

The diary of a beck steward

by Maire O'Donnell

Back Beck (Section BB1) June 30th, 2025

Sylvia and I carried out an inspection of the upper part of our section of Back Beck on June 30th 2025. We started at 10 am from below the wall between Rob Walker's land and that of Mrs Haggas, where it is called Heathness Gill. We viewed the upper area, between the wall and the woodland to the west and above the culvert under the bypass, from a vantage point below the wall.

The pool at the foot of the culvert and both beck sides of that part appeared to be free of litter, and, from our limited view, so was the woodland immediately above the culvert.

The beck seemed to be flowing freely despite the low water level. It was at that point that we saw our first Himalayan Balsam plant in the uncovered bed of the beck at the pool just below the wall.

The steep riparian land on both sides above the beck were overgrown with nettles and high grasses. We scanned both areas as we walked alongside but did not see anything else of concern.

Due to trees and bushes growing over the beck it was, and often is, difficult to access the last part of Heathness Gill so we will approach that from golf course, under the bridge, at a later date, when we inspect the next part of the beck downstream (see below).

Notes

Himalayan balsam

This was the first time we have found Himalayan balsam in any part of Heathness Gill. Four plants were pulled out at four different places on the edge of the banks very near the water which, due to the lack of rain over the last few months, was at a low level.

An increase in nettles throughout the area, along beck sides and surrounding woodlands was noted

Bird sounds

We heard wrens, chaff chaff and coal tit

Butterflies

We saw whites, small browns among the trees each side of the beck, and as we exited the beck, on the higher land nearer the house, we saw a number of pairs of meadow brown butterflies.

Flora

Harts tongue fern, other ferns (common) which were difficult to attach a name to

A fungus on a rotten tree in the beck, various names were suggested, possibly a turkey tail fungus

Black and round fungus, possible King Alfred's cakes

Self heal, yellow pimpernel, vetch (purple), water figwort, brooklime.

Insects

Many in flight but not identifiable. Water insects, mainly pond skaters.

Trees

Due to age, there seem to be more fallen trees along the beck side. The log piles noted previously were rotting nicely into the landscape as were the fallen trees. We intend to identify these at a later date

Litter

Surprisingly little, a few small pieces of plastic and one large plastic 'pop' bottle



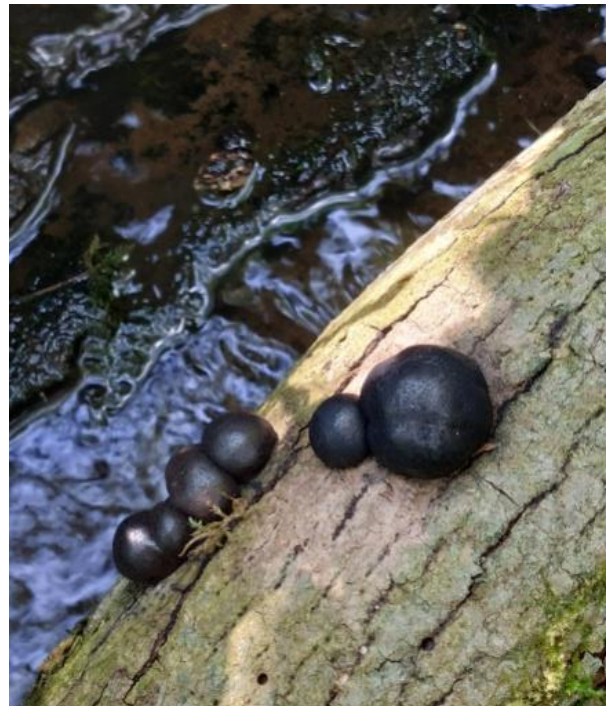
Himalayan balsam



Himalayan balsam



Turkey tail fungus



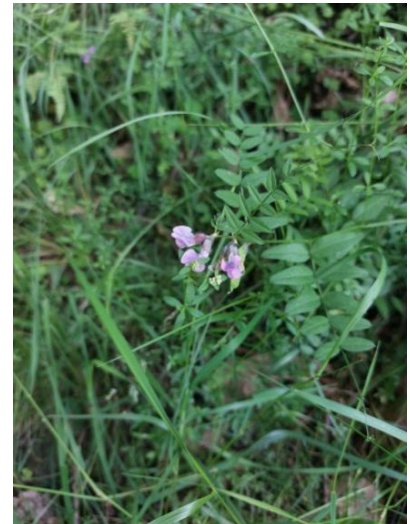
King Alfred's cakes fungus



Hart's tongue fern



Water figwort



Purple vetch



Yellow pimpernel



Brooklime

Continuation of Back Beck survey September 2nd

Syliva and I started out at 2 pm to inspect the beck from the Heathness bridge to the private lane to the Walker Acrea property off School Lane.

In this part of Back Beck access is more difficult as the beck sides are steeper than Heathness, trees and bushes as well as fallen branches impede access to many parts. Brambles and nettles combine to make our work both hazardous and impossible to get close or into parts of the Beck.

However, this is a magical and secret domain which we are privileged to view and be part of for the time we are there.

The time gap between the 30th June and today (2nd September) means that although the flora is similar to that in Heathness, there are differences in the absence of spring and early summer wildflowers and thus less insects and bird songs identified. We did find red campion and herb robert on the edge of the beck enjoying access to the water during the recent very dry spell.

Alas, we found more Himalayan balsam, gladly not many, one near the beginning of our tract and another larger in expanse in the beck near tee 17. Although we managed to take the tops off without any explosions, I did wonder if some seeds had already burst.

There was a leaky dam at the bridge between hole 16 and the 17th tee. This was noted last year. It seems be doing a great job and not to be in danger of blocking the aperture as far as we could see.

We were unable to get close or into the rest of beck from there and had to walk to the end of our section and access some of the beck from below.

So there are now areas of Back Beck from Heathness bridge to the private lane near School Lane which we can get a view of but not necessarily see finer details and parts now which are out of our sight. This means we find fewer golf balls when previously we used to find dozens, in the water and along the beck sides so there may well be an accumulation of disintegrating golf balls therein.

In this part of the beck, litter was minimal, a few golf balls, small scraps of plastic, and some old dog poo bags.



Leaky dam|



Himalayan balsam|



Maire investigating pipe discharging into beck



Looking into one of the inaccessible areas

The pipe pictured was leading from a pool above the rocks enabling water to flow into the area below. So no contamination was being caused as far as we could see.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Mrs Haggas for her support and allowing us to walk over her land and into Heathness Gill, Rob Walker for permission to walk through parts of the golf course to access parts of Back Beck, and also to Sylvia for her friendship and support, especially with the photographs and computer prowess.