

## **Swaledale & Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group**

### **The proposed Swaledale Big Dig Project**

#### **Introduction**

Reeth and Grinton both have long histories going back at least to Anglo-Saxon times and perhaps earlier. Both are mentioned in the Domesday Book and it has been suggested that there might have been a Roman fort in the area, perhaps at Reeth. In the 1980's Andrew Fleming & Tim Laurie excavated an Iron Age settlement East of Healaugh and recently SWAAG has uncovered a Romano-British settlement on the Clarke's land at the Hagg, Fremington. The Swaledale Big Dig aims to add to our knowledge of the development of these villages over the ages.

#### **The Swaledale & Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group - SWAAG**

SWAAG is a group of local people with a keen interest in local archaeology. Formed in 2009, we have been very fortunate in obtaining LEADER funding over a 3 year period ending in 2013, which has enabled us to undertake three archaeological digs so far. These digs, supervised by Durham University, have not only added to our understanding of the archaeology of the area but have also greatly increased the expertise and archaeological skills of our members. With appropriate supervision and guidance our members will be able to carry out the proposed Big Dig project as well as assist in the training and supervision of other local people who we hope will wish to participate. Further information on our work can be found on the SWAAG website [www.swaag.org](http://www.swaag.org) together with details of our publications.

#### **The proposed project.**

The aim, as stated above, is to add to our knowledge of the development of the settlements of Reeth and Grinton over the ages. To achieve this we propose to involve local people in digging a number of test pits (one metre square, maximum one metre deep) in gardens and public spaces around the centres of the two villages. If people in other local settlements wish to participate we will support them if resources allow.

With respect to Reeth, a primary objective is to increase our understanding of the layout of the settlement prior to the laying out of the village green, following the granting of the market charter in 1694/5. It is assumed that the development of a market town led to the layout of the buildings around a central green, as it is today – see the 1830 map and 1<sup>st</sup> Ed OS below. Our main hypothesis is that prior to 1695 or thereabouts, Reeth was probably a typical medieval village, as postulated by the archaeologist Andrew Fleming, with a row of tofts (dwellings) & crofts (small fields) roughly on the line of High Row and another line facing them with the crofts extending back towards where the Post Office is today; see Fleming's conjectural reconstruction below. Whilst this seems the most likely plan of the settlement there are other possibilities such as the tofts and crofts aligned along the routes shown on the map below entitled "Reeth 1857 with potential routes through highlighted" or indeed there being no plan at all with the dwellings scattered almost at random. A further hypothesis is that the Green in medieval times was as we see it today; the Victoria County History of Yorkshire notes that the tolls which passed

with Healaugh Manor in 1513 point to an early market at Reeth; it must have been held somewhere.

We propose to dig a number of test pits on and around Reeth Green in order to test these hypotheses and thereby gain a better understanding of the development of the village. In doing so, we wish to involve as many members of the local community as possible and hope to be able to dig not only on the Green but also in nearby gardens as well.

Our objectives with respect to Grinton are similar to those for Reeth. There are extensive prehistoric earthworks close to the village but the medieval/post medieval settlement does not appear to have undergone such a radical transformation as Reeth may have done,. Nonetheless there are some intriguing questions regarding its early development. Grinton was one of the largest ecclesiastical parishes in the country and the construction of the church in Norman times suggests that Grinton was the major settlement in the area but little is known about its development until more recent times.

The layout of the routes in and out of the settlement, as illustrated on the 1840 tithe map below, suggests that these may have changed over time. The main road from Richmond in the East swings sharply North as it approaches the village. At this point there is a footpath continuing West and crossing Grinton Beck; this, shown in blue on the tithe map, might have been an original route into the village and might perhaps have continued West to join up with the lane shown in pink to Swale Hall. Further, did what is now the main route form a cross roads in the centre of the village by continuing down the footpath between the church and Blackburn Hall, as shown in green, eventually joining Swale Hall lane? It has also been suggested that prior to the construction of the turnpike road to Richmond the main road through the village was that from Leyburn.

There are many other as yet unanswered questions regarding the development of Grinton. For example:

1. Leland wrote about Grinton being a little market town for corn and linen in c1540. Where was this market held? Perhaps in the centre in front of the buildings numbered 883/4 on the tithe map?
2. A visual survey of the field numbered 888 on the tithe map quickly identifies a number of 'lumps and bumps'. Are these the remains of medieval tofts and crofts?
3. Was Grinton much bigger in medieval times? The aerial photograph below shows more earthworks, particularly to the east of the road, and supports this hypothesis suggesting that Grinton was previously larger, with dwellings strung out on either side of the North-South Leyburn road.

### **The development of the project**

The project may well span more than one year and be more costly than we initially thought and so we will apply for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). In developing the bid we will be seeking the written support of the two parish councils and looking to involve the local schools together with a number of other local organisations. We aim to submit a bid to the HLF by mid-May and would expect to hear from them within a couple of months.

If we are successful then we will:

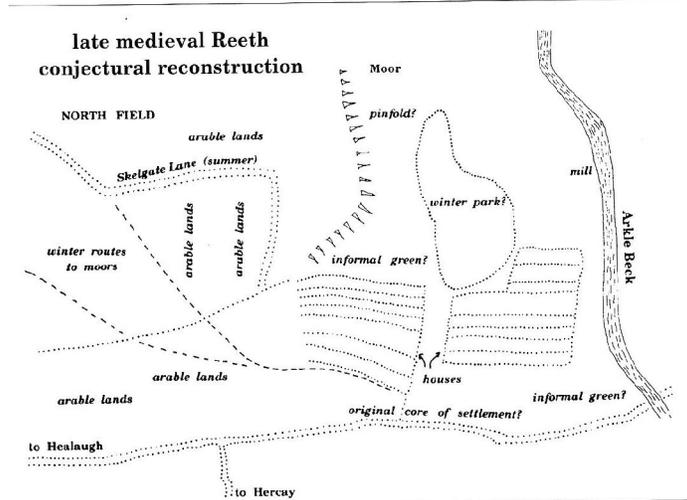
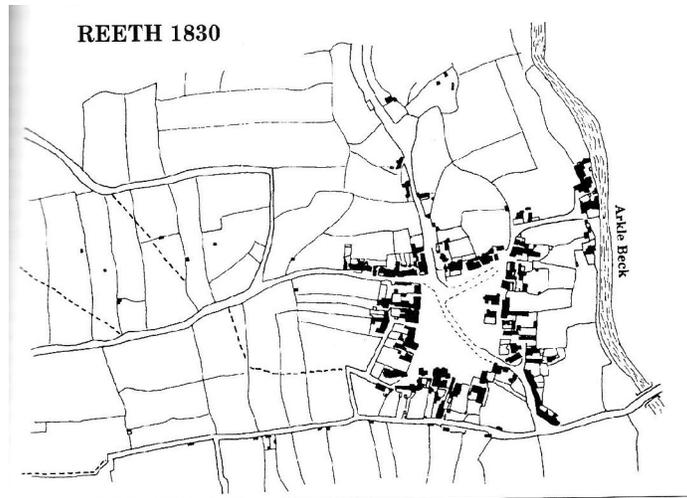
- arrange a public meeting to explain the project and assess local interest
- appoint professional archaeologists to advise and supervise the project
- carry out documentary research over the winter of 2013/14
- seek offers of assistance, particularly with regard to locations of test pits
- identify precise locations of proposed test pits, liaising with relevant land owners
- schedule the digging of the test pits, probably May-June
- produce a health & safety assessment. We expect each test pit to be completed within one day so we will not be leaving large open holes anywhere. SWAAG has public liability insurance.
- following analysis of finds, arrange a public de-briefing session and publish the results.
- liaise throughout with appropriate authorities – Parish Councils, Richmondshire District Council, YDNPA

### **Involvement of the Parish Councils**

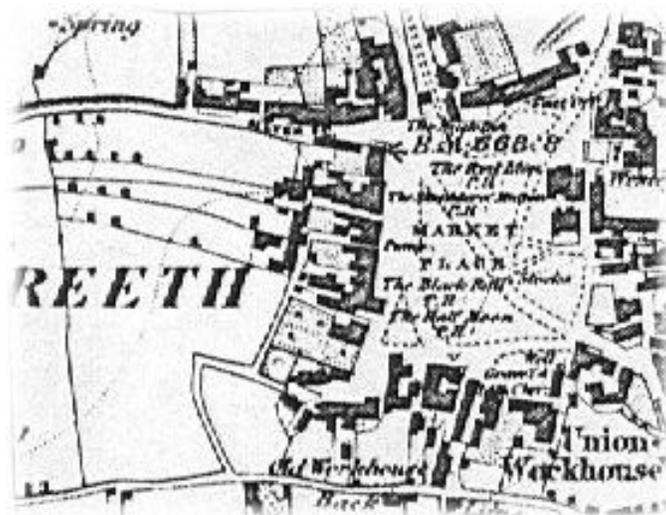
At this stage we are seeking written support from Grinton Parish Council and Reeth Parish Council to submit with our application. . We will seek the same from local schools, other local organisations and the Yorkshire Dales National Park, noting that the latter is represented on the project steering committee.

Alan Mills on behalf of SWAAG

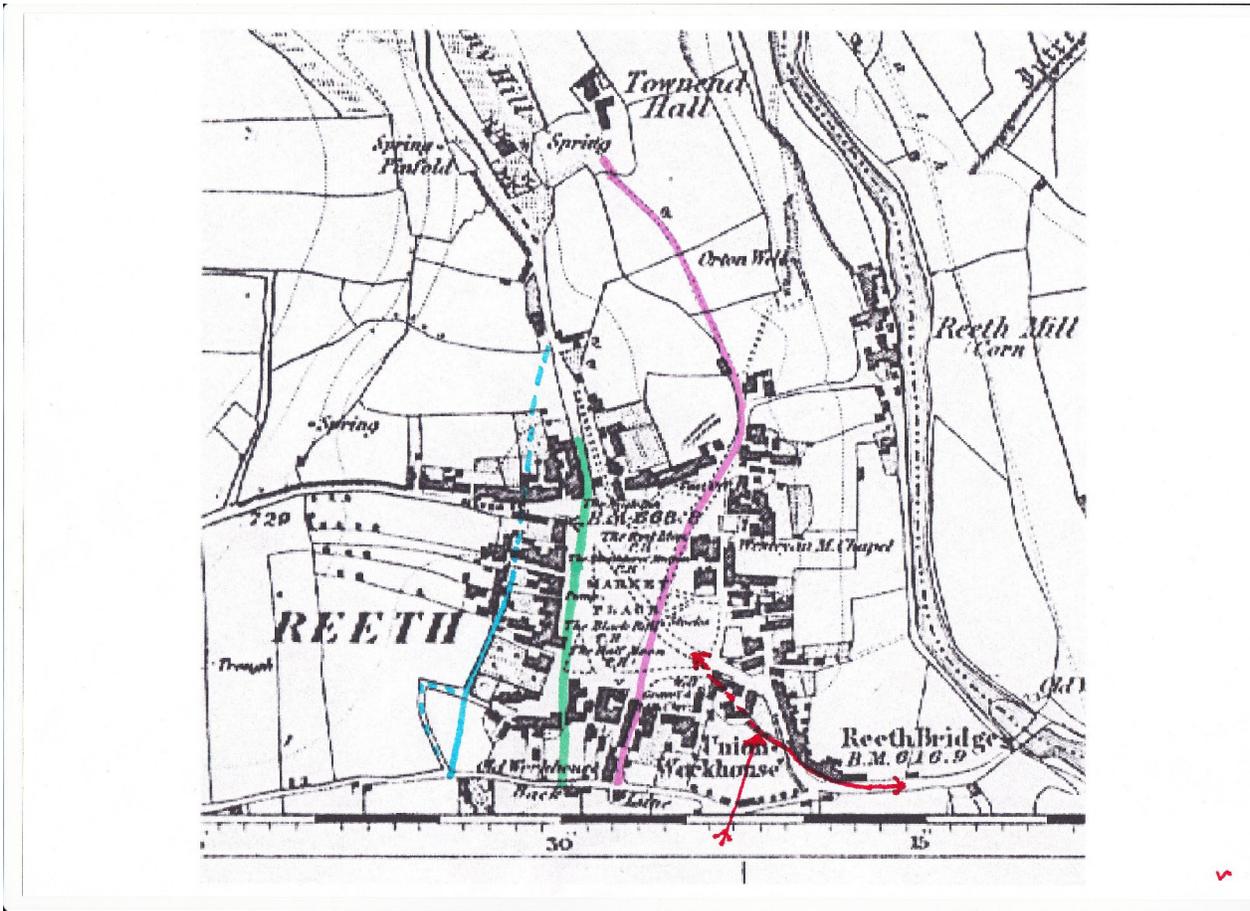
17<sup>th</sup> January 2013



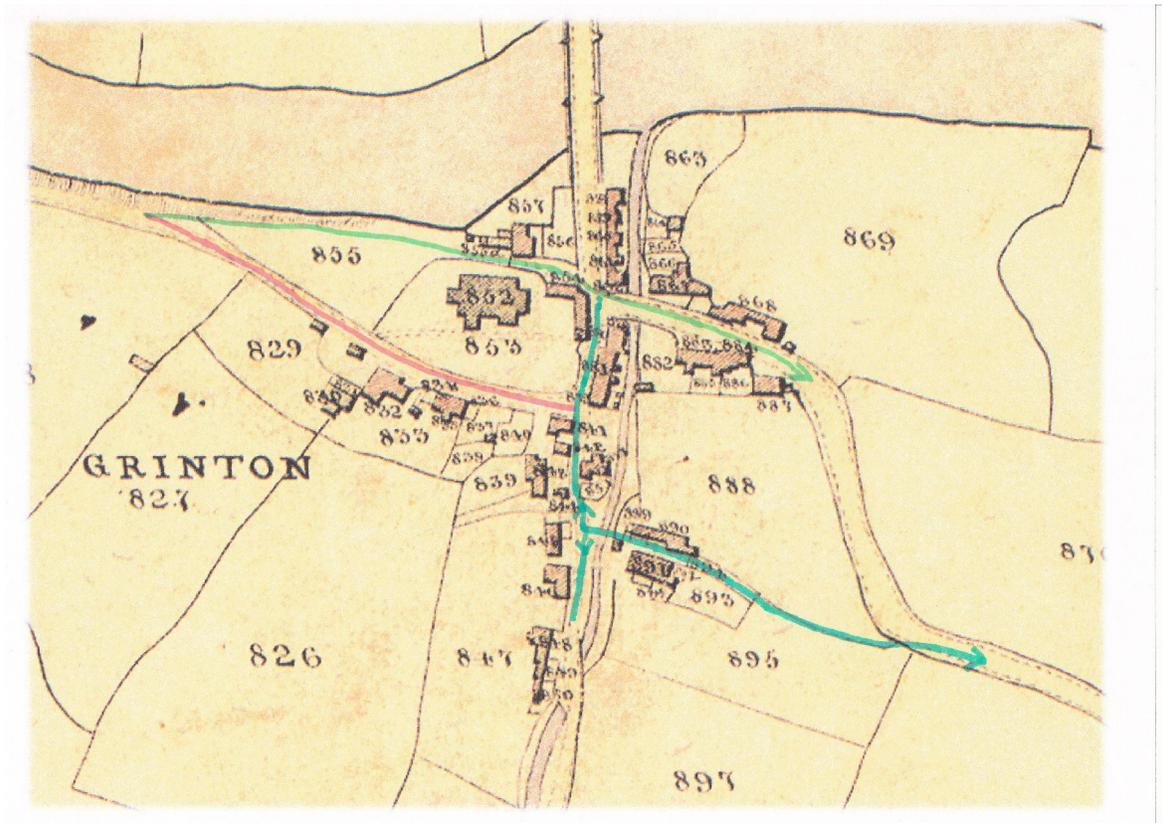
From Andrew Fleming : Swaledale – Valley of the Wild River



Part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map 1857



Reeth 1857 with potential routes through highlighted



Grinton Tithe map with routes highlighted



Aerial photo of Grinton, looking South (YDP196/22)