



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Southern Magnesian Limestone

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 30



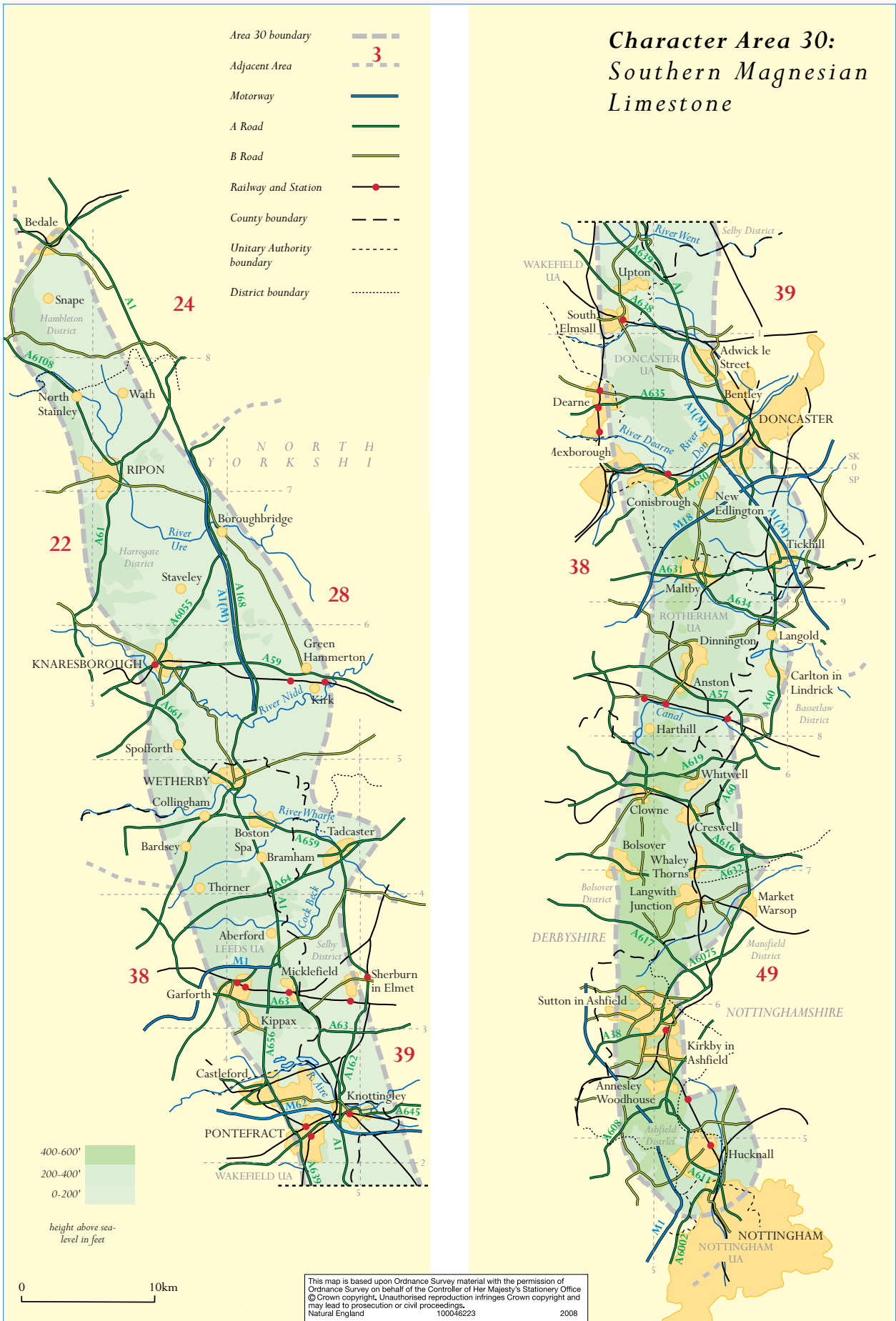
Introduction

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>).



Farmhouses were aligned with their display fronts facing village streets and their working yards and buildings on medieval plots to the rear. Note the Low Countries influence in the gable end of this 17th-century yeoman farmer's house at Arkendale, which is also a characteristic early example of the use of brick. Photo © Jen Deadman

Front cover: Farmsteads set around ponds and greens are a common plan form in the north and centre of the area. Low Arkendale near Knaresborough (see map on p 8) comprises a loose scatter of farmsteads with a mix of buildings dating from the 17th to the 19th centuries, evolving into courtyard plan forms. This farmstead retains a 17th-century, timber-framed barn. The distinctive linear brickwork pattern visible in the tall yard building is a common feature of the many cobble structures built on the local glacial moraine. Photo © Jen Deadman



This map shows the Southern Magnesian Limestone, 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.

Comprising an elevated ridge with smoothly rolling landform, this area is dissected by dry valleys of predominantly Magnesium Limestone geology. It extends in a narrow band nearly the length of the Yorkshire and Humber region from near Bedale into Derbyshire. Of the area, 11% is urban, 7% is woodland, 73% is cultivated and only 1% is designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Historic character

- Farming in this limestone plateau landscape has long been characterised by an emphasis on arable production, with pasture on steep slopes and in valley bottoms. Piecemeal enclosure and nucleated settlement dominates the landscape, earlier planned and irregular enclosure being concentrated around medieval grange farms and a small number of isolated farms established by the 17th century.
- Courtyard plans, mostly rebuilt with interlinked buildings as regular plans, include threshing barns, granaries, stables and cart sheds to facilitate arable farming. Cattle yards and buildings for cattle developed to manage fatstock and produce manure, the larger farms developing with multi-yards. Outshots to barns for housing cattle are common, as also are loose boxes and shelter sheds to yards.
- Timber-frame is now mostly confined to farmhouses and barns. Buildings in brick, from the 19th century, can retain evidence for earlier limestone buildings.

Significance

- Whilst farmhouses of the 18th century and earlier are found across the area, working buildings of this date are very rare – a stark contrast to the upland fringe areas to its west. These mostly comprise timber-framed and aisled barns on larger historic farmsteads. They are concentrated in medieval settlement sites and areas, and some farmsteads relate to the earthworks of shrunken medieval settlements.
- Evidence for horse, water and steam-powered threshing is highly significant. Any surviving examples of internal machinery – the gearing for horse wheels, mill wheels, boilers and fixed threshing machines – are of exceptional rarity.

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 (38.9%, the national average being 32%).

Historic development

- This area's well-drained and calcareous brown earths have been suited to a long history of arable cultivation from the Neolithic period, with pasture concentrated on the steeper slopes and valley bottoms.
- Cropmarks complement the earthwork evidence for the division of land (the Iron Age Grim's Ditch being sited east of Leeds) in revealing enclosed and unenclosed farmsteads with round houses and co-axial field systems that were used into the Romano-British period and beyond. The landscape has also been influenced by the Roman occupation, with Dere Street forming the basis for much of the route of the modern A1.
- The limestone escarpment is intersected by narrow valleys, such as those of the Nidd, Aire and Don, and is bordered by an urban fringe area of medieval market towns and textile centres, expanding as industrial towns in the 18th and 19th centuries (Ripon, Knaresborough and Harrogate, Knottingley, Pontefract, Worksop, Mansfield, Wetherby, Bolsover, and Nottingham).
- Some rivers (especially the Aire and Don) have enabled the export of farm produce, coal and limestone to ports on the east coast (especially the Humber). The exploitation of coalfields with deeper shafts from the late 19th century resulted in the development of older settlements or led to new settlements (for example New Rossington).
- The historic development of farming and settlement in this area shares some of the features of other limestone plateau landscapes: little woodland by the 11th century, extensive cultivation in the period up to the 14th century, the development of mixed farms in tandem with the desertion and shrinkage of settlements in the 14th to 16th centuries, and the development of large arable-based farms driven by estates and improving tenants in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Proximity to urban markets and industrial centres also stimulated and sustained the growth of smaller farms which supplied them with dairy produce, eggs and vegetables; these include county council smallholdings dating from the 1890s.
- Country houses, together with their landscaped gardens and wider settings, form a major feature of this area and include landmarks in the development of the English landscape style, such as Studley Royal and its water gardens.

Landscape and settlement

- The present strong pattern of nucleated settlement was evident by the 11th century, with deserted or shrunken medieval settlements marking the contraction from the high-water mark of medieval settlement in the early 14th century.
- Isolated farmsteads relate to shrunken settlements, former medieval monastic grange farms and post-medieval enclosure landscapes. Landed estates expanded after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and parkland (for example Bedale Hall, Hardwick Hall, Studley Royal and the landscaping of the former Cistercian monastery of Fountains) is now a strong feature of this area. These estates were actively engaged in agricultural improvement, based around rotations using root crops and artificial grasses, from the late 17th century. As well as the rebuilding of farmsteads, estates played a key role in the development of villages with schools and other community buildings as well as houses.
- Piecemeal enclosure – often reorganised with larger fields and straight boundaries as farms were enlarged and restructured in the 18th and 19th centuries – dominates the farmed landscape. Sparse hedges and stone walls are the typical boundary divisions. These relate to the enclosure of open fields which were extensive until the later 17th century, and the

later movement of farmsteads to the edges of villages and isolated sites. Fields around villages can retain the coherent pattern of medieval strip fields and enclosures extending to back lanes.

- Earlier patterns of enclosure can be traced around medieval grange farms, farms that developed on the sites of shrunken settlements and other 17th-century and earlier

farmstead sites, including those in scarp-slope landscapes.

- The area was mostly cleared of its woodland by the Bronze Age, and was still little-wooded in the late 11th century. Ancient woodland is mostly confined to ridge tops, scarp slopes and valleys. Large blocks of woodland were closely linked to the development of estates from the 17th century and include plantations and coverts for field sports.

Farmstead and building types

There are a small number of medieval to early 18th-century, timber-framed barns. The earliest buildings on farmsteads are typically farmhouses, which are concentrated within villages. Houses were increasingly built in local limestone and brick, with services built to the rear of symmetrical front ranges, from the 17th century. The overwhelming majority of houses on isolated farmsteads date from the late 18th century, and farm buildings from the 19th century. However, many farmsteads offer evidence for 19th-century buildings retaining earlier cores of limestone, with timber-frames being more commonly found within houses than farm buildings.

Farmstead types

- Courtyard-plan steadings, mostly the result of rebuilding from the later 18th century, are dominant. Loose courtyard plans with detached buildings, often of different dates around one or more sides of a yard, are concentrated within villages where they developed in parallel to the decline of other farms. Regular courtyard plans are the most common, and mostly comprise full courtyards, E-shaped and U-shaped plans with south-facing yards, and multi-yard plans on the larger farmsteads. There is a mix of dispersed and courtyard plans with some pre-1750 lobby-entrance farmhouses and large and symmetrical double-depth farmhouses dating from the later 18th century.

which extends westwards to the area around Halifax.

- Combination barns from the 19th century are found with threshing barns above or more usually, to one side of stables, cart shed(s) or (less frequently) cattle housing, with first-floor granaries.
- Aisled barns are of 17th-century and earlier date.
- 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 and also fodder-processing machines within barns.
- There are some steam engine houses, found associated with the largest-scale regular courtyard plan farmsteads.

Building types

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

- There are some pre-1840 threshing barns with wide doorways to threshing bays, which, if timber-framed, may contain evidence for a regional concentration of aisled construction

- The scale of individual farms and of arable-based farming is reflected in the provision of granaries (frequently built as an upper storey over a cart shed or animal housing), cart sheds, implement sheds and stables.

- The most common buildings for cattle are outshots added to barns, loose boxes for

fatstock, shelter sheds and cow houses for dairy cattle.

- Pigsties, often marked by yards with feeding troughs, are usually placed close to the house.



This village farmstead has a lower, steeply pitched roofline in its present gable, built of cobbles with brick levelling courses. The change in brickwork on the front elevation would suggest it was single storey originally. Photo © Jen Deadman

The presence of timber-framed buildings is sometimes more obvious, as here in Scriven, a Slingsby estate village centred around a green. The 17th-century house to the left has a framed first floor with a ground floor rebuilt in stone. Other farmhouses have brick cladding over timber-frames and frequently retain timber re-used from earlier framed buildings. Photo © Jen Deadman

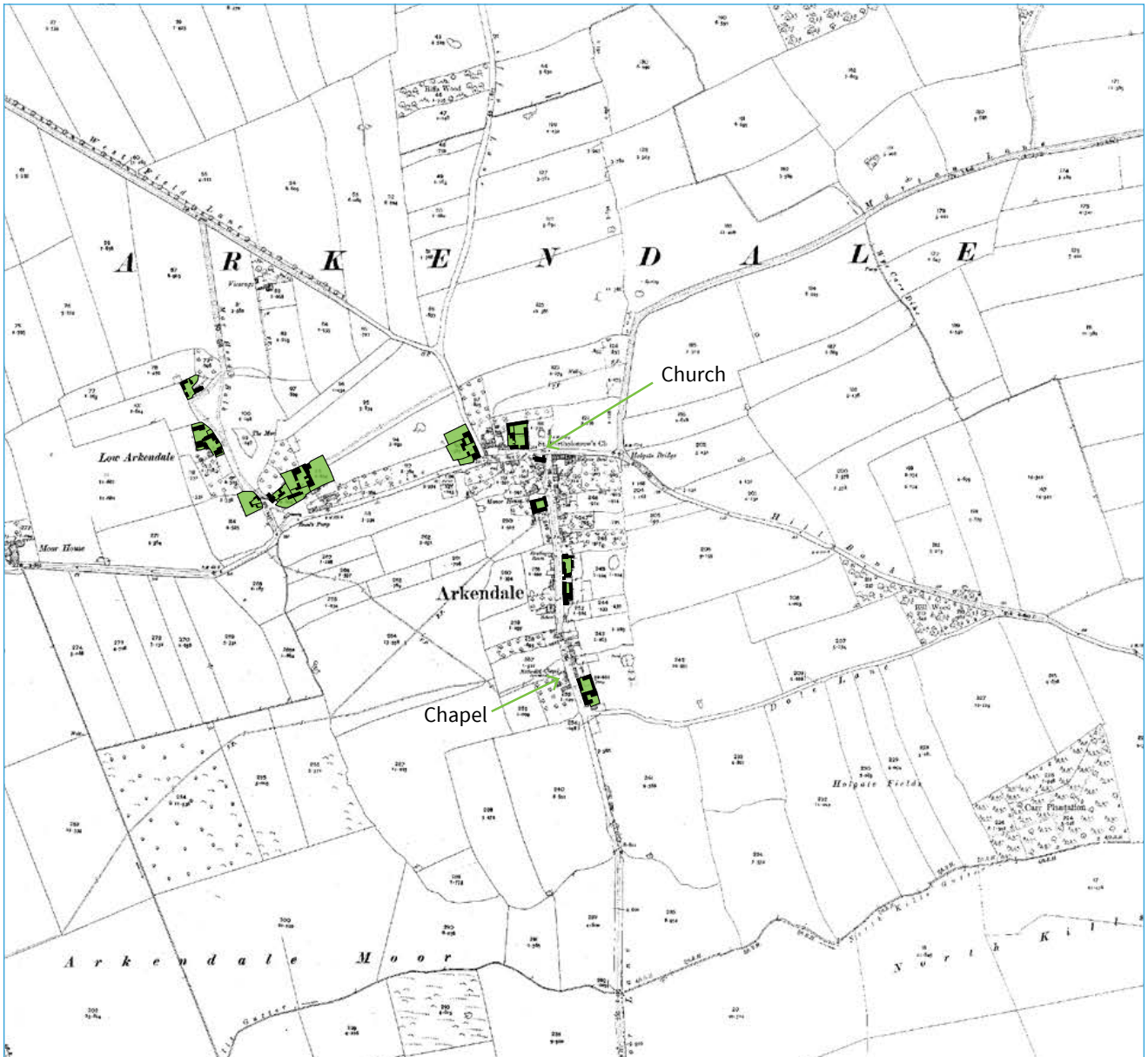


Most farmsteads sited away from villages date from after the mid-18th century, and are viewed across fields bounded by low thorn hedges. To the left is a typical mid-19th-century farmstead, to the east of Knaresborough, with a large combination barn of cobble and brick construction. To the right is a brick-built courtyard group of the early 19th century, including a combination barn (with integral stables) and a pyramidal-roofed dovecote to the left. Photos © Jen Deadman



Early 19th-century stables, the farmhouse with its attached dairy to the rear being dated 1777. Photo © Jen Deadman

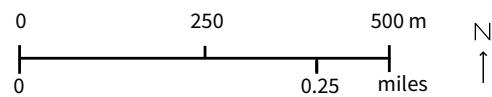
Mid- to late 19th-century, regular courtyard plan, in a village setting in the north of the area. The farmhouse fronts the village street with the yard set behind. Photo © Jen Deadman



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

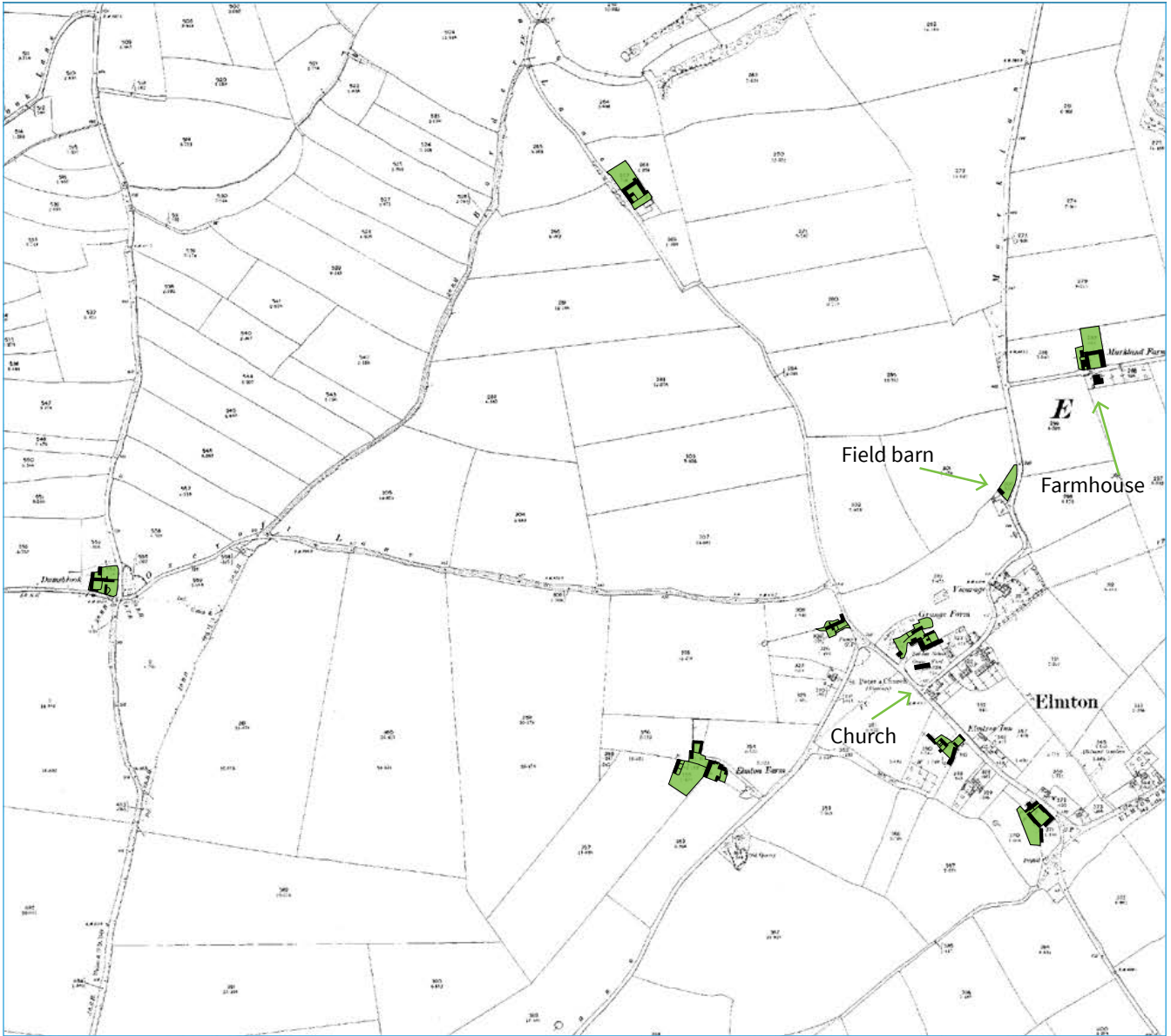


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.




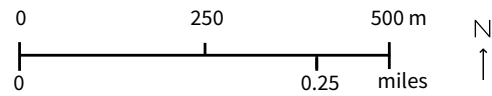
Arkendale

On higher ground to the east is High Arkendale. The two settlements are now joined by a string of modern housing. Arkendale is a linear village set along a spring line with former farmsteads constrained within narrow plots at right angles to the street. Larger farmsteads developed away from the village street. Although 19th-century in the main, some buildings evidence earlier origins, most notably in raised rooflines.



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



Elmton

The pattern of the fields around Elmton, to the north of Bolsover, illustrate a process of piecemeal enclosure of strip fields and then further enlargement and reorganisation as some farms grew in size and were rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries. The enclosures to the north-west result from the drainage of grazing land.



The brick-built granary over an open-fronted cart shed is common to farmsteads in this area of mixed pastoral and arable farming. Note the cast-iron column and the louvred windows to ventilate the grain. Photo © Jen Deadman



Dentilled eaves are seen throughout the area on both 18th- and 19th-century buildings. Photo © Jen Deadman



Timber-framed barns of the 17th century and earlier, often aisled as here, were commonly reclad or their walls mostly replaced by brick and cobble in the 18th and 19th centuries. This barn was originally aisled on both sides. Photos © Jen Deadman



Courses of brickwork help maintain stability in random cobble walls. Brick is used also as quoins and as dressings to openings. Photo © Jen Deadman



The stone walling remaining on the lower courses of this mid-19th-century combination barn shows that it has earlier origins, prior to its rebuilding and incorporation into a courtyard with cart sheds (in the foreground) facing the access track. Photo © Jen Deadman



The decorative use of brick quoins and lacing to this mid-19th-century combination barn is enhanced by the arched recess with doveholes in its gable end. Photo © Jen Deadman



In the north and central areas, smallholdings built by Councils are found both in villages and in isolated positions along roadsides. The farmhouses, always with a bay window on the left-hand hand side, front a small yard or double yard where buildings are distinguished by their use of weatherboarding over a concrete frame. County farms originally developed following the enactment of the Smallholdings and Allotments Acts of 1907 and 1908. Under these Acts, all Councils had a statutory duty to meet the demand of applications by young persons to enter into farming. After the First World War, the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act 1919 encouraged Councils to expand their estates to accommodate, in particular, the settlement on the land of the returning ex-servicemen who had to be given preference over all other applicants. Photo © Jen Deadman



The pitch of this earlier stone walling suggests the presence of a thatched, single-storey building. Photo © Jen Deadman



Another distinctive building type is the henry-piggery, the hens reaching their nesting area via a small pop hole with a removable ladder. Machine brick shows where this building has been extended for a workshop on the left-hand side. Photo © Jen Deadman

Materials and detail

- Pre-17th century timber-frame is now largely confined to towns, where it is commonly refronted. The creamy-white Magnesian Limestone is widely used in local buildings, occasionally combined with brick quoins and lacing or stone cobbles, and the roofing material is commonly red pantiles. Brick was increasingly used from the early 18th century.



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