

Back Beck and the Old First School Site

At this point Back Beck flows around the boundary of the old First School site, now largely wooded after rewilding for 20 years or so. The beck flows under the old railway bridge (Bridge 55), in front of the Primary School playing fields before going under Back Beck Lane into the Garth, joining Town Beck at Aynholme Bridge.

Next to the entrance to the site you can see steps down to the beck. These were constructed by parents of children attending the School in the 1990s to provide access to the beck for “pond dipping”.

Jon Grey from the Wild Trout Trust electro-fished the beck slightly upstream of this point in 2019 and found young trout (*Salmo trutta*) and a number of bullhead (*Cottus gobio*).

However overall water quality is poor mainly due to nutrient pollution from livestock farming higher up the hillside.

So far we have not seen signal crayfish in the beck at sites upstream of Bridge 55. In 2020 Jack Greenhalgh from Bristol University searched carefully by hand for crayfish and analysed water samples for crayfish DNA. The results were negative.

However, at a site downstream close to the Primary School young crayfish were observed and crayfish DNA was detected. Consequently, we believe signal crayfish have not yet migrated upstream of Bridge 55 and that the large step in the channel on the downside of the bridge is acting as a barrier to upstream passage.



Bullhead - *Cottus gobio*

<https://www.naturespot.org.uk/species/bullhead>