



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

South West Peak

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 53

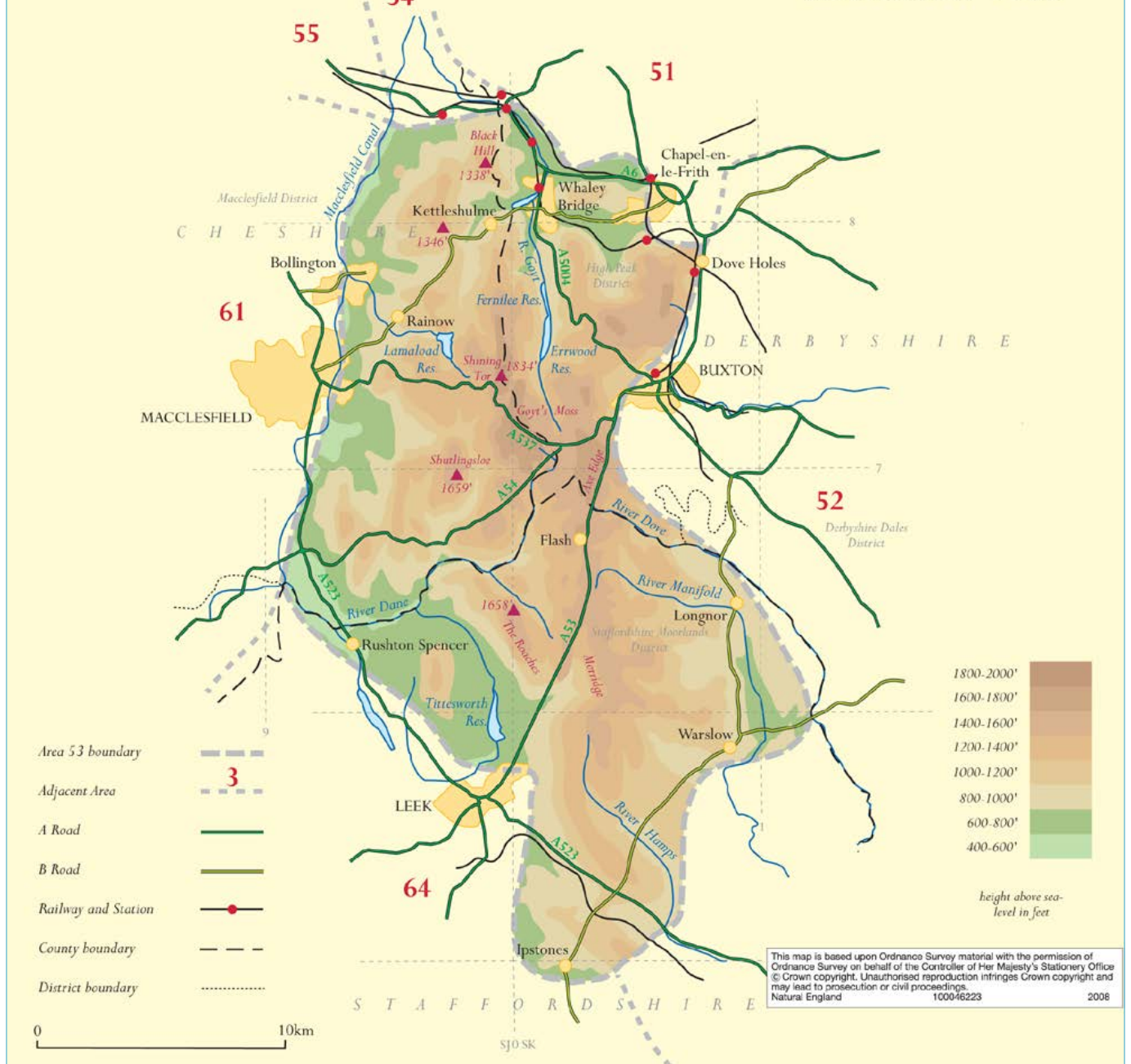


Introduction

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: Farmsteads in the landscape at Fawfield, showing the dispersed settlement pattern and mix of small-scale farmstead types and regular and irregular enclosures of different dates which is characteristic of this area.
Photo © Historic England 27964/021

Character Area 53: South West Peak



This map shows the South West Peak, 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.

The South West Peak is an area of upland and associated foothills in the south-west part of the Pennines. It is bounded by the distinctly different Character Areas of the White Peak to the east and the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain to the west. To the north it blends into the rest of the Dark Peak and the Manchester Pennine Fringe. There are no major settlements within the area which extends between Whaley Bridge and the outskirts of Macclesfield, Leek and Buxton. Of the area, 2% is urban and almost 6% is woodland. Over 65% of the area lies within the Peak District National Park.

Historic character

- A very high density of dispersed settlement, most farmsteads being on medieval to 17th-century sites and relating to fields enclosed from woodland or on a piecemeal basis by dry stone walls and hedgerows over the same period. Nucleated villages are concentrated to the south-east adjoining the White Peak, where isolated farmsteads relate to more-recent phases of enclosure. Hedgerows and dry stone walls to field boundaries.
- Predominant pattern of linear farmsteads, some originating as medieval to 16th-century longhouses and others developing as parallel or L-shaped plans with later cow houses, cart sheds and stables.
- Small-scale courtyard plans, and dispersed plans which developed within the anciently-enclosed landscapes and on routeways to the moors, are another distinctive feature.

Significance

Farmsteads Mapping in the Peak District and Staffordshire has shown that the survival of traditional farmsteads are very high, with 86% recorded from late 19th century maps retaining more than half of their historic form. This significance is heightened by the fact that the farmsteads and working buildings, including their field barns, sit within a landscape which retains visible evidence for land use and settlement from the prehistoric period. Of special significance in a national context, and for the uplands of northern England, are:

- Farmsteads and smallholdings that have a clear relationship with surviving areas of common land.
- Farmsteads with evidence for pre-19th century fabric which might relate to the dates of enclosure around them.

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.
- The West Midlands Farmstead and Landscape Project showed that the Staffordshire part of this area has a low economic mass and a high proportion of farmsteads remaining in agricultural use (45%); the area was noted as having a relatively high diversification of farm businesses (numbers of holiday homes substantially exceeding regional expectations) and a relatively low proportion in residential use (51%).
- National Park designation has enabled the funding of maintenance and repair through the agri-environment schemes.
- The Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a medium proportion in this National Character Area of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (21.4%, the national average being 32%).

Historic development

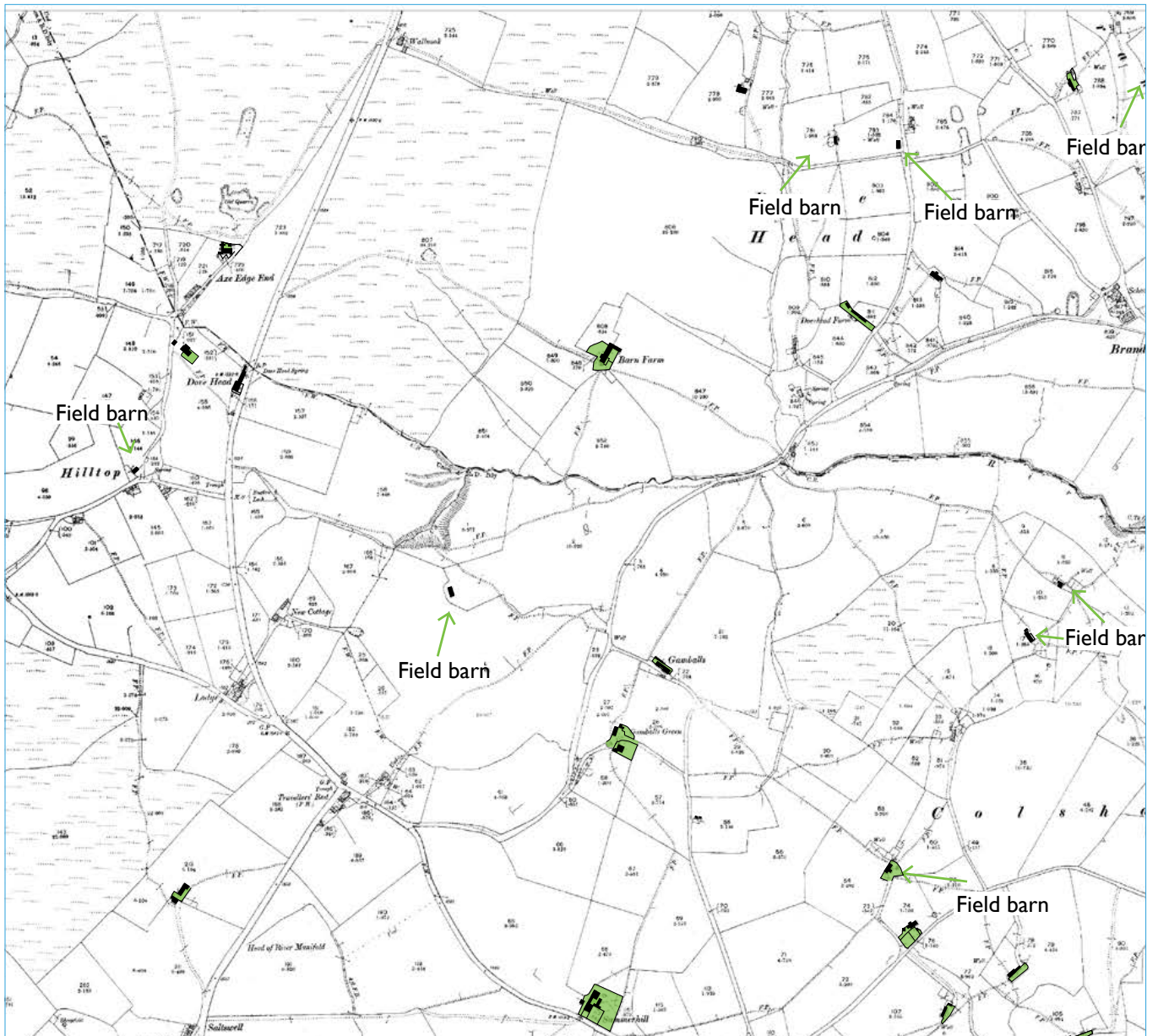
- The moors result from the clearance of the native upland forests from the Mesolithic and then Neolithic period to provide hunting and grazing land. They have for centuries been utilised by surrounding communities for summer grazing, with peat, heather and bracken cut for fuel, bedding, roofing and fodder.
- Ecclesiastical and secular estates worked stock farms in the medieval period, and extensive areas were later managed by substantial landowners such as the Dukes of Devonshire, Lord Liverpool and the Earls of Derby.
- Sheep farming, with the wool market at Macclesfield, developed as a key element of the agricultural economy, combined with cattle rearing, dairying and small-scale arable farming. The area (like other parts of the South Pennines further north) exported to the urban and industrial markets of Lancashire, east Cheshire and the Potteries, and in the 18th and 19th centuries increased productivity was enabled by the enclosure of substantial areas of moorland that had formerly served as communal grazing.
- Coal mining, from the medieval period to the early 20th century, was concentrated in the Flash and Goldsitch Moss area: it was often combined with part-time farming. Copper was also worked from the medieval period, production peaking in the later 18th century.

Landscape and settlement

- Settlement pattern is characterised by a very high degree of dispersal. High density of farmsteads which are isolated, in clusters or hamlets – the latter sometimes developing from medieval stock farms. Villages are concentrated on the limestone-gritstone divide.
- Irregular and semi-regular enclosure pattern predominates, the result of medieval to 17th-century woodland clearance and intakes from the moor. There is some evidence for oval enclosures to medieval and earlier ring-fenced farms.
- Regular enclosures with large fields are associated with late 18th- to 19th-century

enclosure of the open moor and common hill pasture, found in patches throughout but concentrated to the south of the area.

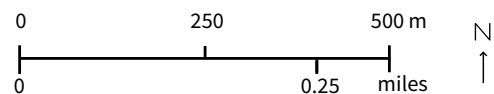
- Nucleated villages are concentrated to the south, where farmsteads expanded within villages or were built on new sites in newly enclosed land.
- Evidence of medieval open field farming survives in small areas where later boundaries perpetuate the broad outline of the long cultivation strips associated with valley settlements.



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.
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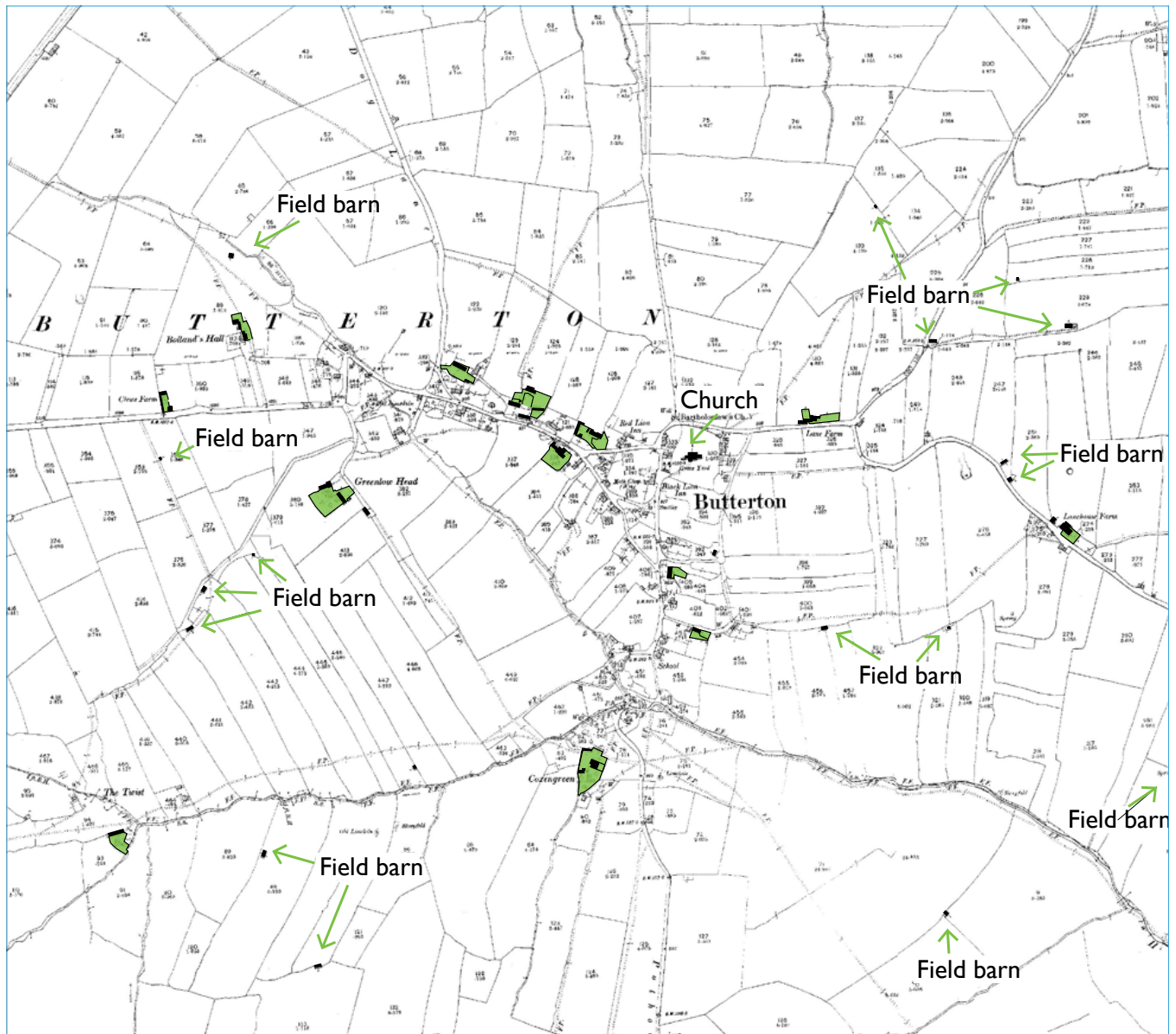


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



Dovehead

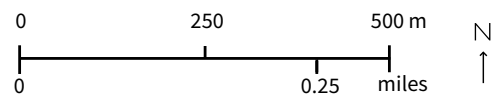
This reflects the largely dispersed settlement found across most of this area, with farmsteads and hamlets dating from the medieval period scattered across the landscape. In this area, settlement and fields have pushed out into the moorland and small areas of common, in tandem with a long process of piecemeal enclosure. This resulted in small, irregular fields, although some later enclosure may be identified by their straight boundaries. The farmsteads of this area are typically small in scale; many have linear and L-plans with the farmhouses attached to the working buildings or small loose courtyards. Field barns are also a feature of this landscape.



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.



Butterscombe

Butterscombe is a classic example of a nucleated village found in the south of this area. It is surrounded by the fossilised strips of its former open fields, with more regular fields enclosed from the common to the north-west. Apart from one or two farms, most of the farmsteads remained in the village core, although by late 19th century the number of farms had dropped to five medium-sized farmsteads and numerous field barns had been constructed within the enclosed fields.



The relatively large scale of the farmhouse and combination barn, in comparison to the lower ancillary buildings of the steading, is typical of farmsteads in this area. Note the field barns to the rear.



A loose courtyard group with ranges of two-storey cattle housing and combination barns to two sides of the yard. Photo © Jen Deadman



This linear arrangement of a house with a small cow house is typical of many smallholdings in the area. Photo © Jen Deadman



A large combination range, mainly cattle housing with a loft above, but with full-height crop storage in the end bay marked by the ventilation slits in the right gable end. Photo © Jen Deadman



A storeyed cow house of the early to mid-19th century, later extended with a single-storey range. Photo © Bob Edwards



Farmstead at Morridge Side, Bradnop, showing the farmhouse facing into its own garden and farm buildings (mostly for housing cattle) placed to two sides of the farmyard. Photo © Historic England 27966/066



Granaries Steps to an upper floor granary and wool loft in the gable end of a combination barn. Photo © Bob Edwards



The importance of hay for winter fodder is shown in this large-scale hay barn with stone piers. Photo © Bob Edwards



Larger outfarms were also built on the plateau, where large holdings developed in the late 18th and 19th centuries. This combination building faces into a yard and comprises a granary above a stable to the left, and a hay loft over cattle housing to the right. Photo © Bob Edwards

Materials and detail

- Gritstone is the predominant traditional building material with some red sandstone which is concentrated to the west. Heavy stone lintels over windows and stone jambs to doorways are common.
- Brick becomes more common towards the west.
- Remnants of generally 16th-century or earlier timber-frame are very rare and almost all confined to houses. Some working buildings retain lintels and other timbers taken from earlier, cruck-framed buildings.
- Stone slate (gritstone) roofs and plain tile or Welsh slate roofs are of 19th-century date. Staffordshire blue tiles are seen particularly in the west of the area.



Historic England

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

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The **West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project**, led by English Heritage (now Historic England), has mapped the historic character, survival and use of farmsteads across the whole region which includes part of this NCA. For the Summary Report of 2009 see <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/west-midlands-farmsteads-landscapes/> For more detailed guidance on farmsteads in the National Park see the **Peak District Historic Farmsteads Guidance** <https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/looking-after/living-and-working/farmers-land-managers/historic-farmsteads-guidance>

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