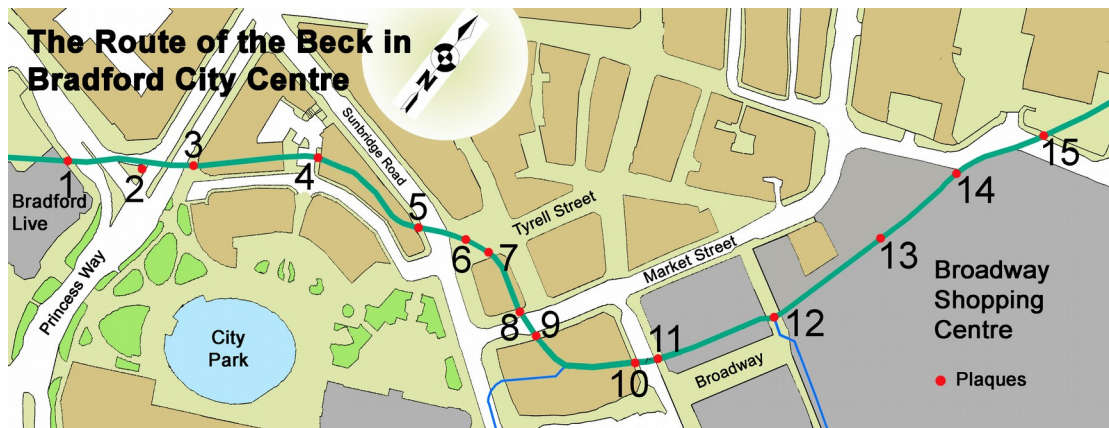


Bradford Beck: Take the Plaques Walk



Welcome to the Bradford Beck Plaques Walk.

A series of 15 plaques is placed along the route of Bradford Beck as it flows hidden beneath the centre of Bradford.

The walk begins alongside Bradford Live. Look out for the dark slate-coloured paving stones. Each bears two lines of a poem, sponsor's name and shows the direction of flow of the water under your feet.

Bradford Beck

**On westerly moors
Rise Chellow, Pinch, Pitty**

**Energy once harnessed
To power this wool city**

**Goit and Beck in parallel
Power in, waste out**

**Spectral Saxon elders
Mourn memory of trout**

**In pure flow below Sunbridge
Fish once chased**

**Disregarded water
In gothic vaults encased**

**Culverted, covered
Forced underground, hidden**

**Cherished sparkling Beck
Degraded to a midden**

**Fouled by industry detritus
Sky just a dream**

**Under our city lies
A misused, abused stream**

**Awaiting a rebirth
Whispering in the dark**

**Water sighs, eddies, races
Unseen, unremarked**

**So small a waterway
For Bradford dale drained**

**Beck fed the canal basin
Its miasma ill-famed**

**Skip across the broad ford
Bradford is named**

Jane Callaghan

FOBB © 2015

Plaque 1 (On the wooden cinema surround)

Sponsor: Bradford Live

**On westerly moors
Rise Chellow, Pinch, Pitty**

Standing here, Bradford Beck flows about 4 metres below you. In the 18th century a brewery stood here using the beck as a source of water. The brewing process kills cholera bacteria and so beer provided safe liquid and calories for working people.

Bradford Live is a renovated cinema which many older local people refer to as The Odeon or Gaumont. The Odeon's doors closed in 2000 but this building with its beautiful listed façade looks hopeful once again as a major entertainment venue.

Plaque 2 (A traffic island at the end of Thornton Road)

Sponsor: Safe Style

**Energy once harnessed
To power this wool city**

Nearby on 13th April 1891, mill workers who had been on strike through a harsh winter, gathered here to demonstrate. The Mayor, who had sided with the mill owners, read the Riot Act (1715) and troops with fixed bayonets dispersed the crowd. Strikers and police horses were injured and a few weeks later, the strikers returned to the mills on reduced wages. However, out of this strike was born the Independent Labour Party, a fore-runner of the modern Labour Party.

Plaque 3 (Godwin Street, outside Aldermanbury House) **Sponsor: Anchor Housing**

**Goit and Beck in parallel
Power in, waste out**

From Elizabeth I's time, Bradford people chose religious freedom and Bradford became a largely Puritan town. However, close to here stood a den of gambling, drinking and vice: a pub called The Cockpit. This pub was also used by John Wesley to preach to newly converted Methodists in 1756.

Beneath your feet, the Goit rejoins Bradford Beck. The Goit is a channel taken off the Beck higher up to provide a rushing stream to power a medieval corn mill.

Plaque 4 (Miller Gate, a small cul-de-sac off Aldermanbury) **Sponsor: British Land**

**Spectral Saxon elders
Mourn memory of trout**

This plaque is over the Beck, by where a corn mill stood. It was a feudal soke mill, which meant that the Lord of the Manor had the right to demand that his tenants grind their corn at his mill. Records show fines for people grinding their corn elsewhere. The Beck was economically vital to Bradford long before the industrial revolution.

Look through the tunnel, and you can see City Park. The park cost £24 million, mainly paid for by the council and is a gathering place for many. The artificial lake constantly changes shape and size. Thus, water continues to contribute to city life.

Plaque 5 (Bottom of Sunbridge Road)

Sponsor: Yorkshire Water

**In pure flow below Sunbridge
Fish once chased**

From this plaque you can just see Centenary Square. It was named to mark the centenary of Bradford being granted city status in 1897. This meant that the Mayor would be known as the Lord Mayor and the Council could enact bye laws. From an obscure market town with a population of 6,000 by 1910 Bradford was booming: the World centre of the wool trade and one of Europe's wealthiest cities.

In the Square stands the Bradford City fire disaster memorial which the Queen honoured with a wreath on her visit for the centennial ceremonies in 1997.



City Hall Centenary Square City Park from Plaque 6

Plaque 6 (By the seats)

Dedicated to the 56 who died in the fire at Bradford City football ground in May 1985.

**Disregarded water
In gothic vaults encased**

From here there is a view of the magnificent City Hall, opened in 1873. Clearly visible from the street, statues of Britain's monarchs are mounted around the walls. To mark that Bradford's leading families supported the Parliamentary side during the English Civil War, Oliver Cromwell is included in the line-up. Cromwell's atrocities in Ireland meant that over 200 years later on the day of his statue's placement, the usual Irish labourers working on the building, lest the statue be "accidentally" dropped and smashed, were replaced with English workmen.

Plaque 7 (Tyrell St, across from the seats)

Sponsor: Cinderella Club

**Culverted, covered
Forced underground, hidden**

Here, if this were 1800, you would be standing on a bridge looking down on the Beck. You are near the bottom of Ivegate, one of Bradford's oldest streets. The ending of the street name has nothing to do with gates: it derives from the Danish word *gata*, which simply means "street". The Yorkshire dialect was strongly influenced by Danish invaders and settlers who had their capital at Jorvik (York) before the Norman invasion.

Plaque 8 (Market Street)

Sponsor: Rimmingtons

**Cherished sparkling Beck
Degraded to a midden**

You are now in Market Street, a major thoroughfare since the town began to grow. You are standing at a plaque with the former Tarapaca Bank building across the road, formed to foster Anglo-Chilean trade in alpaca fleece.

The Beck is contained beneath your feet, but in 1947 heavy rain fell and water levels in Bradford Beck rose. Pressure built up in the culvert below you and Market Street distorted. The Beck exploded through the road surface, sending hundreds of wooden cobbles high into the air to land close-by. Local schools closed for the safety of the children, many of whom made their way into the city to gawp at the flood damage.

Plaque 9 (By the bus stop)

Dedicated to the memory of Jackie Emmott

**Fouled by industry detritus
Sky just a dream**

This plaque is opposite what was once Bradford's most prestigious department store, Brown & Muff, known as the 'Harrods of the North'. Beginning as a small dress shop in 1814 the present building was completed in 1870. Older people can still remember customers arriving in chauffeured cars to be met by liveried staff who made sure they never had to open a door for themselves.

The Muff family from Ilkley ran the store from 1900 and in 1909 they changed their name to Maufe, thus inspiring the following poem:



In Bradford 'tis good enough
To be known as Mrs Muff,
But in Ilkley by the River Wharfe
It's better to be known as Mrs Maufe.

Plaque 10 (Next to a bookmaker's on Bank Street)

Sponsor: Grattan

**Under our city lies
A misused, abused stream**

Look up the hill from this plaque, and you can just see a corner of the former Wool Exchange. On 9th August 1864 Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister at the time, laid the foundation stone of the building. It was to be the hub of Bradford's wool trade until the 1960's by which time the city's world-renowned position as 'Worstedopolis' had all but ended. Nowadays the Wool Exchange building provides a beautiful location for a branch of Waterstones bookshop.

Visit www.markingbradfordbeck.org for photographs of the stream below you.

Plaque 11 (Bank Street, near to the Wool Exchange) **Sponsor: Feature Radiators**

Awaiting a rebirth
Whispering in the dark

This plaque is on Bank Street, named for the many banks on this road which served the city. Below your feet the Beck runs through a cathedral of vaulted arches. Total darkness hides intricate Victorian masonry, elegant in its symmetry and geometry.

Plaque 12 (Between Zizzi and the austere Arndale House) **Sponsor: The Broadway**

Water sighs, eddies, races
Unseen, unremarked

Where the austere walls of Arndale House tower above you once stood one of Bradford's handsomest Victorian buildings, Swan Arcade. It housed up-market retailers and firms of wool brokers. The writer J B Priestley was employed here after he left school and although he found the work dull he admired Swan Arcade itself.

The arcade's doors closed for the last time in 1962 and demolition began the following day to make way for a more modern building. Priestley campaigned vigorously to save it but by then he had left Bradford and his opinion counted little.

Thus on 10th December 1963 Yorkshire and England fast bowler Fred Trueman ceremonially topped out Arndale House, one of Bradford's aesthetically inferior buildings. Let's remember Trueman for his cricket.

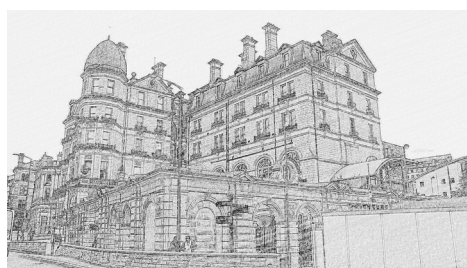
Plaque 13 (In The Broadway shopping centre by the Market St information plynth)

So small a waterway
For Bradford dale drained

Sponsor: The Broadway

The Broadway Shopping Centre covers the former broad ford which was in fact a wide bridge across the Beck. It is after this river crossing that Bradford is named.

The Beck flows beneath your feet, hidden from view, unreachable by anyone but City engineers. Here the culvert is wide, rectangular in section and of heavily reinforced concrete. The bed is flat and smooth and the stream bubbles down a small three-stepped weir.



Plaque 14 (Outside River Island)
Sponsor: The Broadway

Beck fed the canal basin
Its miasma ill-famed

This plaque is close to the Midland Hotel in whose foyer, Sir Henry Irving died, 13th October 1905. Below you was once a junction controlled by a sluice gate where water was channelled off to feed the beginning and highest point of the Bradford Canal. The canal company never had permission to replenish the canal from the Beck and in 1866 an injunction forced the channel's closure and filling in.

**Skip across the broad ford
Bradford is named**

This plaque is close to what was once the terminal basin of the Bradford Canal and what was formerly a vast area of docks. The canal was three miles long with ten locks. In the 1860s, following an outbreak of cholera there were attempts to close down the canal, “that seething cauldron of impurity,” as the Bradford Observer described it. The canal company argued that the water was polluted before it reached the canal. Indeed, in Victorian times, it is said that one could light the surface of Bradford Beck with a match. The Bradford Canal closed in 1922 and was filled in.

About the Plaques Walk

The Plaques Walk was conceived in 2014 by the Friends of Bradford’s Becks and the plaques paid for by businesses, organisations and private individuals.

Its aim is to highlight the water-course that has been closed in, polluted and mostly neglected until recent times.



The Beck enabled Bradford's existence and former growth to industrial might. It was a source of water for power and transport for the early citizens of Broad Ford.

The Friends of Bradford Beck believe that this unloved stream could once again become an important asset to the City of Bradford.

Urban streams bring beauty and interest to built up places and allow nature to have a foot-hold. Urban streams contribute to our prosperity and well-being.

We want the Beck once again to enhance our lives with charm and interest.

Visit us at www.markingbradfordbeck.org for photographs of the stream beneath your feet and to learn more about the Beck and the city above it.

Find out more and get involved to make a difference.

The Friends of Bradford's Becks 2016

