Farmstead and Landscape Statement

# Border Moors and Forests
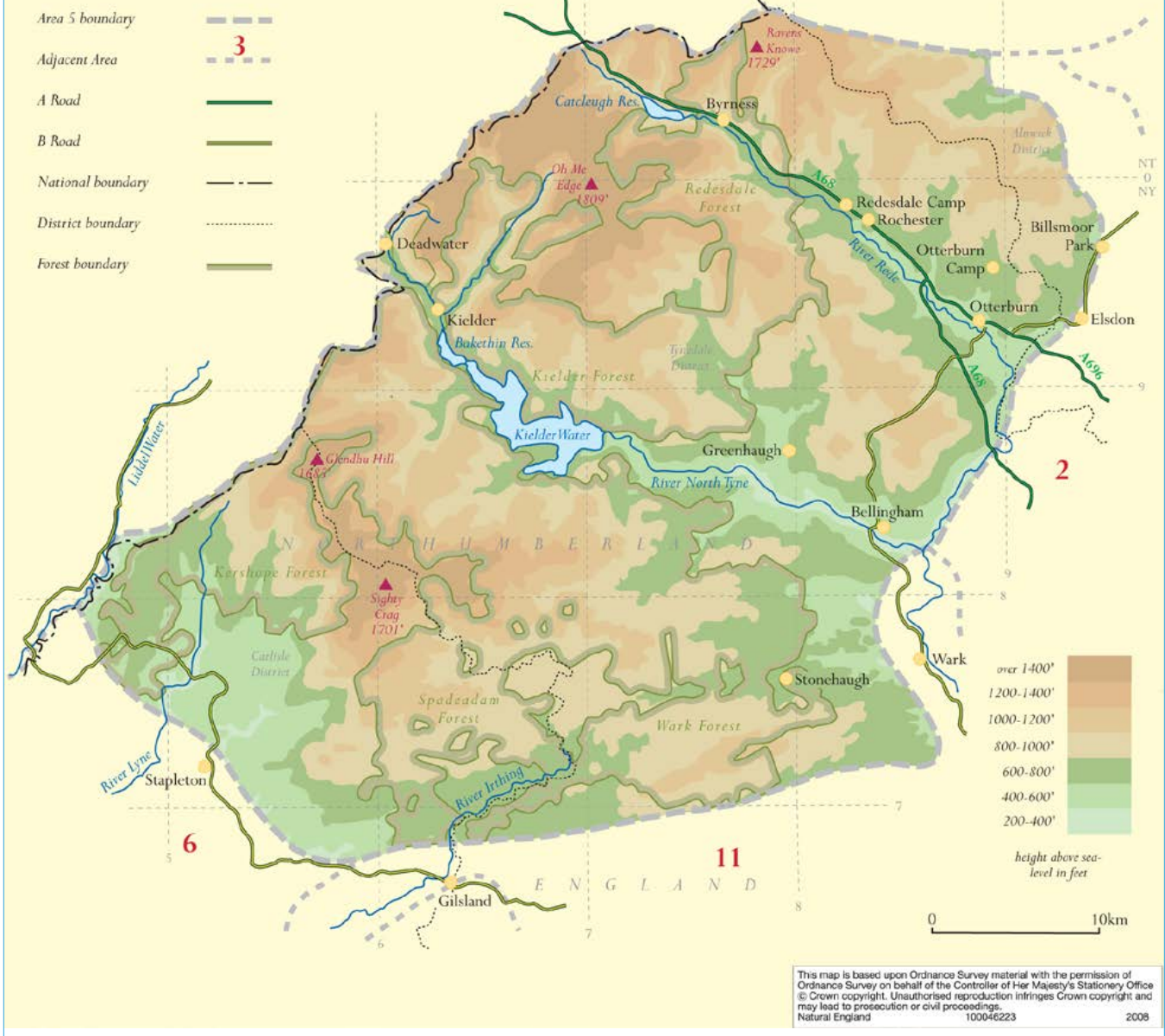
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 5

# Introduction

The Farmstead and Landscape Statements will help you to identify the historic character of traditional farmsteads and their buildings in all parts of England, and how they relate to their surrounding landscapes. They are now available for all of England's National Character Areas (NCAs), and should be read in conjunction with the NCA profiles which have been produced by Natural England using a wide range of environmental information (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles). Each Farmstead and Landscape Statement is supported by Historic England's advice on farm buildings (https://historicengland.org.uk/farmbuildings), which provides links to the *National Farmsteads Character Statement*, national guidance on **Farm Building Types** and a fully-sourced summary in the *Historic Farmsteads: Preliminary Character Statements*. It also forms part of additional research on historic landscapes, including the mapping of farmsteads in some parts of England (see https://historicengland.org.uk/characterisation).



The hamlet of Gatehouse, comprising a cluster of farmhouses derived from bastles with 19th-century combination barns, set within fields with straight field boundaries and planted woodland dating from reorganisation of the surrounding farmland in the same period. There are traces of rig systems around the hamlet. Photo © Historic England 28562/034

**Front cover:** This landscape exhibits many of the key features of this area: coniferous plantations on the high ground, and late 18th- and 19th-century enclosure with straight, thorn hedgerows overlying an earlier landscape with the remnants of earlier ridge and furrow. In the foreground is poorly-drained, low-lying land, overlooked by a small-scale, loose courtyard farmstead with an outbuilding visible to one side of the yard to its rear; behind it are the ruins of an 18th-century, linear farmstead and on the edge of the plantations – and of the historic moorland – another linear farmstead. Photo © Jen Deadman

## Character Area 5: Border Moors and Forests

**Legend:**
- Area 5 boundary
- Adjacent Area — 3
- A Road
- B Road
- National boundary
- District boundary
- Forest boundary

**Height above sea-level in feet:**
- over 1400'
- 1200-1400'
- 1000-1200'
- 800-1000'
- 600-800'
- 400-600'
- 200-400'

0 ———— 10km

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Natural England          100046223          2008

This map shows the Border Moors and Forests, with the numbers of neighbouring National Character Areas around it.

# Summary

See the National Farmsteads Character Statement for a short introduction to the headings below, including maps and tables.

This extensive upland plateau, dominated by coniferous woodland, is located in the English-Scottish border country and is centred on Kielder Water. To the south-west it drops down to the Solway Basin and to the south it is defined by the Whin Sill scarps, running along the Tyne Gap. To the east are the sandstone hills of Northumberland. There is no urban area, but an unusually high woodland cover of 43%. Of this area, 39% (the eastern part) lies in the Northumberland National Park.

## Historic character

- Dispersed settlement of isolated farmsteads and hamlets, intermixed with small villages, is predominant. Farmsteads mostly relate to medieval and post-medieval enclosure – mostly by dry stone walls - of moorland, woodland and to a lesser extent arable land which was usually divided into strips. Regular enclosure frequently overlies these earlier patterns. Areas of wholly regular enclosure mostly relate to moorland that was newly enclosed in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

- This time-depth in the landscape is further strengthened by evidence everywhere for medieval, arable land use and settlement with ridge and furrow and the evidence for shrunken settlement.

- The area has a relatively high density of bastle houses which are dispersed across the landscape, either abandoned or absorbed into larger farmsteads.

- Farmsteads mostly comprise linear and L-shaped courtyard plan forms, with larger fields and regular courtyard farmsteads developing on some of the arable estate lands.

## Significance

- There is exceptionally high survival of traditional farmsteads within a landscape which retains a clear legacy of medieval and post-medieval dispersed settlement and which also retains visible evidence for land use and settlement from the medieval period and earlier.

- Bastles are the main surviving early farmstead type, and because of the historic development, combined with the dispersed settlement character, they are particularly numerous in this area. The yards and surrounding boundaries – dry stone walls often representing the rebuilding or realignment of turf boundaries – have high archaeological potential.

- Some linear farmsteads, and in particular those where the domestic and working elements are internally connected, represent a significant and final phase of farmsteads derived from the longhouse tradition.

- Working buildings with 18th-century and earlier fabric are of exceptional rarity.

## Present and future issues

- The rate of redundancy for traditional farm buildings has accelerated in recent years, as in other upland and upland fringe areas of England, due to the replacement of stalling by loose housing and the replacement of hay production by mechanised bulk handling.

- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a low proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (5.9%, the national average being 32%). The project also observed that an above-average percentage (14.3%, the national average being 7.5%) have been noted as showing obvious signs of structural disrepair.
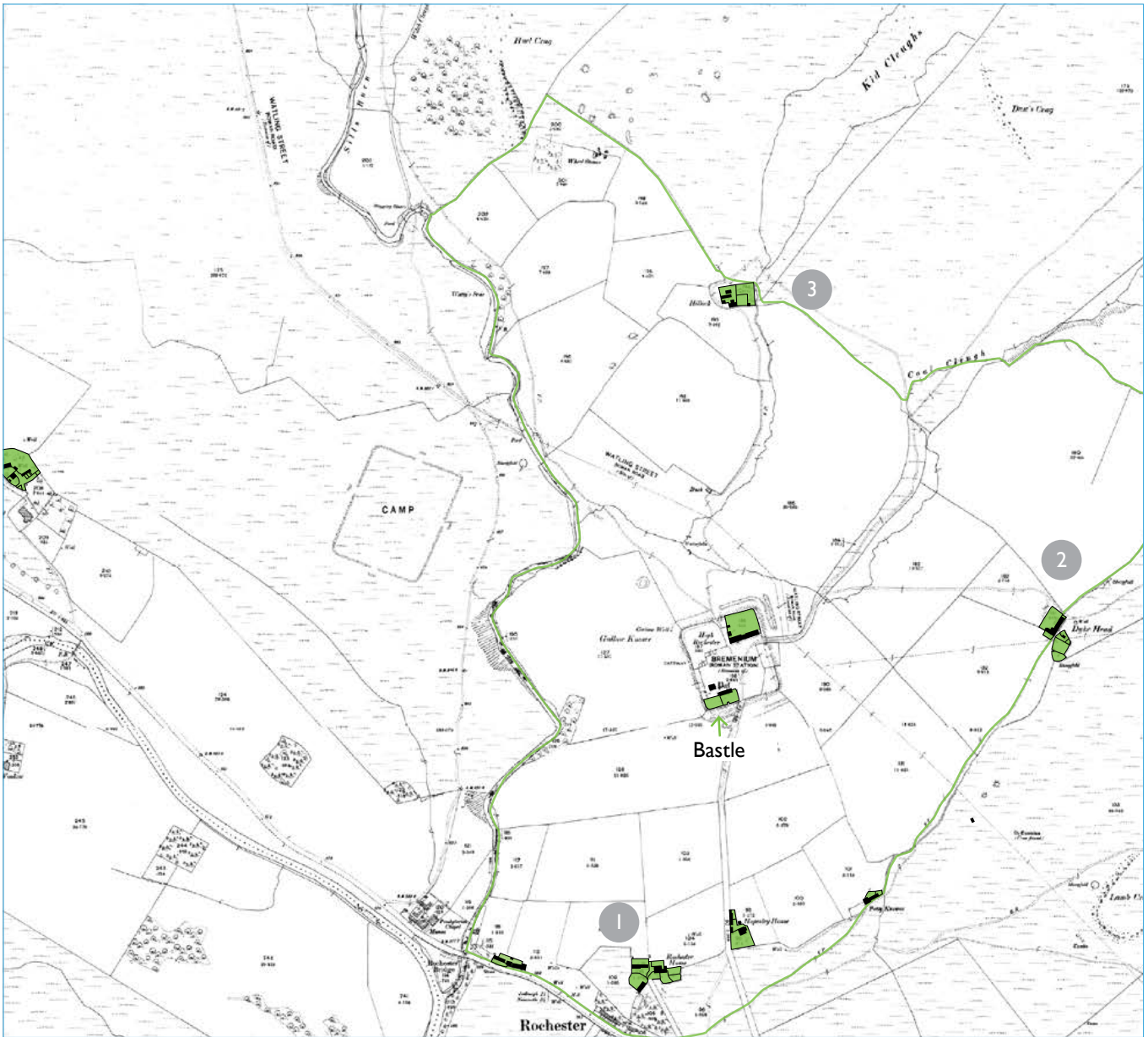
# Historic development

- The area has a long history of pastoral agriculture. Farmers have historically benefitted from access to extensive areas of upland grazing. The main period of arable cultivation, in the 12th to 14th centuries, was followed by pastoral mixed farming with an emphasis on the rearing of cattle and sheep for their meat and wool. Arable was concentrated in the broader dales.

- The moors were used for hunting, in the medieval period. Upper Redesdale was exploited by estates (particularly the Umfravilles) as stock farms for cattle and sheep. Ancient tracks over the moors were used into the 19th century, for the droving of cattle from Scotland.

- The part adjacent to the Scottish Border was known as the 'Debateable Lands'. During the period of border warfare and weakened lordship between the 14th and early 17th centuries, groups of small farms were held by farming families in return for military service. Kinship-based groups developed to provide mutual protection in the face of Scottish raids and were also associated with the reiving clans which were also the cause of much instability into the 17th century. Although there is evidence for depopulation in this period, there are also indications that (at least in Upper Tynedale and Redesdale) the relaxation of lordly control over the landscape enabled some colonisation by customary tenants of areas (for example Rochester and its surrounding farms) that had previously been hunting forest or stock farms. After the Union of the Crowns in 1603, and despite the continuance of relatively lawless conditions, farms were increasingly leased to individuals for monetary rent, and there was an increase in the cross-border droving trade in cattle, which benefitted local farmers.

- Defensible bastles which reflect these uncertain conditions, where the lower floor was used to house animals and the upper for domestic use, were most commonly built in the late 16th and 17th centuries. They are dispersed across upper Coquetdale, Redesdale and North Tynedale, in contrast to their sparser distribution in the village farmlands north of the Coquet (see Area 3: Cheviot Fringe). Some were built on a large scale, including as communal strongholds, and it can be difficult to distinguish between them. Towers and bastles might also be provided with a defensible yard, or barmkin, for protecting people and livestock in the event of a raid.
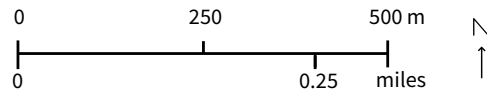
# Landscape and settlement

- The moors result from the clearance of the native upland forests by the late Iron Age to provide grazing land. They have for centuries been utilised by surrounding communities for summer grazing, with peat, heather and bracken cut for fuel, bedding, roofing and fodder.

- The well-preserved Roman road to the border runs through Redesdale, accompanied by perhaps the most important collection of marching camps in the Roman Empire. However, the recorded evidence for land use and settlement (in the form of hill forts, palisaded enclosures and enclosed farmsteads) continuing into the Roman and post-Roman period is sparse, relative to adjacent areas. These settlements probably continued in use until the 7th to 9th centuries.

- Summer grazing in the uplands from the prehistoric period has left patterns of small shieling settlements, some adopted for permanent settlement in later centuries. Some of these had developed into farmsteads by the 14th century.

- The present pattern of dispersed settlement comprising farmsteads and hamlets dates from the 12th century. These worked a mixture of extensive moorland for grazing and in-bye land (often protected by a stock-proof boundary, as with the Pennines and the Lake) for the production of hay and corn. The remains of medieval settlement and cultivation, visible in the landscape (house platforms, lynchets and ridge and furrow), provide a testament to the extent of arable cultivation prior to the contraction of settlement from the 14th century.

- There were no permanent farms in Upper Redesdale and Tynedale until the later 17th century. Many abandoned farmsteads and shielings were abandoned and re-established or newly founded from the 17th century (for example Catcleugh and Byreness Farms, established on former shieling sites in the Upper Rede Valley). Some individual farmsteads also result from the contraction of farming hamlets into farmsteads.

- Cross-ridge dykes, sheep stalls and other scattered enclosures reflect centuries of pastoral farming, especially following the expansion of the 17th and 18th centuries. The emphasis was on the rearing of cattle for export on the hoof, and holdings were rationalised as elsewhere (but later than in the Pennine dales and the Cumbrian Fells to the south and west) and valley-side fields for the summer grazing of cattle were commonly enclosed over the 17th and 18th centuries. Also over this period, many of the summer shieling grounds for grazing livestock had been subdivided into large farms.

- Upper Redesdale, north-west of Otterburn, had the largest farms. Some small villages such as Otterburn and Bellingham developed as manorial and market centres. The lower valleys of Redesdale and North Tyne in particular, demonstrate late 18th- and 19th-century agricultural improvement: large, regular fields of permanent and improved pasture, divided by walls and fences. There is in-bye in sheltered valleys.
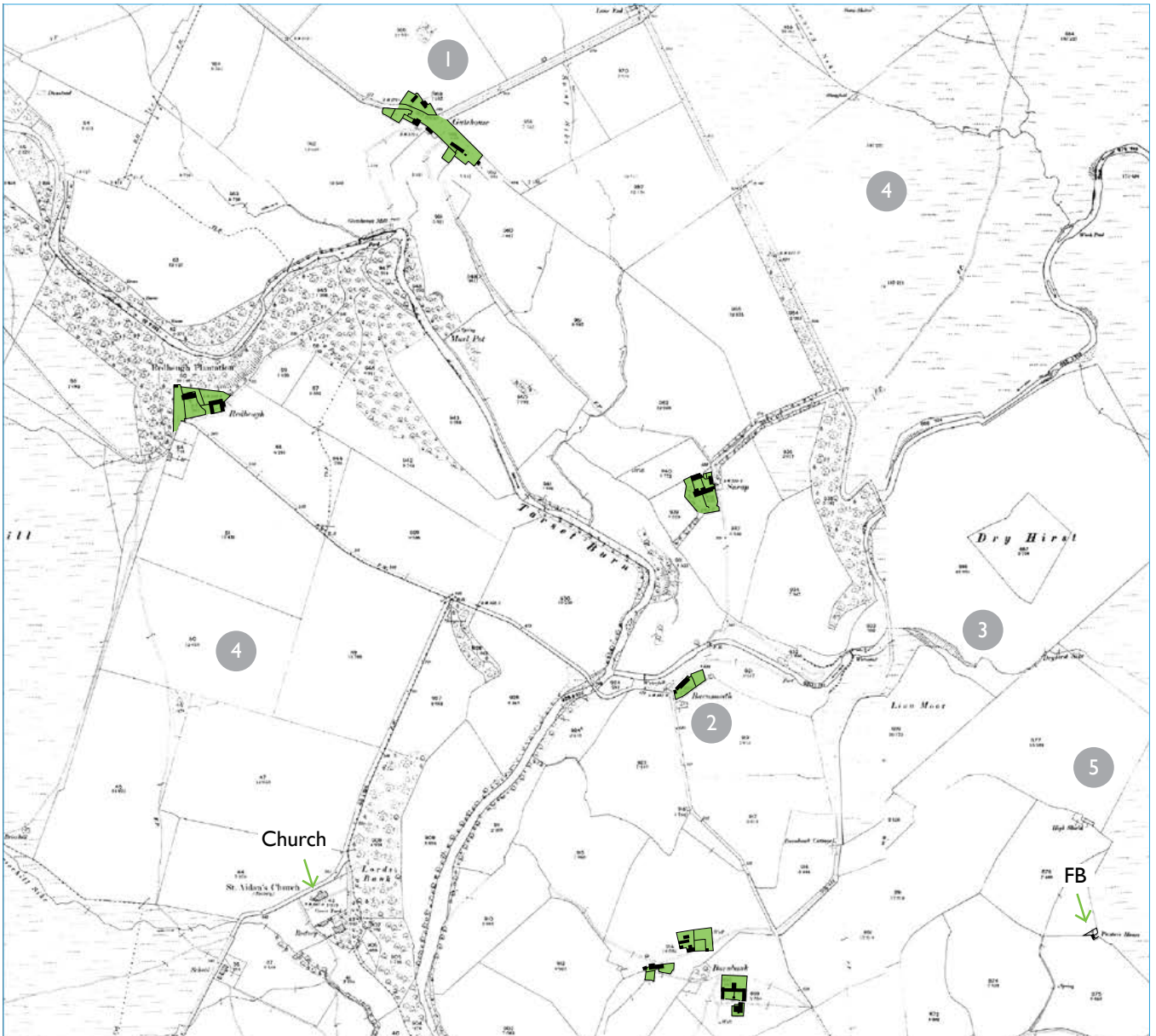
Bastle

Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.

0          250          500 m

0                    0.25          miles

N

## Rochester

This landscape has one of the most significant clusters of marching camps to have survived in the Roman Empire, centred around Watling Street. A bastle was established in the 16th or early 17th century within the first-century camp at Bremenium. Rochester (1) was on the edge of the main zone of settlement in the medieval period. The cattle farms owned by the Umfraville feudal lords were leased out by the 15th century, but Scottish raids meant that colonisation by farmsteads and hamlets was short-lived until the 17th century. Visible in the core of this map is a landscape of mostly irregular enclosure, around the edges of which are mostly linear farmsteads. Surviving fabric indicates that most of these date from the 18th century and earlier, the ancient boundary wall which separated this inner core of farmland (for corn and hay) from the open moor beyond being visible at Dale Head (2). Early, irregular enclosures are clearly visible at Rochester and Dale Head, whereas Hillock to the north had its farmyard replanned in the 19th century.

Maps are based on 2nd edition 25" Ordnance Survey maps, which show farmsteads after the last major phase in the building of traditional farmsteads in England. © Crown Copyright [and database rights] 2020. OS 100024900

Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.
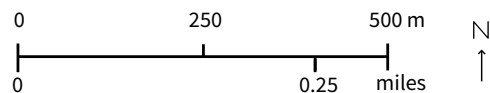
## Greenhaugh

At the core of this map is a landscape of dispersed settlement, mostly with linear and small-scale L-plan farmsteads set within irregular enclosed fields, established in the 17th century and earlier. Gatehouse (1) to the north, comprises a settlement of four or five bastles, to the south-west of which is a deserted medieval settlement. There are other bastles at Redheugh to its south-west and at Burnmouth (2), to the west of which is a deserted medieval settlement. The ruined farmstead (3) to the east was established as a permanent settlement by the 15th century on the site of an earlier, summer-seasonal settlement (shieling). To the south is a cluster of three farmsteads, one of these rebuilt as a regular U-shaped yard for the rearing and fattening of cattle in the mid-19th century. The regular enclosures (4) to the north-east and south-west, indicate that these moorlands were taken in for agriculture in the early 19th century, the unimproved moors being rich in the remains of medieval and earlier land use and settlement. The church and rectory (5) were built in 1818 for the Commissioners of Greenwich Hospital.

# Farmstead and building types

Despite the impact of 19th-century rebuilding across this area, it has retained a higher proportion of buildings with 18th-century and earlier origins than any other upland and upland fringe areas along the Anglo-Scottish Borders. These include bastles and the evidence for earlier, single-storey cores in farmhouses and, more rarely, working buildings. Isolated farmsteads and farm hamlets in the upper dales date from the later 17th and 18th centuries following the introduction of more secure conditions.

## Farmstead types

The key farmstead types that had developed up to the end of the 19th century, and that are still evident today, are:

- Defensible bastles, where the lower floor was used to house animals and the upper for domestic use, are more numerous than in neighbouring areas, reflecting the need on the part of farmers and estates to provide a measure of protection and reassurance in a landscape of dispersed settlement. They were most commonly built in the late 16th and 17th centuries. Their walls are typically a metre thick and the upper doorway, originally reached by an external ladder, is most frequently set towards the centre of one of the side elevations. Ladders were later replaced by a flight of stone steps. The living quarters of a bastle were heated by a fireplace set against one end wall – usually the opposite end to the byre entrance. Evidence for a timber firehood sometimes remains. A loft area above provided sleeping accommodation. Some were built on a larger scale as stronghouses, including for communal use, and it can be difficult to distinguish between them. Towers and bastles might also be provided with a defensible yard, or barmkin, for protecting people and livestock in the event of a raid.

- Linear and L-plan farmsteads with integral farmhouses, where the house and working buildings are attached and in-line, are mostly of late 18th- and 19th-century date, with some additional ranges and surrounding enclosures for sheep. In contrast to the Cheviots and Northumberland to the east, and in common with other upland and upland fringe areas of Cumbria, there is evidence for some of these linear farmsteads being heightened and extended into their present form. This suggests the existence of earlier generations of stone-built (possibly cruck-framed) buildings which were substantial enough to be adapted. Archaeological and documentary evidence suggests that these (and longhouses where the domestic ends and byres for cattle were interconnected and shared the same entrance) were common across this area and much of Northumberland, prior to the 18th century.

- Small to medium-scale courtyard plans, where the working buildings are usually arranged around one yard for cattle, reflect the increase in the upkeep and overwintering of cattle in the later 18th and 19th centuries. They are mostly loose courtyard groups with a working building to one side of the yard and regular courtyard groups that comprise single-storey, L- and U-shaped multifunctional ranges.

- Larger courtyard steadings are rare and associated with arable exploitation of land on great estates and more fertile soils, in lower valleys of Redesdale and North Tyne in particular.

# Building types

Single-storey houses are a characteristic feature.

Building types mainly comprise:

- Single-storey and storeyed multifunctional ranges (combination barns) with cattle housing (this being especially dominant), stabling, cart sheds, lofts for storing hay and wool and sometimes a threshing barn.

- Large threshing barns, some with attached wheel houses (locally termed horse gins) for powering threshing machines, are rare in this area. They were built adjacent to the barn in which the threshing machine and other fodder-processing machinery was housed, and are usually connected to other ranges in the yard – most commonly a straw barn with easy access to the cattle yard and a granary above a cart shed or cattle housing.

- Ranges for cattle include enclosed cow houses and (in the east of the area) hemmels: a form of open-fronted shed for fatstock, particular to north-east England.

- Minor buildings include calf houses and occasional pigsties, the latter often as lean-tos with external feeding troughs.

- Hay barns were either built in stone or provided as examples of iron-framed 'Dutch barns' in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

- Cart and implement sheds are typically small in scale (one bay to a farmstead, typically in a multifunctional range), which, combined with the small size of stables, also testifies to the importance of pastoral farming in this area.

- Field barns, mostly built for the overwintering of cattle and the storage of hay, are rare in this area compared to the Lakes and the Pennines to the south.

- Buildings for sheep can be difficult to detect as they can resemble shelter sheds or cow houses but have lower eaves. There are very few recorded examples. Sheep husbandry rarely required buildings, but required sheep washes and areas for collecting and sorting them which were often located close to the farmstead. Sheep pens are scattered across the moorlands, testifying to the importance of sheep to the agricultural economy.



This large farmstead at Bewcastle is set close to the medieval castle and church, the former built for the defence of the English border in the 12th century and slighted after the Civil War. It is an exceptionally large farmstead for this area, with large, interlinked ranges set around several yards. It is surrounded by evidence, in the form of house platforms, lynchets and ridge and furrow, for the medieval village and arable fields which preceded its shrinkage into an individual farmstead over the 18th century. Photo © Jen Deadman

Bastles in the landscape at Low Leam, north of Bewcastle. This landscape was reorganised with regular fields in the 19th century, when the farmstead to the right developed into a courtyard complex around an earlier bastle. It is not known when the bastle to the left was abandoned, but it may have continued to serve as a field barn for cattle or sheep. © Jen Deadman



This farmstead in upper North Tynedale displays the contribution of 19th-century, agricultural improvement to the character of this area. Plantations and regular enclosures provide the backdrop to the farmstead, which has a mid-19th-century house looking towards the North Tyne and farmland along it, much of this land being drained to encourage the growth of corn and hay. The working buildings display the influence of Northumberland farmstead architecture of this period. They are interlinked to form a regular L-plan range, including a cart shed, threshing barn and granary (with external steps). This large farm was well-placed to further expand from the 1950s, as can be seen to the right. Photo © Jeremy Lake

Bastles. Black Midden is an isolated, 15th- or 16th-century bastle set in an elevated position above Tarset Burn, east of Kielder Forest. The byre entrance, square headed with a narrow chamfer to the lintel, is set in the east gable. The entrance on the front elevation is secondary. The domestic area at first floor level is reached by an external stone stair on the front elevation. The doorway is square headed, with narrow, continuous chamfer to lintel and jambs. Sockets under the lintel are possibly for vertical bars. Sockets are evident for a harr hung door and a draw bar. Photo © Jen Deadman

The bases of three sets of roof trusses, possibly of cruck construction, remain. They spring from below eaves level. Photo © Jen Deadman





Some of the more accessible bastles, as here to the north of Bellingham, were incorporated within farmsteads that were extended and remodelled as part of the 19th-century agricultural improvements across the area. The upper floor of this bastle was used as a granary, as part of a courtyard group set within a landscape transformed through regular enclosure. Photo © Jen Deadman

Linear plan. This single-storey, linear-plan farmstead to the south-west of the area, has an L-plan range of working buildings to the rear. It reflects a combination of Cumbrian influences in the rendering and treatment of the house, and Borders or Scottish architecture through its building as a single-storey range. The marginal nature of the poorly-drained landscape and the straight, thorn hedgerows of late enclosure are also evident. Photo © Jen Deadman

The stepped roofs of this linear range in Elsdon, comprising stables, cart shed with loft over, two cottages and farmhouse, is an arrangement commonplace to the east of this area and the North York Moors. Elsdon continued to thrive due to its position astride drove roads from Scotland.
Photo © Jen Deadman



This isolated, linear farmstead in Upper Redesdale, with a stable and then cattle housing, is located in a landscape of semi-improved pasture.
Photo © Jen Deadman



Another linear farmstead in Upper Redesdale, with cattle housing and a stable close to the house. This consists of a mid-19th-century rebuilding of an earlier range. Photo © Jen Deadman



Loose courtyard. This loose courtyard farmstead in Upper Redesdale is dominated by a two-storey, L-plan range, with additional cattle housing and a cart shed facing onto the track. The house faces away from the group. Photo © Jen Deadman



A regular L-plan range in Upper North Tynedale. A cow house attached to a storeyed combination barn. Visible to the left are steps to a first-floor granary above a stable to the left of hemmels for cattle: the threshing barn is sited further to the left. Photo © Jeremy Lake

Regular courtyard. This fine, late 18th-century, five-bay farmhouse faces away from a regular courtyard group of buildings, and is sited in a landscape of piecemeal, 18th-century and earlier enclosure in the south-west of the area. Large and formally-treated groups of this type are very rare in this area. Photo © Jen Deadman







Above and left: A regular courtyard farmstead protected by a shelter belt of sycamores close to Bewcastle. The house, rebuilt in the mid-19th century, with a symmetrical, three-bay front, originated as a single-storey 18th-century or earlier house. The buildings exhibit the requirements of the mixed farming that was practised where practicable in this period: a barn for storing hay and corn, single-storey cow houses, a stable and pigsty attached to the house and a small lean-to for geese. Photos © Jen Deadman



This regular U-shaped farmstead near to Gisland has single-storey cow houses flanking a storeyed combination barn. Photo © Jen Deadman

Combination barns. Combination barns of this large scale (above, left) with attached horse engine houses (above, right) are rare in this area. The threshing machine was located on the upper floor of the barn to the right, where ventilation was provided by slits in the stonework and also clay pipes were used for land drainage. Doors provide access to cattle housing below, and note also the raised walkway around the site of the midden or dungheap. This example dates from the peak of agricultural expansion and improvement in the 1840s to 1870s. Photo © Jen Deadman





Cow housing. The corner of a cattle yard, showing a granary above a hemmel for cattle and the distinctive, tall doorway to a stable in the angle of the two ranges to the left. Photo © Jen Deadman

Dutch barns. Large, iron-framed hay barns ('Dutch barns') were added to some farmsteads in this area in the decades around 1900. Photo © Jen Deadman



Field barns. This isolated field barn – in effect a shelter for cattle, with a walled yard – is located in an area of semi-improved pasture, now reverted to moorland, to the south-east of the area. It sits on and is surrounded by earlier earthworks and building platforms. Photo © Jen Deadman

Sheep creep. A 'sheep creep' to enable the movement of sheep through walls and between fields and moorland. Photo © Jen Deadman

## Materials and detail

- The area has seen extensive rebuilding of the rural building stock since the late 18th century. Sandstone, either rubble or dressed, is now the common building material, with sandstone roofing slates universal, some existing from the 17th century.

- The arrival of the railways in the mid-19th century made possible the cheap import of blue Welsh slate and saw the decline of earlier roofing traditions.

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