



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Tees Lowlands

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 23



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>).



19th-century village farm in Newby on the outskirts of Middlesbrough, located at the south end of the settlement on the margins of the village green. To the south-east of the farmstead are building platforms and earthworks. The settlement plan form is a type well known in County Durham in which two parallel lines of houses face onto a broad, rectangular village green with narrow crofts and garden areas to the rear. Photo © Jen Deadman

Front cover: Late 18th- or early 19th-century farmstead characteristic of the large, dispersed farms scattered throughout the landscape of the Tees Lowlands, set on open fertile land in the south of the area with distinctive traditional red brick buildings and pantile roofs. Here, the farmhouse is incorporated within the original working yard with modern buildings to the north and east. Photo © Jen Deadman



This map shows the Tees Lowlands with the numbers of neighbouring National Character Areas around it.

Summary

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

The Tees Lowlands span parts of County Durham, Cleveland and North Yorkshire. Centred on Middlesbrough, Darlington and the river Tees, the lowlands are framed by the Cleveland Hills to the south-east and the Pennine fringes to the west. Of the Character Area, 17% is urban area and only 3% is woodland.

Historic character

- This was an area of village-based settlement which experienced much depopulation of settlements and the reorganisation of farmlands around enlarged holdings from the 14th century. Many isolated farmsteads have developed from this period and from the last phase of 18th- and 19th-century enclosure of strip fields and common land (including marshland and fenland), many farmsteads continuing to develop within villages.
- Industrial growth including the world's first steam-powered passenger train, the railway manufacturing and engineering centre at Darlington and the port and manufacturing centre at Middlesbrough provide the wider context and background to the reorganisation and rebuilding of farms and their buildings in the 19th century.
- Most farmsteads were rebuilt in the 19th century as regular courtyard layouts, loose courtyard layouts which developed on a more piecemeal basis being concentrated within villages.
- Building types reflect the development of arable-based agriculture in the late 18th and 19th centuries, with substantial threshing and combination barns (often with engine houses), granaries, stables and cart sheds; yards and buildings for cattle, including covered yards, extensive shelter sheds and cow houses, show an emphasis on fatstock and, in the late 19th century (in cow houses and pigsties), the increased importance of liquid milk for export to urban markets. The smaller farms of the pastoral area to the west are dominated by cattle housing including calf houses.
- Building in sandstone and from the 18th-century brick is combined with pantiles and Welsh slate.

Significance

- Farmhouses date from a phase of rebuilding dating from the late 17th century that extends into the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau, and working buildings (mainly barns) of 18th-century and earlier date are more common than in other lowland areas in Durham.
- Some farmsteads relate to shrunken medieval settlements, ridge and furrow and also rare surviving relict common and their associated routeways.
- Any evidence for horse, water and steam-powered threshing is highly significant and early in a national context. Any surviving examples of internal machinery – the gearing for horse wheels, mill wheels, boilers and fixed threshing machines – are of exceptional rarity.

Present and future issues

- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a low proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (17.9%, the national average being 32%).
- The Photo Image Project also recorded an above-average percentage (15.9%, the national average being 7.5%) of listed working farm buildings that show obvious signs of structural disrepair.

Historic development

- This area had been cleared of most of its woodland by the time of the Roman occupation, when it was well populated with small settlements.
- Its fertile soils, and access to coastal grazing marshes to the east and substantial blocks of common land supported the development of villages in the 12th and 13th centuries, in some cases from the earlier Anglo-Scandinavian settlements of the 9th to 11th centuries.
- Numerous earthworks of settlements and ridge and furrow testify to the shrinkage and abandonment of settlement in the 14th to 16th centuries, and subsequent use of arable land as pasture. These are especially notable around Skerne Carrs.
- Many isolated farmsteads, and larger village-based farms, developed in the 17th and 18th centuries as production was reorganised around larger centralised farming units, many linked to country estates sustained by wealth from industry.
- Rapid industrial growth in the 19th century was initially based on mineral extraction and the export of coal along the Tees and from coastal ports. The pioneering stages and development of rail communications (including the Stockton and Darlington Railway, opened in 1825 as the world's first passenger steam railway) and, from the 1830s, chemical manufacture, was followed by the development of the old market town at Darlington into a railway and engineering centre and Middlesbrough as a port and from the 1850s its ironworks and steelworks supplied from the Cleveland Hills – its most famous work being Dorman Long's Sydney Harbour Bridge of 1932.
- These developments, combined with the area's fertile loam-based soils, provided an incentive to the reorganisation and drainage of farmland, and the construction of farmsteads on estates often funded through industrial rather than old-landed wealth. Dairying and the liquid milk trade emerged as an important industry in the late 19th century to supply local industrial populations. The Durham Ox, born in 1796 and bred by Charles Colling of Ketton Hall near Darlington, was nationally celebrated as one of the iconic animals of the Agricultural Revolution as well as being a forerunner of the Shorthorn breed, which was both a fatstock and dairying breed.

Landscape and settlement

- Many farmsteads continued to develop within villages into the 19th and 20th centuries. Villages and their surrounding strip fields date from either the Anglo-Scandinavian settlements at the end of the first millennium AD, or after the 'Harrying of the North' in the late 11th century. This was mostly complete by the end of the 13th century. Planned villages, some centred on greens, are characterised by regular rows of facing house plots with their associated radiating tofts or garths (for example Gainford).
- Most isolated farmsteads around villages, with the exception of a small number of manorial sites and medieval grange farms, were built in association with or later than the post-medieval piecemeal enclosure of the open arable fields. This was mostly complete by the mid-18th century, sometimes preserving the curved outlines of these fields but often also reorganised and enlarged with straight boundaries in the 19th and 20th centuries. The result is a mix of species-diverse and thorn hedgerows, with some drystone walls to the west. The remaining commons and open pastures were enclosed by regular fields with thorn hedgerows from the later 18th century.
- Estates have also lent a designed character to much of the landscape, with plantations and sometimes the distinctive styles of estate architecture. The lowland parkland estates are well-wooded, with ancient broadleaf woodland largely confined to steep valley sides. There is very limited woodland cover on the high pasture: shelter belts and conifer plantations.

Farmstead and building types

Working buildings of the 18th century and earlier are very rare. Some farmhouses in this area are early 18th-century or earlier cross-passage houses with the chimney stack backing onto the passage, which are mostly found within villages. Most farmhouses were built or rebuilt in the later 18th and early 19th centuries, the result being the dominance of symmetrical 'Georgian' fronts with services to the rear.

Farmstead types

- Courtyard farmsteads, usually dating from two or more phases of rebuilding in the 19th century, are the dominant farmstead type. Loose courtyard farmsteads, with working buildings to two or three sides of the yard, are concentrated within villages and larger farmsteads commonly developed on the edges of villages.
- Regular courtyard farmsteads are commonly found as full courtyards, U-shaped or L-shaped layouts and also multi-yards with buildings to two or three yards.
- Pastoral farming areas, which can be very localised, are marked by much smaller-scale farmsteads, including linear.

Building types

Building types display the evidence for the scale of arable farming and cattle management in this area:

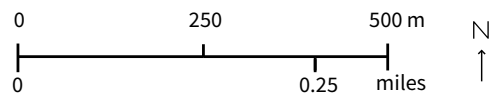
- Grain production across most of the area in the 17th-19th centuries is characterised by substantial threshing and combination barns, granaries (frequently built as an upper storey over a cart shed or animal housing), cart sheds, implement sheds and stables that reflect the comparatively smaller scale of farms in this area.
- The highly-mechanised nature of farming by the mid-19th century is reflected in the numbers of barns with wheel houses; it was



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.
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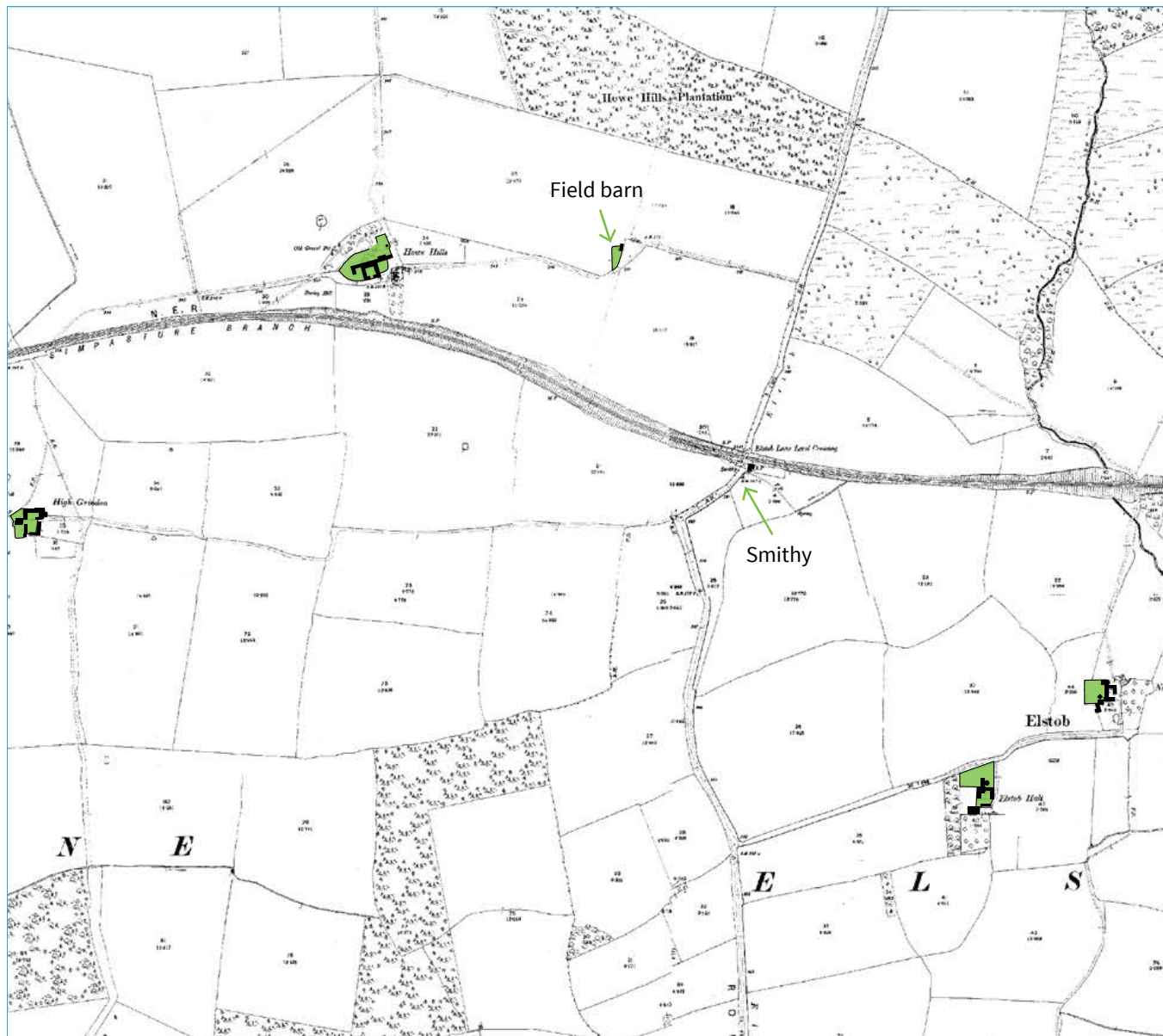


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



Bradbury

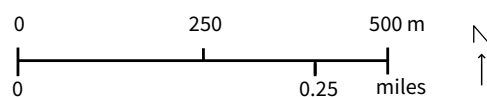
This area north of Bradbury, traversed by the North Eastern Railway, developed with large arable-based farms served by outfarms and field barns in fields mostly enclosed on a piecemeal basis by the 19th century. Carr land, as elsewhere in this area, provided valuable, seasonally flooded grazing land.



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



Elstob

This landscape of piecemeal enclosure, subject to some reorganisation with plantations and straight field boundaries in the late 18th century, is traversed by a branch of the Clarence Railway, which from the 1830s took coal to ports on the Tees. Wheel houses can be seen projecting from the barns on regular courtyard layouts on earlier farmstead sites: Elstob Hall to the south-east has an early 18th-century house.

common (as widely adopted further north in Northumberland) for the threshing barn to house a threshing machine and be placed in-line with a barn for the receipt of straw from the threshed sheaves of corn, which was then taken to the cattle yards. These are distinctive types of building which extend into the Lothians and other parts of Scotland subject to agricultural improvement.

- Cattle sheds and associated yards include hemmels, a form of open-fronted shed for fatstock particular to north-east England. The increased importance accorded to fatstock in the second half of the 19th century is also

reflected in evidence for the rebuilding of farmsteads with more yards and buildings for cattle, including loose boxes (marked by multiple doors), wide-span sheds and covered yards which also preserved the manure's nutrients. This again is part of a pattern extending into the Lothians.

- Smaller farmstead in pastoral farming areas have byres (cow houses with stalls for the small numbers of milk cattle) and pigsties, often marked by yards with feeding troughs, are usually placed close to the house.
- There were smithies on the largest farmsteads.



Loose collection of buildings set around the yard at Dromonby Hall, one of several dispersed farmsteads bearing the name Dromonby, lying within a kilometre square situated between the villages of Kirkby and Great Busby south of Stokesley. The Domesday book describes Dromonby as having three households and sixteen ploughlands. Evidence for medieval field strips can still be discerned amongst later enclosure. Photo © Jen Deadman



Girsby on the east bank of the Tees. A small, isolated hamlet of four houses and an Anglican church built in 1838, formerly a township in the parish of Sockburn. The linear farmstead to the right, is the only farm within the hamlet. Four outliers of 18th- to 19th-century date with regular yard plans lie dispersed close by within fields of early piecemeal and later enclosure. Photo © Jen Deadman



Isolated, early 19th-century steading following a regular courtyard plan form of linked and loose buildings set around a yard. The wheel house depicted on the 1893 map was dismantled by 1914. Photo © Jen Deadman



Alwent Hall Farm is set in an isolated position amongst fields of piecemeal enclosure north of the Tees. The steading comprises an E-shaped plan form with three north-south ranges served by a large five-bay, east-west combination barn, to the rear of which is a former gin gang. To the north is a further yard where a mix of rubble and brick buildings form the north range. The farmhouse adjoins the main yard to the east but is set in its own enclosed area. To the rear of the house is a small domestic yard with a hennery-piggery. The farmhouse is late 17th century, with early 18th- or 19th-century additions and alterations. It is built of sandstone rubble as are the farm buildings which are early to mid-19th-century in date. Photo © Jen Deadman



On this farmstead, the house is set to the north of the road and working buildings to the south. The linked buildings are set around a yard infilled by the end of the late 19th century with two parallel cattle sheds. The first edition OS map of 1857 would suggest the farm was built on the site of a smaller steading which consisted of a scatter of buildings. An area of ridge and furrow is still visible to the east. Photo © Jen Deadman



A large combination barn sits on the northern perimeter of the yard adjacent to the roadside. A pentagonal gin gang adjoins it to the rear. (Photo © Jen Deadman)



These parallel ranges were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to cover the yard within a U-plan farmstead at Girsby. These buildings stand today presenting gable ends to the roadside, brick-built with pantiled roofs and fine detail to eaves and openings. The farmhouse to the south was formerly separated from the working buildings by its own small domestic yard. Photos © Jen Deadman



East Rounton is a model village near Northallerton in the south-west of the area, constructed for Sir Isaac Lowthian Bell, an ironmaster of Teeside. Rounton Grange has been demolished but the Home Farm, built in 1874 by Phillip Bell in the Vernacular Revival Style, still remains. The farmhouse and four adjoining cottages are sited close to the road and front a large E-shaped yard. The yard comprises linked ranges of cattle housing and covered yards served by a large east-west combination barn with feed houses and a threshing barn. Today Home Farm is a working cattle farm supporting a thriving farm shop. Photo © Jen Deadman



By contrast, on the Raby estate in the north-west of the area is a former smallholding to the east of Staindrop which, although 18th- to 19th-century in date, may be indicative of the form of some earlier holdings. A cottage with an adjoining byre faces into the yard on the south side. The domestic and animal ends appear to be of one build but with no internal link. Adjoining the dwelling to the east is a weatherboarded barn with a corrugated iron roof characteristic of the Raby estate. On the western perimeter is an animal house with access into the adjoining field. The opening has been reduced, suggesting it was originally a cart shed. On the northern side is an earth closet. The earth closet and weatherboarded barn are secondary, built between 1897 and 1921, as are the yard walls. There is ridge and furrow in the surrounding fields. Photo © Jen Deadman



Combination barns with wheel houses adjoining to the rear are a characteristic feature of Tees Lowland farms and a testament to the mixed nature of the local farming traditions. The combination barn is generally the largest agricultural building and serves a variety of functions. A hayloft or granary is usually located at first floor level, with animal housing and a threshing floor below. Photos © Jen Deadman



Here the evidence for the wheel house remains in the shadow of a low roof line on the long elevation. The Dutch barn to the right, dating from the early 1900s and used for hay or straw storage, is frequently found in close proximity to the barn. Photo © Jen Deadman



Granaries and cart sheds are frequently housed in the same building. Here, the six-bay cart shed with granary over is an easterly extension to the U-shaped farmstead adjacent to the 16th-century Thornton Hall. The arched entries to the cart sheds have now been blocked to form animal housing. The granary was accessed by external stone



Field barns and outfarms are generally small and few and far between in the south of the area. This is a mid-19th-century, brick-built outfarm set in an isolated position east of Hutton Rudby in the far south of the area. Here, cattle were housed and fodder processed and stored in fields away from the main farmstead. Photo © Jen Deadman



Field barns for housing cattle over winter are more numerous on the Raby Estate to the north-west. This is a small, stone, field barn attached to a weatherboarded hay barn. The existence of small field barns without sufficient space for hay contrasts with those in the Yorkshire Dales to the west, where two-thirds of the barn might be for the storage of hay. Later weatherboarded hay barns are typical, hinting at the earlier presence of separate stacks and stack stands, the latter being recorded in association with the archaeological evidence for small field barns dating from the 17th century and earlier in parts of the Dales. Photo © Jen Deadman



Field barn and weatherboarded hay barn north of Staindrop with Raby Castle as backdrop. Photo © Jen Deadman



Although designed as small cattle houses, many of the Raby field barns now act as sheep shelters. Photo © Jen Deadman



An unusual, early 19th-century, circular field barn to the south-east of Staindrop. It is divided into four equal-sized areas, each served by its own door. It straddles a wide hedge line and is accessible by animals from either field. Walls are of thinly rendered coursed and squared sandstone, the roof is of small, thick, dark-grey slates topped with a lead finial. Photo © Jen Deadman

Materials and detail

- Rural settlements and farmsteads were affected by widespread rebuilding in brick and sandstone in the later 18th and 19th centuries. The traditional building materials are sandstone,

with extensive use of brick from the late 18th century. The main roofing material comprises pantiles and Welsh slate.



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