



West Vale Circular, inc Viaduct

Getting there and parking

Start at Brig Royd Car Park in West Vale HX4 8AL (at the junction of Stainland Road and Rochdale Road). Parking charges apply.

Other Information

Moderate ability - includes one short steep incline and uneven paths which can be slippery.

Distance 2.75 miles.

Cafes in West Vale at the start and end of the walk. No facilities en route.

Muddy after rain, slippery stones - walking boots and poles advised.

Route Details and Reflections

Exit the car park and cross the Rochdale Road to head up through West Vale with Andy Thornton's mill on your right.

Continue heading up the main street crossing Saddleworth Road.

Just after the Jet garage, turn right down Little Bradley, heading towards the dirt track (currently a red sign - Jarabosky).

Reflection 1 - Bridge



- Today's theme of the reflection is about looking. We are going to be looking up; looking down; looking beyond but firstly we are looking at this amazing bend in the river. Looking around the bend.
- Let's just take in this fabulous bend. Man-made? Quite likely. I'm not sure that this would be a natural path of a river to do almost a 360.
- Can you think of a time when life has suddenly done a complete, unexpected turn?
- How did you feel at the time? Was it a positive or challenging experience?
- If this unexpected turn was a positive experience, were you able to share the joy with others?
- If it was a challenging experience, did you feel alone or did you feel held at the time?
- In the immortal words of Gerry and the Pacemakers - 'You'll never walk alone'. God will help us during those unexpected turns in life. **We were never meant to handle them on our own.**

JOURNEY ON

Cross the bridge then take the immediate right, following the river, passing the green fence on your left-hand side and stone gate post to your right.

As you reach the metal bridge on your right, cross the bridge to take the footpath on the left. Continue with the river now on your left.

Pass through the gap in the wall and continue walking alongside the river on your left.

As you reach the first bridge on your left (before Bosch and the Business park) turn left over the bridge (Ellistones Lane - unmarked). Keep left to follow the path alongside the river, which remains on your left. (Effectively doing a U turn.)

After 200 yards, stop for a reflection in front of the crags.

Reflection 2 - Craggs



- We have looked around the bend and we are now looking beyond. What do you see through the trees? Answer - the crags.
- There's an expression we commonly use 'I can't see the wood through the trees'. Which means that you can't see the clear answer, as we are too focused on the details and not the big picture.
- Bring an occasion to mind when you couldn't see beyond the detail; the clear answer; the best way forward, because you 'couldn't see the wood through the trees'.
- There's a bible verse from the book of Proverbs which reads - 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight'. (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- Can this proverb help us when we are making decisions about which way to turn, with unexpected bends, even help us to see the wood through the trees?
- Read the proverb again.

JOURNEY ON

As the path forks, keep to the right, ignore the tracks off to the left.

Past the farm buildings on your left to reach a T Junction, at which point you turn left and follow the concrete track around to the right.

As you reach the main road, turn right and walk 50 yards up the road to be near a street lamp. Across the road is a metal farm gate, to the right of which there is a gap in the wall which leads to the path. Cross the road and pass through the gap in the wall to join the field path.

Pass through the gap in the fence at the end of the field.

Reflection 3 - Viaduct



- We have looked around unexpected bends, we have looked beyond and now we look up.
- How magnificent are our viaducts! What an amazing feat of engineering.
- History - The West Vale Viaduct is a Grade II listed, 13-arch stone structure built by the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway that opened on 1 January 1875. It carried the Stainland branch line over the village, primarily serving local woollen mills. Passenger services ceased in 1929, with the line closing completely in 1959, and it has since been incorporated into a pedestrian and cycle route.
- We look up and look beyond. We look beyond the viaduct. How magnificent our our skies.
- With just four words - 'Let there be light' - (just two in Hebrew) God created more than one hundred billion galaxies (Gen. 1:3). 'The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born' (Ps. 33:6, NLT). When we are needing help and guidance, what on earth might happen if God were to just speak a few words quietly to us?
- Is there a decision to be made that is playing on your mind? As we pause and look around and beyond, we ask for direction, for the path to be made straight.

JOURNEY On

Cross the broken down wall and continue on the path with the viaduct above on your left.

After 20 yards turn left to join the path heading off left to pass beneath the arches of the viaduct.

Cross the wooden footbridge and continue along the path.

Continue along the path up the hill (it becomes quite steep in places) to reach a T junction, at which point you turn left on the tarmac path.

The path emerges out to the housing area. Bear left down Rawroyd and as you reach the first house on your right, take the path to the right hand side of the house.

Ignore the path off to the left, just continue straight ahead on the path. As you reach the road, cross directly over and take the path on the right hand side of the large dis-used building, Lyndhurst (red bollard).

Reflection 4 - at the viaduct looking over West Vale



- We look down over the people of Vest Vale going about their daily lives.
- Billions of people [go through] each day precariously balanced upon a rock traveling at 66,627 miles per hour around the sun, in a galaxy that is itself moving at 1,342,160 miles per hour in relation to extra-galactical frames of reference. Quietly these people make themselves a coffee, [], for the most part, barely giving the maker of so much mystery a second thought. Their [amazing] three-pound brains churn through 11 million bits of information per second, and their ten-ounce hearts pump five litres of blood through 100,000 miles of tubing, and yet the great Giver of Life demands neither allegiance, acknowledgement nor thanks. (Quote from 'How to hear God' by Peter Greig)
- Perhaps, as we look out, we give the maker of so much mystery a second thought. And give thanks.

Cross the viaduct and continue along the main path until you reach the main road. Cross the zebra crossing, turning right and descend the path back to the car park.