



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Carmmenellis

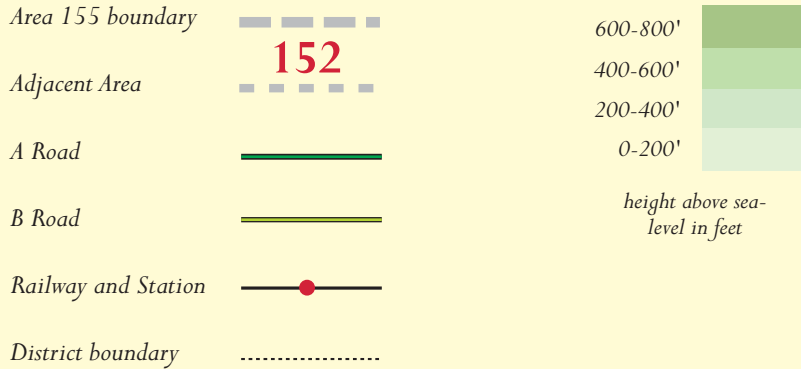
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 155



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 155 Carnmenellis



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The Carnmenellis 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 landlocked Character Area, relatively small and circular in shape, is based on the Carnmenellis granite, one of the series of granite intrusions running through Cornwall. Located in the west of Cornwall, it has a mild climate, although the hills are exposed and wind-swept. The urban areas of Camborne and Redruth lie to the north, Falmouth and Penryn to the east and Helston to the south-west. Of the Character Area, 3% is classed as urban, 70% is farmland and 5% is woodland; 0.3% of the area lies within the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Some 2,062ha of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site falls within the Carnmenellis NCA, covering 14% of the area.

Historic character

- The main granite massif has poor soils, isolated rough grazing hilltops and wet boggy valleys. Livestock farming always has been preponderant.
- The southern area is richer, with mixed farming and horticulture.
- In 18th and early 19th centuries this was one of the foremost hard-rock mineral producing areas in the world (tin and copper especially); the landscape heavily shaped by mining and granite quarrying, including by the provision of smallholdings for part-time miner-farmers.
- The predominant settlement pattern is of dispersed farmsteads and hamlets, mixed with small nucleated mining and quarrying settlements. There has been little inward investment since the decline of industrial activity – the granite upland has much evidence of contraction and abandonment, and is typified by an ad-hoc appearance of subsistence farming, with much opportunistic re-use and conversion of both agricultural and industrial buildings.
- Many of the farms straddle the boundary between Carnmenellis and Cornish Killas NCA with farming links with market towns such as Helston; 19th-century industrial links followed the same pattern. The number of large houses and parks surrounding the uplands is notable – both older gentry and new industrialists have grown rich on the mineral wealth.
- There is a predominant pattern of linear farmsteads including many small-scale miner-farmer examples, dispersed layouts (some townplace layouts) and loose courtyard layouts, commonly with a combination barn to just one side of the yard. The farms on richer soils to the south and east have many examples of mid- to late-19th century improved courtyards.
- Key buildings are late 18th- to mid-19th-century, two-storey combination barns (chall barns); less common in this area are bank barns. There is some evidence of horse and water power (leats, reservoirs, water wheels, etc.), more typical of the larger farms on the richer, lower edges of the Area.
- Low and small-scale buildings, commonly pigsties and calf houses and goosehouses are close to the farmhouse; there are some

detached stables (generally small in scale) and granaries.

- There are some field barns and 19th-century outfarms. Uplands are typified by re-used cottages, worked-out mine buildings, etc., caravans, sheds and re-used containers; larger farms throughout area are more typically

found now with large 20th-century sheds than traditional farm buildings.

- Most of Cornwall's known examples of hulls (underground passage with storage chambers cut into sides of banks or hillside) are concentrated in this area – 77 out of 99 known.

Significance

- This is one of the most significant, and ancient, areas of metalliferous production and working (with ancient stream-working and lode-back mining sites), and associated with it is significant, relatively early documentary and map evidence for the process of creation of smallholdings from both medieval field systems and farmsteads and intake from the waste (for example Basset estate activity on Carn Arthen in the 1750s), and subsequent

re-amalgamation and re-use of sites and buildings following industrial decline.

- The evidence for the expansion and contraction of land use on the granite uplands, since at least the Neolithic/Bronze Age, and as seen throughout Cornwall, is perhaps at its most complex in Carnmenellis, although this is one of the least researched and understood areas in Cornwall.

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 (28.6%, the national average being 32%).
- Both ancient field systems and distinctive post medieval smallholdings are at potential threat from hedge removal and many have no

protection through hedge regulations due to their exposed, former heathland locations.

- Development pressure is relatively low, although there has been limited development scattered through the open countryside and smaller settlements, mainly from barn conversions.

Historic development

- The evidence for the expansion and contraction of land use on the granite uplands, as seen throughout Cornwall, is perhaps at its most complex in Carnmenellis, although this is one of the least researched and understood areas in Cornwall.
- The upland moors have been used for seasonal grazing and fuel since at least the Neolithic or Bronze Ages. They retain the highest concentrations of prehistoric settlement, ritual sites and other features including, in this area, one of Cornwall's most important

archaeological sites – the Neolithic settlement remains dramatically located on top of the detached granite boss of Carn Brea.

- Generally, Carnmenellis is lower, less extensive and more accessible than the larger moors, surrounded by anciently and densely settled good agricultural land; there is evidence of medieval settlement and field systems underlying much of the area.
- This was one of the earliest exploited mineral areas (at least from the medieval period), with

very extensive remains of streamworks and early lode-back working as well as later deep shaft mining.

- The other major industry, especially in the south of the area, was granite quarrying.
- From the 18th- to mid-19th centuries, there was rapid growth of industrial communities on the periphery, particularly dense in the Camborne-Redruth area, including service industries, (founding and smelting) and export ports (especially Granite ports of for example Penryn and Gweek). All these industries were part of a mixed economy with many industrial workers having smallholdings.
- Industrial activity stimulated the development of large gentry houses and accompanying parks, especially on the more favourable lands on the periphery of the area – although Carn Brea was itself the site of a medieval deer park (the ‘castle’ was perhaps a hunting lodge). Pendarves Park and the estate village of Treslothan dominate the western sides of the area; Clowance is only just off the western edge of the area. Other major sites include late-medieval and post-medieval manors like Roscrow to the south, or the various houses of, for instance, the Williams family of industrialists, like Burncoose and Pengreep on the north-east side of Carnmenellis.
- The great industrial expansion from the mid-18th century was early in the Cornish context, so that many features, such as the huge expansion in smallholdings, are considerably earlier here than in other similar areas – there is evidence that the Basset family was subdividing Carn Entral and Carn Arthen in the 1750s.
- In contrast to its long history, much of the mining activity, and much of the associated smallholding and subdivision of older field systems, ended relatively early and suddenly. Mine buildings and remains, as well as many smallholdings, fields and buildings, were already being cleared away in the late 19th century – evidence of entire phases of industry, settlement and agricultural organisation has been lost in some places.
- In contrast, the granite quarrying industry continues to this day, albeit reduced in numbers of quarries, but generally has had much less impact on the character of the surrounding countryside and settlement patterns.
- The area was largely by-passed or only skirted by major roads or rail links although there were minor tramways, etc. within the area.
- One of the main features of the southern part of the area is the extensive systems of leats and water management systems, associated both with industrial sites and with the milling and town-water supply leat systems of Helston.
- Until the creation of Stithians reservoir (opened 1967) there was virtually no history of leisure or tourist-related activity in the area.
- Agriculture links Carnmenellis with the surrounding NCAs as many of the farms straddle the boundary between it and Cornish Killas NCA.
- There are also farming links with market towns such as Helston, paralleled by the rise of tourism.

Landscape and settlement

- Although there are many prehistoric irregular field patterns, most of the area was open grazing land and the history of the landscape since the later prehistoric times has been that of piecemeal enclosure and the exploitation of mineral resources.
- The acidic soils are of poor quality and predominantly gravelly and peaty but with patches of brown earths in the lower-lying parts of the area. Gorse covered heaths and Cornish hedges are very characteristic.



The photograph shows an adjoining, typical Carnmenellis upland landscape – the curving outer boundaries of amalgamated anciently enclosed fields associated with medieval (or earlier) settlement at Carthew contrast with the regular enclosures taken out of the moor of Calvadnack, itself with Iron Age enclosures and settlement remains. The small-scale farmsteads are typical of this area – generally 19th century cottages surrounded by a loose agglomeration of single storeyed buildings, usually of indeterminate date, with a mix of granite and concrete and tin roofs; the long string of cottages and buildings (to the right) includes mills, industrial buildings, cottages and smallholdings – today caravans, sheds and re-used containers are just as typical elements of the landscape. Photo © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2009; F90-040.

- One feature of the area is the very boggy valleys, especially on the southern and eastern sides – these were as much the waste, rough grazing areas that early settlement avoided as the upland heaths.
- Towards the south, the landscape becomes a little gentler. The soils are richer, the climate less extreme and the influences of mining are much reduced. This has allowed the development of larger farms and some horticulture in the more sheltered valleys. In place of mining, granite quarrying has influenced the landscape in the south and east leaving a legacy of rock, waste tips and sheer rock faces.
- The now disconnected remnants of open moorland on the highest areas are surrounded by patterns of irregular ancient fields, often with early, irregular enclosure and subdivision associated with the earliest (post medieval) phases of mineral exploitation and creation of smallholdings.
- There are, in contrast, areas of very distinct regular 18th- and 19th-century enclosures, often with dry stone walls constructed from moorland boulders – in contrast to the older, larger earth and stone Cornish hedges that bound the enclosing medieval fields. There is clear evidence of the influence of the major landlords in their layout; adjoining blocks of land suddenly change from old large fields to tightly laid out and controlled subdivisions, simply marking a change of ownership rather than of geology or topography.

- An area of 20th-century boundary loss, much of both the early, organic pattern of farm and field subdivision, and the later regular smallholding fields, has been removed, so that much of the landscape appears to have reverted to an anciently enclosed, medieval pattern, the evidence of change in the intervening years having been cleared away.
- The predominant settlement pattern is of an extremely high degree of dispersal of scattered farmsteads and hamlets, with much evidence of contraction and abandonment, not only of older (medieval) hamlets, but also of 18th- and 19th-century smallholdings to form the farmsteads of today.
- This ancient pattern of settlement is intermixed with small nucleated settlements, nearly all associated with mining or quarrying (Brea, Beacon, Troon, Carnkie, Mabe, Longdowns).
- Despite much loss, remnants of the 19th-century mining and quarrying industries still abound. Engine houses and mining warehouses, processing buildings, terraced houses and Methodist chapels are major characteristics of the industrial villages.
- There are large areas of bare spoil heaps and surface working, some slowly being colonised by heathland. Hundreds of former mine shafts occur throughout the area. This mining landscape is now recognised as internationally important, reflected by the designation of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape as a World Heritage Site.
- Much of the area has received very little inward investment since the decline of industrial activity – an area typified largely by an ad-hoc appearance of subsistence farming, with much opportunistic re-use and conversion of both agricultural and industrial buildings, with most farm buildings being relatively modern, although usually set in an interesting older context.
- Livestock rearing and dairy are the most common farm types. A large portion of the agricultural land is turned to grazing or uncropped land. There is also widespread rough grazing.
- There are small amounts of cereal and root crop growing in the NCA. Horticulture focuses on the richer soils and gentler slopes in the south and west.
- On the more sheltered sites and better land to the south, large modern farm buildings tend to dominate the older dwellings.



Carmenellis landscape. Photo © E Berry.

Farmstead and building types

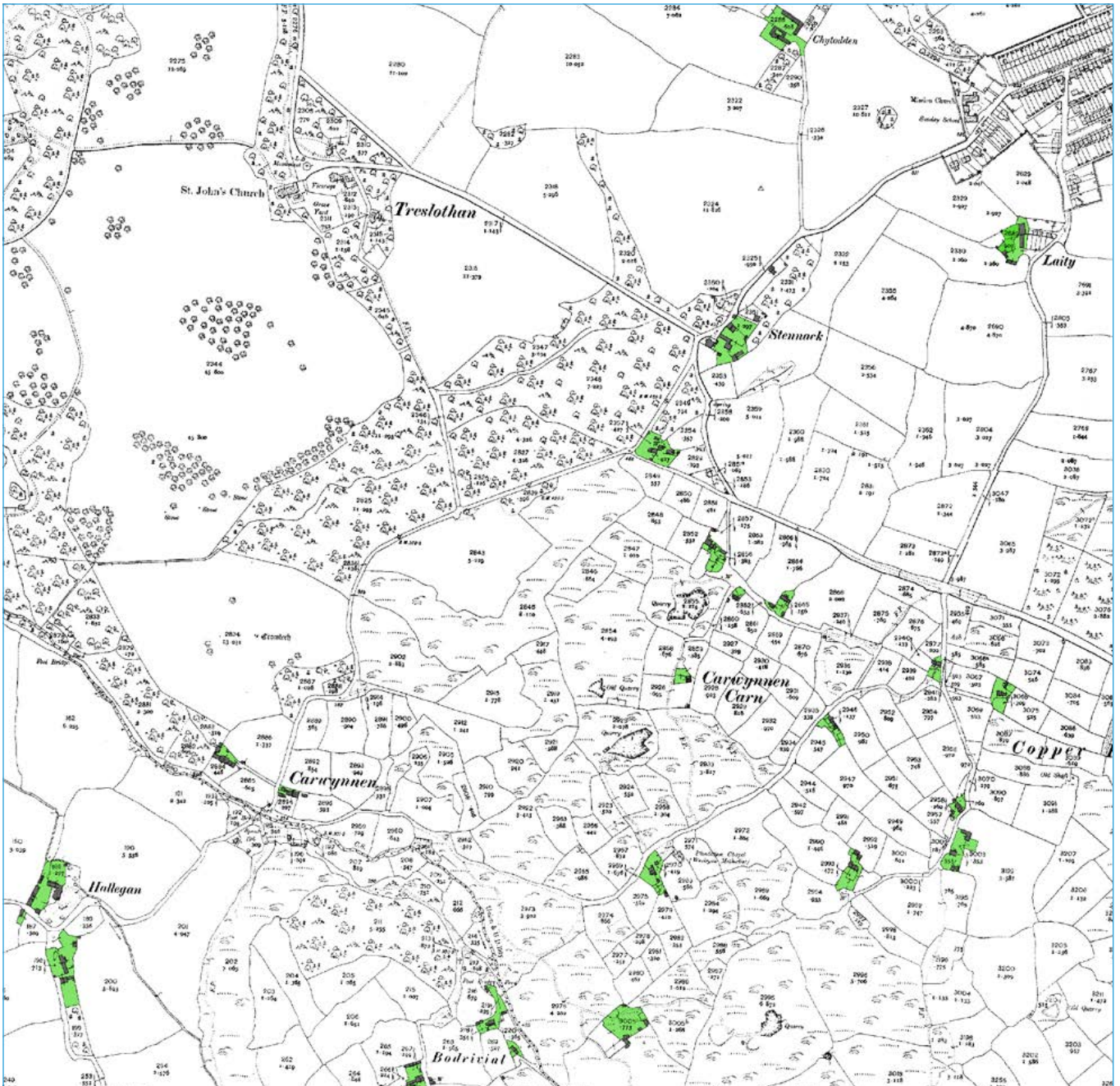
- Pre-19th-century farmstead buildings predominantly comprise farmhouses. There is archaeological evidence for pre-18th-century farming hamlets, linear farmsteads being characteristic of the later 18th and 19th centuries on smaller farms.
- Widespread rebuilding of farmsteads in parallel with amalgamation of holdings from the later 19th century, and especially the 20th century, is now the overriding impression of the central areas, with earlier buildings largely confined to linear and high status farmsteads in the better lands off the high granite uplands.
- Bank barns dating from the late 18th to mid-19th centuries, these being distinct from chaff barns in that they are accessed from natural or artificial banks. They are part of a wider development in the south-west peninsula.
- Wheel houses or evidence of water power (leats, reservoirs, water wheels, etc.) for horse-powered threshing and fodder-processing machinery; many barns had light engines which have left little trace. This is more typical of the larger farms on the richer lower edges of the Area.

The predominant pattern is of:

- Linear farmsteads which display great variation in scale, including many small-scale miner-farmer examples
- Loose courtyard layouts, commonly with a combination barn to just one side of the yard, sometimes larger in scale
- Dispersed layouts with working buildings and yards sometimes intermixed with two or more farmhouses
- Regular courtyard layouts, to overall L-plans and including large-scale examples with buildings to three or four sides of the yard
- Most farmsteads contain a mowhay for ricking corn, hay, turf and furze, all have a kitchen garden, and many have orchards, especially in the more sheltered parts of the lowland.
- Some detached stables (generally small in scale) and granaries.
- Low and small-scale buildings close to the farmhouse, commonly pigsties and calf houses and goose houses
- Hulls (underground passage with storage chambers cut into sides of banks or hillside); most of Cornwall's known examples are concentrated in this area – 77 out of 99 known.
- Some field barns and 19th-century outfarms
- The uplands are typified by ad-hoc subsistence farmsteads as much as amalgamated, improved sites, with a lot of re-used farm buildings, cottages, worked-out mine buildings, etc., with re-used stones, quoins, etc.
- Caravans, sheds and re-used containers are as typical elements of the farmstead and uplands; larger farms throughout area are more typically now with large 20th-century sheds than traditional farm buildings.

Key buildings are:

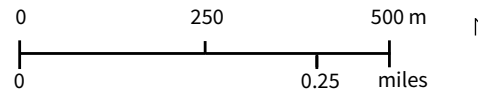
- Two-storey combination barns. The upper-floor barns and hay storage, set over animal housing, might be accessed by external steps or ramps.



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

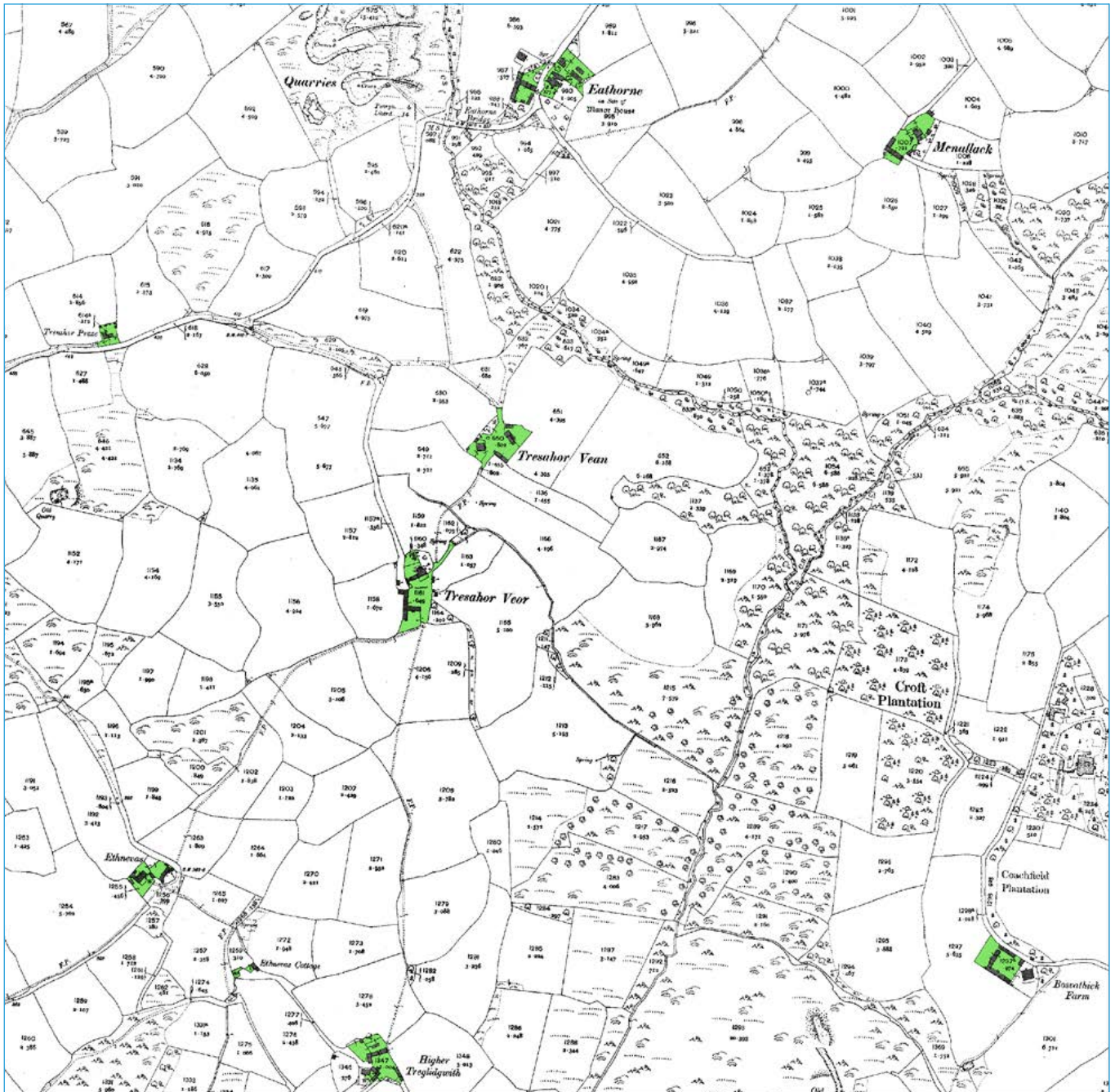


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



In this one map extract, can be seen the full range of the complex ebb and flow on Carmarthenshire:

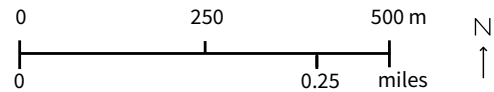
- Medieval barton/manorial farmsteads (Treslothan 13th century, Hallegan 12th–15th century, Bodrivial 14th century – the name meaning perhaps ‘dwelling in the fertile upland’), set amongst still recognisable medieval field systems.
- Informal early enclosures as around Carwynnen (first recorded 1430) or Laity Farm, recorded 16th century – meaning ‘milk farm’ – indicative of land use at time – possibly already linked to mining and agricultural specialisation.
- Creation of smallholdings, appropriately centred on Copper Hill and Stennack (‘tin ground’).
- Mining village (Troon); upland mining remains.
- Estate Parkland; 19th century amalgamations of earlier fields.



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.



This map shows a contrasting area around the southern, richer lands of the NCA. All the hamlets are medieval in origin, sitting within their discrete, roughly circular pattern of enclosing anciently enclosed fields, linked by a network of ancient lanes and set amid valley-bottom wetlands and woods. Most of the farmsteads have regular planned courtyards, relatively high status and with buildings that suggest at least two major local phases of agricultural improvements – farmhouses dating from the 1790s, and mid- to late 19th- century farm buildings. The listed buildings at Tresahor Vean (see centre – house, barn, shippons, stables and cart sheds with lofts above and an implement shed with a granary above) are all dated 1858, and Bosvathick Farm (bottom right) is a single-phase estate farm complex built in the late 1880s. In contrast is the cottage/smallholding at Tresahor Praze (top-left) which is a late 19th-century response to the expansion of quarrying in and around the area. This industry contributed to the relative local prosperity, including the fine small country house and park at Bosvathick (right and off-map).



Medieval manorial site at Cosawes. Improved regular courtyard with good 18th-century farmhouse and cottage plus farm buildings including barn, shippens and good example of a horse-engine house, all with scantle slate roofs. Photo © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2009; F90-019.



Smallholding, Polcrebo Moors. Small 17th-century or earlier house, extended and remodelled in 18th century and in 1836 (datestone); a row of cottages formed out of house and farm-building unit. Photo © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2009; F90-116.



Crahan, an old townplace hamlet in Wendron parish. Linear ranges dispersed around a driftway, gradually evolving with amalgamation of farms into a loose courtyard – showing the problem with definition in an area like Carnmenellis. Abandoned buildings dispersed around older, larger yard; some are abandoned houses. Photo © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2009; F90-181.



Tregear, Crowan parish. A medieval farm (a tre settlement – one of the primary settlement types in the Cornish landscape), not only takes its name from the adjacent round, but exploits it for a yard. The present farmhouse and improved courtyard developed over the 19th century – the earlier buildings were within and on the ramparts of the round itself. Photo © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2009; F90-053.



Manhay. A medieval farmstead (the main farmstead on the road, centre right, is 18th century), associated with later 19th-century farmsteads and cottages sited amongst and on linear mine-waste dumps – mostly 20th century. Photo © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2009; F90-183.



A small but well detailed 17th-century house, rare in this area (at left) within a medieval field system with a small townplace at Pengelly. Here, a dispersed steading evolved into a loose courtyard layout – chall barn range (centre) facing a linear row of shippens/ outbuildings, with a small scatter of later, small buildings. Photo © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2009; 90-115.



Very small barns are associated with smallholdings, often eclipsed in size by the equally tiny associated cottages. Photo © E Berry.

This late 18th century farmhouse with an earlier core has most of its farm functions incorporated in a single block – associated with a contemporary nearby small water mill. In the early 19th century, a back-kitchen wing was built at right angles behind the kitchen/ living room. Later in the 19th century, a two-storey outbuilding (granary or apple loft) was added at the right-hand side of the house with front wall set back and a single-storey stable was built at the left hand side of the back kitchen. Photo © E Berry.



Mid- to late 19th-century chall barn at Releath Farm. Photo © E Berry.



Treweege Barton. Horse-engine house on a barton farm in Stithians parish. Photo © E Berry.



Late 19th-century chall barn with attached building for the preparation and mixing of feed. Photo © E Berry.



Hull, showing double entrance (the passage forms a continuous arc behind). Photo © Ann Reynolds.



Vellanewson: a late 18th-century to early 19th-century mill next to a small farmstead. Without the evidence of the wheel this is virtually indistinguishable in scale, details and use of materials from similar farm buildings (although those are otherwise rare, especially this early, in Carnmenellis). Photo © E Berry.



Vellanewson. Roofing is more likely to be corrugated iron, tin or asbestos than any other material now, notwithstanding historic use of slate and thatch. Photo © E Berry.



Helland: goose house, interior showing corbelled roof construction. Photo © E Berry.



Helland: goose house (restored). Photo © E Berry.

Materials and detail

- Most common traditional building materials are slate and granite, often whitewashed and with slate roofs and sometimes slate hanging to walls.
- Thatch was formerly widespread but is now very rare.
- Cob was formerly widespread and often found used to build upper floors of rural and town buildings into the 19th century. Limited use of brick, Localised use of thatch for roofing.
- Older buildings are constructed of local granite with slate roofs and some slate-hung walls.
- The scattered farmhouses, hamlets and village centres (mainly of recent, industrial origin) normally consist of granite-built houses with slate roofs, whereas newer dwellings from the 1970s and 1980s are often covered with pebbledash.



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:
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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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