



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

# Morecambe Bay Limestones

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 20



## 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>).

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**Front cover:** A 16th-century gentry farmstead on the west side of the Lyth valley. Earlier more irregular enclosures provide the setting to most of the farmsteads, in the distance being regular early 19th-century enclosure of Lythe Moss. Photo © Historic England 28583/037



This map shows the Morecombe Bay Limestones, 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 area is located on the southern coast of Cumbria, extending around the coastline from Morecambe to just east of Barrow-in-Furness. Of the area, 18.7% is in the Lake District National Park, whilst a further 18.4% is within Arnside-Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Most of the area (96.5%) is countryside, with 3.5% defined as urban. Just under 18% of the Character Area is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

## Historic character

- Farmsteads share many of the characteristics of the South Cumbrian Low Fells, particularly to the north and north-east on the wooded limestone escarpments away from the estuary reaches. Estate farmlands lend a parkland character to the area east of Kendal, whilst a Lancashire influence in building form becomes increasingly apparent in the south-east, towards the Lune Valley.
- Farmsteads mostly relate to fields dating from piecemeal enclosure since at least the 15th century, and to areas of regular enclosure which have replaced these earlier patterns and relate to moorland and marsh, which were reclaimed and newly enclosed in the late 18th and 19th centuries, with larger fields and farmsteads developing on some of the arable estate lands.
- Linear farmsteads have mostly been subsumed into courtyard group of buildings which developed during the 18th and 19th centuries in response to an increased demand for dairy products by the rapidly growing settlements and resorts of the coastal plain.

## Significance

- There is an exceptionally high survival of traditional farmsteads, as in many of the other northern uplands. The significance is heightened by the fact that the farmsteads and working buildings sit within a landscape which retains visible evidence for land use and settlement from the prehistoric period. Of particular significance is:
  - mosslands in the wide river valleys and estuary lands to the south of the area, where little evidence for earlier buildings remains.
- There is a divide between the older steadings set on piecemeal enclosure on the limestone escarpments to the north and west, and the later 19th-century farmsteads set on reclaimed
- There is an amalgam of the Cumbrian and Lancashire building design in the south-east of the area. On the former, large, dairy and stock farms, the low, cat-slide roofs and gable entries of the Lancashire combination barns are as common as the long Cumbrian barn with full-length pentice, commonly seen in both the Low and High Fells.

## Present and future issues

- The rate of redundancy for traditional farm buildings has accelerated in recent years, as in other upland and upland fringe areas of England, due to the replacement of stalling by loose housing and the replacement of hay production by mechanised bulk handling.

- The expansion of many of the villages by the development of housing for the retired, as second homes and for people who work in the larger settlements such as Kendal and Ulverston has had the effect of an increased demand for redundant farm buildings to be brought into the housing market.
- The drainage of wetlands and the loss of limestone walls and hedges is due to changing farm practices.
- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image project (2006) recorded a medium proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (29.3%, the national average being 32%). This reflects the pressure for conversion outside the National Park boundary. The sample was too small to record those showing obvious signs of structural repair.
- The traditional building stock mostly dates from the late 17th century. Comparatively large numbers of 17th-century houses are found around Witherslack, south-west of Kendall.

## Historic development

- The presence of burial mounds and stone circles on the higher ground confirms that the area was farmed in Neolithic times. Further evidence of early burials has been found at Dog Holes Cave in the limestone on Warton Crag near Silverdale. Abandoned prehistoric settlements and enclosures probably became unenclosed commons during the medieval period. There is evidence of medieval field patterns, particularly around the villages of Urswick on the Furness peninsular.
- From the 12th century, the influence of the monastic houses (Furness Abbey, Cartmel and Conishead Priors) was central to the medieval development of the area, through their control of much of the farmland and fostering of local industries. From the 16th century onwards, this area saw a gradual progression from a predominantly rural economy to an area in which industry, particularly bobbin making, metalworking and textiles (hemp and flax in particular), played a greater part.
- Many of the semi-natural woodlands in the area were managed on a 'coppice-with-standards' basis up until the last century. This allowed valuable construction timber to be extracted in the long term but also allowed species such as hazel to be coppiced on an approximate 15-year rotation. The coppice timber provided fuel in the form of charcoal for the smelting of iron and copper ores which were mined in the area, and later, material for the production of bobbins for the emerging textile trade in Lancashire. Coppice woodlands are characteristic of many parts of the area including in Low Furness and the Arnside & Silverdale AONB.
- Crops and mixed grazing developed on the coastal plain and valleys and grazing on the limestone outcrops and hills. There was an increase in grain production and small-scale dairying from the late 17th century, when the area also fattened cattle brought in from Scotland and the uplands to the north. Locally produced lime from coastal farms played a key role in late 18th- and 19th-century improvement.

## Landscape and settlement

- The Morecambe Bay Limestones area comprises the lower limestone hills and escarpments and coastal plains which lie to the south of the South Cumbria Low Fells, and fringes the northern and eastern margins of Morecambe Bay. The coastal plain and valleys, with rectilinear fields of late enclosure exhibiting well-managed enclosed grasslands, contrast with the piecemeal enclosure of unimproved grasslands, wetlands and woodland on the limestone outcrops and hills. The plateau tops consist mainly of open common fells of rough pasture. The valley slopes are characterised by significant blocks of woodland, small rocky outcrops and damson orchards, while the valley bottoms are flat, largely treeless, with rectilinear fields divided by hedges and drainage ditches, and with remnants of raised mire.
- Larger nucleated settlements predominate to the east and around estuaries with residential coastal resorts (for example Grange-over-Sands) which developed from the 19th century and stimulated the demand for liquid milk and other products. On the wide, lower reaches of the river valleys, farmsteads are widely dispersed, the majority established in the late 19th and 20th centuries and set within large, rectilinear fields established on reclaimed wetland.
- Away from the coast and river valleys, the landscape is one of dispersed farmsteads and hamlets mostly associated with piecemeal and regular enclosure of the 17th to early 19th centuries.
- Sizeable areas of ancient and irregular enclosure (pre-1600) with dispersed settlement also survive most notably on the limestone escarpments away from the coast.

## Farmstead and building types

The traditional building stock mostly dates from the late 17th century. Comparatively large numbers of 17th century houses are found around Witherslack, south-west of Kendal.

### Farmstead types

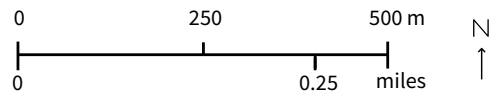
- The farmstead which consists solely of a single, long range where buildings have been added to over time is rare in this area. Similarly, evidence for the longhouse tradition and alternate rebuilding is not as clearly defined as in other upland areas. There is little evidence for the raising of buildings from one to two storeys.
- Linear farmsteads are the basic historic farmstead type, but by the late 19th century, many had expanded or were newly built (usually with detached houses) as regular and loose courtyard plans with buildings to two sides or more of the yard.
- Courtyard plans are common, and mostly reflect the development from the later 18th century of yards for the overwintering of cattle. Most common is the range comprising a house with a combination barn attached (frequently in a roadside position) set within a loose courtyard arrangement. Farmhouses are either integrated within the complex, or in later examples stand apart from it. The combination barn is the common element to two adjacent yards. Yards which comprise two parallel ranges are also common. Large, regular courtyard farmsteads are found on the lower slopes, which sometimes conform to a U-shaped plan.



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

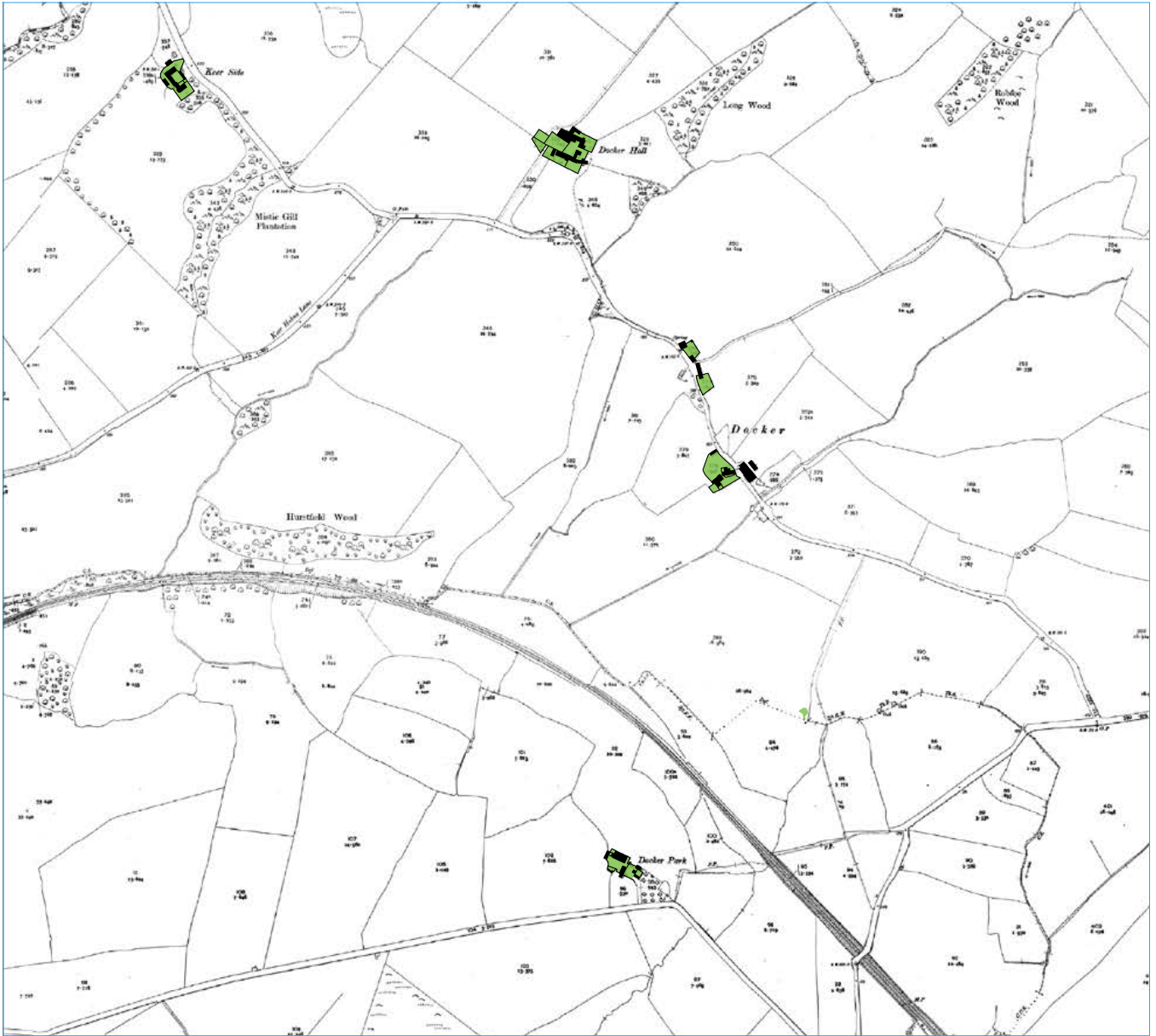


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



## Lyth Valley

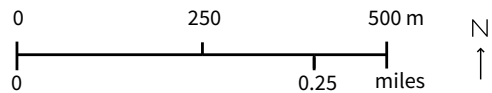
This map shows a very clear division between the east, with its regular enclosures resulting from the drainage and improvement of Lyth Moss (previously used as a source of fuel and grazing land) in 1803 and 1838, and the ancient, irregular enclosures set under Whitbarrow Fell to the west. The woodlands were exploited for charcoal and household goods, such as baskets and tool handles. The dispersed plans of the farmsteads in this latter area, such as Johnscalls to the south (1), contrast with the regular courtyard layouts of the late enclosure landscape (2). Flodder Hall to the north (3) dates from the 16th century.



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



### Docker, south-east of Kendal

This is an estate landscape of large fields reorganised from earlier enclosure, centred around the hamlet of Docker, Docker Hall and Docker Park. Docker Hall (1), with its early 17th-century house and attached early 18th-century barns is a high-status site, reflected in the large size of the fields around it and its reorganisation into a regular multi-yard plan in the 19th century, most probably after the moor to its north was enclosed and improved for agriculture. Keer Side (2) to the west similarly reflects agricultural improvement in its U-shaped, regular courtyard plan. There are three farmsteads which developed from linear farmsteads within Docker, two of which are centred around dated farmhouses of the late 17th century.



- Larger courtyard steadings are associated with arable exploitation of land on great estates and more fertile soils.
- Dispersed plans set either side of a road (dispersed driftway plans) are frequently large.

## Building types

- Key building types are two-storey combination barns, banked or unbanked, some threshing barns (including some of 18th-century or earlier date). Building types mainly comprise:
  - Bank barns are not as common as in other areas of Cumbria, due to the less hilly nature of the terrain, although they are still a feature of the landscape. They date from the late 17th century at first on the home farms of large estates. Variant bank barns, built across the slope, with entry to cow house in gable end, are mostly 18th century in date: these typically had entries inserted into side walls to enable better access to stalls. Bank barns built along the slope (termed 'true bank barns') were built from the mid-18th century on most holdings.
  - These frequently form an L-shaped plan with part-lofted combination or threshing barns.
  - Single-storey and part-lofted combination barns, were typically built with the threshing area flanked by cattle housing and stabling and often with additional cattle housing in projecting wings or outshots.
  - Minor buildings include calf houses and pigsties, the latter often as lean-tos.
  - Field barns include some bank barns, mostly built for the overwintering of cattle and the storage of hay. The earliest of these date from the late 17th century and are found at heads of valleys and some valley sides.
- Large, two-storey, yard combination barns can be found with cattle entries set on the long elevation.



This farmstead, rebuilt around an earlier house in the mid-19th century, is sited within regular enclosed fields. Photo © Jen Deadman



Field barn situated close to a dyke in the broad, wide stretch of the Lyth valley as it begins to level out.  
Photo © Jen Deadman



Farmstead on the edge of reclaimed mossland on the Cartmel peninsula, where drained marshland is criss-crossed by large drainage dykes and large rectilinear fields of late enclosure. The mid-19th-century farmhouse faces towards the drained mosslands. Farmsteads sited on the mosslands are frequently 20th century in date. Photo © Jen Deadman



The landscape to the east opens out into an area of large, regular fields with occasional linear villages which retain their tofts. There is a hint of earlier strip fields now subsumed by fields of later enclosure. Dispersed farmsteads are dotted across the landscape, some with 17th-century origins which belie an earlier, less formal landscape. Place names are frequently associated with parkland; 'New Park' is suggestive of the re-modelling of a medieval park landscape.  
Photo © Jen Deadman



This farmstead, built in the late 18th to 19th centuries, with its symmetrically-fronted house set apart from the combination barn facing into a yard, is set amongst regular-shaped fields of late enclosure in the east of the area. These fields overlie the ridge and furrow of earlier settlement. Photo © Jen Deadman



**Linear plans** A 17th-century, linear farmstead in the hamlet of Docker, south of Hutton Roof. The farmhouse is dated 1668 and has a later 18th-century addition to the right. The attached combination barn is of a later date. A similar linear farmstead, built twenty years later, is sited immediately to the left of the picture, and also lies hard against the road side. The hamlet is set in fields evidencing piecemeal enclosure from medieval strip fields. Photo © Jen Deadman



**Courtyard plans.** Large complex set on the edge of Hilderstone Moss, west of Burton-in-Kendal and the M6 motorway. Individual early to mid-19th-century buildings are set around three sides of a yard with smaller buildings detached from the yard. The house looks away from the group, this being found on larger and high-status farmsteads. The surrounding land mossland has been drained and divided up into neat, rectilinear parcels. Photo © Jen Deadman



Flodder Hall. Large, gentry farm of 16th-century origins with later additions. This is one of a string of farmsteads, some of which are very large, which lies below Whitbarrow Fell on the west side of the Lyth valley, above the River Gilpin. The land immediately below, on which the majority of the farmsteads sit, is comprised of small, irregular fields of earlier enclosure. The land below (Lyth Moss), has been drained and presents a landscape of rectilinear fields of late enclosure. The high-status house looks away from the loose courtyard group of buildings and towards the mosslands. Photo © Jen Deadman



This farmstead is set on the road side, half a mile north of Leven, west of the M6 motorway. To the west is the wide plain of the Lyth valley. The farmstead sits on land where early piecemeal enclosure was reworked in the 19th century. Two yards have been formed either side of a large combination barn. The farmhouse, facing into the yard, forms one side of one yard, working buildings form the yard curtilage of the other. Photo © Jen Deadman



Dawson Fold. The loose courtyard plan steading comprises three large combination barns, two set close to the roadside and a third, a bank barn, lying in parallel behind. There is a yard area between. This large dairy farm is set amongst fields of piecemeal enclosure on the edge of the Lyth Valley. This dispersed farmstead straddles the roadside, with the farmhouse on one side and working buildings on the other. The house, which has 16th-century origins, was altered and extended through to the 19th century when it was bought by a businessman from Manchester. The working buildings are 18th century, although the farm is documented to have been worked in the 16th century. Photo © Jen Deadman



Large, U-shaped regular courtyard plan, one of a loose collection of farmsteads forming a small dispersed settlement in the east of the area in the parish of Hutton Roof. The farmstead comprises large, linked units set on three sides of a yard. The farmhouse of yeoman farmer status is 17th century in origin, and looks away from the 18th- and 19th-century farm buildings. Photo © Jen Deadman



South Low Farm, north of Flodder Hall. The late 17th-century house with large combination barn attached lies close to the roadside with a walled holding enclosure to the front. A second barn is set parallel behind, with a free-standing stable forming the third side of the yard. Note the continuous canopy, a typical feature. Photo © Jen Deadman



Isolated, 19th-century, parallel-plan farmstead at a road junction south of Hutton Roof. It is set amongst fields of 19th-century enclosure with some relict strip fields adjacent to the minor road leading from the village. Behind the house and barn is a small yard arrangement with a combination barn set on the south curtilage parallel with the front range. A threshing barn lies out in the field to the east. Photo © Jen Deadman



Regular L-plan farmstead in Docker. The substantial 18th-century farmhouse, set back from and attached to the yard buildings, lies on one side of the road, the combination barn on the other. Photo © Jen Deadman



**Dispersed plans** Farmstead on the Cartmel Peninsula which comprises a house and attached combination barn on one side of the road with a further combination barn on the other. A threshing barn forms the return of the latter. The working buildings appear to be 18th-century in date, the farmhouse may be older. Photo © Jen Deadman



Large, dispersed farmstead sited on both sides of the road in fields of piecemeal enclosure on Cartmel Fell. The sloping site comprises a series of working buildings set one below the other. The farmhouse sits at the highest point and is a large complex with 16th-century origins. Photo © Jen Deadman



**Combination barns** Combination barn set on a yard curtilage. Extended in brick, the barn is of indeterminate age and possibly predates the 19th-century farmhouse lying on the far side of the yard. Cattle would have been housed at ground-floor level with storage for hay or corn above. A row of small openings at first floor level would suggest air vents or possibly pigeon holes. Photo © Jen Deadman

Greenbank. Large, mid-19th-century combination barn ramped to the rear. In this example, cattle entries flank the feeding passage in the gable end. This plan form is less common in this area than in other areas of the Lakes and the West Pennines. Photo © Jen Deadman



This large, late 18th-century combination barn fronts a yard area. A full-height hay mow flanks the high cart entry to the left, beyond which there is a possible former domestic unit. To the right is a byre with a loft over. There are blocked entries (reduced to windows) on the front elevation. A walled enclosure fronts the building. Photo © Jen Deadman



This large combination barn, a late example dated 1904, is a component part of a large, dispersed farmstead of manorial status which lies north of Witherslack. The farmhouse has 16th- to 17th-century origins. The barn has the appearance of the part-lofted plan form with outshots flanking the long elevation. The projecting porch with pitched roof is not found in the 18th-century form of this building. Photo © Jen Deadman



Cartmel peninsula. L-shaped arrangement with a large combination barn and later threshing barn, across the road from the farmhouse and attached combination barn. Immediately beyond the barn, on a level platform, is the site of the open horse wheel. Photo © Jen Deadman



Farmstead occupying corner plot in the village of Ackenthwaite. Large, early to mid-19th-century combination barns are conjoined to accommodate cattle housing and hay storage, both in the main body of the buildings and in outshots. Photo © Jen Deadman



Here, there is a clever amalgamation of the standard combination barn and the part lofted barn, the latter made evident by the large cat slide roofs over the numerous outshots. Photo © Jen Deadman



To the north, on the far side of the road, is a converted part-lofted combination barn of mid-19th-century date, where the former plan form can still be read. Photo © Jen Deadman



Outskirts of Raisbeck, below Asby Fell, South Orton Fells. A Farmstead with bank barn parallel to the rear of the house, which faces away from the yard. Cattle entries are sited on the yard elevation of the barn. Latterly, a further working building was added to close off the yard area to the north, to form a U-shaped plan. Photo © Jen Deadman



**Stables** Stables are frequently found as component parts of a combination barn. This mid-19th-century example is a small, free-standing building with a loft over. It is part of the farm complex, but faces out into the field. It has a loft over. Note the slates laid flat over the lintels and the massive sandstone quoins. Photo © Jen Deadman



**Calf housing** Calf housing is often located in the outshots of combination barns. This outshot houses a small calf house with a loft over – the loft accessed by external steps set under the shelter of the pentice roof. A small entry in the loft wall under the eaves was probably designed to allow hens access, via wooden ramp, to the loft. This arrangement is often found above pigsties. A dog hull lies below the steps, again sheltered by the pentice roof of over the cart entry. Photo © Jen Deadman



**Field barns** Field barns take various forms. They can be located against field boundaries or are visible as free-standing structures isolated in the fields. The majority are found on the wide valley floors. They provided shelter for five or six cows and had a hayloft at the upper level. Occasionally, they are single storey, but many are lofted. This example is single storey with an entry in the gable end. Photo © Jen Deadman





This larger, lofted field barn has an entry in the long elevation. Here, the cattle were possibly tethered either side of the entry. Photo © Jen Deadman



Field barn with cart entry and loft over with a plan form in the style of the part-lofted combination barn. Here the byre was to the right of the entrance and was lofted over. The loft would be served by the forking hole in the gable end. To the left was the open hay mow. Photo © Jen Deadman



Lofted field barn divided into two unconnected areas, that to the left with an unusual walled enclosure to the front. Field barns, once redundant and with little prospect of alternative use, rapidly deteriorate in condition. Photo © Jen Deadman



## Materials and detail

- Traditional materials are limestone with Cumbrian and Welsh slate roofs. There are some rare, surviving cruck-frames.
- Sandstone is sometimes incorporated as a walling material and frequently used as corner quoins and as dressings to openings.
- Roofs are of Cumbrian and Welsh slate.



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