



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

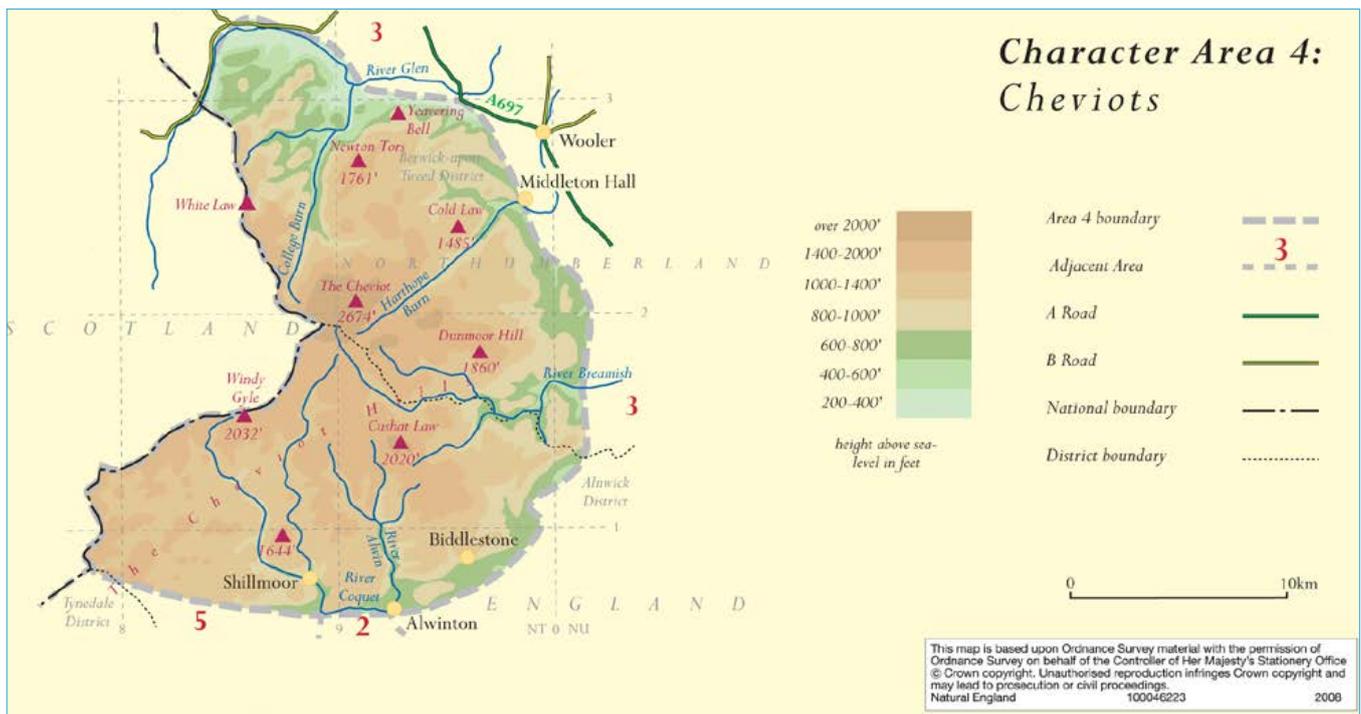
Cheviots

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 4



Introduction

The Farmstead and Landscape Statements will help you to identify the historic character of traditional farmsteads and their buildings in all parts of England, and how they relate to their surrounding landscapes. They are now available for all of England’s National Character Areas (NCAs), and should be read in conjunction with the NCA profiles which have been produced by Natural England using a wide range of environmental information (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>). Each Farmstead and Landscape Statement is supported by Historic England’s advice on farm buildings (<https://historicengland.org.uk/farmbuildings>), which provides links to the *National Farmsteads Character Statement*, national guidance on **Farm Building Types** and a fully-sourced summary in the *Historic Farmsteads: Preliminary Character Statements*. It also forms part of additional research on historic landscapes, including the mapping of farmsteads in some parts of England (see <https://historicengland.org.uk/characterisation>).



This map shows the Cheviot Hills, with the numbers of neighbouring National Character Areas around it.

Front cover: Alwinton is one of several small hamlets set in the foothills of the Cheviots in an area of dispersed settlement and isolated farmsteads. It lies close to the River Coquet with the Cheviot Hills to the north and the Border Moors and Forests to the west. Small fields of piecemeal enclosure close to the hillside become larger and more regular to the east and south. The sites of ancient settlements and enclosure are scattered on the upper slopes along the lines of old drove ways which pass north-south over the moorland tops. Photo © Jen Deadman

Summary

See the National Farmsteads Character Statement for a short introduction to the headings below, including maps and tables.

The Cheviot Hills are part of the wild upland plateaux of the Northumberland moors on the Scottish border. They form distinctive, smooth, rounded hills rising to the west of the lowland belt of the Cheviot Fringe. The Character Area is almost totally devoid of settlement. Of this area, 13% is woodland and 99% of land lies within the Northumberland National Park.

Historic character

- The present pattern of dispersed settlement has developed since the medieval period from a complex mix of village-based and dispersed settlement, and the patterns of enclosure by dry stone walls are strikingly earlier than in the Cheviot Fringe to the east.
- Isolated farmsteads and farm hamlets in the upper dales date from the later 17th and 18th centuries, following the introduction of more secure conditions in the Borders country. Some isolated farmsteads derive from seasonal settlements (shielings) used by shepherds over the summer.
- Linear and L-shaped farmsteads, mostly of the mid- to late 19th century, with little sign of adaptation from earlier buildings, are predominant. The ‘farm hamlets’ of the Cheviots, with one or two regular courtyard plan farmsteads and their related housing, result from the shrinkage and transformation (completed after a final phase in the late 18th and early 19th centuries) of former villages

Significance

- Although all areas have few buildings predating the mid-19th century, and most areas have none, Cheviot farmsteads have significance as a whole because they relate to a nationally and internationally significant survival of medieval and prehistoric settlement, trackways and field systems. The platforms of medieval and post-medieval farmsteads and settlements can be observed in relationship to the remains of cultivation terraces and ridge and furrow on the hillsides and valley bottoms around them, which in turn overlie earlier (Iron Age and Romano-British) ‘cord rig’ ploughing and cultivation terraces.
- The late date of rebuilding (extending into the early 20th century) is remarkable in an English context and has more in common with areas of Scotland where only small steadings were required to run very large sheep farms.
- Some linear farmsteads, and in particular those where the domestic and working elements are internally connected, represent a significant and final phase of farmsteads derived from the longhouse tradition.
- Working buildings with 18th-century and earlier fabric are of exceptional rarity.
- Bastles are highly significant in a national context, for they reflect the unsettled history of the Anglo-Scottish borders. The yards and surrounding boundaries – dry stone walls often representing the rebuilding or realignment of turf boundaries – can retain high

archaeological potential for the development of bastles in their landscape context.

Present and future issues

- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a low proportion of listed working farm buildings converted

Historic development

- Farmers made use of the upland moors of the Cheviots for seasonal grazing, fuel and heather for roofing, these areas resulting from clearance for grazing and then cultivation in the Neolithic/Bronze Age. They retain an exceptionally high concentration of prehistoric settlement and ritual sites and features as well as summer shieling grounds for grazing livestock and other medieval and later features (such as lynchets and ridge and furrow) associated with the expansion and contraction of land use. Deserted medieval villages and hamlets, together with visible remains of abandoned field systems, indicate a period of greater population and farming diversity prior to the 14th century.
- Border warfare resulted in a loss of population between the 14th and early 17th centuries, and over this period groups of small farms were held by farming families in return for military service. Many of the Cheviots' villages around the fringes of the Cheviots were defended from Scottish raids with a 13th- to 15th-century tower; in some villages (for example at Alnham) there were two (one for the vicar and another for the manor). Some continued to be built into the 16th century in response to this threat and that of reiving clans along the Anglo-Scottish borders. Towers and bastles might also be provided with a defensible yard, or barmkin, for protecting people and livestock in the event of a raid. Bastles continued to be built as the threat from reiving families and other uncertainty continued.
- The Union of the Crowns in 1603 paved the way for more settled border conditions, including improvements in pasture and arable production by estates, some derived from fortified predecessors. Bastles continued to be built into the 17th century, as the threat from reiving families and other uncertainty, notably with the Civil War, continued, and often land continued to be farmed in common; tenants' holdings lay intermixed in strip fields, into the 18th century.
- Large-scale commercial sheep farming emerged in the Cheviots and in the adjacent areas of the Anglo-Scottish Borders in the period c 1550–c 1700, under the direction of larger landowners exercising considerable control through leasehold tenure over large areas.
- Estate management continued to shape agricultural practice in the late 18th and 19th centuries, when the sheep farms of this area (and mixed farms where the soils and topography permitted the growing of corn) were redeveloped for supply to lowland fattening areas, often held by the same estates. Oats, barley and turnips were mostly grown as fodder for farm animals, and there was some underdrainage of the land.
- Enclosure of communal townfields and of formerly extensive common pasture on the hills and moors was driven by landlords. As elsewhere in estate-dominated Northumberland, a first phase, spanning the 16th to 18th centuries, was followed by often total reorganisation and the final phase of enclosure in the late 18th and 19th centuries, which occurred in tandem with the reorganisation of many settlements and the

appearance of large farmsteads with workers' housing.



Sited high on an escarpment, to the east of Alwinton, and set amongst a historic landscape of ancient field systems, old settlements, and the platforms of old homesteads lies Old Middleton Town. It overlooks North Middleton, a large, early 19th-century planned farm, set below in the Cheviot Fringe (see Area 3). A shrunken village, the Old Town has two surviving buildings, occupied until the middle of the 20th century. Both are ruinous and date from the 19th century. North Middleton, formerly part of the Tankerville estate, is itself set amongst fields which evidence medieval settlement. Photo © Jen Deadman



Former smallholding, built in around 1900, on the edge of Wooler common. A track leads from Wooler, past the northern edge of the common, across the moorland in an east-west direction to meet with other tracks centred on Commonburn House in the heart of the upland massif. Strip fields, set at right angles to the road, are evident below the common. Photo © Jen Deadman

Landscape and settlement

- Extensive prehistoric settlement and ritual remains are concentrated in the moors, including 'cup and ring' marked rocks, Bronze Age burial and field clearance cairns and Bronze Age/Iron Age/Romano-British enclosed and unenclosed settlements and their associated field systems: the latter probably remained in use long after the end of Roman occupation. The upland forest had been cleared by the end of the first millennium BC, by which time increasing numbers of small, enclosed settlements were being established within, or even overlying, the small, Iron Age hillforts which are a distinctive feature of the Cheviots. These farming settlements, often with stockyards and house platforms cut into the sloping ground, frequently expanded and continued in use well into the first millennium AD. They often occupy higher ground than the medieval villages, established by the 12th century, which were surrounded by open fields subdivided into strips.
- The peak of settlement expansion had been reached by the 14th century, by which time a diversity of villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads had developed. Some farmsteads developed on the sites of shieling grounds. Many of the more marginally located villages, hamlets and farmsteads had been abandoned by the 16th century as a result of the colder and wetter climate, border strife and plague, and settlement became focused on the core medieval villages with their surrounding strip fields for the cropping of corn and hay.
- New farmsteads away from these villages were then established or re-established during the more settled conditions that returned from the 17th century, as formerly dispersed farm holdings were rationalised and these core retained villages, with their numerous small tenements, contracted in size. This process was well advanced by the mid-18th century, earlier than in those villages that have been studied in the Cheviot Fringe (Area 3).
- The late 18th and early 19th centuries witnessed the final phase in establishing new farmsteads, as township commons were enclosed, fields were transformed and the remnants of tenements and their enclosures removed.
- Blocks of conifer plantation and thin shelter belts reflect estate-based landscape management during the late 19th and early 20th century. Sandstone and fieldstone rubble walls are characteristic of the late 18th- and early 19th-century enclosure with hedgerows to lower slopes.
- Upland landscapes remained largely open as common pasture until the parliamentary enclosures of the late 18th and 19th centuries. These are characterised by large rectangular fields marked by stone walls ('dykes') or are defined by hedgerows on lower slopes.

Farmstead and building types

The extent of rebuilding and associated enclosure in the mid- to late 19th and early 20th centuries is unusual in a national context, and strongly associated (as in Scotland) with the activities of estates. Smaller yards and fields around farmsteads were used for milking cattle, sorting livestock and the washing and clipping of sheep in early summer.

Farmstead types

- There is a sharp contrast between the building types adopted by the hill farms and the larger farms at the foot of the hills. The key farmstead types which had developed up to the end of the 19th century, and are still evident today, are the linear plan forms found predominantly in the high upland areas and hill farms and the courtyard plans of the larger estate farms, dotted around the margins of the Cheviots, where the working buildings are arranged around one or more yards for cattle. (For detailed information regarding 18th- to 19th-century planned estate farms see Cheviot Fringe Area 3 and Northumberland Sandstone Hills Area 2.)
- Defensible bastles, where the lower floor was used to house animals and the upper for domestic use, were most commonly built in the late 16th and 17th centuries, but are not as numerous as within the former villages on the western fringe and to the south of Coquetdale. (For illustration see Area 3: Cheviot Fringe and Area 5: Border Moors and Forests.) Their walls are typically around a metre thick and the upper doorway, originally reached by an external ladder, is most frequently set towards the centre of one of the side elevations. Ladders were later replaced by a flight of stone steps. The living quarters of a bastle were heated by a fireplace set against one end wall – usually opposite the end with the byre entrance. Evidence for a timber firehood sometimes remains. A loft area above provided sleeping accommodation. Some were built on a larger scale as stronghouses, including for communal use, and it can be difficult to distinguish between them. Towers and bastles might also be provided with a defensible yard, or ‘barmkin’, for protecting people and livestock in the event of a raid.
- Linear ranges, occasionally with a scatter of small buildings, are characteristic of the small, upland hill farms where the emphasis is on sheep rearing. The majority are of 19th-century origin, replacing older more unsuitable buildings. There are the ruins and platforms of 18th-century and earlier, single-storey ranges, suggesting (as is the case in the Cheviot Fringe to the east – see Area 3) that both linear farmsteads in the longhouse tradition and longhouses, where there was a shared entrance to an interconnected house and byre, were formerly more common.
- Linear farmsteads can be extended into an L-shaped plan.
- Loose courtyard farmsteads with buildings set to one or two sides of the yard are less common, but are found on smaller farmsteads.
- Regular courtyard farmsteads where the working buildings are interlinked (most commonly as L-shaped and rarely U-shaped ranges) and arranged around one or more yards for cattle, are found in areas with larger farms where mixed farming was practised. The ribbon of larger estate farms set around the foot of the Cheviots is mainly mixed, with the rearing and fattening of cattle concentrated in large, economically designed yards, generally of the early to mid-19th century.

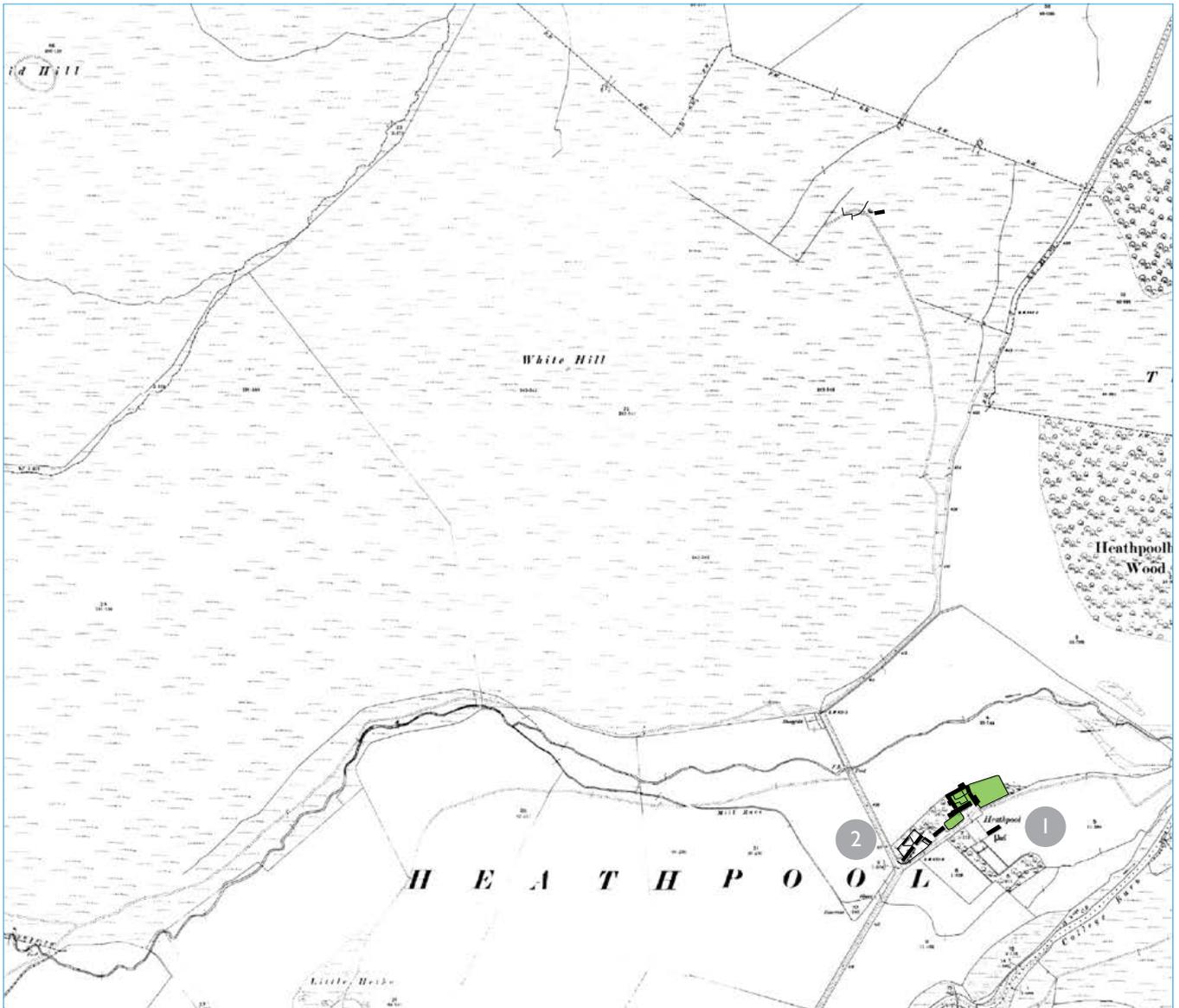


Hethpool, looking north towards the moorland with medieval and prehistoric cultivation terraces. Photo © Historic England 28566/024

Building types

Building types mainly comprise:

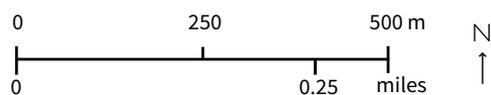
- Cow houses (locally termed byres), with stalls for a small number of milk cattle were universal. On the small upland farm the byre was attached to the house range and would have housed one or two house cows. On larger farms the byre was frequently incorporated into the yard. Low ranges of stock sheds and associated yards, for cattle fattening, often running in parallel or linked around the perimeter of the yard, are associated with the larger farms on the lower margins. Field barns, common to other upland areas for housing small numbers of cattle overwinter away from the farm, are rare.
- Hemmels, a form of open-fronted shed for fatstock, are distinguished by their multiple arched entries. They are particular to north-east England, and can be found on small farms, but are more characteristic of the larger farms.
- Fodder houses comprised a single unit attached to the house range. On the planned farms on the periphery of the Cheviots, large combination barns served a wide range of functions, including fodder housing. They accommodated threshing barn, straw barn, granary, cart shed and stables. By the 19th century they are frequently seen to form a unit with threshing barn and wheel house or horse gin.
- Lean-tos were used for pigsties, frequently adjoining the earth closet. On larger farms these could be free standing units.
- Hay barns are not a common element of the hill farm. Hay possibly stood in stooks in an enclosure close to the house. Along College Burn, 20th century estate improvements saw



Maps are based on 2nd edition 25" Ordnance Survey maps, which show farmsteads after the last major phase in the building of traditional farmsteads in England. © Crown Copyright [and database rights] 2020. OS 100024900

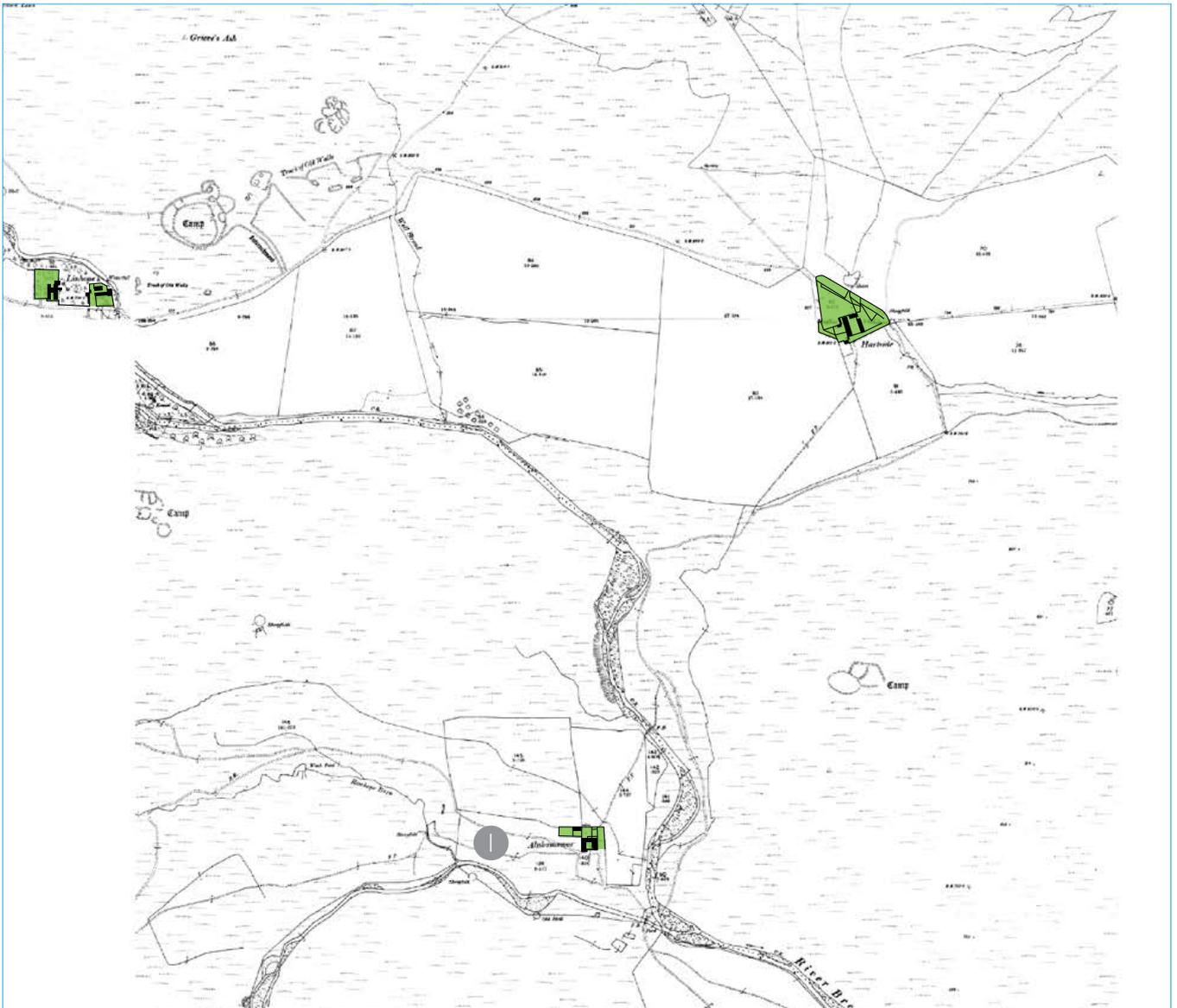


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



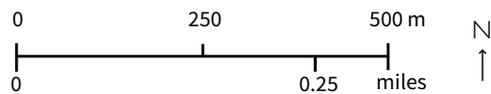
Hethpool

Hethpool village, typical of those established on the valley terraces by the 12th and 13th centuries, was reorganised as a farm hamlet by around 1800. To the south-west, visible on the border of the map, is the defended Iron Age settlement of Little Hetha. On the hill slopes to the north the earthworks of medieval ridge and furrow overlie earlier field systems which relate to hillside and hilltop settlements dating back to the Bronze Age. The village, which was vulnerable to Scottish raids, was defended by a tower house (1) built by the 15th century. The farmstead (2) was built as a U-shaped, regular courtyard complex for the processing of crops and the fattening of cattle on turnips. To its west are farm cottages of 1926, built in an Arts and Crafts style and to the east is Hethpool House which was built in 1919 for a Tyneside industrialist. Some of the terracing built into the hillsides was used for the cultivation of roots, including for sheep.



Maps are based on 2nd edition 25" Ordnance Survey maps, which show farmsteads after the last major phase in the building of traditional farmsteads in England. © Crown Copyright [and database rights] 2020. OS 100024900

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



Alnham

Between the late 18th and late 19th centuries, this landscape had been reorganised, and its farmsteads resited and redesigned as regular courtyard plans, for the rearing of sheep and cattle for fattening in the arable vales to the east. The village of Alnham (off the map to the south-east, and defended by two medieval towers) had been reorganised as a farm hamlet over the same period. The summer seasonal settlements (shielings) within this map, occupied by shepherds working from Alnham and elsewhere, began to develop as permanent settlements in the 13th century: one lies 600 metres west of Alnhammoor Farm (1), and was abandoned over the 14th and 15th centuries, when the farmstead was established on the present site alongside the river Breamish. Throughout the area are the remains of medieval settlement, including the platforms of longhouses.

the investment in large hay barns on estate smallholdings. On the larger farms, hay was frequently stored in a yard or combination barn.

- Yards and open-fronted sheds were for handling sheep.



In sharp contrast to the smallholdings sited on the hillsides and along the narrow valley bottoms are a number of planned estate farms of late 18th- and 19th-century origin, set around the perimeter of the Cheviots on the fertile lower ground. Middleton Hall lies directly below the escarpment where the ancient enclosures of Old Middleton Town are sited. Middleton Hall sits at the head of an east-west track which follows the Harthorpe Burn to where it rises high in the Cheviots. Photo © Jen Deadman



The College Burn flows north, rising on the southern flank of the Cheviots. The large farmstead of Hethpool and its Peel tower sit at the northern extremity close to Kirknewton. Small 19th-century steadings, characteristically painted white, lie along the valley bottom in fields which evidence ridge and furrow and earlier settlement. Some improved pasture is found in piecemeal enclosure on the lower valley sides. Sheep graze the uplands. There are few cattle. Blocks of conifer plantation cover large areas east and west of the burn. For more details on this area see the map. Photo © Jen Deadman



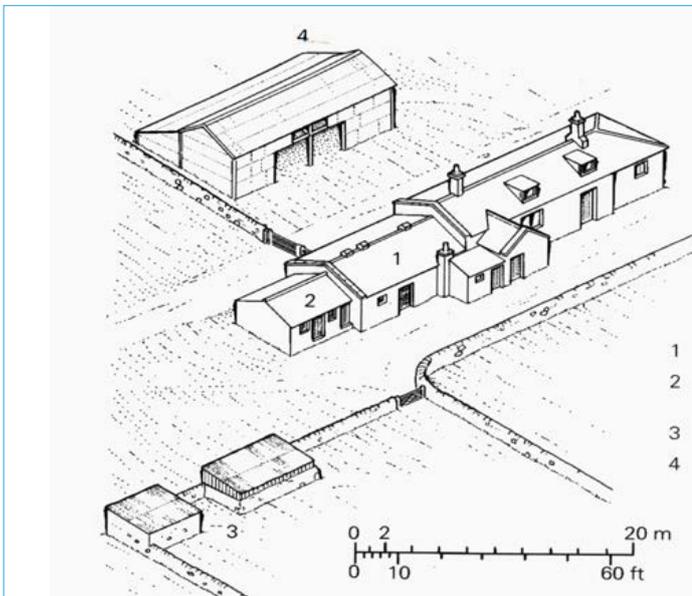
Linear farmsteads. This small, single-storey linear farmstead, of late 18th- or early 19th-century date, is one of two extant buildings at Old Middleton Town. There is no common entrance and no interconnecting door. Each area is served by an entry on the front elevation, the entry to the dwelling being more finely crafted than that accessing the agricultural end. A lean-to pig sty lies against the right-hand gable, and a corrugated barn is set to the rear. There are small enclosures to the rear and evidence for a cobble hardstanding to the front. A circular sheep fold lies on the far side of the track. Photo © Jen Deadman



Adjoining to the left is an older structure, now ruinous but with the gable end still intact. Walls of field stone stand to approximately one metre high. The newer build abuts the older and incorporates the old gable in its fabric. The older building measures approximately 6 by 4.5 metres. Photo © Jen Deadman



In the valley of the College Burn are several small hill farms dating from the 19th century which underwent a programme of estate improvement in the 20th century. The linear forms of the buildings can still be read. The farmsteads are small and isolated, usually consisting only of a house to which a short range of working buildings is attached. Photo © Jen Deadman



Mounthooly Farm

At Mounthooly the farm originally comprised farmhouse and one adjoining building, with possibly two field shelters in a nearby field.

Drawing © Historic England

1. stable/byre
2. later loose boxes
3. field shelters
4. hay barn, implement store



Trowupburn is a remote, 19th-century hill farm set deep in the north Cheviots. Here, a two-storey farmhouse has a low range of attached working buildings. In front of the house is a large yard which may have been used for sheep handling and which contains a hay barn of 20th-century date. Photo © Jen Deadman



Courtyard farmsteads. A small, loose courtyard farmstead, with a mid-19th-century combination barn and byre set around a small yard, at Barrow Mill on the river Coquet, Alwinton. The surviving base of a rare, early 19th-century corn-drying kiln, for drying of oats and barley prior to milling, lies immediately to the west. Photo © Jen Deadman



Large, planned estate farms are dotted around the base of the Cheviots, mainly mixed farms with an emphasis on cattle rearing. This U-shaped 19th-century farmstead lies on the lower hill slopes. It comprises single-storey cow houses set around a yard. Two farm workers' houses are visible to the left. The farmhouse is set away from the steading. Photo © Jen Deadman



At Middleton Hall, the early 19th-century buildings are focused around a yard where the dominant feature is a huge combination barn which forms an L-shape with a range of open-fronted cart sheds forming the return. A loose arrangement of other buildings is set around the yard. The majority of the buildings stand empty. A large covered yard of late 19th-century date, now houses stock. Photo © Jen Deadman



At Prendwick the emphasis was on large-scale cattle rearing around open yards and the production of fodder. Direct access to fodder and straw was from adjacent purpose-built barns. The yards were covered in the 20th century. Photo © Jen Deadman



Combination barns. Fodder houses on smaller farms often comprised a single unit attached to the house range. On the planned farms based at the foot of the Cheviots, large combination barns served a wide range of functions, including fodder housing. Photo © Jen Deadman



Hay barns. Hay barns were not a common element of the hill farm. Hay possibly stood in stooks in an enclosure close to the house. Along College Burn 20th-century estate improvements saw the investment in large hay barns on estate small holdings. Here, a 20th-century open sided hay barn at Fleehope on College Burn is sited in an enclosed area to the rear of the steading. Photo © Jen Deadman



At Trowupburn the hay barn, with low covered lean-to, is sited in a large yard to the front of the house. It has been suggested that the lean-to may have been used for drying wool washed in the adjacent stream. The absence of openings on the stream side elevation and lack of ventilation would perhaps throw some doubt on this interpretation. Today it is used for housing sheep at lambing time. Photo © Jen Deadman



Cow houses (byres). At Trowupburn two small byres adjoin the farmhouse. Photo © Jen Deadman



At Fleehope the byre is sited at the end of the range. It opens onto a yard which also serves a small hemmel (open fronted cattle shed) to the left. The yard is now covered. Photo © Jen Deadman



Hemmels. On the larger farms at the foot of the hills, the hemmels are frequently part of a larger building. Carts sheds and ancillary stores are also found on the ground floor, and a granary is sited at the upper level. Photo © Jen Deadman



Wheel houses. Here the wheel house lies adjacent to the fodder house and cattle yards. The power would have been used to power chaff and turnip cutters. Photo © Jen Deadman



Sheep housing. There was no permanent structure related to sheep husbandry apart from stone sheep folds on the moor top or valley sides. Small enclosures of moveable wooden hurdles were constructed close to the steading for sorting, clipping and dipping of sheep. Modern wooden fencing replaces hurdles around the sheep pens. Photos © Jen Deadman



Ruinous building at Old Middleton Town, possibly pre-18th century. The walls are built of large, loosely coursed field stone, typically pre-19th-century in date. The corner quoins are large and roughly squared. Photo © Jen Deadman

Materials and detail

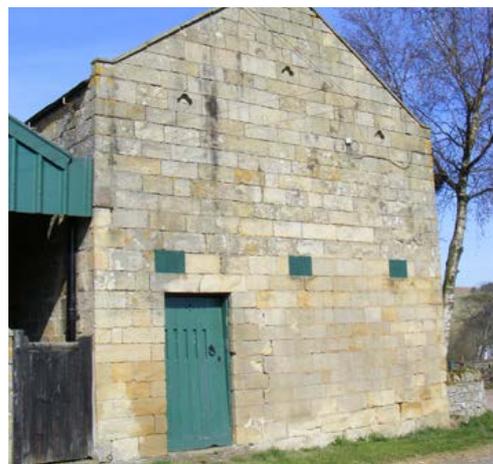
- The area has seen extensive rebuilding of rural building stock since the late 18th century. Clay stone and thatch were gradually replaced by more recent traditional building materials: sandstone in varying shades of yellow, pink and grey (either rubble or dressed) and grey, Welsh slates.
- Orange clay pantiles, common to many areas on the eastern side of the country were produced locally and used throughout, replaced in the mid-19th century with cheap imports of blue, Welsh slate made possible by the arrival of the railway system.
- The pattern of projecting through stones, evident in other upland areas is absent here as is the use of watershot masonry.
- There is little evidence of chamfered doorways and lintels, characteristic of the 17th century, to suggest the presence of earlier buildings. Evidence of alternate rebuild and the raising of structures from one to two stories is elusive. Date stones are not a feature of the area.



Quoins to corners and openings are generally of long and short sandstone blocks. Here they are left unfinished at the outward edge and marked with a scribed line up to which the render would have abutted. Photo © Jen Deadman



Window with wooden shutter in the farmhouse at Old Middleton Town. Note long and short quoins and random rubble wall. Photo © Jen Deadman



Mid- to late 19th-century combination barn, built of well coursed and squared masonry, as is the pigsty. Note the fine coping stones on the sty wall and the quality of the dressings around openings and feeding chute. Photo © Jen Deadman



Historic England

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