

Pandy Inn to Llanvihangel Crucorney			Pandy Inn to Llanvihangel Crucorney (Extended Walk)		
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
14 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 2019	13 <sup>th</sup> April 2024		14 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 2019		
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## Pandy Inn to Llanvihangel Crucorney (via Llanthony and Cwmyoy)

**Start:** Penbidwal, Pandy Inn Bus Stop

**Finish:** Llanvihangel Crucorney, opp. Skirrid Inn Bus Stop

Pandy Inn Bus Stop, map reference SO 335 224, is 9 km north east of Abergavenny, 200 km west northwest of Charing Cross and 109m above sea level; Skirrid Inn Bus Stop, map reference SO 325 206, is 2 km south west of Pandy and 144m above sea level. Both are in **Monmouthshire, Wales**.

**Length:** 24.7 km (15.4 mi).

**Cumulative ascent/descent:** 871/836m. For a shorter or longer walk, see below **Walk Options**.

**Toughness:** 8 out of 10

**Time:** 6 ½ hours walking time.

**Transport:** Pandy Inn and Llanvihangel Crucorney are served by Bus Line 23 (Newport – Abergavenny – Hereford) with 7 buses a day, Mon-Sat only.

**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 route at the south easterly end of the Black Mountains area in the Brecon Beacons National Park starts with a steep ascent onto an Iron Age hillfort site and on to Hatterrall Hill, and then follows Offa's Dyke Path and the Beacons Way across Hatterrall Hill and the largely heathery – but in parts boggy – open moorland of the dramatic Hatterrall Ridge with fine panoramic views from this natural boundary of a ridge up along the wild, lonely and beautiful Vale of Ewyas (the valley of the River Honddu and the easternmost valley of The Black Mountains) and across the South Wales mountain ranges to the west, and over the plains of the Welsh/English borderlands to the east, on a good day all the way to The Cotswolds and the Malvern Hills.

A dramatic descent at the start of the return leads down into the Vale of Ewyas with a bird's eye view of the fascinating romantic ruins of Llanthony Priory, the remnants of one of Wales's great medieval buildings, and to lunch at its cellar bar or a nearby pub.

The return down the glacial valley between steep ridges offers fantastic views to the Sugar Loaf and Skirrid mountains near Abergavenny, some old oak woodlands, river meadows and plenty of waterways streaming down the hillsides. A memorable highlight is Cwmyoy village, both for the ascent of the superb viewpoint of a crag above the village and for the renowned crooked church, bent and twisted due to the still active landslide on which it was built.

Shorter and longer options are described.

## Walk Options:

**A Shortcut just before lunch** cuts 3.2 km/2.0 mi and 121m ascent.

**Another Shortcut cuts the climb** up the hill looming over Cwmyoy village, cutting 740m and 43m ascent.

**A Shortcut mid-afternoon** cuts 360m and 63m ascent.

**An Extension** over the superb viewpoint of Twyn-y-Gaer (hillfort) adds 2.0 km/1.2 mi and 196m ascent.

**Lunch** (details last updated 17/04/2024)

**Llanthony Priory Hotel Cellar Bar** Llanthony, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 7NN (01873 890 487, <https://www.llanthonyprioryhotel.co.uk/>). The Priory Hotel's bar is located 12.5 km/7.8 mi into the walk. Open Nov-Mar: Fri 18.00-22.00, all day Sat and 10.30-16.00 Sun; April-Oct: Tue-Fri 10.30-15.00 and 18.00-22.00, all day Sat-Sun.

**The Half Moon Inn** Llanthony, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 7NN (01873 890 611). The Half Moon is located 13.0 km/8.1 mi into the walk.

**Llanthony Treats** Honddu Cottage, Llanthony, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 7NN (01873 890 867, <http://www.llanthonytreats.co.uk/>). Treats is located 13.1 km/8.1 mi into the walk.

**Tea** (details last updated 17/04/2024)

**The Old Pandy Inn** Hereford Road Pandy, Monmouthshire, NP7 8DR (01873 890 208). At the start of the walk, so a tea stop if walked in reverse. Open from 18.00 Tue-Thu and all day Fri-Sun.

**The Queen's Head** Cwmyoy, nr Stanton, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 7NE (01873 890 241).

The Queen's Head is located 2.4 km/1.5 mi from the end of the walk.

**The Skirrid Mountain Inn** Skirrid View Llanvihangel Crucorney, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, NP7 8DH (01873 890 258, <https://skirridinn.com/>). The Skirrid Inn is located at the end of the walk. Open 17.30-23.00 Mon, 11.30-14.30 and 17.30-22.30 Tue-Thu, 11.30-23.30 Fri-Sat and 12.00-22.30 Sun. Food served 12.00-14.30 Tue-Fri, 17.30-21.00 Mon-Fri, 12.00-21.00 Sat and 12.00-15.00 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/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:

### 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 level.

### 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).

### 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.

### Offa's Dyke Path/Llwybr Clawdd Offa

Offa's Dyke Path (Welsh: *Llwybr Clawdd Offa*) is a 285 km (177 mi) waymarked linear long-distance footpath following closely the Wales–England border from the Severn Estuary near Chepstow to Prestatyn on the north coast. Opened in 1971, it is one of Britain's National Trails and for about 100 km either follows, or keeps close company with, the remnants of Offa's Dyke, an earthwork, probably mostly constructed in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century on the orders of Offa, King of Mercia. The route initially follows the Wye Valley, then crosses the Black Mountains, the Shropshire Hills (including the many ups and downs of the 'Switchback'), the Eglwyseg moors and the Clwydian Range.

### 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.

### Hatterrall Hill and Ridge

Hatterrall Hill is a rounded peak in the Black Mountains which sits on the Wales-England border, partly in Monmouthshire, partly in Herefordshire. Its summit at 531m is the high point of a peaty plateau which falls away steeply to the sides. Broad ridges run to the north, the southeast and southwest. To the north the Hatterrall Ridge dips to a col at around 485m elevation before rising gradually over several kilometres towards Crib y Garth/Black Hill and over its highest point (Black Mountain at 703m) to Hay Bluff above Hay-on-Wye. The ridge to the southwest ends abruptly at the sheer cliff known as the Darren below which is a considerable landslipped area extending to the hamlet of Cwmyoy with its mis-shapen church.

### Vale of Ewyas (Llanthony Valley)

The Vale of Ewyas (Welsh: *Dyffryn Ewias*) is the steep-sided and secluded once-glaciated valley of the Afon Honddu. As well as for its outstanding beauty, it is known for the ruins of Llanthony Priory, and for several noteworthy churches such as those at Capel-y-ffin (one of the smallest in the country) and Cwmyoy. It is sometimes referred to as the 'Llanthony Valley' after the village situated at the valley centre. Ewyas originally (and possibly) was an early Welsh kingdom which may have been formed around the time of the Roman withdrawal from Britain. The name was later used for a much smaller administrative sub-division, which covered the area of the modern Vale of Ewyas and a larger area to the east including the villages of Ewyas Harold and Ewyas Lacy (now within Herefordshire).

### Llanthony Priory

Llanthony Priory (Welsh: *Priordy Llanddewi Nant Hodni*) is a partly ruined former Augustinian priory in the secluded Vale of Ewyas, a steep-sided once-glaciated valley. It lies on the old Abergavenny to Hay-on-Wye road. The priory ruins lie to the west of the Hatterrall Ridge, a limb of the Black Mountains. The main ruins are under the care of Cadw and entrance is free.

The priory is a Grade I listed building as are three other buildings within the precinct: The Priory Hotel (a converted domestic home for one of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century owners), St David's Church (established after the Dissolution in the remains of the infirmary) and Court Farm Barn (the former gatehouse of the priory). The priory dates back to around the year 1100, when Norman nobleman Walter de Lacy reputedly came upon a ruined chapel of St. David in this location, and was inspired to devote himself to solitary prayer and study. A church was built on the site, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and consecrated in 1108. By 1118, a group of around 40 monks from England founded a priory of Canons Regular, the first in Wales. The Priory eventually became one of the great medieval buildings in Wales, in a mixture of Norman and Gothic architectural styles, but the buildings gradually decayed to a ruin after the Dissolution, attracting many artists, including JMW Turner who painted them from the opposite hillside.

### **St. Martin's, Cwmyoy**

St Martin's in Cwmyoy (Welsh: *Cwm-iou*) is a pretty little crooked church with a leaning spire, in fact it has been called the "most crooked church in Great Britain". No part of it is square or at right angles with any other part. This is the result of being built on ground where subsidence has occurred in rock debris left by a huge block of sandstone after the Ice Age splitting off from the hill above the church, which is a spur of Hatterrall Hill. The hill has a great gash caused by this and it is this landslide which not only gives the church and village its name Cwmyoy ('the valley of the yoke'), but the church is also built with stone from that landslide. The church chancel has been described as a remarkable example of a "weeping chancel", where the nave represents Christ's body and the deflected chancel his head fallen sideways in death. Though here not only the axis but the whole chancel slews sideways.

St. Martin's contains a 13<sup>th</sup> century carved stone cross, thought to have been one of the crosses on the Pilgrims' Way to St. David's. Today the cross is secured to the floor of the church.

### **Twyn-y-Gaer Hillfort**

Twyn-y-Gaer Iron Age Camp is a strongly embanked and ditched promontory enclosure occupying the summit of an isolated and dramatic hill at the southern end of the Vale of Ewyas, on its southern side, overlooking three valleys. It is an elongated oval in plan, roughly 225m by 85m, defined by a rampart with a ditch and counterscarp bank, except on the south where the hillslopes are at their steepest and was formerly protected by a wooden palisade. There is a single in-turned east-facing entrance. The interior is divided by two lines of east-facing ramparts and ditches into three sections, each with a central entrance. Excavations in the 1960s and 1970s showed that the more easterly subdivision was the eastern front of the earliest enclosure. Finds included some pottery, including salt containers, iron and copper alloy objects, including brooches, glass beads, querns and iron working debris, as well as traces of timber housing. The occupation by the Silures tribe had ended by the Roman period.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

Alight from the bus at the **Pandy Inn** stop on the **A465** in **The Black Mountains** area on 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 A road and in 120m – just before **The Old Pandy Inn** – *turn left* along a tarmac lane, signed 'Walterstone 2, Oldcastle 1 ½, Longtown 4 ½'. In 40m you go under the railway line (Welsh Marches Line, Abergavenny – Hereford) and in 40m ignore a right turning footpath ('Allt-yr-yms 0.8 km') by a caravan park on the left. In 40m cross the **Honddu River/Afon Honddu** on a road bridge, entering the National Park. In 180m where the main road turns right to Longtown, and a minor road turns left to Llanthony, you go through a metal kissing gate to the left of a rusty metal field gate and continue in the same direction between trees.

In 210m go through a metal kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate onto a tarmac lane at a T-junction and *turn up to the left* along it towards a grand house (**Tre-wyn**). In 150m the lane skirts the house to its right and at the house itself you pass a signpost 'Hatterrall Hill 3.6 km' to continue steeply uphill along the lane. In 130m ignore a right turning tarmac lane through a metal field gate by a part-hidden signpost ('To Offa's Dyke Path') and continue in the same direction along the rising lane. In 100m, with views ahead of **The Skirrid/Ysgyryd Fawr** (SWC Walk 347 Llanvihangel Crucorney Circular), *turn hard right* with the lane between earth banks (bluebells in season). In 350m *turn right* with a wooden signpost ('Y Gelli Gandryll 14 milltir/Hay-on-Wye 14 mi') along a grassy path between trees. You have joined **Offa's Dyke Path/Llwybr Clawdd Offa** (ODP).

In 210m you go over a stile to the right of a wooden field gate and enter **Access Land**. Continue steadily uphill along a clear path and in 90m *turn left* with the path to go more steeply uphill and in 50m – at the top of this rise – *turn right* with a marker post along a drystone wall on the left. In 150m go through the ditch-and-bank outer ramparts of **Pentwyn Iron Age Hillfort** and in 80m where the wall veers away to the left, you have fine views back towards **Edmund's Tump** (105°) and **The Skirrid/Ysgyryd Fawr** (170°) as well as **Pandy and Llanvihangel** villages. Follow a grassy path to the right and in 40m to the left to a fenced clump of trees and in another 40m you reach a plateau in the centre of the hillfort site, now with **Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl** on your left (230°) and the smaller **Gaer** to the right of it (250°), closer by (the extension of this walk crosses it).

You *bear left* along a clear grass path around the hill's summit and in 80m another grass path joins from the left behind and in 15m you pass a marker post with National Trail and ODP markers and a small info panel on **Pentwyn hillfort/Bryngaer Pentwyn**. In another 25m a sunken path joins from the left behind, the **Beacons Way** joins along it. In 160m you leave the hillfort site through a gash in the earth bank where there is a car wide gravel track running parallel below. In 70m pass an info panel on **Hatterrall Hill Common**. You can see the coming gentle ascent up **Hatterrall Hill** clearly ahead, as well as the large walled enclosure half way up the ascent. Stay to the right of the walled enclosure, along the grassy Beacons Way (the one to the left – a public footpath, is a gravel track). In 340m from the far corner of the enclosure the paths re-join and you continue in the same direction along the track up a **subsidiary top of Hatterrall Hill**.

You can see the **south westerly spur of the ridge of Hatterrall Hill** to the left, in the **Vale of Ewyas**. In 180m reach a trig point by a marker post, at 464m above sea level. On the right you look down across **the Welsh/English border lands**: the river at the bottom of the range – the **River Monnow/Afon Mynwy** – here forms the border, the English county beyond it is **Herefordshire**. On a very clear day you might catch sight of the **Cotswolds**, the **Malvern Hills** (65°) and the **Clee Hills**.



Continue in the same direction along a clear car wide track up along the ridge through largely **heathery ground** with plenty of (edible) **whimberries** (the south Welsh term for bilberries) in season, and the **occasional wild pony** on view. In 110m a track joins from the left by a marker post. In 370m by a mini-cairn you pass a National Trail marker stone, where a path to **Oldcastle** turns off to the right. You keep ascending and in 540m by another marker stone *curve right* with the car wide track bridleway up onto a higher level of the heathery plateau, where the footpath and the ODP continue in the same direction to Cwmyoy. In 450m, after a sharp left turn followed by a right turn, you briefly cross over into England, as the border joins up from the right and in another 280m re-cross it and then follow it until turning left down into Llanthony much later on.

Half left ahead you can see – higher up in the vale – the fork in the valley, near **Capel-y-ffin** hamlet, with the two valley forks separating the three tops at the far end of the Vale of Ewyas, at the northerly scarp of the Black Mountains range: **Rhos Dirion** at 713m above sea level, and **Twmpa/Lord Hereford's Knob** at 680m and **Hay Bluff** at 670m. The higher top to the left of the ridge, 11 km away on 295°, is **Waun Fach**, at 811m above sea level **the highest top in the Black Mountains**. The grass path passes **Hatterrall Hill's undramatic highest top** (at 531m above sea level) a little to its right, and at times it continues as a sunken gravel track through the heathery ridge.

Eventually you get first views of **the ruins of Llanthony Priory** below on the left (part-hidden by a large farm this side of it), and of a drystone wall running down the slope towards it. The ridge visibly narrows and in about 1.3 kilometres from the summit of Hatterrall Hill you approach **a staggered multi-path junction** (a five-way footpath junction on the OS map) not far from the top of that wall. At an initial three-way junction, a grass path joins from the left behind on 240°, a clear wider track (the Beacons Way) forks left towards the drystone wall (335°) and a gently ascending track continues along the ridge on 20°. Continue in the same direction for 25m to a marker stone (Llanthony to the left, Longtown to the right, National Trail ahead).

### **Here you have a choice:**

**For a shortcut, directly down to Llanthony**, *turn left* with the Beacons Way towards the drystone wall and in 110m you have the wall on your left. In 350m ignore a right fork away from the wall and in 80m the wall veers to the left away from the clear path. You have the wall, then a fence, back on your left in 800m where the terrain levels out and in 300m by an info panel and a three-way signpost, *turn left with the Beacons Way*, through a gate and down a pasture with a fence and a stream on your left. In 140m cross a footpath by a stile on the left and in 60m in the bottom field corner go through a wooden kissing gate into a wood and *bear right* along a car wide track. In 100m you ford a stream and in 90m emerge from the wood through a metal field gate into a pasture with the priory ruins ahead. Cross the field to the bottom right corner and in 140m go through a wooden gate and follow the left-hand wall of the priory compound. In 170m go through a gate to the right of a wooden field gate by a three-way signpost (the main walk joins from the right) and *turn left* around the walled compound. Pick up the directions below at the asterisk \*).

**For the main walk, continue in the same direction gently uphill** through a gap in an earth bank. In about 1.0 kilometres you pass another **trig point** at 552m above sea level. Ignore any faint left turns and continue along the ridge in a north westerly direction. Ahead to the right of the main ridge you can see the **Black Hill/Crib y Garth** spur of the Black Mountains and the **Olchon Valley**. In 250m the path is flagged by **a boggy section** and in 35m **by a mini-cairn** you ignore a left turn (down to Llanthony but not as scenic as the recommended descent). In 530m at a clear path crossing by a **part-collapsed mini-cairn** on the left, just after the path has started to gently ascend again, you continue in the same

direction and in 130m pass **a larger cairn** on the right (both public footpaths as per the OS map) by an indistinct crosspaths. In 160m you pass **a cairn** on the right (on the OS map) and in 480m you cross another indistinct path by a **small pile of stones** and *veer left* with the path and in 180m you *bear left* with the path and pass a **large pile of stones** on the right (on the OS map).

In all but the worst weather, you can now see **a cairn** 280m ahead in a north westerly direction (also on the OS map, but really: a storm shelter) and continue past it **towards another cairn** straight ahead and 500m away. **By the cairn** (at 605m above sea level, the highest point of the walk) **and by a marker stone** (ODP onwards, Llanthony to the left), **you turn left on a bearing of 235°**, initially along gravel. In 100m pass a cairn on the right, where the path starts to descend into the Vale of Ewyas, with fine views ahead of the valley and the mountains seen at the start of the ascent early in the walk. In 500m the path *bears to the right* with a steep drop on the left, just before the gradient increases further, down the flank of **Loxidge Tump**. You have fine full views of **Llanthony Priory's ruins** down below. In 330m the path turns to the left along an engineered section to cross a stream, where a faint path leads to a drop ahead, and then in 50m turns right to follow the stream further downhill. The path changes sides of the stream and in 150m passes a clump of trees to then turn left towards the priory buildings (175°). You descend to an info panel on Hatterrall Hill (seen before) by a stile in a fence line and a two-way signpost and on the other side follow a clear path downhill. You have left the **Access Land**.

The path continues steeply and in 70m you cross a farm track by a marker post and in another 70m cross a stile to enter **Loxidge Wood** in its left-hand corner (bluebells in season). In 20m leave the wood over a stile by a three-way signpost and *veer right* towards a point near the middle of the pasture's lower boundary fence, to the left of the second oak tree from the right (165°). In 220m go through a fence gap (a missing field gate) by a two-way signpost and continue in the same direction towards a wooden gate at the bottom of the drop. In 190m go through a gate with a stile to the right and *veer left* towards a two-way signpost. In 30m *turn right* along a car wide gravel track with the signpost, crossing a stream on an earth bridge and heading towards the right-hand corner of the walled priory compound. In 200m go through a gate to the right of a wooden field gate (the shortcut joins from the left) and *turn left* around the walled compound.

\*) In 80m by a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate on the left, *turn left* into the priory compound, through a small car park and along the drive. You pass **St. David's, Llanthony** on the right, supposedly built on the site of the earlier monastic cell of St. David, patron saint of Wales, and *turn left* into the courtyard of the priory, with its many info panels and with the **Llanthony Priory Hotel Cellar Bar** on the left. Leave the priory past the church and go back to the wooden gate and continue in the same direction (signed 'Gate House'). In 100m pass the gatehouse to its left and go through a wooden gate and *turn left* along a tarmac lane between earth banks. [The **Half Moon Inn** is 90m away in the same direction along the road though.] In 170m ignore the drive to the priory on the left and a right turning footpath (Pont yr Afon/River Bridge) to the **Treats** café 70m on the right by the bridge. In 100m the **Afon Honddu** is down on the right below at a meander in the river and in another 170m where the road turns down to the right, you continue in the same direction through a double metal field gate along a signposted footpath ('Cwmyoy'). This is the right of two car wide gravel tracks, down the middle of the field (150° initially).

You now go through several pastures **in the same direction for 1.3 km**, ever so gently ascending, until you have **Maes-y-Beran** farm away on the right. **In more detail:** In 350m, 30m before the end of the field, *fork right* to the right of two metal field gates and go over a stile to the right of it by a yellow-topped marker post and ford a stream. Walk through the next pasture along its left-hand boundary. In 60m ford a stream and **[!]** *fork*

*left* up a bank to stay to the left of a line of bushes (120°) and follow the left-hand field boundary. In 110m by a two-way signpost, continue in the same direction where the fence veers away to the left and in 150m in the far field corner, ford a stream and go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate into the adjacent pasture.

Head for a point about 100m down the right from the top left corner (120°) and in 200m go over a stile to the left of a signpost 10m to the left of a wooden gate and follow a couple of right-hand field boundaries, in 50m ford a stream and ignore a permissive path down to the right with a **Tir Gofal** waymarker (this translates as 'Care of the Land' and was a 1999 UK and EU-funded scheme to encourage environmentally friendly agriculture and public access to the countryside, preceding the CRoW-Act, which only came into effect in 2005). In 110m you cross a stile into the next field and in 180m you cross a stream on a plank bridge. Continue in the same direction between fences and in 30m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and in 20m over another stile by a two-way signpost.

*Bear right* towards **Maes-y-Beran farm**. In 150m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and follow a car wide gravel track through the farm. *Bear right* with the track and in 100m at a three-way signpost *turn left* over a stile to the left of a metal field gate along a bridleway ('Cwmyoy'), ignoring the concrete farm track continuation (a restricted byway) down to the Valley Road. You now walk **in the same direction through six pastures**, crossing a few streams in the process, **until you get to some ruined farmstead. In more detail:** follow the left-hand boundary of the first three fields; you have fine back views from here up to **the top of the Vale of Ewias**, where it forks into two arms (330°); continue in the same direction through the next three fields, passing a few marker posts en route and going over a few stiles; up on the left in the fourth field: bluebells in season. At the end of the sixth field you ford another stream by a two-way signpost and in 40m *turn right* to go **through a long-ruined farmstead** ('Weild' on the OS map).

In 20m *veer left* into a pasture and head to the left of a large oak tree 100m away along a clear path (210°). Continue towards a gap in the boundary growth 110m away and ford a stream there. You have **fine views to the back** towards Hatterall Ridge and the descent route from it into Llanthony. In the next field continue in the same direction towards a stile in the opposite fence line and in 150m ford a stream by a two-way signpost and go over the stile to the left of a metal field gate. In the next large field head towards the far bottom-right corner along a clear path and in 130m you converge with the fence line (with a steeply dropping wood on the other side). In another 160m go over a stile and continue in the same direction to a stile dead ahead, 150m away with the river now visible away to the right. In the next field you head for a stile in a fence line 200m away, staying to the left of a fenced tree nursery.

Aim to the left of a ford and a two-railed footbridge across the river (signposted 'Cwmyoy' but ignore!) and *turn left* over the stile, signposted '**Darren**' ('scarp' in English), and go through a pasture along a clear path towards a hanging wood, with the river on the right. In 40m you ford a streamlet, and start to ascend through the wood, in 25m ford a stream, in 50m pass a marker post on a tree stump on the left, in 25m ford another stream and in 70m cross an often-muddy stretch. Continue along a car wide grassy track with a fence on the right and in 50m pass a marker post indicating a left turn and in 20m *turn left* (i.e. do not go through a metal field gate). In 40m you *turn right* over a stile and *turn left* along the left-hand boundary of a pasture. In 40m – by a marker post on the left – the public footpath bears right towards a metal field gate 50m away and then continues through **Daren-uchaf** farm, while a permitted footpath continues along the left-hand field boundary to a metal field gate in the top-left corner to go around the farm. The track through the farm is often very muddy.



**Therefore, follow the permitted footpath** up the field and leave it in 80m over a stile to the right of the gate and in 20m go up some steps and across another stile and *turn right* along a barbed wire fence. In 165m at the far end of the farmyard by a field gate, you re-join the public footpath and in 20m by a wooden field gate by **Daren-ganol** farm, **[!]** *turn left* with a small handwritten sign ('Cwmyoy'). In 20m *turn right* along the house's garden fence and in 90m ignore a metal field gate and bear up to the left with the path. In another 30m *turn right* through a metal field gate and continue along a grassy ledge with a barbed wire fence on the right. In 100m you continue along a car wide farm track which joins from the right behind and in 60m you have the '**Darren**' (or scarp), which gives its name to the farms just passed, up on your left and the hill looming above Cwmyoy ahead.

In 70m bear up to the left with the track, which in 90m levels out and in 15m by a marker post, you *turn right* along a narrow path at a T-junction with a byway (the car wide grassy track on the left leads to Ty-bach (house) and the Access Land). You head somewhat to the left of another farm house, **Daren-isaf**. In 110m go through a metal field gate or over a stile to its right and in 10m ford a stream. In 25m continue in the same direction to the left of a raised pasture and follow a stream (at times in its bed). In 120m you reach a missing gate with a couple of markers on its posts.

### **Here you have a choice:**

**To avoid the climb up the hill** above Cwmyoy (cut 740m and 43m ascent), continue in the same direction along a grassy path on the level (175°) and in 200m go through a wooden field gate at the corner of a fenced area. You continue at the base of the crag, in 180m passing a cottage on your left, and in 70m where a path joins from the left by an info panel on Hatterrall Hill (seen twice before), the main walk route joins from the left. Pick up the text in the middle of the second paragraph below ("You go through a green...").

**To climb up that hill (recommended for its grand views)**, *turn left* (130°) along a clear path up a fenced pasture to its top-right corner. In 180m go through a gate in a wall and *turn right*, initially along the base of the crag, then curving left with the path, winding up to its top plateau. From the plateau (this is **Access Land**), either re-trace your steps back to the gate (longer), or take the direct descent through a jumble of rocks (shorter, but much steeper). At the gate *turn right*, with the crag on your right, and follow the wall on your left. You pass a gash on the right between the two tops of the crag (which was difficult to comprehend from the top) and in 160m *turn right* at a T-junction with a byway between drystone walls, gently downhill along the base of the wooded flank of the crag.

You pass a **wooden cottage** in 25m and in 200m *turn right* by a fence corner on the right along a footpath, ignoring the continuation of the byway ahead. In 250m *bear left* with the path between drystone walls. In 70m pass an info panel on Hatterrall Hill (seen twice before) by a T-junction with a path coming down from the right. This is the alternative route avoiding the ascent. *Turn left*. You go through a green metal field gate downhill along a steep walled path with trees growing along the tops of the walls. In 125m *turn left* at a T-junction with a road and in 30m *turn right* through a metal gate into the churchyard of **St. Martin's, Cwmyoy**, the '**Leaning Church**' (the best views of the leaning are to be had from the tree on the left) and follow a paved path down and around to the right past a medieval cross to the church entrance (usually open).

### **Coming back out of the church, you have a choice:**

**For the Extension over the Twyn-y-Gaer hillfort site** (which includes a steep ascent through the wood you can see opposite), head down a paved path with a metal railing on

the left and leave the churchyard through a metal kissing gate. Pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Twyn-y-Gaer Extension**.

**For the Main Walk**, *turn left* along a paved path on the level, back past the medieval cross, and in the church yard corner go through a wooden gate to the left of a wider wooden gate and then between walls. In 20m continue along a tarmac lane and in another 30m continue in the same direction with a footpath signpost along a car wide grassy track where the lane turns right. In 30m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and follow a left-hand field boundary. In 100m continue in the same direction where the fence turns to the left and in 100m cross a stream and go over a stile into the adjacent pasture and veer ever so slightly left (85°) towards a metal field gate in 210m. Go over a stile to the left of that field gate and continue in the same direction along the next field's left-hand boundary. In 125m go over a stile onto a tarmac lane and cross a two-railed bridge opposite over a stream and go through a metal gate into a pasture.

[**To avoid the coming ascent** (cut 360m and 63m ascent), *turn right* along the lane for 1.3 km, where a public footpath joins from the left out of a farmyard, and *turn right* with the road, ignoring a (private) car wide gravel drive ahead. Pick up the text near the end of the second paragraph below: "In 230m you reach a bridge..."].

*Bear right* up broadly towards some farm buildings (110°) but leave the field in 250m about 50m to the left of the farm (**Perthi-crwn**) through a gate. You get good **views** back from here **to the crag above Cwmyoy** and also some signs in the fields of **the landslips off Hatterrall Hill**, that created the Darren and caused the church to lean. *Turn right* along a car wide grassy track towards the farm and then through its yard along concrete. You then follow a grassy track to a metal field gate and go through it. In 50m continue in the same direction in an open field and in 150m continue in the same direction with a fence on the right. In 100m *curve left* with the boundary by a metal field gate on the right and in 80m go over a stepless stile to the right of a metal field gate and follow right-hand boundaries through two more pastures.

In 300m you go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate, ford a stream and in 30m *turn right* over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and walk down a pasture, initially down the middle of the field on a bearing of 210°. The hills seen ahead are **Bryn Arw and Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl**. In 200m continue along a left-hand fence to its bottom left corner 100m away, where you go over a stile and follow a yellow arrow on a hand-written footpath sign on a tree, along a left-hand field boundary further downhill. In 170m in the bottom corner go over a stile onto a tarmac lane and *turn left* along it. In 60m a public footpath joins from the left out of a farmyard and you *turn right* with the road, ignoring a (private) car wide gravel drive ahead. In 230m you reach a bridge over the **Honddu River**, the **Pont Rhys Powell**. **Unless** you want to visit the early tea stop **The Queen's Head** pub 150m ahead along the road, *turn left* before the bridge over a stile into a pasture and *turn right* along its boundary, with the river on your right.

**\*\***) In 120m cross a stream over a two-railed bridge and go over a stile into another pasture and cross it diagonally to its far-left corner 300m away. Leave the field through a lightly wooded area (bluebells and wood anemones in season) and cross a stream on a plank bridge and in 50m *turn left* over a stile into a pasture and follow its right-hand boundary along the river. In 150m – by **Strawberry Cottage** on the left (on the OS map) – *turn right* over a raised two-railed wooden footbridge over the river and ascend to a road and *turn left* along it (without a pavement). In 1.1 kilometres you pass under the railway line and **[!]** in another 140m **[!]** *turn right* through a metal field gate into a pasture along an unmarked public footpath.

Follow the left-hand field boundary and in 220m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and *bear up to the left* through a sloping pasture to the church in **Llanvihangel Crucorney** (Llanvihangel translates as 'Church of St. Michael'). The exit from the field is in its far-left corner in 230m, over a stile into a corner of the churchyard where you have to *turn left* around a tree and some shrubs and then *turn right* to walk along the right-hand side of **St. Michael's, Llanvihangel Crucorney** (usually open, but modernised inside). Follow a tarmac path out of the churchyard in 50m and *turn right* to a road. Cross the road and *turn left* along its opposite pavement and in 60m pass a **bus stop for services to Hereford**, just before **The Skirrid Inn**.

**Buses to Avergavenny** stop opposite the pub, even though there is neither a bus stop sign nor a bus shelter or a timetable!

### **Twyn-y-Gaer Extension (add 2.0 km/1.2 mi and 196m ascent/descent)**

Continue downhill along a grassy path to the right of a garden and in 70m *bear left* with the path to a road and *turn right* along it. In 60m *turn left* with a two-way signpost (direction 'Llanthony') over a stone wall using steps in it and *turn right* on the other side along a narrow path with a steep drop on the left. You drop down with the path and in 60m pass a marker post. In 30m go over a stile and follow a path through a wooded area and in 40m *turn left* out of the wood over a stile into a pasture and follow a marker post towards the bottom-right corner. In 150m leave the field over a stile and a stone wall (using steps in it as before) and *turn left* at a T-junction with the tarmac lane to cross the **Honddu River** on a bridge. Follow the lane through **Neuadd Farm** and uphill and in about 250m *turn left* at a T-junction with the **Valley Road**.

In 40m *turn right* over a stile into a pasture and climb up it steeply in a straight line. Have a rest along the way to enjoy the **fine views back to Cwmyoy**, its church and the crag and the Darren behind it. In 200m *turn right* at a T-junction with a bridleway. Ignore (in 50m if you came up the field in a straight line) the continuation of the bridleway turning left through a wooden gate, and continue in the same direction along the path along the

upper field boundary (a public footpath). In 70m you go through a metal gate into a wood (**Coed Robin**) and continue steeply uphill along a clear, straight path with a stream on the left. In 230m cross a car wide forest track and continue in the same direction through the wood, still steeply uphill, through a recently cleared area. In 200m *turn hard left* with the track by a marker post, now rising less steeply along a ledge leading along the bottom of a plantation. In 230m *turn right* at a fence corner, keeping the fence on your left and in 30m go over a stile into a grassy area this side of a walled house (**The Rock** on the OS map).

*Turn right* along the wall with the wood on your right and in 40m follow a car wide grassy track (a byway, can be overgrown in summer). In 140m go through a metal field gate into **Access Land** and *turn left* along a fence. In 20m *turn left* at a T-junction with a car wide gravel track. You are now walking along the narrow ridge between the **valleys of the Honddu and the Grwyne Fawr**, with **Gaer** hill and its **Twyn-y-Gaer** hillfort site dead ahead. Visible from the crest, on the right on 255° you have a nearby top (**Crug Mawr**) and a higher top on the main ridge of the Black Mountains behind it (**Pen Cerrig-calch**), as well as on 290° **Pen Allt-mawr**, also on the main ridge (both: SWC Walk 333 Crickhowell Circular via Table Mountain and the Three Pens)

In 150m you pass The Rock, the house passed a few minutes ago, away on your left and in 170m the views open up on the right to the tops mentioned above, as well as to **Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl** on the half-right (200°). In 130m a byway joins from the left through a metal field gate and in 140m you ignore a faint grass path forking right to a walled enclosure. In 180m where the wall on your left starts to gently curve away to the left, you *fork right uphill* (170°) along a clear grassy path, also ignoring a right running grass path. In 170m cross a grass track and in 60m cross a narrower path (an unmarked public footpath). In 20m ignore a right forking grass path (also a public footpath) and follow the broad meandering path up to the rim of the top plateau of **Gaer**.

You eventually reach a band of gorse just below the summit plateau and continue in the same direction along a grass path. The path curves to the left and in 70m levels out with some higher ground to its left, with **Sugar Loaf/Y Fâl** and its offshoots **Deri** and **Rholben** across the **Cwm Coed-y-cerig valley** below. In 15m go through the ditch and up the bank of the rampart of the **Twyn-y-Gaer hillfort**. Walk through the grass, bracken and gorse to the cairn in its centre 65m away, at 427m above sea level. From the cairn continue in the previous direction (85°) and in 50m start a gentle descent which leads in 90m through the ramparts of the hillfort at the historic entrance and to a fence marking the boundary of the **Access Land**. At the fence *turn left* with the clear grassy path along the base of the hillfort and in 60m curve to the left with it.

In 80m *turn right* downhill with the path (with last views of the middle part of the **Vale of Ewyas** and the earlier descent to Llanthony) and follow the right-hand boundary to the bottom-right corner of the Access Land by the top of a wood. In 200m *turn right* at a T-junction with a car wide gravel track through a metal field gate and follow the track along the wood. The track continues as a tarmac lane in 300m and you ignore all ways off and descend back into the valley over 1.3 kilometres, always with the wood on your left. At a T-junction with the **Valley Road**, *turn right* for 25m and at the early tea stop **The Queen's Head** pub, *turn left* down a lane, signed 'Cwmyoy'. In 125m cross the **Honddu River** on the **Pont Rhys Powell** and *turn right* over a stile by a two-way signpost into a pasture (the main walk has joined from the left along the lane).

*Turn right* along the field boundary, with the river on your right, and pick up the directions above at the double asterisk \*\*).