

The Genealogy of the Ginnels

Ginnels provide shortcuts for pedestrians in built-up areas, and many were made around Headingley as it developed as a suburb in the 19th and 20th centuries. But many of these ginnels were in fact originally shortcuts across fields, when Headingley was a village, long before it became a suburb.

These rural paths connected settlements to centres of activity, and some of the shortcuts were actually quite long – they took the shortest cut, but over a long distance (for instance, Wood Mill was approached from both north and south by tracks a mile long). Settlements themselves were linked by just a few roads. Then as now, Headingley Lane wound north from Leeds to Headingley village and thence to Headingley Moor Side (Far Headingley), where it branched east to Adel and west to Moor Grange. From the village itself, roads ran down west to Kirkstall and to Burley, and east to the bridge over Meanwood Beck. Otherwise, the countryside was criss-crossed by tracks. Many paths to the east ran to the mills (especially Wood Mill) and factories and quarries along the Beck, including those from Leeds **01**, **14**, **15** and Weetwood Hall **19** and those across Headingley Moor **16**, **17**, **18**, as well as tracks along the valley. To the west, paths ran from Headingley village south to Burley Quarry **07** and north to Grange Farm **08**. Sometimes, these followed field boundaries, but often they cut across. Most have survived, in some form, to the present day.

In Victorian times, Headingley became a suburb of Leeds, and villas and terraces spread over the fields. Some original ginnels were made, like that by William Oddy in Headingley Moor Side (to link the cottages he built there) **12**, or the ginnel at the end of Oakfield Terrace (built by a building club) **13**, or the neglected end of Shire Oak Road **02**. But most Victorian ginnels were in fact fossilisations of old rural tracks. They included the path over Headingley Hill, cutting through Grosvenor Road and Cumberland Road to Woodhouse Ridge **01**; and School Lane, from Monk Bridge Road over the Moor and down the hill **16**; and the track down from Weetwood Hall to Meanwood valley **19**. All of these in fact converged on Wood Mill, though most of their routes still remained open paths.

The second great phase of ginnels was between the Wars, in the new housing estates. Some of these enclosed more of the rural paths. To the east, more of the paths over the Moor down to Meanwood Beck were captured, especially the track to Whalley Tannery **17**, as well as further stretches of tracks to the former Wood Mill, now Meanwood Tannery, including School Lane **16** and the track beside the mill **15**. To the west, the paths to Grange (now Parkside) Farm **08** and alongside the Stadium (formerly to Burley Quarry) **07** were now enclosed. But many of the Interwar ginnels were newly built, within the estates, including those in the St Chads **11**, in Beckett's Park **10**, in the Trelawns **09** and in Spring Bank Crescent **05**. Also, a couple were ad hoc developments **03**, **04**.

Finally, after the Second World War, a few most recent ginnels were made. In the heart of Headingley Town Centre, an access path to former fields at last became a ginnel **06**. Down by Meanwood Beck, another stretch of the old path to Wood Mill was fenced in **14**. And further upstream, the last length of an old path to Whalley Tannery was enclosed by a new estate **18**.

So, the genealogy of the ginnels around Headingley offers a shortcut back into the history of the village and its environs.

Bold number refer to the ginnels in the gallery.



Ordnance Survey 1851