



Himalayan Balsam Campaign Report 2021



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, 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 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. Himalayan balsam (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 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, documented our experience, effort and progress since we began our campaign in the summer of 2017 to attempt to eradicate it from the parish.

For the first four seasons we focussed 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, our aim in 2021, while not losing our focus on the becks, was to seek to work with riparian landowners and communities upstream and downstream to start 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 2021. As in 2020 we were fortunate that the campaign season coincided with the easing of restrictions after the national lockdown, so we were able to organise a full programme of socially distanced work parties. In total we organised 31 work parties between late June and mid-August, on Monday evenings, Thursday mornings and Saturday mornings, a total of 376 volunteer hours.

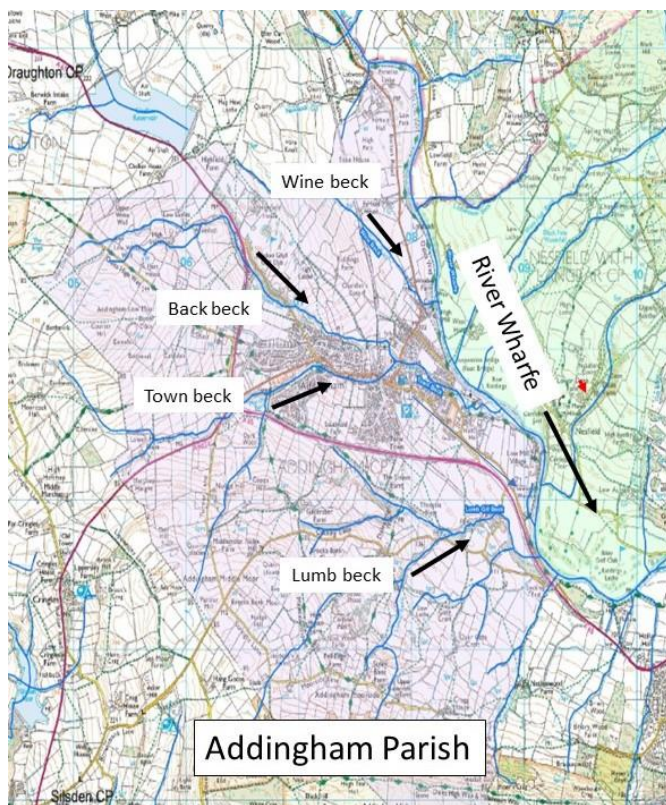


Fig.1 Addingham's beck system

The Becks

Town Beck & Back Beck

Addingham 4 Becks Stewards kept a watching brief on the becks where they run through the village throughout the summer. The Stewards reported and pulled a relatively small numbers of plants on **Town Beck** from Marchup Ghyll down to Low Mill Lane. Pleasingly, there was much less balsam just below Aynholme Bridge this year, and this was tackled by two volunteers in 30 minutes. **Back Beck** remained clear.

Lumb Beck catchment

Four AEG volunteers spent time in late May/early June recording where balsam was coming through along Lumb Beck and its tributaries, to help plan where to concentrate our efforts this year. Thanks to our work in previous years there were so few plants along some stretches of beck that they could be pulled on the recce or required only a couple of volunteers to revisit rather than a larger work party.

We went out on 16 sessions (24 in 2020), from 19th June until mid-August, a total of 252 volunteer hours. Much of this effort was spent in some 'difficult to clear' places, notably among gorse next to



Lumb Beck above Stegholes, close to wildflower rich grassland, and on the banks of Hall Gill, again among gorse. In some places we found more plants than in summer 2020, and more plants coming through later in the season. The medieval 'Beever Pond' wetland and the copse above took 19 volunteer hours this year, compared to 8 in 2020. This year we tackled this area later in the season when it was easier to see the balsam above the native wetland vegetation. It is clear however, that we are moving in the right direction, in 2019 it needed over 40 volunteer hours.

A field-by-field wildlife habitat mapping survey of the Lumb Beck catchment funded by Natural England's Nature Recovery Network was carried out by Haycock & Jay Ecologists for the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust and AEG in early August. Pleasingly in her field notes, the ecologist commented on the notable absence of Himalayan balsam in the catchment. She did find plants in a few areas, which will be highlighted in the report, and will guide us to the places we should concentrate on next summer.

The River Wharfe

Lower Town Beck

With the co-operation of landowners along Low Mill Lane, we were for the first time able to tackle the substantial invasion of balsam along the channels of Town Beck where it joins 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.



Our campaign at Low Mill Lane started with a session involving an enthusiastic group from Addingham Guides, and was followed up by three more AEG work parties in June, July and August, totalling 52 volunteer hours.

South bank from Addingham Suspension Bridge upstream to Farfield

Our recce in June, found occasional plants along the river bank at High Mill at Dawson Crossley Field and Olicana Park. After that the river bank was balsam free until a substantial stand at the bottom of the steep wooded bank at the end of Longfield. Imported rubble appears to be the main source here. With the permission of the landowner, we organised an evening work party to deal with this (10 volunteer hours). At Olicana Park, the Beck Steward looking after Winebeck where it joins the river keeps a watching brief.



North bank from High Mill Weir to Nesfield

We were aware of a substantial amount of balsam on the banks of West Hall Beck, which enters the Wharfe at Addingham suspension bridge and contacted the landowner, who welcomed our approach. Some effort at chemical control had been made where the balsam was invading the



adjacent hayfield, with limited success. Recces along the river bank found a substantial amount of balsam especially in wet flushes at the edge of the pasture upstream of the suspension bridge. Downstream from the bridge, there were substantial amounts particularly growing among dense stands of willow next to the river, but also invading the neighbouring grassland and drainage channels.

We used our larger Saturday work parties to tackle the balsam here, spending three sessions on West Hall Beck and five sessions along the river bank, a total of 90 volunteer hours. We cleared the balsam on the beck from the river to West Hall Farm, and along the river bank to High Mill Weir. Downstream of the suspension bridge, we got a substantial way down towards Nesfield, but ran out of time to get all the way.

Downstream of Addingham



The Ilkley Clean River Group supported by Climate Action Ilkley stepped up efforts to deal with the substantial infestations of balsam on both banks of the Wharfe in 2021. They concentrated their work on Ilkley Golf Course on the north bank immediately downstream of Addingham parish.

We were pleased to link up with them for the 'Great Balsam Bash' on 3 July. Fourteen AEG volunteers joined the work party to clear balsam from the river bank 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. We approached the Estate to seek their co-operation and offer to work with them. We organised two work parties (28 volunteer hours) with the Estate's River Keeper who is tasked with keeping balsam under control.

We removed balsam from Lob Wood and beck, and the neighbouring lay-bys. We also worked on the main river from Barden Bridge to the aquaduct, removing balsam from the wooded bank on the west side of the river and the fenced, ungrazed wildflower rich riparian zone on the opposite bank.



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 time it took just 6 volunteer hours.

Other invasives

While balsam has continued to be the focus, 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 second year. Although there was much less to remove this summer, we expect an annual clear will be needed.



We worked with several landowners to remove invasive **giant hogweed** growing in a small number of places in the Lumb Beck catchment. We now believe we have this species under control but there may be some small patches appearing in the spring as dormant seed already in the soil germinates.

Conclusions & future plans

We are increasingly confident that Himalayan balsam can be eradicated from the Addingham becks. There will undoubtedly still be control to do in some places in the Lumb Beck catchment next summer and on Lower Town Beck but we are getting closer to just needing to keep a watching brief.

On the north side of the river next summer we will aim to work with the landowners higher up West Hall Beck to recce and control balsam on this system, as well as continuing the work we started in 2021.

Our experience working on the main river for the first time, suggests that it may 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 2022 as well as working on the Addingham stretch of the Wharfe, we also plan to continue to collaborate with Ilkley Clean River Group downstream and the Bolton Abbey Estate upstream. Another "Big Balsam Bash" along the Dalesway in Ilkley has been scheduled for Saturday 9th July.

Jan Hindle & Rick Battarbee
Addingham Environment Group
January 2022



We dedicate this report to our much missed friend and dedicated AEG volunteer, the late Barry Tiffany. Barry very sadly died suddenly in October 2021. He was a stalwart balsam basher, and we will always think of him among the gorse above Stegholes and the willow on the Wharfe.

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Jamie Crabtree
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Lower Town Beck Landowners

Alan & Penny Jerome
Liz Clayton

River Wharfe Landowners

Simon & Richard Ellis
Chris & Nick Harker

The AEG Balsam Bashing Volunteer Team 2021

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