

The Plaque Trail

Follow the trail of 15 plaques along the route of Bradford Beck as it flows hidden beneath the centre of Bradford. Each one of the dark slate-coloured paving stones bears two lines of a poem, the sponsor's name and an arrow showing the beck's direction of flow. The poem was the winning entry in a public poetry competition held in 2015.

A more detailed tour of the plaques is available at:

www.markingbradfordbeck.org

The trail is 0.8km long and begins alongside the former Odeon cinema (Bradford Live) in Thornton Road.

Plaque 1: On the wooden hoarding.

Sponsor: Bradford Live.

In the 18th century a brewery stood here. Cholera bacteria in the beck were killed by the brewing process and beer provided safe liquid and calories for working people.

Plaque 2: A traffic island at the end of Thornton Road. Sponsor: Safe Style.

In April 1891, mill workers who had been on strike through a harsh winter, gathered near here to demonstrate. The Riot Act was read and troops dispersed the crowd.

Plaque 3: Godwin Street, outside Aldermanbury House.

Sponsor: Anchor Housing.

The 1800 map of Bradford shows a network of goits or mill streams in this area. One of them flowed into the beck just where you stand.

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

This is the site of a medieval corn mill which was built around 1530 and was powered by an artificial mill race. The mill was owned by the Lord of the Manor and his tenants had



to grind their corn here.

It was demolished in 1871.

Plaque 5: Bottom of Sunbridge Road.

Sponsor: Yorkshire Water.

Sunbridge Road is named after the Sun Inn, an important meeting place on the site of the Co-operative Bank opposite. It was near Sun Bridge, one of the beck crossing points.

Plaque 6: Tyrell Street, by the benches.

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

Plaque 7: Tyrell Street, across from the benches. Sponsor: Cinderella Club.

Here, if this were 1800, you would be standing on Ive Bridge, looking down on the beck. Ivegate is one of Bradford's oldest streets. The bridge was later called Sun Bridge.

Plaque 8: Market Street.

Sponsor: Rimmingtons.

In 1946 heavy rain fell and water levels in Bradford Beck rose. Pressure built up and the beck exploded through Market Street, dislodging hundreds of wooden cobbles.

Plaque 9: Market Street, by the bus stop.

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



Plaque 10: Next to a bookmakers on Bank Street. Sponsor: Grattan.

Look up the hill from this plaque, and you can just see a turreted corner of the former Wool Exchange. This 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.

Plaque 11: Across the road from Plaque 10. Sponsor: Feature Radiators.

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: By Zizzi restaurant. Sponsor: The Broadway.

Here once stood one of Bradford's handsomest Victorian buildings, Swan Arcade. The writer J. B. Priestley was employed here and he campaigned vigorously to save it, but it was demolished in 1962.

Plaque 13: In the Broadway Shopping centre by the Market Street information plinth. Sponsor: The Broadway.

The Broadway Shopping Centre was built over the former Broad Ford, after which Bradford is named.

Plaque 14: Lower Kirkgate, outside River Island.

Sponsor: The Broadway.

Below you was once a junction controlled by a sluice gate where water was channelled off to feed the beginning of the Bradford Canal – although the canal company never had permission to use water from the beck!

Plaque 15: Cross the road and along a few paces. Sponsor: Napoleons.

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 closed in 1922 and was filled in.