Feetham and Low Row together make up one discontinuous line of settlement extending for almost 2km along the main Swaledale road. Neither can really be described as a village. Only a few properties, notably towards the east end of Low Row, actually front onto the road. Others are set further from it, those above the road often beyond an area of sloping green. The road itself has no pavements, and cannot be safely walked.

Many of the more interesting houses are on the south, set below the road - at one time there was an earlier road that ran nearer the river. This is not an area well served by footpaths, and so, apart from bird’s-eye glimpses of their stone slate roofs, the houses remain largely hidden to the general public. Some long-distance glimpses are available from footpaths on the opposite side of the valley.

The buildings of Feetham are by and large very typical of Swaledale. The earliest are houses of the 17th century, and show the usual features - triangular-headed doorways (often helpfully dated on their lintels), mullioned windows, and small fire windows alongside the hearth. Heather thatch seems to have been universal at a vernacular level until the later 18th/19th century when almost all buildings had their eaves raised and were re-roofed in flagstones. Occasional buildings - the Punchbowl Inn is a good example - still show the outline of a steep heather-thatched gable in one end wall. Apart from the Punchbowl (which only seems to have been a public house from the later 19th century) Feetham has no public buildings, other than the parish church, which was built as a chapel to Grinton in 1840, until Melbecks parish was created in 1892. The majority of the parishioners doubtless remained Dissenters.

Nonconformity is much more in evidence in Low Row, a short walk to the west. The Wesleyan Church closed within the last few years. The Congregational Church has a preaching box dating to 1806, remodelled in 1874. Tucked away in the woodland below the road, are houses that reflect the growing prosperity of the area in the 18th century, for example Paradise with its knitting workshops - a rare Northern Dales example of a building type more familiar in West Yorkshire - and Gorton Lodge and Farmhouse.

For a more detailed discussion of nonconformity in the Dales see the essay titled ‘Places of Worship’ in the Themes/Religion section of the website www.outofoblivion.org.uk. Both Melbecks and Grinton parishes also contain important archaeological remains. Type ‘Melbecks’ or ‘Grinton’ in the Keyword Search box of the Out of Oblivion website and follow the links.
1. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH
Holy Trinity Church (which also announces itself as 'Melbecks Parish Church') dates to 1841 and is constructed of roughly-coursed stone with tooled gritstone ashlar dressings. It consists of an unaisled nave of four quite narrow bays, with a south porch, and a small box-like sanctuary. Only the simple Gothic altar rails survive from the original fittings and furnishings. The simple benches in the nave are of 1886 and the rather more elaborate Caen stone pulpit and font of 1905. The east window has attractive orange margins to its lights. All the other windows are simply leaded. The organ, standing free at the south-east corner of the nave, dates from 1911 and is a rare surviving example of the works of the Positive Organ Company of London.

2. PUNCHBOWL INN
A tall three-storey range incorporating building fabric of a variety of dates. Its south side is an intriguing archaeological puzzle. It seems to have begun as a pair of houses, the later, to the west, has two '1638' dates (that on the stone set into the blocked fire-window perhaps genuine, copied later over the doorway). The steep heather-thatched gable visible in the west wall is that of an extension to this 1638 house (perhaps an added kitchen). In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the whole range was raised in height and re-windowed. A firemark high on the wall is of a type issued in 1754, but does not necessarily provide accurate dating evidence. The building has suffered later changes of fortune. The 1913 Ordnance Survey map suggests that the east part of the building was roofless and was largely rebuilt in 1921. The western part was gutted by a serious fire in 1929.
LOW ROW

Plan showing featured buildings

1. CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
Built in 1806, remodelled in 1809 and ‘renewed’ in 1874, information provided by a tablet high on the east gable. It is quite a plain building, with an extension at the west end (presumably of 1874) with a vestry on the ground floor and an organ loft above. Inside there is a western gallery on two slender cast-iron columns and two interesting monuments to Susannah Allason (the Minister’s wife) who died in 1830 and John Scott who died in 1811. Most of the other internal fittings are of 1874 and later.

2. GORTON FARMHOUSE
Gorton Farmhouse (Grade II listed) is dated ‘1776’ with an attached coach house to the west with circular windows to both ground floor and loft.

3. GORTON LODGE
Gorton Lodge (Grade II listed) was the house of the Fryer and later the Parkes families, who were involved in the local knitting industry. It is early 18th century with rusticated quoins, a moulded string and window openings in architrave surrounds. Attached to the east end is a 17th-century cottage with the remains of mullioned windows.

4. PARADISE
From both an historical and architectural point of view, this is arguably the most important building in Low Row/Feetham, but one which is virtually invisible to the public, except from across the valley. It is a great three-storey slab of a building of various 17th- and 18th-century dates, a house-cum-manufactory that was once an important centre for the Swaledale knitting industry. The east part is the house with its doorway dated ‘1653’. The west, with 18th-century mullioned windows, contained the workshops. A little to the east is a stable block dated ‘1791’. Both the house and stable block are Grade II listed.

5. LITERARY INSTITUTE AND ASSEMBLY ROOMS
An appealing building with shaped bargeboards, and two shallow gabled porches with ashlar round-headed doorways. It dates to 1909. Like the Wesleyan Church it has an impressive series of named foundation stones including ‘Captain Lyell Lord of the Manor’.

6. OLD SCHOOL
This former school has a tall window in the centre for the schoolroom, and a two-storey section to each side. The front wall, with its low gate-piers, is attractive. There is a K6 telephone box (listed Grade II) close to its west end.

7. WESLEYAN CHURCH
This building is dated 1901, with the usual array of named foundation stones. It is a slightly Italianate building of rough-faced stone with ashlar dressings. Architectural display is confined to the gabled frontage, the side walls each having four plain arched windows. The building is now disused.
This leaflet and others in the series were produced by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority as part of the Private Spaces Public Places project. This European Union funded project was undertaken during 2003-5 in selected villages in the Richmondshire area of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The project’s aim was to enable communities to take a more active role in the management and enhancement of the historic character of their villages, and to promote a common outlook on their future development. An Historic Environment Consultancy firm was appointed by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority to complete character appraisal documents in consultation with each community. The documents include an appraisal of the historic character of the village, and form the basis for the development of an agreed action plan targeting specific enhancement projects.

Electronic versions of the village character appraisal documents, along with a copy of this leaflet are available on www.yorkshiredales.org.uk from the Understanding/Historic Environment page.

PARTICIPATING VILLAGES

WARD: Aysgarth:
- VILLAGES:
  - Carperby
  - West Burton
  - Thornton Rust
  - Aysgarth
  - Thoralby
  - Newbiggin

WARD: Bolton Manor:
- VILLAGES:
  - Castle Bolton
  - West Witton

WARD: Grinton and Upper Swaledale:
- VILLAGES:
  - Muker
  - Gunnerside
  - Low Row
  - Keld
  - Grinton

WARD: Hawes and High Abbotside:
- VILLAGES:
  - Gayle
  - Burtersett
  - Sedbusk
  - Hardraw
Architrave
A characteristic moulded surround to a doorway or window typical of the 18th century.

Ashlar
Good quality cut stone with a smoothly-tooled surface.

Bay
Elevations can usually be divided into a series bays on the basis of their architectural features - a bay might contain one window on each floor level. If referring to a timber-framed building, or a roof structure, the bay would be the section between each pair of posts, or between each tie-beam and set of principal rafters.

Fire window
A small window at one end of the front wall of a house, lighting the side of the hearth.

Impost
The block at the head of the jamb of an opening from which the head or arch springs.

Moulded string
A horizontal course projecting from the wall face, carrying some form of moulding.

Mullioned window
A window divided into a series of lights by vertical stone mullions.

Rusticated quoins
Quoins, usually of ashlar, in which the edges of the individual blocks are bevelled or chamfered. Typical of good-quality Classical buildings of the 17th century onwards.

Sanctuary
The easternmost part of the chancel of a church, containing the altar.