

Garvald – Gifford walk

Distance: 9 kilometres, 6 miles

Time: 2½ - 3½ hours



About the Walk: This level walk follows steep sided valleys (formed by melt water at the end of the last ice age) between Garvald and Gifford. You'll pass by freshwater, woodlands, and grassy fields. These fields often have cattle in them, so do take extra care if you are walking with small children and / or dogs. Underfoot, the surface can at times be very muddy and stout footwear is recommended.

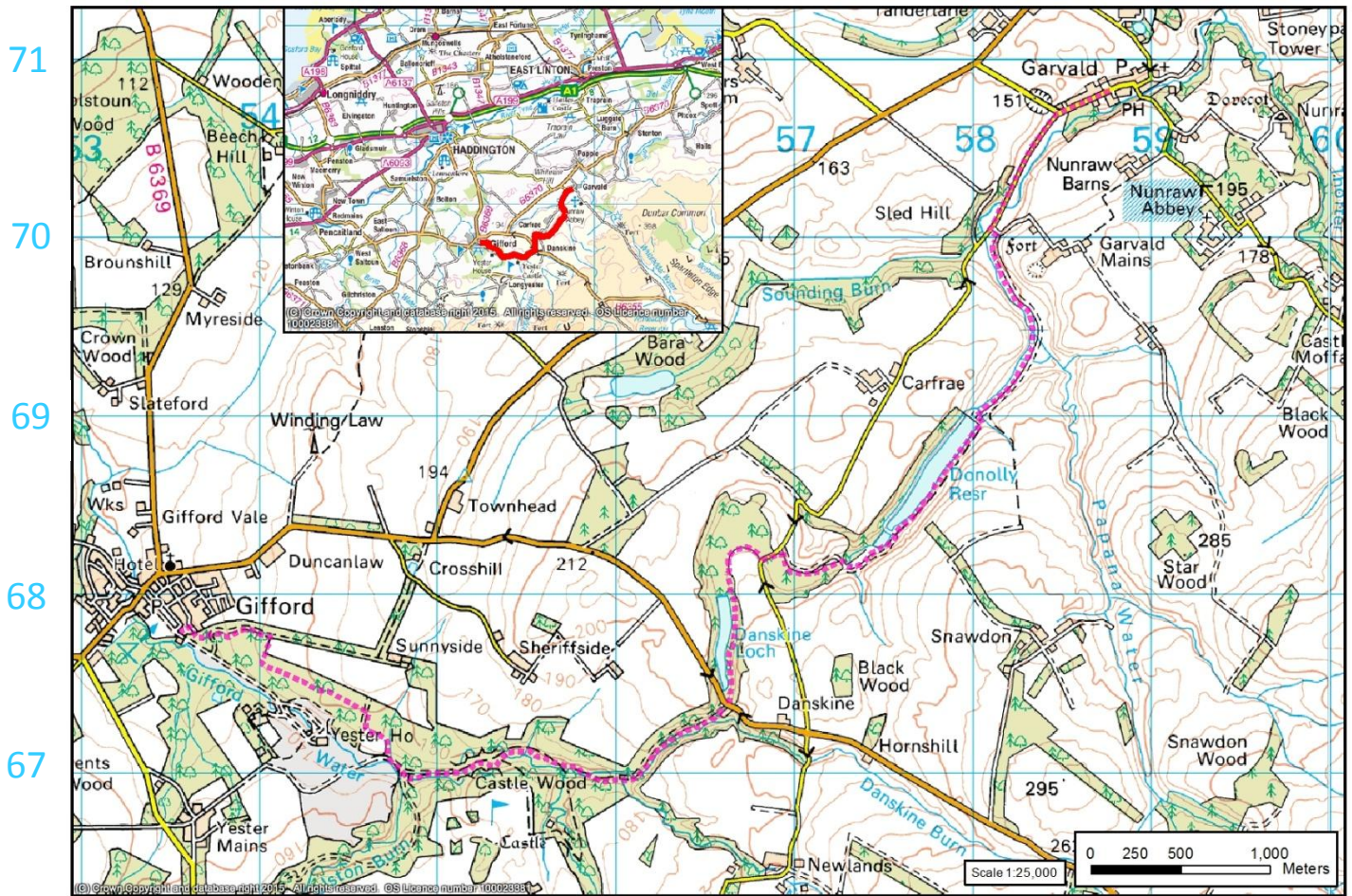


Transport: No public transport, so it is best to either have someone drop you off at one end, or using 2 cars, shuttle one to the end. A taxi for 6 from Gifford to Garvald costs about £12. (CB Private Hire Tel: 01620 282 002 or 07951 666 350)

Refreshments: Garvald has an inn and Gifford 2 hotels.

Route: From Garvald, go SW to the end of the village and then continue along the minor road sign-posted towards Carfrae. After ½km turn L towards Garvald Mains and almost immediately R where a round disc indicates the start of the route. From here on discs, and after Danskine larger finger posts sign the way to Gifford. In Gifford the path emerges on a side street, where, a footpath on the left can be followed to the entrance gates of Yester Estate. From here the lime tree avenue is followed to the village.

Optional Detour to Yester Castle: At grid reference NT557 670 you may wish to turn left and seek out, Yester Castle, which is some 750m up a track on the R hand side. Though fascinating, **the castle is in a dangerous condition** and great care should be taken.



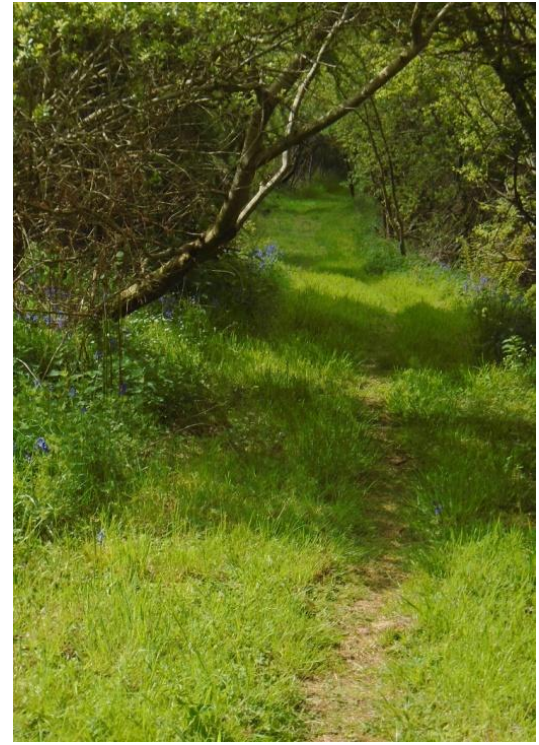
Common blue damselfly



A welcome rest at the west end of Donolly reservoir

Garvald: The village is comprised of 18th century red sandstone buildings, and if you can, is worth a walk around before you set out. At one time it was a thriving village; businesses included two breweries, three public houses, tailors, weavers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, wrights, and coopers.

Donolly Reservoir: Built in 1889, it supplied Garvald. In the 1950's it was not unusual for fish to come out of the taps in the village! It ceased as a water supply in 1994. Now it is a good place to see swans and ducks and in summer, along the path, blue damselflies brighten up the way.

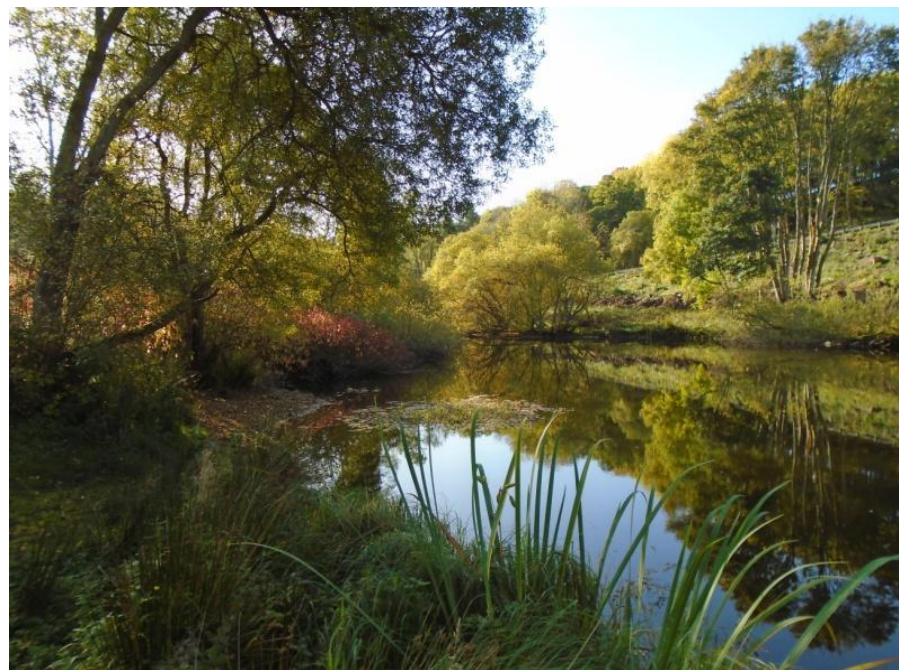


Donolly reservoir in winter and the path alongside it in summer

Danskine: Former marshy ground in which Oliver Cromwell's cannons became bogged down, en route from Edinburgh to Dunbar. Local tradition has it that the troops drank all the beer found in the Garvald breweries. Danskine loch was dug by the 8th Marquis of Tweeddale in the 1840's and is now used as a carp fishery.

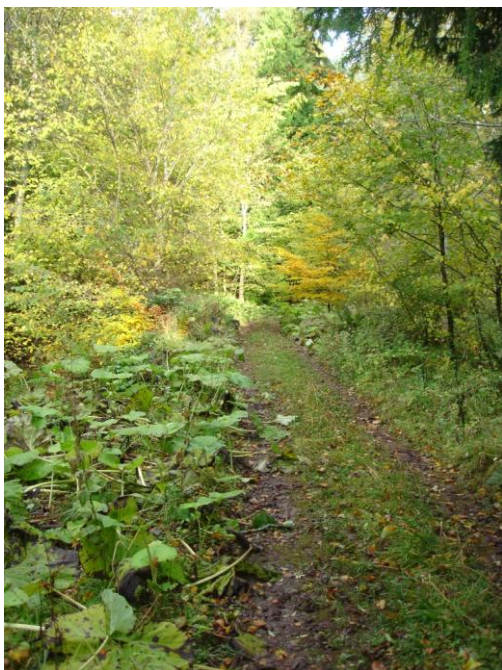


You cross a minor road between Donolly and Danskine.



Danskine loch

(On the detour) Yester Castle: Built in the late 13th century by Hugo de Gifford who employed French masons. It is said that the stone work was so fine and it was built so quickly that many locals believed it was the work of Goblins. This castle did not last long, being levelled in order to prevent use by the English, a policy instigated by King Robert the Bruce. However the original 13th century vaulted underground chamber –the Goblin Ha’ (hall) is still intact. In the 14th century the castle passed to the Hay family who, in 1557, moved to the more comfortable surroundings of a new home on the site of the present Yester House.



Track through Yester estate and its policy woodlands



Yester Estate. Between 1646 and 1715 improvements were made to the estate which included moving the village of Yester to its current location in Gifford and the planting of 6,000 acres of woodland. As you follow the Gifford Water you’ll pass some fine specimen trees, and, in spring, banks of wild garlic, winter heliotrope and bluebells.

Yester House was built in 1715. There is no public access to Yester House or its immediate grounds.



Looking back to the entrance gates of Yester Estate

Gifford is a planned village, developed in association with textile and paper mills and had two annual fairs. One paper mill produced Bank of Scotland notes. The village is approached along a fine avenue of lime trees; to the left is a park originally the bleaching field and to the right an enclosure surrounded by stone walls - the pound. This was for holding cattle overnight prior to being driven to market. From 1901 to 1933 Gifford was the terminus of a railway line which linked the village, by a rather circuitous route, to Edinburgh, providing an easier way to transport cattle as well as people.



Wild garlic pervades the banks of the Gifford Water in spring

