

| Storey Arms to Libanus (via Ystradfellte) | | | Storey Arms to Libanus (with Shortcut) | | |
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| 1 st walk check | 2 nd walk check | 3 rd walk check | 1 st walk check | 2 nd walk check | 3 rd walk check |
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Storey Arms to Libanus or Circular (via Ystradfellte)

Start: Glyn Tarell, Storey Arms Bus Stop

Finish: Libanus Bus Stop

There are also large car parks by the Storey Arms and a little further to the south along the A470.

Glyn Tarell, Storey Arms Bus Stop, map reference SN 982 203, is 10 km south west of Brecon/Aberhonddu, 235 km west north west of Charing Cross and 440m above sea level. Libanus Bus Stop, map reference SN 994 259, is 6 km north northeast of Storey Arms and 203m above sea level. Both are in **Powys, Wales**.

Length: 30.0 km (18.7 mi).

Cumulative ascent/descent: 900/1137m. For a longer or shorter walk, see *below* **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 10 out of 10

Time: 8 hours walking time.

Transport: Glyn Tarell, Storey Arms and Libanus Bus Stops are served by line T4 (Cardiff – Merthyr Tydfil–Brecon – Newtown), with 9 buses a day Monday-Sat and 6 on Sundays.

Saturday Walkers' Club: This walk is doable as a daywalk from London if you have motorised transport. Accommodation is available in Libanus and many other places along the bus line, including the Llwyn-y-Celyn Youth Hostel reached via an Alternative Ending and with its own bus stop on the same line.

OS Landranger Map: 160 (Brecon Beacons)

OS Explorer Map: OL12 (Brecon Beacons National Park)

Walk Notes:

This strenuous route explores the easterly part of the Fforest Fawr area of the Brecon Beacons, starting from a high pass between the Central Beacons ridge and the imposing Fan Fawr.

Often ignored by walkers due to its vicinity to Corn Du and Pen y Fan, Fan Fawr is an impressive hulk of a mountain, after a steep ascent providing for fantastic views across the Fforest Fawr out to Black Mountain and across to the Central Beacons. You then descend along the broad and gentle flank of it, eventually along the watershed between the Hepste and Mellte catchment areas, two of the three main rivers of the Waterfall Country just to the south. Stretches of this descent are fundamentally pathless and with some watery although not boggy areas, but in good weather the onwards route is not difficult to discern. In bad weather though, good navigation skills are essential!

You cross over from sandstone terrain into the limestone upland of the Mynydd y Garn with its shake holes and limestone outcrops, and follow the limestone rockface of the Gwaun Cefnygarreg atop the Mellte valley to lunch in Ystradfellte. Rising out of the valley, you cross another limestone upland and ascend the gentle ridge of Fan Llia and Fan Dringarth, after which several shorter options to finish are described.

But the main route ascends Fan Frynych, a glorious viewpoint overlooking the Usk Valley, followed by a long, scenic descent into the valley. Lastly, you cross the grassy common-with-views of the Mynydd Illtud as well as pass the National Park Visitor Centre en route to Libanus with its pub and bus stop.

A shortcut greatly reduces the effort. An extension via Twyn y Gaer (hill) is described.

Walk Options:

A Shortcut, from Fan Fawr to Fan Dringarth, reduces the walk to a steep ascent, a crossing of a shallow valley and a long scenic descent: 15.1 km/9.3 mi with 528/765m ascent/descent, **5/10**.

After passing over Fan Dringarth, there are then five different finishes possible:

- **A Circular Walk back to the Storey Arms** bus stop is the least steep descent (cuts 4.2 km and 237m descent, **9/10**);
- **An Alternative Finish at the Llwyn-y-Celyn** bus stop, the steepest finish, without going to the top of Fan Frynych first (cut 5.1 km and 56/179m ascent/descent, **9/10**);
- **An Alternative Finish at the Llwyn-y-Celyn** bus stop, the steepest finish, but going to the top of Fan Frynych first (cut 4.4 km and 23/146m ascent/descent, **9/10**);
- **The Main Walk Finish to the Libanus** bus stop by The Tai'r Bull Inn;
- **An Extension over Twyn y Gaer** (an Iron Age hillfort site), before the Libanus Finish (add 3.5 km and 75m ascent/descent).

Lunch (details last updated 08/09/2022)

The New Inn Ystradfellte, Aberdare, Powys CF44 9JE (01639 721 014, <https://www.waterfallways.co.uk/>).

The New Inn is located 11.5 km/7.1 mi into the walk. Open Wed-Sun 13.00-22.00 (17.00 Sun). Food served to 19.30 (16.30 Sun).

Tea (details last updated 13/10/2022)

YHA Brecon Beacons Llwyn y celyn, Libanus, Brecon, Powys, LD3 8NH (01874 622485, <https://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/brecon-beacons>). The Youth Hostel is located 200m down a lane opposite the bus stop at the walk's **alternative finish** and its reception is open and sells hot and cold drinks daily 07.00-10.00 and 17.00-22.00. It is licensed. Meals are served in the evening.

The Tai'r Bull Inn A470, Libanus, Brecon, Powys LD3 8EL (01874 622 600, <https://www.thetairbullinn.co.uk/>). Open from 12.30-23.00 Wed-Sat and 12.30-19.00 Sun. Food served 12.30-20.00 Wed-Thu, 12.30-21.00 Fri-Sat and 12.00-17.00 Sun.

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; gwydfa: 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:

Brecon Beacons National Park/Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog

Home to spectacular landscapes, a rich variety of wildlife and fascinating cultural and geological heritage, the Brecon Beacons National Park in Mid-Wales boasts a magnificent array of Old Red Sandstone peaks, open moorland and green valleys, spanning 1.344 km² (520 mi²). Pen y Fan within the Central Beacons is perhaps the best-known summit but there are many others in the five distinct parts of the National Park (Black Mountain (Y Mynydd Du) in the far west, Fforest Fawr, Central Beacons, the Llangattock and Llangynidr Hills, and the Black Mountains to the east).

Cambrian Way/Taith Cambria

The Cambrian Way ('The Mountain Connoisseur's Walk') is a very challenging 479 km (298 mi) linear long-distance high-level footpath traversing much of the highest and wildest parts of Wales. It runs coast-to-coast from Cardiff Castle to Conwy Castle over the Black Mountains, Brecon Beacons, Carmarthen Fan, Plynlimon, Cadair Idris, the Rhinogs, the Snowdon massif and the Carneddau and is unmarked in the higher mountain areas. Navigational skills are therefore of paramount importance.

<http://www.cambrianway.org.uk/>

Fan Fawr/Fan Llia/Fan Dringarth/Fan Frynych

Fan Fawr ('great peak') is an impressive bulky mountain that is nevertheless often overlooked due to its proximity to the Central Beacons ridge just across the A470. Its slopes feed water into four rivers (the Tarell, Taf Fawr, Hepste (via the Afon y Waun) and Mellte (via the Afon Dringarth) and two of those are dammed for reservoirs. The hill is largely formed from Old Red Sandstone and its eastern cwm contains a fine late-glacial moraine known as Cefn Bach.

Fan Llia ('peak near Llia' (river)) is a subsidiary summit of Fan Fawr and has the form of a broad ridge aligned south-south-west to north-north-east with a subsidiary top to the north which is known as **Fan Dringarth** ('peak near Dringarth' (river)). It is made of Old Red Sandstone.

Fan Frynych is the northernmost peak of the Fforest Fawr massif and is classed as a subsidiary summit of Fan Fawr. It is made of Old Red Sandstone. The north eastern flank of the mountain is defined by a geological fault and large parts of the mountain's eastern flanks are affected by landslips.

Rivers/Afonydd Tarell, Taf Fawr, Hepste, Mellte, Llia, Dringarth

The **Tarell** rises on the north easterly slopes of Fan Fawr and flows north, then north-east, for 20 km into the River Usk.

The **Taf Fawr** rises below the peak of Corn Du, and flows in a generally southerly direction through a steep-sided valley. Merging with the Taf Fechan in Cefncoedycymer, just north of Merthyr Tidfyl, it forms the Taff, which enters the Severn Estuary in Cardiff Bay. Three reservoirs along its course provide water for Cardiff. The headwaters of the **Hepste** are the Afon y Waun, Nant y Cwrier and Nant Hepste Fechan, rising on the dip-slopes of the Fforest Fawr and combine to form the Hepste near the farmstead of Hepste Fechan. It enters onto the limestone outcrop near this point and sections of its course downstream remain dry in all but flood conditions as the flow disappears underground. The river flows over the Millstone Grit outcrop from some way beyond Hepste Bridge to then plunge over a band of resistant gritstone to form Sgwd yr Eira and the Cilhepste Falls and join the Mellte. Its lower section forms the border between Powys and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The **Mellte** is formed by the confluence of the **Afon Llia** and the **Afon Dringarth** in the Fforest Fawr and its name is derived from 'mellt' - the Welsh word for 'lightning' - after its tendency to rise and fall rapidly in response to heavy rainfall. It runs underground for ½ km at Porth yr Ogof (cave) as it crosses the limestone outcrop, resurging at Pwll Glas. There are fifteen known entrances to the cave system.

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.

Beacons Way/Ffordd-y-Bannau

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

Craig Cerrig-Gleisiad a Fan Frynych National Nature Reserve

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

WALK DIRECTIONS

Step off the bus at the **Storey Arms Outdoor Centre/Canolfan y Bannau** high up on the pass between the Glyn Tarell and the Taff Vale/Cwm Taf, in the heart of the **Brecon Beacons National Park**, at 440m above sea. Start to walk in a westerly direction (i.e.: if arriving from the direction of Brecon/Aberhonddu, cross the road), to the right of a **refreshment kiosk** (open daily) along a gravel path for 20m to a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and enter the open hillside (**Access Land**) with a National Park Open Access sign and a **Cambrian Way/Taith Cambria** marker. Continue in the same direction (230°), ignoring a faint path to the right, aiming for a saddle to the left of the obvious top ahead (**Fan Fawr**) and to the right of a promontory. You are following a grass path to the right of a ditch-like depression and in about 200m you have a stream on the right. This is one of the furthest tributaries of the **Afon Tarell**, which joins the Usk River just to the west of the centre of Brecon.

Stay with the stream and in about 170m the gradient eases a little, although with another steeper part of the initial ascent already visible ahead. Rear views show the broad ascent paths up to Corn Du (and Pen y Fan, which is out of view) from the Storey Arms and Pont ar Daf car parks (SWC Walk 85 Pen y Fan and Corn Du from Storey Arms). In 50m you cross the stream and continue in the same direction, soon steeply ascending up the grassy hill flank with some steps having been forced into the ground by walkers. As the gradient eases, the top of Fan Fawr comes back into view and you continue in the same direction. In 50m pass a boggy area on the left and *veer to the left*, now aiming for the left-hand base of the top ahead (215°). The road noise from the A470 has subsided and you follow the slightly soggy path to the left towards the ascent path bearing up to the right. In 180m *veer to the left* to in 100m negotiate a boggy area before getting to the base of the ascent path (at 570m above sea).

The uphill path follows a bearing of 245° and in 250m you pass a red sandstone rock nose on the right (at 630m above sea), just after a large reservoir has come into view in the valley to the left (the **Beacons Reservoir**). In another 100m a steep grass path turns to the left (235°), at 670m above sea. [This is **easy-to-miss**, just as the path continues steeply up a deep chute.] *Turn left* along this, initially along more steps in the grass slope then along a fine grass path, and follow it for 400m **to the top of Fan Fawr**. [If you missed the turning, not to worry: there is a second, more obvious, path turning left 90m further along, but it runs along the middle of a broad ridge, far away from the drop, restricting the views somewhat. Both paths merge 50m before the top.]

You have fine views into the bowl-shaped valley on the left, feeding its run-off into the **Beacons Reservoir**, the first of three along the **Taf Fawr**. All three reservoirs become visible as you ascend the path. **The Black Mountains/Y Mynyddoedd Duon** are visible in the distance behind, to the left of Corn Du. Follow the rim of the bowl to the obvious top, marked by a cairn. **From the top of Fan Fawr** (at 734m above sea), you can see all of the tops walked across in the afternoon, all lower than Fan Fawr though: on the right (340°) **Craig Cerrig-Gleisiad** and **Fan Frynych** (both at 629m above sea); a little to the right across the upper Cwm Dringarth (on 265°): **Fan Dringarth** (617m above sea); to the left along it and part of the same ridge (on 260°): **Fan Llia** (632m above sea). On top of those, you have **Fan Nedd** beyond Fan Dringarth, **Fan Gyhrych** due W (at 725m above sea and 9km away) and **The Black Mountain/Y Mynydd Du** facing in this direction: the wide ridge of **Fan Hir** and the obvious top of **Fan Brycheiniog** to the right of it on 280° (802m above sea and 15km away). And with some luck, you get a glimpse of the **Bristol Channel** to the left. There is no trigpoint at the top of Fan Fawr, but there is one on the subsidiary top some distance away, seen half right ahead and there are also several faint paths leaving this summit.

Here you have a choice:

For a Shortcut from Fan Fawr to Fan Dringarth, take the faint path on a 290° bearing initially and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Shortcut**.

For the Main Walk, walk towards the trig point: *bear right* away from the rim of the bowl and follow a clear path on a bearing of 235° along the broad top plateau. The walking is mainly good along a grass path, which may become squelchy in places after heavy rain, and you reach the trigpoint in 625m (at 715m above sea). A little to the left 6 kilometres away (on 200°), you can see the rock face of the **Gwaun Cefnygarreg** (457m above sea), the aim en route to lunch in **Ystradfelte** (which is just about visible to the right of it in the valley bottom). There are seven paths converging at the trigpoint, three of those lead on from the previous direction: a faint one to the half right, one dead ahead (235°) and one to the left (195°). **[!]** *Bear left* along the furthest left of the three paths on 195°. **For the next 1.6 km you broadly stay on this bearing**, soon with higher ground to the right, and with the valley on the left being that of the **Afon y Waun**, one of the three headwaters of the **Hepste River/Afon Hepste**.

In more detail: in 90m you pass through some spongy ground and **[!]** take the left fork. From here meander with the path, broadly along the 195° bearing. In 340m you cross an infant stream in a clear cut (at 674m above sea). In about 900m you reach a field of scattered red sandstone boulders (at 600m above sea) and find your way through it, still on the same bearing. The path has been clear most of the way, grassy or tussocky, and in the main easy to walk along. You go pathless through scattered boulders for about 150m and in another 150m, you reach another late-seen band of boulders (at 560m above sea).

[!] *Veer left* in a southerly direction along the broad ridge, the **Bryn Penwyn-uchaf**. This is the **watershed between Afon y Waun/Hepste River** on the left and Afon Dringarth/**Mellte River** on the right. You now walk due S downhill Fan Fawr's slope. This is pathless and you have to carefully negotiate or skirt around some large tussocky areas, but the ground is always carrying. There are also a few more streams than the OS map suggests, often part-hidden under the turf. In 1.1 kilometres (at 453m above sea) you cross a clear infant stream, the **Nant Mawr**, which runs down to the right into a gorge and thence into the Dringarth Valley. In another 300m (at 443m above sea), you pass some small pools on the right (**Llynnau'r Waun** on the OS map, this may look just like a tussocky depression without close scrutiny). You reascend a little and in another 140m (if on the right bearing), again at 443m above sea, **you meet a clear wide grassy track**, used for livestock movements across the upland moor.

Bear right (230° initially) along the track, with some higher ground visible ahead, as the track descends to a fording of a stream 300m away (at 430m above sea). In another 130m or so beyond the stream, you *turn left* (due S) pathless across the open limestone moor (**Waun Dywarch** = turf moor) towards some higher ground 220m away and in 100m further (at 452m above sea) you reach a peculiar limestone outcrop in a large grassy area, with stones rising out of the grass in an almost regular pattern. *Turn right* from the previous direction to spot a trigpoint (in good weather) 2 kilometres away at similar height, on a bearing of 215°. Aim for that trigpoint across the limestone upland of the **Mynydd y Garn**, with plenty of **shake holes** and limestone outcrops in evidence. You go through a couple of dips during which you lose sight of the trigpoint and pass a few tops dominated by limestone outcrops. The ground is a little uneven in places but this is fine walking terrain. There are often wild ponies around.

On the last stretch to the trigpoint, stay to the right of a limestone rock face and curve to the right of an area of bracken, then head left for a ladder stile over a barbed wire fence, up a limestone step and a little to the right of the trigpoint. In another 20m you reach the **trigpoint at 457m above sea**, with fine views (weather permitting) all

around, from Pen y Fan/Corn Du to most of the Fforest Fawr tops, as well as the lower lying wooded valleys of the **Waterfall Country/Bro'r Skydau** and **Moel Penderyn** to the left of it (on 185° and only 371m high), the area covered in SWC 400 Waterfall Country/Bro'r Skydau (Pontneddfechan Circular).

Turn right from the previous direction across the limestone upland, along a clear path broadly parallel to the fence on the right. In 75m **[!]** *fork right* and after 110m converge with the fence along the limestone rockface, which here stands atop a crumbling drystone wall. In 120m the wall discontinues and you have just the fence on the right, with the drop beyond. In another 120m you have fine views of a stretch where the rock face has collapsed into the valley below, just before a perpendicular drystone wall drops down into the valley along the rock face. In 25m the fence discontinues and you follow a clear path along the drop. In 140m you pass a short stretch of collapsing drystone wall and in 50m curve to the left around a bowl created by a collapsed part of the rock face. You can spot **Ystradfellte** village down in the valley (due W), with the church hall, churchyard and church the nearest buildings.

Continue along the rock face for another 500m. **In more detail:** The path veers away from the drop a little and you can spot a road ahead this side of a large wood. Down to the right you can see a path leading from the bottom of the rockface to a tarmac lane, to the right of a drystone wall. This is the intermediate aim. Continue along the rockface, en route crossing an audible but not visible stream, and in another 50m you get to a shake hole by a crumbling drystone wall, with a tree growing out of the shake hole's wall. A streamlet runs into the hole and disappears underground, this is therefore a **swallow hole**, the **Gwaen Cefn y Garreg Sink**. There is a fence visible below beyond an area of bracken and large boulders, leading back towards the drystone wall.

Here you *turn right*, just before the sinkhole, over the crumbling drystone wall and go down a short steep bit over some stones to pick up a clear path *turning right* back on yourself, but below the rock face. This is **still Access Land**, so **you could descend steeply** to the fence, through the bracken and grass, while avoiding the slippery and sometimes unstable boulders. And then *turn right* along the fence with a (broken) Permitted Footpath marker post. **But it is safer** to follow the clear path below the rockface: you pass a large limestone boulder and in another 35m cross the collapsed drystone wall. In 25m you walk between two hawthorn trees and in another 35m *turn left* downhill. The path converges with the drystone wall on the left and in 100m you *turn left* over a stile **out of the Access Land**.

You follow a Permitted Footpath between barbed wire fence and drystone wall downhill to a road. [There are some trees growing in that strip so you will have to get to the right of the wall in those places and near the road it is full of bracken and tussock as well.] Go over a stile onto the tarmac lane and cross it a little to the left to a two-way signpost ('Gwaen Cefnygarreg' back, Public Footpath onwards) and follow the footpath along a grass path through bracken to the right of a recently felled and newly planted wood. In 35m *turn left* with the path and continue with a wall away to the right, now with the rock face above away to the left. In 90m *curve to the right* with the wall and path and in 550m emerge onto the road seen much earlier from the plateau.

Turn right downhill, with fine views back to the rock face. This is a single lane road with passing places and relatively busy as it runs between two of the main car parks for the waterfalls and the Porth yr Ogof cave system. In 200m ignore a left turn signed for the **Cwm Porth Car Park** and continue in the same direction, now along a wider lane. In 130m you pass a 15% gradient traffic sign and start the steep descent into the valley of the **Mellte River/Afon Mellte**. In 140m the road turns left and in 75m, by a footpath signpost on the right, you ignore a footpath turning left over a stepless stile into a wood (SWC 400 Waterfall Country comes up the road and turns over that stile).

You now reverse-walk SWC 400 for 1.25 km: in 80m *turn left* with the road and in 60m ignore a left turning drive to **Porth yr Ogof Farm** and *turn right* with the road between trees and hedges and in 130m ignore a footpath joining from the right, just before the bridge over the **Mellte River**, which is often dry on this stretch, with the water only flowing below the limestone boulders in the riverbed. Continue into **Ystradfellte** village, in 140m passing the **Church Hall**, the **village store and Post Office** (weekdays only) on the right and in 50m, by some benches either side of the entrance to **St. Mary's Church, Ystradfellte** on the right, you reach a four-way road junction at the heart of the village by **The New Inn** on the right with a car park on the left across a lane.

[A London trivia: **Godre Pentre** (= 'end of the village') cottage, owned by the **Croydon Caving Club**, is 70m away to the left down the Pontneddfechan Road (a white house with white metal gate).]

Continue uphill between the pub on the right and the car park on the left along a row of cottages initially up a deteriorating tarmac lane. In 300m, where the lane turns to the right to Tyle Farm, you continue in the same direction through a metal field gate and up a rough grassy car wide track, a restricted byway and a **path to Access Land**. In 100m go through another metal field gate and continue uphill between trees, **rising out of the Mellte Valley**. In 300m, now in the open, you ignore a marked public footpath turning right into a pasture (although the marker points ahead) and in 30m enter the walled upland limestone **Access Land** through a metal field gate in a drystone wall. Continue in the same direction along the drystone wall on the right, on the course of the unmarked restricted byway, ignoring both a left turning public footpath ('Dyffryn', SWC Walk 400 Waterfall Country comes from that direction), as well as a public bridleway bearing left across the area (without any trace on the ground).

In 80m at a wall corner, *bear left* (295°) along a clear grass path through this limestone upland with its **shake holes and limestone outcrops**, clear to the left of the raised area on the right, which leads to the top of **Carnau Gwynion**. There are a few hawthorn trees scattered about and blocks of limestone dotted here and there and you have fine views to the left and right. In 150m, at the top of a slight incline, you *curve to the right* with the path (320°) and in another 320m a clear wide path joins from the left behind (a Public Road on the OS map). In 130m go through a metal field gate in a wall made of large stones and continue in the same direction (5°) between higher ground on both sides, gently rising. In 220m you pass a water-filled shake hole on the right, near the top of this rise, now with the ridge containing **Fan Llia and Fan Dringarth** visible ahead, with **Fan Nedd** to the left of that (with a plantation on its near slope). In 40m there is another water-filled shake hole on the left and **Fan Fawr** is now in view.

This area saw **extensive lime burning** before the enclosure of 1819, and in 100m you pass **a large lime kiln** on the right (a 'running draw kiln'). The path curves to the right to the far-right corner of the walled area and in 120m you **leave the Access Land** through a metal field gate and continue in the same direction gently downhill along a very wide grass strip between drystone walls, still along the restricted byway (ignore a ladder stile to the left). In 500m *turn left* with the track and go through a metal field gate with a marker and continue along another walled track. In 410m you reach a tarmac lane at a bend and *bear left* along it, on the level, immediately crossing the **Nant Plas-y-Gros**, which runs down to the right towards the **Afon Llia**. Follow the lane for 830m, mostly between forests to where it bears up to the left by a sign for **Blaen Llia Forest/Coedwig**.

[!] *Fork right* downhill along a car wide gravel track to a car park by the **Afon Llia** 280m away, now following **The Beacons Way**, which has joined from down the lane. By the car park, there are some info panels and a map and you pass some car barriers

and cross the **Afon Llia** on a very wide two-railed bridge, back into **Access Land**. On the other side, immediately *turn left* along a grass path. In 80m *turn right* uphill with the path and in another 40m *turn left* through a metal gate with a Beacons Way marker on the reverse of a gate post. You go over a railed footbridge across a ditch and – with **a small waterfall** visible below to the left on the Nant y Groes, a Llia tributary – in 20m *bear right* uphill on a broad bearing of 40° along a not always obvious path up the rolling moorland to the ridge of **Fan Llia**. Higher up, the path is clear and grassy.

In 1.7 km **pass a large cairn on the ridge** at 614m above sea, where the gradient eases considerably and you have the **Ystradfellte Reservoir** down below on the right in the **Cwm Dringarth** and **Fan Fawr** rising on the other side of the valley. In 100m you pass a couple of small lochs and in 430m go over **the top of Fan Llia** at 632m above sea and continue along the clear ridge path (5°). Half left ahead you can see the scenic **Cwm Senni** dropping down from the Fforest Fawr all the way to **Sennybridge** on the **River Usk**. In 700m go over the top of **Fan Dringarth** at 617m above sea and in another 250m you pass some distinct small boulders right by the sharp drop of the escarpment, at a height of 607m above sea. SWC Walk 307 Fforest Fawr Traverse joins from the left out of the valley. The path veers left a little and continues in a northerly direction. Ignore all ways off for 1.3 km. The Shortcut joins from the right out of the valley along this stretch.

*) Just before a minor summit (point 570m on the OS map), *bear half right* along a broader path (50°), gently descending. In 450m you cross some deep groughs (an infant stream) and in another 150m ignore a faint left fork. In 400m the gradient eases and you continue in the same direction, more gently ascending. In 400m or so (at 600m above sea) you reach a large cairn (the 'Pile of Stones' on the OS map).

Here you have a choice:

For a finish at the Storey Arms bus stop, *fork right* (50°) further up the slope of **Craig Cerrig-gleisiad**, leaving the Beacons Way, and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Storey Arms Ending**.

For the Main Walk finish at Libanus and the Alternative Finish at the Llwyn-y-celyn bus stop, you *take the left fork* (30°). In 550m continue along a fence on the left along the top of a valley on the left (a path has joined along the fence from below) and in 210m you reach a path and fence T-junction by a sign for the **Craig Cerrig-Gleisiad a Fan Frynych National Nature Reserve** on the left, with a steep drop directly ahead and by a couple of stiles (one ahead and one to the left). *Turn left* to cross the stile into the Nature Reserve and continue gently uphill, now with a fence and a drop to your right. You have **Fan Frynych** ahead and can see **Brecon** down in the valley below to the right. In 250m you reach a wooden kissing gate on the right.

Here you have a choice:

For the Alternative Finish at the Llwyn-y-celyn bus stop (without going to the top of Fan Frynych first), *turn right* through the wooden kissing gate and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Llwyn-y-celyn Ending**.

For the Main Walk's Finish at Libanus (as well as the Extension), continue in the same direction uphill and in 40m pass a pond on the left. You follow a rough boulder and grass track and in 200m it levels out, just 15m before the fence on the right bears to the right with a crumbling drystone wall beyond it. There is a stile a further 20m along the fence, this is the start of **the descent route to the Llewyn-y-celyn bus stop after going to the top of Fan Frynych**. Continue along the track for 20m and *turn left then right* along a grass path that climbs up steeply onto the slightly higher

level of the hill's plateau. You follow a clear grass path curving gently to the left for 250m to the trigpoint of **Fan Frynych** at 629m above sea (the exact same height as Craig Cerrig-gleisiad to the hard left). From here you have **very fine views** into the Usk Valley (with the slope preventing seeing all of it, for now) and back to and along the Fforest Fawr tops to the Black Mountain/Y Mynydd Du.

For a Finish at the Llwyn-y-celyn bus stop, return along the path you came and cross the stile mentioned earlier. *Turn left* along a clear path gently downhill for 130m to a T-junction and *turn right* more steeply downhill into the bowl. In 80m at a four-way junction by a well-made cairn and a marker post with a green disc and white arrow, you continue steeply downhill on a clear grassy path and pick up the directions below under **Llwyn-y-celyn Ending** at the asterisk *).

For the Main Walk and the Extension, *turn second right* (50°) from the previous direction along a clear path to the left of a pond in 60m and **[!]** *turn sharp right* at the far end of the pond along a faint path, ignoring the clear path continuing ahead. In 40m walk between disused pits and in 60m you reach the car wide track walked along earlier, and *turn left* along it, passing more disused pits. On the right below you have the **Glyn Tarrell** with the A470 running through it, and in the distance on the half right (72°) **Mynydd Troed** by the Llangors Lake (SWC 308 Bwlch Circular) with the northerly scarp of **The Black Mountains** beyond. You are descending gently, with the Iron Age hillfort site **Twyn y Gaer** visible in the valley ahead just to the left of the track (the Extension leads to it). In 370m *turn right* with the track. [A faint grass path continues ahead for 60m to **an old cairn that is also a fine viewpoint**, from there you can descend to the right to re-join the track a little further along by a metal field gate.]

In 40m you can see a cairn on the left, beyond a dip, and in 20m start the steep descent into the valley. In 90m *turn left* through a metal field gate and continue along the track, to the right of the fence and to the right of the nose of the mountain, so only with views to the right and ahead, but what fine views they are! A drystone wall and fence run away to the right and they slowly converge with the track. In 630m in the lower corner of the fenced area and where the track turns sharply to the left and a public footpath joins from the right through a wooden kissing gate, **[!]** you continue ahead through a second wooden kissing gate and *veer right a little* gently uphill for 60m to the top of **Twyn Dylluan-Ddu** (= hill of the black owl) at 493m above sea. You get very fine views back from here to Fan Fawr and Corn Du/Pen y Fan as well as up Fan Frynych. Follow a clear track down this gentle grassy hill, with a small settlement coming into view ahead down in the valley (50°): **Libanus**.

Grass gives way to bracken in places, there are some birch trees about, and in 900m from the top of the Twyn, you reach the bottom of the fenced hillside, where the track turns to the left and an unmarked public footpath joins from the right and continues along the narrowing track. You briefly *turn left* with the track **[!]** and in 10m *fork right* downhill along the fence along a rough and steep path between trees. In 70m *turn right* over a stile with a footpath marker **out of the Access Land** into a sloping pasture. The right of way now follows the right-hand fence, but the immediate area is overgrown so follow the path to the left for 20m then *turn right* down the pasture. The exit from the field will be in the far-right bottom corner 550m away, but you have to negotiate a couple of soggy and tussocky areas en route, broadly explaining the meandering line of the right of way on the OS map. **Fan Frynych** towers in the back.

Near the exit, stay to the right of a deep bowl (a stream disappears into a culvert and only resurges on the far side of the road, that presumably is the 'waterfall' on the OS map), and then *bear left* to a metal field gate and leave the field over a stile by a footpath signpost onto the **A4215**. Cross the road a little to the left and go through a wooden kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate by a footpath signpost into a

pasture and *bear left* along a clear path. You now go through several pastures in broadly the same direction, going through gates in 110m, in another 40m and in 30m and in 130m and continue in the same direction with a handwritten 'Mynydd Illtyd Common' sign. In 150m in the far corner of the next field, go through a metal gate and *veer left* to another metal gate 50m away. You have entered the **Access Land** of the moorland of the **Daudraeth Illtyd Nature Reserve** and in 15m *turn right* along a clear car wide grass track following the reserve boundary (a restricted byway/cilffordd gyfyngedig).

Ignore all paths and tracks off to the left and in 1 km you reach a three-way tarmac lane junction. Cross the lane running left to right and continue in the same direction along the lane signed for the **Brecon Beacons National Park Visitor Centre/ Canolfan Ymwelwyr y Parc Cenedlaethol**. Ignore a grass track bearing left across the grassy common and in 140m you pass the gate into the grounds of the visitor centre (its café closes at 16.30). In 50m you pass a cattle grid and a right turn into a car park and in 100m you reach the corner of the barbed wire fence and hedge to your right, with the wide open space of the **Mynydd Illtud** ahead, leading to **Twyn y Gaer**.

Here you have a choice:

For an Extension via Twyn y Gaer (add 3.5 km and 75m ascent/descent), continue in the same direction along a grassy track through the common. Pick up the directions below under **Extension**.

For the Main Walk, *turn right* along a mud-prone car wide track and in 100m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate **out of the Access Land** and follow the track gently downhill towards Libanus. In 900m, you go through a metal field gate and pass **Argoed-Lywd** Outdoor Education Centre. The track continues as a tarmac lane, and in another 600m you pass the first houses of the village. In 180m the Extension joins from the left along a residential road and in 60m you reach the village green on the **A470**, with the name-giving chapel (Libanus is an ancient name for (Mount) Lebanon, a common name for chapels in Wales) on the left, a **bus stop for services to Merthyr Tidfyl and Cardiff** opposite the road, the one **for services to Brecon** 50m to the left and **The Tai'r Bull Inn** a further 60m to the left.

Shortcut

The path becomes clearer as you descend and the direction turns to 300°. In clear weather, you can see the valley as you descend, and it is helpful to take a mental note of the onward route. Look for a path crossing the valley diagonally from right to left, crossing a river on the left above a waterfall. This is the route you are aiming for. After 1.3 km the path descends very steeply to the **Nant Mawr** (a stream) which you cross easily on a couple of stepping stones. Continue on a probably boggy path slightly uphill at about 305° **[!]**, not the path running parallel to the stream more to your left.

In another 800m you cross another wider stream (the **Nant y Gwair**), this time needing a handful of stepping stones. Continue west to the waterfall on the **Nant y Gaseg**, which you reach in 475m. The easiest place to cross is about 10m above the waterfall. Beyond the waterfall, take an initially clear path heading left towards the summit of **Fan Dringarth**. It begins to peter out further up, so when the slope is less steep, strike directly up the grassy slope in a broadly westerly direction until you reach the ridge top at about 570m above sea. Here you find an obvious wide path (the **Beacons Way**). The Main Walk runs along it.

Turn right and pick up the directions in the main text at the asterisk *).

Extension (add 3.5 km and 75m ascent/descent)

You now continue across the common for 2.1 km to the obvious top ahead. **In more detail:** In 50m ignore a left-bearing path gently uphill (on the OS map) and continue in the same direction, also gently uphill, broadly parallel to the fence line away on the right. In 400m you go through some gorse bushes. You have fine views of the mountains of today's route in the back, and in 100m you can see the top of **Sugarloaf/Y Fâl** in the distance on the right (100°). In 40m cross a grass track at an oblique crossing (on the OS map), and in another 230m ignore a track bearing up to the left and *veer right* with the path and in 60m *veer back to the left*. In 70m cross a grass track running down to a pond on the right (on the OS map) and in 110m cross a broad grass track (on the OS map) at an oblique crossing and in 70m pass a bridleway signpost and marker post and cross a tarmac lane.

In 50m go through some bracken and follow the clear grass path downhill. In 110m at a fence corner, ignore a path bearing left with the fence, and in 30m a path bearing to the right. In 90m cross a road and ascend in a straight line to the Iron Age hillfort site on **Twyn y Gaer** (= mound of the fort), in 110m crossing another track (on the OS map). In 450m you go through the bank and ditch of the hillfort and in 70m reach the trigpoint at 367m above sea. There are very fine views from here up and down the Usk Valley, so this would have been an important defensive position for the local tribe. Down the valley, the next Iron Age hillfort site on **Pen y Crug** is rising above the town of Brecon at 331m above sea (SWC Walk 306 Brecon Circular). [There are some more earthworks scattered around the top of the hill, for example a right bearing path leads in 50m past a tumulus to some overgrown earth banks another 125m away.]

You return the way you came for 70m to the bank and ditch around the hillfort and *bear left* downhill (165° initially) to in 350m (having crossed a couple of grass tracks en route) converge with the left-hand fence boundary of the common and continue along it (ignore a field gate on the left). In 280m you reach a tarmac lane crossing the common and *turn left* along it and in 70m *turn left* at a T-junction of tarmac lanes, in 40m going over a cattle grid with a metal field gate to the left. In 40m, by **Penrheol Cottage**, *turn right* downhill a deteriorating tarmac drive with a public footpath signpost. In 280m by **Tyisha Farm**, *turn right* along a grass path (beware of low-hanging branches) and in 60m go over a stile into a pasture to the right of a ruined farm building. In 10m pass a three-way footpath signpost and continue in the same direction along the boundary.

In 150m cross a streamlet and leave the field through a metal field gate with a yellow marker on a fence post and continue in the same direction along a left-hand field boundary initially. Stay on the level on a southerly bearing down the middle of the field though, where the boundary bears away down to the left. In 120m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and *veer right* (195°) to in 160m leave this field through a boundary gap. *Veer left* in the next field (due S) and in 100m ford a streamlet and go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate and *veer left* towards **Upper Bolgoed Farm** 130m away. At the farm negotiate a couple of fences preventing direct access to the field gate into the farmyard and cross the yard and leave it through another metal field gate onto the tarmac farm drive.

Where the drive turns left, **[!]** you continue in the same direction through a metal field gate (or over a stepless stile to the right) into a pasture and *veer left* to a point halfway down the field, a little to the left of the furthest right houses of **Libanus** village. In 170m go over a two-railed wooden footbridge across a stream and *veer left* along a grass path that in 20m continues along a tarmac pavement along a residential road. In 20m *turn left* at a T-junction downhill and in 70m *turn right* with the lane, ignoring a cul-de-sac to the left. In 120m you reach a T-junction with a road coming down from the National Park Visitor Centre, by a two-way footpath signpost. The Main Walk comes

down from the right. *Turn left* down the road and in 60m you reach the village green on the **A470**, with the name-giving chapel (Libanus is an ancient name for (Mount) Lebanon, a common name for chapels in Wales) on the left, a **bus stop for services to Merthyr Tidfyl and Cardiff** opposite the road, the one **for services to Brecon** 50m to the left and **The Tai'r Bull Inn** a further 60m to the left.

Storey Arms Ending (cut 4.2 km and 237m descent)

In 70m you *veer right* (due E) and follow the path to the peak of **Craig Cerrig-gleisiad** 650m away. You have **Fan Fawr** away to the right. At the cairn on the peak, at 629m above sea (the exact same height as Fan Frynych to the left), there is a barbed wire fence line visible 50m ahead with dry-stone wall remnants and the steep drop of the escarpment beyond it. The **Beacons Way** runs along the fence. Drop down to the fence and *turn right* along it. In 120m at the fence corner, *turn left* with the fence and with Beacons Way markers on a fence post. In 150m *bear left* with the fence and some more markers. In 90m the path drops more steeply and in another 120m where the fence bears left (at spot height 560m above sea), **[!]** *turn right* – initially without a path – and in 50m you can see a clear path about 100m away, on a bearing of 160°.

Pick up that path and contour along the steep grassy slope with views ahead of the large car park on the A470 by the **Storey Arms Centre**, to the right of a forested area. The path continues with the drop to your left (**Gorllwm** on the OS map) and you follow this for 2.5 km, ignoring occasional forks off to the right. Cross several streams, some continuing their drop down the **Craig y Fro** as waterfalls, and eventually the path descends to converge with the A470 below and you walk through any of two kissing gates into the car park. The **bus stop for services to Brecon** is away to the right, the one **for services to Merthyr Tidfyl and Cardiff** on the other side.

Llwyn-y-celyn Ending (cut 5.1 km and 56/179m ascent/descent)

Head to the right, gently downhill on a clear path (80°). In 20m follow this path around to the left as it contours along the side of a steep slope (20°). In a further 30m you pass a marker post on the right to continue following the path along the hillside (ignoring a right turn downhill). In 250m at a four-way junction by a well-made cairn and a marker post with a green disc and white arrow, you *turn sharply right* to continue steeply downhill on a clear grassy path.

***)** You will pass a few more marker posts with some dramatic cliffs ahead and around to the right (the **Craig Cerrig-gleisiad**, result of massive post-glacial rockslides). In 400m, where the path levels out for a while, continue ahead along the grassy path with a marker post (ignoring a faint path heading up a small hill on the left, point 464m on the OS map and a **moraine**, left behind by a melting glacier). The path eventually makes a gradual curve to the left.

In 550m you go through a wall gap to the right of a wooden gate to continue in the same direction and in another 340m go through a wooden kissing gate into a lay-by on the **A470** to *turn left* along its grassy margin. In 300m on the right you reach the **bus stop for services to Merthyr Tidfyl and Cardiff, and in another 130m on the left the one for services to Brecon**. If you have time, cross the road and pay a visit to the **Llwyn-y-Celyn YHA Brecon Beacons** 200m down the track 30m before the bus stop. They are open to the public and have a small bar area inside and some tables outside **for a post walk beverage or snack**.