

Bus Gargrave to Skipton, walk back along the canal

We describe the walk here starting from Gargrave and then taking a bus to Skipton. It would of course be possible to travel in the opposite direction, and as both towns have a railway station, it would be possible to use the train instead of a bus. Having said all that, the arrangements we outline here worked excellently for us, and were very convenient. Parking in Gargrave is free, and can be found at North Street, opposite the Village Hall. If you are using Satnav to get there try BD23 3RD as a postcode, or if your device accepts What-3-Words tags use **skewing.joggers.spirits** as a location. This corresponds to the OS grid reference SD93205432.

From the car park head back to the A65 along Pennine Way at the front of the Village Hall, to find the bus stop in front of the Dalesman Café. There are a number of bus services that we could use to make this journey. We used the 580, departing at 09:55, but for alternatives visit <https://northyorkstravel.info/place/?place=gargrave>

The bus journey to Skipton takes just 15 minutes, and we alight at the Bus station which rather conveniently is right next to the canal. We start out by crossing the pedestrian bridge from the bus station to the canal tow path, noting a plaque stating that the name for this is Gallows Footbridge.

Once at the tow path we head left and into the town centre – navigation for the entirety of this route is simple – the canal is just to your right, and beyond that all you need to remember is keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Almost immediately we arrive at the bridge where the A6069 crosses over the canal, and in front of us we have the old warehouses and loading areas from when the Leeds Liverpool canal was in its heyday. Opposite us we have a junction in the canal, where a short section of canal known locally as the Springs Branch connects to the main line. Our route stays with the main line of the canal and heads out to the west of the town, passing the back of the many Victorian Mills served by the canal. Most of these have been sandblasted and converted into rather upmarket apartments – the area would have looked much more “gritty” when still industrialised. If you have time on your side, it might be worth taking a stroll down the various side streets to explore the area.

We soon arrive at a large road bridge which soars over the canal. This is the A629, which most of us will have driven over many times. We follow the tow path round to a swing bridge known as the Niffany Bridge, and then take a narrow path at the side of the busy A6069 for about 100m until the towpath diverges from the road and enters a more tranquil rural stretch. At this point in the walk, we have Gawber Hill over to our right, and then the canal, the railway line to Gargrave, the A6069, and the River Aire all running parallel in close proximity. Don't forget to look back along this stretch as the views over the roofs of Skipton toward Skipton Moor (373m) are very atmospheric, particularly if the morning mist is still lingering.

We pass under the A59, and then the canal starts to turn right as it contours around Hooper Hill: Following the contours in this way was a feature of early canals, as it reduced the need for complex locks, albeit with a price to be paid in the sense of longer, more convoluted routes. As canal building expertise advanced, locks became a more attractive option, and straighter canals were preferred. Both approaches can be seen on the Leeds Liverpool Canal, as this huge project took many years to complete.

Our next landmark is a swing bridge bringing farm access over from the A65 to farm buildings at Thorlby, then we have an uninterrupted stroll for more than a mile until we get to the next swing bridge at Highgate, and as we look left, we now have Gargrave in sight. The most prominent visual feature is the factory belonging to Scapa Healthcare.

We continue along the towpath and soon approach the A65 where we find the first lock of the day – Holme Bridge lock – this is the first lock for 17 miles for boaters arriving from the south.

Just 50m later the canal is carried over a minor stream at an aqueduct, and to our left we see an interesting, ruined building which although now abandoned was clearly once important enough to boast an impressive chimney (suggesting one or more fireplaces) along with substantial window openings. This was clearly more than an agricultural shed.

Our path continues to Ray Bridge – which we met previously on our Gargrave and Eshton walk. From here we follow the canal under a further bridge – where we see an interesting canal side warehouse now housing an architectural practice, and then just 200m later we arrive at our penultimate bridge of the day – Eshton Road bridge Number 171 where we also see Eshton Road Lock.

Just 200m later we arrive at bridge number 170, also known as Higherland Bridge where we leave the canal and head left downhill for just 50m to find the car park where our day started.

- **Total distance 8.5 km (5.3 miles)**
- **Total ascent 10 m**
- **Easy walk**