right* (50°), briefly leaving the Beacons Way (which forks left on 30°). In 70m you *veer right* (due E) and follow the path to the peak of **Craig Cerrig-gleisiad** 650m away. You have **Fan Fawr** away to the right. From the cairn on the peak, at 629m above sea level, there is a barbed wire fence line visible 50m ahead with dry-stone wall remnants and the steep drop of the escarpment beyond it. The **Beacons Way** runs along the fence. Drop down to the fence and *turn right* along it. In 110m at the fence corner, *bear left* with the fence and with Beacons Way markers on a fence post. In 150m *bear left* with the fence and some more markers.

[!] In 70m where the fence veers to the left, you continue ahead along a faint then clear grass path which in 200m *turns right* to contour the steep grassy hill slope, initially at a height of 570m above sea level and on a bearing of 160°. You have views ahead of the large car parks on the A470 by the **Storey Arms Centre**, to the right of a forested area. The path continues with the drop to your left (**Gorllwm** on the OS map) and you follow this for 2.5 km. Cross several streams (tributaries of the **Afon Tarell**, which joins the Usk in Brecon), some continuing their drop down the **Craig y Fro** as **waterfalls**, and eventually the path descends to converge with the A470 and you walk through a kissing gate and over a boardwalk across some muddy ground into the car park.

The **bus stop for services to Brecon** is this side of the road, the **one for services to Merthyr Tidfyl** (trains and connecting buses to Cardiff) opposite.

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