

National Character Area 70 **Melbourne Parklands**

Summary

The Melbourne Parklands are a landscape of rolling farmland, parkland and woodland on the northern flanks of the ridge between Burton upon Trent and Swadlincote. The land slopes down to the River Trent, which borders the northern and western sides of the character area in a broad arc as it flows from Burton upon Trent to its confluence with the River Soar. This is a rural area, with 11% of the land classified as 'urban' and 6% as woodland. Settlement predominantly consists of nucleated villages where some historic farmsteads remain. The isolated farmsteads, set within generally large-scale fields, generally developed from the 17th century in association with piecemeal and regular enclosure of the open fields which extended across most of the landscape in the medieval period.

Landscape and Settlement

- Strong pattern of nucleated settlement, with (in Warwickshire) 16.7% of farmsteads in villages and 50% in hamlets.
- Very low density of farmsteads in the landscape.
- Large-scale farmsteads (66%) predominant, the smaller-scale farmsteads concentrated in settlements.

Farmstead and Building Types

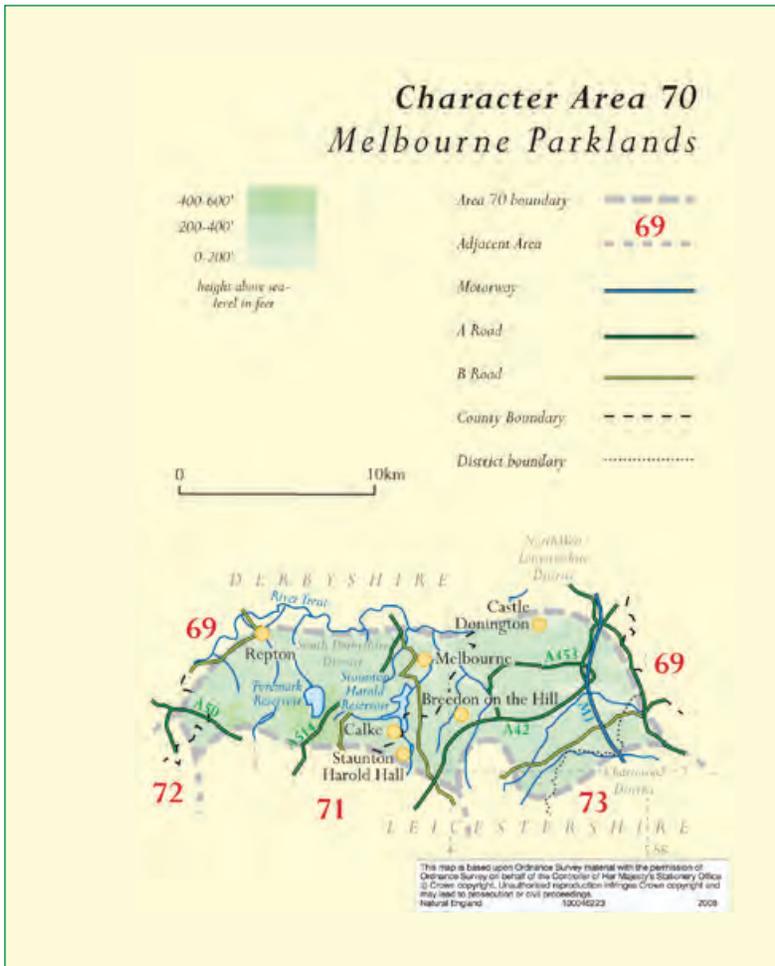
- Some older farmsteads within villages, typically of loose courtyard form with occasional survival of timber-framed barns.
- Isolated farmsteads, mostly medium-large-scale regular and loose courtyard plans with combination barns, associated with large-scale and mostly regular enclosure of medieval open fields.
- Designed farmsteads are a feature of this area, mostly relating to historic parks.

Rarity and Significance

- Low rates of survival of historic farmsteads recorded from late 19th century maps (in Staffordshire and Warwickshire), in part due to loss (50%) around settlements and to removal of working buildings (house only surviving in 16% of cases), with 16% of historic farmsteads retaining more than half of their historic footprint.
- In a national context there is a medium survival of pre-1750 farmstead buildings, mainly threshing barns clustered in settlements.

Drivers for Change

- 0.0-5% of listed working buildings have obvious signs of structural disrepair; and above 50% with visible adaptive reuse.

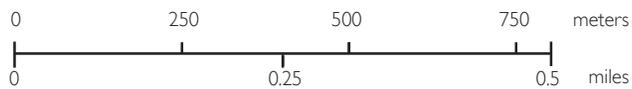
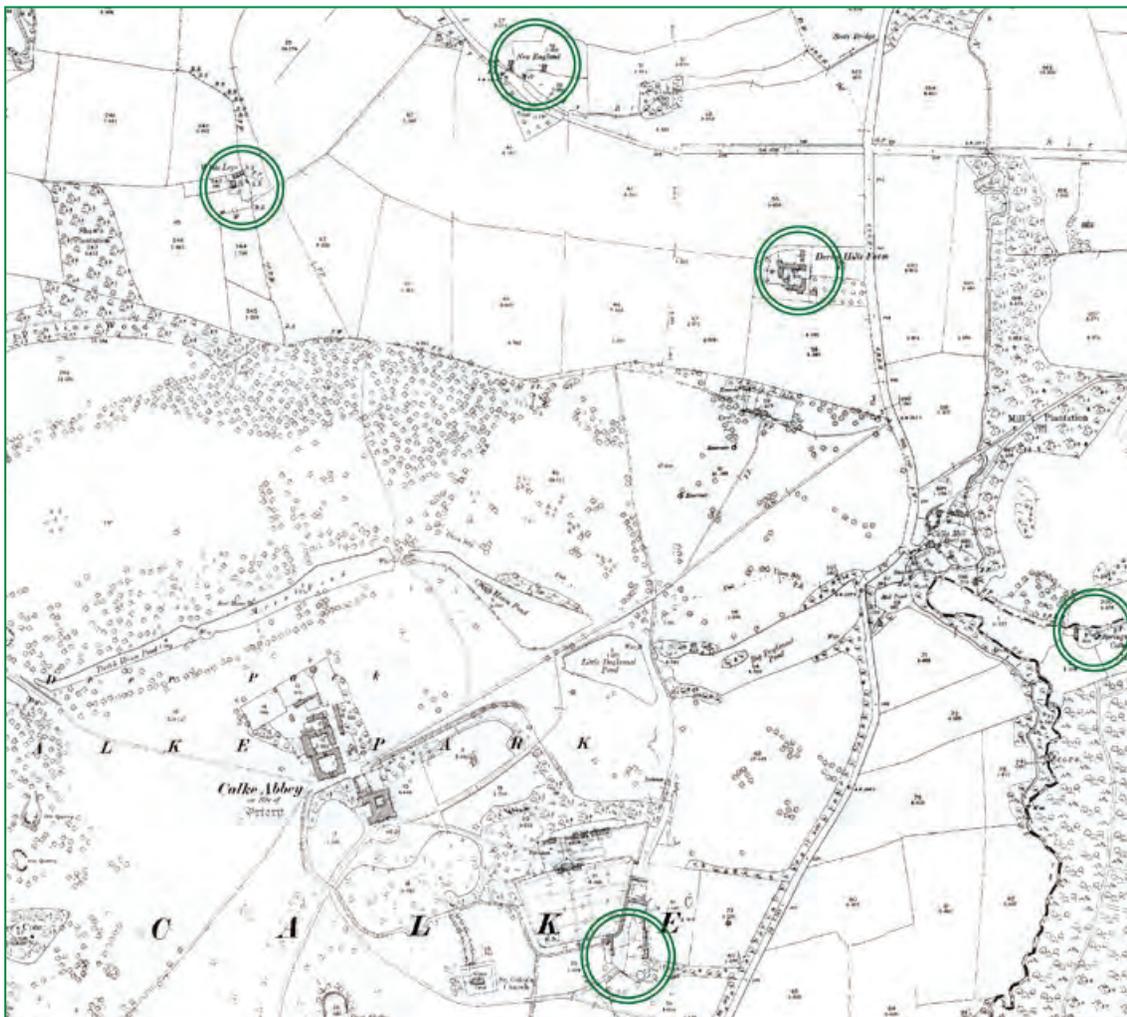


I HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Scattered evidence of prehistoric occupation followed by more extensive clearance and settlement in the Iron Age and Roman periods.
- The Anglo-Saxon period saw the development of major Mercian ecclesiastical centres at Repton and Breedon on the Hill, and the spread of smaller scattered settlements amidst the woodlands and heaths.
- Estates had a major influence on this area, from the establishment of monastic houses and secular estates by the 13th century, which controlled both farm land and deer parks. The dissolution of the monasteries (e.g. Calke Abbey) prompted the enlargement of estates and the elaboration of country houses and parkland which reached a peak in the 17th and 18th centuries. 19th estate architecture is a feature of many smaller villages.
- The area developed a strong mixed farming economy, dominated by corn production and the fattening of cattle on rich pastures.
- Some villages, including Repton, Melbourne and Castle Donington, expanded in the 18th-19th centuries as local market centres and latterly as commuter towns.

2 LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT

- Predominant pattern of nucleated settlement, established by the 11th century, surrounded by open fields and commons which extended across most of the farmland in the medieval period. Few farmsteads now remain in the villages.
- There are surviving areas – mostly in parkland and long used for pasture – of ridge and furrow (e.g. south of Repton and around Ticknall).
- Isolated farmsteads mostly relate to large-scale regular and semi-regular fields resulting from piecemeal and planned enclosure. There has often been substantial boundary change and removal in the 19th and 20th centuries. Fields are largest to the plateau areas, and more irregular and smaller in the valley sides (where earlier farmsteads are concentrated) and close to villages.



-  Farmstead
-  Outfarm

Calke Abbey
The Melbourne Parklands is an area where landscaped parks form an important part of the character of the landscape. Such estates usually had home farms within or on the edge of the park as well as farmsteads within the wider estate. However, these home farms tend not to be the large planned model farms that are often associated with large estates in some parts of the country. At Calke Abbey there were two farmstead groups associated with the park; a group north of the double courtyard plan house and stables with a threshing barn and cattle housing and the home farm of predominantly single storey cattle housing and stables to the east of the church. Beyond the park are the regular and piecemeal enclosure of former open fields and areas of common, associated with regular-plan farmsteads. There are also areas of irregular enclosure and small farmsteads in the valleys that cut across the area, often of loose courtyard or regular L-plan form. 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

- Parkland landscapes make a major contribution to the area, in some cases retaining elements of the boundaries of medieval deer parks.
- Ancient woodland survives only in fragments, the majority of the woodland character is instead dependent on later plantations, spinneys and copses set along the ridges and ornamental planting in parkland (specimen trees, avenues and trees in landscaped pasture).

3 FARMSTEAD AND BUILDING TYPES

In a national context there is a medium survival of pre-1750 farmstead buildings, mainly threshing barns typically found within settlements.

Farmstead Types

- Predominant pattern of medium-large scale regular courtyard farmsteads, mostly with multiple cattle yards.
- Large-scale loose courtyard plans, mostly with working buildings to three or four sides of the yard, are concentrated in valley sides and in villages.



This U-plan group originated as a loose courtyard plan. 17th century or earlier timber-framed buildings are linked by later buildings. Brick largely replaced timber-framing from the 18th century.

Building Types

- Most farmsteads were either rebuilt or relocated far beyond the villages in the early-mid 19th century, usually with combination barns serving cattle courts in regular layouts.
- Earlier buildings, mostly threshing barns, can be found in some settlements.
- Stables originally found on most farms.
- Shelter sheds for cattle.

4 BUILDING MATERIALS

- Red brick and plain clay tile (notably Staffordshire blues) are the predominant building materials for farmhouses and farm buildings, with some use of sandstone.
- Some rare survival of earlier timber-framed buildings including occasional examples of cruck framing.



A regular courtyard T-plan farmstead, still based in a village. Note the tall barn that projects from the cattle housing.



Examples of 17th century or earlier timber-framing can occasionally be seen in threshing barns and cow houses



Threshing barns were either replaced or converted to cow housing as arable reverted to pasture in the late 19th century. Here the threshing bay has been bricked up.



A small 18th century brick barn. The architectural treatment of this barn, with its coped gables at each end, is more typical of East than West Midlands traditional architecture.



Two-storey mid 19th century brick cow house.



A single storey stable, of a type increasingly built in the late 19th century.



An outfarm group with a combination barn and a foldyard.

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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