

Hellifield Beck

Hellifield Beck trundles its way down from the moors above Hellifield in a gentle meandering fashion. Passing Little Newton and disappearing under the Skipton-to-Hellifield line, it flows past Newton Way and the new housing estate, and disappears into a tunnel under the 'Lanky' line, before reappearing in what is generally termed as the first Beck Field.

Prior to the railways being constructed, the Beck would have had a clear uninterrupted passage, as it made its way through undeveloped fields before reaching the Beck Field Bridge – or Town End Bridge as it is named on the old Ordnance Survey Maps. It's a pity there are no photographs existing (that I'm aware of) of the area around what was the end of the village, prior to the railways being built. The view of the beck, and the Countryside it runs

through looking towards the moors from the Beck Bridge, would have been very different.

Leaning over the Beck Field (Town End) Bridge we can look down on the Beck as it makes its way through the field towards the Back Lane - or Boggart Lane - to give it its correct title. The sides of the beck, its banks, and the watercourse itself, have deviated over the years due to flooding, erosion



Segment of the Ordnance Survey from 1875. Showing Hellifield Beck prior to the Hellifield to Blackburn Railway Line being built. The Railway Station shown would have been the original Station at the top of Haw Lane.

etc. But the general current course of the beck is not very different from the one shown on the map. Town End Bridge prior to the 'Lanky' Line would not have been like the structure we see today. It was more similar in its looks and construction, to the old bridge over the beck at Little Newton. Though it would have been wider, and with part of the beck crossed by a ford which ran alongside the original bridge. The original bridge was replaced when the 'Lanky' line was constructed through the village circa 1880. The beck continues on its way through the 2nd Beck Field where a footbridge traverses the beck as part of a public footpath. There has been much erosion here, and the banking over the years has been washed away in places – almost up to the side of the adjoining field.

The 3rd Beck Field is by far the most interesting. It is bordered on one side by trees and hedgerows, and the beck itself runs stronger here as it is fuelled by a spring which rises from the corner of the field adjoining Beck House. Recent tree planting along its course aims to provide a barrier from grazing livestock and will no doubt encourage wildlife, flora and fauna. At the end of the field is Snell Holme Bridge which is crossed by the Gisburn – Long Preston Road. Over 250 years old, the bridge was built by William Snell, a resident of Hellifield in 1730 who owned land adjoining the beck.

The word 'Holme' is old English and means 'A corner of land between two streams'. The two streams being Hellifield Beck and the nearby Gallaber Syke.



Snell Holme Bridge. Built in 1730.

As the beck flows under Snell Holme Bridge, it enters the 4th Beck Field, which is bordered by the Sewerage Plant. Here the land rises on both sides and Hellifield Beck is joined by Gallaber Syke to form Pan Beck. The watercourse tumbles on its way where it finally enters the Ribble near Halton West Bridge. Generations of children have played, fished, built dens, and enjoyed 'Beckjumping' along the banks of Hellifield Beck. For a general stroll along its banks, it remains a pleasing and seemingly never changing aspect of our village. Long may that continue.

Ken Leak, February 2020



The Third Beck Field, before the recent tree planting.