

# White Peak

## National Character Area 52

The White Peak, 78% of which lies within the Peak District National Park, is an elevated limestone plateau dissected by steeply cut dales and gorges with rock outcrops, screes, and cave systems. The area is surrounded by the distinctive 'gritstone' moors of the Dark Peak to the north and east, and by the South West Peak to the west. The area extends from around Castleton in the north to the outskirts of Ashbourne in the south. Just over 2% of the area is urban, 4% is woodland.

### SUMMARY

#### HISTORIC CHARACTER

- Farmsteads within villages mostly relate to fields dating from piecemeal enclosure of former strip fields since at the least the 15th century. Isolated farmsteads are typically associated with areas of regular enclosure of former commons newly-enclosed in the late 18th and 19th centuries, with larger fields and farmsteads developing on some of the arable estate lands.
- Medium-high density of small- to medium-scale farmsteads in the landscape, increasing to very high in the west adjoining the South West Peak. These mostly comprise loose courtyard plans and linear and L-plans with farmhouse and farm buildings attached and in-line.
- The present predominant pattern of stone and slate farmsteads results mainly from rebuilding in the 18th and 19th centuries. Earlier cores date back to the late 17th century but very rarely before.
- Combination barns provide crop processing and storage areas flanked by cattle housing and stabling.

- Some bank barns built gable-end to slope.
- Two-storey ranges providing cow houses with lofts above.
- Field barns providing housing for cattle, with haylofts over, are a major feature of the area.

#### SIGNIFICANCE

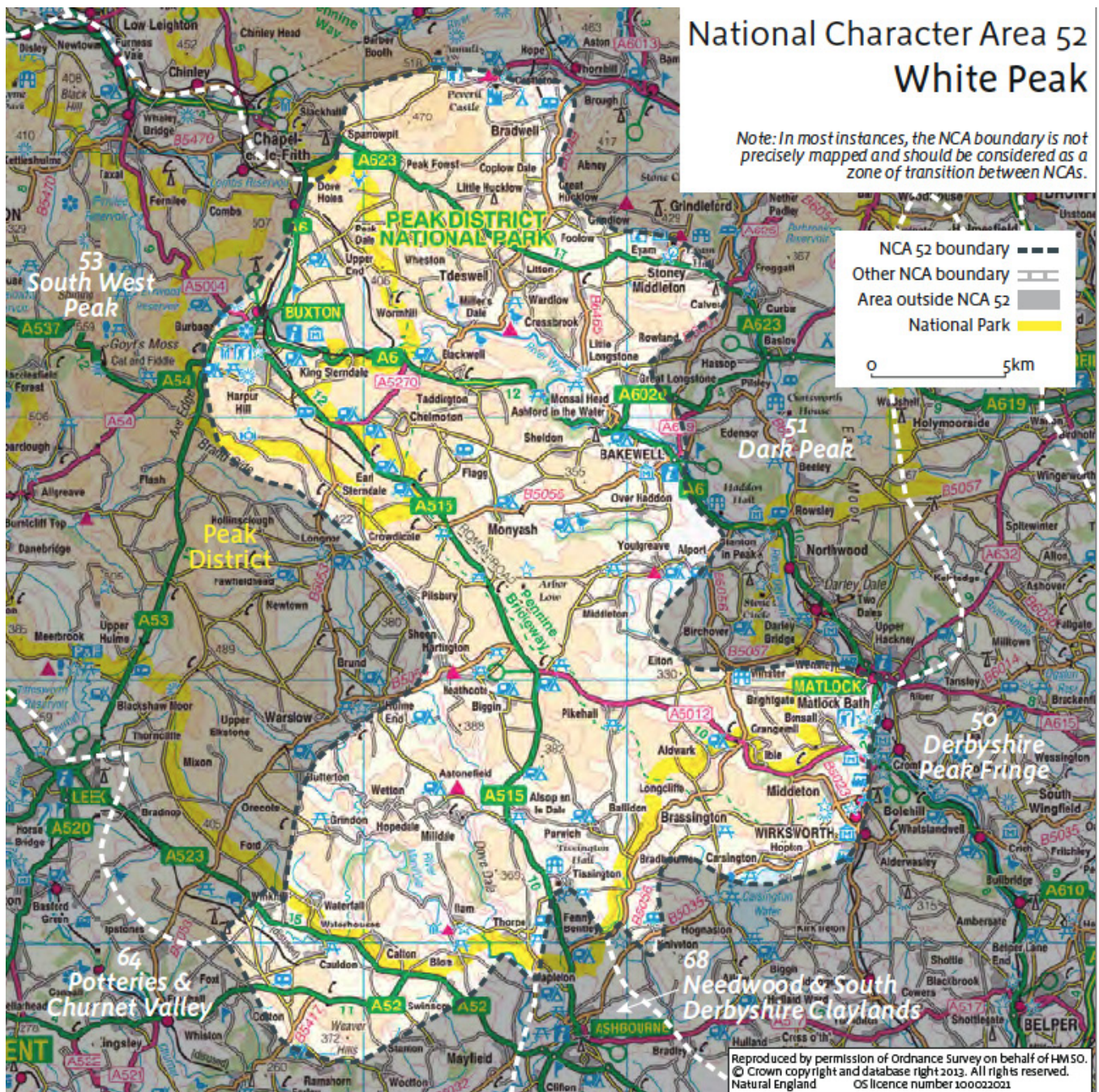
- Farmsteads Project mapping in Staffordshire and the Peak District National Park has revealed exceptionally high rates of survival of traditional farmsteads in this area, with 83% of farmsteads recorded from late-19th century maps retaining more than half of their historic footprint. This significance is heightened by the fact that the farmsteads and working buildings, including their field barns, sit within a landscape which retains visible evidence for land use and settlement from the prehistoric period.
- Some very rare surviving cruck-built houses and (more rarely) farm buildings dating from the 15th-17th centuries.

**PRESENT AND FUTURE ISSUES**

- The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project has revealed that this area has a high proportion of historic farmsteads remaining in agricultural use (43% in Staffordshire). There is a (relatively) high level of conversion to non-residential uses outside of agriculture (7%): this includes provision of holiday homes and other tourist

accommodation to a greater degree than is typical of the region as a whole.

- 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.



This map shows the Dark Peak, with the numbers of neighbouring National Character Areas around it.

- Many farmsteads are in residential use, including some linked to ‘hobby farming’.
- The Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a low proportion in this National Character Area of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (17.9%, the national average being 32%).

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

- Sheep farming, in combination with arable cropping, was dominant from the medieval period. Berceries (sheep farms of monastic estates) were concentrated in the higher west of the area. Corn production was enabled by the well-drained loamy soils of this area, in contrast to most other southern Pennines landscapes.
- By the 19th century cattle rearing, to supply meat to the growing cities nearby, had grown in importance although intensive dairy farming on improved grassland is now the dominant land cover.
- Lead mining was a distinctive feature of the area, having taken place at least from Roman times to the 19th century. Minor exposed veins were commonly worked by miner-farmers working smallholdings into the 19th century. Some of the field barns around villages are probably associated with these smallholdings with few or no buildings located with the house in the village. Mining for semi-precious stone, Blue John, was developed during the mid 18th century in the cave systems in the north-west corner of the White Peak.
- Some planned village settlements (e.g. Monyash) developed as markets. The largest market town at Buxton developed into a spa under the direction of the dukes of Devonshire. Matlock Gorge and Matlock Bath grew in the 18th and 19th centuries first as spas and then as small inland resorts.

### LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT

- Present strongly nucleated pattern of settlement developed by the 13th century, and many villages retain evidence in their linear or branched forms for 12-13th century origins as planned settlements. Settlements (e.g. Bradwell and Winstar) expanded considerably due to the lead industry.
- There are generally fewer nucleated villages and more dispersed settlement on the higher areas of plateau to the west and north-east.
- Predominant pattern of piecemeal enclosure, mostly complete by 18th century. This is often associated with a very strong pattern of narrow fields close to village centres, which define the boundaries of former medieval arable strips, and some remnant ridge-and-furrow (e.g. in the Chelmorton area). Some strips may have been used as pasture from the outset.
- Some isolated farmsteads originated as medieval sheep granges; others represent movement of farmsteads out from villages when farmland and commons were enclosed in the post-medieval period or the steadings of lead-miners.
- Large rectangular fields can be 12th-14th century enclosures associated with monastic grange farms (e.g. One Ash Grange, Monyash) but they are generally associated with post-1750 enclosure of extensive wastes and commons. The latter are associated with high numbers of dew ponds and lime kilns which reflect the need to provide water for cattle once common access to water supplies ceased, and the maintaining of farmland fertility.
- Most of the remaining woodland in this area was cleared by the 17th century to supply the lead mines. Woodland is now restricted to small isolated copses (generally of late 18th/19th century date) on high ground, old lead rakes with lead-polluted ground and larger areas of ancient woodland and scrub

along the steep sides of the dales.

- Shelter belts to isolated farmsteads.

### FARMSTEAD AND BUILDING TYPES

The present predominant pattern of stone and slate farmsteads results mainly from rebuilding in the 18th and 19th centuries. Earlier cores date back to the late 17th century but very rarely before.

#### Farmstead types

Farmsteads were originally linear in form but the increase in the upkeep and overwintering of cattle in the 18th century gave rise to the development of the courtyard groups evident today. The key farmstead types that had developed up to the end of the 19th century, and that are still evident today, are:

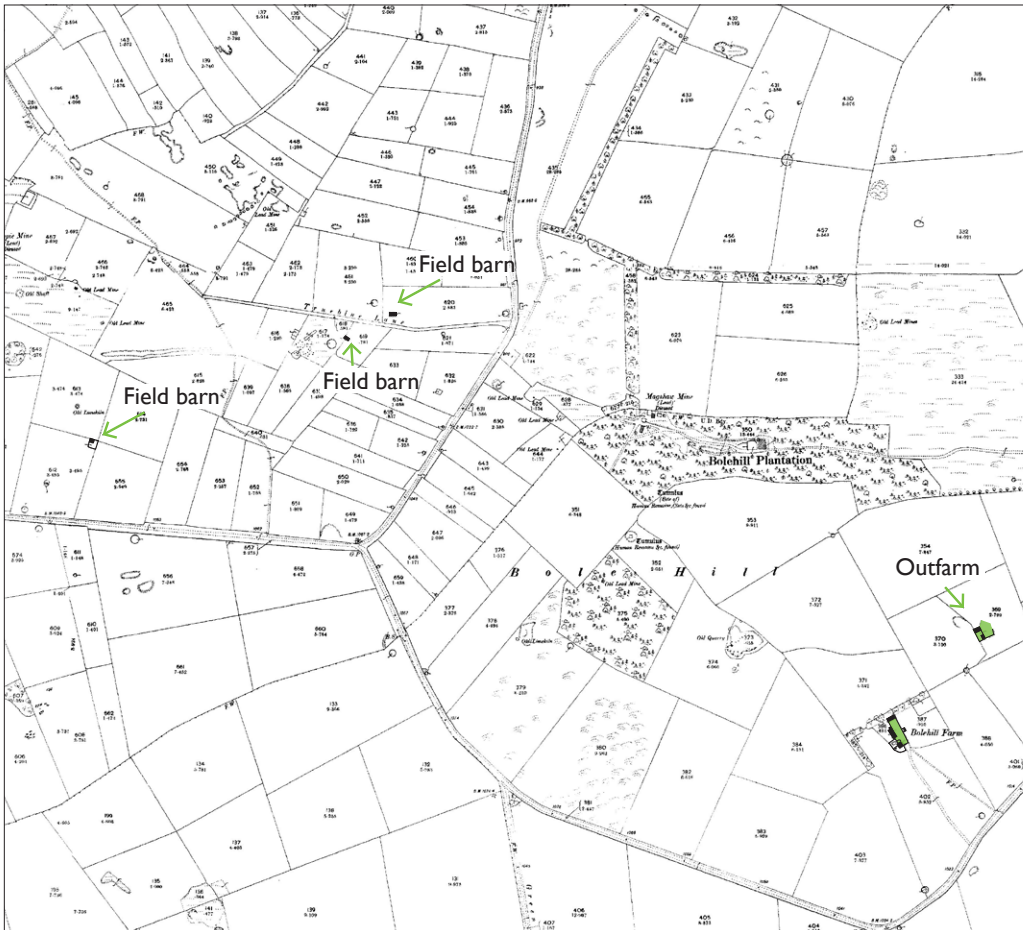
- The predominant tradition is of linear farmsteads, some of 16th century date but most of late 17th-19th century date. Barns and other buildings are attached in-line, and sometimes developed into an overall L-shaped form.
- Small loose courtyard plans with working buildings to one or two sides of the yard.
- Some dispersed cluster and multi-yard layouts, reflecting their development as pounds for containing stock.
- Regular plans are uncommon – the most frequent form is the regular L-plan. Small numbers of medium-scale courtyard-plan including U-plan farmsteads developed on some estates concentrated on the better quality lands in the east of the area from the late 18th century, often in combination with regular large-scale enclosure and with the classical facades of farmhouses facing re-sited and improved routeways.
- Farms were considerably larger in the non-mining south-west in contrast to areas where mining provided secondary or dual employment and where there are more very

small holdings (120 acres against under 60).

#### Building types


Farmsteads typically contain multi-functional building ranges, most commonly combining corn storage and processing, housing for cattle and horses, and carts. Small detached buildings – for housing pigs and calves as well as storage and other uses – are a typical feature.

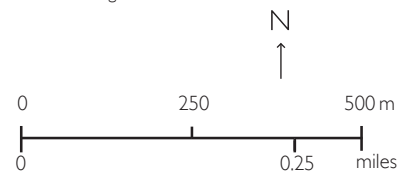
- There are some rare surviving examples of three- or four-bay cruck-framed barns of 15th to 17th century date (part of a South Pennines group). These are part of a group extending southwards from the South Pennines, and which survive on smaller farms or in barns retained as small working buildings on larger farms.
- Combination barns dating from the 17th century, either with a wide range of functions (threshing barn, cow housing, stabling, hay lofts) or comprising threshing barns with full-height central threshing floor flanked by lofted bays for animal housing at either end and external openings for pitching hay. These include some variant bank barns, built gable-end into the slope. It is common to find blocked threshing bays indicating a change in use from arable to animal housing.
- Two-storey ranges with cattle housing and haylofts over.
- Distinctive 18th and early 19th century field barns with hay lofts above cow stalling are clustered in areas of intensive lead mining, such as around Winster and Bonsall, and around the market centres of Bakewell and Alstonefield.
- Sheep folds are a common feature built within the walled field enclosures, particularly in the south of the area.

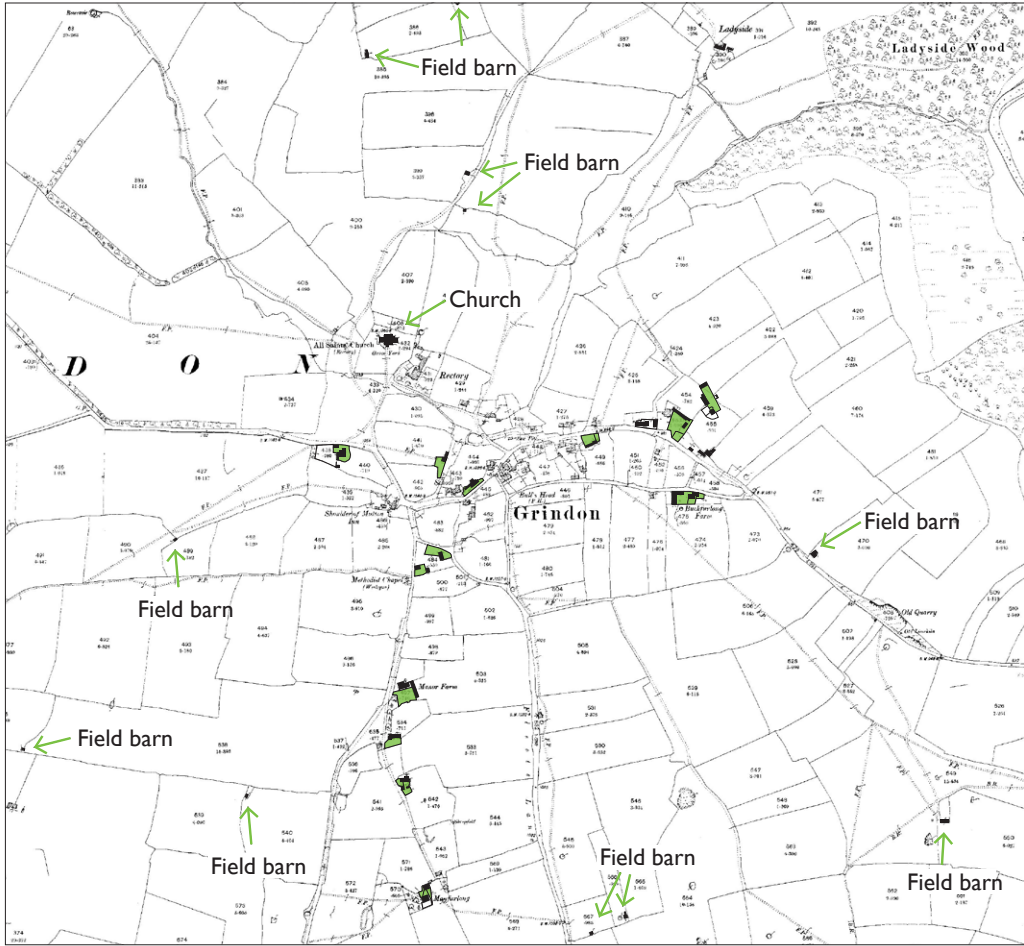


Sheldon

This map shows the area to the south-east of the village, one of the settlements in the village farmlands which fringe the plateau. The extent of the former open fields is visible to the north-west corner where the distinctive curves of the medieval strip fields are followed by later enclosure boundaries. Beyond the open fields are small but regular fields with a number of isolated field barns worked from farmsteads in the village. These fields represent a second phase of enclosure of probable post-medieval date whilst on the higher ground larger regular fields are the result of post-1750 enclosure of the open commons. Within this area is an isolated farmstead of loose courtyard plan built at the time of the enclosure. Across this landscape of the later enclosures is evidence for industrial activity; lead mines, lime kilns and quarries.


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

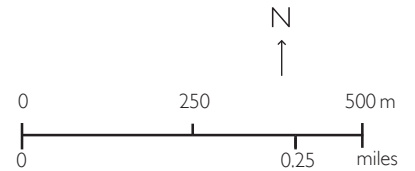




Grindon

Grindon is an irregular village on the western edge of the area, where there was a long history of enclosure. Within the settlement are numerous small- to medium-scale farmsteads ranging from small linear ranges to regular L plans. Many buildings which appear to be 19th century in date have an earlier single-storey core. To the east of the village the pattern of the former strips of the open fields has been fossilised in the field boundaries. To the west is a different pattern of small- to medium-scale irregular fields of piecemeal enclosure with more rectilinear boundaries edging the former common to the north-west. Within the fields surrounding the village are some small field barns.

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





The use of stone for walls and buildings gives a strong unified character to the landscapes of the plateau. Photo © Peak District National Park Authority



Clusters of farmsteads developed within the earlier enclosure of the slopes and valleys of the outer fringe of the plateau, with mature trees being a strong landscape feature. Photo © Jen Deadman



Around the plateau linear farming settlements developed. The stone enclosure boundaries have either a planned appearance or (in background) have retained the curved outlines of medieval strips. Photo © Jen Deadman

### MATERIALS AND DETAIL

- Limestone and gritstone used either singly or in combination are the predominant building materials, the latter particularly for lintels and architectural detailing.
- Stone slate (gritstone) roofs later replaced by Welsh slate roofs.

- Some 16th century or earlier timber-frame building. Evidence for cruck framing is extremely rare, more so than in the adjoining Dark Peak and South West Peak. Some very rare examples of early weatherboarding to former external walls.
- The use of mono-pitch roofs is common for smaller, ancillary buildings

### LINEAR PLANS



A linear farmstead at Grindon. Photo © Jen Deadman



Linear farmsteads often developed over the 18th and 19th centuries into substantial ranges – ground-floor stabling and cattle housing and first-floor granaries (marked by the steps to right), hay loft and storage for the corn crop. Photo © Jen Deadman



A linear farmstead which shows clear evidence of having been heightened (in the early-mid 19th century) from an earlier linear farmstead range.  
Photo © Jen Deadman



A linear range with working buildings to both ends of the farmhouse.  
Photo © Jen Deadman



A village-based linear range with the steps clearly indicating a first-floor granary. Photo © Jen Deadman



COURTYARD PLANS



A large L-plan range with the farmhouse attached, sited on commons (on the Weaver Hills) enclosed in the early 19th century. Photo © Jen Deadman



In contrast to the usual stone farm buildings this brick-built regular U-plan farmstead is more typical of lowland areas of Staffordshire. Photo © Jen Deadman



Combination barns typical of the White Peak within a medieval hamlet. Photo © Jen Deadman

DISPERSED PLANS



A small dispersed cluster with no defined yard and the farm buildings scattered around the farmhouse. Photo © Jen Deadman



A dispersed driftway plan, the driftway running through the farm and providing access to moorland grazing being clearly visible. Photo © Jen Deadman

COMBINATION BARN



A combination barn remodelled into its present form in the late 19th century, and now houses offices. The steps to the right provide access to a granary sited above a cartshed. To the left is a cowhouse and (far left, marked by its taller door) a stable. Above is a pitching door to the loft for hay and the corn crop. Photo © Jen Deadman



A combination barn characteristic of the Pennines with doors in the gable leading to feeding passages for cattle stalls which extended into projecting outshots (lean-tos). Photo © Jen Deadman



The combination barns typical of the White Peak set within a medieval hamlet, and roofed with clay tiles. Photo © Jen Deadman



Combination barn with lofted cattle housing accessed from the gable end. The central threshing bay has a stable beyond. This form of barn was more common before the rebuilding with large storeyed barns in the 19th century. The lintel over the threshing door is a possible remnant of a timber-framed building, these having been largely swept away by stone buildings by the 19th century. Photo © Jen Deadman



A combination barn with an integral cartshed to the left. Photo © Jen Deadman

HAY BARN



Hay barns (as shown to the left) are typically large in scale.  
Photo © Jen Deadman

COW HOUSES



A small-scale cow house with hayloft over. Photo © Jen Deadman



A small-scale animal house, the larger stone blocks indicating the raising and extension of an earlier stone rubble building. Photo © Jen Deadman



LEFT A small-scale animal house, the larger stone blocks indicating the raising and extension of an earlier building. Photo © Jen Deadman

STABLES



A small stable with hayloft. Photo © Jen Deadman

FIELD BARN AND OUTFARMS



Field barns for cattle and their winter fodder are found in many parts of the White Peak, often in close proximity to each other and being sited with dispersed holdings some distance from the main steading.  
© Peak District National Park Authority.



A field barn within a regular planned enclosure landscape on the plateau. © Peak District National Park Authority.



This small cow house stands in a small paddock within a village rather than being part of a formal farmstead. Note the pophole in the gable end for hens, which would access the henloft via a moveable ladder.  
Photo © Jen Deadman



Larger outfarms were also built on the plateau where large holdings developed in the late 18th and 19th centuries. This group comprises a threshing barn and cow house and further animal housing attached to the rear. Photo © Jen Deadman

## FURTHER READING

This document is part of the Peak District Historic Farmsteads Guidance [[www.PeakDistrict.gov.uk](http://www.PeakDistrict.gov.uk)] which includes:

- A *Peak District Farmsteads Character Statement* which provides illustrated guidance on the character and significance of the area's traditional farmsteads and buildings.
- A *Farmsteads Assessment Framework* to help owners and applicants consider the potential for change of traditional farmsteads and their buildings before any application for planning, and to inform any scheme as it develops.
- *Farmstead and Landscape Statements* for the other National Character Areas in the Peak District.
- The *Peak District Farmsteads and Landscapes Project Report* which summarises the results of mapping the historic character, survival and date of farmsteads across the Peak District National Park.

The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project, led by English Heritage (now Historic England), has also mapped the historic character, survival and use of farmsteads across the whole region. For the Summary Report of 2009 see <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/west-midlands-farmsteads-landscapes/>

This document has been written by Jeremy Lake, formerly of Historic England, and Bob Edwards of Forum Heritage Services with contributions from Ken Smith, recently retired Cultural Heritage Manager from the Peak District National Park Authority. Ordnance Survey maps are 2nd edition maps of c.1900, which show farmsteads after the last major phase in the building of traditional farmsteads in England. © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2017).

For more on the National Character Areas see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>



Historic England