Historic Farmsteads
Preliminary Character Statement:
South West Region

ENGLISH HERITAGE

The Countryside Agency
Landscape Access Recreation

Acknowledgements

The text of this document was prepared by Jeremy Lake and Bob Edwards with contributions to the national section from Susanna Wade Martins and additional assistance by Peter Gaskell and Julie Ryan. It was designed by Steve Dent and edited by Nicki Marshall of BiscuitBox Ltd. The research project was commissioned by English Heritage and the Countryside Agency and managed by Peter Gaskell of the University of Gloucestershire. The assistance of the following people is gratefully acknowledged: Eric Berry, Freya Edwards and the many farmers and owners of buildings who gave their time to discuss their farm buildings and allowed access for photography.

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** and at **www.ahds.ac.uk**.

English Heritage is the Government's adviser on the historic environment. Central to the role of English Heritage is the advice it gives to local planning authorities, government departments and others on the conservation of historic buildings, sites and areas, archaeology on land and underwater, designed landscapes and the historic aspects of the landscape as a whole. English Heritage also has a duty to enhance people's understanding and enjoyment of their heritage and, as part of this, it manages an estate of over 400 historic properties open to the public.

The Countryside Agency is the statutory body working to conserve and enhance England's countryside. The aim of the Countryside Agency's Landscape, Access and Recreation division is to help everyone respect, protect and enjoy the countryside, protect natural landscapes, and encourage access to, enjoyment of and sustainable management and use of the countryside.

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The document should be cited as: **Historic Farmsteads. Preliminary Character Statement: South West Region.**

Published in August 2006 by the University of Gloucestershire in association with English Heritage and the Countryside Agency.

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Cover image: Shobrooke Barton, Devon (Devon Redlands). A characteristic scene in Devon with the barton or manor farm located next to the parish church in a locally prominent position and isolated from other settlement. © *Bob Edwards*

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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

Dispersed settlement, with numerous isolated farmsteads and hamlets of medieval origin and the occasional remnants of communal farming, forms a significant part of the settlement pattern in the counties of Devon and Cornwall, the western edges of Dorset and Somerset and the Forest of Dean. The majority of

Gloucestershire (excluding the Forest of Dean), Somerset and Dorset has, in contrast, a relatively low level of dispersed settlement with nucleation – and traces of open-field farming – increasing towards the east and south-east of the Region. Settlement in the chalk areas of Wiltshire and Dorset is strongly concentrated in the river valleys.

Differentiation of farming practices is evident as early as the 11th century. By the 16th century arable farming was concentrated in the vales of Somerset and Dorset, in the South Hams of Devon and along the coastal strip of Cornwall and north Somerset. Combined with sheep farming, it had become well established across the Dorset and Wiltshire chalk and in the Cotswolds. The areas of sheep and corn farming on the chalklands of Dorset and Wiltshire intensified production with the development of watermeadows allowing larger flocks of sheep to be kept, in turn improving soil fertility with their dung, and through the enclosure and ploughing of the downs. Pastoral farming dominated much of the Region from the 14th century on account of its generally mild winters, heavy rainfall and cool summers. By the 17th century a large proportion of the arable land had been converted to pasture for cattle or sheep or given over to other uses such as orchards. Cider production became a speciality from Gloucestershire to east Cornwall. As national markets developed, parts of the Region such as east Cornwall and north Devon focused on the rearing of stock, which was moved eastwards into Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire for fattening to supply the growing populations of London and other major towns and cities across the south. Other parts of the Region, for example on the heavier soils of north Wiltshire and east Devon, specialised in dairying with some farms having little or no arable.

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

There is a great abundance and variety of good building stone, ranging from the chalk of the southern downlands to the honey-coloured Jurassic oolite of the Cotswolds and the red sandstones of mid-Devon lias; from the limestone of southern Gloucestershire and Somerset, to the slates and granites of west Somerset, northern Devon and Cornwall.

The South West region is recognised as the principal area of England for earth-built structures. Much of Devon and parts of Cornwall and Somerset have numerous farm buildings constructed out of earth (cob), one of the cheapest materials available to the farmer; the differing soils used give each area its own local character.

Across the Region different thatching techniques using combed wheat, long straw or water reed have different characteristics and are important, if subtle, elements in creating local distinctiveness. Devon and Dorset have the highest concentration of listed thatched buildings in the country. In Devon in particular combed wheat reed has been used for centuries.

There is a scatter of cruck-framed buildings across the Region formed of large, curving timbers that form the main trusses of a building. Jointed crucks are concentrated in Devon, west and south Somerset and west Dorset, and together with other architectural features (such as the lateral chimneystacks found on farmhouses) form part of a shared cultural tradition with south-west Wales.

Aisled barns, principally concentrated in the South East and parts of the East of England, are found in small numbers in the east of the Region.

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

This Region displays very strong contrasts in farmstead scale and type, often intermingled in the same area. There is a marked contrast, however, between the farmstead plans found in the pastoral farming areas and the arable-based areas where larger-scale loose courtyard plans predominate.

The medieval longhouses of the South West, with a particular concentration around Dartmoor, form a distribution of national significance.

Later linear farmsteads are a feature of Cornwall, Bodmin Moor and Dartmoor (where many of the early to mid-19th-century intakes around Bodmin Moor were being worked by part-timers in local industries) and the sheltered vales extending into Exmoor.

Throughout the Region loose courtyard plans were associated with large and gentry farms in the period before 1750. By the early 19th century, loose courtyard layouts were largely confined to arable areas (particularly in the Cotswolds, the Dorset and Wiltshire downs, the Mendips and the coastal fringe of Somerset).

Generally, it was not until after the 1840s that some degree of rationalisation occurred with farmsteads re-organised around yards. In Cornwall few farm buildings pre-date 1800 and the rebuilding of farmsteads around yards in the early to mid-19th century was invariably accompanied by farm amalgamation.

In contrast to other regions, the influence of estates is rarely reflected in regular farmstead plans. In Somerset, some were built in the Bristol area (mostly after the 1840s), and the Acland and Knight families were active in the north Exmoor area.

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

Barns. There is a huge variation in the scale of threshing barns, from the arable downlands and vales to the very small-scale barns typical of mid-Devon. There are many examples of combination barns, with livestock accommodation and cart sheds at one or both ends of the barn (as in Gloucestershire, the claylands of north Wiltshire and Somerset) or accommodated underneath the threshing barn. The latter are concentrated in Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, and range from small-scale barns with external steps to large bank barns – the principal concentration of these outside Cumbria. Aisled barns are largely confined to the chalk downs in the east of the Region.

In the eastern vale and downland landscapes of the region there exist many highly specialised farmstead buildings including **staddle barns** in the eastern downlands, **detached granaries** set either on brick arches or staddle stones and **stabling** dating from the 17th century.

Cattle were commonly housed in enclosed **cow houses** or **shelter sheds** but the use of bank barns in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset and, in the pastoral landscapes of Devon and west Somerset, the highly-specialised **linhay** (open-fronted cattle sheds with hay lofts dating from the 16th century) are regionally characteristic building types.

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**.

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 South 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 South 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**.

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

2.1 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**).

The South 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)**. The web addresses for each JCA are detailed in Section 11.

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.

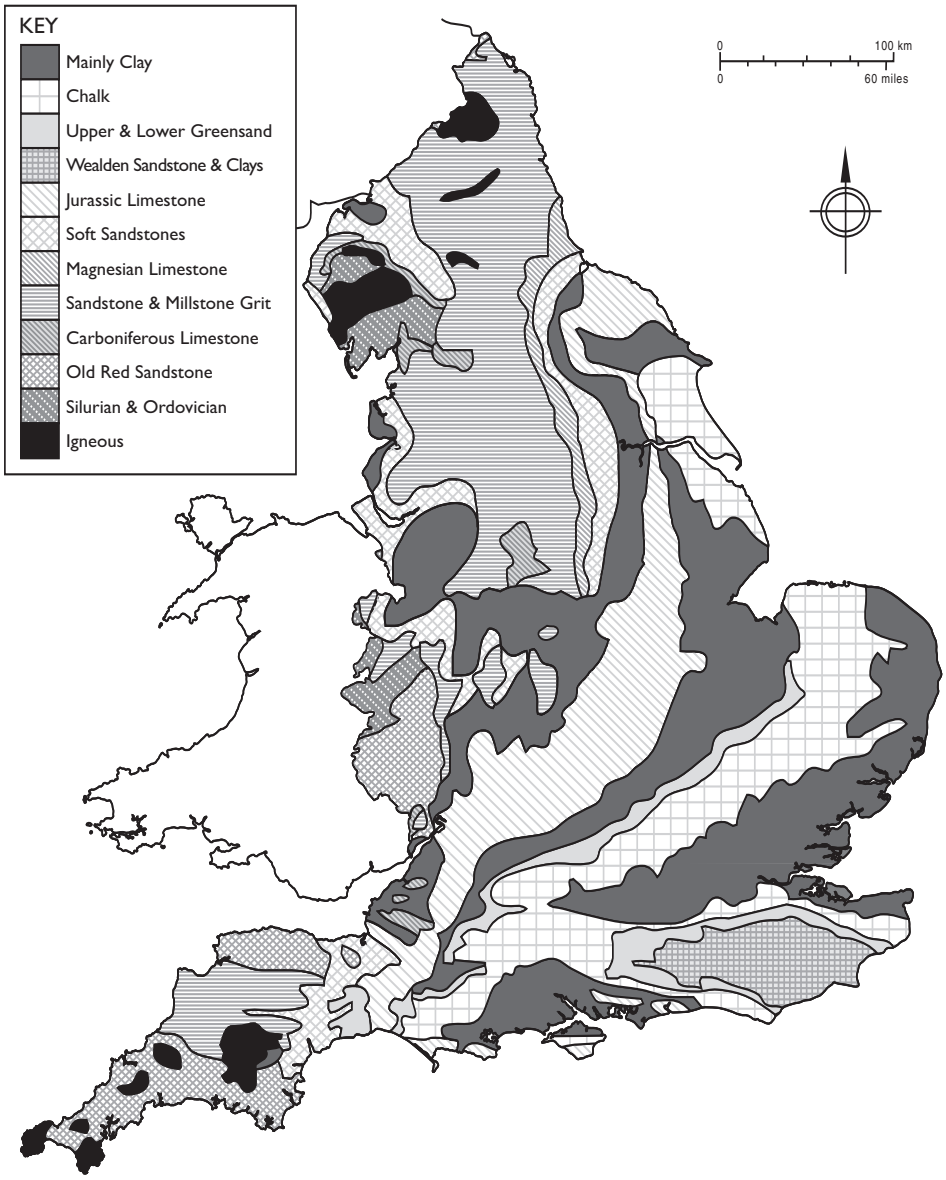
For characterisation see:
www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation

2.2 THE CHARACTER OF THE SOUTH WEST REGION: AN INTRODUCTION

The Government Region of the South West comprises the historic counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, and includes the largely urban areas of Bristol, Swindon and the Bournemouth and Poole conurbation. The area presents a great diversity of landscape character areas, from open, windswept moorland rich in wildlife and archaeology in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, to the gently rolling small-scale well-hedged landscapes of woods, farms and villages in South Devon; from the prominent wooded hills of the Quantocks and Mendips, to the low-lying fens, marshes and pastures of the Somerset Levels and Moors crisscrossed by drainage ditches and punctuated by small settlements.

The diversity of landscape character is strongly influenced by the varied geology of the South West Region. Large areas of chalk and limestone are a key characteristic of much of Dorset, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and extensive parts of Somerset. North of the Mendips, undulating chalk downland intercut by numerous river valleys forms the dominant landscapes of the Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase, the Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs, and the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs. To the north lies the limestone belt of the Cotswolds, which links north Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, the broad valleys of the Severn and Avon vales and the well-wooded area of the Forest of Dean and Lower Wye.

Around and between the chalk and limestone hills of Dorset, sandy heaths, green hills and clay vales are found. Red sandstone in the Devon Redlands gives mid-Devon a strong character expressed through its red soils, and



1A Geology Map of England
England displays a huge diversity in geology, with a greater variety in small areas than anywhere else in Europe. The South West Region has a very varied geology offering a wide range of building materials. The different stones available for walling and roofing make a major contribution to local distinctiveness.
Based upon Solid Geology. Source: Defra/BGS, NERC; by permission of the British Geological Survey IPR/52-65C. © Crown copyright OS Licence no. 100042054

earth-walled and stone buildings. The granite areas of West Penwith, Bodmin Moor and Dartmoor provide the backbone for Cornwall and central Devon with clays, shales and slates over much of Somerset and the rest of Devon and Cornwall.

The Region has the highest proportion of land in agricultural use (80%) of any English region. The Region experiences relatively high rainfall, especially in Devon and Cornwall, and cooler summers with mild winters, which favour pastoral farming. Soil type and quality is another factor: compared with the other English regions there is a below-average area of farmland within the best two grades of land quality but the Region has the highest level of grade 3 agricultural land rated as good to moderate. The grade 1 land is concentrated in the Vale of Pewsey, around Newent in Gloucestershire, on the sandy soils of South Somerset, in the valleys of the Rivers Exe and Culm, and to the west and north of Taunton. The arable lands within the Region lie mainly in the east on the chalk and limestone areas of Dorset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

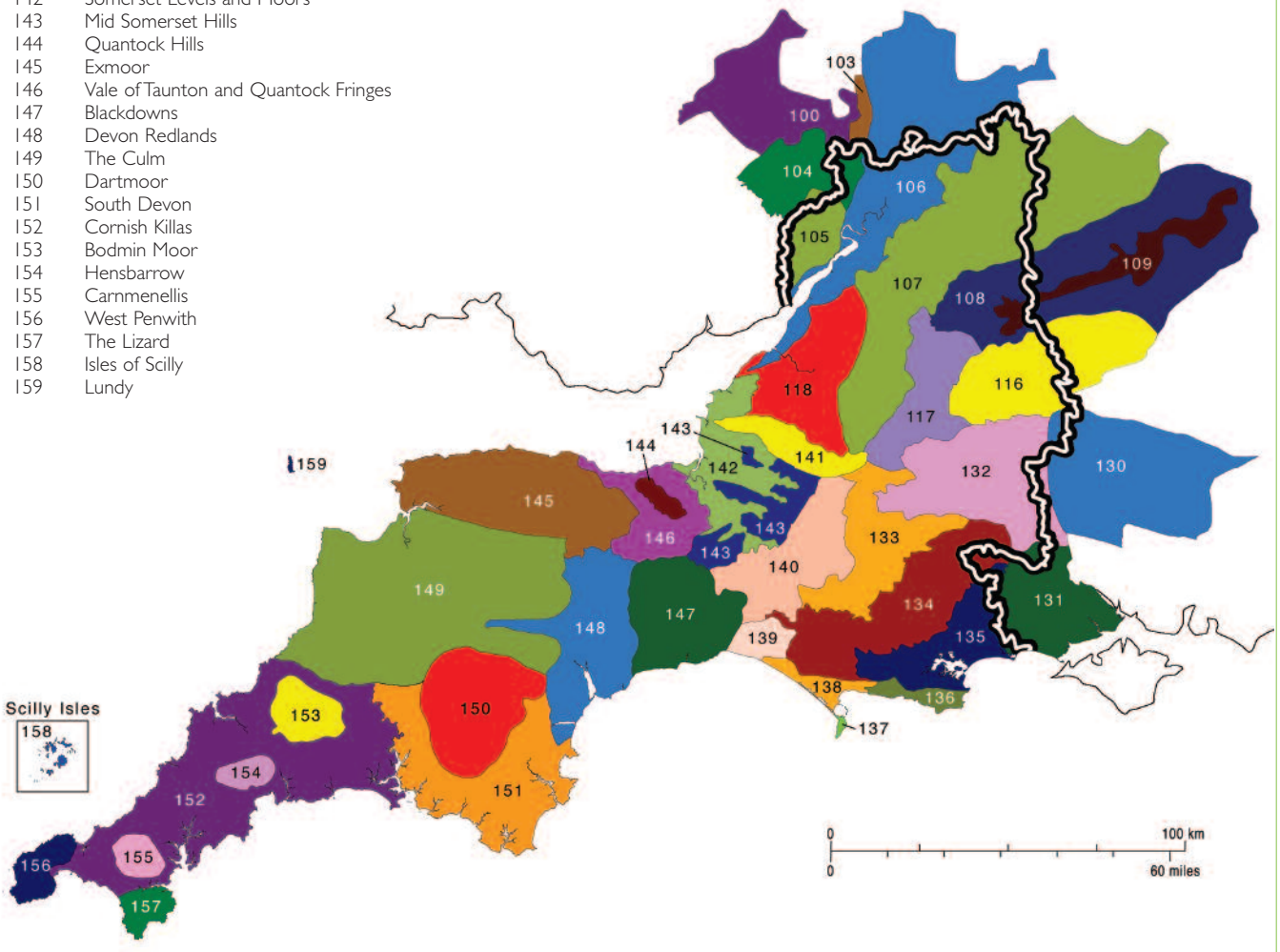
2.3 THE CHARACTER OF RURAL SETTLEMENT

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

JCA number	*JCA name*	*Also located within adjacent Regions*
100	Herefordshire Lowland	
103	Malvern Hills	
104	South Herefordshire and Over Severn	West Midlands
105	Forest of Dean and Lower Wye	West Midlands
106	Severn and Avon Vales	West Midlands
107	Cotswolds	West Midlands and South East
108	Upper Thames Clay Vales	South East
109	Midvale Ridge	South East
116	Berkshire and Marlborough Downs	South East
117	Avon Vales	
118	Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges	
130	Hampshire Downs	South East
131	New Forest	South East
132	Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs	South East
133	Blackmoor Vale and Vale of Wardour	
134	Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase	South East
135	Dorset Heaths	South East
136	South Purbeck	
137	Isle of Portland	
138	Weymouth Lowlands	
139	Marshwood and Powerstock Vales	
140	Yeovil Scarplands	
141	Mendip Hills	
142	Somerset Levels and Moors	
143	Mid Somerset Hills	
144	Quantock Hills	
145	Exmoor	
146	Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes	
147	Blackdowns	
148	Devon Redlands	
149	The Culm	
150	Dartmoor	
151	South Devon	
152	Cornish Killas	
153	Bodmin Moor	
154	Hensbarrow	
155	Carnmenellis	
156	West Penwith	
157	The Lizard	
158	Isles of Scilly	
159	Lundy	



1B 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*

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*

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 which 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 east Dorset and Wiltshire to East Anglia, and a Northern & Western Province. In these Provinces settlement is mostly dispersed. The South West Region is divided between all three Provinces with the Central Province in much of the east except on the Wiltshire and Dorset chalk, which falls into the South-Eastern Province (despite settlement being predominantly nucleated), and the Northern and Western Province in the south-west peninsula.
Based upon 'England: Rural Settlement in the mid-19th century'. Source: An Atlas of Rural Settlement in. England (2000)

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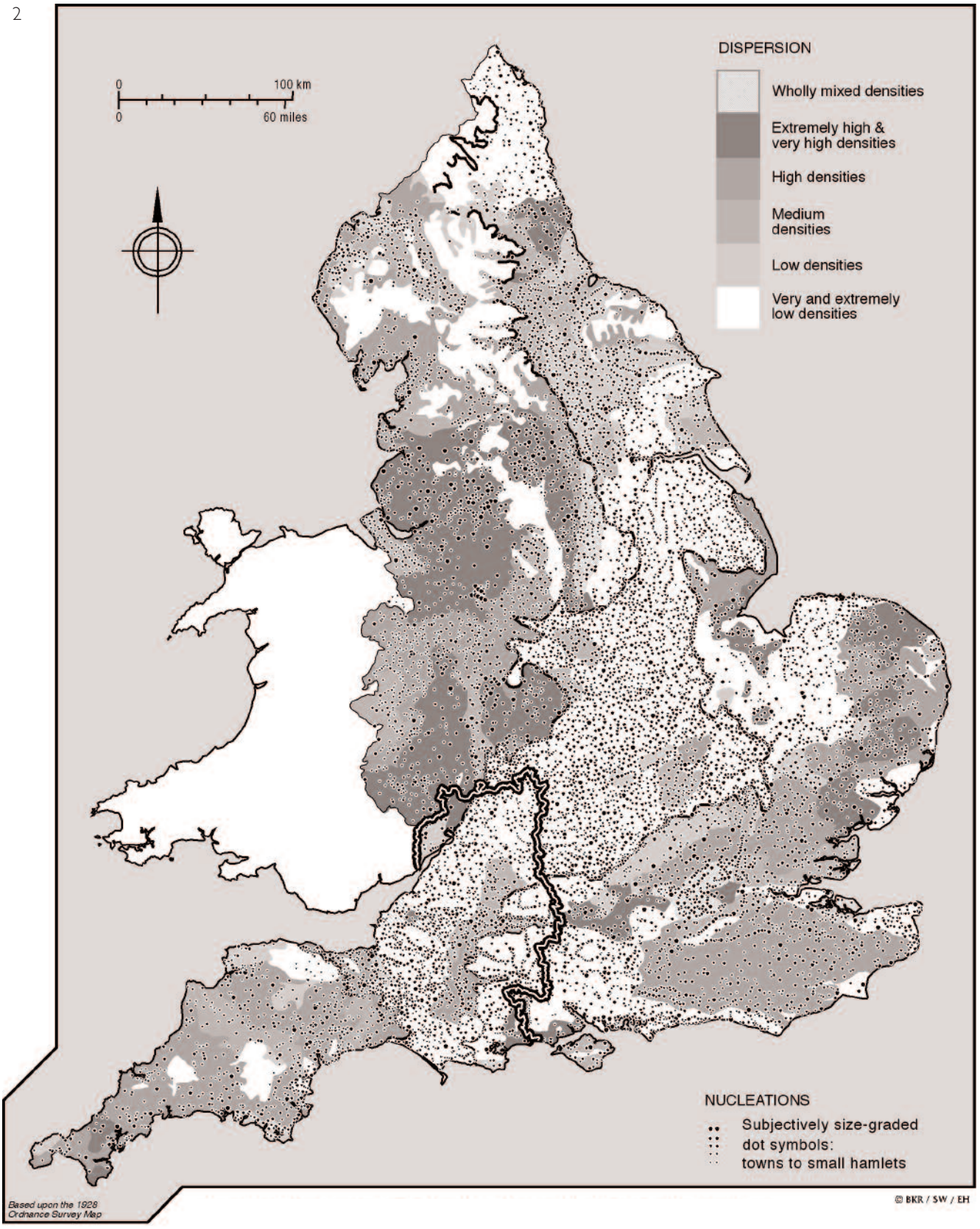

Study of English Rural Settlement (Roberts & Wrathmell 2002). In summary, it has been demonstrated that a Central Province mostly characterised by nucleated settlement and, by the 14th century, communal fields which occupied the great majority of the land area, is flanked by a South-Eastern Province 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 rare for present farmstead sites – as in Cornwall's West Penwith – to display such continuity.

2.3.2 RURAL SETTLEMENT IN THE SOUTH WEST REGION

Dispersed settlement, with numerous isolated farmsteads and hamlets of medieval origin, forms a significant part of the settlement pattern in the counties of Devon and Cornwall and in other areas such as the western edges of Dorset and Somerset and the Forest of Dean. In these areas, most present farmsteads can trace their origins to the 14th century or earlier: there were, for example, between 12 and 15,000 farmsteads in late-14th-century Devon (Hallam 1988, p.237) – over 90% of the present total. In parts of Cornwall and Devon a number of farmsteads and their associated fields can trace their origins back to the Bronze Age or Iron Age. Enclosure was complete in many areas by the 16th century, characteristically retaining curved shapes of medieval strips to at least one of the longer sides. Some of these enclosures are quite large in scale, the result of acquisition by wealthier farmers of many strips prior to enclosure. Larger-scale enclosures are associated with high-status barton farms.

The majority of Gloucestershire (excluding the Forest of Dean), Somerset and Dorset lie within the Central Province. These areas have, in contrast to Devon and Cornwall, a relatively low level of dispersed settlement with nucleation – and traces of open-field farming – increasing towards the east and south-east of the Region (Roberts & Wrathmell 2000). In some smaller areas, however, there is evidence of a mixture of nucleated villages and anciently established farmsteads and hamlets in the settlement pattern. An area with a higher level of dispersed settlement combined with nucleated settlement runs through Blackmoor Vale in north Dorset, along the boundary between Wiltshire and east Somerset and on into the claylands of north-west Wiltshire and the Vale of Gloucester.

Many villages in the chalk areas of Wiltshire and the eastern chalk of Dorset appear to have been laid out in a planned fashion during the medieval period (Taylor 1970; Lewis 1994). The lack of water on the downs was probably one of the major factors in the development of this settlement pattern; the river valleys are clearly marked by lines of settlement. Enclosure of the open fields was underway by the 15th century resulting in often large fields that reflect the earlier pattern of strips with gently curving field boundaries. Small fields, similarly reflecting their origins as former strips, tend to cluster around settlements. On the higher downs regular enclosure is more typical with large fields and straight boundaries dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, although occasionally areas of earlier enclosure are seen on the downland.

The links between geology, topography, agriculture and settlement can be seen clearly in the maps of Wiltshire

3 This series of maps shows the relationships between landscape, settlement patterns and agricultural regions. The contrast between the 'chalk and the cheese' is particularly evident. On the chalk downland of much of the south and east of the county, sheep and corn farming was dominant and settlement was concentrated in villages along the river valleys. Here farms could be large, even by national standards. On the heavier soils of the north-west of the county is the 'cheese' – a dairying area where settlement is dispersed with many hamlets and isolated farmsteads. Historically, farms in this area were small. 3A *Based upon Wiltshire topographical divisions. Source: The Medieval Landscape of Wessex (1994) p.173. © Carenza Lewis;* 3B *Based upon Wiltshire drainage pattern. Source: The Medieval Landscape of Wessex (1994) p.173. © Carenza Lewis;* 3C *Based upon Farming regions of the South. Source: The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Thirsk, J. Vol. 4 (1967) © Cambridge University Press;* 3D *Based upon Patterns and Processes in the Medieval Settlement of Wiltshire. Source: The Medieval Landscape of Wessex (1994) p.174. © Carenza Lewis*

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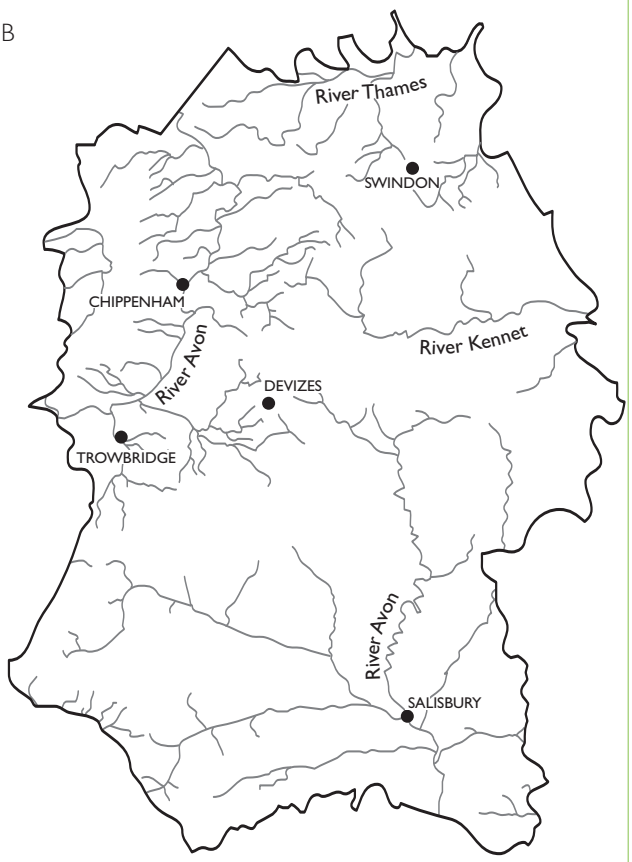
3B



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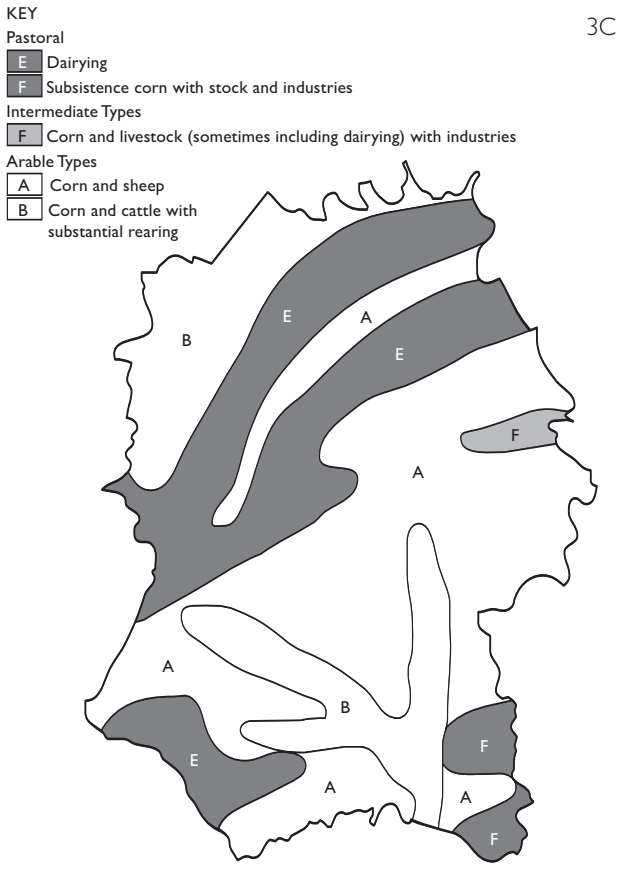

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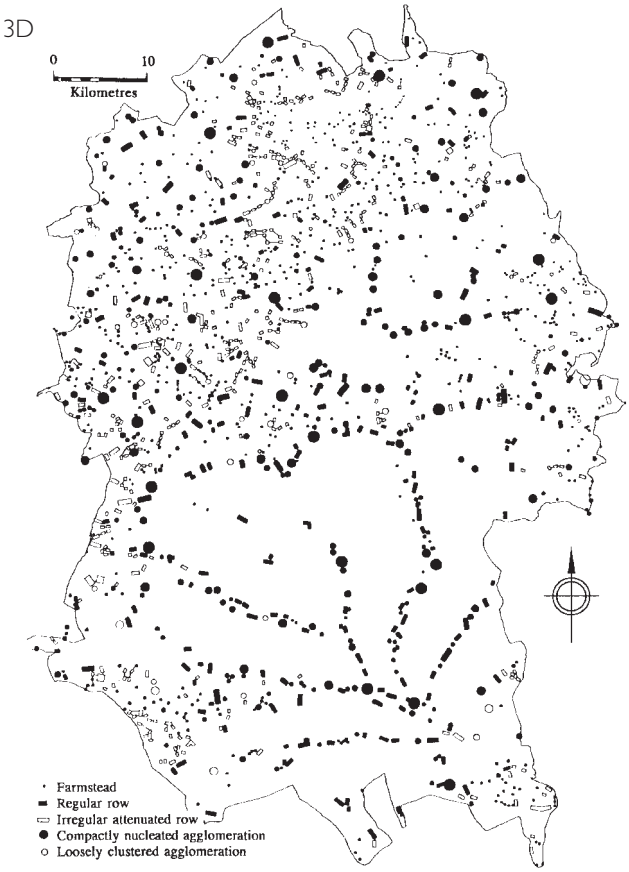


(Figure 3), a county that exhibits strong contrasts between the northern claylands and the southern downlands: in the claylands, small and dispersed farmsteads, ancient enclosure, specialisation in dairying from the 17th century; in the downlands, large farmsteads often concentrated in villages, sheep and corn farming, and 18th- and 19th-century enclosure with the construction of new steadings and outfarms.

3.0 Building Materials

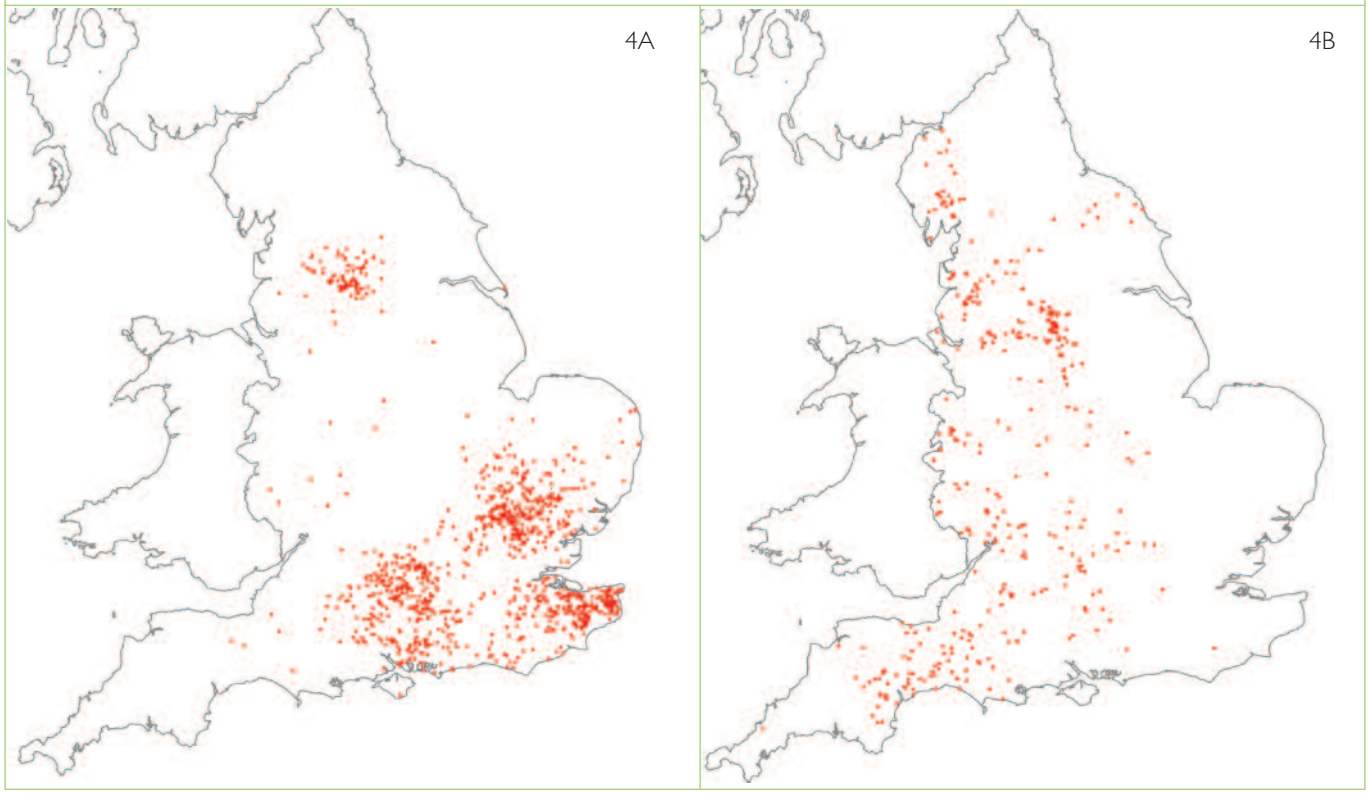
3.1 NATIONAL OVERVIEW

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, the 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 4 and 5). 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

4 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, 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.



5A Aisled barn, Cressing Temple, Essex. One of the earliest barns in England, one of two barns surviving from an estate of the Knights Hospitaller and erected with timber felled between 1259 and 1280. © *English Heritage / Michael Williams*

5B 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. © *Jen Deadman*

6 Listed earth-walled agricultural buildings in England. Survival is more extensive than this map indicates. Cob agricultural buildings are concentrated in the South West Region and extend across Dorset and Wiltshire in this Region and Hampshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (South East Region). In parts of East Anglia unfired blocks of clay (clay lump), were widely used in the 19th century. Clay-walled buildings also survive in the Solway Plain in Cumbria and the Fylde of Lancashire. Few buildings constructed in mud-and-stud, the earth-walling tradition of the East Midlands, now survive.

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.

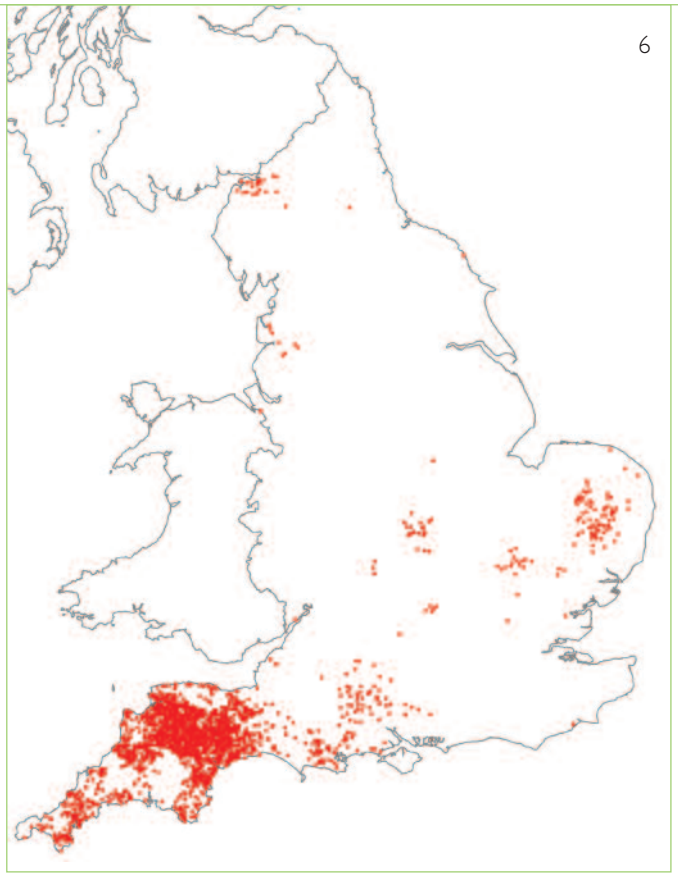
3.1.1 WALLING

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).

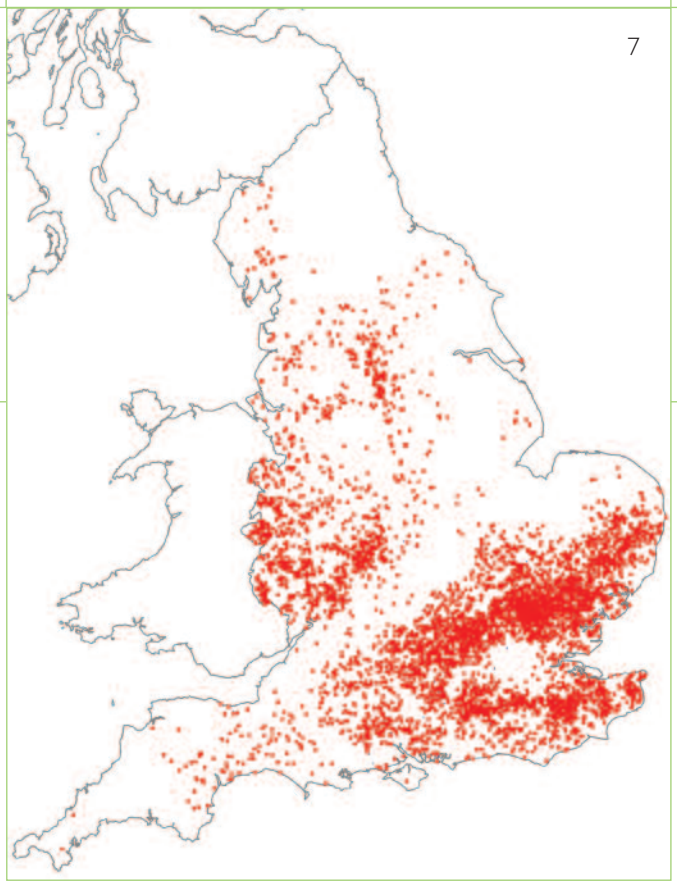
3.1.1.2 Mass walling

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 (Figure 5), examples dating from the 14th century. 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



7 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.

trusses for mass-walled buildings (Smith 1965; Stenning & Andrews 1988; and Figures 4 and 7). 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 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

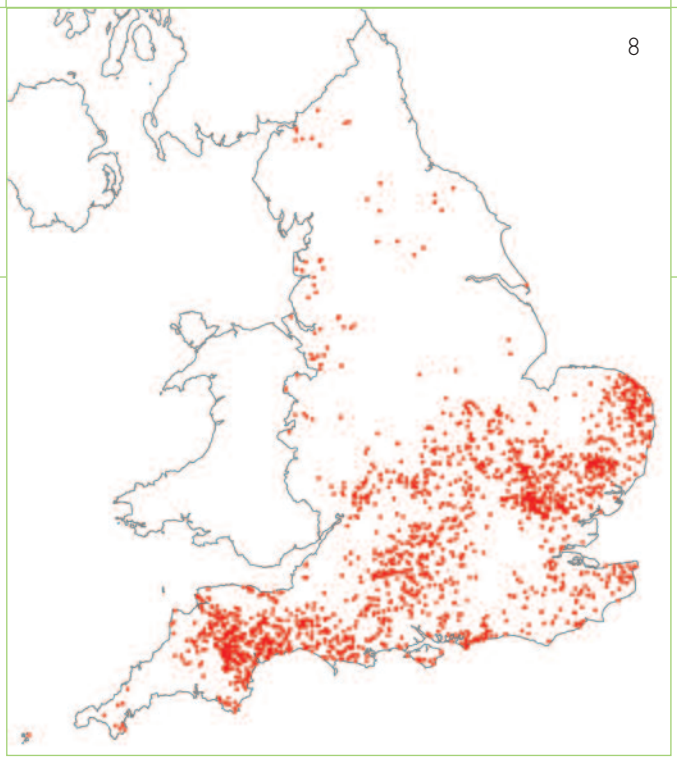
Thatch was common in large parts of the country, and farmers used a wide range of locally available materials: heather, bracken, reeds, rushes, grass, turf, and straw from oats, barley, wheat and rye. Thatch, predominantly made of wheat straw or water reed, is now mainly confined to southern England and East Anglia (Figure 8). 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.

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 general use for new farm buildings (particularly on so-called Dutch Barns for protecting harvested hay and corn crops, see 6.4.1) until the farming depression of the 1880s made cheaper materials desirable. By the First World War, corrugated iron was in general use for the repair of roofs on farm buildings, particularly thatch. It was also used for the walling of model farmsteads built to a budget (Wade Martins 2002, p.175) and for smallholders' buildings in areas such as the New Forest.



8 Listed thatched agricultural buildings in England. Particularly evident is the concentration of surviving thatch – the majority of which in agricultural buildings is listed – in southern England, despite its widespread replacement by materials such as corrugated iron from the late 19th century. Rebuilding, and reproofing in slate and tile, has removed the evidence for its formerly extensive use (in straw, heather and bracken) from much of northern England. Such a map presents an obvious invitation to future analysis and research.

From the 1940s, asbestos cement cladding and a variety of insulating products found their way on to the farmstead. Hit-and-miss vertical boarding (also known as Yorkshire boarding) has been used as cladding since the 1970s.

3.2 BUILDING MATERIALS IN THE SOUTH WEST

3.2.1 WALLING (Figure 9)

3.2.1.1 Stone

Within much of the South West Region there is a great abundance and variety of good building stone, ranging from the chalk of the southern downlands to the honey-coloured Jurassic oolite of the Cotswolds and the red sandstones of mid-Devon lias; from the limestone of southern Gloucestershire and Somerset, to the slates and granites of west Somerset, northern Devon and Cornwall. Cut and dressed stonework was used for the most high-status and formal farm complexes and, where rougher masonry was used, for the details and surrounds of quoining, the copings and kneelers to gable ends, doors and windows.

3.2.1.2 Earth

Much of Devon and parts of Cornwall and Somerset have numerous farm buildings constructed out of earth (known in the South West as cob), one of the cheapest materials available to the farmer: the differing soils used give each area its own local character. The concentration of earth-built structures found in parts of the South West Region is highly characteristic, forming one of the principal areas nationally where this building technique was used (Figure 6). Documents show that it was formerly more widespread. In Cornwall cob and thatch buildings survived on many farms until improvements, especially after the 1790s, brought their replacement by stone, tiled and slated buildings (Potts 1974; Worgan 1811). In the chalkland area of Wiltshire and Dorset chalk-mud was used for smaller farm buildings and boundary walls.

3.2.1.3 Timber

Timber framing is common across the chalk of Wiltshire where the buildings would usually be covered with weatherboarding or the panels infilled with brick or wattle and covered with daub, but it is less common on the Dorset chalklands where building stones from nearby areas were preferred. Timber framing is also concentrated in the Vale of Gloucester and Forest of Dean, its use being replaced by brick and stone from the later 17th century (at a high social level) and more generally from the late 18th century. Roof construction of the 17th century or earlier tended to use timbers with greater dimensions than those used later, especially in areas where timber was in short supply, such as Cornwall. Imported softwood was increasingly used in the 19th century. Within Devon, Somerset and Gloucestershire in particular, many barns, including stone and cob examples, were built using cruck or jointed cruck roof construction. Crucks are generally large, curving timbers that form the main trusses of a building. Jointed crucks are concentrated in Devon, west and south Somerset and west Dorset, and together with other architectural features (such as the lateral chimneystacks found on farmhouses) form part of a shared cultural tradition with south-west Wales. There is a scatter of true crucks – where the same curved timber was used from base to apex – over much of the Region (except for Cornwall where there are no recorded examples), with a marked concentration in the Vale of Gloucester (Alcock 2002 and Figure 4).

3.2.1.4 Brick

From the 17th century, brick began to be used in farm buildings as a display of fashion and wealth in some areas, particularly where there was a lack of good building stone such as on the chalk of Wiltshire and in the Vale of Gloucester. Apart from a number of stable and barn buildings in Wiltshire and Dorset, it did not come into general use until the 19th century and then only in the clay vales and chalk uplands. In the chalk areas buildings of banded brick and flint became the standard building style in the mid- to late 19th century. In some

9 Examples of walling materials in the South West Region

A Granite, Dartmoor. Granite is hard to work, and rarely was it finished for farm buildings. More commonly it was picked from moorland and roughly worked, prior to bedding in earth mortar. (Dartmoor) © *Jeremy Lake*

B Old Red Sandstone, Exmoor. The sandstone splits easily into relatively thin pieces and is typically used as unworked rubble. In some field boundaries the stones were laid at an angle or in a herringbone fashion. (Exmoor) © *Bob Edwards*

C Limestone, Cotswolds, Gloucestershire. Limestone was easily worked and built into roughly coursed walling, and even dressed and ashlar work for farm buildings. (Cotswolds) © *Bob Edwards*

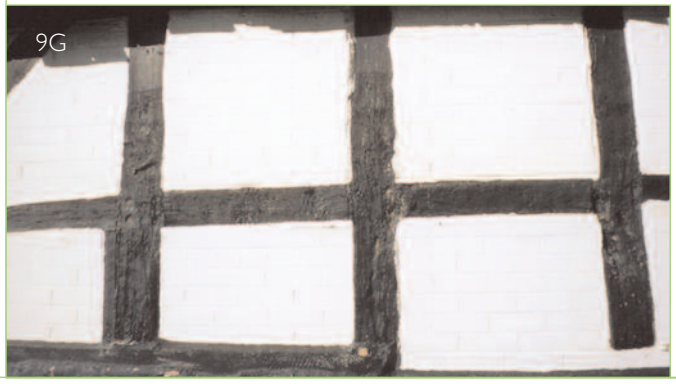
D Chalk cob, Wiltshire. Built on a brick plinth, the layers of cob or 'lifts' are clearly visible. As with many agricultural buildings the cob has been left unrendered. In some cases it was given some protection with a chalk slurry and only rarely was it rendered, the typical treatment for domestic cob buildings. (Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs) © *Bob Edwards*

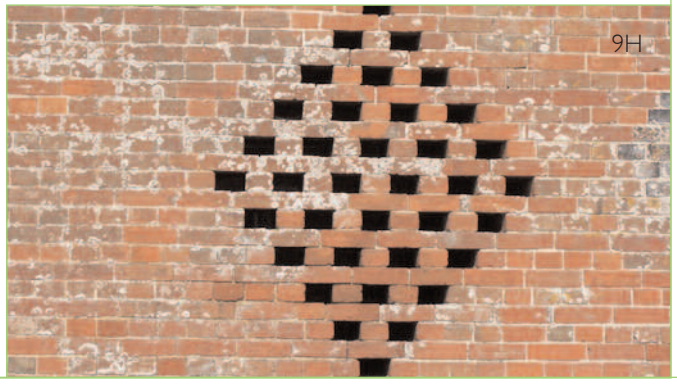
E Cob in Devon using the characteristic red earth. Whereas chalk cob rarely incorporates brick or stone quoins, here stone is used to form the corners of the buildings. (Exmoor) © *Bob Edwards*

F Weatherboarding. The typical wall covering for timber-framed agricultural buildings across Wiltshire and parts of Dorset and Somerset in particular. (Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase) © *Bob Edwards*

G In the Vale of Gloucester, where there is also a strong timber-framing tradition shared with that of the southern West Midlands, brick in-filling of the panels formed by the framing is characteristic. (Severn and Avon Vales) © *Jeremy Lake*

H Brick. Locally made bricks can give a distinctive character to farm buildings as can the use of details such as the pattern of ventilation holes in this Dorset barn, a characteristic of the area. (Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase) © *Bob Edwards*





10 Examples of roofing materials in the South West Region

A & B Thatch. Straw thatch is an important roofing material across Devon and Dorset. Combed wheat reed is characteristic of Devon (A) whilst in Dorset both combed wheat and longstraw thatching (B) was widely practised. Water reed was not widely used in the Region. (A Dartmoor; B Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase)
A © *Eric Berry;* B © *Bob Edwards*

C, D & E Stone capable of being slit into thin sheets for making roofing slates is found in several parts of the Region including the Cotswolds (C) Purbeck (D) and north and west Cornwall (E). Each has its own character, both in terms of the colour of stone and the size of the slates produced. (C Cotswolds; D South Purbeck; E Cornish Killas)
C & D © *Bob Edwards*; E © *Eric Berry*

F Clay tiles. In areas where there was no local stone suitable for making slates plain clay tiles offered an alternative thatch, in some areas replacing thatch from the 18th century onwards. Where local clay for brick and tile making was available, such as north Wiltshire and the Vale of Gloucester, tiles became the usual roofing material (Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase) © *Bob Edwards*

G Pantiles. Bridgwater in Somerset became the main production centre for pantiles in the Region from the mid-18th century and their use spread across the eastern part of the Region, aided from the mid-19th century by the expanding railway network. (Dorset Heaths)
© *Bob Edwards*

H Welsh slate. Across most of the Region the use of Welsh slate increased as the railways made transportation easier and cheaper. Along the north coast of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset Welsh slate has had a longer usage as it was brought to these areas by boat. (Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase) © *Bob Edwards*


10A


10B


10C


10D


10E


10F


10G


10H

areas, such as north Devon and north Somerset, brick was often used for the quoins and window dressings.

3.2.2 ROOFING (Figure 10)

3.2.2.1 Thatch

Over considerable parts of the Region the predominant roofing material was straw for thatching, surviving examples being concentrated in Devon and Dorset, which have the highest concentration of listed thatched buildings in the country. This was a by-product of arable farming and so was generally cheap and available on most farms. Across the Region different methods of processing and applying the straw were used. In Devon in particular combed wheat reed – uncrushed straw applied with the stems lying in the same direction and the butts exposed at the surface – has been used for centuries. It is a characteristic feature of the county and a nationally significant aspect of the Region's built heritage. Across much of the remainder of the Region, longstraw – straw that has been bent and bruised through threshing and with the heads and butts of the straw mixed – was the dominant thatching style. In a few limited areas, managed reed beds provided water reed for thatching (for example at Abbotsbury in Dorset) but it is probable that most reed available was used to provide a key for plaster on ceilings and stud walls in houses. Other materials used for thatching, especially as a base coat beneath straw, include heather, which was also used on Dartmoor as a topcoat, and bracken and gorse. Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Gloucestershire may contain a few surviving examples of solid thatch roofs where the whole of the roof void is filled with thatching material. Most solid thatch roofs are under threat from destruction through neglect or by repairs that often replace the solid thatch with a conventional roof of rafters and battens (Moir & Letts 1999, pp.103–4). Rope thatch, a tradition found elsewhere in the Atlantic seaboard areas of Scotland, Wales and Ireland, was used in West Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly; pantile and slate now cover their former steep roof pitches.

3.2.2.2 Slate

The limestone of the Cotswolds and Purbeck in Dorset can be split into thin slates due to its bedding and used on roofs. Slate used elsewhere in the Region has metamorphosed from shale. In the late 18th century, Devon and Cornwall were responsible for one-fifth of British slate production (Moir & Letts 1999, p.18). Of greatest importance to the appearance of farm buildings was the widespread introduction of Welsh slate, although the northern coasts of Devon and Cornwall had been exposed to Welsh slate from an early date (Moir & Letts 1999, p.18). Buildings designed to have slate roofs are often noticeably different to those that were built for other roofing materials, as it requires a much shallower roof pitch than either thatch or tiles.

3.2.2.3 Tiles

Clay tiles, which were used only sparingly and for high-status buildings before the 18th century, became more widely introduced to parts of the Region towards the end of that century. Plain tiles, for example, are characteristic of the Vale of Gloucester. Pantiles, manufactured at Bridgwater in Somerset, are a strong contributor to countryside character across Somerset, Dorset and east Devon. Outside of this area of the South West and the Isles of Scilly, they are also found throughout eastern England from Northumberland to Norfolk.