



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Sefton Coast

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 57



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>).



Aerial view of farmstead partially surrounded by woodland.

Front cover: Moss Farm

The 17th-century and earlier date of farmhouses provides further evidence of the drainage and enclosure of land in this area. Here is Moss Farm north of Hightown, a cruck-framed house set within an irregular enclosure that contrasts with the low thorn hedgerows resulting from later reorganisation of farmland. Photo © Historic England 28771/038

Character Area 57: Sefton Coast

This map shows the Sefton Coast 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 Sefton Coast runs north from the edge of Crosby to the mouth of the Ribble Estuary. It is characterised by intertidal sands and silts, dune systems, coastal heath, and is backed by arable farmland. It is valued in its own right as a conservation and recreation resource. It includes a series of coastal settlements including Southport. Of the area, 26% is urban, 15% is arable or horticultural, 6% improved grassland, and 5% is woodland, whilst 24% of the area is designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Historic character

- The character of this small area, with reorganised fields and large farms, has been shaped by estates and the development of coastal resorts from the mid-19th century.
- Large courtyard farmsteads are set within fields subject to reorganisation in the later 18th and 19th centuries, with linear, L-plan and small-scale courtyard farmsteads remaining from the small farms which typified this area until the early 19th century.
- There are also areas of former mosses and moorland enclosed and improved in the 17th century, characterised by large, open hedgeless fields bounded by ditches.

Significance

- Complete traditional farmsteads relate to the agricultural improvement of this area in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

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 (100%, the national average being 32%).

Historic development

The historic development of this area has much in common with that of the coastal area extending northwards along the Lancashire and Amounderness Plain (NCA 32):

- drainage of wetlands from the medieval period
- agricultural improvement for arable-based farming, peaking in the mid-19th century and followed by the rising importance of dairying

and the development of local specialities such as the breeding of rabbits in warrens and the growing of asparagus for expanding urban markets including the coastal resorts that developed in this area from the 1840s.

Landscape and settlement

- This area has been subject to much change in the later 19th and 20th centuries, mostly after the final phase of reclamation and enclosure which was followed by the development of coastal resorts and recreational landscapes. Houses and barns of the 18th century and earlier are concentrated in medieval villages and hamlets. Beyond the north and central areas dominated by Formby and Southport,

the Sefton Coast is a region of dispersed farmsteads and small hamlets concentrated mainly to the south on reclaimed mossland. Here, the landscape is characterised by large, open, hedgeless fields bounded by ditches and coarse grasses. Isolated, 19th-century farmsteads feature prominently in the landscape, set amongst deciduous shelter beds.

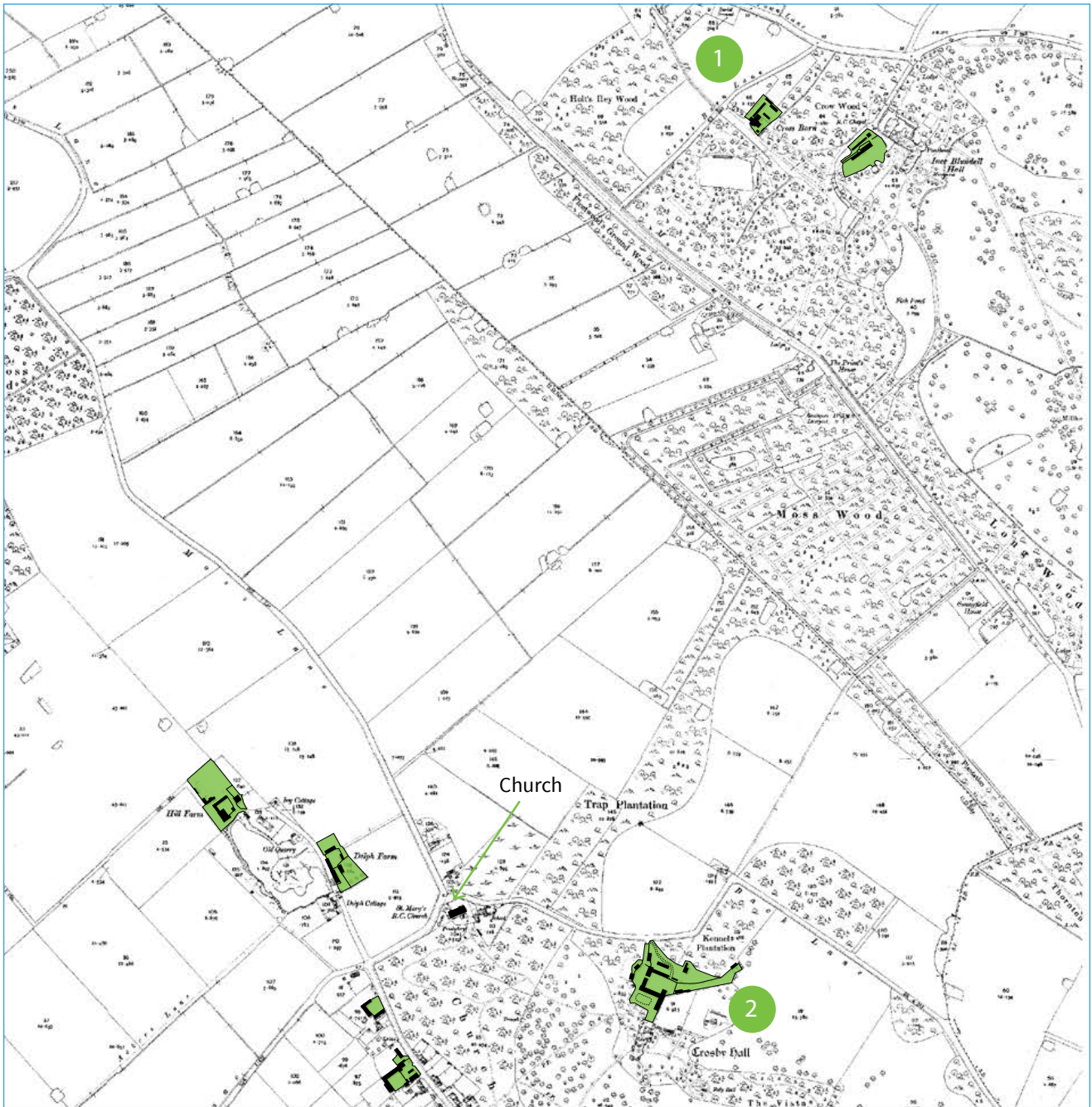
Farmstead and building types

- Farmsteads are similar to, but generally smaller in scale than those to the north. Linear farmsteads may include cruck-frames dating from the 17th century. There is evidence for the development of houses with symmetrical fronts facing village streets and courtyards of working buildings to the rear from the

early 18th century, and most courtyard farms having L-plan ranges or detached buildings set around two or three sides of yards. Buildings mostly comprise combination barns for hay, corn and housing livestock, housing for cattle and storage for hay.



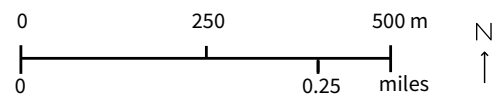
This five-bay, late 19th-century hay barn is sited centrally in the north yard at Crosby Hall, easily accessible to cattle housing and stables situated on the perimeter of the yard. It has a hipped slate roof with oversailing eaves set on rectangular brick piers. This style of hay barn is found throughout the north of England generally on large estate farms. 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.
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Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



Little Crosby, Ince Blundell

This area shows the northern part of linear village of Little Crosby, an earlier farmstead with a cruck-framed barn dated to c 1540 at Cross Farm (1) and the home farm around the 16th century Crosby Hall (2). To the north-east is part of the park at Ince Blundell which dates from the mid-18th century, around the core of the Old Hall which dates from the 16th century. Evidence for medieval strip fields is retained to the south-west of the village but elsewhere has been subject to later enclosure. The mosses and moorland began to be enclosed and improved in the 17th century. Farmsteads within the village date to between the 17th and 19th centuries and include some which developed from linear into courtyard arrangements.



A three-bay cart shed of sandstone rubble with cylindrical stone columns with thin square caps supporting a graduated slate roof. Photo © Jen Deadman



Great Altcar, a long straggling settlement, lies to the north of Little Crosby and south of Formby. The area is intensively farmed and is characterised by drainage dykes. This mid-19th-century farmhouse on the outskirts of the village stands in its own garden and orchard, distancing itself from the yard and L-shaped range to the rear. Photo © Jen Deadman



Here, also with a loose arrangement of small agricultural buildings to the rear, is a small, mid-19th-century steading with the house and combination barn separated by the yard entry. The combination barn is of standard plan form with central cart bay/threshing floor flanked by a lofted byre and full-height hay mew. Photo © Jen Deadman



A mid-19th-century steading with a combination barn and single-storey cattle housing close to Hightown in the south of the area. Photo © Jen Deadman

Materials and detail

- The farmsteads of the area are dominated by the use of brick, and Welsh slate, with some rare surviving fragments of timber-frame. The tradition of building in clay around wattle walling and light timber studding extended into the Lancashire and Amounderness Plain (NCA 32), and marram grass from coastal dunes was widely used for thatching.



Historic England

This guidance has been prepared by
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