



# Skipton Castle Woods teachers guide

## Quick guide to the history of Skipton Castle Woods

Skipton Castle Wood is a beautiful woodland, central to the North Yorkshire town of Skipton. Designated as ancient semi-natural woodland and a planted ancient woodland site, Skipton Castle Wood is a magical place **rich in history**.

It is on a 75 year lease to the Woodland Trust from Skipton Castle, which lies adjacent to it. The castle and the woodland are next to each other and located on the edge of the town and are hence within easy walking distance of the main facilities and shops.

A canal towpath, following the line of Skipton Castle ramparts and Springs Canal, provides a direct link between the towns High Street and the woods, following the course of Eller Beck through a stunning steep-sided valley.

Skipton Castle is over 900 years old and **one of the most complete and best preserved medieval castles in England**. Visitors can explore every corner once inside the castle, which withstood a three-year siege during the Civil War.

**For nearly a thousand years**, Skipton Castle Wood provided fuel, building materials and food to the Castle it surrounds.

The forest was carefully managed for firewood, timber and for hunting, while the stream provided fresh water.

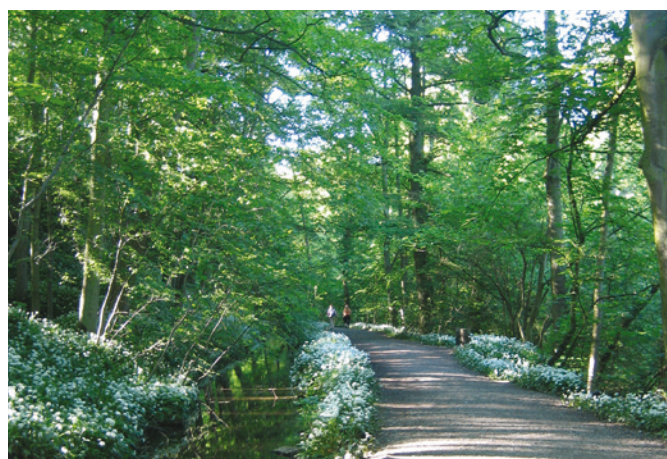
More recently, the waterways that run through it gave power to local wool, corn and saw mills across two centuries. There is also evidence of the tramway that was used to transport limestone from Haw Bank Quarry.

Most of this ancient woodland is dominated by ash but the occasional sycamore, beech, Scots pine, Norway spruce and hornbeam indicate a greater variety in the past. The woods are renowned for their vivid displays of bluebells and wild garlic and sustain five species of bat. Notable bird species include; green and great spotted woodpeckers, kingfisher and heron.



# Skipton Castle Woods timeline

<b>1066</b>	<b>Norman conquest of England by William the Conqueror</b> All land belongs to the King and he grants portions to noblemen in exchange for money, produce, the support of knights etc. Forest law is established, with areas of 'forest' being enclosed and policed for the exclusivity of 'vert' and 'venison' (the green and the game) to the upper classes. Skipton Forest (including Skipton Castle Woods) is enclosed with a pale or fence, but different parts are granted/rented by different noblemen.
<b>1086</b>	<b>The Domesday survey is completed</b> Skipton (recorded as Scepton/Sceptune) means 'town of sheep'.
<b>1090</b>	Norman Baron Robert de Romille builds a timber fort at the site of Skipton Castle. Sometime afterwards the defensive structure is rebuilt in stone.
<b>1115</b>	Leges Henrici Primi is written, a document that records the laws at the time of Henry I. It is an offence to cut wood both within and outside of the Royal forest.
<b>1184</b>	<b>Assize of the Forest is written by Henry II</b> It includes the appointment of twelve knights in each county to guard the 'venison and vert' (the game and the greenery) of the forest, and the wasting of woodland resources is forbidden. The employment of foresters is mandatory.
<b>1310</b>	The Clifford family is granted the Castle by Edward II.
<b>1437</b>	Lord Thomas Clifford visits his Skipton estate and his hungry horses 'eat up most of the herbage of the Old Park' (Skipton Castle Woods).
<b>Mid 1500s</b>	Yeoman Robert Kitchin, is a 'Forster' and 'Keeper' of Old Park of Skipton (Skipton Castle Woods).
<b>1645</b>	During the English Civil War (fought 1642-1651 between the Roundheads and the Cavaliers) Skipton Castle was the last Royalist stronghold in the North. It yielded only after a three-year siege!
<b>1700s</b>	The Industrial Revolution played a role in shaping Skipton Castle Woods. The woods were used for timber, limestone and water.
<b>1773</b>	The Skipton to Bingley section of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal is completed, and The Earl of Thanet builds the Thanet Canal (Springs Branch) which helps to connect his limestone quarries with it.
<b>1785</b>	High Mill is built by Peter Garforth, John Blackburn and James Benson Sidgwick. This is the very first industrial mill in Skipton (and the whole of Yorkshire). High Mill is positioned at the entrance to the Woods and uses the water from it to generate power for cotton spinning.
<b>1794</b>	The Thanet Canal (Springs Branch) is extended by 240 yards and a tramway is built to transport limestone more easily from The Earl of Thanet's quarries. The Canal now starts at the entrance to the Woods.
<b>1836</b>	Castle residents complain about the noise of limestone being loaded onto barges by dropping it all the way from the Castle walls to the canal. It occasionally sunk a canal boat too!
<b>1971</b>	Public access to the Woods is allowed for the first time.
<b>1998</b>	The Woodland Trust sign a 75 year lease to look after Skipton Castle Woods on behalf of Skipton Castle.







## Planning your visit

If you are visiting Skipton Castle Woods with a group please contact Paul Bunton, Woodland Trust People Engagement Officer on [paulbunton@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:paulbunton@woodlandtrust.org.uk) or **0845 2935753**. The People Engagement Officer can provide further advice for planning your visit and also make sure that it doesn't coincide with any disruptive physical work being carried out in the Woods or any major events.

## Finding out more

- For more information about the work of the Woodland Trust, Skipton Castle Woods and more activities to download visit [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/skiptoncastlewoods](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/skiptoncastlewoods)
- Skipton Castle [www.skiptoncastle.co.uk](http://www.skiptoncastle.co.uk) – one of the best preserved medieval castles in the country and key to the history of the woods
- Craven Museum and Gallery [www.cravenmuseum.org](http://www.cravenmuseum.org) – to discover objects and stories of the woods through the ages and surrounding Craven area
- Skipton Library [www.northyorks.gov.uk/skiptonlibrary](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/skiptonlibrary) – pop in to read a story or do your own research about the history of the woods.



The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. Our vision is a UK rich in woods and trees, enjoyed and valued by everyone. Established for 40 years, we save threatened ancient woodland and plant new native woods to create vital homes for wildlife and places to reflect and play.



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