



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Durham Coalfield Pennine Fringe

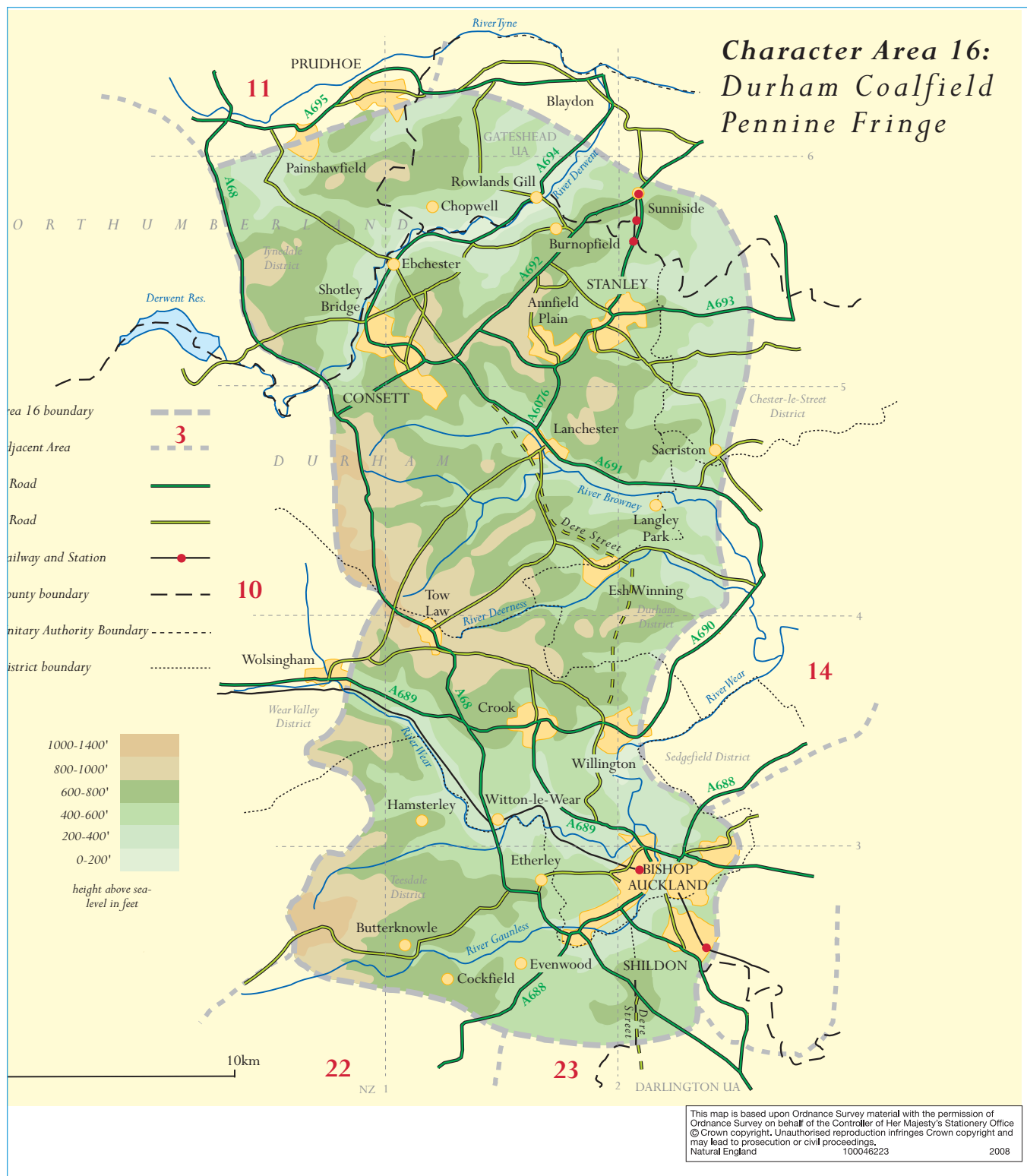
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 16



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>).

Front cover: Hollymoor Farm, now a dairy farm, is set on common land at the west end of Cockfield village. It was the former residence and office of the pit manager to a nearby colliery in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Here, a small yard has been subsumed by modern buildings. Old shafts and pits dating back to the 14th century are spread thickly on Cockfield Fell to the north whilst to the south and west are fields of improved pasture. Photo © Jen Deadman



This map shows the Durham Coalfield Pennine Fringe, 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 relatively high, rolling, large-scale transitional landscape lies to the east of the North Pennines, dipping down gently eastwards to the heavily settled lowlands of the Tyne and Wear valleys. A mainly rural landscape, it is heavily influenced in places by urban and industrial development and mineral working. Of the area, 7% is urban and 12% woodland. A very small percentage of the area (3%) lies in the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Historic character

- This is an area characterised since the medieval period by a mix of nucleated and dispersed settlement. The density of farmsteads in the landscape has increased due to the extent of post-medieval enclosure and the development of small farms and smallholdings with by-employment in local industries.
- Markets for agricultural produce were also stimulated in the 19th century by the expansion and foundation of industrial settlements in the north and east of the area, next to deep-mined collieries, ironworks and steelworks.
- The western upland fringe of the area has an upland character with dry stone walls and the eastern lowland area is dominated by hedgerows, all these relating to a complex pattern of post-medieval piecemeal enclosure of fields and the planned (mostly late 18th to mid-19th century) enclosure of moorland and commons which survived longest on the upland fringe. This latest phase of enclosure, and the reorganisation of farms on estates, was accompanied by the building of country houses. Associated parkland and woodland plantations lend much of the area the look of a designed and improved landscape that contrasts with the character of its industrial and common-edge settlements.
- Whilst linear farmsteads typical of upland landscapes survive to the west, the reorganisation of farms of all scales is also reflected in the dominance of regular courtyard layouts. Houses are often attached to working buildings, making overall U-plan and L-plan layouts. Some farmsteads with detached houses have two or more yards, some of these in the east of the area being very large-scale multi-yard and E-plan complexes.
- Farmsteads are dominated by storeyed combination barns in much of the area, which are very similar to those found in the North Pennines (NCA 10). Cattle housing is dominant, whilst to the east stables, cart sheds and granaries testify to the development of arable farming across much of this area, and most farmsteads have storeyed and single-storey buildings for housing fatstock and dairy cattle. Pigsties are found on most farmsteads, also with meal houses

Significance

- The survival of traditional farmsteads is markedly lower in the lowland landscapes to the east than in the upland fringe areas to the west. 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.

- Any evidence for horse, water and steam-powered threshing is highly significant and

Present and future issues

This area has had a high rate of loss of traditional farm buildings that is comparable with that of the lowlands of Durham to the east.

- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a low proportion of listed working farm buildings

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.

converted to non-agricultural use (14.3%, the national average being 32%).

- The Photo Image Project also recorded an above-average percentage (21.4%, the national average being 7.5%) of listed working farm buildings that show obvious signs of structural disrepair.

Historic development

- The area displays a contrast between its upland character adjoining the North Pennines (NCA 10) to the west, where sheep and cattle grazing was concentrated on more acid-based soils, and a gradual transition following the grain of west-east river valleys to a lowland landscape adjoining the Tyne and Wear Lowlands (NCA 14), where arable-based mixed farming was more important.
- Archaeological sites – crop marks and earthwork remains which best survive within the western uplands, especially moorland – show that this area was extensively settled in the Bronze and Iron Age. British communities continued to develop through the Roman occupation from the end of the 1st century AD, when Dere Street and its associated forts were first built extending from York into present-day Scotland.
- Extractive industries – especially of coal, ironstone, building stone and sand – have developed in close association with farming across this area; evidence is dispersed across the landscape, the small size of upland farms

in particular testifying to the combination of farming and industrial by-employment. Iron ore from the Coal Measures has been exploited from the Iron Age. The estates of the Prince Bishops of Durham and Durham Cathedral Priory were a major influence on economic development in the medieval period, driving the mining of coal on exposed seams of Coal Measures. Coal mining intensified in the 16th century as larger collieries were developed which exported to the south of England and Europe, linked to coastal ports by a network of wagonways from the early 17th century. Causey Arch at Tanfield (1727), which took metal rails over the Causey Burn, is one of the earliest railway bridges in the world. Quarrying also developed across this area.

- New industrial settlements and the rapid expansion of existing settlements followed the development of deep-pit mining and of large-scale ironworks and later steelworks, particularly in the period from the 1830s. Examples include the development of coal mining settlements at Stanley and Willington, and added to the medieval market town (and

site of the Durham Bishops' palace) of Bishop Auckland, and the development of Consett by the Derwent Iron Company.

- Farming was reorganised – often under the management of estates – from the 17th century in order to supply the growing population. Sheep and cattle reared to the west were driven down the area's historic droving routeways to be fattened in the east of and outside the area. Smallholdings were sustained by by-employment in coal mining and related industries such as the management of woodland to supply pit props. The widespread evidence for early to mid-19th century horse engine houses, and the reorganisation of farmsteads (see below), testifies to the efforts of estates and farms to economise on farm labour and streamline
- the processing of corn and the production of fatstock and milk to feed its growing industrial population.
- Although over 70% of the area is grassland or uncropped land, these farmsteads and also lime kilns and tile drainage testify to the increased intensification of arable cropping and stock fattening across much of the area in the 19th century. Demand also sustained the survival and development of smallholdings which could supply milk and other produce to the growing industrial communities; these have left little trace in contrast to the courtyard layouts of most farmsteads. The production of liquid milk assumed greater significance from the mid- 19th century, increasingly in the uplands after the decline in corn process from the 1870s.

Landscape and settlement

- Dry stone walls enclose fields in the pastoral farming landscapes to the west, and hedges become more frequent in the mixed farming landscapes to the east.
- Villages, some (for example Cockfield and Hamsterley) clearly planned along a main street with crofts extending behind them, were established across the area in the 12th and 13th centuries. They were surrounded by communal fields and separated from each other by areas of common and waste, used for grazing landscape, intermittent cultivation and also becoming a focus of extractive industries from the medieval period.
- High-status farmsteads including manor farms, dating from the 17th century and very rarely earlier, typically developed on the edges of these villages. Some isolated farmsteads and farming hamlets retain layouts and patterns of routeways and piecemeal enclosure (partly retaining curved field boundaries relating to former strip fields). These, combined with ridge and furrow and settlement earthworks, suggest the shrinkage of larger farming settlements in the 14th to 17th centuries.
- These patterns of piecemeal enclosure and farming settlements, and farmsteads with pre-1750 recorded houses alongside routeways, contrast with the planned landscapes resulting from 18th- and 19th-century regular enclosure of farmed landscapes and more usually the open commons and wastes which survived longest in the western part of the area. Isolated houses and farmsteads typically developed within a grid pattern of routeways and field boundaries.
- There is documentary evidence, throughout the coalfields from the late 17th century, for miners building single-storey, stone-built cottages and 'rows' in wastes, commons and roadside locations away from nucleated settlements. Employers' provision of housing for miners increased in the 18th century, tying them to their places of employment. Two-storey terraces built by colliery owners became a common feature of mining villages and towns from the 19th century.
- From the mid 18th century, industrial wealth underpinned the building and rebuilding of country houses with their parkland, which as at Gibside intermixed ornamental walks and prospects with views of a productive industrial landscape. Estates are also characterised

by mixed and coniferous shelterbelts, which are a feature of the 18th-and 19th-century reorganised and enclosed farming landscapes. Broadleaf woodland is confined largely to

river margins and steep-sided denes. Some agricultural land has been reinstated following post-1945 open cast mining

Farmstead and building types

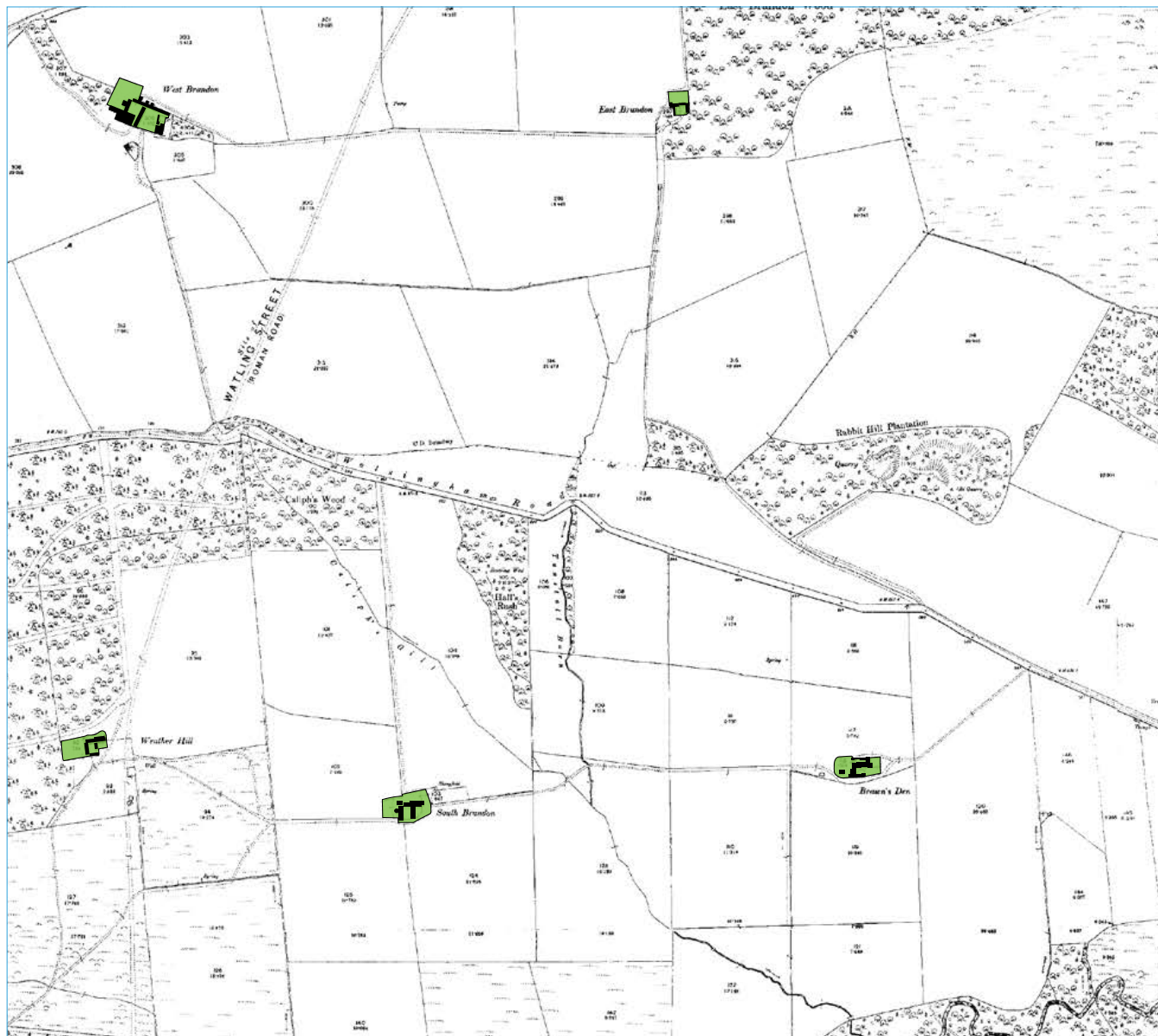
- The historic character of this area retains the legacy of rebuilding that is mainly 19th and 20th century in date. Many farmhouses remained as single-storey dwellings into the 19th century and have in turn been demolished and rebuilt in recent decades.
- The farmhouses of the largest and most prosperous farms, including those on manor farms, testify to a phase of rebuilding in the early to mid-18th century, either as three-unit houses with a cross-passage or symmetrical 'Georgian' houses with services placed to the rear. Farm workers' (locally termed hinds) housing is found on larger farmsteads, and can be found attached to farmhouses.
- Recorded buildings suggest that farm buildings date from an initial phase of rebuilding in the late 18th century, and that earlier fabric is of exceptional rarity. It is common to find traditional buildings replaced or hidden by early and later 20th-century buildings built of brick, concrete block and corrugated iron.
- Some farmsteads within villages developed in a piecemeal fashion as loose courtyards with detached buildings set around a cattle yard. Most farmsteads in this area developed as regular courtyard plans. They are noticeably smaller in scale, and are more likely to have farmhouses attached to them, than those of the lowlands and upland fringe of Northumberland to the north. L-shaped and U-shaped layouts are common, larger farmsteads having two or more cattle yards (regular multi-yards) and in some cases (in the lowland areas to the east) E-plan layouts. Most farmsteads, except the smallest in scale, have engine houses for mechanised threshing built onto them.
- Small farms and smallholdings can be found concentrated around industrial settlements, particularly to the south in combination with recent timber fencing and horse paddocks. These are most noticeable to the south of the area, where there is evidence of much 20th-century adaptation: bungalows replacing single-storey houses, corrugated-iron and concrete block buildings.

Farmstead types

- Farmsteads may retain the evidence for earlier linear farmsteads with houses attached in-line to working buildings, particularly to the west, but this is elusive due to the extent of later rebuilding.
- There is some evidence in this area for some farmsteads retaining bastles at their core. Defensible bastles, 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 and are a distinctive feature of the North Pennines, where the tradition of living over farm animals in so-called 'byre houses' continued into the early 20th century, and the uplands and upland fringe areas of Northumberland.

Building types

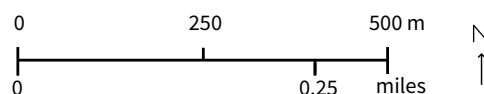
- Combination barns are a common feature, with first-floor threshing areas and granaries and hay lofts above ground-floor stables and cow houses.
- Larger farms – concentrated to the east - have threshing and attached straw barns, a distinctive type of building associated with mechanised threshing which extend 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.



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

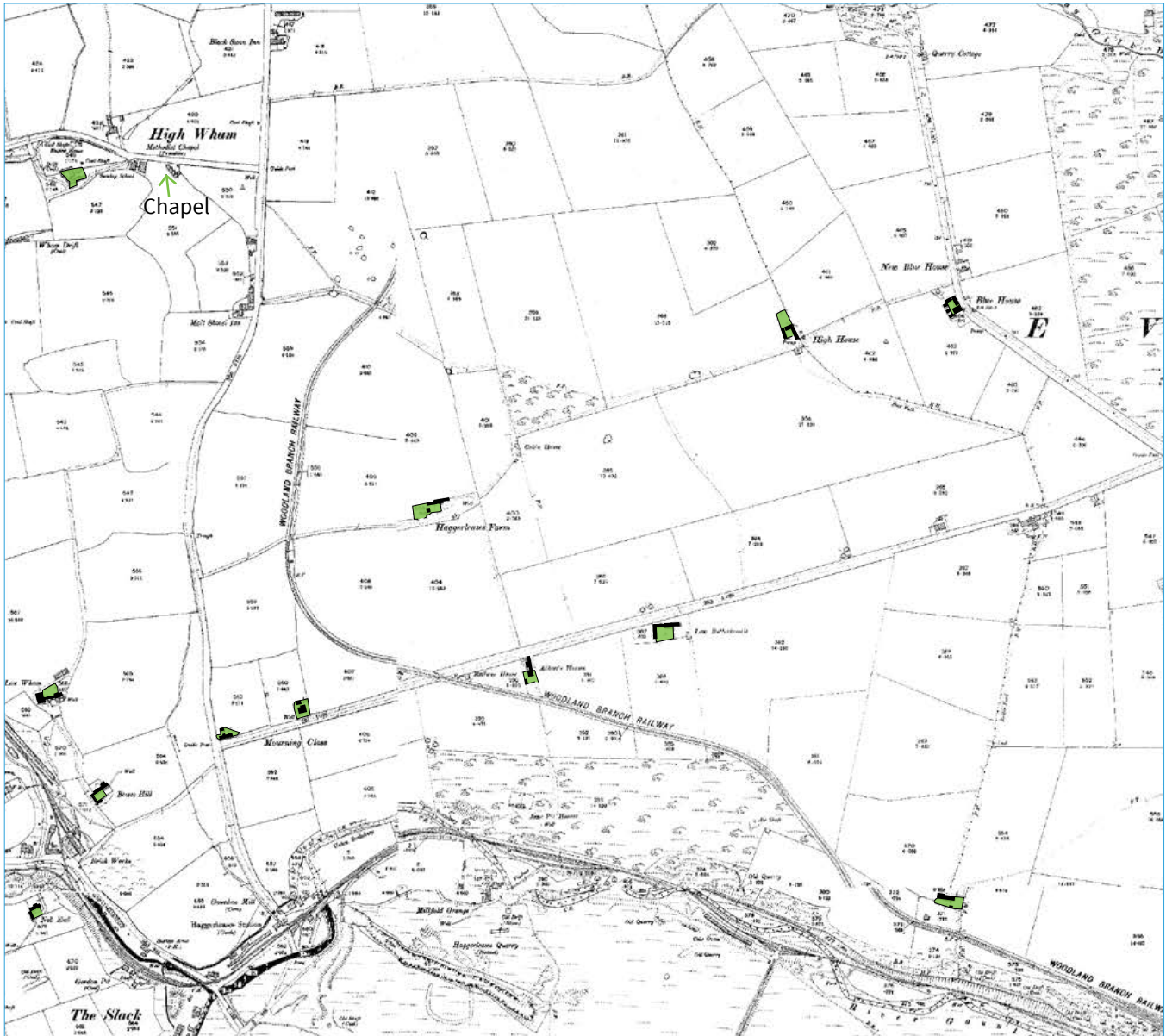


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



Brancepeth

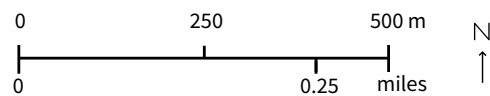
The landscape of this area, which is traversed south-west to north-east by Watling Street, displays a strong contrast between the formal, planned enclosures of former rough ground south of Wolsingham Road and traces of post-medieval enclosures of medieval strip fields to its north. Across both areas, however, the effects of reorganisation by the estate in the early to mid-19th century can be seen – regular enclosures, medium to large-scale regular courtyard plan farmsteads, those to West Brandon to the north-west and South Brandon to the south having wheel houses clearly projecting from their barns, and plantations. Many of these farmsteads were rebuilt as part of a programme of estate architecture including estate workers' housing in the medieval village of Brancepeth close to its medieval castle, which had been remodelled in 1819–21 for local mine owners, the Russells.



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



High Wham, north of Cockfield Fell

This area, sited just to the north of Cockfield Fell, shows a clear division between the early 19th-century regular enclosure of moorland to the east and the piecemeal enclosure of medieval strip fields to the west of the sinuous road that passes High Wham. Regular L-plan farmsteads with attached houses and linear plans predominate, with more courtyard plans in the area of regular enclosure: all were rebuilt or newly built in the 19th century. Cockfield Fell is England's largest scheduled monument, almost 350 hectares in size. The fell has a rich historic past, which includes pre-Roman settlements and industrial evidence for mining and quarrying that dates from the 14th century. Tramroads and then railways, including the famous Stockton and Darlington Railway of 1830 which

- 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 was housed and are found across this area. This may indicate the importance of mechanisation in an area where the mining industry raised the cost of rural labour, including on relatively small farms.
- There were some steam engine houses, but less common than in the lowlands of Northumberland.
- Buildings associated with grain production - granaries (frequently built as an upper storey over a cart shed or animal housing), cart sheds, implement sheds and stables – are concentrated to the east and in areas subject to large-scale 19th century improvement
- In contrast smaller pastoral farms have hay barns, byres (cow houses with stalls for the small numbers of milk cattle) and pigsties, often marked by yards with feeding troughs and usually placed close to the house.
- Smithies were on the largest farmsteads.
- Field shelters for cattle generally comprise open-fronted sheds (hemmels) either with an associated yard, or open to the field.



As in many mining communities, the practice of farming combined with mining was commonplace. The smallholdings of former miner-farmers are spread thickly below Cockfield Fell, particularly to the north around Butterknowle, and set in a landscape of small fields of semi-improved pasture. Farmhouses are small, often single storey, with a cluster of outbuildings. Frequently, older buildings have been replaced by structures of corrugated iron and latterly steel sheet and breeze block. On this smallholding, the only extant traditional building is the large combination barn set to the rear. As is frequently the case, the bungalow replaces a single-storey farmhouse. Photo © Jen Deadman



This is one of the larger farmsteads set north of Cockfield Fell, with ridge and furrow visible in the foreground. Here, the farmhouse is a replacement new build whilst buildings have been retained. Many traditional field barns have been replaced in the 20th century using industrial materials as seen here, in the mid-ground to the left. Photo © Jen Deadman



Late 18th-century planned courtyard group in the setting of the 14th-century Mortham tower, which was used as a farm after the building of Rokeby Park to the designs of Sir Thomas Robinson in 1725-31. Photo © Historic England 28558/022



Early to mid-19th-century farmstead at South Brandon (see map on p 6), showing the house sited to one side of the fully enclosed courtyard layout with a wheel house projecting from the barn to the left and cart sheds facing the road. Photo Historic England 28526/045



Further north, away from the mining villages, the landscape is one of larger fields, with farm buildings generally retained and repaired. There is a marked emphasis on hobby farming, horse breeding and livery stables. Photo © Jen Deadman



A small field barn engulfed by the ubiquitous post and rail fencing – replacement for quickthorn hedges and stone walls in some parts of this area. Photo © Jen Deadman



A late 18th-century farmhouse and its combination barn, these buildings dominating farmstead groups. Photo © Jen Deadman



Hollins Hill Farm is situated at the southern end of the long, medieval, planned village of Hamsterley. It possibly developed as a result of the reorganisation of land ownership due to the clearing and enclosing of Hamsterley Waste, for which an act was granted in 1757. To the rear, the farmhouse overlooks an open field where a small, single-storey building with a stack formerly served as a mash or meal house. Photo © Jen Deadman



Farmstead at East Butsfield, rebuilt on a large scale in the early to mid-19th century, with a horse-engine house attached to its barn and with its buildings dispersed either side of the road which runs through the yard. It is set on high ground north of Tow Law and west of Lanchester. Relict strip fields in the surrounding landscape suggest early farming patterns and possible continuance of occupation since medieval times. Immediately to the east is a series of disused quarries which may have supplemented the agricultural wage in the 18th and 19th centuries. Photo © Jen Deadman



A small, late 18th- or early 19th-century steading lying close to Hedley Hill in the north of the area. Here, the farmhouse is set away from a loose arrangement of buildings, presenting its gable end to the yard and L-shaped range of which the large combination barn is the most significant structure. A wheel house formerly adjoined the barn at the rear. Photo © Jen Deadman



Some very large farms were planned within areas affected by high investment in agricultural improvement and enclosure, as here, close to the village of Whittonstall in the north of the area. Here, three parallel yards are served by a large combination barn range including a granary; attached to its barn and set to one side of the projecting straw barn is a wheel house which provided motive power to a threshing and fodder-processing machines. Photo © Jen Deadman



A relatively small, U-shaped farmstead to the west of Brancepeth set in large regular-shaped fields of 19th-century enclosure. Again, the farmhouse sits to one side of the yard. Photo © Jen Deadman

Materials and detail

- Traditional buildings are comprised of Carboniferous Sandstone, and sometimes Permian Limestone, with stone flag roofs more common to the west. Roofs are generally pantiled.
- Brick was widely used from the mid-19th century, and is a highly distinctive characteristic of the historic mining communities.
- Rendered and whitewashed buildings are a distinctive feature of the Raby estate to the south.



Historic England

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

First published by English Heritage 2013. This
edition published by Historic England 2020.

Please refer to this document as:
Historic England 2020 Farmstead and Landscape
Statement: Durham Coalfield Pennine Fringe.
Swindon: Historic England.

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Product code: 52130 RRL code: 020/2020
Publication date: February 2020 © Historic England
Design: Historic England and Chantal Freeman, Diva
Arts