

The Headingley Hill ginnel

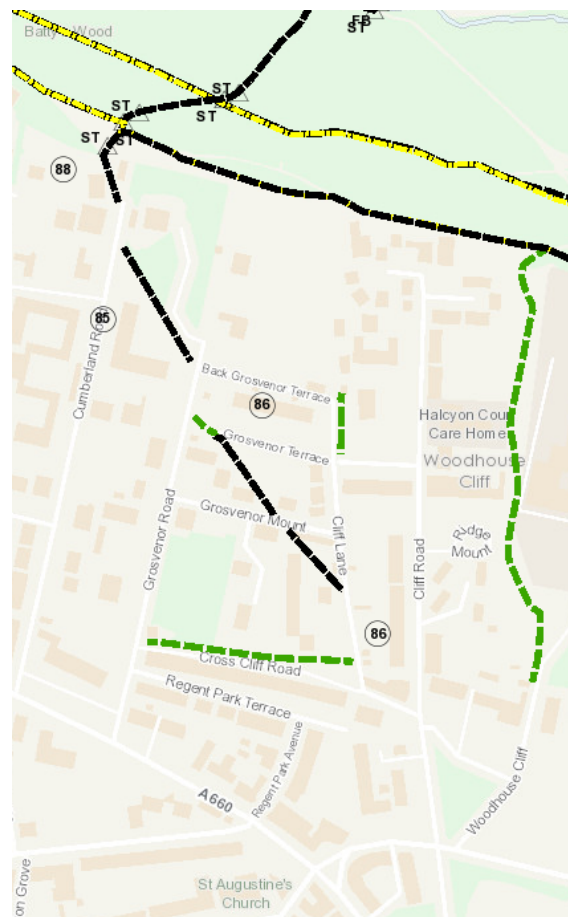
The main focus of footpaths (and thus later, of ginnels) around Headingley was the corn mill built on and powered by Meanwood Beck nearly a thousand years ago. (Originally known as Wood Mill [after the local 'mean' or 'common' woods], it was acquired by Kirkstall Abbey about 1230, and later was the site of Meanwood Tannery.) It was approached from the south, up Meanwood Beck (see the Headingley Hill ginnel **01** below), from the north, down the Beck (see the Weetwood ginnel **19**), and from the west, over Headingley Moor (see School Lane **16**).



Ordnance Survey 1851



Ordnance Survey 1908



Leeds Public Rights Of Way Map

01 The **Headingley Hill** ginnel links Hyde Park Corner with Woodhouse Ridge, across the Hill, in four parts, by way of Cliff Lane, Grosvenor Mount, Grosvenor Road and Cumberland Road; the four parts of the ginnel altogether are some 370 metres (400 yards) long, while the longest part is that between Grosvenor Road and Cumberland Road, at 100 metres (110 yards).

Path: The route over Headingley Hill was originally a track from Woodhouse Moor to Wood Mill, a distance of about 1.6 km or one mile. The track branched off from the lane across Woodhouse Moor (at the junction with Rampart Road), just before the hamlet of Wrangthorn, and ran diagonally north-west over the fields on Headingley Hill, to Woodhouse Ridge. There, it ran along the top of Batty's Wood, before descending through fields to Meanwood Beck. The track then followed the Beck upstream, over Monk Bridge Road, to Wood Mill. Since the Mill (later the site of Meanwood Tannery, now Stone Mill Court in Tannery Park) was granted to Kirkstall Abbey around 1230, thus probably built in the twelfth century - so, the original path to the Mill may well be the best part of a thousand years old!

Over time, the route has been amended. Late in the eighteenth century, an oil mill was built by the Beck, just north of Batty's Wood. A weir was built above Monk Bridge, feeding a mill stream to power the mill – and the track now followed the west bank of this mill stream. In addition, two lanes led from Otley Road to the mill (now Wood Lane and Grove Lane), both crossing the track. (Also, a new path ran down the edge of Batty's Wood to the oil mill.) Meanwhile, at its south end, the developing hamlet of Wrangthorn was built over the track. On Headingley Hill itself, from the 1820s, land was sold in large building plots, and Cumberland Road, Grosvenor Road and Cliff Lane were laid for access: all crossed the track.

Ginnel: During the nineteenth century, the streets on Headingley Hill were developed, and the old track was fossilised as a ginnel. In a field between Grosvenor Road and Cumberland Road, in 1848, Ridgeway House was built – but since the field was crossed by the track, the path was cut into the hill, and walled, and a footbridge was built over (it's now Listed), to connect the two parts of the House's grounds. At the end of Cumberland Road, houses were built on either side of the track. Grosvenor Mount was laid. In the triangle between the track, the Mount and Cliff Lane, a house was built, later becoming Headingley Orphanage for Boys (it's now private houses). On the other side of the track, Grove House was built (now Grosvenor Park Gardens). Finally, after the Great War, houses were built on Grosvenor Mount, with the track fenced along the back of their gardens. (Beyond Woodhouse Ridge, further stretches of the old track have been enclosed: see the Spring Hill ginnel **14** and the Highbury ginnel **15**.)

The whole ginnel is a Public Right Of Way, comprising Definitive Footpaths Leeds 86 and Leeds 85 and the south end of Leeds 88.

The ginnel is described in Lucy Newlyn's poem –

Crossing the Ridge

The longest ginnel I know
moves across the map
like two big tacking-stitches
or the broken furrow of a plough.

It starts where the bluebells grow
under the oaks in Batty's wood
and climbs in a deep groove
between tall houses, over the brow
of the Ridge to the far side,
where it blanks out
on Cumberland Road in brightness:
empty, un-selving, wide.

Then it rallies; and down -
diagonally left and down -
it delves like something
dark and purposive, into town.

Thirty years since I walked here,
and not a stone changed.
Only a moment's hesitation
after climbing, as I stand where
the ginnel closes on light
and opens on darkness -
caught in the bright hiatus,
a thief in the night.

From Lucy Newlyn, *Ginnel* (2005), reproduced by kind permission of Carcanet Press, Manchester, UK.