



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Tyne and Wear Lowlands

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 14



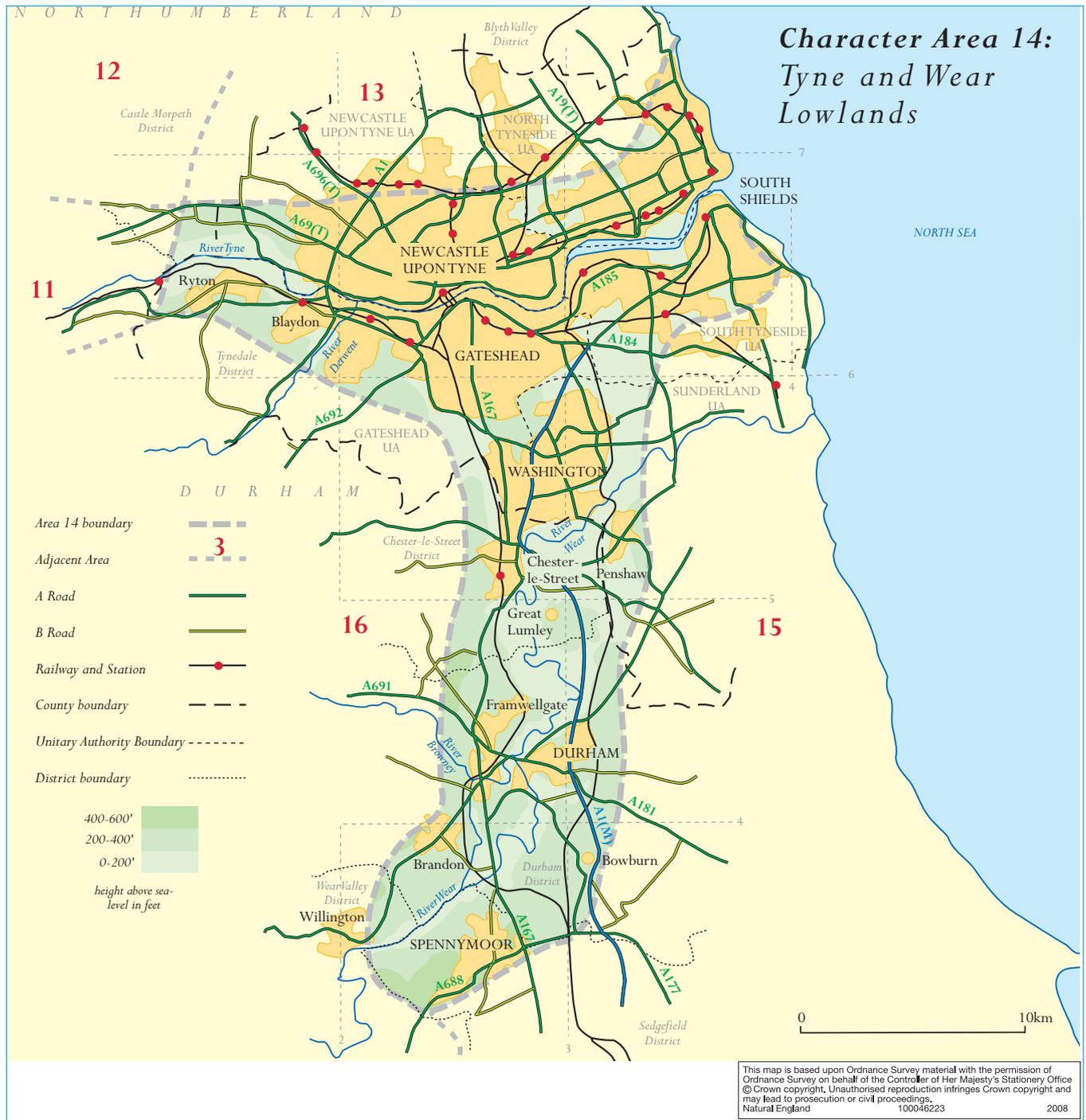
Introduction

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>).



Mid-19th-century farmsteads south of New Brancepeth, a former mining village which developed on open fields in the middle of the 19th century. Photo © Jen Deadman

Front cover: In the north of the area, farmsteads characteristically lie scattered between the nucleated settlements of mining villages and the larger industrial conurbations. An isolated farmstead on the urban fringe is set on an open hillside below the mining village of Greenside on the western outskirts of Newcastle. This was formerly a substantial courtyard plan farm of which only the farmhouse remains. Photo © Jen Deadman



This map shows the Tyne and Wear Lowlands, with the numbers of the 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.

Centred on the lower valleys of the Tyne and Wear, the lowlands are a gently undulating landscape with widespread urban and industrial development and a long history of coal mining. The land is 45% urban area, and there is 6% woodland cover.

Historic character

- Farmland is intermixed with mining and other industrial areas which, despite medieval origins, are largely the result of the expansion of older and the planning of new settlements in the 19th century.
- Farms of different types and scales developed to serve these communities, but – as with other parts of lowland Northumberland – arable combined with fatstock production and sheep farming came to dominate agriculture in the 18th and 19th centuries.
- Most farmsteads were rebuilt in the early to mid-19th century as regular courtyard layouts with engine houses built onto barns, granaries, cart sheds, stables and a wide variety of cattle housing. Whilst some are large scale, with buildings around two or more yards, most are smaller in scale than in the lowland areas to the north where very large farms with their associated workers' housing developed.
- Patterns of piecemeal and regular enclosure from strip fields and commons extended across most of the area by the late 18th century, later pockets of planned enclosure then focusing mainly on remaining areas of common land. Reorganisation of fields and plantations, and parkland settings to country houses, gives much of the landscape an estate character.

Significance

- The survival of traditional farmsteads is markedly lower than in the lowland landscapes to the north, except in some of the landscapes to the south that have been less affected by 20th-century development.
- The evidence for horse, water and steam-powered threshing is highly significant and early in a national context. Any surviving examples of internal machinery – the gearing for horse wheels, mill wheels, boilers and fixed threshing machines – are of exceptional rarity.
- Working buildings with 18th-century and earlier fabric, including traces of heather thatch, are of exceptional rarity and will provide important evidence that can inform understanding of how this landscape developed.

Present and future issues

- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a high proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (46.2%, the national average being 32%). The Photo Image Project also recorded an above-average

percentage (14.3%, the national average being

7.5%) of listed working farm buildings that show obvious signs of structural disrepair.

Historic development

- The exploitation of the Coal Measures from Roman and medieval origins transformed the settled landscape after the 16th century and particularly during the 19th century as new pithead villages were established, industrial infrastructure developed and the great urban centres expanded. The dockyards, shipyards and heavy industries in Sunderland and along the Tyne expanded considerably from the late 18th century and particularly in the mid- to late 19th century when deep-pit coal mining and ironworks were established. The associated transport infrastructure included the tramroads that ran from the Durham Coalfields (NCA 16) to riverside staithe and coastal ports. As elsewhere in Northumberland and the Durham Coalfield (NCA 16), single-storey housing continued to be built into the 19th century, two-storey terrace housing being built in increasing numbers from the 1830s to 1840s. Late 19th- and 20th- century development has covered much of the farmland in this area.
- There is extensive earthwork and cropmark evidence for a long history of mixed farming from the prehistoric period, sustaining the garrisons on Hadrian's Wall, the early monastic communities at Monkwearmouth and Jarrow and in the medieval period the estates of

the Prince Bishops of Durham. Industrial prosperity is also reflected in the large number of 18th- and 19th-century country houses, set within parkland in the vicinity of major settlements.

- These developments influenced agriculture in this area, which from the 16th century was focused on the production of grain, dairy produce and fatstock for export to local urban centres and via coastal ports to national markets. As with other lowland and upland fringe areas of Northumberland and Durham, rotational farming using roots and artificial grasses was introduced across this area over the 18th century, helping with farmyard manure and the application of lime and tile drainage to boost yields; this system of farming was facilitated by the reorganisation and continued enclosure of farmland, large-scale and regular enclosed fields being centred on large farms or farming hamlets.
- Dairying also emerged as an important industry, and the liquid milk trade developed in the late 19th century to supply the local industrial population. A small number of small industrial farmsteads was built to supply new planned villages, constructed in the 19th century, with liquid milk and other produce.

Landscape and settlement

- A strong characteristic of this area is the intermixture of 19th-century and later settlement with an underpinning pattern of medieval settlement that dates from after the 'Harrying of the North' in the late 11th century and was mostly complete by the end of the 13th century. Planned villages, some centred on greens (for example Elwick and Dalton Piercy), are characterised by regular rows of facing house-plots with their associated tofts or garths. These historic villages were frequently subsumed by mining and industrial

terraced housing, this development being particularly marked to the north of Durham.

- Post-medieval piecemeal enclosure of the open arable fields was largely complete by the 18th century and the remaining commons and open pastures were enclosed by regular fields from the later 18th century. Whilst the pattern of medieval strip fields is still clearly legible around some villages, particularly to the south of the area, earlier phases of enclosure were again reorganised by farms and estates as they

restructured and undertook improvements to boost yields in the 17th to 19th centuries. Most isolated farmsteads date from the early to mid- 19th century, as production was reorganised around larger, centralised farming units, many linked to coal-enriched country estates.

- Thorn hedgerows are predominant and hedgerow trees are generally few. Semi-native broadleaved woodland was encouraged on estate lands and in parklands of the great houses.

Farmstead and building types

There is a small number of medieval to 18th-century barns, the former related to monastic holdings in the immediate environs of Durham. The earliest buildings on farmsteads are typically the farmhouses, some of which in this area are early 18th-century and earlier cross-passage houses, with the chimney stack backing onto the passage.

Farmstead types

- Farmhouses of the 18th century and earlier are mostly found within villages, some of these developing from linear farmsteads with the houses and working buildings attached in-line.
- Courtyard farmsteads, usually dating from two or more phases of rebuilding in the 19th century, are the dominant farmstead type. With the exception of a relatively smaller amount of very large, regular multi-yard layouts, these are noticeably looser in form and smaller in scale – and single-storey workers' (locally termed hinds) cottages less common – than those of the lowlands and upland fringe of Northumberland to the north. Investigation may offer evidence for several phases of piecemeal development that complements that of the fields around them.
- Loose courtyard farmsteads, with working buildings to two or three sides of the yard, are concentrated within villages. Larger farmsteads commonly developed on the edges of villages.
- Regular courtyard farmsteads are commonly found as full courtyards, U-shaped, E-shaped or L-shaped layouts and also multi-yards with buildings to two or three yards. Larger-scale examples typically have detached farmhouses that may face their own gardens. The highly-mechanised nature of farming is reflected in the numbers of barns with wheel houses: it was common for the threshing barn to house a threshing machine and be placed in-line with a barn for the receipt of straw from the threshed sheaves of corn, which was then taken to the cattle yards.

Building types

Building types display the evidence for the scale of arable farming and cattle management in this area:

- Combination barns, with threshing floors above animal housing, are found on many farms and are similar to those found in the Durham Coalfields and North Pennines to the west.
- Larger farms have threshing and attached straw barns, a distinctive type of building associated with mechanised threshing, which extends into the Lothians and other parts of Scotland subject to agricultural improvement. The first floor of the threshing barn had doors for pitching in sheaves of corn and contained the threshing machine, the corn being bagged on the ground floor after it was threshed.
- Wheel houses, locally termed horse gins, which had been used in mines for centuries, were adapted from the late 18th century to provide rotary power for powering threshing machines. They were built adjacent to the barn in which the threshing machine and

other fodder-processing machinery were housed.

- There were some steam engine houses, but less common than in the lowlands of Northumberland.
- Grain production is characterised by granaries (frequently built as an upper storey over a cart shed or animal housing), cart sheds, implement sheds and stables that reflect the comparatively smaller scale of farms in this area.
- Cattle sheds and associated yards include hemmels, a form of open-fronted shed for fatstock particular to north-east England. The increased importance accorded to fatstock

in the second half of the 19th century is also reflected in evidence for the rebuilding of farmsteads with more yards and buildings for cattle, including loose boxes (marked by multiple doors), wide-span sheds and covered yards which also preserved the manure's nutrients. Most covered yards date from the early 20th century.

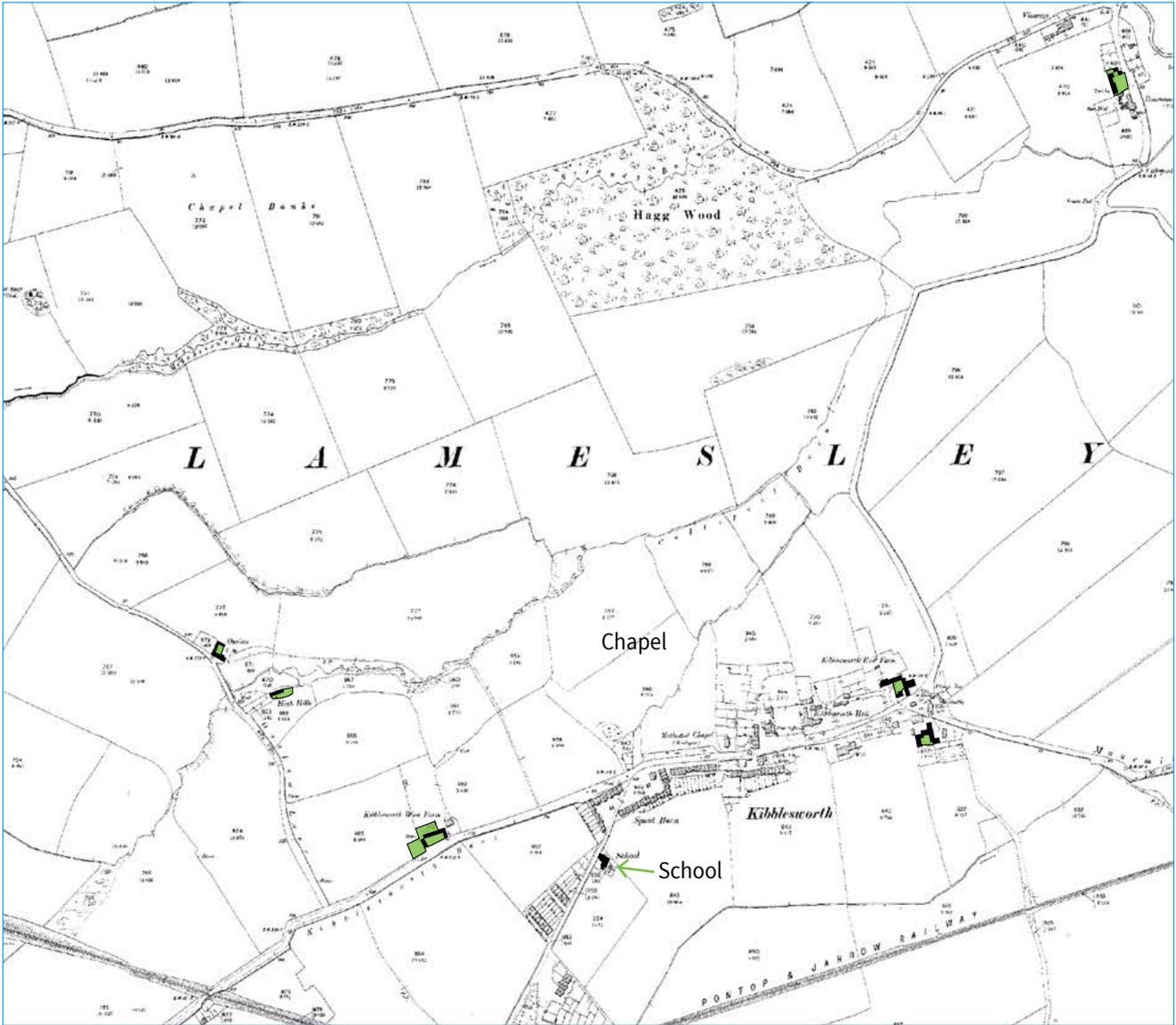
- Byres (cow houses with stalls for the small numbers of milk cattle) and pigsties, often marked by yards with feeding troughs, are usually placed close to the house.
- Smithies were found on the largest farmsteads.



On a much smaller scale, High Houghall Farm, situated on the lands of Durham Priory in an isolated rural position one mile to the south of Durham city, comprises a singular group of buildings framing a small yard. The south-facing, early 17th-century farmhouse has a labourer's cottage adjoining to the east, with the main yard barn set at right angles behind. To the east of the farmhouse is a small lofted building possibly a cow house or stable of 16th-century date. A later, L-shaped single-storey byre range is attached to the north. Photo © Jen Deadman



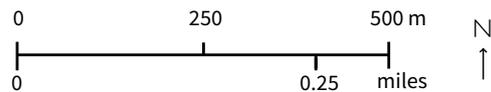
The four-bay, 16th-century barn at High Houghall runs at right angles behind the farmhouse and is built of sandstone rubble masonry roughly coursed and squared with large corner quoins and has an abundance of both triangular and square ventilation slits as seen in early monastic barns. Its roof is steeply pitched suggesting it was once thatched. The barn has the central cart entry, much debased and possibly not original, with access to and from the fields to the rear. A smaller entry opens onto the yard with a fine, four-centred arched lintel and large, chamfered stone dressings. 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.



Kibblesworth

One farm to the east of the village at Kibblesworth, to the north of Washington, has retained recorded 18th-century fabric (its farmhouse). The village retains its distinctive medieval plan form, with the outlines of strip fields being retained in the curved outlines of medieval strips around it, and most of the farms – with the probable exception of those within the irregular intake enclosures around Coltspool to the west – date from after the regular enclosure of its farmland in the early 19th century. They supplied a growing industrial population from this period in Kibblesworth, after the sinking of its pit (to the south of the map) in 1842. A cycle track now runs along the Bowes Railway, which was extended after 1842 to meet George Stephenson's famous line laid in 1826: sections of this to the east are scheduled as an Ancient Monument.



This farmstead at Plawsworth, next to the River Weare, is set within a landscape of regular enclosures and plantations dating from the 18th century. The house has a fine classical house and incorporates a cheese room, and the late 18th-century barn (with the tiled roof) has wheel houses for powering threshing machinery to its north and east sides. Note the scale of the stables and other buildings in this regular multi-yard arrangement, typical of the largest farms that developed in this area. Photo © Historic England



Newfield Farm, to the west of Washington, was rebuilt in about 1861 as an E-plan outfarm with a projecting horse-engine house and a pair of farm workers' cottages. It illustrates the high levels of capital investment that accompanied High Farming in the mid-19th century, serving a then-large farm of over 260 acres. Photo © Historic England 28527/062



To the east of Beamish at Pockerley – and now within the Open Air Museum – is this site of medieval origins, with a 15th-century pele tower adjoining the east side of an 18th-century farmhouse, and early to mid-19th-century buildings serving a large arable-based farm. Photo © Historic England 28527/044

Materials and detail

- Most of the building stock dates from the mid-18th century, sandstone being the traditional walling material combined with slate and pantiled roofs. Brick made from Coal Measure deposits was used at an early date, from the later 18th century, for farm buildings.



Historic England

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