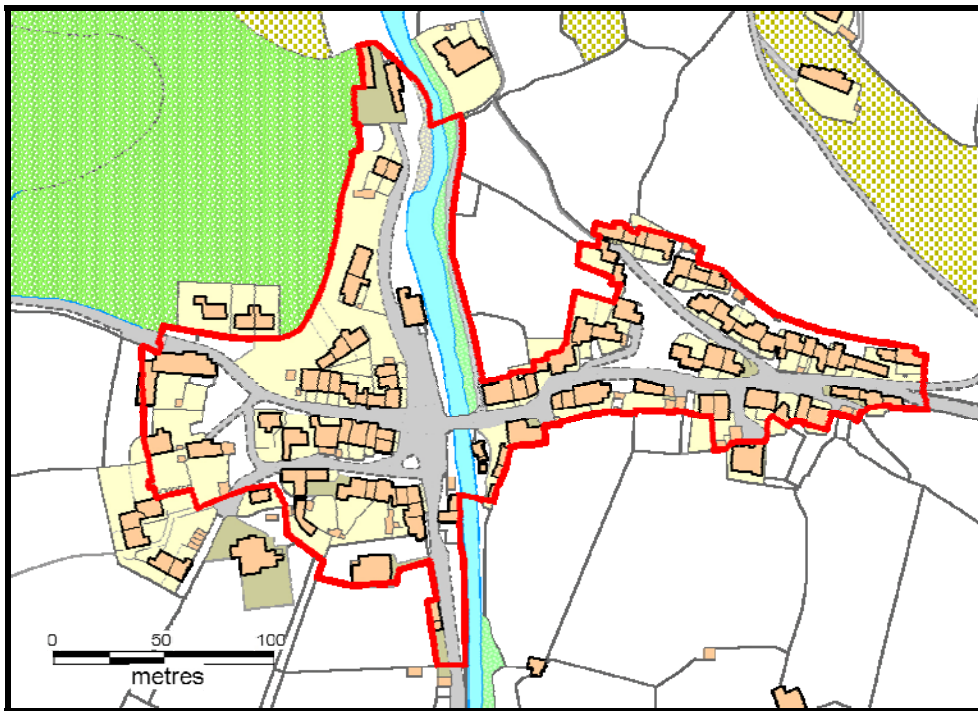


Gunnerside, Swaledale – Conservation Area Character Appraisal

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1 Introduction

This draft character appraisal has been prepared as part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's Conservation Area Strategy. It has been prepared by Blaise Vyner Heritage and Arts Consultancy and follows on from a guided walk and Conservation Area Workshop meeting held at Gunnerside on Saturday 20th January 2001 and further meetings on 12 June 2001 and 4 September 2001.

2 Location and setting

Gunnerside is focused on the banks of the Gunnerside Beck, and cleaves to the east-west communication routes which follow the rising ground of the north valley side and which enabled the crossing of Gunnerside Gill above the flood plain of the River Swale. This situation, adopted by a number of other Swaledale villages, has rising hillsides to the north, but provides open views to the south, maximising the opportunities for daylight.

The modern route through the village gives the impression of an almost linear settlement, but it is actually one with a series of focuses. The principal character of the village's form derives from 17th century and earlier agricultural settlement, although today's buildings owe much to the economic prosperity brought about by the lead mining industry of the 18th and 19th centuries. From the beck crossing and its approach, paths and tracks fan outwards, east and west along the Swale, and more particularly, up the valley side to Old Gang, Lownathwaite, and other lead mines and smelting mills. The tracks provides a framework upon which the settlement developed, variable in origin and structure so that now these various tracks are the most significant delineation of the various elements of the village.

3 Archaeological and historical background to the settlement

To judge from scattered burial monuments and occasional finds of flint, the earliest settlement activity in Swaledale may well have begun before or during the Bronze Age, in the second millennium BC. Human settlement increased in density during the Iron Age and into the Roman period, when lead was probably first extracted from the nearby hills for the first time. Despite this lengthy history, the surviving system of walled fields and stone field barns, spectacularly visible on the southern dale side and in the dale bottom when approaching Gunnerside from the east, is a product of enclosure which took place from the end of the 18th century and into the beginning of the 19th century. Underlying traces of earlier enclosure banks, some dating from Romano-British times, can be seen at times of low sunlight or light snow, but in the past the dale was much more heavily wooded, with agriculture tending to take place in cleared areas with sheep and cattle grazing amongst trees or scrub.

Upper Swaledale appears to have had its own distinctive identity at least from the pre-Conquest period, and has been identified as the location of the 10th century kingdom of the Swale - 'Swaldal' in tenth century Norse (Fleming 1998). The name Gunnerside means 'Gunnars saetr' - a summer pasture, or shieling, belonging to Gunnar, dating probably from the 10th century. The shieling may, like others in the dale, have continued into the Middle Ages as a vaccary, or dairy farm (Fleming 1998, 46). In 1298 Gunnerside was one of the 12 vaccaries, or dairy farms, named in the inquisition post mortem of Gilbert de Gaunt. Cattle raising was probably the principal activity at this time, and at the time of the Dissolution the vaccary was in the possession of Rievaulx Abbey.

There is little physical evidence of all these generations of farmers, foresters, craftsmen, and tradespeople surviving today, although earlier cultivation terraces survive on the slopes between Gunnerside and Ivelet, and yet more evidence may survive beneath the present buildings in the village. Around Gunnerside the 'traditional' dales landscape of stone walls and agricultural field barns, established during the mid-late 18th century, is particularly obvious, an important historic landscape which is interspersed with, and sometimes overlain by, the remains of 18th and 19th century lead mining.

4 Economic development

Early settlement in upper Swaledale was comprised of widely scattered farmsteads dependent on mixed farming - grazing sheep and cattle, with only small areas of arable land. Woodland and mineral resources were exploited with varying intensity. More intensive exploitation of minerals developed during the Romano-British period, but thereafter dropped away until the interest of the monasteries during the Middle Ages, to receding again until the 18th and 19th century. These last two centuries saw prolonged economic development coupled with a considerable rise in the population of the dales, and the consolidation of settlements which still reflect this industrial heyday, although the end of the century saw drastic depopulation. Gunnerside, in the centre of the lead-mining district, had a 'look of ruin and desolation' in the late 19th and early 20th century. This air had 'vanished' by 1934 owing to efforts of a new landlord, Lord Rochdale, and an increase in visitors intent on sightseeing (Pontefract and Hartley 1934).

Agriculture

Through the later medieval period the farming economy continued to be based on cattle and dairy produce, using cheap family labour and supplying a growing demand for butter and cheese. By the end of the 17th century butter was carried to Yarm for export to London, and the trade continued into the 18th century.

The confirmation of ancient tenants' rights and the documented improvements to the Wharton estate in the late 16th and early 17th centuries provide the historical context for the building of the stone farmhouses in the village. There was a water-powered corn mill by 1635 and research indicates a settlement was well established by that date. No corn was grown in the upper dale after 1600, from which time it was brought in via the Richmond markets. Gunnerside has the important feature of a steady and reliable water supply that could be channelled into a leat to power the corn mill. Oats continued to be grown and would have been ground here. In 1614 James Harrison of Gunnerside had a loom and was probably spinning and weaving his own wool.

The five stone buildings which the present appraisal has identified as having 17th century origins (see below) are rebuildings or new builds as the economy changed in reaction to the demand for lead, and farmers diversified. Land ownership in the dale was passed on through a system of partible inheritance, the land being divided between children rather than passing to the eldest son. This resulted in a tradition of small holdings, necessarily supported by a mixed economy with spinning, knitting, weaving, quarrying and lead mining combined with agriculture. By the early 19th century Baines Directory of 1823 listed six farmers living and working in Gunnerside, and even at the end of that century the number had only risen to seven farmers.

Mining and other economic activities

Lead was being mined by the late 17th century and tenants paid low rents throughout the 18th century. The sons of farming families were often miners, and the building of cottages onto existing family farmhouses was common, while miners from outside the village built cottages on Lodge Green, the steep hill slope across which a maze of paths leads to the mines and smelting mills. The Blakethwaite and Lownathwaite lead-mine levels were worked at the top of Gunnerside Gill in the early 19th century - a time when Britain was the world's leading lead producer. Both mines were badly affected by the 1826 trade slump and were then abandoned but in the mid-19th century the industry was re-organised and work continued again until the 1870s.

The important role of the lead industry was paralleled by the wool trade, which developed from the early 18th century. This was controlled by dealers who bought fleeces and controlled the production of cloth by supplying local skilled workers with carded wool for spinning or yarn for weaving. Specialisation in hand knitted clothing gave employment to many, and the wool merchants traded directly through Richmond. Developing industry expanded the range of occupations - the early 19th century directory listed a carrier, shoemaker, flour dealer, shepherd, butcher, and income tax collector. By the late 19th century Kelly's Directory advertised the King's Head Inn, under Mary Shaw's name, as having 'every accommodation for visitors'- a time when Swaledale was becoming popular with tourists, a trend consolidated with the development of the motor car and the popularity of motor touring in the twentieth century.

5 Settlement structure and fabric

Settlement layout

The surviving fragments of older buildings suggest that Gunnerside may well have developed from a primary settlement on the west side of Gunnerside Beck at a crossing point where tracks from east and west converged. Like most other Swaledale settlements, it was not located actually on the River Swale. The bridge over the Swale was constructed around 1830, during a mining slump. Before that time routes crossed the Swale at Ivelet and, possibly also at Isles. The layout of early settlement at Gunnerside is no longer clear, although the survival of open space and green in the village centre suggests that a green

was always a feature of the settlement. Early settlement also existed along the route extending eastwards from the beck crossing, although the consolidation of these two focuses did not finally take place until the 19th century.

Building materials

Buildings in Gunnerside are almost all constructed from local stone with stone slate roofs. There is considerable variation in the finish of the building stone which reflects the various methods of its acquisition, and the use to which it was put. Good quality dressed quarried stone is visible, for example, in Spensely House, while regularly shaped blocks with hammered surfaces, as seen in Ghyll Edge/Ghyll View and the poorer quality slabs used for smaller cottages, including the Smithy, may well be the by-product of late 18th century lead mining. The beck was also a source of building material although there is little sign of rubble stone surviving in today's buildings. Rendering is present on Rose Cottage, and also the Croft House group, where it may disguise some earlier architectural details. While the relatively shallow pitch of the stone slate roofs suggests that these all post-date the use of thatch, which had largely disappeared as a local roofing material by the early 19th century.

As elsewhere in the dales, no evidence was found for the use of earlier timber framed construction in any of the surviving buildings. Small farmhouses and other vernacular buildings in the area were built of timber crucks with stone and mud walls and thatched roofs until the 17th century. The increasing shortage of wood and population changes led to new building methods and load-bearing stone walls began to be built from about 1600 onwards. The pressures brought about by lead mining and the upsurge in population growth resulted in 17th century houses often being divided up into two, three, or more small cottages. The five houses with 17th century remains in Gunnerside were significantly remodelled in the early 19th century to give greater headroom in the upper storey and more light from new vertically proportioned sash windows. The decline of the lead industry created a surplus of buildings in Gunnerside, as elsewhere in the Dales, with the result that existing buildings largely met the demand for domestic and commercial accommodation in the 20th century.

Street furniture

The K6 phone box dated to 1935 (17), east of Kings Head, is included on the statutory list but otherwise street furniture is not a significant aspect of the special character and appearance of the settlement.

6 The architectural and historical contribution of the existing buildings

Gunnerside has 14 Listed Grade II buildings and other structures. In addition to the Victorian public buildings, these include a number of prosperous residences which were established in the 18th and early 19th century. While these buildings contribute to the special interest of the village, the two-storey houses and cottages more truly reflect the industrial and agricultural history of Gunnerside and are just as important in contributing to the character and appearance of the settlement.

Gunnerside west of the beck

For the purposes of this exercise, Gunnerside west of the beck can be divided into three sectors: At the north-west settlement was established between the lower edge of the steeply sloping Gunnerside pasture land and the flood potential of Gunnerside Beck, as physically defined by the various tracks to the corn mill and lead mines. Steep slopes have always restricted the expansion of settlement here. The western sector is defined on the north by the track to Gunnerside Lodge at the southern limit of the pasture land, and on the

south by a formerly important track to crossing points on the Swale near to Satron and Ivelet bridges. This extends onto sloping pasture which has encouraged the expansion of settlement in the 20th century. Below this track, the south-west sector extends into the more gently sloping hay meadows, marked on the east by the slower flowing southern stretch of Gunnerside Beck.

North-west sector

Near the northernmost tip of the west village, near the mill at the top of the green along Gunnerside Beck, partly closing the diminishing valley, stand Ghyll View and Ghyll Edge, a Listed pair of late 18th century cottages with a rear wing, the stonework laid in watershot courses, with gable copings and kneelers and plain stone surrounds to doorways and windows. The small size of the windows in relation to the wall area suggests an 18th century date for the building, which may have been built as a single house, perhaps for the miller. The domestic nature of this building contrasts with the former industrial buildings which are in evidence around this green area to create an attractive part of the village.

The corn mill, perhaps once associated with Ghyll View/Edge, comprises two parallel ranges, dating from the early 19th century, but including earlier fabric. The taller eastern range stands over a leat and once contained the wheel and mill gear. Coursed rubble masonry and plain openings reflect its industrial nature. The low western range, originally stores/stabling, may have had transient domestic use. Although the character of the building itself has been eroded by its recent use as a garage, which involved the construction of a high linking roof and substantial steel gates, nevertheless it has an important role in defining the special character of Gunnerside. The mill effectively closes Gunnerside Gill where the curve of the stream meets the steep rough slopes of Gunnerside pasture; mixed woodland on the valley sides increases the feeling of enclosure here, while more greenery is visible through the courtyard of the mill, and the noise of the nearby beck fills the air. This is a dramatic meeting of village and countryside which contrast with the subtle join which is more characteristic of Gunnerside.

Moving down towards the village heart, one range, the blacksmith's workshop or smithy, and Rose Cottage face the road up to the corn mill and the mines. The smithy is datable to the early 19th century through its use of coursed rubble walling, high eaves and large windows with thin stone lintels and sills. At this time Baines's *Directory* lists John Calvert and Ralph Simpson as blacksmiths. The smithy has a domestic appearance from the front, with a rare survival of 16-pane sash windows on the ground floor and casements above; Rose Cottage is the southern portion of the building, its render and four-pane sashes suggesting that it was restored in the 19th century. In contrast to other domestic buildings in Gunnerside, this pair of buildings stand above the flood level of the stream and face onto the green and the track to the mill and the mines, rather than towards the sun. This reinforces the notion that these buildings had an important industrial association and today act as an important visible reminder of the history of the village and its self-sufficient past.

The Literary Institute, of 1877, stands above the western edge of the beck. It is a large building with a projecting, gabled, central bay with classical pilasters flanking its grand entrance, along with carved barge boards with finials. The purple slate roof contrasts with the local stone slates of the other village buildings and distinguishes the Institute as a product of the Victorian railway age. The architectural pretensions of the building, and its stated purpose, contrast with the local self sufficiency expressed in Rose Cottage and the smithy standing opposite.

On the north-west periphery of the village a pair of mid-20th century semi-detached cottages intrude awkwardly onto Gunnerside Pasture and lie beyond the built-up core of the village. The track from Gunnerside Lodge continues into the village, flanked by south-facing

cottages which appear to date from the lead mining era, one reported to contain a former dairy room on its north side. The block is finished with a building facing the bridge, a pattern repeated in the west and south-west sectors of the settlement.

West sector

The west sector contains a series of south facing buildings set on the sloping hillside. Spensley House stands in an elevated position, at the western edge of the village and was constructed at the peak of the lead mining industry fortunes. John Joseph Spensley was a schoolmaster in the late 19th century, and the house's present name may be in memory of this period of its occupation. A Grade II Listed building, this is the most prominent private residence in the village, and overlooks an equally imposing terraced garden with high buttressed south wall. The house dominated the old western approach to the village from Ivelet Bridge, and its now retired position is the result of the diversion of the road over the new Swale Bridge in about 1830. The house was constructed in the early 19th century of water-shot masonry with large projecting quoins, ashlar window surrounds, carved stone guttering, an arched entrance with a fanlight, and tall rear stair window with interlaced glazing bars. A single-storey garden building (also listed), known as 'the temple' is built of the strongly marked ironstone seen elsewhere in the village. The building is significant for Gunnerside because it introduces masonry skills and architectural styles - the round arch, carved stone detailing -which eventually influenced detail in less pretentious buildings elsewhere in the village.

Up the hill slope from Spensley house, is Brow Hill farmhouse. A door lintel is inscribed 'RK MK 1695 IP' but the deeply recessed chamfered mullioned windows date from earlier in the 17th century and this suggests an enlargement of the house on the marriage of R and MK, with IP being the builder. The carefully set dripstone above the lintel, the uneven jamb stones, and the form of the first floor windows all show that the house has been substantially altered after in the 19th century. Modern agricultural buildings attached to the west end of the range confirm this as a working farm, and, as such, an important component of the village.

The southern side of the track from Gunnerside Lodge also has a row of south-facing cottages. This row shows the clearest evidence for the sub-division of a 17th century farmhouse in the 19th century: a cottage to the left of Lin House and near Heath View has traces of a 17th century window surround, with a large square ridge stack. Closer study of the rows to north and south of this block might reveal a similar development. The east end of the row is, again, occupied by a 19th century house or commercial premises looking across the more open area towards the bridge.

South-western sector

Bordering the road to the Swale Bridge is the Wesleyan Methodist chapel, it bears a plaque dated 1866 and is listed as a Grade II building. Built of coursed watershot rubble with an ashlar plinth and rusticated quoins, it retains a gallery and some original fittings. The strong silhouette of the facade is a reminder of the importance of Gunnerside in the development of non-conformist Christianity in the dale. Locally said to have been commissioned specifically to be 'better than Reeth's' (itself subsequently rebuilt), the massive building is clearly visible from the road approaching the east end of the village and marks an effective entry point to the character of the built up area. The low boundary wall, railing and gate piers (also Listed) separates the chapel from the road and helps reduce the mass of the building to a scale which continues the effect of settlement diminishing at the edge of the village. Pre-1866 gravestones indicate that this is not the first chapel on this site. Dial House had become a meeting house in 1774, and this site for a new chapel was bought in 1789. The first chapel was built closer to the road and is shown in early photograph, with a

low wall and railing enclosing a front area which appears to have contained at least two large gravestones.

At the north-western edge of this sector is the former Miners Arms public house. Shown on the OS maps of 1856 and 1912, this now comprises a long range with a wing added on the south side. An upper floor window in the south wing has a moulded architrave, suggesting a date in the first half of the 18th century. By the beginning of the 19th century the economy of Gunnerside and elsewhere in the Dale had ceased to be so dependent on agriculture, and diversification into other areas of employment continued. Bulmer's 1890 Directory notes that John Batty combined his work as victualler at the Miners Arms with the ancillary trade of boot and shoe maker, while in Kelly's 1897 directory he is also described as a farmer. A third row of south-facing cottages lies to the east of the Miner's Arms, again finished with buildings facing onto the approach to the Swale Bridge of 1830.

Gunnerside east of the beck

The present stone bridge leading the main east-west road over Gunnerside Gill was constructed in the late 19th century; it replaced one a little further downstream, on the western abutment of which now stands an attractive square building with a pyramidal roof.

Gunnerside east of the beck is also divided into three sectors which reflect physical fabric of the settlement and create slightly differing areas of distinct character. The south sector cleaves to the narrow terrace flanking the southern side of the eastward route from the bridge, overlooking the hay meadows along the north side of the Swale. North of the road the north and north-east sectors are set on rising ground on the north side of the dale, the north sector bounded on the west by Gunnerside Gill and on the east by pathways leading to the lead mines, is characterised by settlement along the north side of the main road. The north-east sector comprises the area more specifically known as Lodge Green, its houses centred upon the routes to the lead mines to the north.

South sector

Immediately by the bridge over Gunnerside Beck, the King's Head Inn is prominently sited, and unlike the south-facing farmhouses which look out over their meadows, it faces the beck crossing and the approaching traffic, which travelled only east and west until the construction of the new bridge over the Swale built in the 1830s. Also listed Grade II, its location and constructional details suggest that it was purpose built as an inn, a place where travellers and businessmen could find overnight accommodation. Early to mid-18th century in date, it is built of carefully dressed coursed rubble, the plain stone surrounds to the windows and doorway, gable copings and shaped kneelers being characteristic of the period. This imposing building is the earliest in the village to survive in anything like its original form. This stature, together with its continuing function, reinforces the sense of being at the centre of the settlement. The 1856 OS map notes the presence here of estate offices, which were probably associated with the re-organisation of the lead mines. The attached workshop or warehouse building at the south corner may pre-date the King's Head, as the first-floor taking-in door is placed awkwardly against the corner of the inn. The height of this block, together with the style of the gable copings and quoins, all suggest a late 17th or early 18th century date, and it may have been built for domestic industry, possibly the wool trade, or warehousing.

The abutments of an earlier bridge can still be seen in the banks of the beck, the remains sufficiently downstream of the present bridge to suggest an early date, before the later consolidation of building lines contingent on the present bridging point. A tall square barn has been built, in French country style, on the east abutment.

A number of significant domestic buildings stand along the south edge of the main east-west road. All face south, looking across hay meadows. Because of their aspect much of their architectural interest is hidden from the modern road, which runs along the rear. With intervening houses and outbuildings infilling a number of cramped plots, the roadside aspect is one of coursed rubble walling, with irregular fenestration, combined with some use of render. A more-or-less continuous frontage, lacking any outstanding architectural interest, is thus presented to the roadside, and this provides a significant contrast to the open aspect and the dispersed arrangement of miner's cottages which step up the hill slope overlooking north side in Section F. The service aspects of today's road frontage disguises the significant architectural interest of the building facades which face south over Gunnerside Bottoms but visual access is provided from the meadow footpath. Croft House, a Listed building, has an antiquity suggested by a substantial chimney stack and narrow fire windows. Classical detailing includes two further ridge stacks, a near symmetrical facade, and door and window architraves which all support the attributed date of 1720. Alteration in the mid-19th century included the provision of plate glass windows and rendering to the south and gables but these changes have not affected the special architectural interest of the building. The property has gate piers and a low wall overlooking the dale, which serve to underline the limited size of the garden.

Calvercote is another ancient listed building, with bands of projecting through-stones, large quoins, a blocked fire window and only one other window in the north aspect, it is typical of 17th century vernacular houses and barns in the area. To the east, at the break of slope by the turn to Lodge Green, an agglomeration of buildings, which includes some features which date from the 17th century, displays a series of inharmonious alterations which extend through to the mid-20th century.

North sector

Gunnarsgill Hall, isolated amongst trees to the north of the village, was built as the National School in the mid-19th century, but is reported to have closed in 1874. Built of ashlar blocks with a slate roof (a Listed building), the plan is typical of the period, with a single main hall, and a short wing housing the master's room and perhaps another classroom. The track descending from the north-west makes a return to the bridge past Greenleigh, which has an early 17th century datestone surviving in a house rebuilt in the late 20th century, and, approaching the Kings Head, becomes a canyon of substantial early and mid-19th century commercial premises. A late 19th century postcard view of the village shows the rear of these houses, having small rear outshuts opening directly into the adjacent field, an arrangement typical of houses at Gunnerside. The Post Office is shown on the 1912 OS map, a substantial business, which in 1890 included a grocer and draper (Bulmers Directory): commercial activities which continue today in the form of a teashop group.

North-east sector

The north-east side of Lodge Green is strongly characterised by unpretentious mid-18th to mid-19th century lead miners cottages. This industrial housing was planted on the steep grass-covered slope, but thinly enough to allow the impression of pasture to spread around them like a green sea which descends to a low revetment wall along the main road. Dial House, a Listed building, was built as two cottages in the mid-18th century, and was used as a meeting house following John Wesley's visit in 1774. Short terraces of cottages, step up the steep slope along the track to the Old Gang lead mines and the smelting mills on Old Gang Beck. Some are carefully built of coursed rubble with stone window surrounds and carved round-arched doorways with projecting key and impost blocks, and stone slate roofs. The front garden walls have coping stones. These masonry styles echo those seen in Spensley House, at the west end of the village. Intruding onto Lodge Green from the

roadside is a small group of low undistinguished mid-20th century cottages, which occupy the site of earlier buildings.

7 Existing land use in and around the village and the role played by public open spaces

'Gunnarside... is a place of sudden changes, its houses now spreading out against the hillside, now drawing close together in the curve of the road, now planting themselves on a steep green...' (Pontefract and Hartley 1934, 111). To the visitor, Gunnarside appears as a village of two halves: the west side of the Gunnarside Gill is a settlement around a green, linked by the bridge to another, eastern, settlement spread out along the east bound road through Lodge Green. This simple dichotomy, however, masks a deeper complexity brought about by later changes in Gunnarside over the past three centuries, and in particular by the interplay between agriculture and industry. In Gunnarside it was industry, now mostly disappeared, which eventually left the greater mark.

Although now dominated by buildings which reflect the importance of the lead industry in the later 18th and 19th century, the structure of Gunnarside west of the beck still owes much to underlying agricultural origins in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The long green running up beside the beck is finally stopped by the largely blind walls of the mill, which probably sits on the site of a 17th century predecessor; a cottage near Heath View has traces of 17th century fabric suggesting that it may have begun life as a farm, only later to become incorporated into one of the south-facing blocks which characterise the structure of this eastern part of Gunnarside; while Brow Hill farmhouse, crouched low and south-facing on the western edge of the village, was built, or more probably re-modelled, in 1695. Collectively these suggest that nucleated settlement first developed here on the west of the beck

These remains are important in that their fabric and location still speak of a more thinly populated agricultural village, with substantial stone constructed farms scattered around the edges of a green which lay beside the western side of the beck. Except where function or ownership dictated otherwise, houses were generally built south-facing to make the most of the sunlight. Tracks and footpaths radiated outwards to fields and pasture beyond the farms, more locally to the mill and outlying farms, as well across the beck to more distant markets.

In this western part of Gunnarside the houses, workshops and other buildings connected with the lead industry, and other commercial and social developments of the later 18th and 19th centuries, are now the obvious components of the village structure, but they consolidated the pattern of the earlier agricultural settlement. Successive development filled in gaps between buildings and blocks of buildings, encroached upon what was once a larger open area at the centre of the settlement, and also at the edges of the built up margin, wherever possible. The north-west sector, limited by slopes and subject to erosion by the beck, acquired a more industrial character complete with public buildings, while the western sector was dominated by domestic buildings which reached an architectural apogee with Spensely House, but which continued to acquire additions during the later 20th century, accommodated unobtrusively on low-lying slopes. The south-west sector, now dominated by the Methodist Chapel, appears to have been re-oriented along the road to the early 19th century Swale bridge, the beck and the meadows limiting its expansion.

The well-defined area bordering Gunnarside Gill, leading up to the mill is also the area which today provides the most obvious indicator of former industry in Gunnarside. The mill provides closure to the little valley, but additional blocking is provided by Ghyll Edge/Ghyll View. Further infilling is created by Rose Cottage and the smithy. The smithy extended its influence across the road to the beck side, evidenced by workshop paraphernalia, an

important and increasingly rare reminder of the impact and importance of the industry in the heart of a Swaledale village.

Earlier buildings appear to be a framework which influenced the positioning of the three south-facing blocks of buildings which became established along tracks extending westwards from the green and towards the crossing point of Gunnerside Gill. The east ends of these house rows provide a clear edge to settlement form, while later, east-facing end buildings created the effect of a village square. This effect is enhanced by the low stone wall flanking the edge of the beck, by the south gable of the four-square Literary Institute, and by the bulk of the King Head and its neighbour. East of the bridge it is the road itself which is firmly defined, first by high flanking buildings, then by the service aspects of south facing buildings, and on the north side, a low parapet wall to Lodge Green.

The firm definition of a northern green, bounded by the slopes and greenery of Gunnerside Gill, of a village square defined by buildings and hard surfaces, and the canyon leaving the bridge to the east, contrasts with the lack of defined spaces elsewhere in Gunnerside. Gunnerside Gill itself underlines the point; it is a strong defining feature in that it physically divides the existing settlement into two, yet flanking walls and the bridge parapets almost disguise its presence to such an extent that it is far more readily heard than seen. Elsewhere, the arrangement of buildings tends to relate closely to roads and tracks, so that, beyond the defined places noted above, their lines may be said to be a significant defining feature.

The lack of an enclosed feel beyond the central area is emphasised by the ready availability of views out of the settlement, from the west outwards towards the south and south-west, and from the east to the south and south-east. The hillsides to the north are also important in that views of them are often glimpsed from between buildings, or across the stone-tiled roofs, but the effect is to soften the boundary between village and country and provide a visual link which is underpinned by the numerous tracks and paths which provide a physical link.

Nor is there any sharp physical boundary between village and countryside. West of the beck, sloping pasture tumbles down hill and blocks of buildings fan out, allowing fingers of green to extend around them. Trees in Gunnerside Gill have increased in extent in recent years and now follow the beck into the centre of the settlement. East of the beck, low set south-facing buildings formally arranged along the roadside, or informally placed on the slopes of Lodge Green, never exclude the surrounding countryside.