



Himalayan Balsam Campaign Report 2022



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 road sides, 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, 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 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, 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 2022. In total we organised 29 work parties between mid- June and mid-August, on Monday or Tuesday evenings, Thursday mornings and Saturday mornings, a total of 336 volunteer hours.

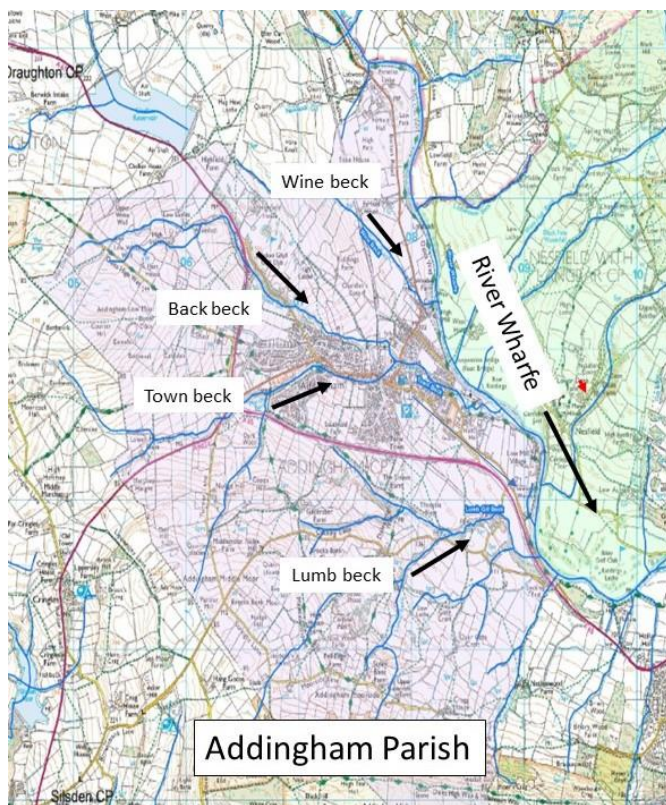


Fig.1 Addingham's beck system

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 and pulled a relatively small numbers of plants on **Town Beck** from Townhead down to Low Mill Lane. On our recces we found some dense stands in Marchup Ghyll above the village, which were tackled in one Saturday morning work session (17 volunteer hours). A further hour was spent on Town Beck below Aynholme Bridge. **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, Ghyll Farm, among the gorse on Hall Gill and at the Beaver Pond wetland, and this is where we took our larger work parties. In 2021 we went out on 12 occasions from 30th June until mid-August, compared to 16 in 2021, and 24 in 2020. A total of 126 volunteer hours were spent in the catchment (252 in 2021), so the effort required is reducing significantly.



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 2 volunteer hours to clear scattered plants (6 volunteer hours in 2021).

The River Wharfe

Lower Town Beck

With the co-operation of landowners along Low Mill Lane, for the second 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. In 2021, it took 52 volunteer hours to clear the balsam here. This reduced to 33 hours over three sessions in 2022

South bank from Addingham Suspension Bridge upstream to Farfield



As in 2021, a few plants were found and pulled along the river bank at High Mill/Dawson Crossley Field. At Olicana Park there was a substantial amount of balsam this year where Winebeck joins the Wharfe and along the riverbank, threatening the wildflower rich bank along the Dales Way next to the caravan park. We organised two work parties to clear this, with the exception of a hard to reach steep section where a boat is needed. We will need to revisit this in 2023.

After that the river bank was balsam free upstream until the steep wooded bank above the river at Longfield. We revisited the area we cleared in 2021, where balsam was growing on imported rubble, at the far end of Longfield. There was substantially less growing here. Later in the season we did however find a new area of balsam on the banks of a steep gully elsewhere in the woodland which we noted for the 2023 season. We spent 36 volunteer hours on this stretch of the Wharfe, mainly at Olicana/Wine Beck.

North bank from High Mill Weir to Nesfield



For the second 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 sessions with Addingham Guides and Addingham Scout Group.

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. We spent three sessions on West Hall Beck, working further up the beck than in 2021. 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 quite achieve our goal of getting all the way down to Nesfield. We spent four sessions on this part of the river bank. In total we spent 85 volunteer hours at West Hall Farm (90 hours in 2021).



Downstream of Addingham

As in 2021, we linked up with The Ilkley Clean River Group supported by Climate Action Ilkley for the second 'Big Balsam Bash' to help clear the substantial stands of balsam on the south bank. Eight 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. For the second year running we organised a work party with the Estate's River Keeper who is tasked with keeping balsam under control.

We contributed 20 volunteer hours on the main river from Barden Bridge towards 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.

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 third 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

We are increasingly confident that Himalayan balsam is under control along the Addingham becks and that we are close to just needing to keep a watching brief each summer, with the exception of a few more persistent patches which we will continue to work on in 2023.

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 second 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 2023 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.

Jan Hindle & Rick Battarbee
Addingham Environment Group
March 2023



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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Simon Ellis
Sue & Richard Hobson
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Rob Morse
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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

**The AEG Balsam Bashing Volunteer Team
2022**

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