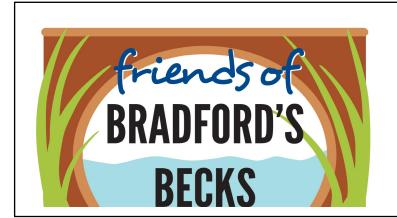


NORTH BECK, KEIGHLEY



North Beck played an important part in the industrial development of Keighley. Along its course were a series of dams and weirs that served nine mills. Today, once it leaves the busy town centre, North Beck has returned to being a peaceful watercourse, winding its way through rural woodland.

LENGTH: 6.5km (4 miles).

TERRAIN: One upward stretch in the first half, and a long slow climb up the valley side in the second half. Three stretches of road walking. The section along North Beck can be wet and muddy at all times and challenging underfoot. Overall ascent 165m. OS map OL21.

START: The junction of Oakworth Road and Becks Road, Keighley, BD21 1SD (near the Royal Mail Delivery Office). w3w ///closes.closet.fairly

PARKING: There are several car parks in Keighley town centre.

BUS / TRAIN: Bus station 10 minutes, Keighley train station 15 minutes.

1. Walk along Becks Road (ignoring the footpath to West Gate). North Beck is down on your right, and there are steps down to get a closer look. Keep forward along Becks Road, and where the road curves round to the left keep forward along a cobbled lane. At the end, just past a road on the right, go up a set of steps. At the top of the steps, follow the path along the side of a playground.

Looking down on the left you can see the sheds of Pennine Weavers, one of the remaining cloth manufacturers in the area – a fitting start to a walk that travels from the industrial past to the rural present. At one time there were 56 textile mills in Keighley – including the first cotton mill in Yorkshire – but as the industry declined Pennine Weavers survived by becoming specialist weavers producing luxury worsted cloth.



At the end, follow the path right, and at the next corner of the playground turn left along a footpath beside a fence. Where a lane comes in from the right keep forward and follow the track, with North Beck down in the valley on the left. This track takes you through the Guardhouse allotments, an unconventional collection of huts and sheds which house goats, geese, chickens and other animals, as well vegetable beds. The area may get its name from a parliamentary garrison stationed here during the Civil War.

Follow the track, ignoring all paths to the left and the right, until you arrive at a set of stone steps. These are known locally as the Cat Steps. Turn left here. At the bottom there is the option to take a pleasant stroll beside the beck – this is optional, and there'll be a longer beckside walk later on. To do this detour take the footpath on the left before the bridge over North Beck and walk about 350m to a weir. Return to the main path.



Cross the bridge, which is next to the site of the early 19th century Holme Mill. Follow the path uphill to a road and turn left, crossing Durrance Street to reach the main road (Fell Lane). Turn right and follow the road uphill for 450m, passing the Three Horses pub.

2. Opposite Rose Meadows take the signposted footpath through a gap stile on the right. Go through a second (very narrow!) gap stile and then go downhill with the wall on your left, heading for a footbridge below – Tinker Bridge – where you meet North Beck again. Cross Tinker Bridge and immediately go left over a stone slab to take the footpath beside the Beck.

The path now takes you on a wonderful 1.2km wander along North Beck and through woodland. It crosses numerous small and not-so-small feeder becks which involve negotiating rough stepping stones (and lots of mud in wet weather). Eventually go over stepping stones and a stile to enter a Woodland Trust property. When you reach a footbridge on the left do not cross it,



but keep forward to start the long climb up the valley side. The footpath eventually joins a track which continues climbing, with lovely views of North Beck valley below. Look out for an arched stone water trough in the wall on the right. The track eventually comes out on a road.



3. Turn right and walk through the attractive village of Laycock for 400m until you reach Low Laithe Fold on the left. Go through a gap stile in the wall on the left of the driveway opposite. Go half right across the field to climb over a stile on the right of a gate. Follow the wall on the left and go through a



gap stile at the end. Turn right and follow the wall on your right. About two-thirds of the way down the field, head half-left towards a gap stile in the wall ahead. In the next field keep the same direction to go through another stile in the next wall. Keep walking in the same direction, and when you come over a rise, look for stepping stones across the beck down on the left. Go across the beck, through the stile, and walk forward, with bushes and the remains of a wall on your right. Keep following the line of the wall, and where the wall turns right, keep forward to exit the field through another gap stile.

4. Keep straight ahead on the tarmac path, crossing Staincliffe Drive and continuing through the houses until you reach a road (North Dean Avenue). Here turn right and keep following the road as it bends left. Walk down the road for 500m, ignoring the first footpath sign on the right. When you come to Broster Avenue on the left, take the signposted path on the right. Follow the path to the left of the playground and start descending stone steps. About two-thirds of the way down you meet the path that you came along earlier. Turn left here, and retrace your steps back to the beginning.

