



## Himalayan Balsam Campaign Report 2023



### Introduction

Invasive Non-Native invasive Species (INNS) are recognised as an increasing problem nationally and there are concerted attempts to control them (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/invasive-species-order-2019-consultation-opens>).

INNS are usually defined as those species introduced by humans outside of their natural or native range. They are those which cause unwanted environmental or social impacts by spreading rapidly and becoming over abundant in the environment. It is not well understood why some non-native species become invasive and others do not.

In Addingham we have problems with Japanese knotweed, Giant hogweed, Curly waterweed, and Himalayan balsam. Addingham Environment Group (AEG) is working with landowners to tackle them all. The main issue though is Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), which had spread extensively.

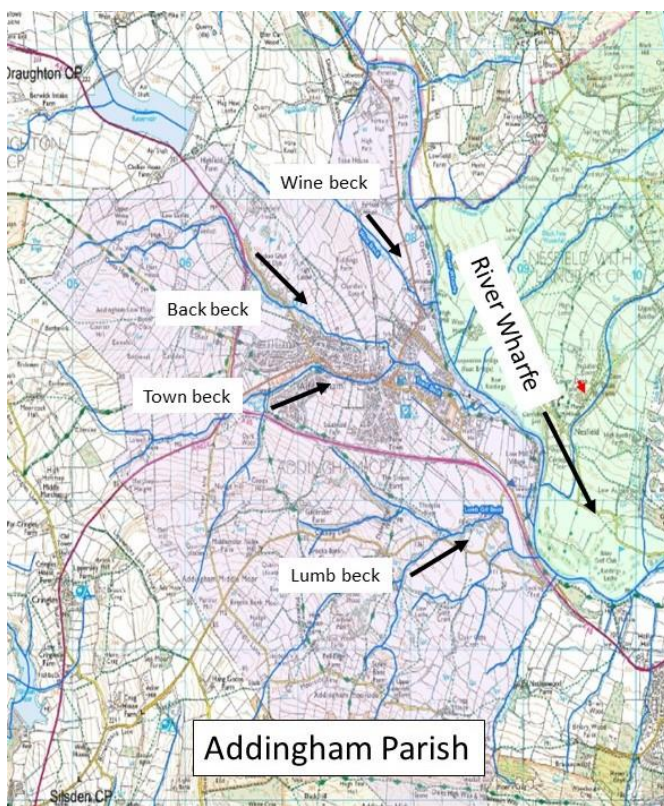
Himalayan balsam (balsam), with its showy pink flowers may look attractive but it is a troublesome 'invader'. Native to the foothills of the Himalayas, it was brought over by plant collectors in the 19th

century. In recent years, in many parts of the country including Yorkshire, it has spread along roadsides, riverbanks, becks and in wet woodlands, out-competing native plants. If left unchecked, it rapidly forms dense stands.

As well as taking the place of native wildflowers, it also reduces the variety and abundance of invertebrates in the soil below and can draw pollinators away from native species. Balsam dies back in the autumn leaving bare ground which is then vulnerable to erosion especially along river and stream banks.

It is listed in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) in England and Wales as an invasive species, making it an offence to plant or otherwise cause it to grow in the wild.

Our report published in March 2021, updated in March 2022 and March 2023, documented our experience, effort and progress since we began our campaign in the summer of 2017 to attempt to eradicate balsam from the parish.



For the first four seasons we focused on the four main beck systems (Town Beck, Back Beck, Lumb Beck and Wine Beck) which rise on the moors above Addingham and flow into the River Wharfe (Fig 1).

Having made good progress controlling balsam along the becks within the parish, from 2021, while not losing our focus on the becks, we started to work with riparian landowners and communities upstream and downstream to address its removal along the River Wharfe and lower Town Beck where it joins the main river.

Here we report on the work we carried out in the summer of 2023. In total we organised 30 work parties between mid-June and late-August, on Monday or Tuesday evenings, Thursday mornings and Saturday mornings, a total of 344 volunteer hours.

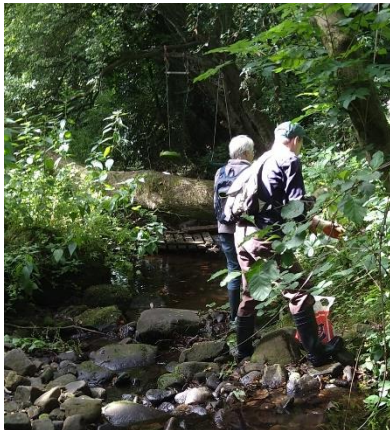
*Fig.1 Addingham's beck system*

The combination of weather conditions in 2023 favoured Himalayan balsam and made it more troublesome to deal with. Rain and warmth in the spring led to high levels of germination from soil seed banks. During the dry spell in late May/June, the seedlings grew longer roots to seek out moisture, making pulling up harder work. In a cloudy, very wet July and August the plants grew very tall seeking the light. The constant rain also meant plants that had been pulled and left on the bank to dry out continued to grow and flower.

We will find out what impact this has on the growth and distribution of plants in 2024, and whether we need to modify our control methods going forward.

## The Becks

### *Town Beck & Back Beck*



Our Addingham 4 Becks stewards kept a watching brief on the becks where they run through the village throughout the summer. A larger number of plants were found on **Town Beck** from Townhead down to Low Mill Lane, compared to the previous year. On our reces we found some dense stands on the banks of Marchup Ghyll above the village (behind Townhead Mill and below the stepping stones), which were tackled in two work sessions (22 volunteer hours, compared to 21 in 2022). **Back Beck** remained clear.

### *Lumb Beck catchment*

Over much of the catchment balsam is confined to isolated plants, growing in and alongside the water courses. This year in these areas the recce and removal were done at the same time, with just two or three volunteers undertaking this work for the most part.



There remain some areas of larger scale invasion, notably around Cuckoo's Nest and Ghyll House Farms, and the Beaver Pond wetland. The very wet summer meant water levels were too high to tackle Beaver Pond.

In 2022, we found very few plants among the gorse above Stegholes, where we had tackled dense stands in 2021, adjacent to flower rich grassland.

Disappointingly in 2023 there was a substantial amount to remove. This became visible later in the season, underlining the importance of the timing of surveys, depending on the vegetation type.

Over the summer of 2023 we went out on 15 occasions from mid-June until mid-August, compared to 12 in 2022, 16 in 2021, and 24 in 2020. We spent 110 volunteer hours working in the catchment (107 in 2022), a substantial reduction on the 2020 total of 206 volunteer hours.



### **Bracken Ghyll Golf Course**

We revisited the woodland and rough grassland on Bracken Ghyll Golf Course where we removed dense stands of balsam in 2020, to keep that under control. This year it took 6 volunteer hours to clear, up on the 2 hours spent in 2022.

## **The River Wharfe**

### ***Lower Town Beck***

With the co-operation of landowners along Low Mill Lane, for the third year running we tackled the substantial invasion of balsam along the channels of Town Beck where they join the River Wharfe and through the wet woodland habitat on the island between the beck and the main river. This floods in high water, depositing seed from higher up the river. This year there was more balsam along the beck channels and substantial stands at the eastern end of the island. However, the effort needed is reducing (52 volunteer hours in 2021, down to 33 in 2022 and 24 in 2023).

### ***South bank from Addingham Suspension Bridge upstream to Farfield***



This year we were able to access the whole riverbank at Olicana Park, and removed balsam threatening wildflower rich habitat by the Dales Way. This took 15 volunteer hours (cf 27 hours in 2022).

After that the river bank was balsam free upstream until the steep wooded bank above the river at Longfield. High river levels, and the effort needed elsewhere meant that we did not manage to get to this area in 2023.

### ***North bank from High Mill Weir to Nesfield***

For the third year running we worked with the landowner at West Hall Farm, to help bring substantial amounts of balsam under control on the main river, as well as on the banks of West Hall Beck. We concentrated our larger work parties here, including a session with Addingham Guides.



We were pleased to find much less balsam on the section upstream of the suspension bridge to High Mill Weir, just one session was needed here this year. Similarly on West Hall Beck, just one session was needed. Most of our effort was spent on the section downstream of the suspension bridge, where there are

dense stands growing in amongst willow, and in wet flushes where water drains from the hayfield. Although we succeeded in clearing more patches we did not achieve our goal of getting all the way down to Nesfield. We spent four sessions on this section of river bank. In total we spent 88 volunteer hours at West Hall Farm ( 85 in 2022 and 90 hours in 2021).

### ***Downstream of Addingham***



As in 2021 and 2022, we linked up with The Ilkley Clean River Group supported by Climate Action Ilkley for the third 'Big Balsam Bash' to help clear the substantial stands of balsam on the south bank. Ten AEG volunteers joined the work party to clear balsam from along the Dalesway from Ilkley Old Road towards the Tennis Club.

### ***Upstream of Addingham***

The Bolton Abbey Estate is immediately upstream on the Wharfe from Addingham. For the second year running we organised a work party with the Estate's River Keeper who is tasked with keeping balsam under control.

This year we ran a joint session with corporate volunteers from the Real Recruitment Group. Thirty-six volunteer hours were spent removing balsam from the river bank and a drainage channel downstream on The Cavendish Pavilion.



### **Other invasives**



While balsam has been the main task, we continued to work with landowners to control other invasive plant species. On the golf course we worked with Bracken Ghyll Golf Club staff to remove **curly waterweed** for the fourth year. Although there was very much less to remove this summer, we expect an annual clear will be needed.

We continued to work with several landowners to remove invasive **giant hogweed** growing in a small number of places in the Lumb Beck catchment. This is

largely under control and for the most part we are now dealing with small patches appearing in the spring as dormant seed already in the soil germinates.

## Conclusions & future plans

Despite a more challenging year, we remain confident that Himalayan balsam is coming under control along the Addingham becks and that we are closer to just needing to keep a watching brief each summer, apart from a few more persistent patches which we will continue to work on in 2024.

On the north side of the River Wharfe next summer, we aim to work with the landowners higher up West Hall Beck to recce and control balsam on this system, as well as continuing to work on the Wharfe where West Hall Beck joins the river downstream as far as Nesfield/Low Mill. We will also continue to work with landowners in the parish on the south bank of the Wharfe.

Our experience working on the main river for a third year, suggests that it will prove difficult to eradicate from the riverbanks entirely. Here, we suggest the priority should be to control spread inland especially where it threatens valuable woodland ground flora and wildflower rich grassland habitat, as well as spread up the beck systems.

In 2024 as well as working on the Addingham stretch of the Wharfe, we will also continue to collaborate with Ilkley Clean River Group downstream and the Bolton Abbey Estate upstream. The Big Balsam Bash will be on Saturday July 13<sup>th</sup>, part of our Climate Action Addingham Water Week.

The tables in Annexe 1 summarise our work since 2020 within Addingham Parish, and our stretch of the River Wharfe. Going forward we will use the traffic light system below to give an indication of progress in controlling Himalayan balsam on the becks, riverbank and adjoining land. The categories are as follows:

Green: under control, isolated plants only - watching brief

Amber: coming under control, some larger groups of plants anticipated

Red: not yet under control – continuing effort needed.

Our aim is to year on year increase the 'green' length of beck and river bank, and reduce the area of other land invaded by balsam in the 'red' category.

**Jan Hindle & Rick Battarbee**  
Addingham Environment Group  
April 2024



Annexe 1

Lumb Beck Catchment

YEAR			2020		2021		2022		2023	
	LENGTH OF BECK (M)	AREA OF ADJ LAND (M <sup>2</sup> )	VOL HOURS BY BECK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND	VOL HOURS BY BECK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND	VOL HOURS BY BECK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND	VOL HOURS BY BECK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND
<b>Lumb Beck: LG1 headwater to Moorside Lane</b>										
No Himalayan balsam present										
<b>Lumb Beck: LG2 Moorside Lane to field boundary north of Stegghouse FM (at GR SE07814810)</b>										
	325		1		1		1		1	
<b>Lumb Beck: LG3 Stegghouse Fm(at GR SE07814810) to the Stegholes to Gatecroft footpath</b>										
	348		14		8		4		3	
		400		4		38		2		19
<b>Lumb Beck: LG4 Stegholes to Gatecroft footpath to Cocking Lane</b>										
	578		9		4		9		4	
<b>Lumb Beck: LG5 Cocking Lane to Lumb Gill Lane</b>										
	752		32		8		8		6	
<b>Lumb Beck: LG6 Lumb Gill Lane to the A65</b>										
	500		14		1		1		1	
<b>Cuckoo's Nest Beck: CB1 Field boundary NW of School Wood Fm (GR SE07094809) to Cuckoo's Nest Farm bridge</b>										
	318		14		8		4		14	
<b>Cuckoo's Nest Beck: CB2 Cuckoo's Nest Farm bridge to confluence with Lumb Beck</b>										
		600						20		26
	300		12		10		11		6	
	420								1	
<b>Throstle Nest Beck: Cat Steps to Lumb Beck</b>										
	475		16		3		1		1	
<b>Gatecroft Beck: Ghyll House Farm to woodland and wetland above Low Lathe to confluence with Hall Gill</b>										
	968		22		14		16		20	
		2000		6		16		6		
<b>Hall Gill: HG1 Cragg Farm to Copping Lane</b>										
	1,152		50		30		20		5	
		317		6		2		2		2
<b>Hall Gill: HG2 Copping Lane to confluence with main Lumb Beck</b>										
	236		6		2		2		2	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2717</b>	<b>2917</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>47</b>

## Marchup/Town Beck

YEAR			2020		2021		2022		2023	
	LENGTH OF BECK (M)	AREA OF ADJ LAND (M <sup>2</sup> )	VOL HOURS BY BECK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND	VOL HOURS BY BECK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND	VOL HOURS BY BECK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND	VOL HOURS BY BECK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND
<b>MB1: Dark Wood Beck to Marchup Beck</b>										
	173				4		4		2	
<b>MB2: Marchup Beck steppingstones to Townhead Culvert</b>										
	454		2		2		17		16	
<b>TB1: Downstream from Townhead Culvert to Church Field</b>										
	1900		4		4		4		6	
<b>TB2: Lower Town Beck to River Wharfe</b>										
		9000			52		33		24	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2527</b>	<b>9000</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>62</b>		<b>58</b>		<b>48</b>	

## River Wharfe – Addingham stretch

YEAR			2020		2021		2022		2023	
	LENGTH OF RIVER (M)	AREA OF ADJ LAND (M <sup>2</sup> )	VOL HOURS RIVER BANK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND	VOL HOURS RIVER BANK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND	VOL HOURS RIVER BANK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND	VOL HOURS RIVER BANK	VOL HOURS ADJ LAND
<b>North Bank - High Mill to Suspension Bridge</b>										
	630				32		12		10	
<b>West Hall Beck - to Nesfield Rd</b>										
	493				24		10		8	
<b>North Bank - Suspension Bridge to Low Mill</b>										
	650				58		63		70	
<b>South Bank - Farfield to Olicana Park</b>										
	1902				10		8		0	
<b>South Bank - Olicana Park</b>										
	166						27		15	
<b>South Bank - High Mill to Suspension Bridge</b>										
	296				1		1		1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4137</b>				<b>125</b>		<b>121</b>		<b>104</b>	



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Richard Solomons  
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Graham Lingard  
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Mrs Stapleton & Mark Stapleton  
Ellis Bros.  
Sue & Richard Hobson  
David Hargreaves  
Luke Winterburn  
Jamie Crabtree  
Michael Flesher

### **Lower Town Beck Landowners**

Alan Jerome  
Liz Clayton

### **River Wharfe Landowners**

Chris & Nick Harker  
Olicana Park  
Ellis Bros.  
Devonshire Estate, Bolton Abbey

### **Balsam Bashing Volunteer Team 2023**

Peter Miller  
Jessica Penrose  
Jackie Olive  
Douglas McCowan  
Maire O'Donnell  
Jan Hindle  
Richard Hindle  
Rick Battarbee  
Nicola Morgan  
Christine Makowski  
Ian Viner  
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Lesley Loughlin  
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Angela Hutton  
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Rob Smith  
Fran Valliant  
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David Bartlett  
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Mike Valliant  
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Simon Lawrence  
Susan Penny  
Chris Cobley  
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Lorraine Robinson  
Sarah Ashelford  
DofE Volunteer -Charlie

