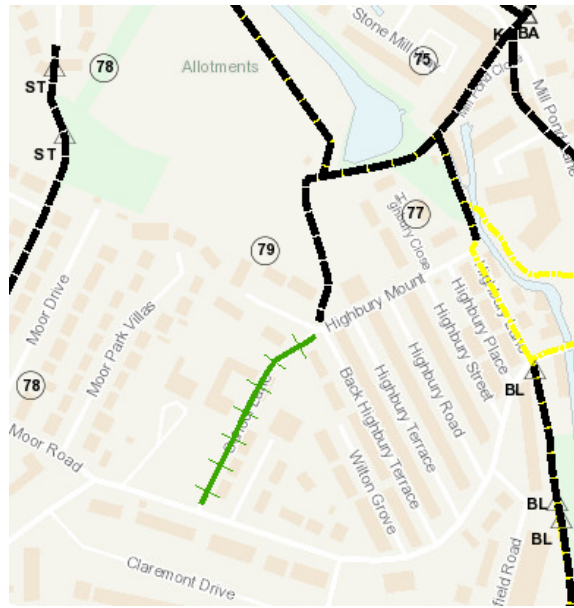


School Lane



Ordnance Survey 1851



Leeds Public Rights Of Way Map

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**), from the north, down the Beck (see the Weetwood ginnel **19**), and from the west, over Headingley Moor (see School Lane **16** below).

16 School Lane is now effectively a ginnel, in three parts, the south part linking Monk Bridge Road and the top of Highbury Mount, the middle part is a green ginnel, linking the Mount and the mill pond, and the north part links the mill pond and Tannery Park; the three parts together are some 300 metres (330 yards) long.

The path: The lane’s origins lie in the eighteenth century, when a track developed from the mill south across Headingley Moor, to meet Monk Bridge Road, perhaps to connect with the new Leeds-Otley turnpike, opened in the mid-century. In 1785, Thomas Martin leased the Wood Mill site for papermaking (Meanwood Tannery was later built on the site, and is now Stone Mill Court in Tannery Park). In 1797, Martin rented land on Headingley Moor from Lord Cardigan, in order to enlarge the mill pond, and the rent was paid to the schoolmaster at the Town School* in Headingley village, ‘for the Education of Poor children.’ The lane across the Moor was designated, to provide access to the millpond and the glebe land beyond; and when Headingley Moor was enclosed in 1834, the lane was referred to as ‘School Road’, reflecting the payment of rent to the school (and its responsibility for maintenance).

The ginnel: The southern part of the lane became a ginnel when Summerhill and Sandfield House were built on either side on Monk Bridge Road in the later nineteenth century. The northern part of the lane was enclosed as the fields north of Highbury Mount were developed for housing from the 1930s onwards.

The south part of the ginnel (between Monk Bridge Road and Highbury Mount) is designated a Non-Definitive Bridleway, the middle part (between the Mount and the mill pond) is a Public Right Of Way, Definitive Footpath Leeds 79, and the north part (between the mill pond and Tannery Park) is also a Public Right Of Way, part of Definitive Footpath Leeds 77 (which continues north to Hollin Drive and south to Highbury Lane, and is part of the Meanwood Valley Trail).

*The Town School was the original parish school next to St Michael's church, set up in 1783. In 1844, the school acquired a new building, what is now the Parish Hall. The Town School became St Michael's Church of England Primary School, and in 1978, it moved to its present purpose-built premises on Wood Lane. In 2006, it was merged with Headingley Primary School, formerly on Bennett Road (now HEART), and was re-named Shire Oak School.

Thanks to Eveleigh Bradford for advice on School Lane.

The ginnel is described in Lucy Newlyn's poem below –

Meanwood ginnel

We're going places.

Barbed wire like steely brambles
lines the ditches,
long and deep as trenches,
between this rambling uncertain ginnel
and the small back garden sheds
of red brick houses.

No one about.

We're kicking over the traces.

Here, on a scrap of earth
between mill-dump and pig-pen
the ginnel ends in open path
then peters out in grit and gravel.
The tannery watches
with a hundred sunken eyes
over the low slumped sacks of fleeces.

Nothing doing.

We're marking time

as makeshift fences
(corrugated iron, chipboard,
chicken wire, wooden planks)
mark out the tatty edges
of this no man's land
we have in common –

going nowhere and dawdling in,
with truant faces.

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