

Llanvihangel Crucorney Circular (via Bryn Arw & Skirrid)			Abergavenny – Walnut Tree Inn Routes		
1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check	1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check
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## Llanvihangel Crucorney Circular (via Bryn Arw and The Skirrid)

**Start & Finish:** Llanvihangel Crucorney, Skirrid Inn Bus Stop

Skirrid Inn Bus Stop, map reference SO 325 206, is 7 km north east of Abergavenny, 200 km west northwest of Charing Cross and 144m above sea level and in **Monmouthshire, Wales**.

**Length:** 20.5 km (12.8 mi).

**Cumulative ascent/descent:** 783m. For a shorter walk, see *below* **Walk Options**.

**Toughness:** 7 out of 10

**Time:** 5 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hours walking time.

For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 12 hours.

**Transport:** Llanvihangel Crucorney is served by line X3 (Cardiff - Abergavenny – Hereford) with 7 buses a day Mon-Sat only. Fares from/to Abergavenny are £3.20 single/£5.40 return (10/19).

**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:** 161 (The Black Mountains/Y Mynyddoedd Duon)

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

### Walk Notes:

This walk in the south eastern corner of the Brecon Beacons National Park combines two more-than-a-kilometre long unchallenging ridge walks, offering fantastic views of the surrounding Black Mountains' hills and the Monmouthshire plain, with some quiet pastures with views as well as scenic wooded valleys, gushing spring-fed streams and a Michelin-starred lunch pub.

From Llanvihangel Crucorney you cross the Honddu River and ascend through pastures half-way up a hill to re-cross the river and ascend the three-topped Bryn Arw on narrow paths through its bracken-covered slopes. The ridge itself is straight as an arrow and the three tops hardly distinguishable, but the views are superb. Descend steeply into the Cwmbrynarw and follow a spring-fed stream to the Gavenny River and go up along the flanks of The Skirrid to its southerly base. Comparatively, The Skirrid isn't a massive mountain, but it rises high above the surrounding plain and offers one of the most rewarding ridge walks in South Britain along its 1 km spine to the highest point of the mountain, with its trig point and remains of an Iron Age hillfort and a Roman Catholic chapel. From here you have fantastic panoramic views of most of the Brecon Beacons' Central and Eastern hills. Descend along the grassy hill flank and through pretty tumbling pastures past the listed medieval Llanvihangel Court back to Crucorney and The Skirrid Inn.

Shorter walks, starting from or finishing in Abergavenny, are possible.

## Walk Options:

**Start (map-led) from Abergavenny Station** direct to the bottom of The Skirrid (cut 5.3 km/3.3 mi), or to the lunch options Copper Kettle Tea Room (cut 6.2 km/3.9 mi) or The Walnut Tree Inn (cut 7.1 km/4.4 mi).

**Have picnic lunch**, cut out the out-and-back to both lunch places (cut 3.3 km/2.0 mi).

**Have lunch at The Copper Kettle Tea Room**, cut out the out-and-back to The Walnut Tree Inn (cut 2.3 km/1.4 mi).

**Finish (map-led) in Abergavenny** direct from the bottom of the ascent of The Skirrid (cut 600m), or from the lunch options the Copper Kettle Tea Room (cut 1.5 km/0.9 mi) or The Walnut Tree Inn (cut 2.5 km/1.5 mi).

**A Variation of this Finish**, going over Ysgryd Fach instead of across a golf course and along the Gavenny River, is possible (add 920m to the Golf Course/Gavenny Ending).

**Car Drivers** can walk an easy – if initially steep – out-and-back to the top of The Skirrid from the Skirrid Car Park on the B4521.

## Lunch (details last updated 04/11/19)

**The Copper Kettle Tea Room** Em-Lee Llanddewi Skirrid, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 8AP (01873 851 929, <https://www.copperkettlewales.com/>). The Copper Kettle is located 11.5 km/7.1 mi into the walk. Closed Wednesday. Open 09.00-17.00 Thu-Tue.

**The Walnut Tree Inn** Llanddewi Skirrid, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 8AW (01873 852 797, <https://www.thewalnuttreeinn.com/>). The Walnut Tree is located 12.6 km/7.8 mi into the walk and is a Michelin-starred inn with 6 tables of 2 in a tiled bar area, suitable for walkers. Set lunch menus are available. Closed Sundays and Mondays. Open 12.00-15.00 and 18.30-21.00 Tue-Sat. Last food orders at lunch: 14.30.

## Tea (details last updated 04/11/19)

**The Skirrid Mountain Inn** Skirrid View Llanvihangel Crucorney, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 8DH (01873 890 258). The Skirrid Inn is located at the end of the walk. Open 17.30-23.00 Mon, 11.30-14.30 and 17.30-23.00 Tue-Fri, 11.30-23.00 Sat and 12.00-22.00 Sun. Food served 12.00-14.30 (not Mon) and 18.00-20.00 (not Sun). Wales's oldest Inn.

## 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/dwâr: 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:

### **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.

### **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).

### **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.

### **Honddu River/Afon Honddu**

The River Honddu (Welsh: *Afon Honddu*) (pronounced *hon-thee*) is a river in the Black Mountains. It rises within the county of Powys near the Gospel Pass at the head of the Vale of Ewyas down which it flows, passing southwards into Monmouthshire to Llanvihangel Crucorney before turning north eastwards to join the River Monnow on the Wales-England border. The only significant tributary is the Nant Bwch, though numerous smaller streams add to the river's flow down the steep sides of the vale.

### **Gavenny River/Afon Gafenni**

The Gavenny is a short river in Monmouthshire in south Wales. It rises 1.5 km south west of the village of Llanvihangel Crucorney from springs in Blaengavenny Wood and flows south for about 6.5 km to its confluence with the River Usk at Abergavenny (= 'Mouth of the Gavenny').

The diminutive Gavenny is something of a misfit stream in its broad valley. This is due to the deposition of a spectacular terminal moraine left behind at Llanvihangel Crucorney by the Ice Age glacier that flowed down the valley. This has diverted the former headwaters of the river eastwards into the Wye catchment. It is likely that the Honddu and possibly also the upper River Monnow formerly flowed in the Gavenny's valley to join the Usk.

### **Ysgyryd Fawr/The Skirrid**

Ysgyryd Fawr (English: the great shattered (or split) [hill]; and often referred to locally as just The Skirrid), is an easterly outlier of the Black Mountains and forms the easternmost part of the Brecon Beacons National Park. The distinctive shape of this Old Red Sandstone hill comprises a long ridge oriented nearly north-south, with a jagged western side resulting from ice age landslips, caused by sandstones overlying weaker mudstones. There are also numerous rock tables on the hill, some of which were formed by the landslide. The mountain is referred to locally as the *Holy Mountain* or *Sacred Hill*, and the ruins of an iron-age hill fort and a medieval chapel, dedicated to St. Michael, lie at the summit, at 486m above sea. Pilgrimages used to be made to the summit and the chapel was used by Roman Catholics during and after the Reformation until at least 1680. Ysgyryd Fawr has belonged to the National Trust since 1939, and The Beacons Way passes along the ridge.

### **Llanvihangel Court**

Llanvihangel Court is a historic, Grade I listed Tudor manor house with landscaped gardens, located a short distance away from the village of Llanvihangel Crucorney. The current house dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and has been described as "the most impressive and richly decorated house of around 1600 in Monmouthshire". The building was given its present appearance by a substantial enlargement and re-casing of circa 1600 by Rhys Morgan, of the family of the original owners. In 1627 it was purchased by Nicholas Arnold and was further extended by him and by his heir John. Nicholas Arnold was a noted horse-breeder as well as MP for Monmouthshire and was responsible for the construction of the stable block. His son was a notorious anti-Papist and Llanvihangel became a centre of the campaign against Monmouthshire recusants.

It remains a private house and is a Grade I listed building. The stable block (from 1630-40 and largely unaltered) has its own Grade I listing, and the garden house, originally one of two on the site of a former walled garden, is listed Grade II\*.

The house opens to the public several days a year, usually in mid-summer.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

After alighting from the bus at the **Skirrid Inn** stop on the old road through **Llanvihangel Crucorney** in **The Black Mountains** area just within the boundary of the **Brecon Beacons National Park**, continue in the direction of travel (if coming from Abergavenny) along the left-hand pavement of the road with the **Beacons Way** and in 50m *turn left* down along a road signed to 'Cwmyoy/Cwm-Iou' and 'Llanthony/Llanddewi Nant Hodni'. [Downhill, as the village sits on a '**terminal moraine**', marking the furthest extent of the ice age glacier that once flowed down the Vale of Ewyas.]

In 40m the view ahead is of the first low hill of the day and away to the left the second, higher hill to climb: **Bryn Arw** and in between to the half left (290°): **Gaer**, with its Iron Age hilltop **Twyn Y Gaer** (SWC Walk 335 Pandy Inn to Llanvihangel Crucorney – Extended Version). At the bottom of the drop at a road junction, where the main road turns left, *bear right* along another tarmac lane, signed 'Longtown 6 miles'. Cross a humped bridge over the **Honddu River/Afon Honddu** and in 50m *turn left* over a stile in a hedge, along a signposted footpath ('Hatterall Hill 3.6 km'). You follow the left-hand boundary of a large pasture with the river mostly directly to the left and in 250m go over a stile and up some steps to cross the Abergavenny – Hereford railway line (the **Marches Line**), with a Beacons Way marker on the far side.

*Turn right* with a footpath marker post along a car wide gravel track and in 20m *turn up to the left* over a stile and follow a couple of pastures uphill along their left-hand boundaries, with a stile separating them. Leave the second field over a plank across a ditch and then a stile and head for the top-right corner of the next field, by **Great Llwygy** farm (340°). In 160m go over a stile in the field corner into the farmyard and in 15m *turn left* along a track at a T-junction. In 35m **[!]** *fork left* on the level with a public footpath between sheds (235°), ignoring the right forking car wide **Beacons Way Bridleway** gently uphill. In 40m the path continues as an earthen track and in 20m you go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate into a pasture. *Veer left* across the field towards the middle of a wood.

You have **fine views of various hills**: **Ysgyryd Fawr (The Skirrid)** on the left (160°), its smaller relation **Ysgyryd Fach** (due S), in the distance the **Mynydd y Garn-fawr** ridge (195°), separating the Usk Valley from the nearest of the formerly highly industrialised Welsh Valleys around Blaenavon, nearby (on 210°) **Deri** – a foothill of Sugarloaf and **Blorenge** to the left of it and behind (205°) and **Bryn Arw** ahead (240°).

In 90m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and *veer left a little* to follow a clear car wide public footpath criss-crossed by mountain-bike tracks. In 100m **[!]** – just after crossing a mountain-bike track – you *fork right* with a footpath marker post off the car wide track and in 130m *bear right* through a more open area with some bracken by a marker post on the right (this path can be overgrown in high summer). In 40m go over a stile into a wood and in 30m over another and continue with a fence on the left. In 120m ignore some wooden steps up to the right and go through a wooden gate by a 'The Wildlife Trusts – **Strawberry Cottage Wood**' sign further into the Nature Reserve instead (mature Sessile Oak and Ash, with an understorey of coppiced Hazel and climbing Honeysuckle).

In 130m pass a marker post and in 30m at a wire fence *turn right* at a T-junction with the **Honddu River audible below**. In 50m go over a stile and descend gently out of the wood towards a meadow and in 50m emerge into the meadow by a marker post with **Strawberry Cottage** on the right ahead. In 30m ignore a left forking car wide drive to a ford across the river and go through a metal field gate and *turn left* in the meadow towards its near-left corner (295°). In 80m *turn left* through a wooden gate and cross the river on a raised railed bridge. On the other side ascend towards the **Vale of Ewyas road** and cross

it a little to the left to continue along a tarmac drive. In 100m you reach **Stanton Manor Farm** and continue in the same direction through the farmyard with metal field gates on either side and continue along a tarmac car wide drive (a Public Way), with **Hatterrall Hill** dominating the view on the hard right.

The flank of **Bryn Arw** lies ahead and in 120m you continue in the same direction, ignoring a left turning gravel car wide track, and pass through a double metal field gate, now along a concrete/gravel mix. In 60m go through a metal field gate and start the long ascent of Bryn Arw. In 120m **[!]** you *bear right* with a car wide grass track, ignoring the continuation of the concrete track which turns left through a metal field gate. The gradient increases and in 30m you pass a metal signpost ('Bettws 3.2 km', 'Pantigelli 3.5 km'). In 55m, with **Hatterrall Hill** ahead, *turn left* with the track between lines of mature trees and pastures beyond the trees. In 350m the terrain levels out and you go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate into the **Access Land of Bryn Arw. Gaer hill**, with its Iron Age hilltop **Twyn Y Gaer** (SWC Walk 335 Pandy Inn to Llanvihangel Crucorney – Extended Version) is visible ahead half right (310°).

In 10m you *turn left* up the bracken-covered flank of the hill with a clear path (a public footpath), ignoring the continuation ahead. In 100m ignore a right turn (on the OS map). In 50m you have a fence on your left. You pass some isolated trees and in 40m *veer to the right* away from the fence. In 40m go through a metal field gate (this is at spot height 265m – by a stepless stile in the fence 20m away on the left) and *turn right* through the bracken along a usually clear path (290°) with a fence on the right, ignoring the continuation uphill. In 50m, by a metal gate on the right, curve up to the left with the fence (245° mostly) and in 200m by a solitary hawthorn tree on the left (at spot height 305m), you *bear up to the right* with the path (250°), still along the fence. In about 400m (at spot height 350m by a metal gate) *turn up to the left* with the fence and path (due S).

In 40m the terrain levels out, with **Sugar Loaf** in view dead ahead, and you *turn left* with the fence and in 60m *turn right* through a metal field gate to reach a T-junction with a wide grassy path at spot height 360m by a little pond on the right (can be dry). *Turn left* (70°) for the final ascent towards Bryn Arw's top. The ground is almost bracken-free for 80m and in another 130m you reach the top plateau and *bear right*, through bracken, gorse and grass. This is **Coal Pit Hill** and the unremarkable top of this, the **highest of the three tops of the Bryn Arw range** is just away to the left (at 384m above sea), with **fine views** from here to Pen y Fan/Corn Du in the Central Beacons on the right (280°); Pen-Cerrig-calch to the right of it closer by (290°); Waun Fach (325°) and the head of the Vale of Ewyas (335°).

Continue along the broad ridge on a bearing of 155° along a clear grassy path at about the same height for about 500m where you pass **the second top** (80m after a cairn on the left), just 1m lower than Coal Pit Hill. The continuation of the ridge is now in view and in 560m you pass another mini-cairn on the left by the third top (the lowest at 378m above sea). The path now descends visibly and in 150m you pass some exposed rocks on the left and in 50m ignore a right turn downhill. In 40m you pass some rock slabs and in another 40m some more prominent flat rocks. In 120m you cross over another, larger rock outcrop. The gradient increases in 80m and in 30m you walk through bracken again. The descent gets steeper still and in 60m you walk through a metal gate in a fence line and in 30m descend very steeply towards **a hawthorn tree** 20m away. Pass the hawthorn tree and in another (steep) 25m – at spot height 305m at a T-junction – *turn right* with the grassy path around the nose of the range.

In 50m you pass some scattered rocks on the right and keep gently descending (305° initially), with a steep drop on the left. In 200m *fork left* gently downhill (310°), where

another path continues ahead on the level and in 70m *turn hard left* downhill (220°) by a barbed wire fence 15m ahead. In 120m *turn right* with the path and in 70m *turn down to the left* with it (with the fence on the right now). In 40m *turn right* one last time on this descent and in 80m you reach a car wide track at a T-junction by a metal field gate on the right. *Turn left* along the track (an unmarked public footpath), with a stream on the right (fed by numerous springs on the flank of Sugar Loaf) flowing down the **Cwmbrynarw** behind a barbed wire fence. In 110m go through a metal field gate (leaving the Access Land) into the grounds of **Cwm Cottage** and in 35m pass it to its right.

In 30m you go through a wooden kissing gate and continue between the stream on the right and a wooded slope on the left. In 75m the path continues as an earthen path right by the stream in a tight gorge and in 100m you go over a stile to the left of a metal gate and **continue uphill to the left of the stream** along a narrow steep path, [!] ignoring a ford with some stepping stones across the stream towards a stile to the left of a metal field gate (an unmarked public footpath). In 30m go over a stile and continue parallel to, but above the stream. In 20m ignore a left forking broad track uphill and continue through an open, lightly wooded valley. In 120m you pass a shepherd's hut (on wheels) on the other side of the stream (may be seasonal) and in 200m go over a stepless stile to the right of a metal field gate into a pasture, with the left-hand nose of **The Skirrid ahead**.

In 30m ignore another ford across the stream on the right and in 100m by a house on the right go through a narrow double metal field gate onto a tarmac lane (**Old Hereford Road**) and briefly *turn right* along it. In 15m *turn left* by a footpath signpost into a pasture through a metal field gate and follow the right-hand boundary along the stream. In 100m DO NOT leave the field through the field gate in the far-right corner, but through another one 30m to the left of it (also ignoring a metal gate to the left of it) and go through the adjacent field along its left-hand boundary hedge. In 100m ignore a couple of metal field gates on the left and in 140m go over a stile to leave the field and re-cross the railway line. In the field on the other side head for the far-right corner (120°) and in 260m go over a stile and cross the infant **Gavenny River/Afon Gafenni** on a concrete bridge.

Go over a stile into an arable field and follow its left-hand grassy boundary and in 140m leave it over a stile to the right of an often-open metal field gate by a footpath signpost to cross the **A465** and *turn right* along the opposite grassy verge with the walled **Upper Triley Farm** on the left. In 50m *turn left* over a stile with a footpath signpost into a pasture and cross it diagonally to the right of a cottage (130°, follow the signpost rather than the right of way on the OS map) to leave it in 210m over a stile to the left of a metal field gate to the right of **Pentre Barn (Triley)** onto a tarmac drive and *turn left* uphill along it. In 50m *turn left* along a tarmac lane between earth banks at a T-junction and in 90m *turn right* along another tarmac lane, signposted 'Llanddewi Skirrid 4 km', still uphill.

In 50m you get fine views on the left of The Skirrid and in 350m by **Top Cottage** on the right continue in the same direction over a stile with a footpath marker where the (now) gravel car wide track turns to the left. You cross a stream on a railed footbridge and cross a stile to then *veer left* (145°) across a pasture to its top-left corner 190m away. Leave the field over a two-railed footbridge over a stream and go over a stile into the next pasture and follow its left-hand boundary gently uphill curving ever so slightly to the left. In 230m leave the field in its top-left corner over a stile to the right of a metal field gate. In the next field continue in the same direction towards a stile in a wooded belt 100m away and go over a plank bridge and up some steps then over a stile into the next field and *bear right* (205°) to a stile to the right of a metal field gate.

In 110m go over the stile and cross a car wide gravel farm track and go through a metal kissing gate and *bear left* (165°) in a pasture to the left of some electricity lines. In 70m go

through a metal kissing gate in the boundary hedge and follow the right-hand boundary of the next field. In 60m ignore a footpath turning right through a metal kissing gate in the hedge and continue in the same direction and (evading a boggy area en route) in 220m leave the field in a wooded strip through a metal gate by some farm buildings on the right (**Pant y Skirrid**). In 20m cross a ditch on a plank bridge and go through another metal gate into a narrow pasture and in 30m go through a fence gap into a larger pasture.

You now go through three consecutive pastures along their bottom right-hand boundaries: in 100m go through a fence gap (a missing gate), in 140m over a stile 25m to the left of the bottom corner (by **Ty'r-ywen** farm), and in 180m through a metal field gate. Away on the right you can see **Ysgyryd Fach**, the smaller relation of The Skirrid. In this next field **[!]** *bear up to the left* to the left of a solitary tall oak tree (75°, i.e. much further up left than the right of way on the OS map suggests) to a point about 100m above the bottom right field corner and in 190m leave the field over a stile into another sloping pasture.

**Here you have a choice:**

**If you skip the lunch stops**, *continue in the same direction* (80°) with the yellow marker along the left of two clear grassy paths, still uphill and in 170m *turn left* over a stepless stile into the **Access Land of Caer Wood** by a wooden gate and a double wooden kissing gate on the right. Walk uphill through the wood along a car wide gravel track and pick up the directions at the asterisk below \*).

**Else veer right** (95°) along the right of two clear grassy paths for about 100m to stay above a boggy stretch running down the field **[!]** *and then bear right* (130°) to the bottom left field corner 250m away. You leave the field over a stile to the left of a metal field gate onto a car wide gravel track at a bend. *Turn left* and in 30m *turn right* through a hedge gap and follow a gravel path to the **Skirrid Car Park**, in 30m passing a map and an info panel. Continue through the car park to its far-right corner and in 150m leave it through a hedge gap. In 20m ignore a left turning footpath and *turn right* across the busy **B4521** and go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and – unless you are aiming for the **The Copper Kettle Tea Room**, which is a further 70m along the road – follow a car wide track.

Go over a stile to the right of a wooden gate to the right of a metal field gate and follow a right-hand pasture boundary. In 180m *veer right* with the boundary and in 40m continue in the same direction where the boundary veers right. In 120m you *turn right* over a stile out of the pasture and continue between fences, later between a hedge and a wall. In 125m *turn left* along a minor lane down into the linear village **Bryn Y Gwenin**. Ignore several public footpaths turning off the lane and in 380m cross the **Mynachdy Brook** on the lane and start a gentle re-ascent. Ignore further footpaths off and in 250m reach the **B4521** by a disused bus stop on the right, cross the road carefully and continue in the same direction along its left-hand pavement to in 60m find **The Walnut Tree Inn** on the left.

Coming out of the Inn, re-trace your steps back to the bottom of the ascent up The Skirrid. **In more detail:** *turn right* along the right-hand pavement of the B road and in 60m *turn left* across it carefully to continue in the same direction along a minor lane into **Bryn Y Gwenin** past a disused bus stop. Ignore some footpaths turning off left, then right, and in 250m cross the **Mynachdy Brook** on the lane and start a gentle ascent through the linear village. Ignore a left turning footpath en route and in 360m at the top of the rise ignore another footpath turning left; in another 25m **[!]** *turn right* with a signposted footpath and the **Beacons Way** between a hedge and a wall.

In 25m on the left you have a pasture, with **Bloreng** looming in the distance beyond. In 100m *turn right* over a stile into a pasture and *bear left towards The Skirrid* (due N),

parallel to the left-hand boundary. In 120m you continue along the boundary and in 40m *veer left* with it. In 180m go over a stile to the left of a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate and cross the **B4521** carefully and *turn left* to in 20m go through a hedge gap into the **Skirrid Car Park**, ignoring the signposted footpath straight ahead up a track. In 150m at the far end of the car park follow a gravel path past an info panel and a map and in 30m go through a hedge gap onto a car wide gravel track and *turn right* along it. You gently ascend the track between trees towards a wood and in 220m go through a wooden gate to the left of a double wooden field gate into the **Access Land of Caer Wood** and *bear right* with the still car wide gravel track.

**\*)** In 30m ignore a left forking car wide gravel track to *fork right* past a footpath marker post. The track ascends a short, stepped section and in 40m it crosses a wide forest track and passes a low **National Trust marker post**. You follow the engineered, well drained path with several benches en route providing options for a rest for the weary. In 250m you cross a car wide forest track and continue in the same direction with a marker post. In 100m go through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate and – by a duckboard on the left – *turn right* with a marker along a car wide gravel track with a mossy drystone wall on the right. In 90m stay to the left of a footpath marker post and in 10m *bear more steeply up to the left* away from the wall and fence on the right (ignore a path off to right).

In 25m you go up a stepped section and in 20m by a lone boulder – through a break in the trees on the right – have **fine views into the Herefordshire Plain**. It follows a short flagstone section and in 20m from the top of the flagged section you *turn right* with the obvious path. In 20m commence a short, stepped section and in another 20m you emerge from the trees (at 355m spot height) and *turn left* with the obvious gravel path. In 150m you reach the ridge of **Ysgyrd Fawr/The Skirrid** and follow it for just over 1 kilometre up another 90m height to the trig point at the far end, **at 486m above sea**, ignoring all ways off. This is **a great bit of walking** in almost any weather, but especially so with fine views, as – from Bloreng and the Central Beacons on the left, via the Usk Valley and Abergavenny and Sugar Loaf, Bryn Arw, the 'fingers' of the Black Mountains to the far end of the range (including Cwmyoy Crag nearby), to the Malverns and Bredon Hills and The Cotswolds – you have **an unrivalled panorama**, which gets further and further revealed as you gradually ascend.

About 40m before the trig point, you walk through the clear bank-and-ditch of an **Iron Age hillfort**, and in another 30m through the two upright stones that are the only (easily noticeable) remnants of **St. Michael's Chapel**, in which Catholic services have been held until long after the Reformation, at least to 1680. At the trig, ignore a faint public footpath coming up to the trig from the half left on 325° (half left compared to the direction you came up) and also an even steeper path directly ahead (15°), and **turn back the way you came** to start the descent from the hill. In 170m **ignore a first path** on the left, turning sharp left through the bracken (80° initially). But in another 60m, by a couple of large pits and a second path on the left, **[!] turn hard left** back on yourself along a clear grassy path through the bracken on an initial bearing of 70° to begin the descent off the ridge.

In 35m you continue to drop more steeply down the bracken-covered hill flank, with pastures below on the right. In 350m by a marker post at a three-way path junction, *turn right* and in 50m *fork left* towards a stile in a fence line visible below. In 60m pass a low marker post with a plethora of markers, crossing a public footpath in the process, and in 40m go over the stile to **leave the Access Land** into a pasture. Continue in the same direction across the field towards a fence corner (85°) and in 200m pass the fence corner on its right. In another 30m *turn left* over a stile just before the far field corner and follow its right-hand boundary (which is 30m away on the right). In 90m you cross a (usually dry) infant stream and re-ascend gently up **The Arwallt** (on the OS map).



In 60m, where the fence bears right, a footpath joins from the right over a stile, as you continue in the same direction. In 100m go over the brow and in 130m *turn left* with a marker post at the far boundary fence (the right-of-way on the OS map indicates a crossing of the fence, but there is no evidence on the ground of this). In 100m in the field corner *turn right* over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and follow a left-hand field boundary downhill, with **fine views of Hatterall Hill and the Cwmyoy Crag**. In 200m go through a metal field gate to the right of another metal field gate and continue in the same direction along a gravel track along a line of trees down towards a large barn. In 140m go through a metal field gate and in 35m another one and *turn left* along a concrete drive, through some more metal field gates.

You continue in the same direction along a tarmac lane and in 150m *turn left* at a three-way tarmac lane junction by **Pen y Mynydd** cottage. In 140m pass **Pen-y-parc** farm and in 200m pass some farm buildings on the right and in 30m a gabled farm house ('The Gables'). **[!]** In 15m *turn right* through a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate along a signposted footpath ('Crucorney 2 km'), with the **Beacons Way** which has re-joined from down the lane. Follow a right-hand boundary down a pasture into a scenic wooded vale, passing a marker post in 60m and in another 160m leave the field through a metal field gate by a high footpath marker post. Follow the right-hand boundary of the next field and in 90m go through a metal gate and across a railed plank bridge and continue in the same direction through the next pasture, towards the middle of the opposite wooded boundary.

In 180m go through a metal gate into the wood and follow a clear path through it. In 75m cross a two-railed wooden footbridge over a stream and go up some steps and through a metal gate into a larger pasture. You follow a clear path gently uphill towards a lone tree and in 130m pass it on its left. The sideways view of **the prow of The Skirrid** is particularly impressive on this stretch. In another 150m leave the field through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and *veer right* through the next pasture along its right-hand boundary. In 200m you go through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and continue in the same direction through the next pasture. In 150m in the field corner go through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and continue in the same direction along a right-hand fence. In 50m continue in the same direction where the fence bears right, a little to the right of some farm buildings.

In 80m go through a metal kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate and *turn left* along a car wide gravel track. In 110m continue on an earth-gravel mix, then further on along tarmac, as you pass some beautifully ruined farm buildings, belonging to **Llanvihangel Court**, including a truly amazing, large stripped-to-the-timber, timber-framed large barn. In 200m *turn left* with the tarmac drive away from the Court, downhill to a crossing of a stream and then re-ascend to the **A465**. Cross the A road and continue in the same direction uphill along a tarmac path into **Llanvihangel Crucorney**. In 60m, opposite **St. Michael and All Angels' Church**, Llanvihangel Crucorney [The village name translates as 'The church of St. Michael's by the Rock on the corner'.], *turn right* at a T-junction with the old road through Crucorney. In 100m pass the village store (with its coffee machine) and after that reach the bus stop (unsigned on the right **towards Abergavenny**) and **The Skirrid Mountain Inn**.

Foliage permitting, you get fine views back from here to **The Skirrid's prow**.