



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Lancashire Coal Measures

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 56



Introduction

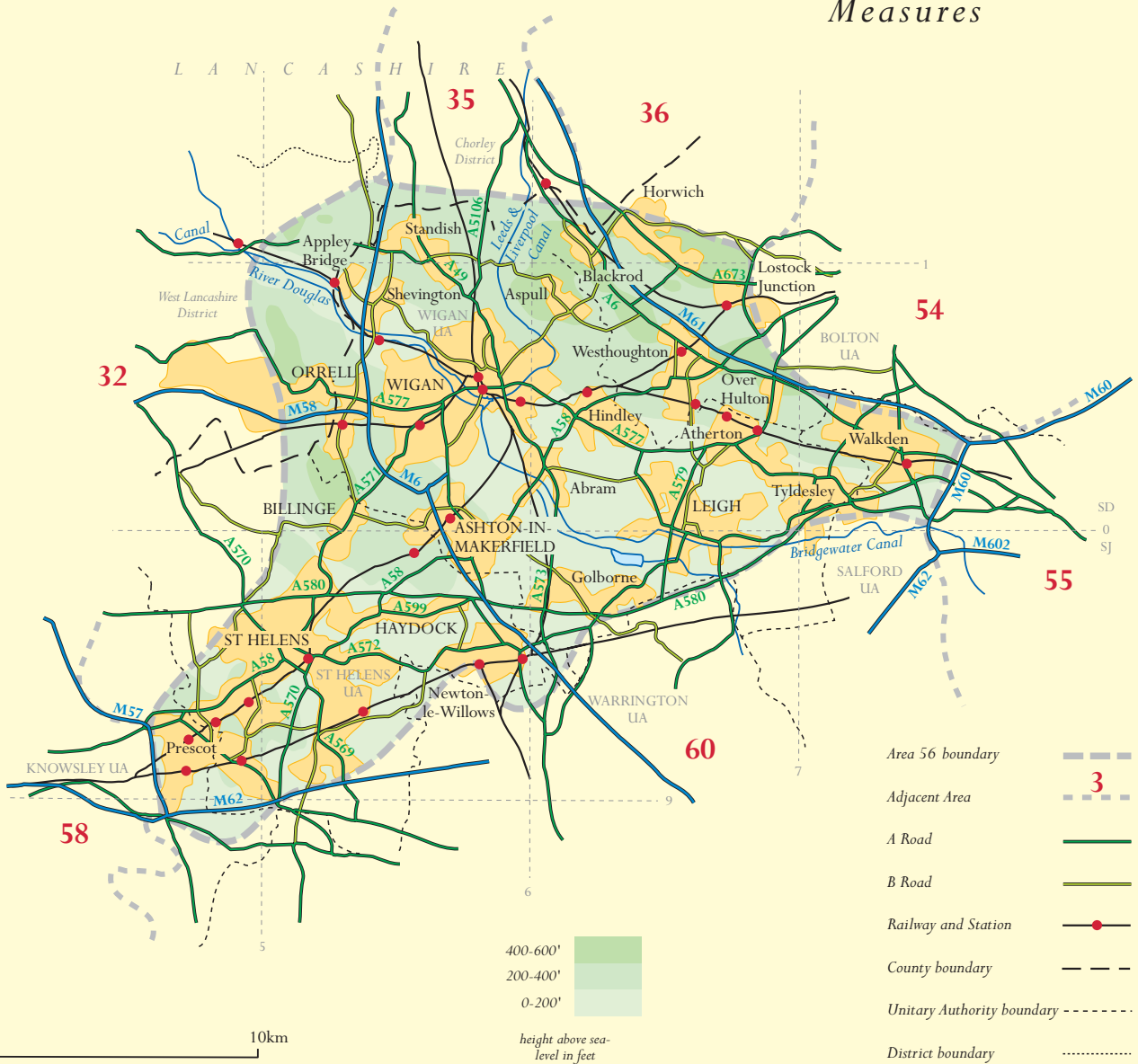
The Farmstead and Landscape Statements will help you to identify the historic character of traditional farmsteads and their buildings in all parts of England, and how they relate to their surrounding landscapes. They are now available for all of England's National Character Areas (NCAs), and should be 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>).



Pennington Hall, facing into Pennington Green in Aspull, is dated 1653 and comprises an early use of brick. The cross wings also mark the high status of the house, and the barn – although rebuilt above the plinth in the later 18th century – was also designed to impress through its prominent alignment to the green. High-status farmsteads face greens and were also associated with medieval moated sites, as at Gidlow Hall to the north of this site. Photo © Jeremy Lake

Front cover: A mid-19th-century farmstead near Haigh in the north-west of the area, set within fields enclosed on a piecemeal basis from the medieval period. Photo © Jeremy Lake

Character Area 56: Lancashire Coal Measures



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This map shows the Lancashire Coal Measures 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.

The Lancashire Coal Measures surround the towns of St Helens and Wigan and extend from the Mersey Valley in the south to the Lancashire and Amounderness Plain in the north-west. The area is dominated by industry and the legacy of mineral working. Of the area, 34% is classed as urban, and 43% is agricultural land. Only 4% is under woodland cover and 0.5% is designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Historic character

- Farmsteads developed as linear plans, dispersed layouts and small-scale courtyards, often alongside and at the meeting point of sinuous routeways, in relationship to 17th-century and earlier piecemeal and irregular enclosure.
- Formal courtyard layouts of detached buildings and regular courtyard layouts of interlinked buildings developed within areas of regular enclosure, whether newly established or resulting from later 18th- and 19th-century reorganisation.
- Farmstead groups, mostly of 19th-century date, are dominated by combination barns and housing for cattle.

Significance

- Traditional farmstead groups do not survive as such a strong feature of the landscape as the Durham Coalfield Pennine Fringe and other industrial areas such as Cornwall, or with evidence for early mechanisation with wheelhouses.
- There are very few survivals of the small farms and smallholdings which developed as a characteristic of this area.

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 (38.7%, the national average being 32%).
- The Photo Image Project also recorded an above-average percentage (17.6%, the national average being 7.5%) of listed working farm buildings that show obvious signs of structural disrepair.

Historic development

- Over the medieval period, this area developed as one of agriculture intermixed with rough grazing on extensive mosslands, which also supplied peat for fuel and materials for building. Between the 12th and 14th centuries, population pressure drove estates and communities to undertake small-scale drainage works to bring the drier edges of the mosslands into cultivation, a process which gathered pace from the later 17th century in tandem with the mining of coal.
- The scale and intensity of mining increased over the 18th century, and particularly as demand intensified after the application of steam power to the Lancashire cotton industry, to glass and copper production at St Helens, and to diverse manufacturing enterprises. The early development of canals (the Bridgewater Canal, opened in 1761 – the first in Britain not to follow a natural watercourse – followed in 1774 by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal) and, from the 1830s, a dense network of railways enabled the export of coal, raw materials and manufactured goods.
- The area's agriculture became focused on the production of fatstock and dairy products on relatively small farms, with corn being produced in areas of deeper and more fertile soils. The production of milk and cheese, and the feeding of cattle on crops produced on local farms, increased over the second half of the 19th century in response to rising demand for dairy produce and meat from industrial centres and resorts. The same period saw an increase in the number of pigs.

Landscape and settlement

- Urban and industrial development predominates, leaving earlier village cores, fragments of agricultural landscapes and areas affected by restoration of mining landscapes such as the Wigan Flashes. The high density of dispersed settlement, as well as the growth of villages, results also from new housing for industrial workers, smallholdings (with by-employment in trade and industry) and farmsteads.
- There is some surviving ancient (pre-1600) enclosure, mainly to the north of Wigan in combination with ancient woodland and associated with a higher survival of 17th-century and earlier houses. Across the whole area, the piecemeal patterns of fields enclosed from medieval strip fields are intermixed with irregular patterns of enclosure that can result from the taking-in of woodland and mossland for agriculture prior to the 14th century or as late as the 18th century. These patterns have in turn been adapted with straight-sided boundaries and regular fields as estates and farms exchanged holdings and reorganised farmland. Plantations ornament these landscapes of piecemeal, reorganised and regular enclosure. The mosslands to the east were reclaimed for arable in the early to mid-19th century in characteristically broad and regular fields with few raised boundaries.

Farmstead and building types

Farmhouses and some barns offer evidence for a phase of rebuilding around 1700, earlier buildings being associated with high-status sites. Pre-19th-century buildings appear, however, to be less common than in the surrounding areas. This is probably due to the rebuilding of farmsteads and smallholdings, particularly for the housing of cattle and fodder.

Farmstead types

- Some dispersed and linear plan farmsteads survive, these being strongly associated with small-scale roadside farms with access to rough grazing. Larger farms have working buildings to three or four sides of yards with

extensive cattle ranges, and regular courtyard plans of overall L-plan form in dairying areas to the south (adjoining the Cheshire Plain – see NCA 61).

Building types

- Two-storey, multifunctional ranges are characteristic, providing cow houses, stables and crop storage or processing areas. These mostly date from the late 18th century and can be marked by large cart entries and

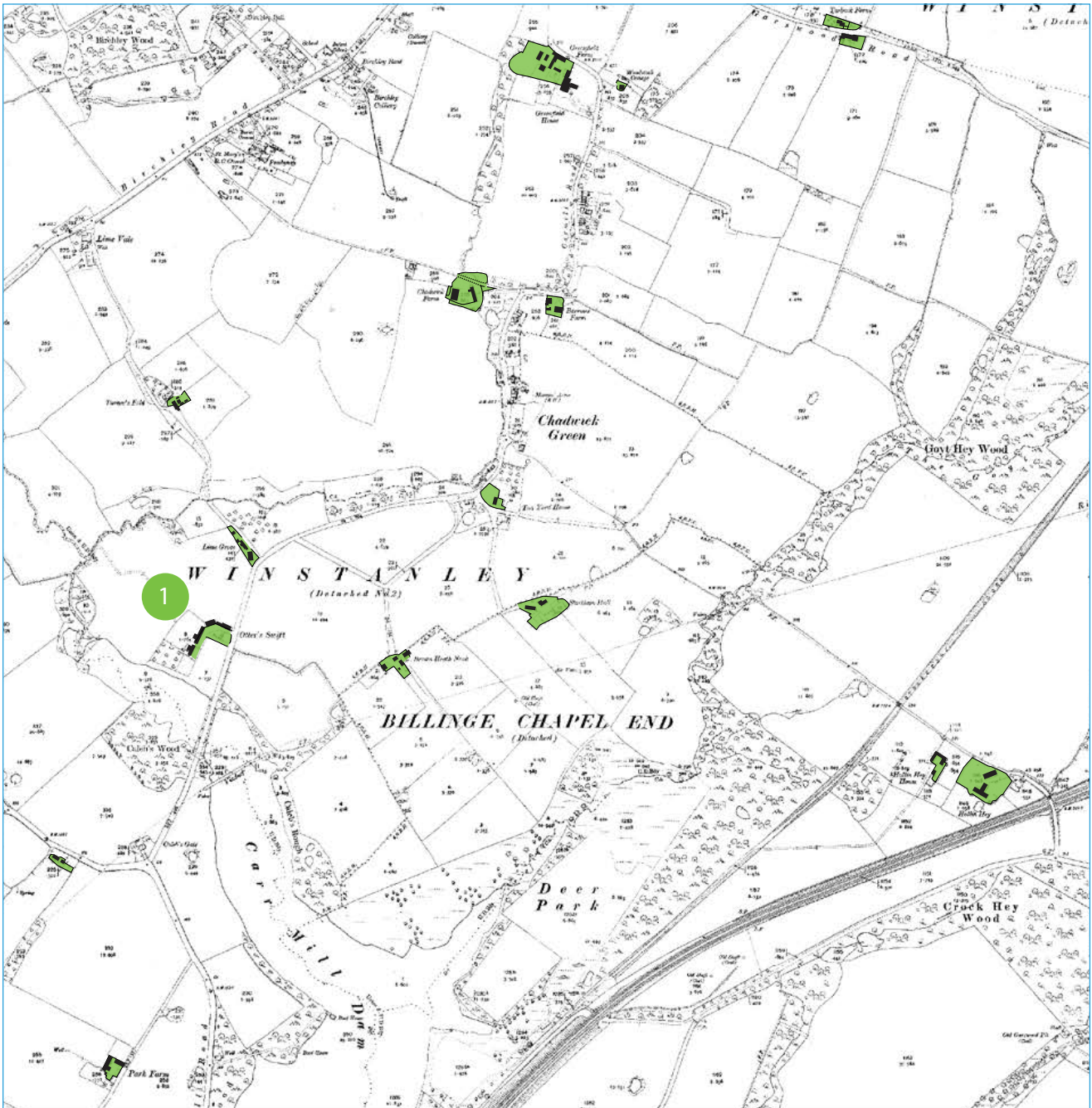
smaller flanking doors (sometimes to the gable end) for cattle, and pitching holes set in the gable or sides to allow hay to be thrown into the upper floor for storage.




An early 19th-century, linear farmstead sited on the edge of newly-enclosed land, with ventilation holes marking the crop storage area, entries to a stable and cow house, a pitching door to the gable end and additional housing for cattle to the rear. Photo © Jeremy Lake

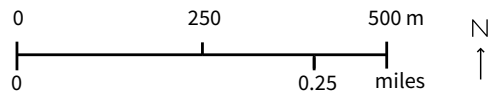


It is common, as here at Blackrod, to find evidence for the phased construction of buildings in dressed stone and later brick. The outshot, enabling the housing of more cattle than could fit into the span of the main building, is another common feature. Photo © Jeremy Lake



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.



Winstanley, St Helens

The buildings on a varied range of farmsteads dating from the medieval period were largely rebuilt in this landscape in the 19th century, when there was also some enclosure and reorganisation of its sandy soils and drainage of marshland around Carr Mill to the south-west. Marl pits helped to fertilise many of the fields, and both small and large farms were sustained by demand for milk, potatoes and other farm produce, which increased in tandem with the development of coal mining and stone quarrying in this area.



Three doors to the gable end mark out this combination barn (at Cooper Turning) as a 'Lancashire-type' of barn, the central door opening into a feeding passage to the stalls. Photo © Jeremy Lake

Materials and detail

- Traditional building materials are Lower and Middle Coal Measure sandstones, timber frame (up to the 17th century) and brick (from the 18th century) with stone flag or Welsh slate roofs.



Historic England

This guidance has been prepared by
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