

Map 08: Riddlesden; Elam Grange and West Riddlesden Hall

Character of the Area

As the canal passes through this section, its setting becomes progressively more urban in character as it enters the edge of Riddlesden, a popular residential area near to Keighley. To the north of Leach Bridge the setting remains open and pastoral, though the trunk road and industrial units a short distance to the south of the canal have a dominating visual presence and can be seen and heard clearly from the canal. Elam Grange (see below) makes an important contribution to the setting of the canal conservation area, some of the buildings predating the construction of the canal.

The fields to the south of the canal drop away quite steeply to the valley bottom, facilitating long distance views and strong visual links with buildings in the vicinity. On the north side of the canal the land rises up steeply and many of the buildings are partially hidden by trees and the topography of the hillside. To the north of Leach Bridge, the setting becomes distinctly suburban and consists of mostly mid-20th century semi-detached houses built in rows along the contours of the sloping hillside.

Trees standing in the grounds of West Riddlesden Hall make an important contribution to the leafy feel and openness of this part of the canal conservation area.

The towpath continues along the southern side of the canal in this section. To the north of Willowbank it is level, fairly narrow and has a gravelled surface. Between Leach Bridge and Willowbank the towpath doubles as a vehicular access to Elam Grange and the houses along Willowbank and therefore becomes substantially wider.

Features of the Area

1. High Cote, Leach Road: Set above the level of the canal is High Cote, a terrace of stone-built properties occupying an elevated position at the top of a steep and wooded bank. The group comprises of a terrace of five properties, a pair of semi-detached houses and a larger detached house. The houses form a diverse group, having varying roof and buildings lines that add to their visual interest. All of the houses are built from coursed local stone and most have traditional stone slate roofs and corniced chimneys indicating that the houses are of some age. The terraced properties appear on the 1852 O.S. map suggesting that they were probably built in the first half of the 19th century. Sadly some of the houses have been altered insensitively with the cladding and painting of stonework,

conservatory extensions and loss of traditional window and door details. From the canal relatively little of the group can be seen other than glimpses of stonework and the roofscape through the trees, however these vistas and the trees standing in front of the cottages add to the visual interest of the canal setting.

2. Willowbank: Set on land between the canal and the lane leading down to Elam Grange are a small group of stone buildings known as Willow Bank. Willowbank House is a substantial mid 19th century dwelling with an adjoining stable/barn that is now converted into a dwelling called Bluebell Cottage. Both houses are built of coursed local stone and have stone slate roofs. The first Ordnance Survey map of the area indicates the buildings were in existence by 1852 and were used as a public house called The Woodpecker. The 1892 map does not refer to such a use and it is possible that the main house had been converted into a private dwelling by that date. The full height canted bay windows to the front elevation were probably added around the end of the 19th century.

3. Leach's Bridge (196): The bridge is a modern, swing bridge operating manually on a pivoting axis on the north side of the canal. It has a metal base and handrails with what appears to be a timber decking carriageway that has been covered with a thin layer of concrete. The abutments to either side of the waterway are of stone construction though the approach to the bridge has been concreted. The good copingstones to either side of the canal indicate the age of the crossing point though the original timber swing bridges that once typified this canal were systematically replaced with metal structures between 1940-90.

4. Elam Grange and associated farm buildings, Elamwood Road: Located a short distance to the south of the canal is Elam Grange, a Grade II listed farmhouse and its associated outbuildings. The farmhouse is thought to date back to the late 17th century, though it has some 18th century alterations. Built of hammer-dressed stone with a stone slate roof, the house retains a number of interesting original features, such as mullioned and transomed windows, a chamfered doorway and quoin stones. To the northeast of the farmhouse is a barn, also Grade II listed that is thought to date to the 17th century or earlier and is an excellent example of an early aisled barn still in agricultural use. Standing to the east of the barn is a group of farm workers cottages and agricultural buildings that were probably built in the 18th century. These are built from dressed local stone and share a long, stone slate roof but sadly are now semi-derelict and in deteriorating condition.

Located immediately alongside the canal, to the north of the barn is a lime kiln. The kiln is a circular structure that is built of coursed rubble stonework and has an arched opening to a stone-lined space leading to a vent opening at the rear. It is unlikely that the kiln has been used for centuries, however it is a Grade II listed structure and is historically important as a piece of canal

heritage. Sadly the kiln is in poor condition, with a number of young trees growing from its roof, causing cracks to appear in the stonework.

Elam Grange and the farm buildings mostly pre-date the construction of the canal and in that sense are different to many of the historic buildings along its route that were built in response to the opportunities offered by the construction of the waterway. Though in need of repair and restoration, the buildings at Elam Grange make a particular contribution to the setting of the canal and are considered to be excellent and rare examples of the local vernacular building form in a relatively unaltered state.

5. 1-9 Leach Way: Standing on the north side of the canal are nos. 1-9 Leach Way, a terrace of five attractive stone cottages set back from the road behind coped stone walls and gardens. Nos. 7 and 9 Leach Way were built before the addition of the other three cottages and are Grade II listed buildings. Dated 1756, these houses were built for the Leach family (who owned West Riddlesden Hall) and were probably used as housing for the farm workers. Built from coursed stone and originally with stone slate roofs (now blue slate), the cottages display typical 18th century character having quoined angles, flat-faced mullioned windows, corniced chimneys and doorways set in plain stone surrounds. No. 7 retains the traditional sliding sash windows frames but no. 9 has been more extensively altered, having a painted elevation to the front and rear and a more modern style of window.

The three later cottages, nos. 1, 3 and 5 are not listed in their own right but are of considerable age and contribute much to the setting of the adjoining cottages and the character of the conservation area. These cottages appear on the 1852 O.S. map and their traditional vernacular form of architecture indicates that they were probably built around start of the 19th century. The cottages are similarly fenestrated having mullioned windows set in flat-faced surrounds (some now missing the central stone mullion), stone slate roofs, timber gutters and corniced chimneys.

6. West Riddlesden Hall: Located a short distance to the north of the canal and set in well wooded grounds is West Riddlesden Hall, a fine example of a 17th century manor house and a Grade I listed building. The house was the long time residence of the Maud family before being passed to the Leach family in the 17th century. The house is dated 1687 and the initials 'TL' (Thomas Leach) are engraved into the datestone, though some sections of the house may predate this. The house itself is in private ownership and is built of coursed hammer-dressed stone with a stone slate roof. The front elevation of the building is south facing and is dominated by three impressive gabled bays, the apexes of which are inset with an oculus opening in a square moulded surround. Central to the frontage is the principal doorway, set into a torus-moulded doorcase. To

each side of the entrance are multiple mullioned and transomed chamfered windows recessed beneath a deep stringcourse. At the rear of the building is a two storey flat roofed porch that was probably added in the 19th century. At the foot of the porch is the doorway that has an ogee-shaped head and hoodmould over. Above the door is a large round window inset with tracery detail and a hoodmould over. Though little of the house is visible from the canal, the grounds of the hall provide a strong and characterful setting to the waterway. The hall itself is an excellent example of an early surviving manor house and by virtue of its Grade I listing is considered to be of national interest.

7. Former barn to West Riddlesden Hall, Leach Way: Standing in the grounds of the hall is the former barn to the house, a c. 17th century barn and mistal range that over the years has been used as a bible college and is now converted in housing. The barn is Grade II listed and is built of coursed stone to an 'L' shaped plan with a stone slate roof. Set into the south facing elevation is a tall round-arched gabled cart entry that breaks forward slightly of the building line. At the opposite end of the elevation are two chamfered quoined doorways with a taking-in door opening above that to the right. The rear elevation is only a single storey in height due to the rising land to the rear and is inset with round headed mullioned windows. The mistal range stands at right angles to the barn and has three chamfered, quoined doorways set beneath large stone lintels. The bottom section of the doorway to the right has been filled and converted to a window of 20th century character and two later windows have been added to the upper portion of the elevation. Standing at the southern end of the mistal range is a smaller stone building that was probably once the gate house to the hall. All the buildings in this group are now in residential use and are set amidst green and leafy gardens that make a positive contribution to the setting and character of the canal.

Issues

- ▶ The dilapidated farm buildings at Elam Grange. These important historic buildings are falling into a poor state of repair and need attention if further damage is to be prevented to their historic fabric.
- ▶ Painting and/or rendering of the stone elevations of some of the traditional buildings at Willowbank, High Cote and Leach Way.
- ▶ Loss of traditional window and door details to buildings on Leach Way, High Cote and Willowbank.
- ▶ Overgrown and overhanging vegetation alongside the towpath needs regularly cutting back.
- ▶ Dog fouling along the banks of the canal and side of the towpath.
- ▶ Rusting visually unattractive railings alongside Leach's Bridge.
- ▶ The towpath between Willowbank and Leach's Bridge is quite badly potholed, probably as a result of its use as access to Willowbank and Elam Grange.