

TRADITIONAL FARM BUILDING SURVEY

Summary Report



WESTMORLAND DALES



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PROJECT

The Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership Scheme aims to unlock and reveal the hidden heritage of the Westmorland Dales, which lies to the north of the Howgill Fells in Cumbria within the Yorkshire Dales National Park. This four-year scheme is primarily funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and involves 22 different projects, that explore the area's natural and cultural heritage.

One of these projects focusses on Traditional Farm Buildings. The aims of the project were twofold : firstly to carry out a survey with trained volunteers to further understand the traditional farm buildings in the area; secondly to grant fund the repair of a number of farm buildings.

The survey has taken place from 2019 until 2023¹, and was carried out on a parish-by-parish basis. The survey was carried out at one of two levels – a basic survey from public rights of way or a more detailed survey where permission had been granted.

In total, 223 farm buildings were surveyed, located both in fields and on farmsteads. The buildings were mainly for the overwintering of cattle and the storage of grass crops. However, evidence for the processing and storing of corn and green crops was also found in the buildings, and this has been compared with documentary evidence from the 19th and 20th centuries.

The results of this survey will be used to enhance the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's Historic Environment Record. The results will contribute to a greater understanding of this built heritage and its surrounding landscape.

The grant scheme has funded repair works to two farm buildings. This included repair works to the walls and roof of a field barn on the site of Pendragon Castle, and more structural works to a bank barn located on the Coast-to-Coast National Trail.



Figure 1 Bank barn situated on the coast-to-coast - before repairs (left), after repairs (right).

¹ It was therefore severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

CONTEXT

Farm buildings are a distinctive part of the landscape in the northwest of England. The Westmorland Dales has historically been located between two National Parks – the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales. Several years ago a desk-based assessment of field barns and farmsteads was undertaken.² This study revealed that the area has a higher ratio of farmsteads to fewer isolated barns. It was also the only region where over 50% of isolated barns present in the 20th century were found to be either derelict or no longer extant. In addition, in a study of traditional buildings in the Lakes, bank barns were said to be a distinctive type of that region, and a ‘a notable example of a peculiarly regional style of building and one that is particularly well suited to the climate’.³

The farming landscape of the Westmorland Dales has been one of change over time (see ‘The Farming Landscape of the Westmorland Dales’ booklet for further information). In 1886 livestock found in the Westmorland Dales, consisted of large numbers of sheep (with a former large industry in wool, and local industry in knitting), high numbers of cattle (formerly dairy), as well as horses, pigs and poultry.

Year	Cattle	Sheep	Horses	Pigs	Poultry
1886	8,751	43,034	1,456	313	9,401

Table 1 A table showing a snapshot of livestock figures (amalgamated from the parishes of Asby, Crosby Garrett, Crosby Ravensworth, Orton, Ravenstonedale and Tebay).⁴

The landscape is predominantly pastoral, with high acreages of meadow and pasture. It is also an upland area, therefore large proportions of the parishes or townships was classed as ‘mountain and heath land’ or ‘rough grazings’. There is archaeological evidence for widespread arable farming in the region. The farm buildings of the Westmorland Dales would suggest certain amounts of arable crops continuing to be grown through the 18th and 19th centuries. Documentary evidence from the 19th and 20th centuries, suggest that corn and green crops were grown, but the figures were generally small indicated they were for local use only – for the foddering and bedding of livestock and perhaps some domestic use. The largest crops were oats and turnips.

Year	Corn Crops Total	Oats Total	% of Oats	Green Crops Total	Turnips Total	% of Turnips
1886	896	796 ¾	89%	436	351	81%

Table 2 A table showing a snapshot of oats and turnip acreages (amalgamated from the parishes of Asby, Crosby Garrett, Crosby Ravensworth, Orton, Ravenstonedale and Tebay).⁵

² Jim Brightman et al., ‘6987 – Field Barns, Farmsteads and Change in the Yorkshire Dales: Characterisation of the Historic Farm Resource of the National Park’ (unpublished report, 2018).

³ Susan Denyer, *Traditional Buildings & Life in the Lake District* (London, 1991), p. 135.

⁴ The National Archives, MAF68/492, Parish Summaries of Agricultural Returns (1886).

⁵ The National Archives, MAF68/492, Parish Summaries of Agricultural Returns (1886).

RESULTS

The survey produced a detailed report which is available separately. This is a simple overview of the results. Although not every parish has been surveyed (only seven so far from a total of 13), a total of 223 farm buildings have been recorded. These were located in fields or across 85 farmsteads. There are many different types of farm buildings in the Westmorland Dales.

Type of Farm Building	Number		Total
	In Field	On Farmstead	
Field Barn	57 (+5 ⁶)		57 (+5)
Bank Barn	32	33	65
Barn		79	79
Stable		6	6
Cart Shed		1	1
Open Shelter	1		1
Single-Storey Barn	1	4	5
Hogg House	1		1
Hennerly-Piggery	1		1
Misc. ⁷	2		2
TOTAL farm buildings surveyed			223

Table 3 A table of farm buildings surveyed as part of the Westmorland Dales project. Some of these figures may be incorrect due to limited access.

Farm buildings were surveyed across 85 farmsteads in the Westmorland Dales as part of this project. It is not possible to make conclusions about many of the planforms as they were not surveyed in that detail. However, the survey results do corroborate previous studies that found linear ranges were the most common. This linear form is a progression from the longhouse, the typical planform in the villages from the medieval period. The linear farmsteads found in the Westmorland Dales are usually a product of several phases and (re)building of different sections at different times.

Figure 2 Illustration of a linear farmstead by Allan T. Adams.



⁶ These buildings were no longer extant, but are thought to have been field barns.

⁷ Of the two miscellaneous buildings, one has an appearance of a farm building, however it appears to relate to woodland rather than agriculture. The other appears to be a shooting lodge, however it does have openings of an agricultural nature. Further interpretation is not possible without an internal view.



Figure 3 Cutaway image of a bank barn located in field with bank access to first floor cart entry, housing for cattle, and storage for crops (drawn by Allan T. Adams).

The most common buildings were field barns, bank barns (found in fields and on farmsteads), and combination barns (found on farmsteads). All of these buildings were principally for the storage of crops and the housing of livestock. Before the boundary extension, bank barns were not a distinctive type in the Yorkshire Dales, only found in small numbers. The bank barn allowed access to the first floor via a bank or ramp for a cart. In many cases the ramp was constructed, and in other cases a natural bank was used.

Barns located in fields were part of an annual cycle of farming. They were situated in meadow fields, the hay crop would be stored in the barn and fed to the overwintered cattle, which would produce muck that was spread over the surrounding field, and thus the cycle repeats.

Stables are found on many farmsteads in the Westmorland Dales. However, only six were surveyed as part of this project. This number does not reflect the true number of stables, as many multi-purpose barns included housing for horses.

Other livestock buildings include hogg houses⁸ and hennery piggeries⁹. Only one hogg house was surveyed, which was in a very poor condition. However, hogg houses are typically found in more remote areas with harsher climates (for instance Swaledale, elsewhere in the Yorkshire Dales). A couple of hennery piggeries were found in Ravenstonedale. Despite high numbers of sheep, pigs and poultry, is not uncommon to have found little built evidence. Sheep and poultry rarely have specific buildings in which they were housed, and pigs would typically be found in small outbuildings near the (farm)house that were not included in this survey.



Figure 4 Hennery-piggery located on green space at the south end of Ravenstonedale (not surveyed). It has the characteristic chute for pig-feed and small loft opening for hen access.

⁸ A hogg house is a shelter for sheep in winter. Hogs are sheep in the first year of their life (between weaning and shearing).

⁹ Hennery-piggeries are small buildings that were used for the housing of both chicken and pigs. Pigs would have been housed on the ground floor, and would have kept predators away from the chickens. The chickens would have accessed the loft by a small opening with protruding stone steps of a wooden ladder, and would have kept the pigs below warm.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership team would like to thank all the volunteers for taking part in this project, both surveying and researching the farm buildings of the Westmorland Dales. In addition, all the landowners who have allowed access to their buildings.

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Please note that this summary report has been created using the report created by the Westmorland Dales Scheme:

Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership Scheme, 'Traditional Farm Buildings in the Westmorland Dales – Survey Results' (2023, Unpublished Report)

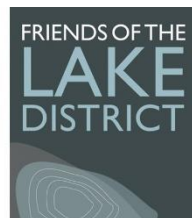


Figure 5 A field barn surveyed in the Westmorland Dales.

