



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Hensbarrow

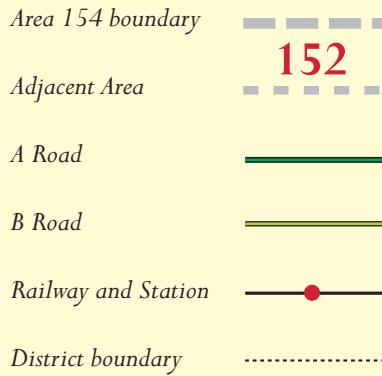
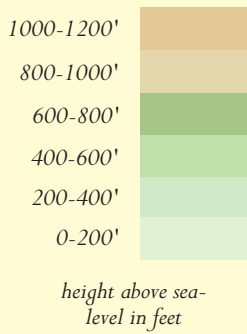
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 154



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>).

Character Area 154 Hensbarrow



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The Hensbarrow Area, 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 small, roughly ellipse-shaped granite Character Area in Cornwall is the centre of the china clay industry, bounded by the urban areas of St Austell and St Blazey to the south, and the main A30 to the north. The northern and eastern boundary areas include Goss and Red Moors which are areas of lowland heath, the largest in Cornwall, with some islands of medieval enclosure. Both contain large SSSIs and nature reserves, with Red Moor containing pools from open-cast tin mining.. Of the Character Area, 49% is farmland, 12% is woodland and 3% is defined as urban and 1.5% lies within the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site.

Historic character

- Landscape is dominated by granite geology and its associated tors and mineral deposits – particularly the china clay.
- This has long been a landscape of dynamic change and this pattern continues as new solar farms are constructed and as china clay continues to be extracted from the landscape.
- The impact of extractive industries has emphasised the historic pattern of islands of ancient farmland interspersed with rough grazing – either high moor, or lower wet moors.
- farmsteads and hamlets are generally dispersed, with a few larger church-towns; smallholdings and cottages are found on moor edges and intakes.
- Medieval farmsteads and early farm buildings (mostly farm houses) are on lower land off high moors – both because of late intake of moors and also destruction by expanding clay industry.
- With notable exceptions, there are relatively few large or improved farmsteads; there are large numbers of linear, dispersed and town-place layouts and loose courtyard plans, usually with a combination barn to just one side of the yard, sometimes larger in scale.
- Smallholdings often consist of a single house and small barn.
- Key buildings are two-storey combination barns (chall barns), some genuine bank barns, shippens, cart houses; piggeries are very common; some light horse and water engines, but these are not common. Also, less common than in other areas are purely grain-related features (granaries, pigeon holes) and ancillary features like bee boles, goose holes, hulls, and cider mills.

Significance

- The landscape is unique (the Cornish Alps – the landscape of clay extraction – itself undergoing rapid change and character loss); the relatively low levels of investment, especially in areas under threat of expanding mineral extraction, mean that Hensbarrow ironically has some of the oldest farmstead

and field patterns surviving anywhere in Cornwall, albeit very patchy.

- However, much of the fabric of the farmsteads in the area was always relatively low-key and insubstantial.

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 (66.7%, the national average being 32%).
- While lack of investment has preserved some aspects of historic farmsteads and landscape, it has also led to decline in farm buildings, whole farmsteads and landscapes. There will be continued loss of sites associated with expanding mineral workings.

Historic development

- Upland moors were used for seasonal grazing and fuel; resulting from clearance in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, these areas retain the highest concentrations of prehistoric settlement (including late prehistoric and Roman period 'rounds', small defended farmsteads or hamlets, which continued to be occupied after the 5th century AD) and ritual sites and features as well as medieval and later features (such as lynchets and ridge and furrow) associated with the expansion and contraction of land use.
- Between the extensive tracts of high moorland, and, most obvious today, in the wet moors surrounding the uplands, were pockets of (at least) medieval settlement and associated field systems – always hard to work in this most unforgiving of geologies.
- the northern slopes of the uplands, around the medieval churchtowns of St Dennis and Roche, remained relatively little affected directly by industry – although becoming important service centres for the industries – and remained a relatively rich agricultural zone between the high moors and the low wetlands.
- Major industries were quarrying, china clay working and mining. Growth of rural industrial communities was rapid from the 18th to mid-19th centuries, and hugely expanded in the late 19th to early 20th centuries, with exponential development of china clay working.
- The increased industrialisation of the area saw the expansion of some of the farming hamlets into industrial villages, primarily to serve the growing population of workers; elsewhere labourers' cottages and terraces sprang up to create entirely new hamlets.
- Although clay extraction originally fitted into and amongst the farming communities (with smallholdings and cottages along unenclosed land expanding with both the tin and clay industries in the 19th century), by the early to mid-20th century, it had begun to be ultimately destructive of all previous landscapes and, indeed, landforms – farming practice fossilised with complete lack of investment in land that was likely to be absorbed by the expanding clay workings.
- All these industries were part of a mixed economy with many industrial workers having smallholdings.
- Although outside the area itself, industrial activity stimulated the development of towns, especially St Austell and the mineral ports (Par, Charlestown, etc.), and of large gentry houses and accompanying parks; the links between the core area and these outlying places via road, rail and canal are part of the history and character of the area.
- The area was largely by-passed or only skirted by major roads or rail links
- There was virtually no history of leisure or tourist related activity in the area before the



Hensbarrow landscape, Gunheath: a granite upland of small pockets of ancient farmland and cottage-smallholdings on the margins of what is now remnant moorland, all gradually giving way to the vast scale of the china clay industry. Photo © Ann Reynolds.

1990s; since then, the area has developed as a visitor destination linked particularly to the clay heritage: Wheal Martyn, Luxulyan

Valley, the Eden Project (in a disused clay pit, attracting over 1 million visitors a year), cycle ways and recreation routes.

Landscape and settlement

- Hensbarrow is a landscape with roots of granite. Granite is exposed as moorstone and tors and where it has decayed, the granite forms pockets of china clay.
- Although the landscape is at the heart of one of the ancient tin stannaries of Cornwall – exploited heavily in the medieval and post-medieval periods – since the mid-19th century, it has been dominated by china clay extraction, which somewhat masks its underlying former character as one of the granite intrusions of Cornwall.
- By the medieval to post-medieval period, most of the area was rough grazing and open moorland – subsequent enclosure, even medieval – went together with exploitation of the mineral resource.
- The irregular field patterns with scattered hamlets and farmsteads, mainly around the fringes of the downland and around the lower moors, interspersed with pockets of valley woodland, represent the range of ages of enclosure.
- Below the high ground, such as Hensbarrow Downs, irregular fields lie in complex patterns, enclosed by largely treeless Cornish hedges. These reflect piecemeal enclosure of the moorland since the medieval period and the mixed farming and mining economy that persisted for centuries. Pasture for livestock rearing is dominant and arable is found on only the most favoured sites.
- The isolated farmsteads, loose clusters of miners' cottages, terraces and small hamlets are linked by narrow, winding, commonly sunken lanes.
- The heavily mined landscape of the last 200 years has also resulted in pockets of well-preserved medieval and early post-medieval farmland, including a high degree of fossilised medieval strip field systems. This continues into the farm vernacular, with a

good representation of local styles surviving. This is clearly the result of the hold of the clay industry, with many farms on the marginal land being owned by the clay companies. This inevitably leads to reluctance to invest in the farm infrastructure, given the temporal nature of its future existence.

- Post medieval miner-farmer smallholdings tend to be found on the marginal land and these are often the first to disappear into the pits and dumps. They often comprise no more than a small cottage and a very simple barn or small block and tin outhouse.
- A major feature of the area is the number of industrial villages. In some, such as Roche and Nanpean, the original farms became subsumed; elsewhere are often straggling, dispersed settlements of labourers' cottages and terraces interspersed with social buildings, schools and chapels.
- The northern and eastern fringes of the NCA, in direct contrast to the Hensbarrow interior, are dominated by the lowland moors of Goss,

Tregoss, Criggan and Red Moor. These moors have been heavily worked for tin since the medieval period, resulting in a distinctive wetland landscape only suitable for marginal (and hazardous) grazing in agricultural terms.

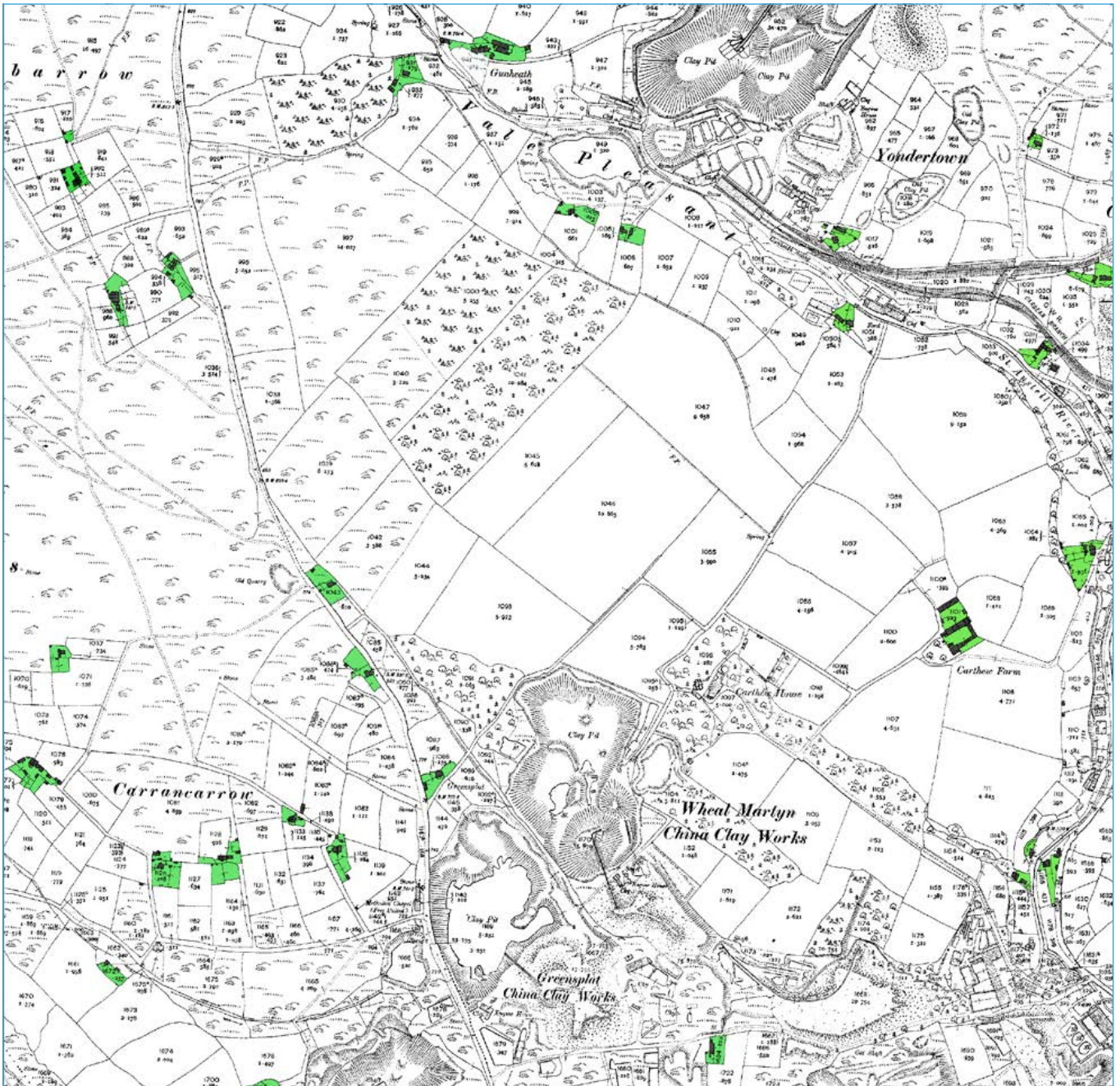
- Between the lowland moors, there is a well-established pattern of traditional farms and farming hamlets, many with medieval origins and often associated with the well-preserved framework of open field systems of former strip fields.
- There is a very distinctive but somewhat atypical field system centred on St Dennis Church. Although it appears to be medieval strip fields in form, it is of post medieval date, and is notable for its dry stone walls rather than the Cornish hedges found over most of the Character Area.
- On the more sheltered sites and better agricultural land, to the east of the area, modern farm buildings tend to dominate the older dwellings.

Farmstead and building types

- Pre-18th-century farmstead buildings predominantly comprise farmhouses, most dating from the late 17th century.
- The farmsteads with medieval origins in this NCA tend to be found within small hamlets on the lower lying land around the fringes of the uplands. This is partially due to the extensive effects of the clay industry on the higher ground removing earlier settlement evidence, although on the whole it is the post-medieval farms which tend to be found on the higher, marginal land.
- The farms can be divided into two main types: traditional farms (larger and often with medieval origins) and smallholdings (small, miner-farmer owned or tenanted).

The predominant pattern is of:

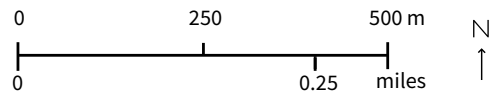
- Loose courtyard layouts, usually with a combination barn to just one side of the yard, sometimes larger in scale. Full, formal courtyard layouts are rare in this area.
- Smallholdings often consisting of a single house and small barn
- Dispersed layouts with working buildings and yards, sometimes intermixed with two or more farmhouses
- Linear farmsteads, including many small-scale miner-farmer examples.



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.



Area 1: The heart of the Hensbarrow uplands

To the right is Carthew Farm, a water-powered regular multi-yard which also operated as a timber mill. It developed from the 1840s on an earlier site as an estate home farm attached to the Martyn's seat at Carthew House. The fields are large and straight-sided 19th-century improvements of anciently enclosed farmland. The NCA has a few of these large-scale planned farmsteads, often relatively grand architecturally, built largely on industrial wealth, (in this case Wheat Martyn) contrasting with the very humble mass of most farms. Smallholdings lie to the west and north, with their small, regular fields taken directly out of the moor. They typically comprise a house and a single combination barn in a small, rectangular garden or yard enclosure; the distinction between these and landless squatter cottages is barely perceptible. In the valleys are a mixture of more such smallholdings, cottages, mills, chapels, school, inns and post office – the beginnings of an industrial community.



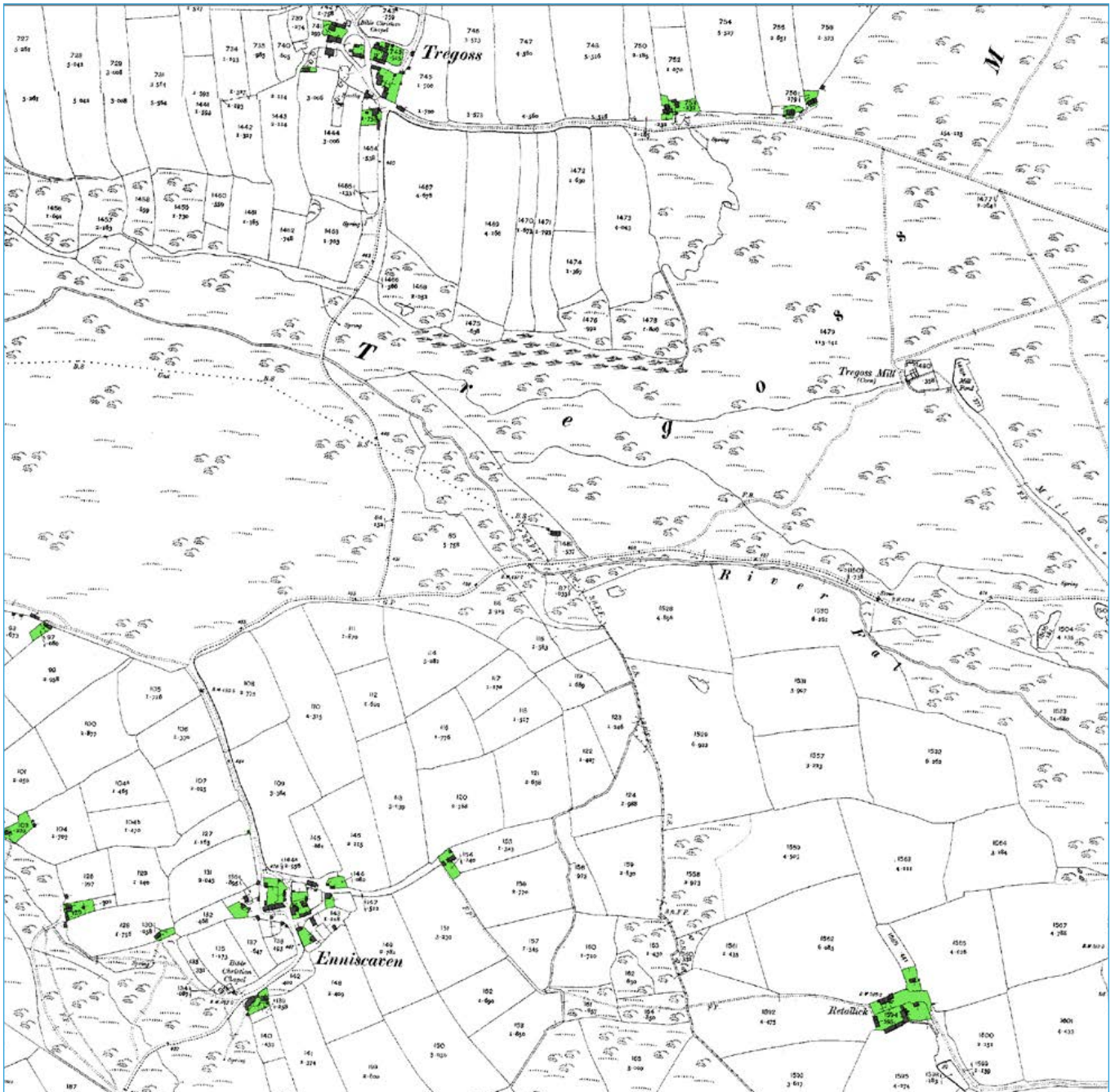
Carthew, on the edge of Wheal Martyn, from the east (see map on previous page).. All is dwarfed by the encroaching scale, even in 1906, of the china clay industry – today Carthew House has succumbed, as have most of the moorland and smallholdings, and Carthew Farm stands on the brink of the abyss. Photo © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2005; F67-028



Carthew. The water-powered complex dating from the 1840s (all listed) operated as a saw mill as well as a farm, a reflection of the industrial interests of the owners. The bank barns were variously used for threshing, granaries and animal housing, as well as saw mills and timber drying. Adjoining the large farmhouse were walled garden, dairy, wash house, pigsties, bee boles. Photo © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2005; F67-027



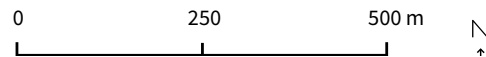
In the parcels of hard-to-work, anciently enclosed land amongst the wet bogs north and east of the high moors, the traditional pattern was of dispersed farmstead. In many cases, these too were transformed, often in a single mid-19th-century phase, into regular courtyards. This is a very late example near Red Moor (c 1900). Photo © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2007; F80-022



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.



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



Area 2: The flat, low-lying wetland moors around the edges of the upland.

Farming hamlets, at least medieval in origin, sit in the centre of three distinct blocks of ancient farmland – islands in the larger area of Goss Moor. Each shows different field patterns: remains of strips surviving in Tregoss to the north, post-medieval small enclosures in Enniscaven to the west, and the larger, 19th-century enclosures around Retallick (which developed into its present form in the late 19th century) to the east. The farmsteads in the hamlets developed into loose courtyards around a shared townplace, together with small cottages and outbuildings dispersed around the roadsides; defining distinct yards and farmsteads is difficult. There had already been much amalgamation and loss of buildings from the early 19th century – few historic buildings survive unaltered or at all today. On the edge of the farmlands are scattered cottages exploiting the open grazing and fuel to be had on the moor.



Gunheath. Cottage/smallholdings squeezed onto the edge of the moors – simple cottages with a variety of low, often roughly built, multi-purpose buildings, today with much use of concrete block and corrugated roofing. Photo © Ann Reynolds.



The archetypal farmstead type of the area: two loose courtyard farmsteads side by side in the anciently enclosed land near St Stephens, Churchtown. Photo © Cornwall Council Licence 2015. Imagery copyright Getmapping PLC.



Small combination barn (chall barn): part of a row of farm buildings formerly one side of a courtyard opposite the house. Photo © Ann Reynolds.



Chall barn and shippon in loose courtyard – granite-built but reroofed with tin. Photo © Nick Cahill.



A large combination barn of early to mid-19th-century date, Knightor. Photo © Eric Berry.



Wheel house, Restineas. Photo © Eric Berry.



Smallholding at Gunheath – small outbuildings scarcely matching the size of even the small farmhouse. Photo © Ann Reynolds.



Goose house, Great Lavrean. Photo © Eric Berry.



Higher Biscovillack: Granite, elvan and corrugated asbestos roof: early to mid-19th-century combination barn and later lean-to cart shed. (Recorded on 1856-60 mapping). Photo © Cornwall Council.



Higher Biscovillack. Former (pre-19th-century) house (right) and attached chall barn/stable (external access steps to first floor off picture to left) with pigeon holes: the whole converted to shippon/chall barn by the early 20th century; some domestic features remain in the house as well as concrete partitions for shippon. Photo © Cornwall Council.



Garrow: The 18th-century outshot to the rear of Garrow may have originally been used as a calf house – internal evidence of partitions/large granite troughs still in situ. Photo © Emma Trevarthen.



Well cut, squared and coursed, china stone. Photo © Eric Berry.



Small-scale granite buildings with concrete-block buildings, all with tin roofs, added in the 1930s-1960s. Photo © Ann Reynolds.



Typical timber partitions – building variously used as cow house and stables. Photo © Cornwall Council.



Higher Biscovillack: The traditional Cornish gate in a Hensbarrow farmstead. Photo © Cornwall Council.

Materials and detail

- The most common traditional building material is granite. China Stone (a form of altered granite) and elvan are also widespread.
- Some buildings have cob first floors, sometimes covered with slate hanging.
- The granite occurs throughout the landscape in walls, clapper bridges, crosses, standing stones, stone stiles and rock exposures.
- Roofs are traditionally rag slate, with cut slate and asbestos slates or sheeting now more commonly found.
- There is limited use of brick, mainly around doors, windows and chimneys and predominantly white or cream coloured as it is made from local clay.
- Wooden slatted doors and windows are found in many barns, along with ventilation slits.
- Feeding passages and stalls are mainly wooden.
- First floors are generally reached by external granite steps or a ramp.
- Much later development marks a shift in the vernacular towards locally produced concrete blocks and sheet metal associated with industrial sites. The long, rendered, concrete and brick terraces of the early 20th century are a distinctive feature of the clay country, as is the nationally significant development of the concrete framed and panelled 'Cornish unit' housing.



Historic England

This guidance has been prepared by Jeremy Lake and the Cornwall Historic Environment Service (Nick Cahill, Emma Trevarthen and Ann Reynolds) with Eric Berry.

Please refer to this document as:
Historic England 2020 Farmstead and Landscape Statement: Hensbarrow. Swindon: Historic England.

For more guidance on farmsteads and landscapes in Cornwall see the Cornwall Historic Farmsteads Guidance at <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/strategic-historic-environment-service/guidance/technical-guidance/cornwall-historic-farmsteads-guidance/>

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