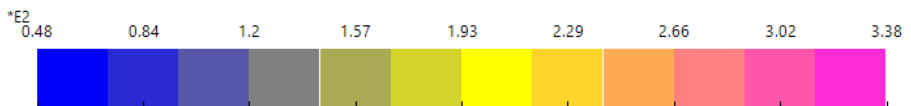
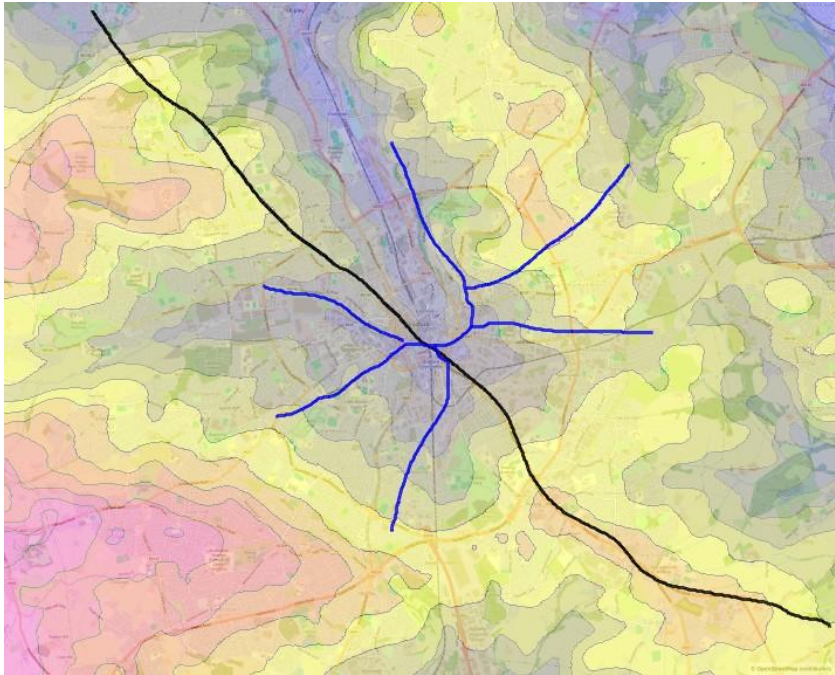


The Origin of Bradford, West Yorkshire



Contour Map of Bradford and Region

Roman Road

Bradford Beck and Its Tributaries

The centre of Bradford is in a low-lying area surrounded by gentle hills on all sides apart from to the Northwest where the Bradford Beck (as it is now named) runs to meet the River Aire. Tributaries, running down the gentle hills, of the Bradford Beck, meet near the centre. Today (2025) the centre and nearby is heavily built up and the beck and many of its tributaries are culverted and run underground.

The place name Bradford originates from the Old English words *brād* and *ford* meaning broad ford. There was probably a Roman Road (see the black line on the diagram) running through Bradford starting somewhere along the A650 (Wakefield Road) and ending in the Roman fort at Elslack near Skipton. This is judged by the straightness on sections like Tong Street and White Abbey Road; the use of the Anglo-Saxon term *stræt*, denoting 'street', along much of this way; and various remnants of Roman agger found near Wakefield Road. The road would have forded the Bradford beck and its tributaries (shown in blue on the diagram) at Bradford. The ford is broad because the city centre region is a confluence of several tributaries over a wide area.

The ford was probably in existence during the time of the Roman presence in England (43AD-410AD). There was no discernible settlement at this time. The time of the establishment of the place was most likely during the settlement by Anglo-Saxons (as judged by the name), in the period 450AD-1066AD. There is no equivalent Welsh precursor to the terms 'broad' or 'ford'. At that time it was either simply a reference to the ford or the settlement itself. Bradford was mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086, so we can be certain the hamlet was in existence at this time.

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