

## WALK 17      LEE QUARRY

**START**              Car park by the A671 on the Whitworth-Bacup boundary, opposite Merlyn Wealth Management (ex-Travellers Rest pub)

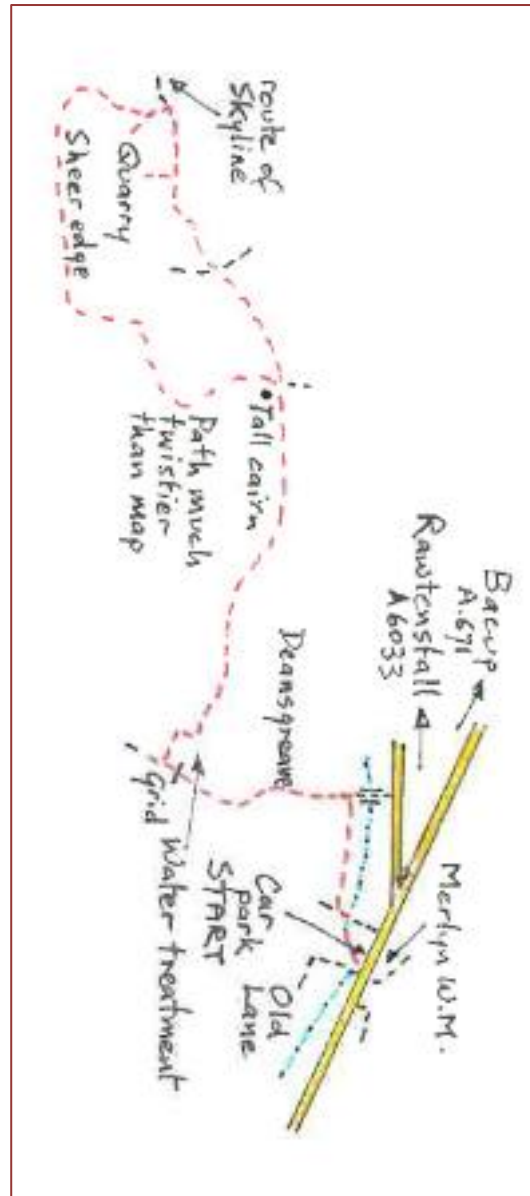
**DISTANCE**        4 miles

**TIME**              Allow 2.5, maybe 3 hours

**NATURE OF WALK**    Only two steep bits, oddly.

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*Once upon a time where you are standing was a railway station, the highest, at 1000 feet above sea level, on the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway. When the line closed in the 1940s the final train was slightly delayed, marooned here for 5 days by snow. Hopefully, weather conditions are rather better today.* Leave via the cycle path at the back of the car park, heading towards Bacup, not Whitworth. In 200 metres, at the fence, don't go blindly ahead: look slightly to your left for a flat, narrow footpath that curves gently for 500 metres just to the left of, and increasingly above, the cyclepath. Friendly goats may hail you as you pass. At the gate at the end turn left and walk up a narrow tarmac road, through Deansgreave, until, just above the underground reservoir, you reach a grotty, dangerous, raised cattle grid. Cross it with immense care. At the corner of the reservoir fence turn right, negotiate the perma-puddles, and then follow this track for about three-quarters of a mile: once you're on to the tramway proper, it's a treat. That's Bacup to your right, and way ahead, across the Rossendale valley, are the two humps of Cribden.



Towards the end of the tramway take note of the towering stone cairn on a little rise to your left – it'll come in handy as a navigation point on your return journey. Also, look out for a little rusty-red footpath roundel with a white arrow (West Pennine Link) on a fencepost as you approach (but don't take) a path up beside the cairn – those roundels will be every bit as useful to you later too. 300 metres further along, the tramway dips, and you enter the quarry. First comes a crossroad: you're going straight across. As you go up the other side it's worth stepping up to your right to examine the metal sculpture that looks out over the valley like a guardian-scorpion. Then continue along the broad track you were on before, *not* turning left...until you have to. As you do, pause again, this time to get your bearings. Above all, look straight ahead of you and locate the two conveniently situated wind turbines. They in turn should direct your eye, between and beneath them, to a short rocky rise of a track that's just to the right of a pool of water. *That's* where you're going once you've negotiated the quarry floor that is spread out before you now. Go left down the slope, then right, beside the first pool and the mountain bikers' playground equipment, and with a second (ribcage?) sculpture well to your right. You'll be on an extensive slab of bedrock hereabouts – go sensibly if it's damp. Very soon there's a fork.

Your exit from the quarry floor is down and right, but you may care to deviate left, between two large outcrops of rock. Soon you're in a flat area surrounded by stratified cliffs, and it's worth realising what those cliffs represent. *Shifting tectonic plates, the actions of water, as well as generations of quarry workers, have conspired to reveal millions of years-worth of rock. How old, how very ancient, are the rocks on which you now*

*stand! If you look to the shaggy top of the cliffs, in some places there's a layer of peat: even that thin marmite-spread dates back over 3000 years. Within the quarry there are stones which bear the traces of ripples dating from a time some 3 million years ago when this whole area lay beneath a shallow sea on the Earth's equator.*

Exit this awesome arena the way you came in, then turn left, heading to the right of the pool (especially evil-looking when the clouds are low) and carefully up the rocky slope. Those who have walked the annual Skyline may recall that at the top the route goes right, along the flat path to the next Lee Quarry sign, but today you should continue up the path to the left, to a platform affording another, very good, view of the rock arena.

Having had your fill, turn around, but *don't* go back down the way you came. Instead, spot the track that leads away to what is now your left. You should follow this, in a sweeping left-hand bend, all the way round the topmost rim of the quarry. But please take real care: the drops to your left are, for the most part, sheer – you've seen the cliffs from below – and the safety measures are rudimentary (and in some cases absent). **Please do not deviate from the track** – however spectacular the view, however good the photo-opportunity, however engrossing the birds nesting in the cliff. Two thirds of the way along the top is a splendidly informative board – well worth a pause. Then the path descends to skirt the far end of the quarry at a lesser (but still sheer) height.

You'll come next to an open area. The broad track you're on heads straight on, gently downhill. If you follow that you'll be back to the crossroad at which you entered the quarry, with the tramway up to your right: if it's misty, go that way. If it's clear, and you're feeling

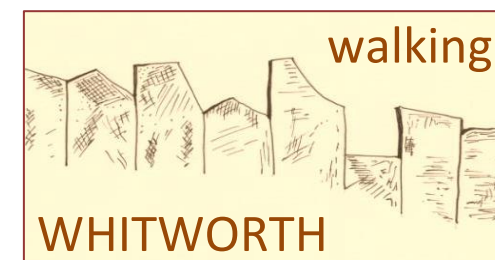
like a bit of a challenge, try this alternative. There's a track, narrower but perfectly good, that leads sharp right from the open area. Follow that, looking out, in the distance ahead and to your left, for the tall cairn mentioned earlier.



Stately and helpful cairn. Pen and ink by Julie Latham

Then, broadly speaking, head for it – but all the paths twist and turn, so this might be fun! Three other clues – the West Pennine Link roundels are *really* helpful; you should encounter the remains of an old sawing shed en route; and a tall bright-green pole that once carried emergency information. And don't forget the tall cairn!

Once you're adjacent to that you're almost at the tramway, and a bracing stride-out back to the underground reservoir, the cattle grid, Deansgreave, and the little gate, just before the bridge, where you'll turn right onto the narrow path back to the car park. (If you miss the little gate, go back and find it – stepping out from between the buildings of Lancashire Sock onto New Line is as dangerous as the quarry cliffs, because there's no pavement, and you're instantly amongst traffic whizzing down from your right. JF



This walk sends you onto a wonderfully airy terrace on excellent walking terrain...and you'll walk it twice. But its distinguishing feature is an astonishing circuit of a disused quarry – Big Country in the sunshine; oppressive and haunting when the clouds are low and heavy. It is spectacular throughout, and a feast for any budding geologist (though it has dangers that make this emphatically NOT a walk for small children). You need to be sure-footed, so play safe with footwear, whatever the weather. It's a Bacup walk really, rather than a Whitworth one, and a frying-pan rather than a circular...but the frying-pan handle is part of the annual Whitworth Skyline walk, so... JF

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