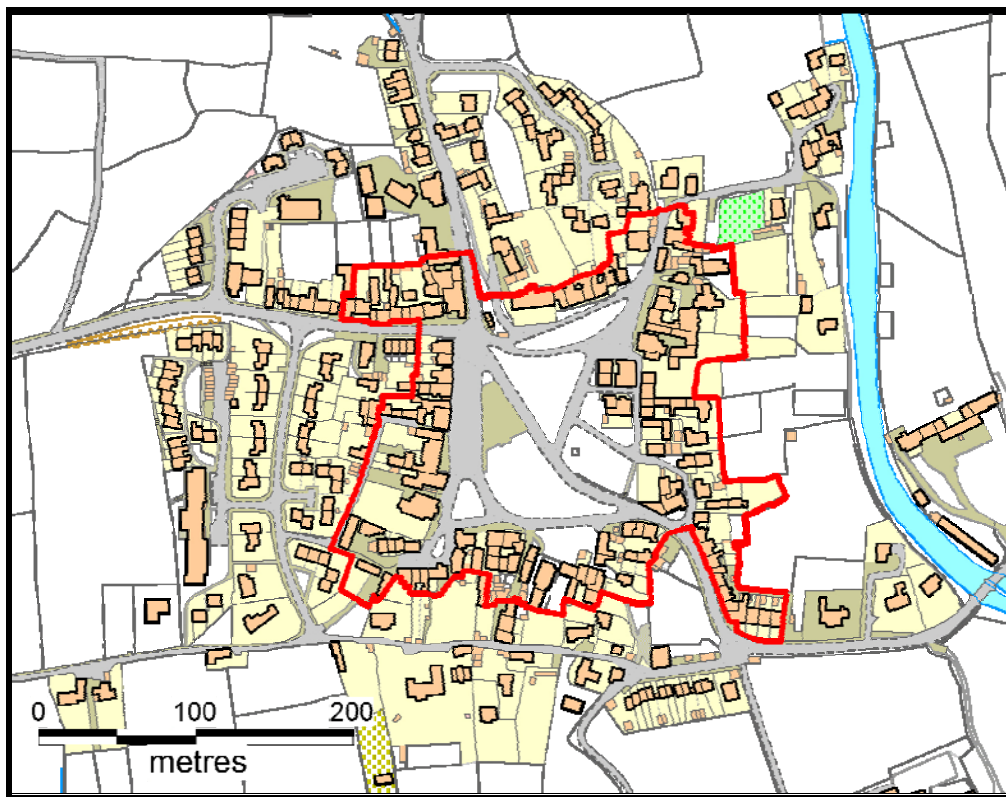


Reeth, Swaledale – Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Designated 27 November 2001



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1 Introduction

This 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 public meeting held at Reeth on Saturday 3rd February 2001.

2 Location and setting

Reeth lies at the eastern end of upper Swaledale, in a prime position on a low shelf above the flood plain of the main valley, between the River Swale and the Arkle Beck. The location is similar to other dales settlements in lying on the main communication route along the Swale at the crossing point of a tributary beck. The form of the settlement is striking for its formal arrangement of buildings around a large village green, which has been a market place for 300 years. Surrounded on three sides by the wild country of upper Swaledale, Reeth is, nevertheless, the capital of middle Swaledale, a more gentle territory which extends eastwards to Richmond.

3 Archaeological and historical background to the settlement

Early settlement is more obvious around Reeth than anywhere else in Swaledale. Its location appears to have been attractive to settlement since at least the Iron Age, indeed, elsewhere in the region many similar river junctions attracted Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement. Maiden Castle, a substantial earthwork enclosure on a terrace on the southern

bank of the Swale, may be a settlement of Iron Age date, its location reminiscent of Reeth itself. An adjacent mound is likely to be of Bronze Age or earlier date, while there are also the foundations of prehistoric round-houses nearby. The Romano-British period is represented by the earthworks of ancient field boundaries, particularly obvious at times of low sunlight or light snow, in the hay meadows between Reeth and Healeagh.

Reeth has an Old English name, translating as 'rough place', and its location may once have been the eastern boundary of an early English kingdom, established perhaps as early as the 7th or 8th century AD (Fleming 1998). Even then Reeth may have been the pre-eminent settlement in Swaledale, with outliers at Daggerston, Grinton, and Kearton. The best evidence for this ancient territory is the series of linear earthworks, or dykes, which cross the dale between Reeth and Fremington and may, at times, have marked an eastern boundary. Traces of similar earthwork boundaries are also shown on early maps beneath what is now the eastern edge of Reeth, above the Arkle Beck.

While place-names and some surviving earthworks suggest settlement during the post-Roman centuries, no evidence for actual occupation has yet been found for these centuries. The same can be said for much of the medieval period, although documentary evidence provides more sure grounds for speculation about the extent of settlement in and around Reeth. Ridge and furrow remains of medieval arable agriculture survives below Riddings Farm, and this, together with the pattern of field boundaries, suggests the layout of open fields around Reeth (Fleming 1998, 69-72), although the extent and plan of the village at that time is unclear. Cattle would have been maintained in parks set in what would have been still well-wooded countryside around the settlement, and it is likely that grazing was particularly important in the more sheltered areas east of Reeth. The higher moorland would have provided turf, peat, timber, heather, and game, all of which would have been exploited, together with lead and coal.

4 Economic development

The exploitation of lead took place in Swaledale during the Romano-British period, but thereafter probably ceased until renewed interest by monastic institutions during the Middle Ages. An early indication of the economic importance of Reeth is provided by 1301 crown tax lists, which show land in the upper dale under Reeth, distinguishing the settlement from the administrative centre at Healaugh and ecclesiastical centre at Grinton. After the Dissolution trade and agriculture provided the mainstay of the economy until the 18th century. Reeth was not always readily accessible because of flooding - the 1547 will of Jeffrey Charder of Reeth left 20 shillings towards the building of Grinton Bridge, which was repaired in 1565 and again in 1575. The 1671 Hearth Tax return for Reeth notes the existence of 191 houses, although these may not all have been in the area of the present village.

During the 18th and 19th centuries the lead industry was again the basis of economic development which was coupled with a considerable rise in the population of the dale, and the consolidation of settlements which still reflect this industrial heyday. Reeth, as the commercial centre for the area, benefitted greatly from its involvement in the 'cleaner' end of the lead industry. The broader base of commerce in Reeth meant that it was better able to weather the decline of the lead industry towards the end of the 19th century, and in a better position to exploit the tourist interest that developed thereafter.

Agriculture, mining, and other economic activities

Through the later medieval period farming was chiefly concerned with cattle and dairy produce and the exporting of butter and cheese. Arable agriculture was undertaken, but to an increasingly limited extent. During the 17th century local corn growing was discontinued

and grain was brought in from Richmond to be ground at Reeth mill, while a 1606 survey (Batty 1985, 9) showed that former arable fields named Wheate Close and Corne Close had by then become meadowland, while a 1613 survey of Francis Charder's lands in Reeth noted recently improved land. In 1771 Arthur Young described enclosed fields manured by peat and coal ashes, cows and horses, and high grass enclosures. He had met Thomas Elliot of Reeth/Fremington 'one of the greatest improvers of moors in Yorkshire' (Hatcher 1990, 197).

Philip Lord Wharton was a major figure in the economic development of Swaledale, developing coal and lead mines during the 17th century, and acquiring a market charter for Reeth in 1695. He was a Protestant Dissenter, and supported others, in his chapels and as mine managers: his influence in the dale accounts for the strong Nonconformist history here.

Improved roads and, in 1773 John Carr's new bridge at Reeth encouraged the further development of the lead industry. In addition, hand knitting became an important element of the dales economy during the 18th and early 19th century, and it is likely that many families in Reeth would have relied on a variety of occupations. Before the end of the 19th century the Dales lead industry had finally declined, leaving agriculture and trade as the mainstays of Reeth's economy, increasingly augmented by income from travellers.

By the 1930s the motor car was increasingly opening up Reeth to visitors, though '...one forgets the motorists when the last horn has blown at the bend, and Reeth settles down to be itself again. And for many months of the year it is itself all the time' (Pontefract and Hartley 1934, 146).

5 Settlement structure and fabric

Settlement layout

The existing layout of Reeth owes much to re-modelling undertaken in the 18th century, which established domestic and commercial premises around an extensive square green. How much of this layout already existed, and how much was new in the 18th century, is now hard to establish. Fleming has suggested (1998, 106, Fig. 7.3), that in the medieval period Reeth formed a rough T-shape, with a straggle of houses along a road following a terrace overlooking the Swale, and with a further row of houses extending north from these on a line fronting the west side of the Green. It may be, however, that the re-modelling of Reeth around its green disturbed a more complex development plan.

The acquisition of a market charter in the late 17th century may have done much to influence the consolidation of the Green and settlement around it. Before that time population levels were somewhat lower and there may have been more fluidity in the arrangement of the settlement pattern. A significant aspect of the character of Reeth is that, even today, there is a striking contrast between the large amount of space provided for commercial activity, on and around the Green, and the much more limited amount of space this has left for domestic settlement, which has had to make best use of the remaining areas of a platform of land which falls away along much of the southern and eastern sides.

Today's pattern of settlement also relates to the position of the present main road as it enters the village and to the Arkengarthdale road. In addition, a number of paths, as well as the tracks shown on old maps, suggest the possibilities of other routes along which settlement may once have focused. The Back Lane towards Healaugh, which now bypasses the heart of Reeth, and a track leading west from Anvil Square are good examples as is the former approach to the Green, which appears to have taken a more westerly alignment.

Building materials

Small farmhouses and other vernacular buildings in the dales were built with timber roof crucks with stone and mud walls and thatched roofs until the early 18th century. The commercial and social ambitions of Reeth are likely to have ensured that the transition to stone construction, for walls and roofs, happened earlier and more completely than elsewhere. The absence of any railway connection ensured that these materials have continued in use long after machine made brick and tile were introduced elsewhere. Coursed rubble-stone is commonly seen and may well have been a by-product of lead extraction, but a considerable quantity of better quality ashlar, used initially for door and window surrounds, and later for facing walls, was probably obtained from dedicated quarries.

No evidence has been seen in Reeth for the use of structural timber framing in any of the surviving buildings, while the relatively shallow pitch of the stone slate roofs suggests that these all post-date the use of thatch, which had almost certainly disappeared as a local roofing material by the mid-19th century. The practice of re-roofing formerly thatched buildings with heavy stone slab roofs may well account for an incident in 1858, when 'the whole of the roof on the house belonging to and occupied by Bill Peacock of Reeth, shoemaker, fell in about 7 o'clock at night' (Batty 1985, 25).

Extensive rebuilding took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, characterised by bay windows and new doorcases. Fashionable new materials are also occasionally in evidence such as true-slate roofing on the Congregational Church, which creates a steeper roofline and a noticeable contrast with its neighbours, and red tile and brick for the architect-designed Edwardian villas east of the Green. Rendering was also applied to some buildings towards the end of the 19th century and found limited favour again in the mid-20th century. The use of black and white paint on render and stonework along High Row and throughout Reeth probably originates in the late 19th century - the time of the 'vernacular revival' when timber-framed houses in counties such as Cheshire were painted black and white, and timbering was used in gables (as in villas on the east side of the village). In Reeth this may reflect the increasing influence of tourism on the local economy.

Most window openings retain their original proportions, a few retaining twelve panes of glass, but more usually replaced in the 20th century by plate glass sashes or, more recently, by synthetic framing materials.

Architectural and historical contribution of the existing buildings

Three domestic building types predominate: the three-storey 'townhouse'; a two-storey house with central doorway and end stacks; and rows of small two-storey cottages built piece-meal or quickly, for a rapidly expanding landless population. The three-storey type dates, in Reeth, from as early as 1734, and is a form of polite architecture of the 18th century seen in Market towns such as Richmond or Skipton. Although broadly similar in proportions, they appear to have had a mixed range of functions including private houses, inns or lodging houses, warehouses or shops, or a combination of such uses. Most the larger buildings on the High Row, where the King's Arms is the king, share this form but, significantly for the character of the village, they have also been planted in other, unexpected locations - the Temperance Hotel/Literary Institute, right on the break of slope on the south side of the Green, or The Laurels, blocking the approach to the Green from Grinton. It is likely that those large houses on the south, east and north sides of the Green once had substantial grounds which were subsequently sold off during the building boom of the 18th and early 19th centuries.

The two-storey building types with central doorways have been identified throughout upper Swaledale as housing for families involved in the dual economy of farming and mining, while the smaller cottages were built for landless lead miners, quarry workers, and others (McLellan 1999, 39). They date initially from the mid-18th century, and in Reeth they continue to be built well into the 19th century, with one substantial pair dating from the mid-20th. Again, best seen on the High Row in the form of Langhorne House (here with an additional bay, Langhorne Cottage), but sporadically present around the Green. There is also some evidence that a small number of earlier buildings were refronted to follow this pattern.

Simpler two-storey cottages of 19th century date, constructed as cottages or converted from commercial or industrial ranges, comprise the majority of the remaining older buildings and are principally located on the south-east approach to the Green, around its eastern edge, and extending along Mill Lane. Such single-bay cottages may be added to the gable end of the larger houses.

Sector 1: West Side of the Green

The west side of Reeth Market Place is dominated by a solid block of substantial two- and three-storey buildings, set close together with only a narrow unenclosed passage or an arched entrance between them and so providing the distinctive appearance of an almost unbroken frontage to the green. They epitomise the commercial supremacy and confidence that Reeth possessed in the 18th century. Today these characteristic buildings present a series of strong contrasts between coursed hammer-dressed stonework walls and whitewashed rendered finishes.

A firm north-west corner to the green is provided by two houses, Langhorne House and Cottage (Grade II listed). These are of one build, echoing the substantial 18th century houses of Reeth, but are a little later in date. The former Spar Shop, adjacent, is another substantial two-storey house, reportedly the building where the market tolls were collected. These two houses contrast with the earlier three storey buildings that make up the rest of this side of the green but they do act to consolidate the junction of High Row with Silver Street. The lower building height is further emphasised by the three-storey Buck Inn at the opposite corner of Silver Street, and softens the north end of the row, while at the same time emphasising the exit from the green.

The second two-storey house adjoins a row of three-storey houses, all Listed Grade II, the earliest being the Kings Arms of 1734 at the south end, with The Cobbles Teashop and the Gift Shop adjoining. The Kings Arms is reported to have contained Clarkson's shop in the early 19th century and is not named as an hotel until much later. The impression of an important inn is reinforced by appropriate signage and a heraldic escutcheon, but the positive contribution of this building to the west side of the Green is reduced slightly by the alternately painted black and white quoins which make the building look to be zip-fastened to the adjoining whitewashed building (The Cobbles Teashop). Narrow alleys at the end of the block, and a near-central arched entrance provide access to the rear of this tall block which contains and overlooks the commercial core of the settlement.

This important row continues to the south to include the uniform frontage of the Victoria House/Black Bull group (Listed Grade II) the latter being emphasised by its whitewashed finish, which creates a distinctive, if somewhat stark contrast. A prominent feature in this row is the fine late 18th century double-bowed shop front, with gothic tracery flanked by Tuscan pilasters. The former Half Moon Hotel, which projects at a right angle to the main building line, complements the block. In visual terms its massing, together with the natural stone walling, helps to close the west side of the green.

A final building in the west row, set physically apart but retaining the frontage line of the old Half Moon, is the former Barclays Bank, a substantial mid-19th century double-fronted house standing in its own grounds with a high wall enclosing a garden containing mature trees - a rare sight in the village centre.

This distinctive row of buildings creates a tremendously important element of streetscape, which in terms of its character and appearance is of an architectural quality more usually found today on the high street of a large North Yorkshire town.

Sector 2: Anvil Square and the south side of the Green

Anvil Square takes its name from a smithy present in the 19th century. While visually it seems tucked away it is an integral but self-contained element of the south side of the Green at its west end. It is distinguished by the small scale of the enclosed area and the character of its surrounding buildings and its appeal is established by the marked contrast with the grandeur of the green and its enclosing buildings. Here are two rows of south facing two-storey cottages, mostly of early 19th century date, which flank a former route exiting to the west. The south row includes significant parts of a 17th century former farmhouse, distinguished by fenestration on the rendered south wall, an important visual reminder that in Reeth commercial activity around the Green supplanted farms at an early date.

The row of cottages completing the east side of Anvil Square is terminated, opposite the former Barclays Bank, by a long range with a projecting wing under a hipped roof. This, together with the whitewashed former bank, creates a portal which emphasises the small-scale local stone buildings around the enclosure of Anvil Square on level ground beyond.

The south side of the Green consists of ground which is falling south to the Swale, and especially steeply, south-east to the Arkle Beck. Cleverly built at the change of slope is the former Temperance Hotel (Listed Grade II) and the Literary Institute, a pair of three-storey 18th century buildings, the east one re-ordered perhaps in response to falling ground or its new use as a Literary Institute from 1878. This block, an isolated echo of the character of the west side of the Green, serves here to emphasise the fragmented building line, and the very varied scale of buildings, on this side of the Green.

The Congregational Church (Listed Grade II), built 1868-70 to replace an earlier independent chapel, presents a dramatic gothic gabled façade to the Green. The location is significant in that it is a southern extension of the raised platform, immediately above the sharp fall of the ground to south and south-east, and the sharp outline of the chapel draws attention to this sudden change of slope. Approached from the north, the building, even with its added belfry, only gradually breaks the skyline. Its steeply pitched slate roof contrasts with the shallower pitched stone flagged roofs more usually seen in Reeth. Research into documents and maps suggests that this location may have been the site of a much earlier chapel (Batty 1985, 15). There are a number of pointers, including the documentary reference of 1288 to 'Walter the parson of the Church of Rythe', together with field names of various periods, including Kirkbank Close and Low Chapel Close.

Sector 3: South-east corner of the Green and its approach

In the lee of the Congregational chapel is a self-contained group of buildings, which are characterised by their tendency to face south-eastwards down the dale. Set at an angle to the Green, and well back in their plots, as if in relation to an earlier road line, Sorrel Sykes and Welbecks is a mid- to late 18th century house, extended to create the Reeth Union Workhouse in the mid-19th century, but now contracted again to form two houses (Listed

Grade II). Also in this group is a building remembered as another old smithy, and a building formerly associated with the workhouse, now known as Sunny Brow.

The east end of the south side of the green is marked by more tall 18th century houses, the Teashop and Alpine Terrace which appear to infill an area once occupied by the road, their arrival having pushed the road northwards and created a firm south-east corner to the Green.

The Old Mortuary, (Listed Grade II) is set against Back Lane - perhaps significantly, once known as Corpse Way. This small rectangular rubble-built structure, with large quoins and carved kneelers, may well be mid-18th century in origin, but was associated with the later workhouse. It is relatively unusual in Reeth in being an early non-domestic structure. The space between here and Alpine Terrace was originally left vacant, it only acquired its intrusive Telephone Exchange and Langhorne Lodge in the Mid C20th, the latter using stone from Hartman Hall. This area provides a neutral contribution to the character of the village.

The Back Lane and the road from the Green converge at the bottom of Stonegate, the route to the Arkle Beck crossing. Approaching from Reeth Bridge the meadowland is now punctuated by two detached houses, the Police House and Vicarage, their lesser suburban architecture harming the interest of the junction between settlement and countryside at this point. This lack of clarity is improved by Bridge Terrace, a pleasantly complete row with a corner shop, built 1905, which immediately gives an urban impression. Turning the corner, the urban impression is maintained by a much earlier row of cottages built in coursed stone. Some negative impact is created by variable modern fenestration and the application of rendering which conceals rubble walls. Small, unaltered cottages start the row, their stone door surrounds, sash windows and one bow window indicating an early 19th century date. The row continues with two apparently former barns or workshops with cart arch entrances, very different in character, but both blocked and with windows inserted, probably in the 20th century. The uphill end is rubble built, and the cart arch is low and four-centered, in a 17th-century style.

Sector 4: East Side of the Green

Dominating the approach to the Green from the south, The Laurels is a fine example of the predominant domestic building type of Reeth, the 18th century 'townhouse'. The Laurels, with original doorcase, attached Tuscan columns and plain entablature, has been upgraded in the late 19th century with the addition of canted bay windows to the ground floor - an addition which is seen elsewhere in Reeth. This very prominent and impressive house now appears to have been shoehorned into a confined space with only a small forecourt garden to its front. Nevertheless, because of its form and appearance it makes a very important contribution to the special character of the village.

Characteristically, houses around the east side of the Green are two storey buildings dating from the later 18th and 19th century, but here less focused on the Green than those on the west side. A number of former rear crofts, which extending down the steep drop towards the beck were infilled by small houses and lead-mining cottages in the earlier 19th century. A particularly good example is the short terrace of small two-storey cottages which extends eastwards away from the Laurels. These are accessed from a grassy footpath that formerly lead to the river and sawmill on the east bank. Unassuming, rubble built, with small four-pane sash windows, these cottages contrast strongly with the more substantial houses which face the Green. The small scale of these buildings, and their close-set pattern around narrow paths, provide contrasts, on the one hand with the open area of the Green, on the other with the wide views over lower Arkle Beck to the east.

These and other terraces nearby relate to the 1820s lead mining boom, and may be associated with the industrial facilities increasingly in evidence on the eastern side of Reeth. In the 19th century they were intermixed with public buildings which included the Police Station, Sunday School, and the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. While coursed rubble walls and stone slates create a variety of attractive textures, discordant notes are again struck by 20th century rendering and mixed fenestration styles.

Tynedale, the Police Station for the village from 1904 to 1926, is another three-storey house, but this time, and unusually, with a garden fronted by a ramped wall with railings, while Sundale, to the north of the Laurels is another similar house (Listed Grade II).

On the east of the green are two building groups which, while they now appear to be encroachments, may relate to a period when the Green did not extend so far east. The southern group contains the present Post Office, and the building has been used in the past as the Mechanics Institute and Methodist meeting house. A recent low extension houses the Post Office and store at what is close to the geographical centre point of the village. Map evidence shows that buildings were in this position by 1839. While the southernmost one is similar to the typical Reeth three-storey 18th house century type, it is significant for the fact that it may not have been wholly domestic in function. Although prominently located, this building gives the impression of having been set somewhat apart from much else that happens around the Green - it faces south, rather than onto the market place, while in its location it appears to overshadow the present east side of the settlement. To the north Ivy Cottage, now with a roughcast finish, and Tyneholme are a mid-20th century rebuild of a once south-facing encroaching block, now facing west.

The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel effectively marks the north-east corner of the Green. Its striking facade dates from two phases of re-building following a fire in 1887. A photograph of 1902 (Batty 1985, 73) shows the west front containing sash windows with flat stone lintels: the round-arched windows were inserted shortly after 1902, when a semi-circular crest and ball finials were added to the pediment; the sides are plain rendered.

The low range of Harland House (named after its occupant, John Harland 1788-1875) and its neighbour has wide doorways and relatively low set windows - one with surviving twelve pane sashes - and is partly rendered. Ostensibly dating from the middle years of the 18th century, the low proportions and large chimney stack hint of earlier origins. The range of small two-storey houses is continued along the street frontage, behind them another crowded layout, similar to that at the south-east corner, with a terrace running eastwards.

The building line of the frontage takes the eye towards and into the narrow lane leading down to the former corn mill. In this area of Reeth, as in other outlying areas, there is a number of surviving workshops, including the timber-clad builders' premises on the east side of Mill Lane, which contrast with the visitor-focused businesses around the Green.

On the eastern edge of this northern part of the village, above the meadows sloping steeply down to Arkle Beck, one of the last phases in the development of Reeth is represented by three large red-roofed Edwardian villas which infilled the last available land. Although these buildings are large and stand high, they are interpolated into the structure of the settlement, and accessed from old paths, so that only glimpses of them can be seen from the village centre. Instead of dominating the street scene, or extending the settlement plan, they contribute visual interest and depth to it.

Sector 5: North side of the Green

Literally and metaphorically, the centrepiece of the north side of the Green is The Burgoyne Hotel (Grade II Listed), named after a former owner, Mrs Burgoyne Johnson, after the

transformation of Hill House to an hotel after World War II. The central range was built in 1783, the left bay was added around 1875, and the right bay later still. The house is built on the site of an earlier house and may incorporate earlier fabric. By the late 19th century this was the home of George William Robinson, Reeth's then principal landowner. The house stands elevated on a terrace, with a railing enclosing its front garden. Despite its scale and position, the railings and hedge serve to set the house apart, so that it does not dominate in the same way as buildings along the west side of the Green. It is still, however, a major component of the streetscene and the contribution it makes to views into the village from higher ground to the south is significant.

Fellside, South View, and Hillcrest form a row. Built in the early 19th century, the houses have been the subject of rebuilding and alteration. The New Manse, fronted by a low walled garden, confirms the domestic character of this side of the Green. In 1899 the building plot, comprising Ward's Garth and a small house, was sold to the Methodists and the Manse was opened in 1901.

Sector 6: Silver Street corner and west side of the Arkengarthdale Road

Silver Street leads west to Healaugh, to the lead mines, and, from 1862, to the school. The Arkengarthdale road was turnpiked in 1770 to facilitate the transportation of Tan Hill coal. The 1895 OS map also shows a road to north-west, Skelgate Lane, which lead to quarries.

The corner of Silver Street and the Arkengarthdale Road, the west and north-west exits from the Green, is emphatically marked by the Buck Inn. This three-storey late 18th century house, rendered and limewashed, would be even more prominent but for equally substantial buildings around the northern and western sides of the Green. The bay windows relate to a late 19th century 'enlargement and improvement' and are similar to others in the village. A limewashed, coursed stone structure built into the hill, opposite the present east door, is an ice house for the inn. The inn, with its stables and yard entered from the Arkengarthdale road, emphasises the former importance of this route.

The flow of 18th and 19th century buildings along Arkengarthdale Road is broken by the 20th century garage and its yard, occupying part of what was once the Buck Inn premises, and the limewashed Reeth Memorial Hall, built as the Conservative Club in 1910. These make a neutral contribution to the character of the street scene. Beyond them, Arkle Terrace and other houses are also early 20th century in date, their dispersed settings contrasting with the enclosed character of the village centre, and visually intruded upon by more recent development.

Back on Silver Street, beyond the Buck Inn, the north side of the street is lined with two and three storey houses, continuing the urban feel of the village along the main road. As elsewhere, the three-storey houses are listed; built of local stone with a variety of surface finishes, they all have shaped kneelers and gable copings, with no. 8 Silver Street standing, unusually, gable end to the road. On the facing, southern, side of the road a terrace of buildings converted to cottages in the 20th century also makes a neutral contribution to the special interest of the area. These two rows really mark the edge of old 'townish' aspect of Reeth. Beyond to the south is a mid-20th century low density group of public and other houses. Set low, with mature gardens and weathered roofs, these have a suburban character which is continued with the recent layout and workshops of the Dales Centre opposite.

Sector 7: The Green

The great central Green is the dominant feature of Reeth, given particular emphasis by the close set buildings lining its western side. In the words of Ella Pontefract and Marie Hartley

'the houses...look from the heights to be sitting around a table' (1934, 145). Indeed, the airy expanse of the Green is an extension of the surrounding countryside, never completely excluded because falling ground to the south and east affords views to the south and east over stone roofs whose shallow pitch echoes the gentle gradients on Reels Head and Bleaberry Hill beyond.

The visual interest of the surrounding buildings is extended across the Green by changing ground levels which, although having a very pronounced southern and south-easterly trend, have many more variations which are given added complexity by a variety of surfaces. The Green continues to be the focus of commercial and social activity in Reeth, the site of market and fairs granted by Charter in 1695, and location of many temporary and not so temporary items of street furniture. Cast iron water pumps (Listed), standing outside the Burgoyne Hotel and the King's Arms, were established in 1868 and replaced the Low Pump, the base of which survives near the former Workhouse, while the low stone bandstand is a recent acquisition. The general low-key or semi-permanent character of these and former items such as the village stocks, which stood near the War Memorial, contrasts with more strident furnishings - a profusion of road signs and the poorly scaled detailing to the vehemently vernacular public toilets.

Sector 8 Valley of Arkle Beck, from the Corn Mill to Reeth Bridge

Reeth corn mill stands on the west bank of Arkle Beck, the structure of the present building largely reflecting its conversion to electricity generation early in the 20th century. External rendering reflects its more recent conversion to domestic use, with projecting 'half millstones' referring to its former function. The mill took water from an upstream weir, an important crossing point of the beck. Orton Well was important as a water source for the north-east part of Reeth.

A former sawmill is now a garage premises. The present stone structure is probably 19th century in date and was saw mill for the AD Mining Company. A central gabled wing has a blind oculus above the stone arched opening. Also part of the premises is a long row of outbuildings (Listed), with seven segmental arched openings.

Like other bridges over the unpredictable Arkle Beck, Reeth bridge has a long history of rebuilding. An early bridge is implied by the record of the construction of a new (wooden) bridge in 1623, but this was in a poor state of repair by 1631. A new bridge, probably of stone, was built in 1769. This was clearly inadequate and in 1773 the existing bridge (Listed), designed by John Carr, and again built by John Peacock, was constructed on strong timber piles and made use of large ashlar stone.

6 Existing land use in and around the village, public and other open spaces

The green 'gives quietness as well as space. ... footsteps which echoed noisily along the road turn suddenly on to the grass. A great house, now empty, looks down on it with interest; and High Row shuts it in on the west.' (Pontefract and Hartley 1934, 145). The plan of Reeth is dominated by this strikingly extensive green, which has determined the arrangement of settlement and commerce for so long that it is hard to imagine that the village may have once had a different layout. Hints of a different plan, which might be confirmed by archaeological investigation, are present in some of the alignments of tracks and property boundaries, especially in the southern part of the village. The possibly ancient ecclesiastical use of the site of the Congregational Church may also be an indicator of the focus of early settlement at Reeth. While the traces of buildings of pre-18th century date are too few to be significant pointers to an older village plan, the arrangement of buildings in the southern and eastern parts of the village suggest formerly less regular arrangements of buildings, perhaps set around a smaller and more irregularly shaped green.

The surfacing of roads with tarmac has tended to mask the older patterns of paths and tracks, here, as elsewhere. The present line of the routes to Grinton, Healaugh, and Arkengarthdale are now the important ones, but two centuries ago the path map was busier and may account for the agglomeration of buildings around Anvil Square and at the south-east corner of the Green. The diminution of market and fair activity has also encouraged the consolidation of the transverse route across the Green. In former days stalls and other obstacles might have encouraged travellers to visit establishments around the periphery of the Green, the enticement now being the facility to park on its western portion.

Topography and economic interests have together ensured that domestic and commercial premises are concentrated around the Green, so that this core of Reeth together with the eastern edge of the settlement is sharply defined. The lower valley of the Arkle Beck contains the occasional buildings of ancillary industries that drew upon water for their motive power. Today, however, the beck, pasture fields, and tree cover are the dominant aspects of this area's character. From the Grinton Road at John Carr's bridge, looking into the beck valley from the settlement above, or walking the footpaths into it, this green vale highlights the distinction between the treeless settlement and the verdant lower dale. Approaching from the west, however, the mass of 20th century development, although small-scale, gives an edge of town impression that is very different in character from the rest of Reeth.

A long history of commercial interest accounts for much of the way in which Reeth is laid out, and for the physical fabric of the village. In layout and buildings Reeth has more in common with the smaller market towns of the region - though small, it is a 'townish' village where public and private space is well defined and both are limited. The Green is the obvious and clearly public space, but after that public areas are few - the stream and its bridge, so often the focus of visitor interest, is removed from the village - so that the Dales Centre, recently developed with crafts shops and parking, provides the only other obviously public area.

The contrast between open public spaces and closed private areas is mirrored in the contrasting impressions of town and village which are present. Approaching from Grinton the visitor is quickly hemmed in by rows of domestic buildings which start with the urban-looking Bridge Terrace, while the expanse of the Green is hidden by another, and older, urban style building in the form of The Laurels. Approaching from Healaugh, the visitor is led along Silver Street, lined with buildings to either side of its lower stretch. From either direction, to enter the Green is to emerge into a village atmosphere, confirmed on the one hand by the expanse of turf, on the other by open views across and into Swaledale. Yet the 'townish' impression does not go completely away, for many of the obvious buildings look as if they belong in a town rather than a village, while many of the buildings which would confirm village status are hidden away behind the frontages of the Green. If this were not Reeth, the tall buildings of the High Row might well face a narrower and more busily trafficked thoroughfare.

The abundance of space on the Green provides a dramatic contrast with its shortage elsewhere. Important properties along the High Row and north side of the Green, combined with topographical limitations, ensured that the area available for domestic settlement was surprisingly restricted by comparison with that available for commerce. Domestic properties are crowded huggermugger together around the southern and eastern sides of the Green, with particular agglomerations at the corners, where roads and tracks entered the settlement. Quite grand 18th century properties, such as The Laurels or Sundale, stand in small plots. Gardens attached to the former Barclays Bank building, or Tynedale, are such an unusual feature that the expanse of hedge fronting the mass of the Burgoyne Hotel particularly emphasises the original status of this building.

Commerce, whether trade through the market, fairs, or shops, is reflected in the increase in population and the subsequent development of a limited range of building types. Dating from the later 19th century, the Congregational Church and the Wesleyan Chapel are the two significant public buildings, while the public use of others - the former Literary Institute, Post Office, and Police Station, has come and gone. Industrial areas such as the mill and building yard in the north-east quarter, and the blacksmith's workshops near the Workhouse and in Anvil Square on the south side of the village, have now acquired a much more domestic character than they once had. The general absence in the centre of the village of small craft workshops and other semi-industrial buildings, together with a lack of obvious former farmhouses and outbuildings, which are a distinct feature of other Swaledale settlements, may well indicate that more commercial aspirations have always played the greater role in creating the prosperity and growth of the village over the last couple of centuries.