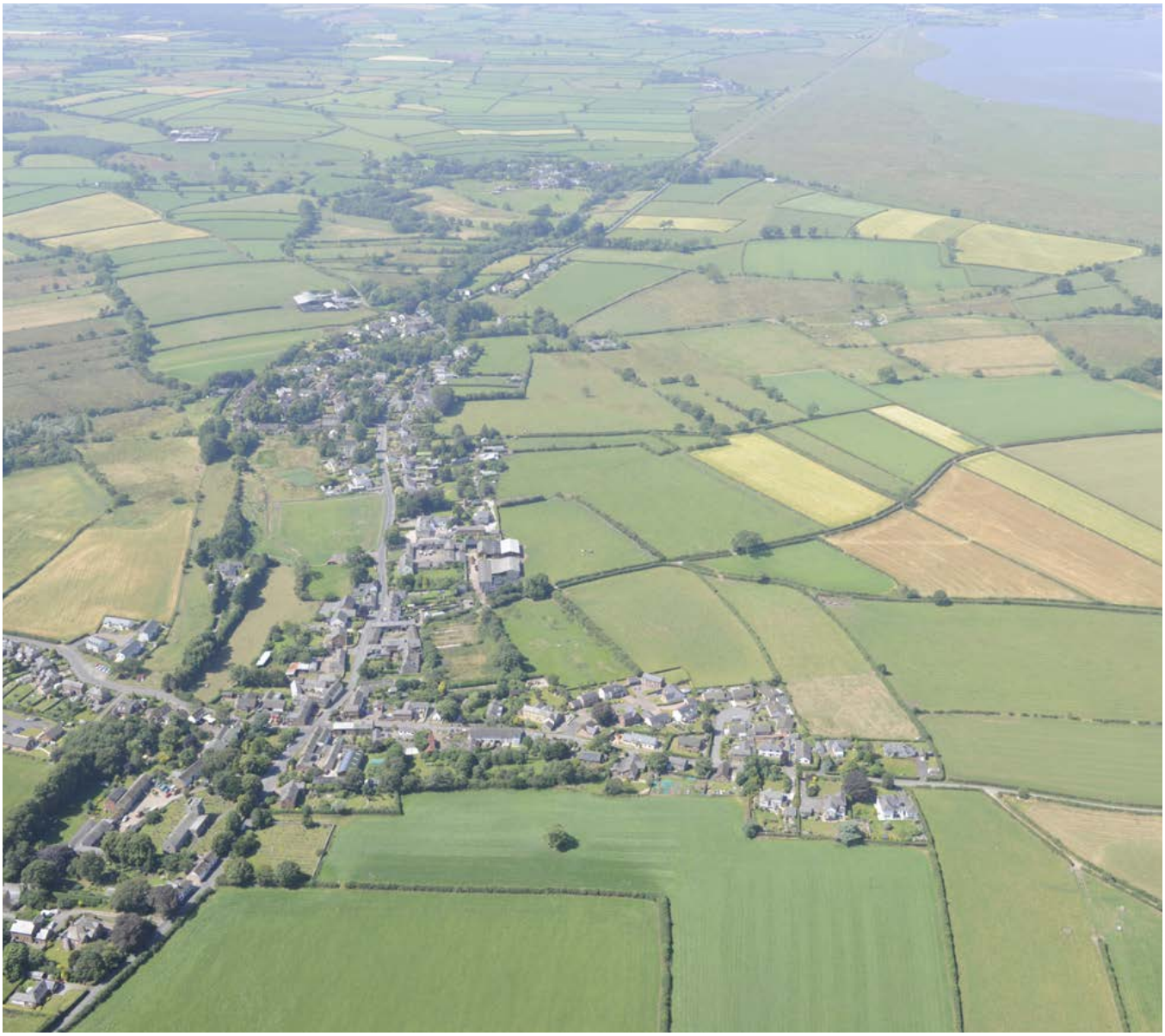
Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

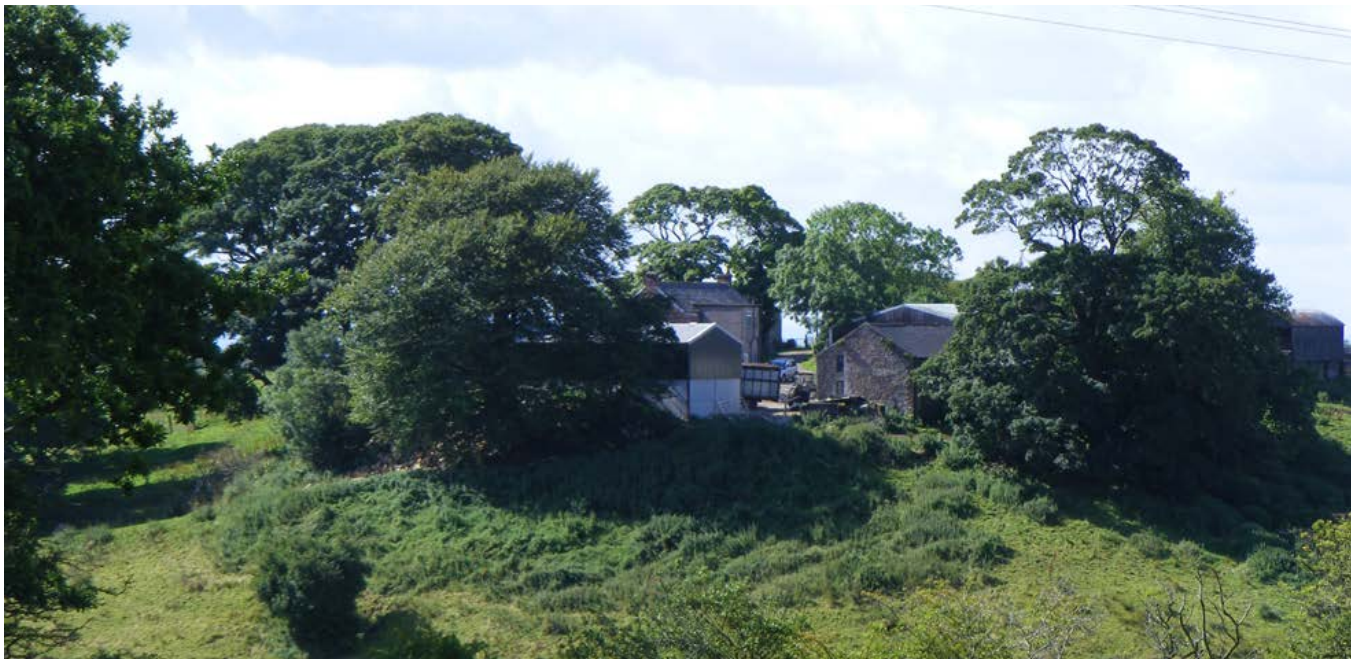
Solway Basin

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 6



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).



One of many small, hill-top farmsteads found in the north-east of the area, many of which as here, are of 17th-century and earlier origin and are set in irregular-shaped enclosures linked to early fields. Photo © Jen Deadman

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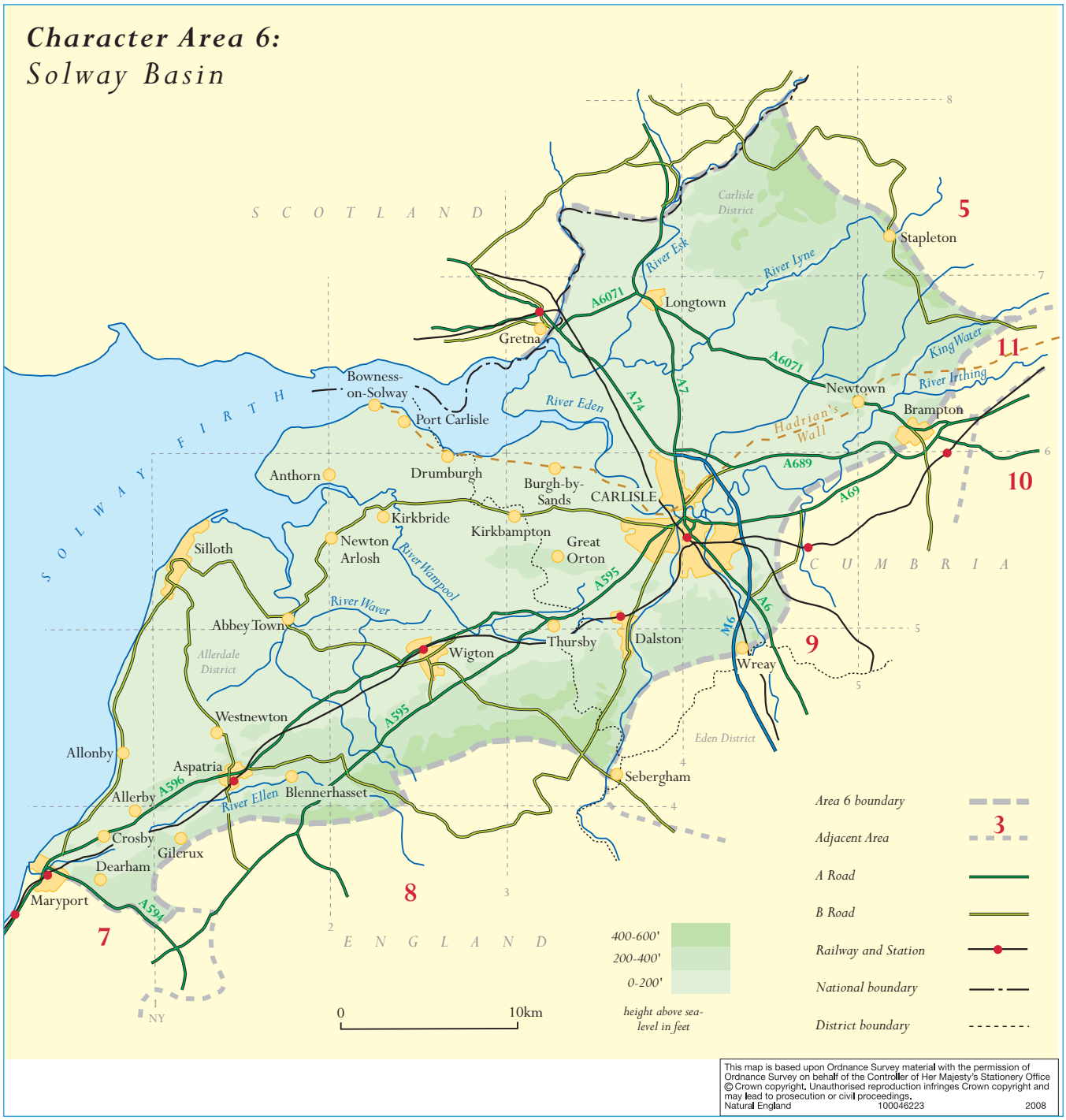
Front cover: Burgh-by-Sands, showing the Solway in the background. Photo © Historic England 28576/048



This map shows the Solway Basin, 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 area lies at the northern end of Cumbria on the coasts of the Solway Firth and extending inland to meet the Eden Valley and Cumbria High Fells.

This is a flat, open and largely managed pastoral landscape, with key features including raised beaches, mudflats and salt marshes. Around 3.2% of the area is urban, with the vast majority (83.5%) of the area being open, cultivated grassland. Only 4.6% of the area is woodland. Of the Character Area, 11.3% is designated as the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); 9% of the area is designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); 1% as National Nature Reserve (NNR) and just under 3% is common land.

Historic character

- This is an area marked by strong contrasts between the coastal and estuarine plain with its marshland and the upland fringe bordering the Cumbria High Fells (NCA 8) and to the north-east of Carlisle.
- Farmsteads that developed within hamlets and villages can relate to highly distinctive patterns of strip fields, in contrast to the regular enclosure of mosslands and common land that relate to most post-1750 farmsteads.
- The linear farmsteads which probably dominated this area prior to the 17th century were rebuilt in the early to mid-19th century as courtyard layouts with barns, granaries, cart sheds, stables and a wide variety of cattle housing. Combination barns developed as a distinctive building type, although the area has very few of the bank barns which are so commonly found in the Eden Valley and the Cumbria High Fells (NCAs 8 and 9).
- Large estates were active across the whole area, leaving a legacy of designed landscapes with plantations and planned courtyard farms.

Significance

- This area has a high survival of pre-1550 houses and farm buildings in a national context. Longhouses and barns dating from the medieval period are rare in a national context, some retaining cruck-frames and many being reroofed at a later date.
- This area also has one of the major concentrations of solid clay-walled buildings in England.
- There are some very fine examples of courtyard farmsteads built by estates and their tenants, demonstrating the application of agricultural improvement.

- Any surviving examples of internal machinery in engine houses are of exceptional rarity in a national context.

Present and future issues

- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a medium proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (25.7%, the national average being 32%).

Historic development

- This area was intensively settled in the late Iron Age and Roman period, by which time most of the woodland in this area had been cleared. Medieval settlement was strongly influenced by the Cistercian monks of Holme Cultram Abbey (founded 1150) who developed the area for wool production, introduced marshland drainage and sea defences and fostered salt-making and iron-ore mining in the coastal plain to the south (see West Cumbria Coastal Plain, NCA 7).

- Cross-border conflict and instability that lasted into the 16th century has provided a legacy of fortified buildings including tower houses. Some formed the basis for later great houses with extensive parklands and gardens such as those of the Buccleuch and Kirklinton Hall estates, whilst others – such as the barn at Brackenrigg (NY 231 613) – changed their function.

- Carlisle, the cathedral city with its Roman fortress, medieval castle and extensive Georgian architecture, is the principal centre, although smaller market towns developed across the area to serve the mainly agricultural economy.

- Historically, the pattern of agriculture was mixed, including along the upland fringe to the north-east. In the medieval period, arable cultivation was combined with wool production, extensive areas of mossland and commons which offered grazing for cattle and a rich source of peat in particular. The fattening of cattle brought down from Scotland intensified from the late 17th century and underpinned the prosperity of farming and a phase of rebuilding farmsteads in this area. The importance of droving routes was eclipsed by the development of the rail network. The railways (many now disused) also led to the expansion of the dairying trade (particularly the supply of liquid milk) and of the Victorian coastal resorts at Silloth, Drumburgh, Port Carlisle and Allonby.

- Cattle were grazed on roadside strips, and the extensive areas of mossland and common that survived until the last phase of enclosures from the late 18th century. This was associated with drainage and the extension of arable cultivation (particularly wheat), yields being boosted by farmyard manure and the introduction of rotations using turnips. 19th-century corn mills are scattered across the area, some associated with farmsteads. Dairying was concentrated on smaller farms, especially those close to railway lines, and some smaller upland-fringe farmsteads also specialised in the rearing of livestock.

Landscape and settlement

- From the medieval period, the rural settlement pattern developed around hamlets and villages. Arable land was farmed in small infield enclosures around each hamlet and in large (formerly common) fields shared between farms in the villages, which may retain evidence of long medieval strips up to 800m in length. These patterns of piecemeal

enclosure of 'infields', often relating to farmsteads which changed and expanded within settlements, are highly distinctive. Periodically cultivated 'outfields' were located between these 'infields' and the extensive areas of common land around them. There are smaller settlements associated with medieval enclosure landscapes in the Elten and Marrow valleys to the south.

- The patterns of piecemeal enclosure around these settlements, and also some early isolated farmsteads including shrunken settlements, contrast with the regular enclosure of the extensive mosslands and common land that often enveloped them. Most isolated farmsteads result from their establishment in this newly enclosed land between the late 18th and mid-19th centuries. Along the coastal plain these include farmsteads within land resulting from the drainage of foreshore mosses. Some farmsteads of 17th-century and earlier date are sited among much earlier enclosed land with sinuous and irregular boundaries, mostly found within river valleys and the former Inglewood Forest to the south of the area and close to extensive areas of former mossland, which retains evidence for peat-cutting, processing hemp (retting pits) and, in raised parts, prehistoric settlement.

- Field boundaries on the coastal plain are defined by drainage ditches, hedgerows and stone-faced hedgebanks called kests. Inland, planned regular fields are defined by hedges with some hedgerow trees, with dry stone walls being commonly used in upland fringe areas.

- Ancient woodland is concentrated in the river valleys, and across much of the area are mostly 19th century broadleaf and conifer plantations; the latter are more densely concentrated to the north-east of the area. .

Farmstead and building types

Like the Eden Valley and the Cumbria High Fells (NCAs 8 and 9), the evidence for the rebuilding of farmhouses in the late 17th and early 18th centuries marks a period of prosperity deriving from the cattle trade. It also – as across Cumbria and North Lancashire more generally – reflects the security of tenure of farmers. The area's clay-walled buildings, including the evidence for pre-1550 fabric in cruck-framed barns and houses, is highly significant in a national context. Estates had a stronger influence on the design and layout of post-1750 enclosure landscapes, and the predominance of late 18th- and 19th-century regular courtyard layouts also implies that estates encouraged the rebuilding of farmsteads to common standards.

Farmstead types

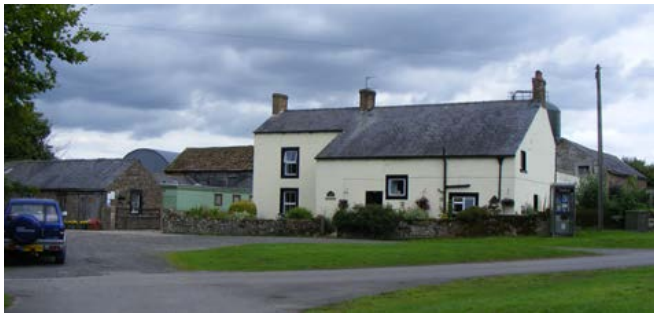
- Linear farmsteads date from the late medieval period to the 19th century, and are found across the area. Some of these are known to have originated as longhouses, which were probably a dominant type of farmstead in the medieval period. There is some potential within the north-east of the area for defensible bastles and bastle-type farmsteads, of the type commonly found in the Border Moors and Forests (NCA 5). Many farmsteads have retained a clear sense of their linear-plan origins, for example with houses and their attached working buildings facing into village greens whilst working buildings have continued to develop around yards on their rear plots. Village steadings are often enclosed by curtilage walls.

- Loose-courtyard plan farmsteads are most commonly found in upland fringe areas and – reflecting their piecemeal development within the constraints of existing plots – within villages. These include some the area's smallest farmsteads, which, apart from minor service buildings, may have a single combination barn facing the farmyard.

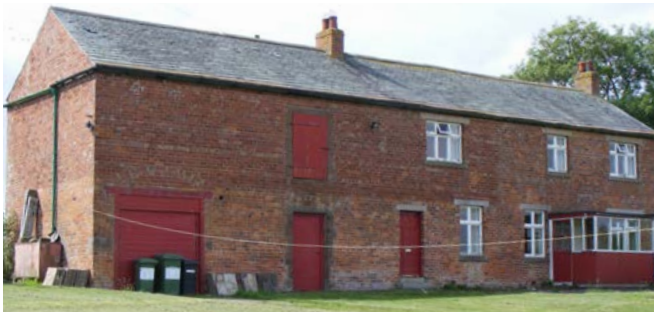
- Regular courtyard U-plan and L-plan farmsteads are common, with the farmhouses often being attached to them. The largest and most prestigious have the farmhouses facing away from working yards, and two or more cattle yards with houses and working buildings dating from the 17th century.

Building types

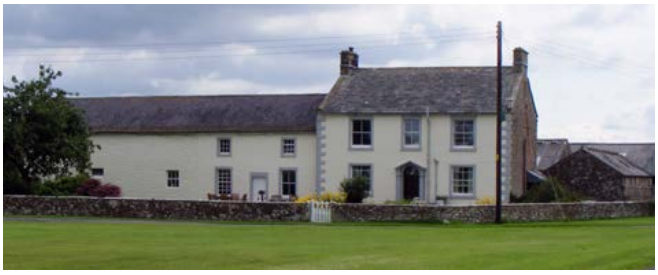
- There are some rare surviving cruck-framed threshing barns, some with evidence for a walled-off end bay for livestock.
- Single-storey and part-lofted combination barns are typically found with the threshing area flanked by cattle housing and stabling and often with additional cattle housing in projecting wings or outshots. These are typically the largest buildings on farmsteads, the largest reflecting the large size of some farms and importance of corn in this area. There are some bank barns of the type commonly found in the Eden Valley and the Cumbria High Fells (NCAs 8 and 9).
- Extensive cattle ranges, cow houses in particular, and cart sheds and stabling with granaries (often over stables or cart sheds), indicate the importance of arable farming and the fattening of stock.
- Hay barns have brick or stone piers. Some cow houses have stone or brick piers to open-fronted hay lofts, the overall appearance being superficially similar to the open-fronted linhays of the south-west peninsula.
- There are wheel houses for horse-powered threshing and fodder-processing machinery.
- Minor buildings include calf houses and pigsties, the latter often as lean-tos.



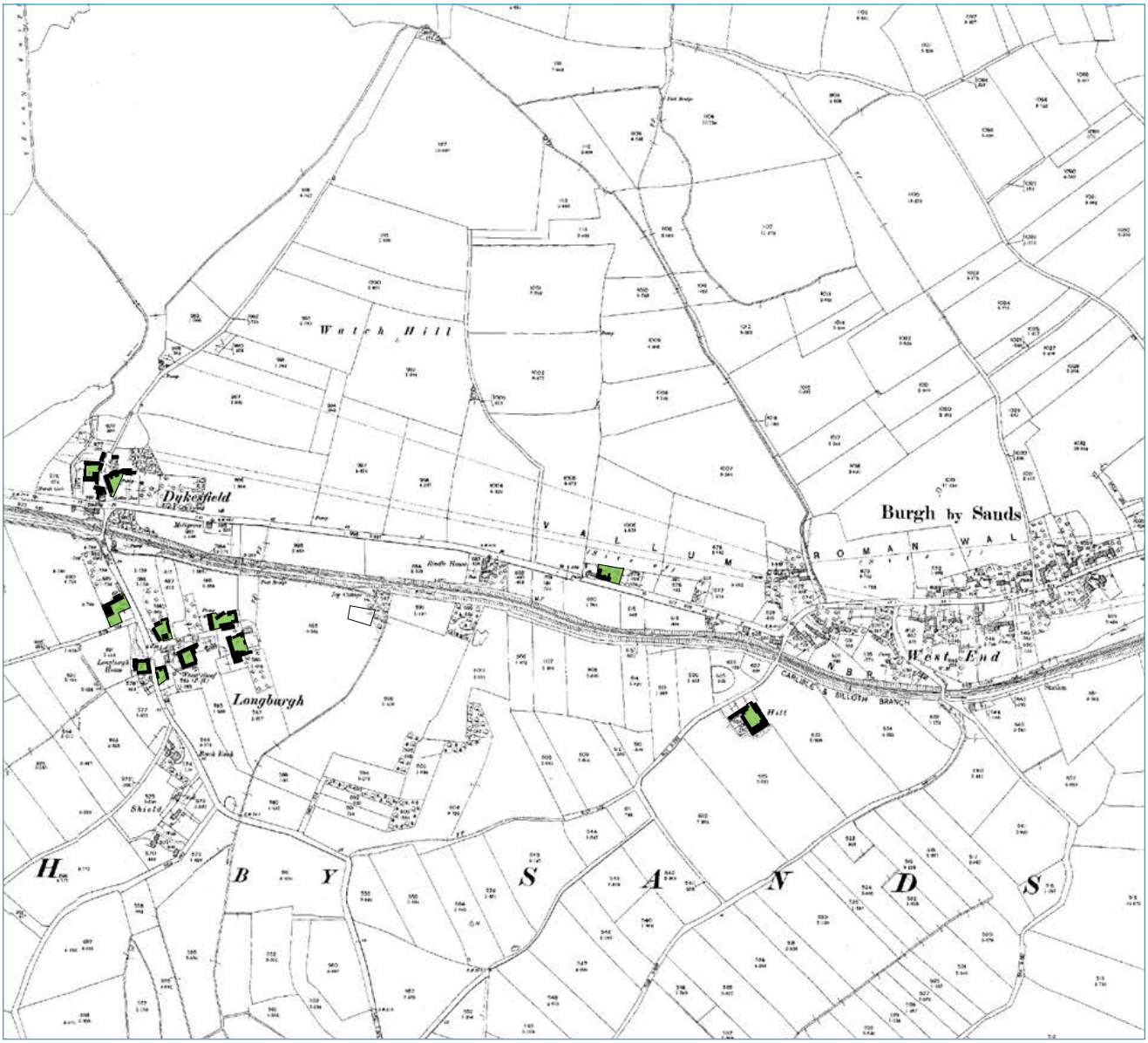
On the lower slopes towards the base of the hills – the eastern edge of the area – village greens are common. Here, the farmstead is set adjacent to the green and again the farmhouse faces into the yard. Photo © Jen Deadman



Mid-19th-century, brick-built linear farmstead, with threshing barn sited over a cart shed and cow house. Combination barns of this type generally provide areas for threshing, fodder storage and cattle housing. There is no internal connection between domestic and working ends. Photo © Jen Deadman



18th-century farmstead bordering a village green with the farmhouse – refronted in the mid-19th century, facing away from the yard. Domestic buildings are frequently rendered with dressings picked out in a different colour. Photo © Jen Deadman



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.

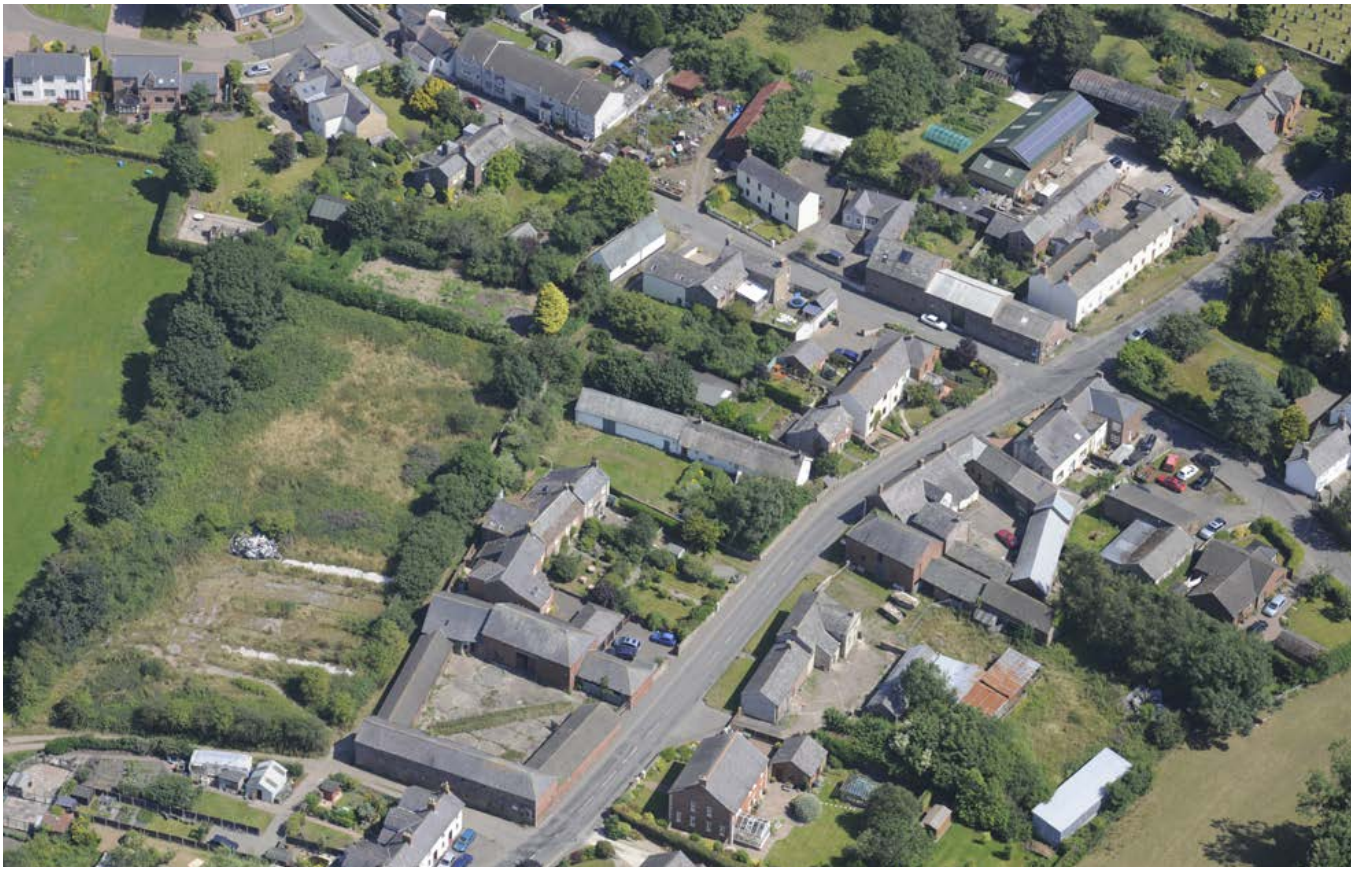
0 250 500 m

0 0.25 miles

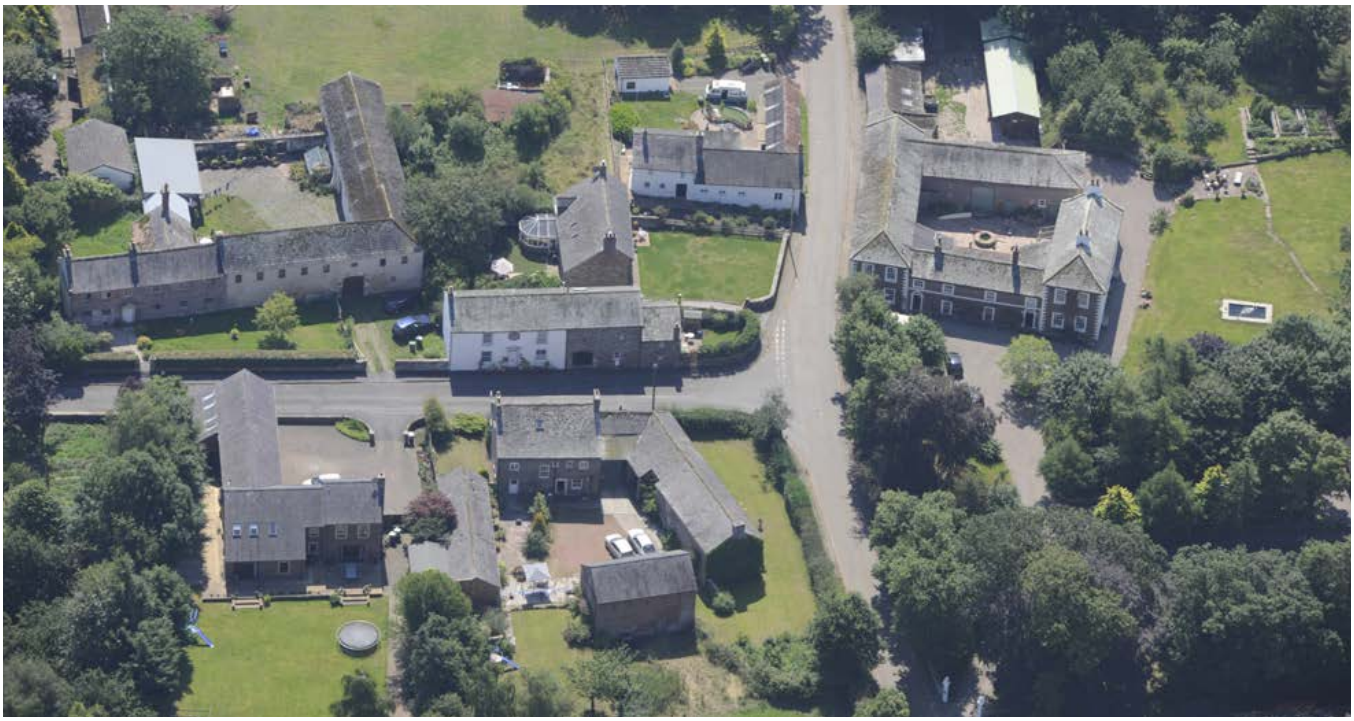
N

Burgh-by-Sands

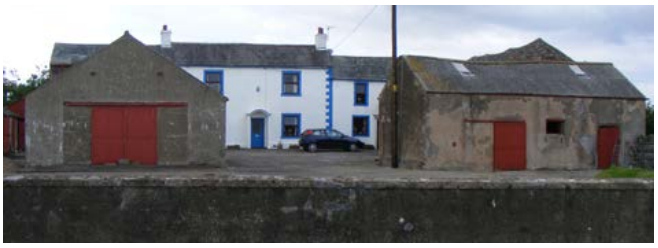
Hadrian's Wall extends towards its westerly end from Burgh-by-Sands to Drumburgh, the map also showing the Port Carlisle railway which superseded the Carlisle Navigation Canal (1823). Many farmsteads remained within these settlements, the architecture of those in Longburgh (see p 11) and Drumburgh showing that they had developed into regular courtyard plans by the later 18th century (and marked in green on this map). Smaller farms built of clay around timber and cruck-frames remained in Burgh by Sands, some being earlier longhouses or smaller courtyards with one or two detached working buildings dating from the medieval period (see p 9). The reorganisation and rebuilding of farms in the 18th and 19th centuries was closely linked to the further drainage and enclosure of the surrounding fields from earlier farmland (some fields retaining the outlines of medieval strips), marshland and other common land.



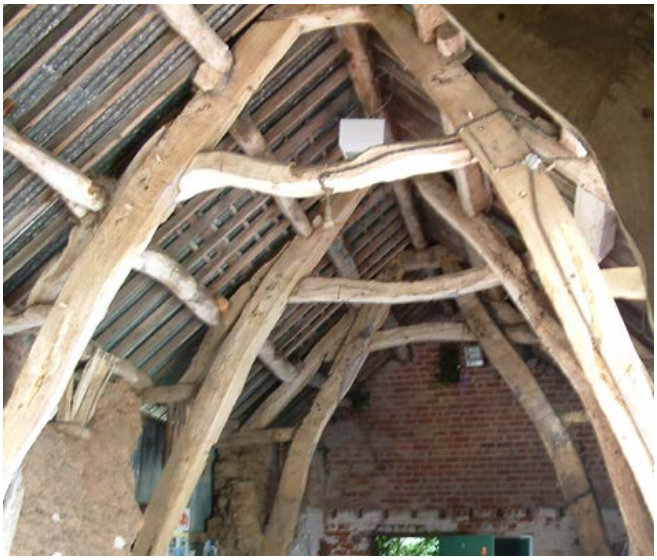
The centre of Burgh-by-Sands, at the centre of the image being an exceptionally rare surviving 17th-century cruck-framed linear farmstead (Lamonby Farm, its timber felled in 1615). Opposite are more clay-walled and cruck-framed buildings dating from the 16th or 17th centuries at Cross Farm (the timbers for the barn were felled in 1551). These farms continued to farm relatively modest holdings, unlike some of the large courtyard-plan farmsteads which were enlarged and rebuilt in the late 18th and 19th centuries within the village. Photo © Historic England 28576/054



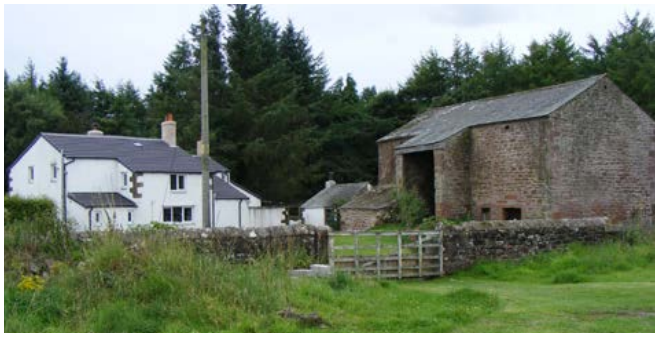
The white-painted linear range at the centre of this photograph of Longburgh is late 17th century, and is clay-walled and cruck-framed. To its right (west) is Longburgh House, a relatively high-status courtyard group including a large barn built in and after 1782. To the left of the image is Longburgh Farm with its late 17th-century house (also clay-walled) with an attached late 17th- or early 18th-century barn range with a malting floor. Photo © Historic England 28577/053

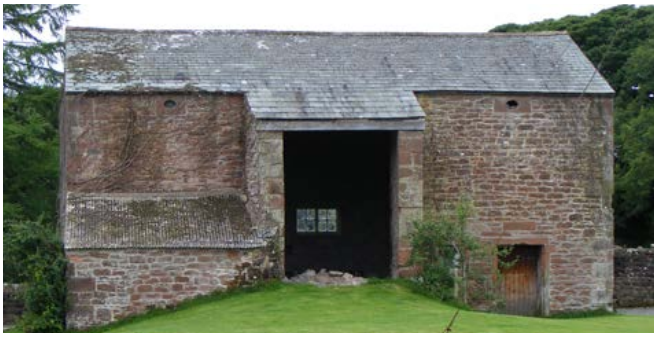


Mid-19th-century roadside steading with rendered farmhouse facing the farmyard, and the buildings left characteristically unrendered. Photo © Jen Deadman



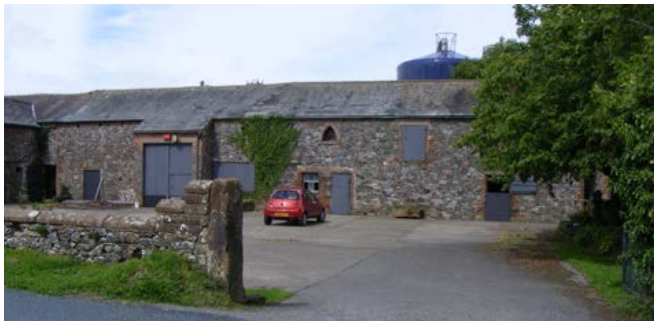
Full-height crucks, sometimes supporting local stapple thatch, and mass clay walling set on cobble plinths, are still in evidence in many older farmhouses and outbuildings. In this large five-bay barn, areas of clay walling remain. The gable end has been replaced in brick. Early windows of clay barns consisted of an opening at the top of the wall, partly covered by riven oak laths pegged to a beam, as shown to the right. Photo © Jen Deadman



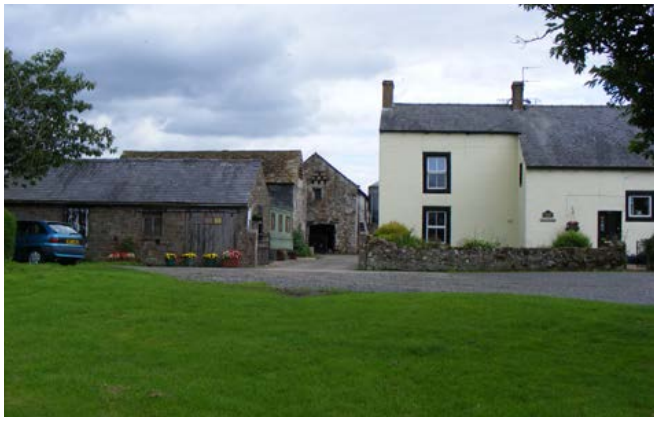


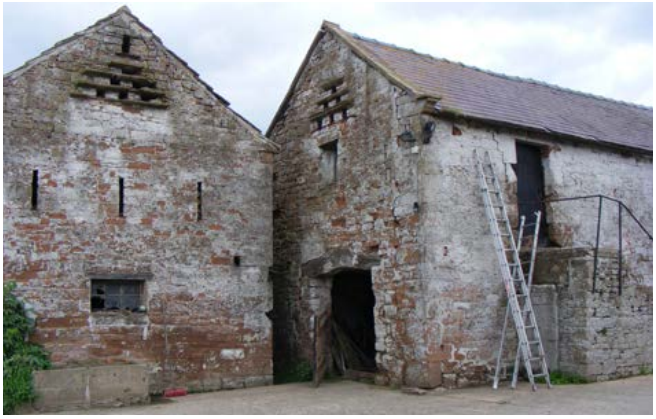
The majority of combination barns of the late 18th and 19th centuries provide the traditional layout of central threshing floor flanked by a lofted byre and full height hay mew. Frequently the combination barn is the main and sometimes the only agricultural building, as here. Note the ramped entry onto the threshing floor and unusual oval vents at eaves level. The projecting porch of the entry to the threshing bay is a common feature. Photo © Jen Deadman

This early 19th-century brick barn, with sandstone dressings set on a cobble plinth, is distinctive of the area. From the 18th century onwards, many farmsteads were constructed of sandstone or locally made bricks. There was a good deal of transport of sandstone dressings into adjacent districts and use of such dressings with brickwork. The distinctive flat arch with voussoirs and keystone is frequently found on combination barns which do not have the projecting porch. Photo © Jen Deadman



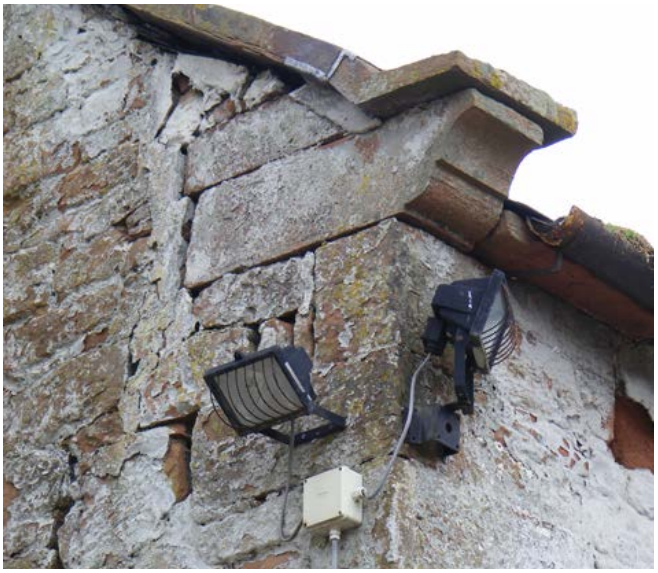
Here, a combination barn of 1836 with a projecting porch dominates the street but is set back behind its yard. It is built entirely of cobble with sandstone dressings to the openings. Photo © Jen Deadman



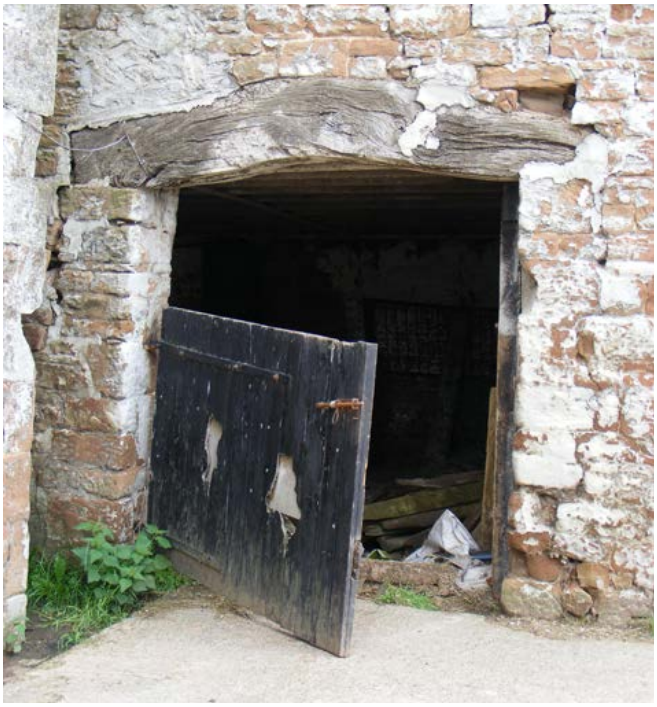


These 18th-century combination barns are two of three set around a small yard. One building retains its stone slate roof. The majority of early barns have now been re-roofed in blue slate. Photo © Jen Deadman

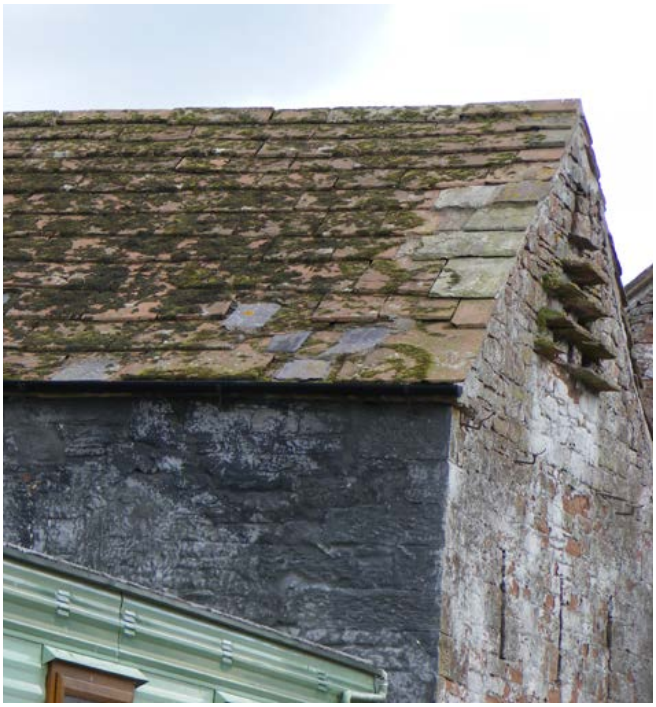
Doveholes are a common feature. Photo © Jen Deadman



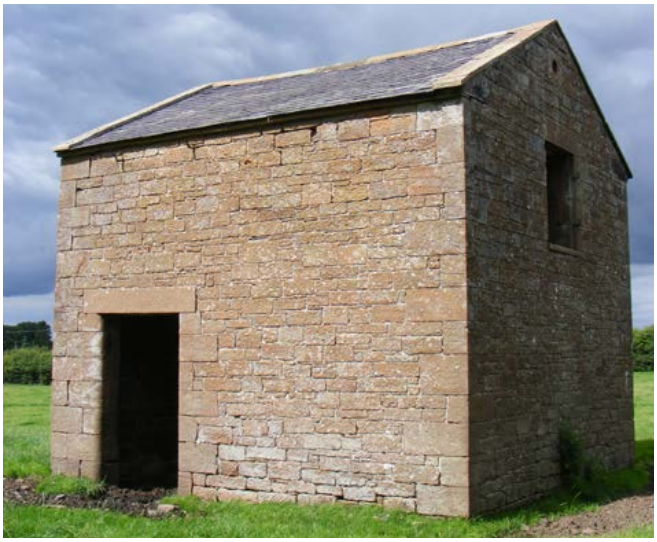
Typical carved stone kneeler to a stone-coped gable end. Photo © Jen Deadman

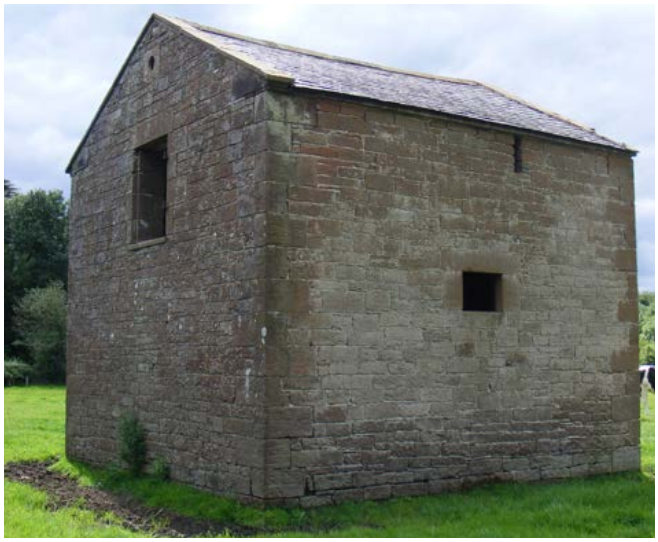


Timber, probably from a cruck-framed building, re-used as a lintel to a doorway. Photo © Jen Deadman

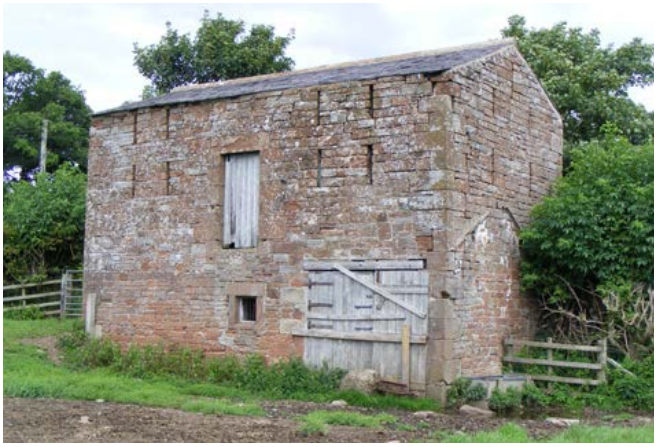


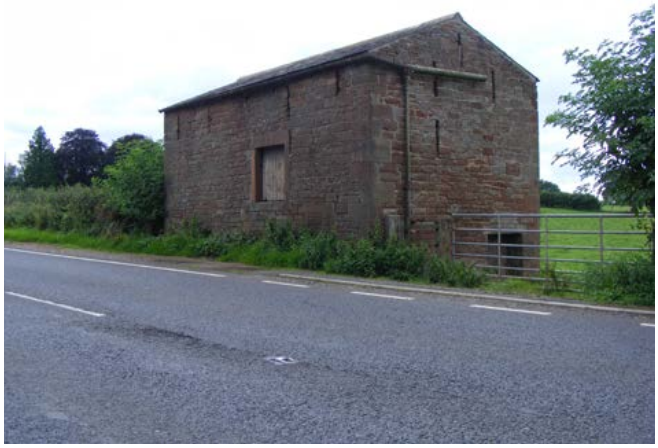
Rare surviving stone slate. The majority of 18th-century and earlier barns have now been re-roofed in blue slate. Photo © Jen Deadman



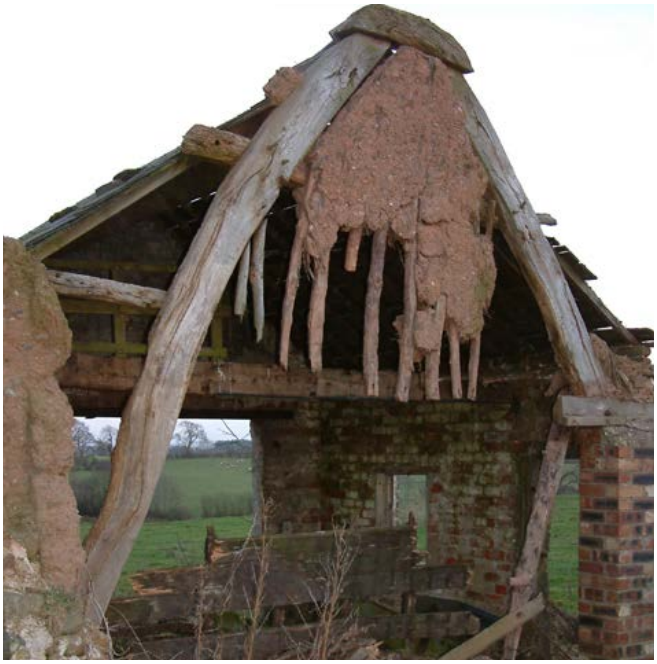


Small-scale field barn for cattle and the storage of hay. Photo © Jen Deadman





Field barns with side-wall entries for pitching in hay. Note the muck hole for throwing out manure below the door to the left. Photo © Jen Deadman



A very rare surviving example of a cruck-framed field barn with remnants of clay walling. Photo © Jen Deadman

Materials and detail

- Stone and slate dominate in upland fringe areas, and cobbles and boulders from rivers and fields were generally used. The Solway Basin displays a varied mixture of materials in traditional buildings, including red sandstone, limestone, cobbles, Welsh and Cumbrian slate. Brick was used from the late 17th century for farmhouses and the late 18th century for farm buildings.

- The Solway Basin has one of the major concentrations of clay-walled buildings in England, dating from between the 14th and 19th centuries. Shallow 'lifts' of walling on thin layers of straw are a distinctive characteristic. Clay-walled buildings are often called 'dabbins'. This is a tradition which extends into Dumfries and Galloway in Scotland. There was widespread destruction of these buildings in the 19th century, the materials being used as manure.

- There are some rare surviving examples of cruck-frames. Straw 'stapple' thatch was also widely used on the Solway Basin, typically to a low pitch built on a turf underlay capable of being patched as required, but there are now few surviving examples.

Historic England

This guidance has been prepared by Jeremy Lake with Jen Deadman.

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