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| Llangynidr to Bwlch or Circular  |  |                            |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> walk check   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check                                 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> September 2019  | 05 <sup>th</sup> August 2022                               |                            |
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| This walk has been checked as noted above, however the publisher cannot accept responsibility for any problems encountered by readers.   |  |                            |

## Llangynidr to Bwlch or Circular

**Start:** Llangynidr Village Hall Bus Stop      **Finish:** Bwlch All Saints or Llangynidr Village Hall Bus Stops.

Llangynidr Village Hall Bus Stop, map reference SO 155 196, is 14 km south east of Brecon, 218 km west northwest of Charing Cross and 123m above sea level. Bwlch All Saints Bus Stop, map reference SO 148 220, is 2.5 km north of Llangynidr and 223m above sea level. Both are in **Powys, Wales**.

**Length:** 21.9 km (13.6 mi).

**Cumulative ascent/descent:** 781/685m. For a shorter walk, see *below* **Walk Options**.

**Toughness:** 7 out of 10

**Time:** 6 ½ hours walking time.

**Transport:** Llangynidr is served by line 43 (Abergavenny – Brecon) with 4-5 buses a day Mon-Sat only. Bwlch is served by line X43 (Abergavenny – Brecon) with 7-8 buses a day Mon-Sat and 5 on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

**Saturday Walkers' Club:** This walk can be done as a daywalk from London, especially if you have motorised transport, but also if taking a train to Abergavenny to connect to above bus services.

**OS Landranger Map:** 160 (Brecon Beacons) and 161 (The Black Mountains)

**OS Explorer Map:** OL12 (Brecon Beacons NP West) and OL 13 (Brecon Beacons NP East)

### Walk Notes:

This walk leads from Llangynidr village up along a tight valley, the Cwm Cleisfer, and onto the open limestone uplands of Mynydd Llangynidr, initially along a lane then through pastures, in the latter stages with some difficult-to-find-and-negotiate paths near the transition to the open moorland. Mynydd Llangynidr is a basically treeless undulating mountain of open limestone uplands with numerous depressions, shake holes and pits, as well as many ancient cairns (burial mounds) dotted across the moorland. You climb to the source of the Cleisfer, a perfect picnic spot, and then across the scarred landscape (map and compass come in handy) to the Chartist Cave, arguably one of Wales' most important historic monuments. The Chartists were a 19<sup>th</sup> century working-class movement for political reform and this cave is where the local group met and stored weapons before the Newport Rising of 1839.

You cross the top of the moorland hill and descend to a remote road by an active limestone quarry and pick up a former tramway for transporting goods to the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal to skirt around the rim of the picturesque wooded Crawnon Valley. A stretch along a ridge high above the Talybont Reservoir is followed by a descent through lush pastures back to Llangynidr. To complete the walk, cross the Usk River and ascend to Bwlch on the other side for a return bus.

A detour near the end leads across Tor y Foel, one of the best mid-level viewpoints in the Brecon Beacons. A variation close to the end follows a narrow path closely along the Usk River for a very bucolic stretch.

## Walk Options:

**A start from Bwlch** (with its more frequent bus service) is possible. But as – at the moment – the service to Llangynidr is sufficiently good in the morning, this is unlikely to be needed, and thus is a map-led option.

**A Variation on the Cwm Cleisfer route** circumvents an often-overgrown stretch with difficult route finding.

**An Extension near the end** over the Tor y Foel hill adds 250m and 113m ascent.

**A Variation of the return route** through Llangynidr leads along the rivers Cwannon and Usk to Llangynidr Bridge. This is flood-prone when The Usk is in spate and has some steep and rocky bits.

**A finish at the start point in Llangynidr** is described but only makes sense if you arrived by car, as the last buses through the village will have left by the time you finish the walk.

## Lunch off route (details last updated 19/08/2022)

**Tafarn-Ty-Uchaf (Top House)** Trefil Road, *Trefil, Tredegar, Blaneau Gwent, NP22 4HG (01495 717 690)*. The Top House is located 1.8 km off route, after 9.3 km/5.8 mi of walking.

## Tea (details last updated 19/08/2022)

**The Coach & Horses Inn** Cwm Cwannon Road, *Llangynidr, Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1LS (01874 730 245, <http://www.thecoachandhorsesinn.com/>)*. Open all day every day. Food served 12.00-14.00 (-15.00 Sun) and 18.00-21.00. Located 3.1 km from the end of the walk.

**The Walnut Tree Café Bar** Coed-Yr-Ynysh Road, *Llangynidr, Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1NA (01874 730 309)*. Open to 17.00 Mon-Sat and to 16.30 Sun. Located 2.2 km from the end of the walk.

**The Red Lion** Duffryn Road, *Llangynidr, Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1NT (01874 730 223, <https://theredlion1.vpweb.co.uk/>)*. Located near the start of the walk, i.e.: at the other end of the village from the end of the walk route. Open all day Tue-Wed and Fri-Sun, also from 16.00 on Thu. Food served 12.00-14.30 (not Thu) and 18.00-21.00.

**The New Inn** Bwlch, *Brecon, Powys, LD3 7RQ (01874 730 215, <https://www.beaconsbackpackers.co.uk/>)*. Open 17.00-23.00 Wed-Fri, 14.00-23.00 Sat & 12.00-21.00 Sun. Dinner served Wed-Sat 18.00-21.00.

## 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:

### Usk Valley/River Usk (Afon Wysg)

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

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

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

### Brecon Beacons National Park

Home to spectacular landscapes, a rich variety of wildlife and fascinating cultural and geological heritage, the Brecon Beacons National Park in Mid-Wales boasts a magnificent array of Old Red Sandstone peaks, open moorland and green valleys, spanning 1,344 km<sup>2</sup> (520 mi<sup>2</sup>). 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).

### 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.

### Mynydd Llangynidr

Mynydd Llangynidr is a basically treeless undulating mountain of open limestone uplands lying between 420m and 557m above sea (at Garn Fawr). It is formed from a layer cake of sandstones and limestones which dip gently southwards into the South Wales Coalfield basin. Broken cliffs of Carboniferous Limestone occur along the northern edges and this rock underlies the entire mountain. Consequently, there are numerous depressions, sink holes and pits.

It is located largely in the county of Powys, but its southern slopes extend into the County Boroughs of Blaneau Gwent and Caerphilly. To the north the hill overlooks Llangynidr village and the valleys of Dyffryn Cwannon and Cwm Claisfer, themselves tributary valleys of the Usk, and to the south the valleys of the Sirhowy and Ebbw Rivers, an early centre of the Industrial Revolution in Wales. Mynydd Llangynidr is a child summit of Cefn yr Ystrad to its south west, and to the east it merges with Mynydd Llangatwg.

There are two large limestone quarries on the hill, one active (Trefil), one not (Blaen Onneu), as well as many smaller and older workings for limestone, sandstone or ironworks.

Numerous ancient cairns (burial mounds) are dotted across the moorland, the most notable of which are Garn Fawr ('big cairn') and Carn Caws ('cheese cairn'). Other prehistoric cairns and a stone row together with evidence of house platforms occur towards its northern edge.

### Shake Holes, Swallow Holes and Limestone Pavements

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.

### Chartist Cave and Movement

Arguably one of Wales' most important historic monuments, this cave is where workers who were involved in the Newport Rising of the 4<sup>th</sup> November 1839 hid, met in secret and plotted the Chartist Uprising – in effect the beginning of democracy for all (men) in Britain and their numbers and fury an inspiration for Karl Marx to write the Communist Manifesto and later Das Kapital.

The cave entrance itself is an earth-topped broad arch formed of millstone grit and easily missed. A passage drops to a lower chamber with many passages leading off from it and the known length of the cave is 440m but it is likely part of a much more extensive cave system under the moors of the Mynydd Llangynidr.

The Newport Uprising was the last large-scale armed rebellion against authority in Great Britain, when almost 10,000 Chartist sympathisers, led by John Frost, marched on Newport, Monmouthshire. The men, including

many coal-miners, most with home-made arms, were intent on liberating fellow Chartists who were reported to have been taken prisoner in the town's Westgate Hotel. About 22 demonstrators were killed when troops ensconced in the hotel opened fire on them. The leaders of the rebellion were convicted of high treason and sentenced to transportation for life (like the Tolpuddle Martyrs around the same time). Testimonies suggest that Newport was to have been the signal for a national uprising.

Chartism was a working-class movement for political reform in Britain that existed from 1838 to 1857, with particular strongholds of support in Northern England, the East Midlands, the Potteries, the Black Country, and the South Wales Valleys. It took its name from the People's Charter of 1838 which called for six reforms to make the political system more democratic, the first five of which have now become law: a vote for every man over 21 years of age, a secret ballot (instead of public voting), MPs to not have to own property, MPs to be paid, equal voting constituencies, an election every year (as a check to bribery and intimidation).

### **Aneurin Bevan Heritage Trail**

Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan, now famed as the founder of the NHS, was the Labour MP for Ebbw Vale and was born and lived in nearby Tredegar. He often walked the foothills and moorlands around the area to rehearse his speeches and recite passages of literature to overcome his speech impediment. His vision for an NHS was inspired by the Tredegar Workmen's Medical Aid Society, a medical health scheme which covered nearly all of Tredegar's residents through weekly subscriptions. So, as minister for health, he was famously reported as saying that he wanted to "Tredegarise" the entire population of Britain.

### **Bryn Oer Tramway/Brinore Tramroad**

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

### **Beacons Way**

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

### **Bwlch**

Bwlch ('pass' in Welsh) is a small settlement strung out along the A 40 which crosses a low col above the Usk Valley at this point between Brecon and Crickhowell. The village is situated 2 km north of the River Usk and about 100m above the valley floor, so that various parts of the village command panoramic views across the Rhiangoll valley to the south-western flanks of the Black Mountains, west to the Brecon Beacons and south to Mynydd Llangynidr and Mynydd Llangattock. The 'pass' separates the rolling moorlands of Cefn Moel and Mynydd Llangorse in the northeast from Buckland Hill to the southwest. Nearby on the slopes of Cefn Moel is a defensive enclosure from prehistoric times as well as a Roman auxiliary fort at Pen-y-gaer.

### **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.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

Alight from the bus in the eastern part of **Llangynidr** (named after the church dedicated to St. Cynidr) by the village hall on the **B4558** road through the village, in the **Usk Valley** in the southern part of the **Brecon Beacons National Park**. Continue in the same direction (if arriving from Brecon) easterly past the **St. Cynidr Stone** (erected to celebrate the millennium) and the village hall, and in 50m *turn right* along **Duffryn Road** (Valley Road) along its right-hand pavement, signed for 'School' and 'The Red Lion'. In 50m you cross **Castle Road** coming in from the right and in another 50m, just before **The Red Lion** pub, **[!]** *turn right* through a wooden gate in a wall into the churchyard of **St. Mary & St. Cynidr, Llangynidr** and follow a tarmac path through it.

You pass the church entrance in 100m (usually open) and in another 30m go through the lychgate and continue in the same direction along a tarmac path, then in 30m again along Duffryn Road, gently uphill. In 200m ignore **Mill Road** on the left. In another 20m *turn half left* (225°) along **Glaisfer Road**. The road follows the **Nant Cleisfer** (Cleisfer Stream) up the **Cwm Cleisfer** (Cleisfer Valley) and you stay on it for 2.0 km, ignoring all right turns, with the stream or its tributaries often audible, to a turnoff just before the road turns left across the stream.

**In more detail:** in 25m you walk between the **Reformed Church** on the right and its graveyard on the left; in 50m ignore a footpath turning right over a stile into a pasture (the hill visible to the right is **Tor y Foel**, skirted or walked across near the end of the walk); the road rises above the level of the stream and eventually you have a hanging wood on the left; after 850m on the road a car wide gravel track (a 'Public Road' as per the OS map) turns up to the right, signed for '**Pantllwyd Farm**', on a bearing of 240°.

### Here you have a choice:

**To avoid a** (700m) **stretch higher up the valley with challenging route finding**, as well as potentially overgrown paths (where there are any), **do turn right** here. In 300m a signposted footpath joins from the right over a stile. You emerge from trees with the (part-ruined) farm buildings now visible ahead. In another 50m, by a metal field gate on the right, you have very fine panoramic views out along and across the **Usk Valley** to the ridges rising above Crickhowell. In another 80m you go through a metal field gate and continue steeply uphill with a barbed wire fence on the left and some pastures on the right. You enter **Pantllwyd Farm** through another metal field gate and in 25m continue in the same direction through a rusty metal field gate with a footpath marker to the right of the buildings (a public footpath crosses here). You ascend a grassy track with a drystone wall on the left initially and in 30m continue between earth banks. In 20m continue up a boulder track and in 130m go through a wooden field gate into **Access Land**.

Continue along the drystone wall on the left and in 80m *bear to the left* with the wall. Follow the wall closely, skirting around a couple of soggy patches, indicated by reed grass growth, and in 420m cross a stream (can be dry in summer), the **Nant y Ddraenen**. In another 130m continue in the same direction at a wall corner along the same contour line (420m above sea), with a barbed wire fence now running a little to the left and the **Coed Y Waun** (Wood of the Moorland) behind. In another 350m you again continue in the same direction at a fence corner. The path now curves gently to the right and eventually starts to drop height into the valley of the **Nant Cleisfer**. In 550m from the wall corner, you cross a stream (often dry in summer) and in another 140m another one. In 130m at the bottom of the drop, you reach an unmarked public footpath crosspaths by the Nant Cleisfer.

*Turn right* up along the stream and pick up the directions below at the asterisk \*).



**Else, continue up the lane** and in 280m ignore a public footpath turning right across a stile into a pasture; you go over a brow in 150m and have first views of the plateau ahead on the half right (foliage permitting); ignore a couple of right turning tarmac drives in 200m and another 400m (to High Meadow and Glaisfer Uchaf farms) and in 125m after the second tarmac drive, **[!]** *fork right* along a signposted footpath ('**Blaen Cwm**' [Head of the Valley]) along a car wide track, where the road turns left across a bridge over the stream. In 30m you cross the **Nant Y Ddraenen** on an earth bridge and in 120m go through a metal field gate into a pasture. You now continue in the same direction for 600m through a succession of pastures with the meandering stream away to the left, going through a couple of metal field gates between them, until you get to a stone barn and ruined farmyard (**Blaen-y-cwm** on the OS map). The pastures have become narrower, encroached on the right-hand side by **Coed Y Waun** (Wood of the Moorland).

From the stone barn you have fine views back towards the northerly end of the main ridge of the **Black Mountains**. In 30m continue with a drystone wall on the right along a grassy car wide track (with the stream 30m away to the left), and soon between walls. [A couple of fallen trees make progress a bit awkward here.] In 60m cross another stream and in 60m go over a stile and continue along a grassy path, now with the wood on the right and the stream close on the left. You have entered **Access Land** and will not leave it for a few hours. In 50m you cross another stream and in another 60m go over a set of stiles either side of a farm track, ignoring the stream bridge on the left and in 50m pass the far corner of the wood and enter a steep pasture. Continue between low walls to a ruined stone cottage 100m away. The next 700m or so further up the valley offer **some challenging route finding and walking**. None of the possible routes are perfect and easy to find or walk. It's best to broadly follow the route of the public footpath on the OS map, although evidence of a path on the ground is not always there, and where it is it may be overgrown.

**In some detail:** from the ruin continue in the same direction for a short stretch along the walled path remnants and *turn left* across the stream at an appropriate point (if cautious, continue for 130m or so to the filter house ahead and cross the bridge there). On the other side go through a metal gate in a wire fence and continue along the stream for another 30m or so past a small ruined enclosure and **[!]** *turn hard left* uphill up the grassy slope on the left to a gravel car wide track. There is a low footpath marker post (although the marker is pointing in the wrong direction). *Turn right* along the drive towards the red brick **Filter House** shown on the OS map, 100m away. You pass an electricity pole in 30m with a yellow marker on the reverse and in 60m – by the start of a concrete wall on the left just before the filter house – there is a low marker post above head height on the steep grassy slope above the concrete wall.

**[!]** *Turn left* up the steep grassy slope and – once above the level of the wall – *turn right* to locate an overgrown path through some gorse that skirts the filter house, descend to a **tributary stream from the Ffynnon Cae-rhos** above, gushing picturesquely down the hillside in a **waterfall**, cross the stream and curve around a nose of the slope to re-join the **Nant Cleisfer** by a small waterfall of its own. For the next 320m to another stream crossing try to follow the Cleisfer closely, while diverting to a higher route around a couple of large trees filling out the whole base of this tight valley. In places it pays to switch to the other side of the stream briefly where the slope narrows in or by some boggy stretches. After the stream crossing, in 140m you cross an unmarked footpath (on the OS map). The alternative route joins from the right along the footpath.

**\*)** Keep to the right of a grassy knoll close by the stream. Soon after that you are in the open heathery moorland of the **Mynydd Llangynidr** and the path soon crosses over to the right-hand side. Head for a lonely low hawthorn tree halfway up the rise, surrounded by hawthorn bushes and a jumble of rocks, possibly a ruined sheep pen (i.e.: not the lone tree

at the top of the rise) near the source of the Nant Cleisfer about 400m ahead on a bearing of 240°. This is the **Blaen Cwmcleisfer** (Head of the Cleisfer Valley) on the OS map, and **an ideal picnic spot**. You are at about 470m above sea and not yet on the high plateau of the moorland, but the views (in good weather) are already quite stunning.

**From the Cleisfer source**, continue in the same direction gently uphill along a clear path through the (non-boggy) moorland to the right of a **Shake Hole**, in the direction of the lone tree at the top of the rise [!] but in 50m, just after the shakehole, *veer left* along a grassy track at a four way-junction (160° initially) and walk **for 800m along minor paths** through an area of **Shake Holes** to a T-junction with a broad grassy track. **In more detail:** In 230m the gradient eases and you can see a rocky top up on the half right, the path continues on 170°; in 70m *veer right* (190°), in 90m *veer left* (175°); in 130m [!] *fork right* (210°) towards a rounded grassy top set back to the left of the rocky top; in 65m *veer left* with the path as you pass the rocky top on its left (170°); continue to the left of the rounded top and in 180m reach a broader grassy path at a T-junction.

*Turn right* along the path and in 50m reach the **Ogof Fawr** (Big Cave)/**Tylles Fawr** (Great Hole) or **Chartist Cave** with its informative plaque. From the cave continue along the grass path (265°), with a cairn, probably one of the many old burial cairns on the moor, away to the left. In 170m you pass a lake, the **Llyn y Garn-fawr** away to the left. The **summit of Mynydd Llangynidr** is to the right at **Garn Fawr**, at 557m above sea, with a large cairn on its top. In the distance on the left you can spot a couple of windfarms, somewhere amongst the **South Wales Valleys**, that former heartland of early industrialisation, and on the right across the upland moor are **The Central Beacons** in the distance. In the back, as before, you have the **Black Mountains**, including the prominent **Sugarloaf/Y Fâl**.

In 900m from the cave, at an [!] **easy-to-miss** fork at the start of a gentle descent into **the valley of the Nant Trefil**, and with a road visible in the valley away to the right, you *fork right* (265° initially) and in 20m walk to the right of a dry shake hole and *bear right* to then pass to the left of another (water-filled) shake hole. You follow a generally well-defined grassy track (albeit with a couple of muddy sections) down the mountain side towards some large boulders at the road side, visible after 130m. They are placed near a point where a track from the (active) **Trefil Quarry** on the left links up with the road. Briefly you are straddling **into Blaneau Gwent County Borough** and **out of the Brecon Beacons National Park**. On the last bit of descent, you go through a boggy section.

**At the road you have a choice:**

**For an out-and-back diversion to Wales' highest village** and the only lunch pub anywhere near the route, *turn left* down **Trefil Road** (the right fork, the left one is the quarry approach) and in 1.8 km find the **Tafarn-Ty-Uchaf (Top House)** in **Trefil**.

**For the continuation of the walk**, *turn right* uphill along the road. Ignore a few rights of way off to the right that the OS map may be showing, and in 700m you reach a **memorial stone** on the right, where a car wide gravel track forks right. This memorial is one stop on the **Aneurin Bevan Heritage Trail**, which commemorates the local Labour MP, post-war Minister of Health and Founder of the NHS, and some of his usual walking routes. Continue in the same direction, ignoring the right fork. In 180m ignore a wooden gate on the right into a conifer plantation, [!] but *fork right* along a car wide gravel track following the plantation's boundary (a signposted bridleway), ignoring the continuation of the tarmac road. This, as well as the previously walked tarmac road, follows the line of the **Bryn Oer Tramway/Brinore Tramroad**, which did connect the quarries and ironworks of the area to the **Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal** at Talybont-on-Usk.

You will follow it for nearly 5 kilometres around the rim of the **Crawnon Valley/Dyffryn Crawnon**. **In more detail:** In 450m you pass a bridleway marker post (with a Bryn Oer Tramway-symbol). Ahead is the **Cwar yr Hendre quarry**, a past filming location for an episode of Doctor Who and the Hitchhiker's Guide to The Galaxy and Transformers III. In 160m there is a clearing in the dropping wood on the right, enabling views down the drop and across to **Waun Rydd**, and in another 120m you've reached the end of the wood and continue in the same direction with a barbed wire fence on the right and with views across the Dyffryn Crawnon ('valley of the garlic river') to the (recently clear-felled) hanging woods at the top of the valley. In 20m ignore a left forking car wide grass track and stay with the fence and in 160m you pass some storage facilities in the rock face on the left.

In 520m you reach a corner of the valley on the right by a waterfall near the source of the Crawnon River (**Blaen-dyffryn Crawnon** on the OS map). *Turn right* across a two-railed wooden bridge over the stream with gates on either side and follow the rim of the valley along a bridleway for 800m, initially with fenced pastures on the left, then with moss-covered rock faces, and with the steeply dropping woods of the **Dyffryn Crawnon Nature Reserve** falling away to the right. In 130m a footpath turns right down into the wood on a dogleg, 10m before a redundant stile and at the end of the straight stretch a bridleway turns down to the right into the wood by a redundant gate ('Horsriders Please Dismount'). In another 80m you cross the **Nant Ddu**, before turning right with the track, now with far views back across to **the moorland of Mynydd Llangynidr** on the right.

In 150m you pass the 'waterfall' that's shown on the OS map and follow the track through some mud-prone stretches in a recently clear-felled wood. You have fabulous views along the valley and across it to the far away main range of the **Black Mountains**. In 650m a waymarked footpath joins from the right below by a ruined farm building on the left just before you cross another stream on the tramroad. In 730m go through a wooden field gate with a bridleway marker by the end of the wood on your left (leaving the **Access Land**) and continue in the same direction along a car wide track, still with a drop on the right into the valley. In 270m a footpath joins from the right below out of the wood along a car wide gravel track across a cattle grid and through a metal field gate and you continue in the same direction along gravel. In 200m you get views on the left across to **Waun Rydd** in the Central Beacons (SWC Walk 278 Brecon Beacons (Pen y Fan) Horseshoe) and in 300m a bridleway joins from the right by an oversized bridge over a streamlet.

In another 300m go through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and a cattle grid and in 40m reach a three-way junction of broad tracks by a signpost on the left at spot height 394m above sea in a saddle of the ridge. There is a stone marker for the **Brinore Tramroad**. A restricted byway joins from the left (signed 'Dolygaer') and you *turn right* along it (signed 'Talybont-on-Usk'). In 100m pass a four-way signpost and continue in the same direction on the level with the **Beacons Way**, which has joined from the left below along a wood's boundary, at last leaving the Tramway, which in 20m forks down to the left towards **Aber**. The **Talybont Reservoir** can be seen down in the wooded valley and half right ahead you can see **Sugarloaf/Y Fâl**. You gently **ascend along the ridge** between the valleys of the **Caerfanell** (on the left) and the **Dyffryn** towards **Tor Y Foel** hill.

In 470m ignore a metal field gate and cattle grid on the left and *fork right* with the Beacons Way along a car wide gravel track. In 50m go through a metal field gate and in 130m ignore a footpath turning right over a stile to the left of a metal field gate into a pasture. In 230m by the corner of the fenced wood on the left, you get views on the left again and go over the brow to the left of the top of **Bryn Melyn** (450m above sea). In another 530m you come to a T-junction with a tarmac lane by a **memorial on the right to Huw Price** (1980-2014), with the quote "If you don't climb the mountain, you can't see the view." Tor y Foel lies ahead, a footpath joins from the left, a byway and a bridleway turn right.



## Here you have a choice:

**For the route over the top of Tor y Foel** (136m height gain from here), continue in the same direction through a gate and up along a clear path (though this is **Access Land**, you can take any route) in 900m to the top at 551m above sea and *turn right* (85°) along a clear path down the narrowing flank of the hill. The descent is gradual at first and in 1.5 km you leave the **Access Land** over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and continue in the same direction along a left-hand field boundary. In 320m go through a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate and in another 270m go through a wooden gate and meet a road at a T-junction. Cross the road to go down a tarmac lane by a house on the left and a tall hedge on the right and pick up the directions two paragraphs below at "In 40m you pass a marker on a fence post."

**For the main walk route**, *turn right* through a metal field gate in a drystone wall into the grounds of **Bwlch-y-waun** farm (leaving the **Access Land**) and continue downhill along the tarmac drive byway with the Beacons Way and with Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl ahead, ignoring the right forking bridleway. In 600m you walk through the farmyard and at the end of it go through a metal field gate and continue in the same direction along a clear car wide track with a fence on the right. Follow this track for 1.7 km down to a tarmac lane, through several gates while also fording numerous streams en route, with some mud-prone stretches, and with either pastures or woods to the side, at times on a grassy ledge. All in, **an easy and tranquil stretch**. At the road *turn left* gently uphill and in 300m the over-the-top route joins from the left through a wooden gate. *Turn right* down a tarmac lane by a house on the left and a tall hedge on the right.

In 40m you pass a marker on a fence post. In 50m go through a metal field gate and *veer left* with a low signpost and a marker post along a car wide gravel track into the **Crawnon Valley**. Apart from the hills and towns seen earlier, there is also now on the left **Buckland Hill** and **Bwlch village** to the right of it, with the **Cefn Moel** and **Mynydd Llangorse** rising behind it (SWC Walk 308 Bwlch Circular via Mynydd Troed and Llangors Lake). In 50m bear left with a marker post and in 40m go through the leftmost of two metal field gates (i.e.: not the one that the track leads to, but the one 20m up from the bottom-left corner). *Turn right* down along a right-hand field boundary for 25m where you go through a metal field gate into the adjacent pasture and follow its left-hand boundary. In 170m go over a stile in the bottom-left field corner and follow another left-hand field boundary. In 110m go through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate and cross a farm track and go through the leftmost field gate opposite.

Follow a right-hand field boundary and in 160m – 20m before the bottom corner – go through a metal gate on the right and follow a left-hand boundary down the next field. In 120m – 30m before the bottom field corner – *turn left* through a metal gate into the neighbouring pasture and continue in the direction of the footpath arrow, to the right of an electricity pole (50°). The **Afon Crawnon** is audible, but not visible, away to the right as it's running in a gorge. In 220m go through a metal gate with a Beacons Way marker and continue through an open glade, then a lightly wooded area. In 130m go through a metal gate and follow a clear path through a wood, with the river now down on the right. In 60m you cross **Depot Lock 65** on the **Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal** and (with an info panel on the left) *turn right* on the towing path opposite. The **Usk Valley Walk** has joined from the left. In 50m the canal crosses the Afon Crawnon quite picturesquely.

## In 170m, just before Bridge No. 133, you have three choices:

**I. For a break at the nearby pub or a return to the start of the walk and the pub there**, *turn left* through a wooden field gate and *turn right* up the road through **Llangynidr**. In 20m the road turns right across the canal to **The Coach & Horses** pub on the right on the other side of the bridge, and a sharp right turn just before it along **Castle Road** would get you to **The Red Lion** and the start of the walk in about 1.2 kilometres.

**II. For an alternative route along the Cwannon and Usk Rivers**, *turn left* through a wooden field gate and *turn left* down the road through **Llangynidr**, and in 80m *turn right* along an unmarked footpath through a wooden field gate and along a tarmac drive to houses. In 30m *fork left* through a high wooden gate with a footpath marker, ignoring the private gravel drive ahead. Follow a path to the left of a row of cottages, with a wall on the left with the Cwannon River behind it. At the end of the cottages *veer right* along a grassy path between low walls with some gardens on either side. In 60m go over a stile and continue along a grassy path and in 50m go through a metal gate into an open area, with the confluence of Cwannon and **The River Usk/Afon Wysg** ahead.

Continue along the wall on your right (i.e.: definitely **not across the grass**: Private!) and then up along the tarmac drive of the house on the right. Just where the drive gets steeper, **[!]** *turn left* off the drive through a black metal gate, a metal 'Footpath' sign and a '**Path rocky and prone to flooding**'-notice and follow an earthen path for 800m along the Usk. Parts of the path are steep and narrow, at other times you have to descend to the water level and hop across rocks, but this is **one very bucolic and beautiful stretch**. 50m before the bridge there is a gate on the right leading to the **Walnut Tree Café**. At the bridge, *turn left* and pick up the directions below: '**Cross the bridge carefully...**'.

**III. For the direct continuation of the walk to Bwlch**, you continue in the same direction along the towing path to go under the bridge and in 180m pass **Lock 64** and **Bridge No. 132** and in another 480m – just before **Bridge No. 131** – *turn up left* to **Forge Road**, the B4560, and *turn left* along its left-hand pavement downhill into Lower Llangynidr. In 200m **Coed-Yr-Ynys** road joins from the left and the **Walnut Tree Café** is 60m to the left along it. Continue downhill to the crossing of **The River Usk/Afon Wysg**. The riverside route joins from the left just before the bridge.

**Cross the bridge carefully using the passing booths, as it's not wide enough for a car and a pedestrian at the same time!** The historic **Llangynidr Bridge** is Grade I listed, built ca. 1700 and believed to be the oldest existing bridge over The Usk. On the Bwlch side of the bridge, you have to follow the relatively busy road uphill through a couple of bends and in 570m continue in the same direction at a crossroads. On a back view, you get fine **views up the Dyffryn Cwannon**, the valley you spent some of the afternoon skirting around. In another 370m you reach **the busy A40** at a bend and *turn left* with a Beacons Way signpost along a gravel-on-tarmac drive to **Corner Ways**. In 50m ignore a left turning tarmac track and continue in the same direction along the tarmac drive and in 40m **by Corner Ways cottage** on the right, you continue in the same direction by turning right over a stile and left up along a grassy path, in 10m continuing up a pasture.

In 80m go through a metal gate in a fence somewhat to the left of the middle of the field and continue in the same direction through the next field towards its top-right corner. In 170m *turn right* over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and go along a top-left field boundary with some fine views on the right to the Black Mountains. In 70m turn left over a stile and continue along a fenced path. In 60m *turn right* over a stile onto a tarmac lane at a T-junction and *turn right* along it. Ignore all ways off **Darren Road** and ascend **into Bwlch village** (not without going through a dip en route) **to the A40** in 700m by **The New Inn** on the right and a **bus stop for services to Brecon** on the left. The **bus stop for services to Crickhowell and Abergavenny** is opposite a little to the left.