



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

# Lancashire and Amounderness Plain

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 32



## 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>).



A small, mid-19th-century steading built of brick, with a farmhouse and combination barn. This is one of a group strung along roads surrounding former common land at Goose Green east of Much Hoole. Photo © Jen Deadman

---

**Front cover:** A 17th-century farmstead at Howe Brook to the south-west of Heskin, set amongst fields that have been enclosed on a piecemeal basis. The house and a three-bay barn are timber-framed set on sandstone plinths, the gable end of the parlour wing having decorative herringbone framing of a type that extends into the Cheshire and along the Welsh borders. In the foreground is a mid-19th-century, L-shaped cattle yard. Photo © Historic England 28603/064

# Character Area 32: Lancashire and Amounderness Plain



This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Natural England 100046223 20

This map shows the Lancashire and Amounderness Plain, 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.

This is a coastal area of high-grade agricultural land, which extends southwards from Morecambe Bay in the north to the outskirts of Liverpool in the south, bounded to the east by the Forest of Bowland and the Upholland ridge. Of the area, 18% is defined urban, 64% is under agriculture and just 2% is covered by woodland. Around 3% is designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

## Historic character

- Farmsteads relate to successive episodes of drainage from the medieval period, which reclaimed large areas of mossland around medieval settlements and isolated farms where 17th-century and earlier buildings are concentrated.
- There is a broad distinction between areas of piecemeal and irregular enclosure, where linear and smaller-scale farmsteads are concentrated, and areas of late 18th- and 19th-century enclosure, where the largest courtyard farms developed.
- Building types illustrate, through threshing and combination barns dating from the 17th century, the need of most farms to house and process corn, and the need to house cattle in combination barns and (usually in the 19th century, rarely before) cow houses, shelter sheds and loose boxes; cart sheds, stables and pigsties are commonly found, and there are some field barns and outfarms.

## Significance

- There are some rare surviving buildings in timber-frame, the local clay tradition and with thatch roofs.
- The area displays the early use of brick prior to its more general introduction from the late 18th century.
- Any farmsteads with evidence for pre-improvement buildings are of great rarity and may also illustrate the development of agriculture into the 19th century.
- Isolated, planned farmsteads, built to courtyard plans, can sit within their planned fieldscapes and illustrate approaches to land reclamation and planning that developed from the late 18th century.

## 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 (37.5%, the national average being 32%).

- The Photo Image Project also recorded an above-average percentage (10%, the national average being 7.5%) of listed working farm

buildings that show obvious signs of structural disrepair.

## Historic development

- There is some evidence of prehistoric, Viking and Anglian settlement along the coastlands, but significant settlement did not occur until the area underwent an agricultural transformation from around the 12th century.
- The Lancashire Plain is traversed by the Ribble Estuary which drains from the Lancashire Valleys (NCA 35) and the Pennines. It included coastal salt marshes and vast areas of mossland, which supplied important resources such as peat and rough grazing for local communities. Between the 12th and 14th centuries, population pressures drove small-scale drainage works to bring the drier edges of the mosslands into cultivation. This process had recommenced by the 16th century, and from around 1700, this area underwent dramatic change into arable farmland. This was enabled by the wind-powered drainage of moss and fenlands which was greatly accelerated with the introduction, from the early 19th century, of steam pumps.
- Small-scale dairying, and farms specialising in market produce, chickens and eggs, developed close to towns and railway stations. Demands for produce arose both from industrial urban expansion, particularly around Preston (rebuilt as a textile and then engineering centre from the mid-18th century), Fleetwood (established as a new town and port in 1836), Blackpool (developed from the 1840s as a coastal resort, hosting workers from textile towns) and of course Liverpool and Manchester further south, and also from the development of resort towns on the coast following the introduction of railways in the 1840s. The application of nightsoil from these towns, and of lime and marl (clay containing lime, marl pits being abundant in this area), boosted productivity. The 19th century also saw extensive drainage of the area's heavy clay soils.
- Large houses and ornamental parkland are notable features of the landscape, especially to the south of the area, reflecting the region's growing industrial wealth.

## Landscape and settlement

- The area has a mix of nucleated and dispersed settlement, the intensity of isolated farmsteads increasing in tandem with enclosure and land improvement. Older settlements are concentrated on areas of naturally-drained sands and gravels, with access to coastal grazing marshes and mosslands with their grazing lands and resources of peat, fishing, hunting and fowling. Much of this area served as rich grazing land in the medieval period, and later enclosure has rarely preserved the outlines of arable strip fields. Fieldscapes in the areas of former mossland were either enclosed on a piecemeal basis – with irregular field boundaries set between routeways termed 'meanygates' used by surrounding communities to access their resources – or to a regular pattern driven by large estates which is almost wholly 18th century or later in date. The Clifton family of Lytham played a particularly significant role in agricultural improvement and the drainage of Lytham Moss and surrounding areas, for example. The wider areas of the plain display greater time depth both in the field systems and the pattern of hamlets and villages, manor houses and meandering, interconnecting lanes.
- The topography and the general pattern of clipped hedges and drainage ditches across the area afford open views across the

landscape. Irregular, pre-1600 enclosure, including areas of wood-pasture, is the dominant field pattern along the eastern side of the area and further west within a narrow band along the east side of the Wyre Estuary and south to the Ribble Estuary near Freckleton. This coincides with the greater distribution of older, less planned settlement. It includes some areas which, on the basis of their ovoid enclosures, appear to have been assarted (cleared under license) from medieval woodland.

- Piecemeal and regular 17th- to early 19th-century enclosure survives well across the former mosslands to the north of the Ribble, especially north of the River Wyre, and in a large, slightly more fragmented arc along the western edge of the area south of the Ribble

Estuary. The process of reclamation produced a more rigorous, rectilinear landscape of medium to large scale fields originally of mixed use and bounded by clipped hedgerows as well as drainage ditches.

- Modern enclosure is most pronounced to the south of the River Ribble and characterised by the amalgamation of ancient and post medieval field systems into large and very large arable landscapes.
- Intensive production methods and the absence of stock has led to the abandonment or removal of hedges, leaving large areas subdivided only by regular tracks and drainage ditches. Woodland is generally sparse, 18th- and 19th-century plantations and shelter belts around farmsteads being a feature of this area.

## Farmstead and building types

There is evidence across the area, as part of a pattern extending northwards into Cumbria, of a phase of rebuilding in the decades around 1700. Earlier buildings tend to be associated with high-status sites, but may also survive as fragments or cores with structures that are apparently much later. Some farm buildings have been converted from earlier dwellings.

### Farmstead types

- Linear farmsteads including fabric dating from the 17th century, and very rarely before, are concentrated in older settlements and on farms within areas of piecemeal enclosure where farms developed with access to mossland. Many of these developed over the late 18th and 19th centuries into loose courtyard farms, with additional building to two or three sides of farmyards, or into dispersed plans: these latter are now rare, their apparently random planning of buildings being sited with ovoid areas for holding livestock. The largest courtyard groups developed in association with high-status farms, including manor farms.
- The reclaimed mosslands are characterised by late 18th- and 19th-century courtyard farms, the smallest built to L-shaped plans and the largest with fully enclosed yards and multi-yards.
- Another locally distinctive farmstead type is the single-phase linear farmstead with housing for cattle and storage for corn and hay. When encountered in areas of regular enclosure, they relate to planned programmes of drainage that included different sizes of farms.

## Building types

Buildings primarily illustrate the requirements of farms to store and process corn, store hay for cattle and horses and house increasing numbers of cattle around farmyards. Key building types are:

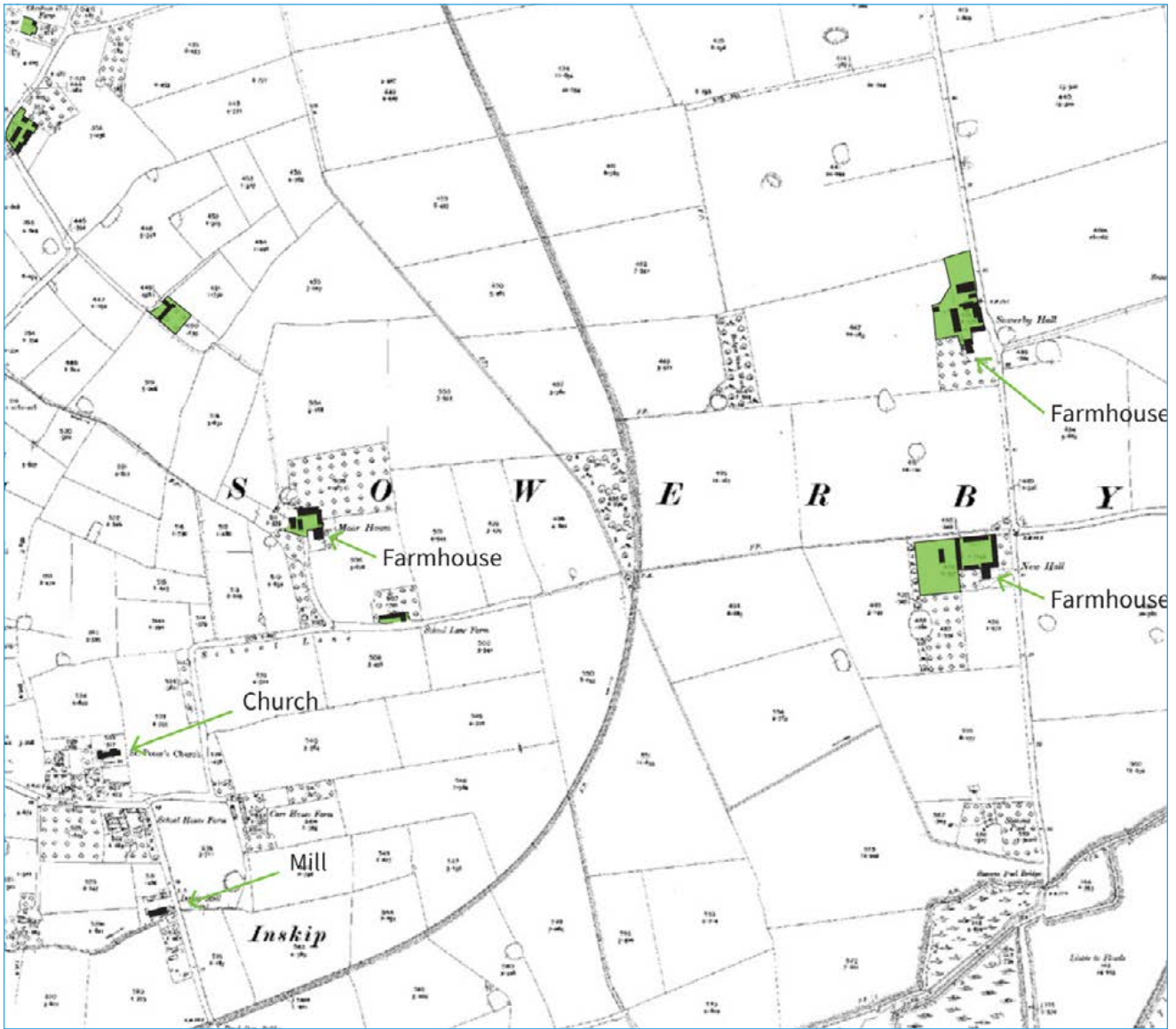
- cruck-framed and timber-framed barns, often reclad and extended. These range from modest barns that form an integral part of linear farmsteads to the large cruck- and box-framed barns on high-status, gentry and manor farms, including some with evidence of vertical subdivisions for multiple functions including livestock.
- combination barns, including some dating from the 17th century on high-status sites, with cattle housing accessed by side or gable-end doors and integral or additional outshots for housing cattle. Some have three gable-end doors, the central door being to a feeding passage – an arrangement termed the ‘Lancashire barn’.
- wheel houses for horse-powered threshing. Attached to barns, these were used on larger farms in particular, from the early 19th century.
- cow houses with stabling dating from the 17th century. Shelter sheds from the 19th century are found on large courtyard farms which produced plenty of straw for cattle yards from corn threshed in the barn. Lofted and single-storey cow houses, some with loose boxes, are more common and on smaller farms might be found in an L-plan range attached to a hay barn.
- pigsties. These are found across the area, and are strongly associated with the growing importance of dairying over the 19th century, as pigs fed on whey and other by-products of the dairy and the farmhouse kitchen.
- some outfarms and field barns for cattle of 19th-century date.



Modernised farmhouse in Treales, a small, linear settlement in the Fylde west of Preston. It was built in the early 18th century as a linear farmstead with an integral barn to the right. The walls are of ‘clat and clay’ and a large part of the rear wall and gable of the barn is of clay straw lump set on a cobble base. It is listed as a rare survival of building materials typical of the area before the 19th century. Photo © Jen Deadman



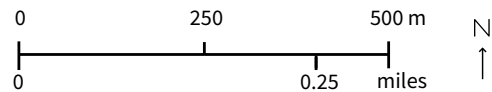
The area is characterised by the early use of brick for vernacular houses, the use of crow-stepped gables and hood moulds being associated with 17th- and early 18th-century buildings. Photo © Jen Deadman



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. © 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.



## Inskip

This area to the north of Inskip in Sowerby displays a strong contrast that is typical of this area – large, regular courtyard plan farmsteads set in fields of regular enclosure, and – despite the effects of later field boundaries and reorganisation – a more organic pattern of piecemeal enclosure and routeways, and smaller farmsteads including linear layouts and earlier fabric. Sowerby Hall to the east, however, is a brick house dated to the early 17th century: the larger fields around it have in fact been reorganised in the early to mid-19th century from an earlier pattern of drainage and enclosure. Some of the smaller farms around Inskip, where the church was built in 1848, date from the 18th and 19th centuries.





At Haighton Green north of Preston is a loose arrangement of steadings set around former common land. To the top left is a three-bay building, a 17th-century linear farmstead, comprising a dwelling and housing for cattle, which was probably converted into a farm building when the present farmhouse was built in the later 18th century. It comprises three crucks on a plinth and has some thatch (above) surviving under a tin roof. The original walls were of clay later replaced with brick. Photo © Jen Deadman



Linear farmsteads display strong contrasts between those relating to late 18th- and 19th-century improvement and those of earlier date. The brick-built farmhouse to the left is a single build with diamond-shaped ventilators to the crop storage and a door to the cow house to the right of the cart bay. The stone plinth is a design feature characteristic of the area. To the right is a linear farmstead comprising a house and barn to the north of Preston, partly rebuilt in brick in the later 18th and 19th centuries and with internal cruck trusses indicating 17th-century or earlier origins. Photo © Jen Deadman



Courtyard farms developed from the late 17th century, possibly earlier. The mid-18th-century farmhouse at Goose Green on the left faces towards the street and away from a courtyard of mid-19th-century buildings including a barn and stables. Photo © Jen Deadman



The three, now-infilled doorways in this gable end of this early 19th-century combination barn are an arrangement found in many Lancashire barns – a central feeding passage and flanking doorways to the cattle stalls. Note the diamond-pattern and cruciform vents to the hay loft, and the owl hole at the top and the circular pitching eye through which hay was thrown into the hay loft. These attractive designs are found throughout the area in agricultural brick buildings of the 18th and 19th centuries. Photo © Jen Deadman

## Materials and detail

- Whilst sandstone was used in upland fringe areas, the farmsteads of the area are dominated by the use of brick, and Welsh slate. The use of brick between the 17th and mid-18th centuries is early in a national context. Cobble walling was used in coastal areas. Vent patterns are very distinctive, providing relief from the dark mottled brickwork of the area and the red brick further south. New Red Sandstone can also be found used as quoins and dressings.
- This area had a rich tradition of timber-framing, including crucks, clay walling and thatch using rushes and grass sods. Surviving examples of the latter date from the later 17th century.

Working buildings in timber-frame (including crucks), are now very rare and concentrated in the central and southern part of the area. Of particular importance is what is locally termed ‘clat and clay’ in the Fylde, which is the tradition of building walls of loamy clay and cut straw around timber studwork with wattle infill. Any examples of thatch roofing using rushes and grass sods will now be of extreme rarity, as wheaten straw was more commonly used from the 17th and 18th centuries.



# Historic England

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

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

We are the public body that looks after  
England's historic environment. We champion  
historic places, helping people understand,  
value and care for them.

Please contact  
[guidance@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:guidance@HistoricEngland.org.uk)  
with any questions about this document.

[HistoricEngland.org.uk](https://HistoricEngland.org.uk)

If you would like this document in a different  
format, please contact our customer services  
department on:

Tel: 0370 333 0607

Email: [customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

All information and weblinks accurate at the  
time of publication.

Please consider the environment before printing  
this document

Product code: 52146 RRL code: 036/2020

Publication date: February 2020 © Historic England

Design: Historic England and Chantal Freeman, Diva  
Arts