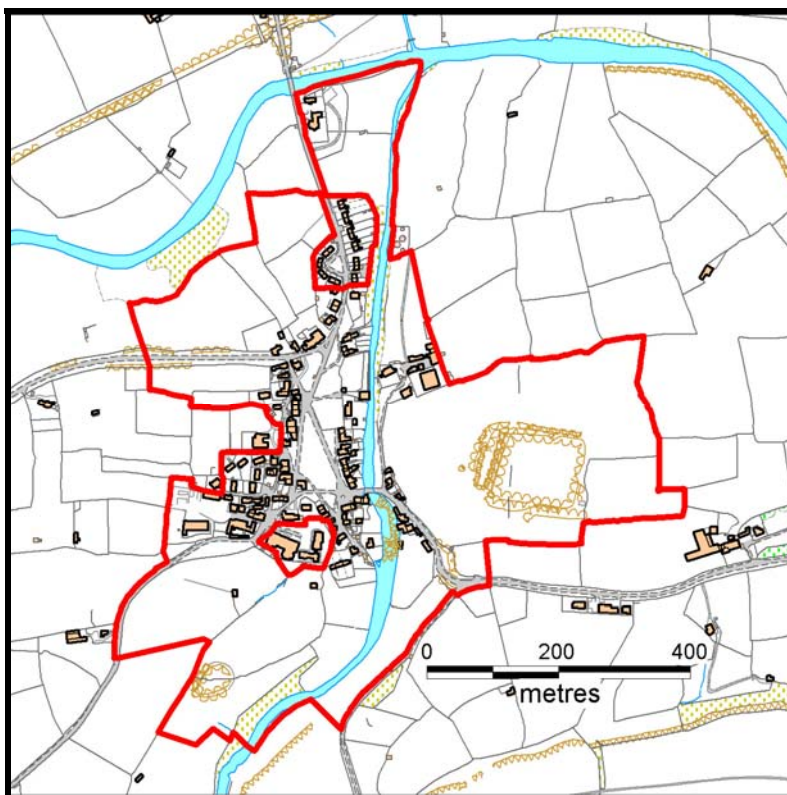


Bainbridge, Wensleydale – Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Designated – 28 March 2000



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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 follows on from a Conservation Area Workshop with the residents of Bainbridge village in September 1999 and a walk around the village with the parish council in October 1999.

2. The Location and Setting of the Village

Bainbridge is located on, and adjacent to, a flat shelf of land immediately next to the River Bain, England's shortest river, some 300m south of its confluence with the River Ure. The village nestles between the low lying, but impressive hills of Howda to the north west and the taller, hogbacked glacial mound of Brough Hill, across the River Bain to the east.

The village is located approximately 5km from the small market town of Hawes to the west, and 17km from the larger settlement of Leyburn in the lower part of Wensleydale.

3. The Historic Origins and Development of Bainbridge.

The position of the village has always been a strategic one, attested to by the presence of the successive roman forts of Virosidium on Brough Hill. Continuously occupied between cAD90 until near to the end of Roman period, in the early 5th century, Virosidium may well, like many other military forts, have had a civilian settlement nearby. Camden, a 16th

century antiquarian, notes the 'traces of many houses' below the fort to the east. However, the identification of at least one medieval tenement in that area may indicate that it is not necessarily the site of any *Vicus*. Excavations of the roman fort have suggested that only the south and east gateways would have been used by wheeled traffic. The best known roman road leading from Virosidum exited to the south west towards Lancaster via Cam Houses and Ribblehead. It seems likely that this road would have crossed the River Bain to the south of the present road bridge, above the head of the shallow waterfalls.

The origins of the present settlement, arranged formally around an irregular, but basically rectangular village green, almost certainly date back to the 12th century, when 'Beynt Bridge' was known to have been established to provide a dwellinghouse and 9 acres of land each for 12 foresters. This was probably located in what was then a clearing of the edge of the then Forest of Wensleydale. Many planned villages, arranged around similar large village greens, are thought to have established elsewhere in the Dales at about this period.

The period following the early Norman harrying of the north up to the 14th century was one of rising population and economic expansion. Monasteries, such as Jervaulx Abbey, extended their estates during this period, and Bainbridge was certainly part of the Jervaulx estate from early medieval times. Its influence on the present form of the village is unknown, but it is likely to have been significant. Accurate and reliable information on the development of the village is scarce until the early 19th Century, when map evidence shows that there were formerly a series of tofts or long garths to the west of the village, and this would also tend to support earlier evidence that growth of Bainbridge was a result of organised planning.

The village green itself has been held in trust since the mid 17th century when villagers brought the manorial rights from the City of London. It seems likely however, that this did not necessarily prevent development encroaching onto the village green. The positioning and alignment of houses set gable onto the village green in the long, but narrow garths to the west side of the village green suggest that Back Syke may have once formed the west edge of the village green and that those houses now situated to the east of the Back Syke such as Riverdale House, Brough View and Delany Cottage were encroachments onto the green in the 18th or 19th Centuries. Other buildings such as the Institute/School building and possibly the Congregational Chapel were built on the green in the late 19th century.

4. The Architectural and Historic Interest of the Buildings and other Structures

Within the proposed conservation area boundary there are only 6 buildings included on the statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. These are the late 18th century cornmill at Low Mill; the Rose & Crown Hotel, reputedly dating back to 1445, but today revealing evidence mainly of 18th and 19th century date; the Manor House; dated to 1670 but possessing c18th and 19th century alterations, possibly introduced when the building was reputedly moved from a site originally a short way away to the north of the A684; the Old Hall which has seen some mid 19th century alterations but which still, for the most part, retains a mid 17th century character; and the C17th farmhouse across the river at Cravenholme. The most recent building to be included on the list is the Friends Meeting House which dates from the early 19th century and still retains its original, though relatively plain, interior. The listed stocks on the village green are probably also of 17th century date, although these are likely to have seen constant repair and renewal and so it is uncertain how much original fabric now survives. The bridge over the Bain is also listed and while reputedly possessing 16th Century fabric, the structure was significantly altered when it was widened by John Carr in 1785.

Almost all other buildings in the village appear to date from the 19th century, or later although a small number may well have 18th century origins. Building forms are generally regular with rectangular plan forms and symmetrical, 'cottage' frontages. There is little in the way of architectural sophistication, and where ornamentation is provided it is often in association with door surrounds or slab lintel porches. Good examples of the former include Stocks House where an ornate door surround is finished with a pulvinated frieze, while Bracchium has a pair of doorways each with ashlar surrounds and a plain cornice. Some buildings from the later part of the 19th century are provided with simple flat porch canopies, usually with simple mouldings, but supported on decorative brackets. Unusual and interesting examples include Fernlea, Rook Hill, Green Lea and Arghyll House.

Another simple but effective detail, noticeable on around a dozen buildings is the use of rectangular, stone gutter brackets, positioned to imitate 'dentils'. These are usually arranged to regular spacings but they are sometimes grouped in pairs as at West View or occasionally in threes as at Rook Hill or the former Congregational Chapel.

Other unlisted buildings worthy of mention include Summerfield, where simple vernacular detailing is given greater interest by being incorporated into a house with a more unusual form comprising subservient flanking bays under a hipped roof of stone slates. The Wensleyan Chapel of 1836 also has hipped roof, symmetrically placed windows with semi-circular heads of simple voussoirs, and an unusual iron staircase flight giving access to a porch on the first floor.

The other chapel in the village is the Congregational Chapel which dates back to 1864 and is the much more adventurous in its well articulated design of moulded surrounds and accentuated key stones. Modern conversion to a dwelling has not dramatically altered its special interest.

Some uniformity is brought to this collection of buildings by the consistent use of building materials. Walls are mainly of local sandstone usually roughly squared and brought to course, while roofs are for the most part laid with stone slate in diminishing courses and simple, unmoulded chimney stacks generally located on the line of the apex.

A small number of buildings now possess smooth flat renders to their exteriors. This type of surface finish was probably added to these buildings during the 20th century and may replace earlier wall treatments such as roughcasts or limewashes. Certainly where such renders have recently been removed, such as at Bracchium Cottage, this has exposed random rubblework of poor quality and durability for which a traditional surface cover of render or roughcast may always have been envisaged.

Key landmark buildings are the Rose & Crown public house and the Manor House to the north, which partly close the northern end of the village; the former School/Institute which encroaches onto the south west corner of the green, on a narrow ledge of flat ground: and Bridge House and its sawmill at the south east corner, with its three storey irregular façade and very finely executed watershot stonework. Other significant buildings employing the vernacular tradition of watershot stonework include Rook Hill, Stocks House and the former School/Institute.

Numerous buildings have been altered in the 20th century and today, only approximately 40% of unlisted properties now retain traditional joinery details to their openings. A high proportion of houses have been fitted with PVCu windows and doors in recent years and this has accumulatively affected the character of the village still further.

5. Land Use in and Around the Village and the Contribution made by Public and Private Open Spaces

The large, rectangular village green at Bainbridge is one of the finest in the whole of the National Park. Criss-crossed by roads and sloping gently down towards the River Bain from the higher shelf of land to the west, this is one of the most distinctive and remarkable open spaces in the region. Adding considerable further interest to this attractive and characterful setting are the numerous individual, mature trees. Three distinct groups are discernible – the two large ‘sentinels’ to the south west of the Manor House at the north entrance of the green, there are two further large examples at the south of the green beyond School Hill, and a slightly larger group clustering to the east of Summerfield Cottage.

Larger groups of trees and woodland are visible around the edge of the village and there are particularly important groups alongside the River Bain, particularly to the north and south of the roadbridge, while the planting on Howda Hill to the north, and the more irregular group to the south of the village on the low glacial mounds are also noteworthy.

Two distinct areas of building can be identified and these consist essentially of a higher and a lower group arranged along the east and west sides of the village green. Those buildings which are clustered irregularly on narrow, confined building plots on either side of the Newkin are on the lowest ground and this lower group continues along the western side of the river bank towards Low Mill. The higher group begins at the Congregational Chapel and, because of the topography, seems to curve northwards, to include the Back Syke and Riverdale House area before continuing along the narrow shelf of land towards the Manor House before curving off via the Rose & Crown Hotel towards Askrigg. The ‘fall’ of the differing roof heights along the length of each group and punctuation of the various trees, creates almost an amphitheatre effect which contributes considerably to the character of the village.

A contrast to the general openness to the village green can be seen in the area of the Newkin. Here, building plots are generally smaller and the buildings seem more densely concentrated while the narrow back lane and smaller enclaves create a more distinctive sense of enclosure and confinement.

A similar but less intense feeling is encountered along the Back Syke which is also narrow and confined, but much more linear in focus. A significant aspect of the interest of this area of the village is the way the Back Syke is terminating at each end by entry into the more spacious areas, containing wider vistas in front of the Manor House and at the square adjacent to the Old Hall/Temperance Hall.

This sense of enclosure was probably more pronounced originally at the north end of the village. However, the loss of buildings to the east of the Rose and Crown Hotel in the nineteenth Century and the construction of the new turnpike road in the late c18th seems to have altered this aspect significantly.

Other important spaces include the open garth to the north of Low Mill which is particularly important both because of the affect it has on making the village green appear wider than it actually is and in allowing for views from the area of the Rose & Crown outwards over the River Bain towards Brough Hill and beyond.

A further area of major importance to the character and appearance of the village is the narrow, open corridor occupied by the River Bain. The views up and down stream from the road bridge are extremely attractive both because of the display of natural character and because they give views over the rear of gardens and ‘hidden’ elevations of buildings alongside the river. This gives a contrast to the more formal facades around, the village green itself.

It has already been mentioned earlier in the text that a number of the building plots on the western side of the village green have long but narrow rear garths. The boundaries to these garths are still partly in evidence today, but map evidence from the 19th century and earlier reveals that these were formally much more consistent and uniform. Today four houses survive at the north west corner of the village with their gables facing towards the village green their longer elevations being aligned along the length of the garth. This arrangement was probably much more prevalent along the whole length of the Back Syke but the building of Bainbridge school and the numerous bungalows in the area of Dale Garth have disturbed this pattern in the modern era.

Other 20th century development is quite noticeable in and around the village of Bainbridge. Two small areas of public housing were built in the 1950s to the north of the village on the road to Askrigg, while a small development of modern bungalows has been built to the north of the Highways Depot in recent years. A further modern development of sheltered accommodation for the elderly, at Sycamore Close, to the north of the Old Hall, has been excluded from the proposed boundary of any conservation area. The buildings in this linked, 'L' shaped group are of uninspiring design, being constructed without chimneys and with external elevations comprising of modern materials and details. In addition the hard and soft landscaping in the vicinity of the property is considered to be inappropriate and out of sympathy with the surrounding environment. The modern public housing at Holme Brae and Holme Brae Crescent have also been excluded from the conservation area on design and material grounds.