



# Historic Farmsteads

## Preliminary Character Statement: North West Region



ENGLISH HERITAGE



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# Acknowledgements

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This document is one of eight Preliminary Character Statements which provide information on the characteristics of traditional farm buildings in each Region. They can be viewed and downloaded at [www.helm.org.uk/ruraldevelopment](http://www.helm.org.uk/ruraldevelopment) and at [www.ahds.ac.uk](http://www.ahds.ac.uk).

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# Summary: North West Region

## I LANDSCAPE AND AGRICULTURAL CONTEXT

### NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Patterns of land use were very varied, reflecting cultural factors as well as climatic conditions and the physical structure of the landscape. The distribution of farmsteads, their dates of foundation and their relationship to the farming landscape are intimately linked to **historical patterns of fields** and **settlement** in the landscape. Areas of nucleated settlement, concentrated in a central band running from Northumberland into Somerset and Dorset, are associated with villages whose communally farmed townfields were subject – at varying rates – to amalgamation and enclosure by tenants and landlords from the 14th century. This process was often associated with the creation of new holdings and farmsteads within the new enclosures. Areas of dispersed settlement, where farmsteads are either isolated or grouped in hamlets and surrounded by originally smaller townfields and more ancient patterns of enclosure, are most strongly characteristic of western and parts of eastern and south-eastern England. Between the two extremes are areas that contain both nucleated and dispersed settlement to varying degrees.

**Agricultural development in England** can be divided into the following major periods:

- *Up to 1750* Economic boom in the 12th and 13th centuries, which included the development of large farms on monastic and secular estates, was followed by contraction of settlement and the leasing out of estates after the famines and plagues of the 14th century. The period from the 15th century was characterised by a general increase in agricultural incomes and productivity and the emergence – particularly from 1660 – of increasingly market-based and specialised regional economies. Substantially complete farm buildings of this period are rare, and provide the first evidence for the development and strengthening of regional traditions and building types. Many surviving farmsteads in upland areas, with farm buildings attached to their farmhouse, survive from the later 17th and 18th centuries. It is otherwise very rare for farmsteads to have more than a house and barn dating from this period.
- *1750 – 1880* This is the most important period of farm building development, the production of farmyard manure by cattle playing a major role in increasing agricultural productivity. The increased output of this period was encouraged by rising grain

prices and the demands of an increasingly urban population, and was enabled by the expansion of the cultivated area (especially from the 1790s to 1815), the continued reorganisation and enlargement of holdings and the final phase of the enclosure of open fields – concentrated in the Midland counties. Substantial improvements in animal husbandry were made with the development of improved breeds and a greater awareness of the importance of the need for housing, particularly for cattle, which hastened fattening and meant that manure could be collected and stored better. The high-input/high-output systems of the 'High Farming' years of the 1840s to 1870s were based on the availability of imported artificial fertilisers, manures and feeds.

- *1880 – 1940* There was little fresh investment due to the long farming depression in this period, notable exceptions being some estates and continuing developments in dairying areas. Hygiene regulations in the inter-war period resulted in intense forms of housing for pigs and poultry, and the replacement of earlier forms of housing for dairy cattle by new forms of cow house with concrete floors and stalls, and metal roofs and fittings.
- *1940 to present* The 1937 Agriculture Act anticipated the need to increase self-sufficiency, and the Second World War witnessed a 60% rise in productivity. This was the result of the growth in livestock numbers, increasing scientific and government control and guidance, more specialised systems of management and the conversion to arable of permanent pasture. The Agriculture Act of 1947 heralded the intensification and increased specialisation of farming in the post-war period, accompanied by the development of government and industry research and guidance. The Government provided grants to cover the capital cost of new building under the Farm Improvement Scheme (introduced 1957). The introduction of wide-span multi-purpose sheds in concrete, steel and asbestos met increasing requirements for machinery and for the environmental control of livestock and on-farm production, particularly of milk.

### REGIONAL PATTERNS

The predominant pattern, established by the end of the medieval period, is of largely dispersed settlement with many hamlets and isolated farmsteads. These either result from the colonisation of areas by individual peasant colonisers or have developed from monastic stock farms established in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Nucleated villages are concentrated in some lowland areas such as the Eden valley, west Cumberland coastal belt and the Solway Plain in the north of the Region, where they are intermixed with isolated farmsteads and hamlets, and in other coastal plain areas further south.

There was often a complex intermingling of both open communal and enclosed arable and meadow land around farming settlements, and a diversity of communal farming strips and anciently enclosed land can be read in the modern landscape. Most of the Region's common arable, meadow and pasture had been enclosed by the 1750s, pockets of communal open-field farming – such as in northern lowland Cumbria – surviving into the 19th century. Despite the strong distinctions between the Region's upland and lowland zones, a defining characteristic of this Region is the amount of uncultivated or intermittently cultivated land, in the form of upland moor or lowland moss. Vast areas of remaining lowland moss and upland moor were enclosed from the end of the 18th century to the middle of the 19th century, the pressure to create more productive pasture and especially arable land – and an increased desire on the part of customary tenants to lease or own their land outright – resulting in a dramatic new landscape of large square fields and straight boundaries.

Because of its wet climate and predominantly upland terrain coupled with heavy clay soils on the lowlands, much of the Region was best suited to pastoral agriculture. Cattle were the mainstay of the farming economy. From the 15th century, there was a general extension of pasture for livestock farming throughout the Region. This resulted in large-scale sheep farming to supply wool for the burgeoning woollen and textile industry, and – particularly after import bans were imposed on Irish cattle in the 1660s – the opening of Cumbria and Galloway in Scotland to the supply and fattening of Scottish beef cattle onto lowland England. The large-scale rebuilding of farmsteads in upland and northern lowland zones was also facilitated by favourable terms of tenancy, which underpinned the development of a strongly independent class of farmer. Throughout the Region the period from the later 17th century saw a decline in arable in upland and other pastoral areas, only larger farms and those in the drained eastern lowlands of Lancashire appearing to retain large quantities of arable. There was a corresponding increase – sometimes in parallel with industrial diversification – of rearing, dairying and fattening, with large increases in the amount of land under permanent pasture through the transfer of arable to pasture, dairying and cheese production for local and distant markets (particularly in the Lancashire and Cheshire Plain), and much more large-scale sheep farming. Cattle remained a far more important source of income than sheep in the Region as a whole.

## 2 BUILDING MATERIALS

### NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The use of locally available materials, combined with local vernacular traditions, makes a fundamental contribution to local and regional diversity.

Long-rooted traditions such as earth walling, thatch and timber frame, survived much longer on farm buildings than farmhouses. Buildings in stone and brick, roofed with tile or slate, increasingly replaced such buildings from the later 18th century.

Standardised forms of construction, including softwood roof trusses, developed across the country in the 19th century, often reflecting the availability of materials such as Welsh slate transported along the canals and, later, the railways. Corrugated iron was used from the late 19th century as a cheap means of replacing or covering roofs (particularly thatch) in poor condition.

### REGIONAL PATTERNS

A great diversity of building stone is available across the Region. This variety in colour, texture and form ranges from the dark grey or purple slate of the Lakeland area to the limestones of south Cumbria and Morecombe Bay, the Millstone Grit sandstone of the Pennines and the less weather-resistant New Red Sandstone of parts of south Lancashire and Cheshire. Stone of a more porous nature, such as some sandstones, was often rendered or whitewashed. More regularly finished stone became more common in the late 18th and 19th centuries, especially for storeyed farm buildings and farmhouses, and is associated with the more widespread introduction of lime mortar (earth mortar being the standard bonding before this time). Watershot masonry, where the outer face is tilted to throw water off the walls, is a technique that was used in upland areas between the late 18th and mid-19th centuries.

In both upland and lowland areas cobbles, rounded either by glacial or water action, were widely found in streambeds and in glacial outwash, and were readily available for structural use. They were used particularly where better-quality quarried stone was scarce, such as the Solway Plain and west Cumberland. They were used either whole, well bedded in clay, or halved with the cut surface forming the outside face. Huge cobbles were frequently used in foundations.

The Region has two of the major concentrations of earth-walled structures in England. In the Fylde of Lancashire, before the 17th century, it was widely applied to timber studs set on a stone slab base, similar to the mud-and-stud tradition of eastern Ireland. In the Solway Plain area, a comparatively greater number of more substantially built clay buildings, including cruck-roofed



barns and longhouses – comparable to examples across the border in Scotland and those of the South West Region – have survived. Most date from between the 17th to mid-19th centuries, although there are 15th-century examples. Clay walling was commonly retained for barns and other farm buildings whilst the house might be built in stone.

The present distribution of timber-framed buildings is confined almost entirely to the Lancashire and Cheshire Plains, where farmhouses far outnumber farm buildings using this technique. Where timber framing survives it is typically square-panel framing, part of a shared regional tradition with the West Midlands.

Brick is a characteristic feature of the Cheshire Plain, Wirral, the Lancashire Plain and Morecombe Bay area.

Over considerable parts of the Region the local stone can be split into thin slates for roofing; for example, Cumberland slate, stone flags, imported Welsh slate.

Clay roof tiles are characteristic of the Cheshire Plain.

### 3 FARMSTEADS

#### NATIONAL FRAMEWORK – FARMSTEAD TYPES

The scale and form of farmstead plan types are subject to much variation and are closely related to farm size and status, terrain and land use. It was far more common for the houses on farms in northern and western England to be attached to the farm buildings. By contrast, even small farms in the South East and East Anglia were characterised by detached houses and separate buildings, often loosely arranged around the sides of a yard.

- *Linear plans*, where houses and farm buildings are attached, were ideally suited to small farms (usually stock rearing and dairying), especially in northern pastoral areas with little corn and longer winters where there was an obvious advantage in having cattle and their fodder (primarily hay) in one enclosed building. They now display a wide range in scale, from large steadings of independent Pennine yeoman-farmers to the smallholdings of miner-farmers.
- *Dispersed plans*, comprising clusters and unplanned groupings of separate buildings, were more widespread. They now range from those of hamlets, where the buildings of different owners were often intermixed, to large-scale individual steadings, some of which were of high status.
- *Loose courtyard plans* became most strongly associated with large and/or arable farms. The buildings are built around a yard with or without scatters of other farm buildings close by.
- *Regular courtyard plans*, where the various functions were carefully placed in relation to one another in

order to minimise the waste of labour, and where the manure could be conserved, were built – at first on large estates – from the later 18th century.

#### REGIONAL PATTERNS – FARMSTEAD TYPES

The predominant farmstead plan of the uplands was the linear layout. Linear or parallel plans continued to be used on smaller holdings in lowland areas throughout the Region, and in both areas large numbers survive from the century after 1650, when growing prosperity and the merger of holdings prompted a large-scale rebuilding programme. There are also many examples of linear farmsteads dating from the late 18th century, sometimes easily distinguished by symmetrical farmhouses and attached bank barns. A regionally distinct linear plan-type is the *laithe house*, the word 'laithe' or 'lathe' being a northern English dialect word for a combined barn and cow house. The house and farm buildings are usually of one build, but there is no cross passage or inter-connection between them. Typical of the central and southern Pennines, but also found in Cumbria and Bowland and Rossendale in Lancashire, examples date from the mid-17th century but are not common until after 1750, with a concentration in the 1780 to 1840 period. They typically served farms of about 30 acres or less, and are most densely concentrated in the Pennine part of West Yorkshire and Lancashire, where dual income from farming and industry – primarily textiles, but also lead working – enabled smallholdings to be economically viable.

From the mid-18th century larger lowland farms would typically be served by a farmstead ranged around a courtyard. In Cumbria they are the finest examples in a national context of planned groups incorporating bank barns in courtyards of buildings, with the house on one side, and courtyard farms are found on larger arable-based holdings throughout the Region.

On the Lancashire and Cheshire Plains where dairying was predominant the most common farmstead layout adopted from the late 18th century was the L- or T-shaped plan, although on some larger farms a U-plan was adopted. Dairy farms typically had a combined barn and fodder house built at right angles to the cow house range, often separated by a cart entry for loading hay and corn into the first-floor lofted areas. Pigsties would usually be placed close to the house, either attached to the L-shaped range or as an individual element of the farmstead.

#### NATIONAL FRAMEWORK – BUILDING TYPES

The functions of crop processing and storage and the accommodation of animals and birds determine the variety of building types, which could house one or a combination of functions. The principal types are listed below.



**Barns** are generally the largest farm buildings to be found on farms. They were either designed solely for storing and processing the corn crop, these being most common in areas of arable production, or as combination barns to incorporate many functions. Threshing machines, usually powered by horses accommodated in a projecting wheel house, were introduced from the later 18th century. Split-level mixing barns developed in many regions from the later 18th century as a result of the widespread introduction of machinery for processing corn and fodder. The introduction of the portable steam engine and threshing machine in the 1850s heralded the end of the traditional barn as a building for storage and processing.

**Field barns** were built in areas where farmsteads and fields were sited at a long distance from each other, and where holdings were intermixed. **Granaries** were either detached or built over stables and cart sheds. **Cart sheds** often faced away from the farmyard and were typically close to the stables and roadways, giving direct access to the fields. **Stables** were normally two-storey well-lit buildings with a hayloft above. **Cow houses** were typically built for dairy cattle. The folding of stock in strawed-down yards and feeding them with root crops became more general from the later 18th century, together with the subdivision of yards into smaller areas and the construction of **shelter sheds** and **looseboxes**. **Pigs** were undoubtedly kept on most farms and particularly on dairying establishments, where there was a ready supply of whey on which to feed them. **Dovecotes** were built to house pigeons, which provided variety to the diets of high-status households and a rich source of manure.

## REGIONAL PATTERNS – BUILDING TYPES

The importance of cattle in the agricultural economy is more evident in the farm buildings of the North West than in any other Region.

The **bastle house** is a building type particular to the Border area of northern England. The cattle were housed on the ground floor, usually with the doorway in a gable end, and the domestic space in a room above was accessed by a ladder or later an external staircase. Bastle houses generally date from the 16th to the 17th centuries and reflect the need to make family and stock secure.

**Threshing barns** that functioned only as a building for crop processing are uncommon in this Region. Combination barns that incorporated several functions – including the threshing of the corn crop, animal housing, fodder storage and sometimes a cart shed – are typical of the Region and were being constructed in the North West in a variety of forms from the medieval period.

It is the way that a diversity of uses, particularly housing cattle, are incorporated into the building (using horizontal and/or vertical divisions) that lead to the distinctive forms of combination barns seen in the North West. Most of these combination barns are wholly or part-lofted, with entries for cattle in one or both ends. These include a large group of aisled barns dating from the 15th to mid-17th centuries concentrated around the South Pennines, but also extending into Lancashire. In Cumbria and the northern upland parts of Lancashire are found multi-functional bank barns, normally using a natural slope to provide level access to both floors. Bank barns are a distinctive and characteristic feature of the Region. The only other part of the country where they are found, although not in the same abundance as in Cumbria, is in adjoining parts of the North East and in the South West counties of Devon, Cornwall and Somerset.

**Granaries, cart sheds** and other individual functions most often appear in combination with others in continuous ranges.

The hay barn is a common feature of many larger pastoral farms – and a distinctive feature of this Region. They are sometimes built to substantial proportions and given decorative treatment in both the form and detail of the ventilation patterns, particularly in the farmsteads of the Cheshire Plain.

The upland parts of the Region – particularly in Cumbria – has some notable pre-19th-century examples of field barns. These include bank barns dating from the 17th century, buildings for housing cattle and sheep. In Cumbria, particularly on the lower pastures of the eastern Lakeland and other hilly areas, a building similar in appearance to a field barn was provided for the hogs or yearling sheep to give them protection over their first winter.

# 1.0 Introduction

If the land is best suited for tillage, then the outhouses must be adapted to the purposes of keeping cattle for plowing; of holding and thrashing corn; and of preserving straw, &c. for winter food. In the counties where oxen plow, ox-houses must exceed the quantity of stabling: if where horses only are used, stables alone will be sufficient. If the land seems to promise fairest for pasturage, then cow houses, suckling-houses, sheepcots, dairies, and fattening houses must predominate; and if for grass, much barn-room seems unnecessary.

*The Complete English Farmer, 1771, quoted in Wiliam 1986, p.67*

Farm buildings are the leitmotif of the countryside. It seems appropriate to describe them with a musical term for they are thematic, and the resonance of their forms, colours and textures within the scenery is that of sound, overall and orchestrated. Here and there is the solo instrument, spectacular in its own right, but much more important is the orchestral effect.

Darley, Gillian (1981) *The National Trust Book of the Farm*, The National Trust, London, p.7

Historic farmsteads and their buildings make a fundamental contribution to the richly varied character of our countryside, and illustrate the long history of farming and settlement in the English landscape. England displays a huge diversity in geology, with a greater variety in small areas than anywhere else in Europe, which combined with varied farming practices has resulted in a great diversity of materials and types of farmstead.

It is clear, however, that we know far more about the nature and processes of change affecting land cover and field pattern than we do about agriculture's built environment and its contribution to countryside character and local distinctiveness. Furthermore, we know far less about the working than the domestic buildings of the farmstead. Recent research has made initial efforts to address this issue, and has made it clear how the domestic and working buildings of the farmstead are subject to very different processes of change (Gaskell & Owen, 2005).

English Heritage is now undertaking to develop this knowledge base in order to inform diverse future outcomes, such as the targeting of grant aid and the development of character-based policies for the sustainable reuse of farm buildings. This document is one of eight regional *preliminary character statements* that aim to promote better and more accessible understanding of the character of farm buildings. It is important, as a first step in this process, to present an information base for a broad diversity of users with an interest in researching,

understanding and managing historic farmsteads. It has therefore been written as a sourced synthesis of information, drawing together information that will enable the farmsteads of each Region to be better understood within the national context of farmstead and agricultural development, and their surrounding fields and settlements. As this is a preliminary statement, it and future work will benefit greatly from information and comments. These will be gratefully received at the following e-mail address:

**[jeremy.lake@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:jeremy.lake@english-heritage.org.uk)**

The objectives of this document are:

- To provide an information base and introduction to the subject.
- To place the development of the farmsteads and farm buildings of the North West Region within their national context.
- To demonstrate, with examples, how the *present* stock of farmsteads and their buildings reflects the diversity of farming, settlement and landscape character in the North West Region.
- To provide broad guidance on the value and survival by period and functional type.

An accompanying policy booklet has also been prepared, which makes the case for urgent action and considers

the importance of historic farm buildings, their value and their future. See *Living buildings in a living landscape: finding a future for traditional farm buildings*, at [www.helm.org.uk/ruraldevelopment](http://www.helm.org.uk/ruraldevelopment).

In each of the following sections, the national overview is presented immediately before the regional statement. For example, on the topic of barns, the national overview describes the development, variety and uses of barns nationally while the regional statement describes the variety that can be seen in the barns of the Region.

**Section 2** provides an introduction to characterisation and briefly describes the landscape character of the Region, examining the pattern of rural settlement across the Region.

**Section 3** describes the predominant building materials used for farm buildings nationally and in the Region.

**Section 4** provides a brief introduction to the agricultural history of England with particular reference to the development of farmsteads and farm buildings divided into the major periods, supported by statements relating to the survival and significance of farm buildings from each period. This is followed by a summary of the

agricultural history of the Region.

**Section 5** provides a national and regional background of types of farmsteads and farm buildings.

**Sections 6, 7 and 8** provide a national and regional overview of key building types.

**Section 9** provides a Glossary of terms both familiar and unfamiliar to the reader (e.g. dairy, linhay, enclosure).

**Section 10** provides a list of national and regional sources for further reference.

It is also important at this stage to outline a distinction in terminology. 'Traditional' is a term often used to describe farm buildings pre-dating 1940, after which modern building materials (concrete, steel, asbestos sheet) and revolutions in farming technology and farmstead planning marked a sharp divide with previous practice. 'Historic' is more encompassing, as it includes farmsteads of all dates, irrespective of changes in form and material; it has been used in this document in order that the reader can view the history of farm buildings, and their change and adaptation over the centuries, within their broad historical context.



# 2.0 Understanding Context and Character

## 1.1 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND CHARACTERISATION

Landscape character is defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. Particular combinations of geology (Figure 1A), landform, soils, vegetation, land use, field patterns and human settlement create character. Character makes each part of the landscape distinct, and gives each its particular sense of place. Landscape-scale techniques for understanding and guiding future change, now brigaded under the heading of characterisation, have developed since the 1990s. These have developed as multi-disciplinary and holistic tools for understanding the whole rural environment, its capacity to absorb change and its links to community values and needs.

During the 1990s the Countryside Commission worked with English Nature and English Heritage to identify Joint Character Areas (159 in total) for the whole of England, each of these resulting from a combination of factors such as land cover, geology, soils, topography, and settlement and enclosure patterns. These are now being used as the framework for the delivery of advice and the targeting of resources for many aspects of the rural environment, most recently to farmers under the Higher Level Stewardship Agri-Environment schemes, and local authorities have taken forward this methodology for Landscape Character Assessments on a finer scale. These are also being used as the spatial framework for reporting change in the countryside, in the Countryside Quality Counts project (see [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)).

The North West Region extends over the Joint Character Areas listed in Figure 1B. Whenever the text cross-refers to the Joint Character Areas, they will be listed by their number (i.e. JCA 152). The key characteristics and a detailed description and map for each Character Area are available from the Countryside Agency's website ([www.countryside.gov.uk/lar/landscape](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/lar/landscape)). The web addresses for each JCA are detailed in Section 1.1.

Human impact has been central to the development and present character of landscape. Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), which is being developed by English Heritage with its county and local partners, is using GIS mapping techniques to deepen our understanding and perception of the long historical development of our landscapes. The practical applications of HLC now include development plans, a broad range of conservation and enhancement strategies, strategic land-use planning and similar initiatives, and research and academic implications (Clark, Darlington & Fairclough, 2004; Rippon, 2005, 100–142).

Pilot work is now indicating that the density and time-depth of farmsteads, and the rates of survival of different types of steading and building, are closely related to patterns of historically conditioned landscape character and type (Lake & Edwards 2006). This work represents a shift in focus away from individual buildings to a more question-based and holistic approach, one that uses landscape to both reflect and inform the patterning of the built environment. Recording and understanding at a local scale can both test and refine these broad-based, contextualised statements and contribute towards a more integrated understanding of both buildings and landscapes.

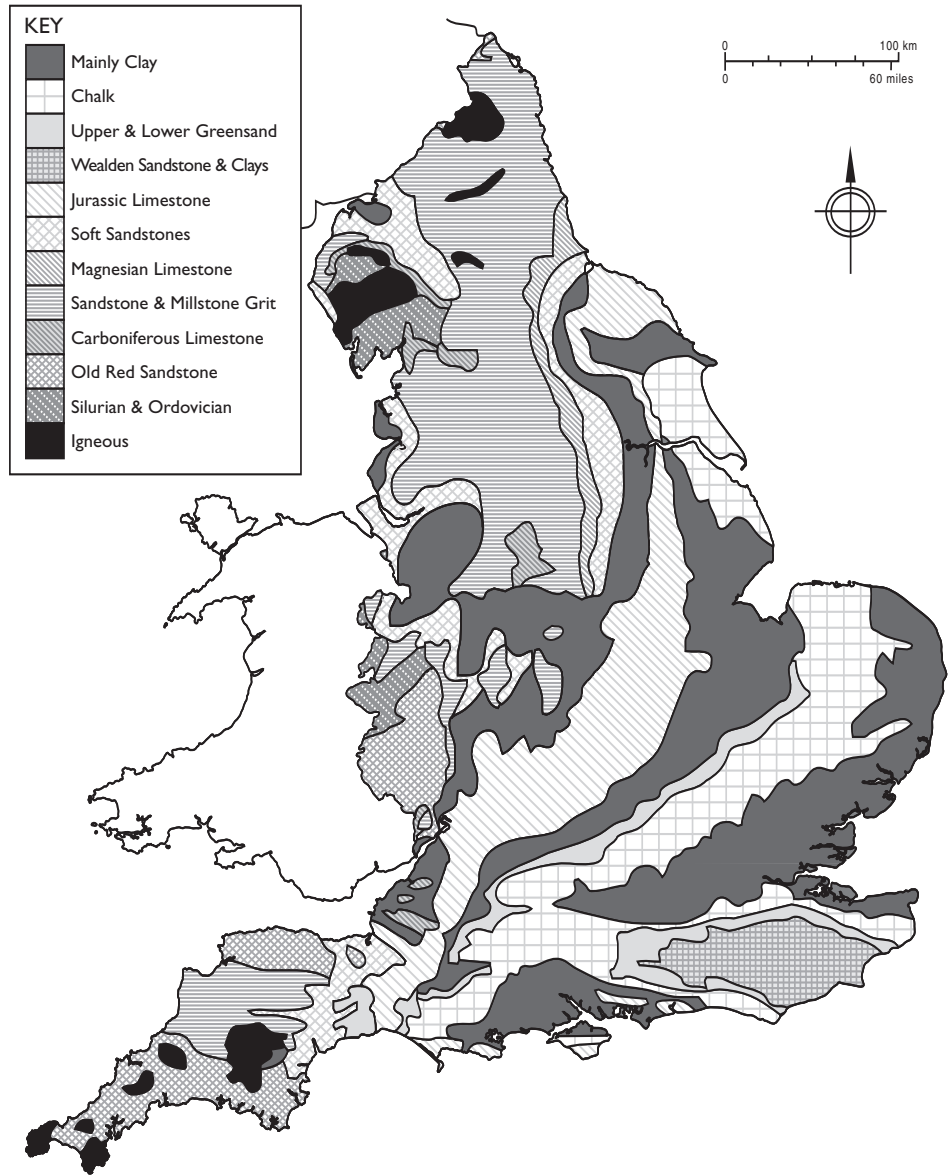
For characterisation see: [www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation)

## 2.2 THE CHARACTER OF THE NORTH WEST REGION: AN INTRODUCTION

The Government Region of the North West covers the counties of Cumbria (comprising the historic counties of Cumberland and Westmorland together with the detached portion of Lancashire to the north of Morecombe Bay covering the Furness and Cartmel districts), Lancashire and Cheshire. The Region presents a wide variety of landscapes and character areas.

Cumbria is dominated by the mountainous area of the Lake District, erupting in a mass of old hard slates and granites. To the north-east of this area, along the Cumbrian coastal plains and over much of the southern half of the Region sandstones and mudstones prevail with heavy clay soils derived from glacial drift. The Pennine uplands dominate the east of the Region, and stretch from the Scottish border through to the Peak District of Derbyshire. Here the hard, coarse, massive and uncompromising Millstone Grit sandstones predominate. A band of carboniferous limestone surfaces west to east through Clitheroe into Yorkshire whilst further south lie the coal measures of the Lancashire Valleys. The transitional zone from fell to plain through central Lancashire and into Cheshire is mostly of red sandstone. To the west, the sandstones are for the most part heavily overlain with marls, clays and recent glacial deposits; the central area comprises soils of varying proportions of clay and sand; to the east the soils are light and sandy. Few English counties present so little geological variety as Cheshire, where apart from the sandstone outcrop of the Overton-Peckforton Ridge, the plains to the west and east are broadly covered by glacial drift.

IA Geology map of England  
 England displays a huge diversity in geology, with a greater variety in small areas than anywhere else in Europe. The North West Region has a varied geology providing sandstone and limestones for both walling and roofing. The availability of good stone across most of the Region means that it is the dominant building material and is a major contributor to local distinctiveness. In the south of the Region the clays of the Cheshire Plain were used for brick and tile making.  
*Based upon 'Solid Geology' Source Defra/BGS, NERC: by permission of the British Geological Survey IPR/52-65C. ©NERC/Crown copyright. OS Licence no. 100042054*



The Border Moors and North Pennines have always been thinly settled, its land suited to rough grazing and now predominantly sheep run. Around the Lake District with its acidic, infertile soils and steep-sided valleys, which eventually open westward to the Eden Valley, lie drier, milder districts with more fertile land characterised by glacial drift or alluvial deposits. The Eden Valley contains some of the richest agricultural land in Cumbria and consists of improved pasture with a significant coverage of arable crops. To the north and west, in the Coastal Plain and Solway Basin, areas of improved, intensively managed pasture are grazed by store cattle, small dairy herds and sheep, in gently undulating countryside.

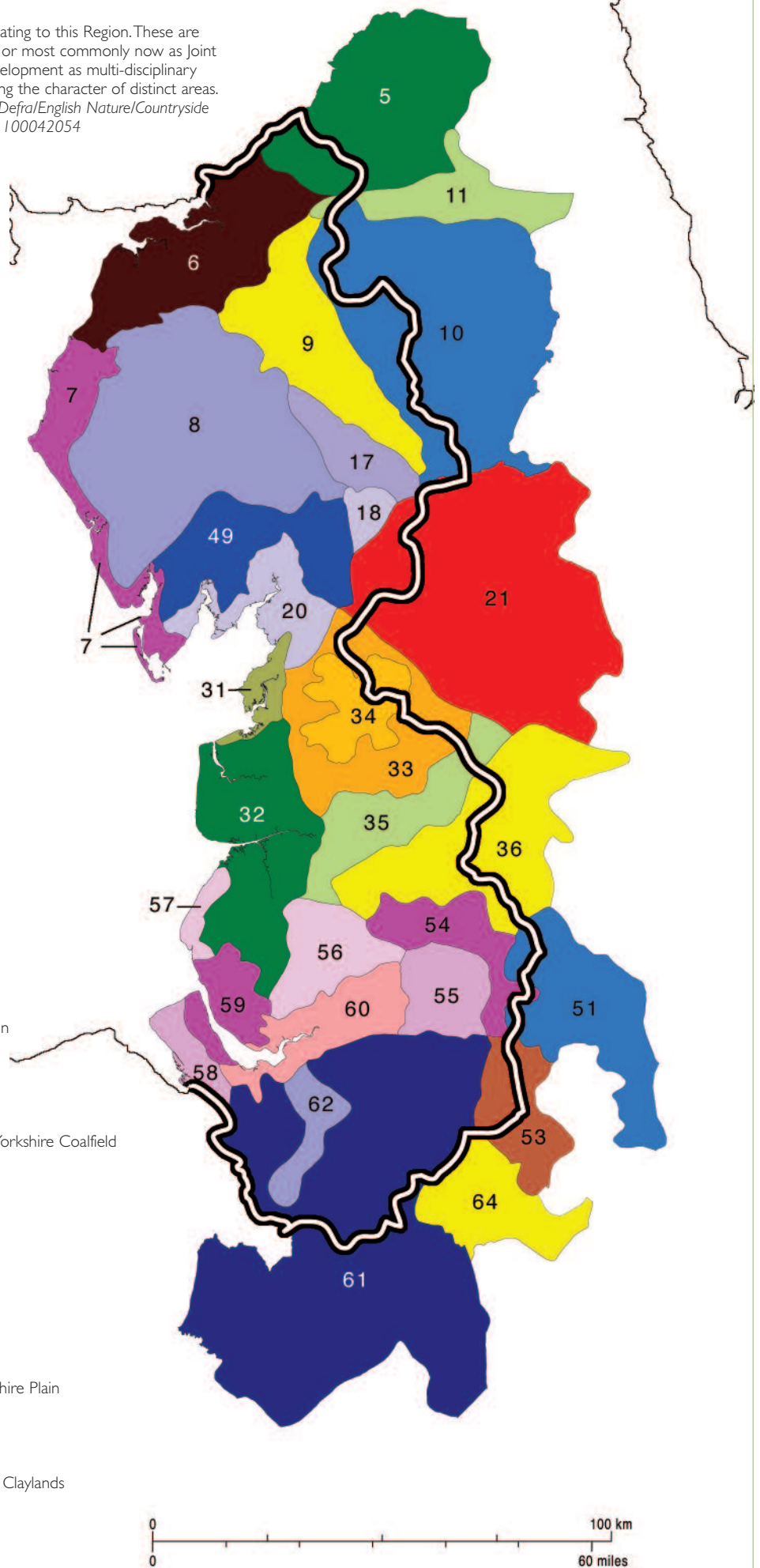
The Southern Cumbrian Fells, including the Furness District, were subject to forest clearance from the medieval period but continued to sustain coppice-based industries (notably iron and gunpowder) into the 20th century. The climate is favourable to fruit growing and amenable to stock rearing. Moving southwards are further moorland and gritstone fells – the Bowland and Pennine Dales (including Rossendale and Trawden) from

the South Pennines and Peaks landscapes to the south – with rough pasture, heather and large areas of blanket peat and areas of reclaimed moorland pasture on the periphery. On the Bowland Fringe and the central area of the Ribble valley, the land supports permanent pasture, mostly improved for dairy and livestock farming.

The Ribble and other river valleys bisect the landscapes of the Pennine Dales and South Pennines, and drain through the Lancashire Plain. North to south they comprise the Lune, Wyre, Ribble and Irwell. Together with the Mersey Valley to the south, these valleys are historically important corridors for movement, settlement and for drainage within the Region.

The western part of Lancashire, from the limestone of Morecombe Bay southwards towards Liverpool, contains high-grade agricultural land. The Lancashire Plain to the north is predominantly improved pasture, whilst further south and into the central area between the Ribble and the Mersey the soils are lighter, resulting in highly productive arable land.

IB This map shows the Character Areas relating to this Region. These are known as Countryside Character Areas or most commonly now as Joint Character Areas, this reflecting their development as multi-disciplinary means of mapping, defining and describing the character of distinct areas. Based upon Joint Character Areas. Source: Defra/English Nature/Countryside Agency. ©/Crown copyright OS Licence no. 100042054



JCA number	JCA name
5	Border Moors and Forests
6	Solway Basin
7	West Cumbria Coastal Plain
8	Cumbria High Fells
9	Eden Valley
10	North Pennines
11	Tyne Gap and Hadrian's Wall
20	Morecambe Bay Limestones
21	Yorkshire Dales
22	Pennine Dales Fringe
31	Morecambe Bay and Lune Estuary
32	Lancashire and Amounderness Plain
33	Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill
34	Bowland Fells
35	Lancashire Valleys
36	Southern Pennines
37	Yorkshire Southern Pennine Fringe
38	Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire Coalfield
49	Sherwood
50	Derbyshire Peak Fringe
51	Dark Peak
52	White Peak
53	South West Peak
54	Manchester Pennine Fringe
55	Manchester Conurbation
56	Lancashire Coal Measures
57	Sefton Coast
58	Merseyside Conurbation
59	Wirral
60	Mersey Valley
61	Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain
62	Cheshire Sandstone Ridge
63	Oswestry Uplands
64	Potteries and Churnet Valley
67	Cannock Chase and Cank Wood
68	Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands
69	Trent Valley Washlands
72	Mease/Sence Lowlands



Beyond the Plain, north-west and into the Fylde, the peninsula between the estuaries of the Wyre and Ribble, soils derived from glacial drift are heavy, and the Region consequently has much permanent grassland. The flat, rolling landscape is historically renowned for its cattle rearing and dairy farming, river meadows and large areas of inland moss. These were improved beyond recognition by the mid-19th century.

Bisected by the distinctive Sandstone Ridge landscape is the Cheshire Plain, a unified landscape extending into North Shropshire and adjacent parts of Staffordshire (West Midlands Region) dominated by dairying, merging with more mixed and arable farming to the north and south-east. It is possessed of broad lowlands of clay loam soils upon marl, interspersed with peat mosses and hemmed in on the east by the South West Peak of moorland. The predominant land use is the production of grass for dairy cattle, sustained by its mild and wet climate.

## 2.3 THE CHARACTER OF RURAL SETTLEMENT

### 2.3.1 NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Farmland has historically been divided into arable for growing corn and other crops, and meadow for hay and grass. In the past, farmers also had access to fallow land, land laid open after the harvest and areas of rougher common ground for grazing livestock. Patterns of settlement in the countryside varied from large, nucleated villages to dispersed settlement areas with scattered, isolated hamlets and farmsteads, both being closely related to the patterns of fields and their associated boundaries in the surrounding landscape. There were many variations between the two extremes of communal open fields with their scattered holdings, which typically developed around larger nucleated settlements, and the anciently enclosed fields of isolated farmsteads and hamlets.

Re-arranging previously communal fields or common pasture land into self-contained private land units enabled the rationalisation of formerly scattered holdings, allowing better management of livestock and rotation of crops. This process of enclosure – evident from the 14th century and even earlier – resulted in the immediate or gradual establishment of new isolated farmsteads out in the fields. It could be undertaken on a piecemeal basis, or in one single phase, the latter form of enclosure being typically more regular in its appearance. Enclosure by parliamentary act, some of which formalised earlier agreements, often resulted in new designed landscapes. Parliamentary enclosure was concentrated in the period 1750 to 1880.

English Heritage has commissioned work on mapping these patterns of settlement in the English countryside, now published as *An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England* (Roberts & Wrathmell 2000) and *Region and Place, A Study of English Rural Settlement* (Roberts & Wrathmell 2002). In summary, it has been demonstrated that a Central Province mostly characterised by nucleated settlement and, by the 14th century, communal fields which occupied the great majority of the land area, is flanked by a South-Eastern Province and both a Northern and Western Province where settlement is mostly dispersed (Figure 2).

In areas of *nucleated settlement* in the medieval period and later, the majority of farmsteads were sited in villages and the surrounding land dominated by communally managed open fields, where the holdings of individual farmers were inter-mixed and farmed in rotation as meadow or arable land. Many open field systems were created during the period from the 9th to the 12th centuries, replacing earlier dispersed patterns of settlement with nucleated villages with communally managed fields, many of which were clearly planned by estates.

Farmsteads in areas of *dispersed settlement* are commonly isolated or clustered in hamlets. They are commonly medieval in origin (pre-14th century generally) and often surrounded by ancient and irregular patterns of field boundaries, including the reclamation of woodland or waste. Typically smaller and more numerous than the open fields of Midlands villages, these fields were either farmed from the outset as compact farming units or contained the scattered holdings or strips of individual farmers that were farmed on a communal basis. Areas of pasture and rough grazing were typically far greater in extent than in areas of nucleated settlement, and have again been subject to varying rates of enclosure from the 14th century.

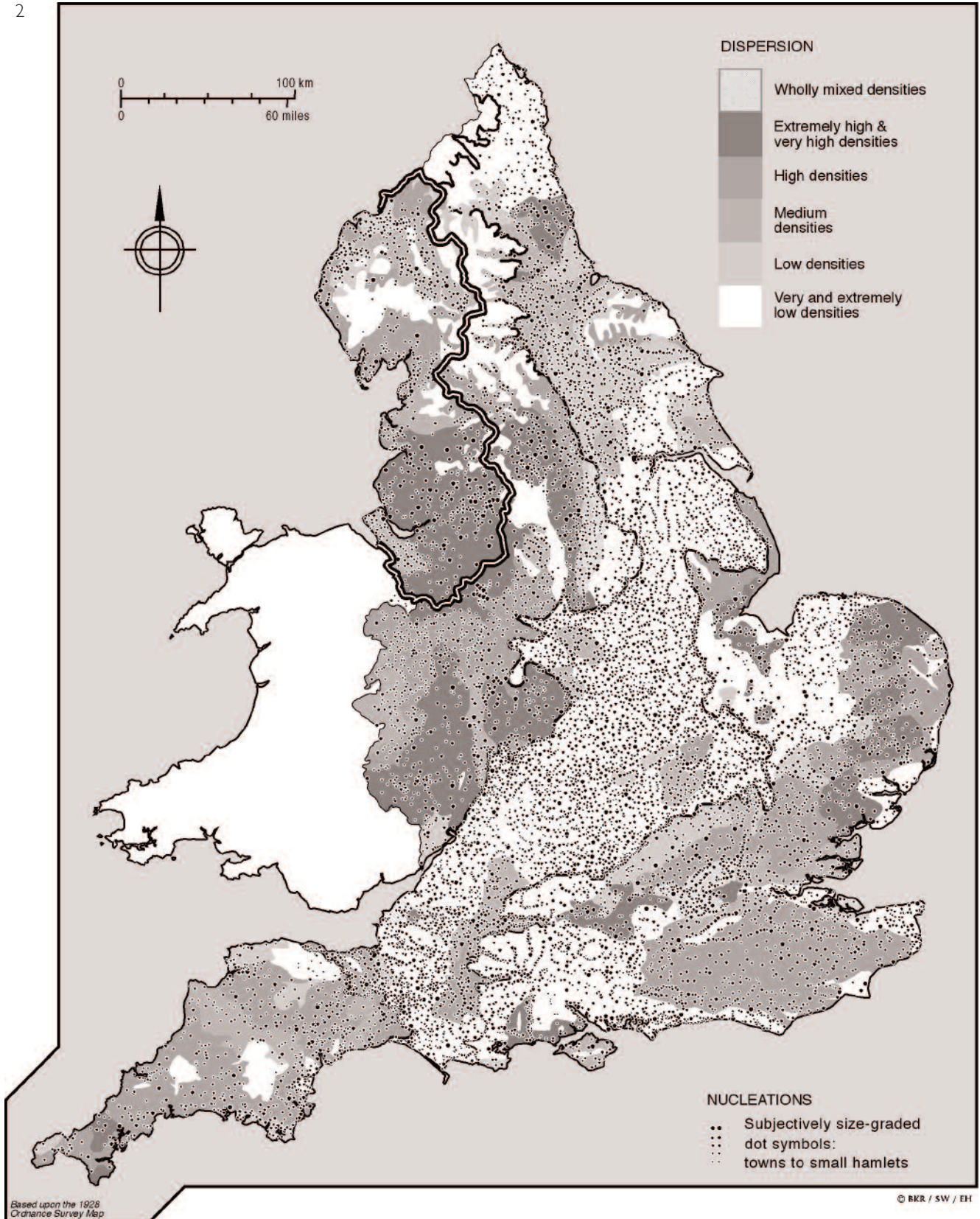
Between the extremes of nucleation and dispersion are the areas that to some degree included both villages and scattered farmsteads and hamlets. In these areas, nucleated villages again originated from developments between the 9th and 12th centuries, but were often intermixed with isolated farmsteads that date from both the medieval period or earlier and from the later enclosure of open fields and common meadow and pasture.

In some areas, the remains of earlier, including pre-Roman, farmsteads are visible as crop-marks or earthworks close to existing farmsteads or villages (see Roberts 1976 and Taylor 1983 for a useful introduction). While research is demonstrating that existing parish and field boundaries possibly originate from very early, even pre-Roman, field and estate boundaries, it is exceptionally

2 Rural settlement in England. Rural settlement can broadly be divided into two types: nucleated villages and dispersed farmsteads and hamlets. Figure 2 presents an analysis of the settlement pattern of England in the mid-19th century that identifies three 'Provinces'. The Central Province, mostly characterised by nucleated settlement and once dominated by communal fields, stretches from Dorset, through Gloucestershire, the East Midlands, Yorkshire and along the north-east coast. This area is flanked by a South-Eastern Province covering the area from Dorset and Wiltshire to East Anglia, and a Northern & Western Province. In these Provinces settlement is mostly dispersed. The North West Region lies wholly within the Northern and Western Province. The density of dispersed settlement varies across the Region. On the Cheshire and Lancashire Plains the density is very high: the Lancashire and Amounderness Plain, the Lancashire Valleys and the areas around Manchester had the highest density of dispersed settlement in England in the 19th century. The settlement of the Region does not solely consist of dispersed settlement; in areas such as the Solway Plain and the Eden Valley settlement is predominantly nucleated with low levels of dispersed settlement.

Source: *An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England* (2000) ©English Heritage/Roberts, B.K. and Wrathmell, S.

2



rare for present farmstead sites – as in Cornwall's West Penwith – to display such continuity.

### 2.3.2 RURAL SETTLEMENT IN THE NORTH WEST

The North West Region lies wholly within Roberts and Wrathmell's Northern and Western Province and has a distinctive pattern of settlement and farming broadly similar to that of the North East and parts of Yorkshire, where settlement is largely dispersed with many small hamlets and isolated farmsteads. The greatest density of dispersed settlement is to be found in the south of the Region in the Cheshire Plain and Lancashire Lowland areas, where a great deal of woodland remained in the 14th century. As elsewhere in the Region, there was little systematic rotation of crops. Small, open arable fields would either be interspersed with extensive pasture or clustered around settlements and surrounded by grazing land. Many of these dispersed hamlets and villages are of medieval origin, as evidenced by the high number of

moated sites and place names incorporating the affix 'green' (Roberts & Wrathmell 2000, pp.53–4). Small areas of the southern part of the Region, such as the Wirral, contain more nucleated villages.

In the northern part of the Region scattered farmsteads and hamlets are found within the mountain valleys of the Lake District. Place names and the location of these settlements suggest that they may originate from seasonal summer grazings or industrial activities such as mining or quarrying (Roberts & Wrathmell 2000, p.53). North of the upland mass of the Lake District, the Eden Valley, west Cumberland coastal belt and Solway Plain are characterised by a very different pattern of settlement, with nucleated villages intermixed with linear hamlets and isolated farmsteads. In Lancashire the villages of the Fylde appear to be rebuildings or extensions of existing villages planned in the 12th or 13th centuries as a result of population pressure.



# 3.0 Building Materials

## 3.1 NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Farm buildings were frequently altered and re-roofed, and survivals can display evidence for successive phases of rebuilding, marked by straight joints in masonry or indications of mortise holes and joints in timberwork.

The present stock of farm buildings displays strong local and regional variation. This is the result of a range of factors, particularly England's huge diversity in geology, the status of the owner, availability of resources managed in the local landscape and the cost of manufactured materials (Rackham 1972; Moir 1997). Long-rooted traditions such as earth walling and thatch in Cornwall and timber frame in Norfolk, survived much longer on farm buildings than farmhouses, and were not overtaken by increasingly fashionable and robust forms of construction (such as stone in parts of Cornwall, brick in Norfolk) until the early to mid-19th century (Potts 1974; Lucas 1997). The coastal shipping trade had for many centuries allowed the transport of building materials, but the arrival firstly of canals and then railways allowed the easier transportation of building materials into inland

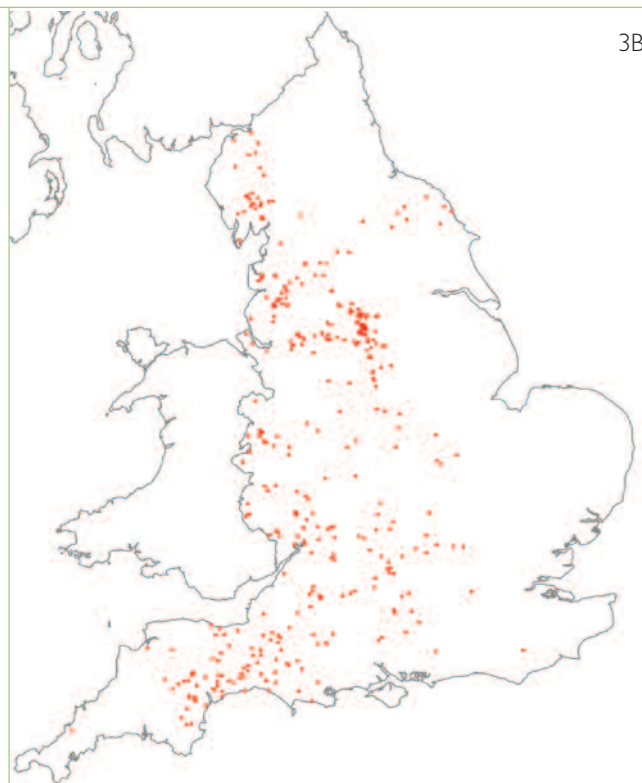
areas. Buildings in stone and brick, and roofed with tile or slate, increasingly replaced buildings in clay, timber and thatch from the later 18th century. Mass-walled buildings comprise the majority of listed agricultural buildings (67%), with timber framing accounting for just over one quarter of entries.

There are strong regional and local differences in roof construction and carpentry, as is still demonstrated by the distribution of aisled and cruck buildings (Figures 3 and 4). From the medieval period, the unit of reference in timber-framed and mass-walled buildings became the bay, the distance between principal roof trusses. These bays could also mark out different areas of storage within barns and other buildings (see 3.1.1.3). Iron bolts, straps and tension bars became increasingly common, often in combination with imported softwood, in the 19th century. Textbooks such as Waistell's *Designs for Agricultural Buildings* (1827) and Stephens's *Book of the Farm* (1844) helped to promote more standardised forms of construction. Metal roofs were used from the 1850s for covered yards and other buildings on expensive planned

3 The distribution of listed aisled (left) and cruck (right) barns in England. Aisled construction, used for domestic buildings from the 12th century at the highest level in society, was suited to the storage and constructional requirements of large barns. The weighting of the distribution is southern English, stretching into the south of the East of England Region, with outliers being generally of a high status and dating from before 1550; a notable concentration in northern England is in the Halifax–Huddersfield area, where the wealth derived from a combination of farming and the cloth industry in the 15th and 16th centuries led to the construction of a notable group of aisled houses and barns. Aisled construction continued to be employed in southern England into the 19th century. Crucks in domestic buildings have a date range from the mid-13th to the mid-17th centuries, examples in the north of England being generally later in date, whereas in agricultural buildings the earliest survivals are 15th century and the latest (in the southern Pennines) early 18th century. There is a wide variety of forms in cruck construction.  
© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. English Heritage 100019088. 2005



3A



3B

4A Aisled barn, Cressing Temple, Essex, one of the earliest barns in England and one of two 13th-century barns surviving from an estate of the Knights Hospitaller erected with timber felled between 1259 and 1280. (South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands)

B Barn at Cross Farm, Burgh-by-Sands, Cumbria, showing the full crucks to the interior of a late 17th-century clay-walled barn. This is one of a group of such barns on the Solway Plain, dating from between the 14th and 17th centuries. (Solway Basin)

A © English Heritage / Michael Williams;

B © Jen Deadman



farmsteads, but did not come into general use – mainly for covered yards – until the end of the 19th century. Pre-fabricated buildings in iron were manufactured and exported from the 1840s, the most well known on the farmstead being the Dutch barn (see 6.4.1), popular from the 1880s. Factory-made prefabricated buildings, built to standard widths applicable to a wide variety of uses, have since the 1950s been the standard building type used on farms. The principal materials are summarised below.

### 3.1.1 WALLING

#### 3.1.1.1 Temporary structures

As could be expected, the most fragile structures are documented from excavation or archives (for example the Wiltshire vicarage stable 'enclosed with hurdle work' in Hobbs [ed] 2000, xvi and p.438) but have not survived. A long-standing building tradition, where posts were set directly in the ground with no definable bay structure, is documented from excavation and has survived in use for single-storey structures (including 18th-century cart sheds and 20th-century tractor sheds) to the present day (Lake 1989, p.43).

#### 3.1.1.2 Mass walling

Mass-walled buildings now dominate the traditional farm building stock, almost exclusively so in the three northern regions. Stone and brick display a wide variety of treatment, their use reflecting not only the availability of materials but also the status of the farm and its owner. Large parts of England – particularly in the South East, South West, East of England, the East Midlands and the North West – display different traditions of walling in earth, dating from the 14th century (Figure 5). Concrete was used from the 1860s on some farms, for example for silage clamps, but did not achieve general use until after the 1950s.

#### 3.1.1.3 Timber frame

Timber-framed buildings are concentrated in the East of England, the South East and the West Midlands. The basic vocabulary of construction had been developed by the 13th century – notably the use of sophisticated jointing techniques, particularly at the junction of the main posts and roof trusses (the so-called bay divisions), and timber sills raised off the ground on dwarf walls. Climate and patterns of land use and ownership have affected the availability of timber and, together with cultural factors, have influenced the distribution, appearance of distinct traditions in timber framing and the framing of roof trusses for mass-walled buildings (Smith 1965; Stenning & Andrews 1988; and Figures 3 and 6). The infill between the timber frames would either be wattle and daub (a clay and straw mix), brick (often a later addition) or simply left as a wattle framework. Timber planks, either rebated or slotted like wattle, were also used but now only survive in very rare instances. External walling and render can also disguise evidence of earlier timber framing, including cruck and aisled construction.

#### 3.1.1.4 Timber cladding

In parts of the country – particularly in the South East, East of England and the western part of the West Midlands – timber frames were often clad in horizontally fixed weatherboarding. Hand-sawn hardwood boarding is now rarely found, as machine-sawn softwood was increasingly used from the late 18th century. Weatherboarding is either applied to a whole building (most commonly in regions in the South East and the southern part of the East of England) or to the upper portions of sidewalls (a common use in the West Midlands). Vertical boarding is mainly found in the South East. This had cover strips to prevent the ingress of rain; surviving examples date from the late 19th century. Hit-and-miss timber boarding, sometimes known as Yorkshire

5 Listed earth-built agricultural buildings in England. Survival is more extensive than this map indicates. The Region has two of the major concentrations of earth-walled structures in England. In the Fylde of Lancashire, before the 18th century, it was widely applied to timber studs set on a stone slab base, similar to the mud-and-stud tradition of eastern Ireland. In the Solway Plain area, a comparatively greater number of more substantially built clay buildings – comparable to examples across the border in Scotland and those of the South West Region – have survived, mostly dating from between the late 17th and mid-19th centuries, including cruck-roofed barns and longhouses. Clay walling was commonly retained for barns and other farm buildings whilst the house might be built in stone. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. English Heritage 100019088. 2005

6 Listed timber-framed barns in England. Although listing concentrates on the generally best-preserved sample of surviving buildings, this map broadly shows the extent of present survival. Note the separation – marked by the limestone belt running from Dorset to Yorkshire – of the major concentrations in south-east and central southern England and western and northern England, where separate traditions of carpentry and framing developed. The map also reveals much about patterns of loss, and particularly rebuilding in stone and brick, over the centuries. There is a sharp boundary, for example, between the claylands of south Norfolk and Suffolk and the lighter soils of Breckland and north Norfolk, where brick had generally replaced timber frame by the 19th century. The absence of timber frame in the North East, where again it is documented, is notable. Such a map presents an obvious invitation to future analysis and research. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. English Heritage 100019088. 2005

boarding, has been widely in use as cladding since the 1970s, since it provides good ventilation and meets modern animal welfare requirements.

### 3.1.1.5 Corrugated iron

See 3.1.2.3.

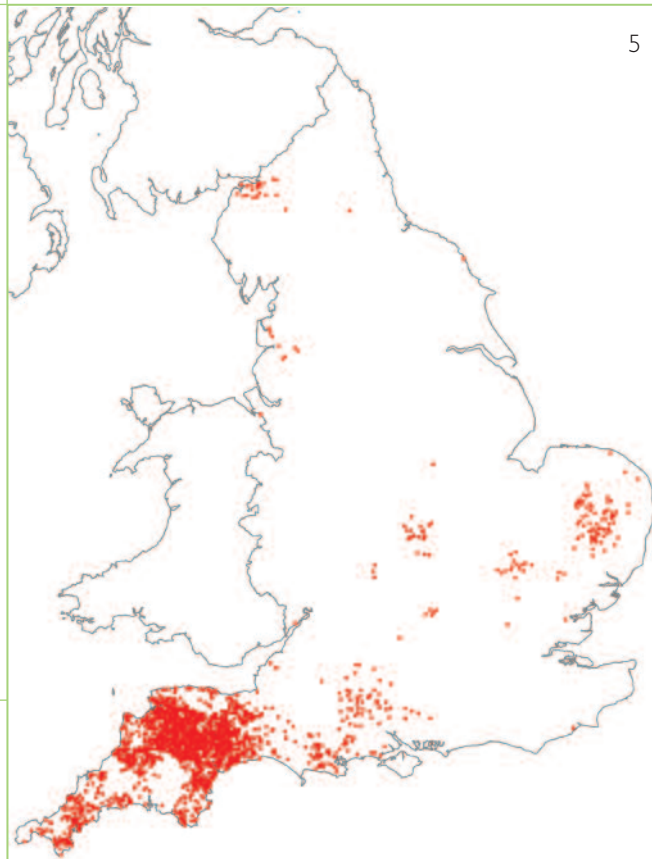
## 3.1.2 ROOFING

### 3.1.2.1 Thatch

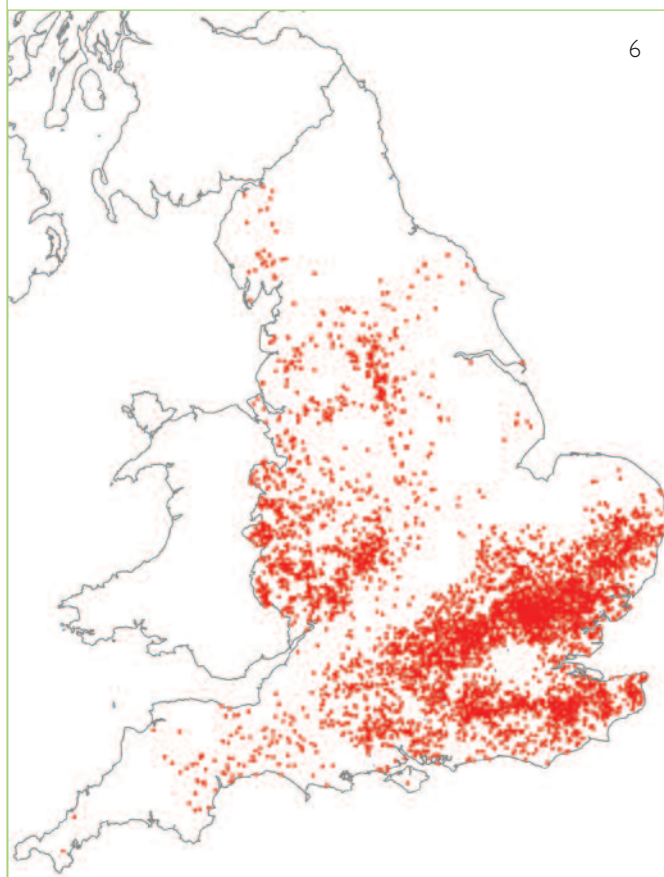
Thatch was common in large parts of the country, and farmers used a wide range of locally available materials: heather, bracken, reeds, rushes, grass, turf, and straw from oats, barley, wheat and rye. Thatch, predominantly made of wheat straw or water reed, is now mainly confined to southern England and East Anglia (Figure 7). Heather and bracken was, until the 19th century, used in upland areas of moorland and heath, such as Dartmoor, the Pennines, the North York Moors and the Cheviots. Solid thatch, where the whole of the roof space was filled with materials such as heather or gorse with a straw or reed topcoat, was formerly widespread but is now very rare (Moir & Letts 1999, pp.103–4).

### 3.1.2.2 Plain clay tiles and stone slates

These materials were used at a high social level from the medieval period and are found in many parts of the country. Their use became increasingly widespread after the later 18th century, along with stone and brick walling, supplanting smaller farm buildings built of timber, earth and thatch in many parts of the country. The coastal trade and improved communications also enabled the widespread introduction of pantiles – instantly recognisable with their distinctive curved profile – into parts of the South West and across large areas of the eastern counties from north Essex to Northumberland, and of Welsh slate into many inland areas.



5



6

### 3.1.2.3 Corrugated iron and other prefabricated modern materials

Corrugated iron was used in England from the 1820s, initially for industrial buildings. Although several pioneering firms were producing portable corrugated-iron-clad buildings by the 1850s, it did not come into