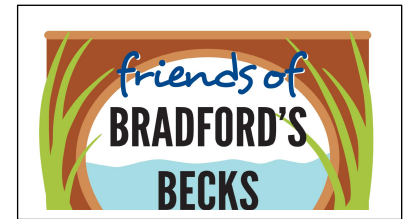


# THE PLAQUE TRAIL



A series of 15 plaques mark the route of Bradford Beck as it flows hidden beneath the city centre. The trail was conceived in 2014 by the Friends of Bradford's Becks (FOBB) and the plaques paid for by businesses, organisations and private individuals. They were installed in 2016 as a reminder that the river which was so important to the development of Bradford is still here, flowing beneath our feet.

Look out for the dark slate-coloured paving stones. Each plaque bears the sponsor's name, an arrow showing the direction of flow, and two lines of a poem. The evocative poem, by Jane Callaghan, was the winning entry in a poetry competition which FOBB held in 2014. You can follow the poem as you follow the Beck's course.

**LENGTH:** (0.8km, 0.5m).

**TERRAIN:** A flat walk on pavements, one set of steps to descend. Care needed when crossing roads.

**START:** Beside Bradford Live on Thornton Road, BD1 2DH. [w3w ///vine.ramp.twin](https://www.vine.ramp.twin)

**PARKING:** There are several car parks in Bradford city centre.

**BUS:** Interchange five minutes walk.

*Before starting the trail, if you want to visit the last place that Bradford Beck can be seen before it disappears under the city centre, continue along Thornton Road for about 180m from the start point and turn left between the end of the car showrooms and the Culture Fusion building. Walk to the end and you can see the Beck disappearing under a bridge to start its underground journey. Note the plaque on the front of the Culture Fusion building, marking the location of Holme Mill, the first steam-powered mill in Bradford, which was built in 1798.*

## **Plaque 1      Sponsor: Bradford Live**

*On Thornton Road, by the last window of Bradford Live.*

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

In the 18th century Whittaker's brewery stood here, using the beck as a source of water. Beer is highly calorific and the brewing process kills bacteria, so beer provided safe liquid and calories for working people. With rapid industrialisation the Beck effectively became a polluted, fetid open sewer, and since local people obtained their drinking water from the Beck, outbreaks of cholera and typhoid were common. By the middle of the 19th century life expectancy of just over 18 years was one of the lowest in the country. The building which now stands here opened as the New Victoria Cinema in 1930.

## **Plaque 2      Sponsor: Safe Style**

*Cross Thornton Road by the pedestrian lights on the corner. After two crossings, stop before turning right to cross Godwin Street. The plaque is on the traffic island on the left.*

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

On 13 April 1891, striking mill workers and their supporters gathered near here to demonstrate and a riot broke out. This was the climax of the bitter Manningham Mills strike, which started in December 1890. The Mayor read the Riot Act and troops with fixed bayonets dispersed the crowd. 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 forerunner of the modern Labour Party.

### **Plaque 3      Sponsor: Anchor Housing**

*Cross Godwin Street and turn left a few paces to near the Anchor entrance to Aldermanbury House.*

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

The 1800 map of Bradford shows a network of goits (artificial mill streams) in this area. You are standing above the location of a goit which was taken off Bradford Beck further back along Thornton Road and used to power the wheel of a medieval corn mill – see next plaque.

### **Plaque 4**

*Go down the steps beside Aldermanbury House, walk along Aldermanbury and go left into Millergate cul-de-sac. The plaque is on the right.*

#### **Spectral Saxon elders, Mourn memory of trout**

This plaque is dedicated to the memory of Ed Butterworth, who was responsible for designing and realising the Plaque Trail.

This is the site of the medieval corn mill which was built around 1530. It was a feudal soke mill which meant that the Lord of the Manor's tenants had to grind their corn here or be fined. Records show fines for people preferring to grind their corn elsewhere. The mill was demolished in 1871 when Sunbridge Road was built. Through the tunnel opposite you can see City Park, which was probably the site of an earlier 13th century mill. The area round that mill tended to flood and silt up the Beck, so the course of Bradford Beck was altered in this direction and a new mill was built here.

### **Plaque 5      Sponsor: Yorkshire Water**

*Continue along Aldermanbury and then go left by the turning circle at the bottom of Sunbridge Road. Walk a few paces up the pavement.*

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

Sunbridge Road is named after the Sun Inn, an important 18th century meeting place which was on the site of the red brick building opposite. The inn was near Sun Bridge, a later name for Ive Bridge, one of the Bradford Beck crossing points.

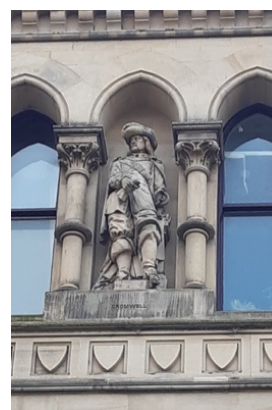
### **Plaque 6**

*Cross the road and walk towards the black bollards at the entrance to Tyrell Street.*

#### **Disregarded water, In gothic vaults encased**

This plaque is dedicated to the 56 people who died in the fire at Bradford City football ground in May 1985.

Behind you is Centenary Square. It was named to mark the centenary of Bradford being granted city status in 1897, when it was the centre of the wool trade and one of Europe's wealthiest cities. The square contains a memorial to the Bradford City fire disaster. You can also see the magnificent City Hall, which has statues of Britain's monarchs mounted around the walls. To mark that Bradford supported the Parliamentary side during the English Civil War, Oliver Cromwell is included – it is believed to be one of only five public statues of him in England.



### **Plaque 7      Sponsor: Cinderella Club**

*In Tyrell St, go half-right to opposite the benches.*

#### **Culverted, covered, Forced underground, hidden**

Here, if this were 1800, you would be standing on Ive 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'. Ivegate rises sharply to

join two more of Bradford's oldest streets, Westgate and Kirkgate: Bradford's dungeon was located at the top of Ivegate, and the city's first market, dating back to 1251, was held at the junction of the three streets.

**Plaque 8      Sponsor: Rimmingtons**

*Turn right down Ivegate to where it meets Market Street and go right for a few paces.*

**Cherished sparkling Beck, Degraded to a midden**

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. 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**

*Cross to the other side of Market Street, outside the Old Bank pub.*

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

This plaque is dedicated to the memory of local resident Jackie Emmott.

This plaque is outside the former Tarapaca Bank, which was formed to foster Anglo-Chilean trade in alpaca fleece. The building on the corner of Ivegate opposite once housed Bradford's most prestigious department store, Brown Muff & Co, which was known as the 'Harrods of the North'. Look up to see the name on the corner pediment. 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      Sponsor: Grattan**

*Go along Market Street and turn right into Bank Street. Stay on the right until opposite the Yorkshire Building Society.*

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

Looking up the hill from this plaque, you can see a turreted corner of the former Wool Exchange, one of Bradford's finest buildings. It opened in 1867 and was the hub of Bradford's wool trade until the 1960s, by which time the city's world-renowned position as 'Worstedopolis' had all but ended. It now houses a bookshop which has been described as the most beautiful in England.

**Plaque 11      Sponsor: Feature Radiators**

*Cross the street to outside the Yorkshire Building Society.*

**Awaiting a rebirth, Whispering in the dark**

This street is named for the many banks 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      Sponsor: The Broadway**

*Turn left into Broadway and at the end left into Charles Street, as far as Zizzi restaurant.*

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

Here once stood the Swan Arcade, one of Bradford's handsomest and much loved Victorian buildings. It housed upmarket retailers such as high-class tailors and its office space was mainly occupied by firms of wool brokers. The writer J B Priestley was employed by one of these for a time after he left school and although he found the work rather dull he admired Swan Arcade itself. It was demolished in 1962, despite the campaigning efforts of Priestley and many other Bradfordians to save it.

**Plaque 13      Sponsor: The Broadway**

*Continue along Charles Street, turn right into Market Street and right again to enter the Broadway Shopping Centre. The plaque is a bronze one and is in front of the information plinth.*

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

Beneath here is the broad ford across Bradford Beck, from which Bradford gets its name. The shopping centre is built on the site of Forster Square, once one of Bradford's major landmarks. The square was named after William Edward Forster (1818-1886) a 19th century Liberal MP for Bradford. On 17th February 1870, Forster presented his Elementary Education Bill to Parliament, thus laying the foundations of compulsory education in England. His statue now stands at the Well Street entrance to the shopping centre.



**Plaque 14      Sponsor: The Broadway**

*Go back out of the Broadway, go right and right again along Lower Kirkgate to the first bend.*

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

Below you was once a junction controlled by a sluice gate where water was channelled off to feed the beginning of the Bradford Canal. The canal company never had permission to take water from the Beck and in 1866 an injunction forced the channel's closure.

**Plaque 15      Sponsor: Napoleons**

*Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing and go right for a few paces.*

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

This plaque is close to what was once the terminal basin of the Bradford Canal and a vast area of docks and warehouses. The canal went to join the Leeds and Liverpool canal in Shipley and 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. The Bradford Canal closed in 1922 and was filled in.

Also nearby is Bradford Cathedral. There has probably been a church on this site since Anglo-Saxon times. During the Civil War Bradford supported the Parliamentary cause, and the Parish Church was used as a defensive strong point when the Royalists besieged Bradford in 1642 and 1643. Wool sacks were hung around the bell tower to protect it from ordnance. The Parish Church became Bradford Cathedral in 1919.

