

National Character Area 53 **South West Peak**

Summary

The South West Peak is an area of upland and associated foothills in the south-west part of the Pennines. It is bounded by the distinctly different character areas of the White Peak to the east and the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain to the west. To the north it blends into the rest of the Dark Peak and the Manchester Pennine Fringe. There are no major settlements within the area which extends between Whaley Bridge, and the outskirts of Macclesfield, Leek and Buxton. 2% of the area is urban and almost 6% is woodland. Over 65% of the area lies within the Peak District National Park.

Landscape and Settlement

- High-very high density of farmsteads in the landscape, a relatively low amount (in Staffordshire) being based in settlements - .3.4% of farmsteads in villages and 4.7% in hamlets.
- Very small and small to medium-scale (59.7 and 27.5% of mapped farmsteads in Staffordshire) farmsteads are predominant, relating to ancient patterns of enclosed fields.

Farmstead and Building Types

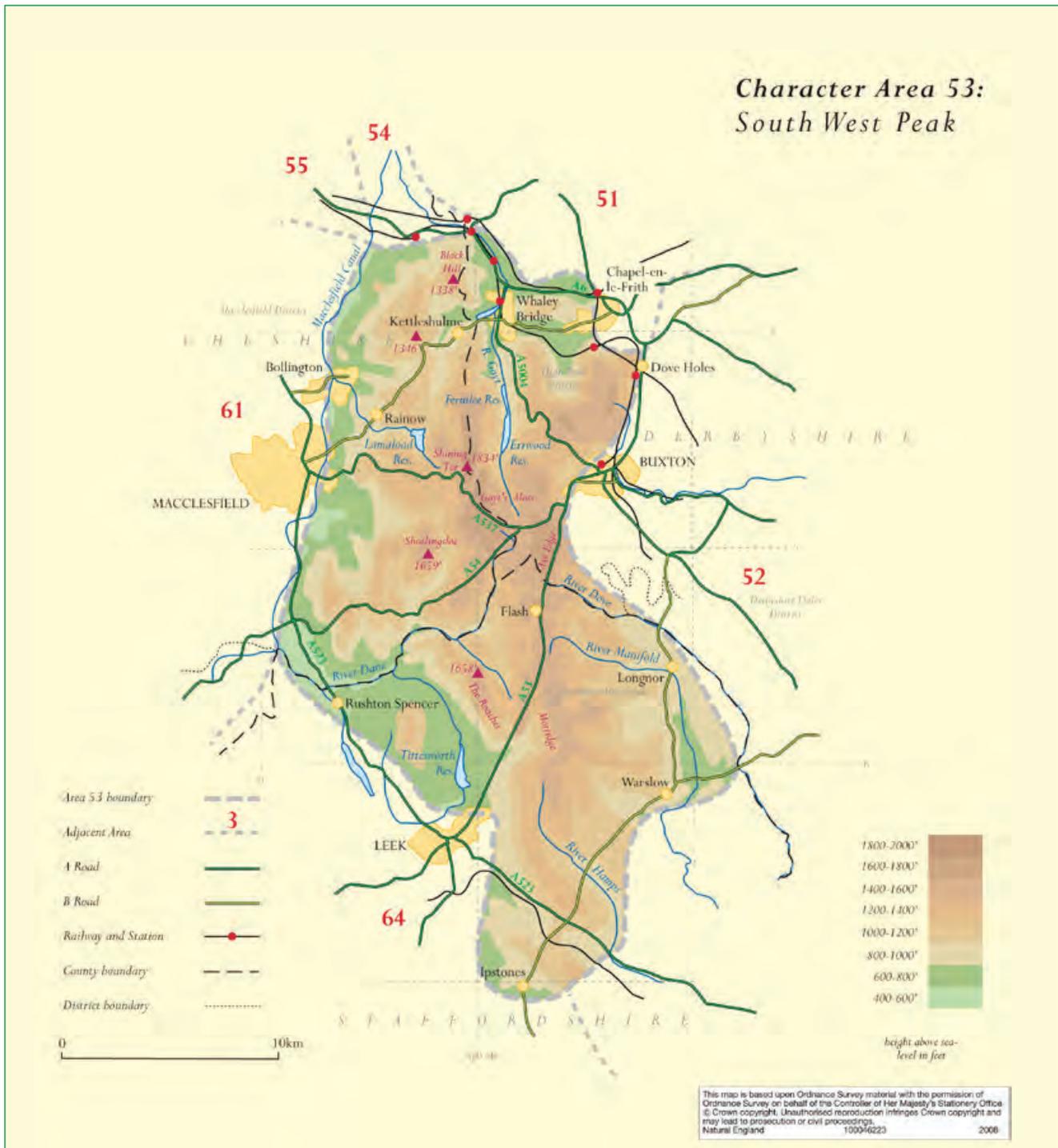
- Linear and L-plan ranges of farmhouse and working building attached in line including laithe houses and cottages with attached cow houses.
- Significant across the area are dispersed farmsteads, medium to small-scale loose courtyard farmsteads, with working buildings to one or two sides of the yard, and regular L-plans.
- Two-storey ranges with hay lofts over cow houses and stables.
- Occasional survival of earlier threshing barns.

Rarity and Significance

- Very high rates of survival of traditional farmsteads, with 86% recorded from late 19th century maps (in Staffordshire) retaining more than half of their historic footprint.
- The present predominant pattern of stone and slate farmsteads results mainly from rebuilding in the 19th century, although a higher proportion of buildings than in the White Peak have earlier cores.
- Some very rare examples of early cattle housing.

Drivers for Change

- 15-20% of listed working buildings have obvious signs of structural disrepair, and 20-30% with visible adaptive reuse.
- This area has a high proportion of recorded farmsteads remaining in agricultural use (45% in Staffordshire) with relatively high diversification of farm businesses (including holiday homes) but both relatively low residential use (51%) and relatively low participation in business.



1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

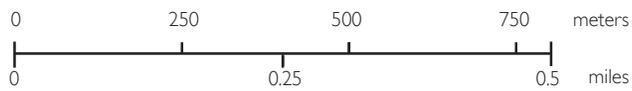
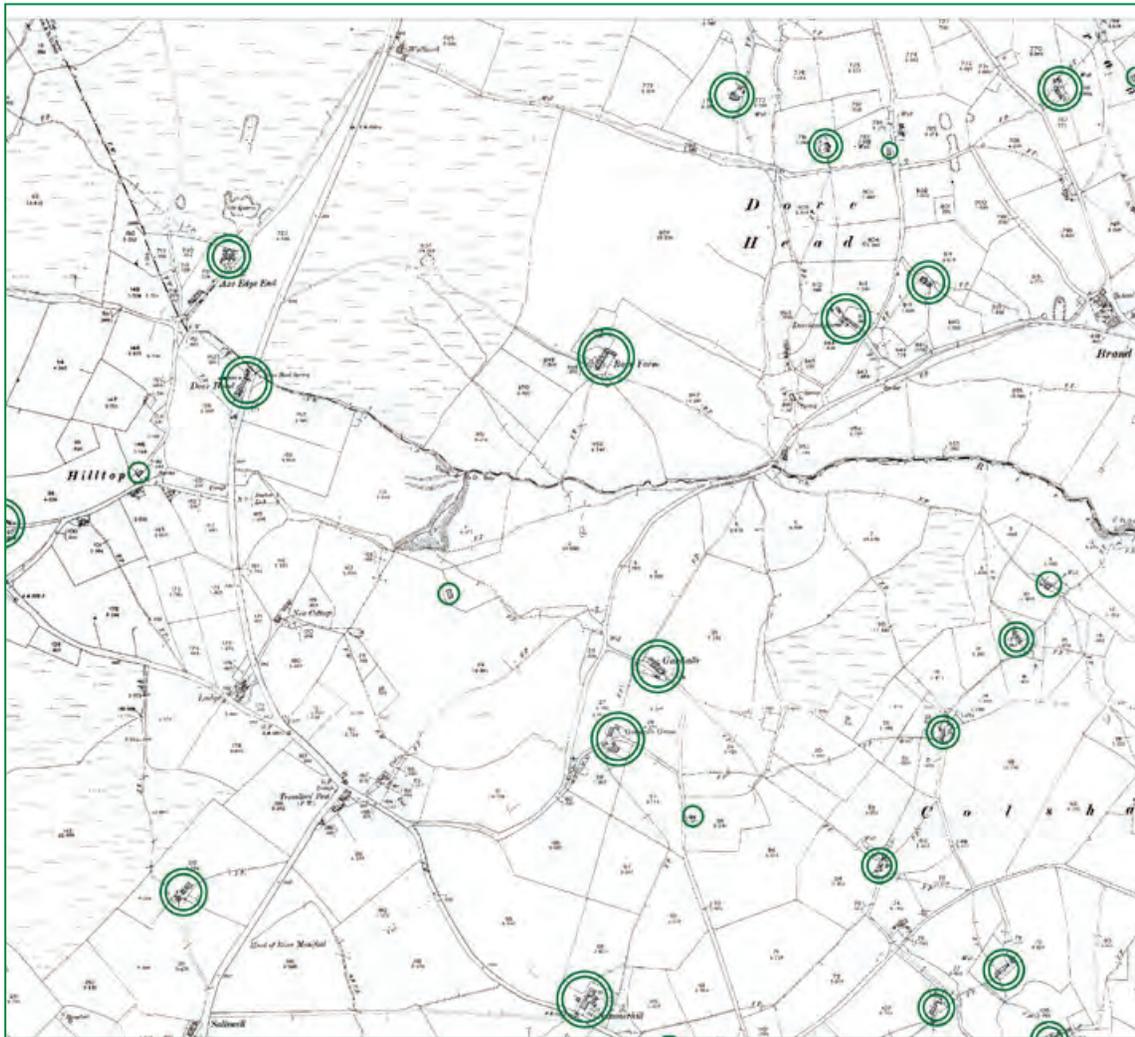
- Ecclesiastical and secular estates worked stock farms in the medieval period, and extensive areas were later managed by substantial landowners such as the Dukes of Devonshire, Lord Liverpool and the Earls of Derby.
- Sheep farming, with the wool market at Macclesfield, developed as a key element of the agricultural economy, combined with cattle rearing, dairying and small-scale arable farming. The area (like other parts of the south Pennines further north) exported to the urban and industrial markets of Lancashire, east Cheshire and the Potteries, and in the 18th and 19th centuries increased productivity was enabled by the enclosure of substantial areas of moorland that had formerly served as communal grazing.
- Coal mining, from the medieval period to the early 20th century, was concentrated in the Flash and Goldstitch Moss area: it was often combined with part-time farming.
- Copper was also worked from the medieval period, production peaking in later 18th century.

2 LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT

- Settlement pattern characterised by very high degree of dispersal. High density of isolated farmsteads which are isolated, in clusters or hamlets - the latter sometimes developing from medieval stock farms. Villages are concentrated on the limestone/gritstone divide.
- Predominant irregular and semi-regular enclosure pattern, the result of medieval-17th century woodland clearance and intakes from the moor. There is some evidence for oval enclosures to medieval and earlier ring-fenced farms.
- Regular and large-scale enclosures associated with late 18th/19th century enclosure of the open moor and common hill pasture, found in patches throughout but concentrated to the south of the area.
- Nucleated villages are concentrated to the south, where farmsteads expanded within villages or were built on new sites in newly-enclosed land.
- Evidence of medieval open field farming survives in small areas where later boundaries perpetuate the broad outline of the long cultivation strips associated with valley settlements.



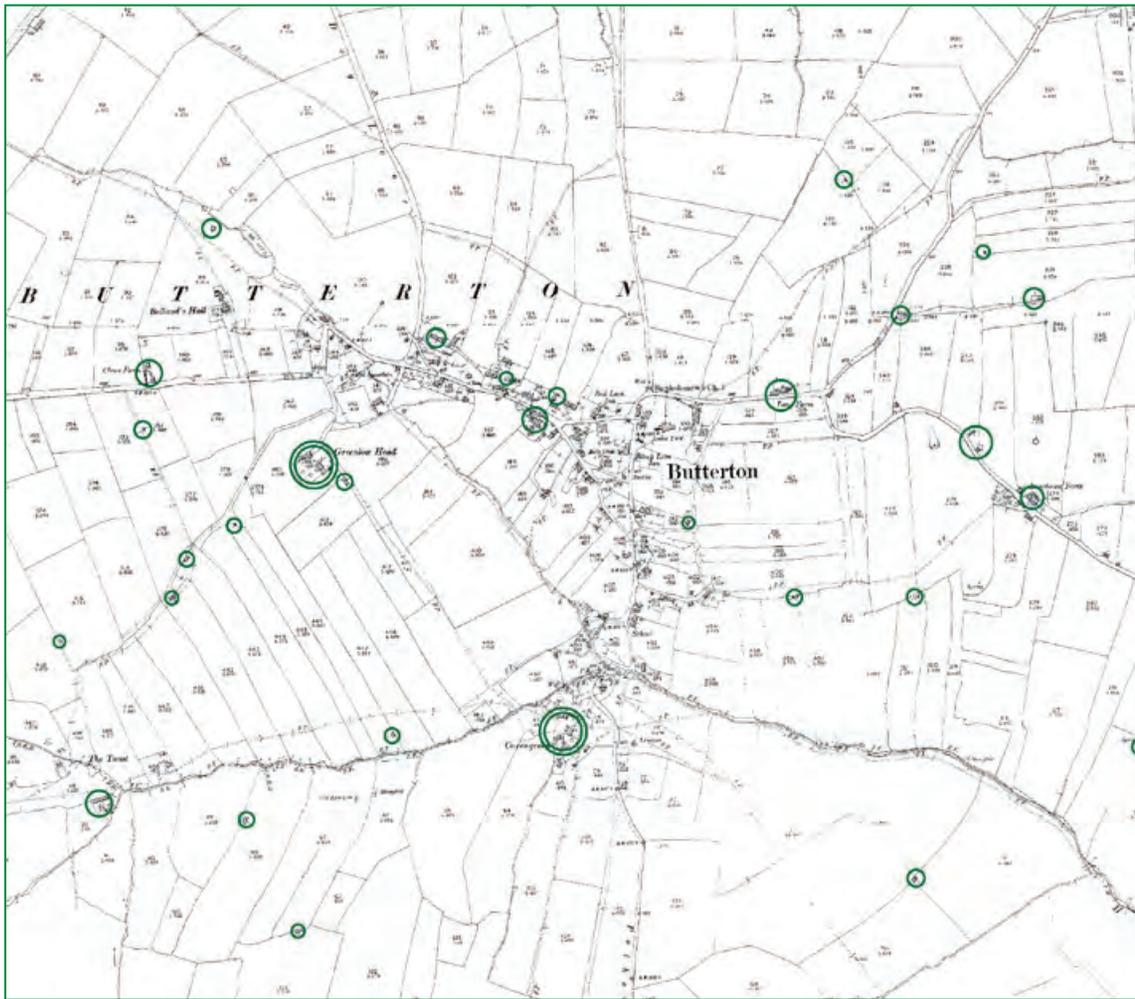
Moorland stands as a backdrop to a field barn and farmstead to the south of the area.



-  Farmstead
-  Outfarm

Dovehead

This reflects the largely dispersed settlement found across most of this area, with farmsteads and hamlets dating from the medieval period scattered across the landscape. In this area, settlement and fields have pushed out into the moorland and small areas of common, in tandem with a long process of piecemeal enclosure. This resulted in small irregular fields although some later enclosure may be identified by their straight boundaries. The farmsteads of this area are typically small in scale - many have linear and L-plans with the farmhouses attached to the working buildings or small loose courtyards. Field barns are also a feature of this landscape. Map based on OS 2nd Edition 25" map © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2005) Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024



-  Farmstead
-  Outfarm

Butterton

Butterton is a classic example of a nucleated village found in the south of this area. It is surrounded by the fossilized strips of its former open fields with more regular fields of enclosure from the common to the north-west. Apart from one or two farms, most of the farmsteads remained in the village core although by late 19th century the number of farms had dropped to five medium sized farmsteads and numerous field barns had been constructed within the enclosed fields. Map based on OS 2nd Edition 25" map © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2005) Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024

3 FARMSTEAD AND BUILDING TYPES

Medium density of pre-1750 farmstead buildings.

Farmstead Types

- Predominant pattern of linear farmsteads, some originating as medieval-16th century longhouses and others developing as parallel or L-shaped plans with later cow houses, cartsheds and stables.
- Some laithe houses incorporating combination barns with high, arched entrances to a barn (hay and corn) with stabling and a cow house (often for as little as six cattle) at the lower end.
- High numbers of small loose courtyard farmsteads with buildings to one or two sides of a yard, larger examples being uncommon.
- Dispersed clusters and, to a lesser degree, dispersed driftway plans are found across the area. These reflect their long development as sites for holding livestock en route to rough upland pastures and also into richer lowland areas for fattening.
- Regular plan farmsteads are, with the exception of L-plan layouts, almost entirely absent from the character area. This suggests little involvement by estates in the remodelling of farmsteads and their landscapes.

Building Types

- Some rare surviving three- or four-bay cruck-framed barns of 15th to 17th century date survive. These are part of a group extending southwards from the South Pennines, and which survive on smaller farms or in barns retained as small working buildings on larger farms.
- Combination barns dating from the 17th century, either with a wide range of functions (threshing barn, cow housing, stabling, hay lofts) or comprising threshing barns with full-height central threshing floor flanked by lofted bays for animal housing at either end and external openings for pitching hay. These include some bank barns, built into slopes, and which are concentrated in south-west and north-west England.
- Cow houses of 17th and 18th century date, including a small number with inscribed pre-1750 dates. These are typically two-storey ranges with lofts over cow houses.
- Field barns with hay lofts above cow stalling.



The relatively large scale of the farmhouse and combination barn, in comparison to the lower ancillary buildings of the steading, is typical of farmsteads in this area. Note the field barns to the rear.

4 BUILDING MATERIALS

- Gritstone is predominant traditional building material with some red sandstone which is concentrated to the west. Heavy stone lintels over windows and stone jambs to doorways are common.
- Brick becomes more common towards the west.
- Remnants of generally 16th century or earlier timber frame are very rare and almost all confined to houses. Some working buildings retain lintels and other timbers taken from earlier cruck-framed buildings.
- Stone slate (gritstone) roofs and plain tile or Welsh slate roofs of 19th century date. Staffordshire blue tiles particularly seen in the west of the area.



A loose courtyard group with ranges of two storey cattle housing and combination barns to two sides of the yard



This linear arrangement of a house with a small cowhouse is typical of many smallholdings in the area.



A storeyed cowhouse of the early to mid 19th century later extended with a single-storey range.



A large combination range, mainly cattle housing with a loft above but with full height crop storage in the end bay marked by the ventilation slits in the right gable end.



Steps to an upper floor granary and wool loft in the gable end of a combination barn.



The importance of hay for winter fodder is shown in this large-scale hay barn with stone piers.



Larger outfarms were also built on the plateau where large holdings developed in the late 18th and 19th centuries. This combination building faces into a yard and comprises a granary above a stable to the left, and a hay loft over cattle housing to the right.

This is one of the **Farmsteads Character Statements** for the National Character Areas. Further illustrated guidance on historic character and significance, under the same headings, is provided in the **West Midlands Farmsteads Character Statement**. They result from *The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project*, which has mapped the historic character and use of farmsteads across the region, and developed planning tools to inform future change. A *Summary Report* summarises the results of the whole project for the whole region and sets out policy and land use implications, and recommendations and next steps for further work.

The *Rarity and Significance* and *Drivers for Change* headings, and other elements of the main text, are based upon the mapping and interpretation of historic character. These records are stored in the relevant local authority *Historic Environment Record* and there is a *Historic Farmstead Characterisation Report* for each county and the Central Conurbation. These have been used as a baseline to determine the patterns of current use, as summarised for each area in the *Drivers for Change* section. There is a *Farmstead Use Report* for the region.

Also under the *Drivers for Change* heading are percentages of listed working farm buildings with visible structural failure and evidence of adaptive reuse. These are based on comparison of 1980s with 1999-2006 photographs, from the *Photo Image Survey* (University of Gloucestershire for English Heritage, 2009). In the West Midlands 27% of listed working farm buildings have evidence for residential reuse (national level 30%), 3% other (national 4%) and 70% (national 66%) have no other evidence for other use. 18.9% have evidence for structural failure (national 8.9%).

The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project is a collaborative project led by English Heritage with the county and metropolitan authorities. This document has been written by Jeremy Lake of English Heritage's Characterisation Team with assistance from Bob Edwards of Forum Heritage Services. All photographs are by English Heritage and Forum Heritage Services unless otherwise acknowledged.



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