


This walk description is from happyhiker.co.uk

Skipton Castle Woods

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Bailey pay car park Skipton (SD 993521)
Ordnance Survey map	OL2 Yorkshire Dales – Southern and Western
Distance	2.4 miles (assuming visit into town)
Date of Walk	6 November 2024
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: I had visited Skipton Castle Woods very briefly a few weeks previously and thought it worthy of another visit hopefully to see some autumn colours. I thought the place quite enchanting and thought I would bring it to attention. Although I live fairly close by, I had never been there before recently.

The woods belong to the castle and were a source of fuel and building materials for 1000 years. Eller Beck runs through it and this provided both power to run wool, corn and saw mills across two centuries, following construction of the Long Dam in the mid 18th century, though there was an earlier corn mill established in 1310. The dam created Round Dam, which today provides a lovely spot with a good chance of seeing wildlife. I saw a heron. The dam fed water to the mills via Sandy Goit. Eller beck eventually runs into the River Aire. In 1908, the beck flooded disastrously, devastating the wood, canal and town.

High Mill (now demolished) was built in 1785 to produce cotton. Opposite this, the Old Saw Mill produced timber for the town and castle. This is now a private house.

The woods have a variety of trees, notably Oak, Hornbeam, Lime, Chestnut, Rowan, Sycamores and Blackthorn with some conifers, together with a host of wildlife and wild flowers.

Skipton Castle Woods has its own website and is run by the Woodland Trust.

There are a number of routes in and around the woods. These are detailed on information boards with a map or you can visit Skipton Castle Woods website. I chose my route on the assumption it would be most interesting following the water and used the Woodland Trust map reproduced here, on which I have overlaid red arrows showing my route.

The Leeds/Liverpool canal in the centre of Skipton and was extended to provide the Springs Branch canal, a cul-de-sac. It opened in 1797 and was funded by Lord Thanet who owned Skipton Castle, to provide a route to his limestone quarries. It is well worth extending the walk along this canal to visit the town centre.

I have not captioned the pictures which are mostly autumn colours in the woods or self explanatory.

I have described my walk into the town centre which is worth a look for independent shops, good pubs/cafes and Skipton Castle which I have visited a couple of times previously and is tremendous.

Skipton is easy to find by the junction of the A59 and A65 roads. The best place to park is at the Bailey car park. To avoid the town centre traffic, I suggest approaching this via the A6131 off the A59, signposted for Embsay.

Start: Leave the car park the way you drove in and turn immediately left. A few yards on, go through a metal gate on the left.

Follow this clearly delineated path into the edge of the woods.

You will shortly come to some steps down but ignore these and keep following the edge of the woods, until it drops down to Ellar Beck. To the right at this point you will see the twin ducts where the beck runs under the road.

Turn left to follow the beck.

Pass a footbridge. There is an interesting sculpture across it.

Continue following the beck. As you pass the dam, the path divides. It is worth a right turn to see the waterfall and there is a long information panel telling you about the history of the area.

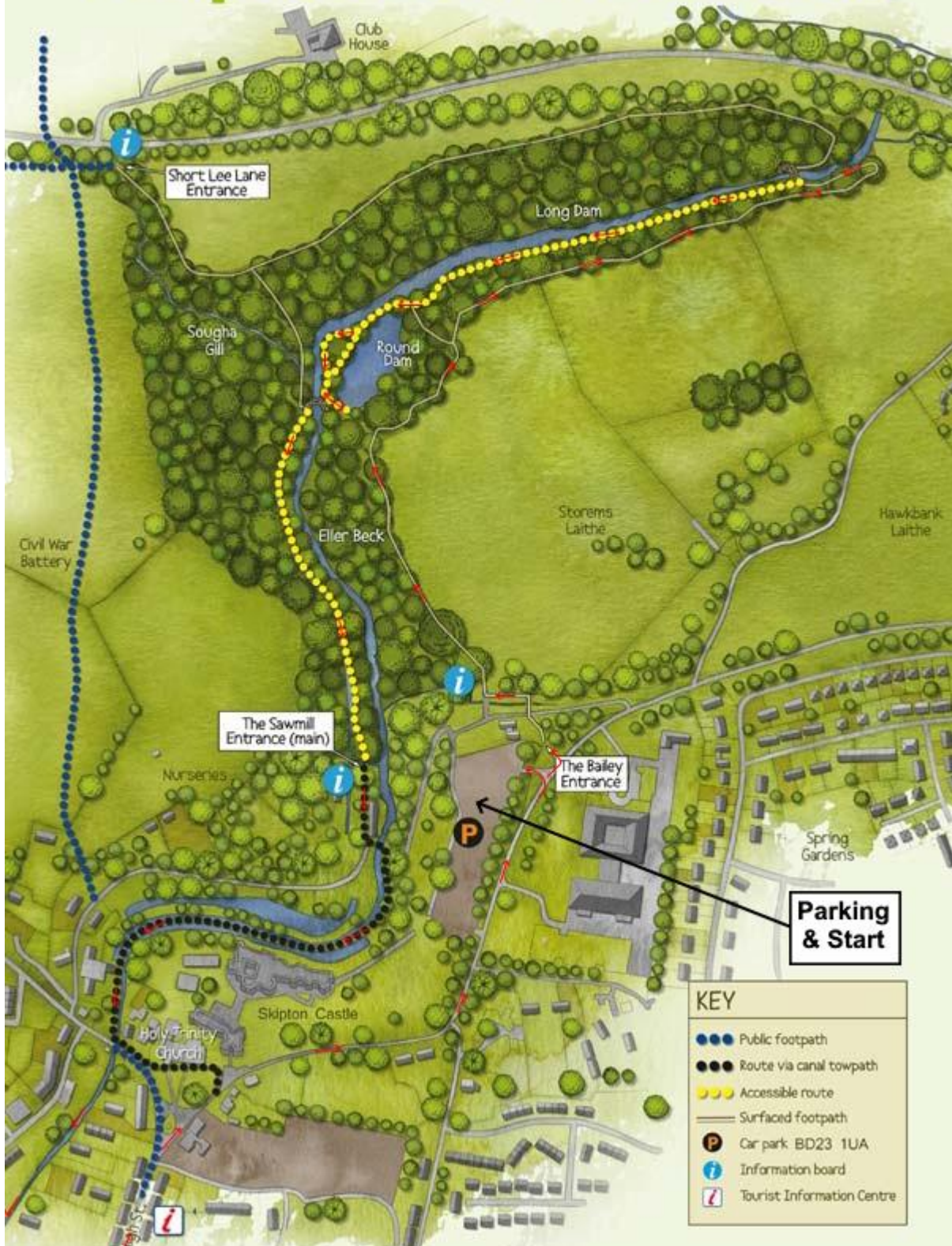
The path loops back to the main track. Continue to follow it. It runs between the goit and Ellar Beck which becomes the Springs canal.

You can now see whatever parts of the town you want.

I followed the canal along to the basin, then turned left along Coach Street and Victoria Street, eventually making my way to the High street and back up to the castle.

Return to the car park is to the right of the castle along the pavement.

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