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## Ripon to Bishop Monkton

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Ripon canal basin (SE 316709). Limited on street parking.
Ordnance Survey map	OS Explorer Map 299 - Ripon & Boroughbridge
Distance	6.6 miles
Traffic light rating	

**Introduction:** This is a lovely very easy walk entirely on the level, from Ripon along the canal to the village of Bishop Monkton with a stream running through its centre. The Ripon Canal and River Ure Navigation runs for 10 miles from the centre of Ripon to Swale Nab where the rivers Ure and Swale join to form the Ouse. It is currently the northern most canal connected to the inland waterway system. Planned in 1766 by John Smeaton also famous for building lighthouses, it was abandoned in 1956 but successfully reopened to navigation as far as Littlethorpe Road Bridge in 1986 and officially re-opened in 1996 all the way back to the canal basin in the centre of Ripon.

The walk takes in the 2¼ miles of the canal to the point where it joins the Ure.

It starts at the canal basin where there is limited parking (SE 316709). To get there, turn off the B6265 south-west on to Bondgate Green Lane then immediately left on to Canal Road. If the parking is full, park on Bondgate Green (the B6265).

Refreshments are available at two pubs in Bishop Monkton and I can strongly recommend the Masons Arms which is hiker friendly and where the food was truly great at modest cost. Check their website for opening times.

**Start:** From the canal basin follow the canal towpath. For the first half mile or so the towpath follows the course of the B6265 but then, by the old lock keeper's cottage at a finger post indicating the Ripon Rowell Way, the canal swings away from the road. Just by the locks (Rhodes Field Locks) are two notice boards which give you the full story of the canal and information about wildlife you might see.

Next you pass Bell Furrows Lock and the marina. Cross the footbridge over the access canal to the marina and continue along the towpath. On the next stretch you pass two bird hides overlooking a large lake.

Pass Ripon Racecourse on your left and then Ripon Motorboat Club on the right. There is a stone bridge here (Nicholson's Bridge) note this, as it where you rejoin the canal on your return journey. For now, continue along the towpath.

The next bridge is Renton's Bridge (SE 331686). Cross this then turn left to follow the tarmac track. As this track turns away from the canal (SE 331683), continue straight ahead alongside the canal. The footpath is marked with a yellow footpath arrow.

At Oxclose Lock, the Ripon Canal joins the River Ure. Just past the locks, go through the kissing gate (SE 332679) and veer away from the canal at about 45 degrees.

Ignore the trees now to your left next to the canal and ahead of you very slightly left, in the fence line, is a clump of trees/bushes which forms the end of a hedge between the fields. Just to the right of this is difficult to see wooden stile with a yellow footpath arrow. Cross this and follow the line of the hedge. As the hedge line ends in the middle of a large open field, keep straight ahead in line with the hedge passing just to the left of a barn. You join a wide stony track and almost ahead of you is a stile with a yellow footpath arrow. You may need to look either side of you depending on exactly where you hit the track.

Once over the stile, follow the hedge line towards the house. Go through the gate to the right of the house (Ashbrook Farm - SE 330672) and keep straight ahead over the bridge, across the brook and ahead on the broad track. The track opens into the main street of Bishop Monkton. Turn right (SE 331666).

Keep a look out on the right for a row of red brick cottages after about 100 yards. Immediately after them is West View (SE 331665), which is your route back to Ripon. Note that the sign for West View is not obvious as you approach from this direction.

It is worth first having a look at the village then returning to this spot. To find the genuinely excellent Masons Arms, turn left along either along Main Street, following the stream or better, continue along the road and turn left on St John's Road to see a fabulous topiary example. The pub is on the right after 200 yards or so.

Returning to West View, a few yards along it the route goes off to the left through a walkers' gate marked with a yellow arrow.

Initially the footpath is fenced off from the field. At the end of the fenced off section, continue straight ahead. The footpath becomes a broad track. Follow this track until you reach a junction of tracks and turn left, passing to the right of a large building which is a huge hen house. It is likely there will be free range chickens everywhere!

Go through a metal gate and across the hen enclosure then through another gate and bear left to follow the drive round between the houses. As you get to the road, you pass an old "upright" green footpath sign which confirms you have not been trespassing! Turn right at the road (SE 336678).

Stay on the road passing through the village of Littlethorpe. Note the long buildings of the Old Ropery where ropes would have been made at one time. Continue walking along the road and turn right at the junction just past the brick built St Michael's Church (SE 323694).

At the next bend in the road (SE 325694), turn right down a broad track alongside a phone box and sign to the Ripon Motorboat Club. You will see the white rails of Ripon Racecourse ahead. Keep left as the track forks and go over the bridge across the canal to the towpath. Turn left to retrace your steps to Ripon.

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