

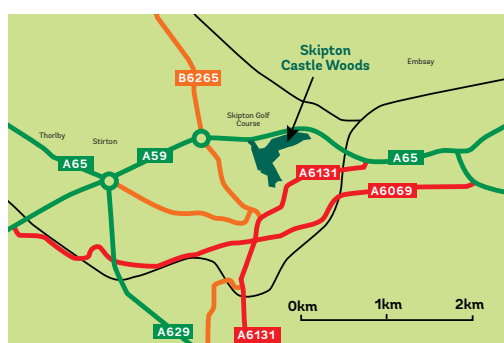
Today, Skipton Castle Woods is a peaceful place, enjoyed by visitors from far and wide. But it wasn't always so! The woodland was once part of a much larger forest in the Manor of Skipton, and for nearly a thousand years this hardworking wood provided the castle owners with timber, fuel, hunting and fishing. In 1753, Sackville Tufnell became the 8th Earl of Thanet and, along with the title, inherited several properties including Skipton Castle Estate and its woodland. Under his tenure, the woodland became a noisy hive of industrial activity, although today much of the evidence of this is hidden. The Earl of Thanet Trail will bring you closer to Skipton's industrial past by unlocking the secrets of Eller Beck and the working wood which is now at rest.

# Earl of Thanet Trail

## Skipton Castle Woods

### Getting here

Skipton Castle Woods is located behind the castle, just a few minutes' walk from Skipton High Street. The main entrance to the wood is accessed on foot via the Canal and Rivers Trust towpath just off Mill Bridge. Pay and display car parking is available in the town less than 0.5km (1/2 mile) from the wood. Skipton train station is just a 10-minute walk away. Bike racks are available in the High Street car park. More information on access can be found at [skipton.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://skipton.woodlandtrust.org.uk). If you would like this leaflet in another format, please contact us.



### Stay in touch

Visit [woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk) to learn more about the work of the Woodland Trust and how you can help us protect trees and woodland.

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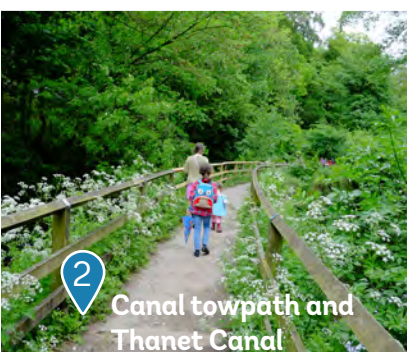
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1 High Corn Mill - cogs



2 Canal towpath and Thanet Canal



3 The Old Saw Mill



4 Skipton Castle from the towpath



5 Sandy Gait - the mill leat



WOODLAND TRUST



# Skipton Castle Woods

## A working wood now at rest

### 1. Start your walk at High Corn Mill on Mill Bridge.

The original mill, called Water Corne Milne and later Soke Mill, was established here around 1310 as part of the Manor of Skipton. The cogs inside the waterwheel house are probably made from hornbeam, a species which still grows in Skipton Castle Woods. During opening hours, you can visit the mill wheelhouse free of charge to operate the waterwheel inside.

### 2. Step off Mill Bridge onto the canal towpath and follow for 0.8km (half a mile), taking in spectacular views of Skipton Castle, Thanet Canal and Eller Beck. The towpath widens to your right on to Thanet Canal or 'Springs Branch'.

The Earl petitioned parliament to build this extension from the Leeds Liverpool Canal towards the wood to transport limestone from his quarry to markets in Bradford and Leeds. It opened in 1773 and the limestone was brought by tram through the woods and dropped down metal chutes to the barges below. In winter it is still possible to see one of the last-remaining chutes through the bare undergrowth opposite the towpath.

### 3. Walking over the bridge which spans Eller Beck, proceed to Chapel Hill and the Old Saw Mill on your right.

The mill, which dates from 1785, was established and owned by Skipton Castle during the tenure of the Earls of Thanet. It processed timber from the woodland, powered by water from Eller Beck. The house and cottage opposite are now a privately owned residence. Continue through the gate in front of the Old Saw Mill towards the wood.

### 4. Go past the mill, noting the wall on the left, near the cottage.

Above this area once stood one of the biggest textile mills in Skipton. High Mill was built in 1785 by Garforth, Blackburn and Sidgwick and water from the woodland powered the looms used to spin cotton yarn.

In 1825, the mill was extended using new steam power that drew even more water from Eller Beck. By 1891 it was abandoned after the lease expired, and the mill was demolished shortly after.

### 5. Enter the woodland, taking in Eller Beck on your right and Sandy Goit (a water drain) on your left.

The goit helps protect the woodland above which is managed for wildlife. You can still admire the ash, beech and hornbeam trees from the path.

### 6. After 0.4km (quarter of a mile), approach the V-shaped bridge to your left which spans a small stream over Sougha Gill. Continue over the bridge and climb the steps. The ascent is steep but the views of the weir are well worth it.

Sometime in the mid-18th century, Eller Beck was harnessed to feed the mills nearby. The river was dammed above the weir and the dam named Long Dam. Water from here is held in the pond known as Round Dam, which in turn feeds the high-level channel called Sandy Goit. This channel historically supplied power to the waterwheels at Old Saw Mill and High Mill near the main entrance to the wood.

### 7. Take a right at the top of Sougha Gill steps.

Notice the change of atmosphere and light. This area of the ancient woodland was felled and planted with fast-growing timber in the 1920s. The Woodland Trust gradually restored it by thinning poplar and later pine and spruce so native broadleaf trees could again take hold. In 2013, a horse called Nathan worked in the wood to clear felled logs using a technique called 'snicking', which limits damage to the woodland floor.

### 8. Descend to the valley on the sloping path and take a right to the bridge which spans a small gorge across Eller Beck.

The bridge was installed by the Woodland Trust to replace a structure washed away in a storm in 1908. The woodland and town were severely flooded during the storm and the aftermath was recorded by Dr Geoffrey Rowley, a local solicitor and historian. His photographs of the wood, along with the rest of his collection, were later donated to Skipton Library.

### 9. For the final part of your walk, cross the bridge and turn left, taking the steps towards the upper path.

Here you will find old lime trees, holly and hazel. Walk for 0.8km (half a mile) to a set of twin steps spanning an arch. The arch is thought to be a link to the old tramway which moved limestone from Haw Bank Quarry, owned by the Earls of Thanet, through the wood and down to the canal for transportation. Stay on the upper path until you exit the wood at The Bailey. Turn right towards the town centre until you come to Skipton Castle which is open to visitors all year round.



#### Earl of Thanet Trail

An enjoyable, active walk through the industrial history of Skipton Castle Woods. Discover the river valley and upper paths on this circular route from town to Skipton Castle, with great views through the trees below.

Mostly wide, surfaced path with some narrow, uneven sections. Includes four bridges, four sets of steps and one steep slope. Some parts can be muddy after heavy rain.



4km /  
2½ miles  
Allow 2 hrs



Entrance



Parking



Information boards



Steps



Toilets



Stone poetry seat



Tourist information