Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Vale of Mowbray

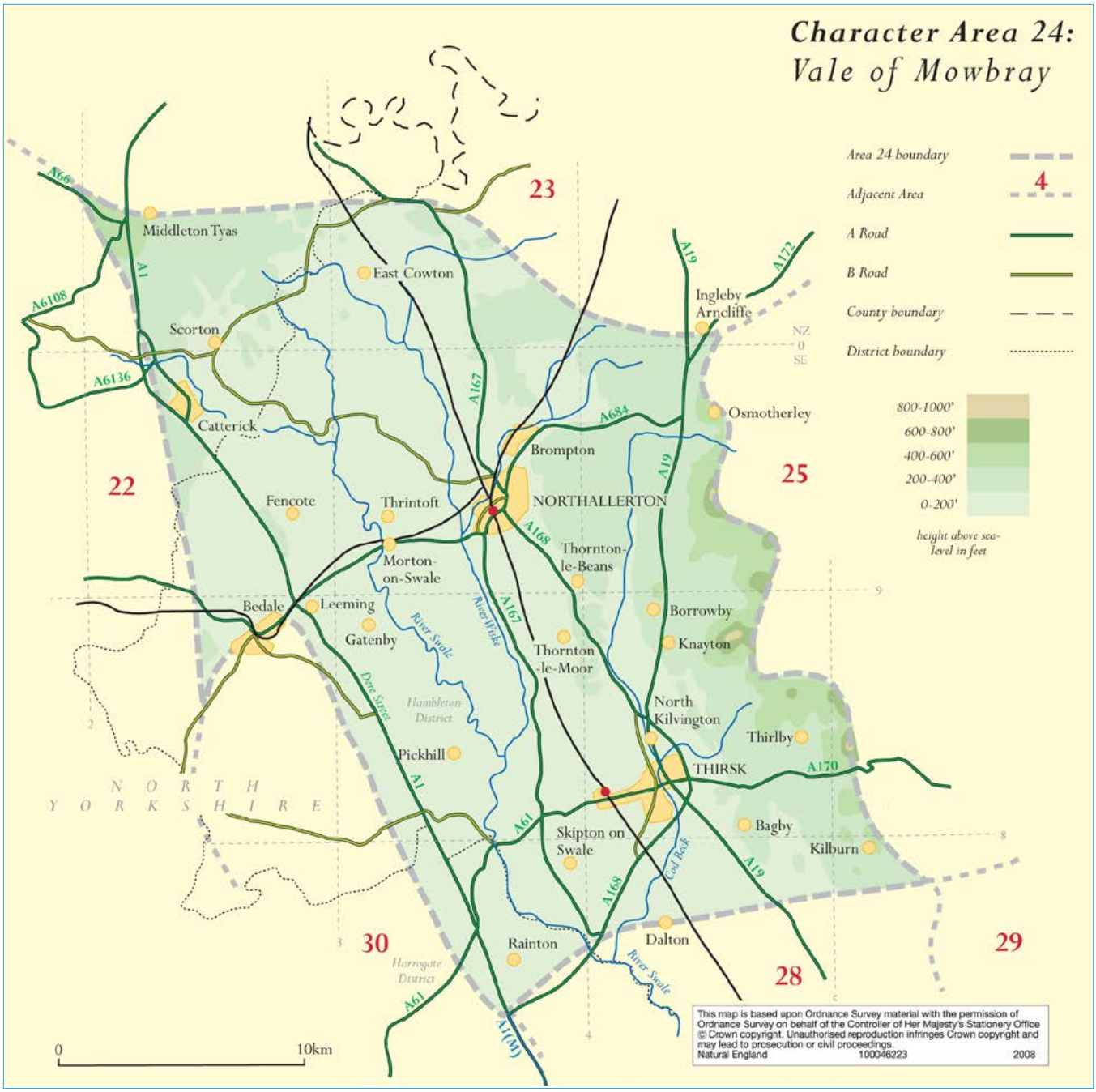
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 24

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 area has some of the earliest planned and model farmsteads of the Age of Improvement. This is Home Farm on the estate of Lord Holderness, who commissioned the architect John Carr to build several farmsteads in the 1760s. Note the formal layout with the centrally-placed house facing away from the farmyard. Photo © Historic England 28523/023

Front cover: This farmstead at Wythop to the west of Bassenthwaite, to the north of the area originated as a 13th-century shieling site which developed into a hamlet and then contracted into a farmstead. Note the medieval cultivation lynchets to the left. The large, multi-yard farmstead was provided with large combination barns and cattle housing, and also a detached house, in the early to mid 19th century. The large fields and some straight boundaries around the farmstead evidence the reorganisation and enlargement of this farm by and during this period, and the straight ridge and furrow in the foreground most probably relates to 19th-century ploughing for crops. Photo © NMR 20249 003



This map shows the Vale of Mowbray with the numbers of neighbouring National Character Areas around it. It subdivides into the following areas.

- To the west the area is one of estates, parkland and planned farms with nucleated settlements around village greens.
- The low-lying valleys of the rivers Swale and Wiske meander through flood plains which become broader to the south. Small villages, frequently linear in form, sit away from the river on slightly higher ground protected by flood banks.
- To the north, settlement is more dispersed and 19th-century brick farmsteads of a middling size are a characteristic feature of the landscape.
- To the east, the land rises off the Vale to meet the Howardian and Hambleton Hills forming a heavily wooded north-south escarpment. Estates and parkland feature in the landscape, with small, nucleated settlements on the lower slopes.

Summary

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

This is a low-lying area located between the North Yorkshire Moors and the Cleveland Hills to the east and the Yorkshire Dales Fringes to the west. Although predominantly agricultural in nature, it includes the county town of Northallerton. Of the area, 3% is urban, 2% is woodland, 86% is under cultivation and 1.7% falls within the Yorkshire Dales National Park boundary.

Historic character

- Courtyard farmsteads are set in fields enclosed on a piecemeal basis from the open fields around villages and also from regular enclosure – the result of later reorganisation of these fields – and from the enclosure of blocks of open common land.
- Small courtyard farmsteads front village streets and are set around village greens.
- Manor houses within villages are common, with landowners consolidating smaller farms to provide yeoman-status farms in the 17th and 18th centuries and, later, larger planned farms on a more industrial scale in the 19th century.
- Rebuilding of farmsteads in the19th century, sometimes with fabric of the late 18th century, was commonly completed in two phases which comprised a set of buildings and yards focused on the production of corn and manure from yard-fed cattle, followed by extension and sometimes complete remodelling from the 1860s for the fattening of cattle – found centrally and in the north of the area.
- Historically, timber-framed buildings of post and rail construction were found throughout the area. Cruck-frame structures exist clad in stone, sometimes in brick, particularly in villages to the east. A band of cruck outliers runs from the narrowest part of the Vale close to Borrowby increasing in numbers further east, becoming more prevalent towards the Vale of Pickering and the North York Moors.
- Evidence for the raising of buildings from one to two storeys is found in the east of the area. Late 17th- and early 18th-century probate inventories would suggest a high percentage of single-storey buildings at this period.

Significance

- There is exceptionally high survival of traditional farmsteads, including a few built to an industrial scale, within a landscape which retains visible evidence for land use and settlement from the medieval period.
- Many steadings were rebuilt in the 18th century. Those to the east also show a custom of alteration to and repair of earlier buildings, to meet changing needs.

Present and future issues

- There is a rise in the number of large, arable farms: the North Yorkshire Historic Landscape Characterisation records a high level of 20th-century field enlargement and amalgamation.

- The Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a low proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use in this National Character Area (18.2%, the national average being 32%). The sample was too small to note the proportion that showed obvious signs of structural disrepair.

- The moors result from the clearance of the native upland forests in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages to provide grazing land. They have for centuries been utilised by surrounding communities for summer grazing, with peat, heather and bracken cut for fuel, bedding, roofing and fodder.

Historic development

- The area has developed as a major transport corridor from the Roman period. Dere Street (A1) runs north-south along the western edge of the Vale with extensive cropmarks indicating the presence of late Iron Age or Romano-British field systems and enclosed and unenclosed farmsteads with round houses. Because of the intensive agriculture in the area, upstanding archaeological remains are not as apparent in the Vale as they are in the surrounding uplands.

- In the medieval period, a strong manorial structure developed with large houses and parks (including the Upsall Estate with medieval park, pale and castle). Earthworks and more elaborate castles are distributed along Dere Street, around the fringes of the Cleveland Hills and near Northallerton. Minor gentry houses date from the mid-16th century, and country houses from the 18th century.

- The area continued to develop as a major transport corridor with north-south roads influencing the position and development of post-medieval coaching towns (e.g. Northallerton, a Roman foundation, and Thirsk); the main Darlington to York railway was built prior to 1845, with many later branch lines and this facilitated milk distribution throughout the area and to towns further north.

- Mixed arable farming has predominated since the medieval period, with cattle rearing and dairying, horse breeding and pig fattening important from the 18th century onwards on the boulder clays to the north and east. Most capital-intensive improvement from the late 18th century focused on the sandier soils to the south and west, but was subject to large-scale contraction and reversion to pasture from the 1880s to the 1940s.

Landscape and settlement

- The present strong pattern of nucleated settlements developed between the 9th and 13th centuries, by which time little woodland remained. Many planned linear and green settlements developed mostly on higher ground. There is a medium to low density of dispersed settlement, lower in the south where there are high-status moated sites of the 12th and 13th centuries. Some isolated farmsteads developed from the 14th century from grange farms of medieval monastic houses, and from shrunken medieval settlements. Others survive as earthworks related to medieval and later village plans and field systems, e.g. at Birkby, Swainby and Winton.

- Open arable fields (two or more in number) were located on higher, better-drained sites around the villages. Many were enclosed by the 17th century with quickthorn field boundaries. Fields are generally medium in scale (especially in the more undulating land to the east) and result mainly from enclosure by agreement between the 14th and 18th centuries, with some large-scale and rectilinear enclosure – in the south-centre and west – of a late 18th- to early 19th-century date. Post-1750 enclosure is linked to field sports, re-introduction of woodland, as small coverts for game, and shelter belts to farmsteads.

- This area had little woodland in the medieval period. The tree cover is generally sparse, but more wooded on rising land to the east. The aspect is generally more open to the south and west, with trees and scrub mostly confined to river margins.
- The riverine landscapes (River Swale and its tributaries the Wiske and Cod Beck) were subject to embankment, drainage and flood control from the late 17th century, except to the south where flood plains widen out across a flat area of former lake deposits.

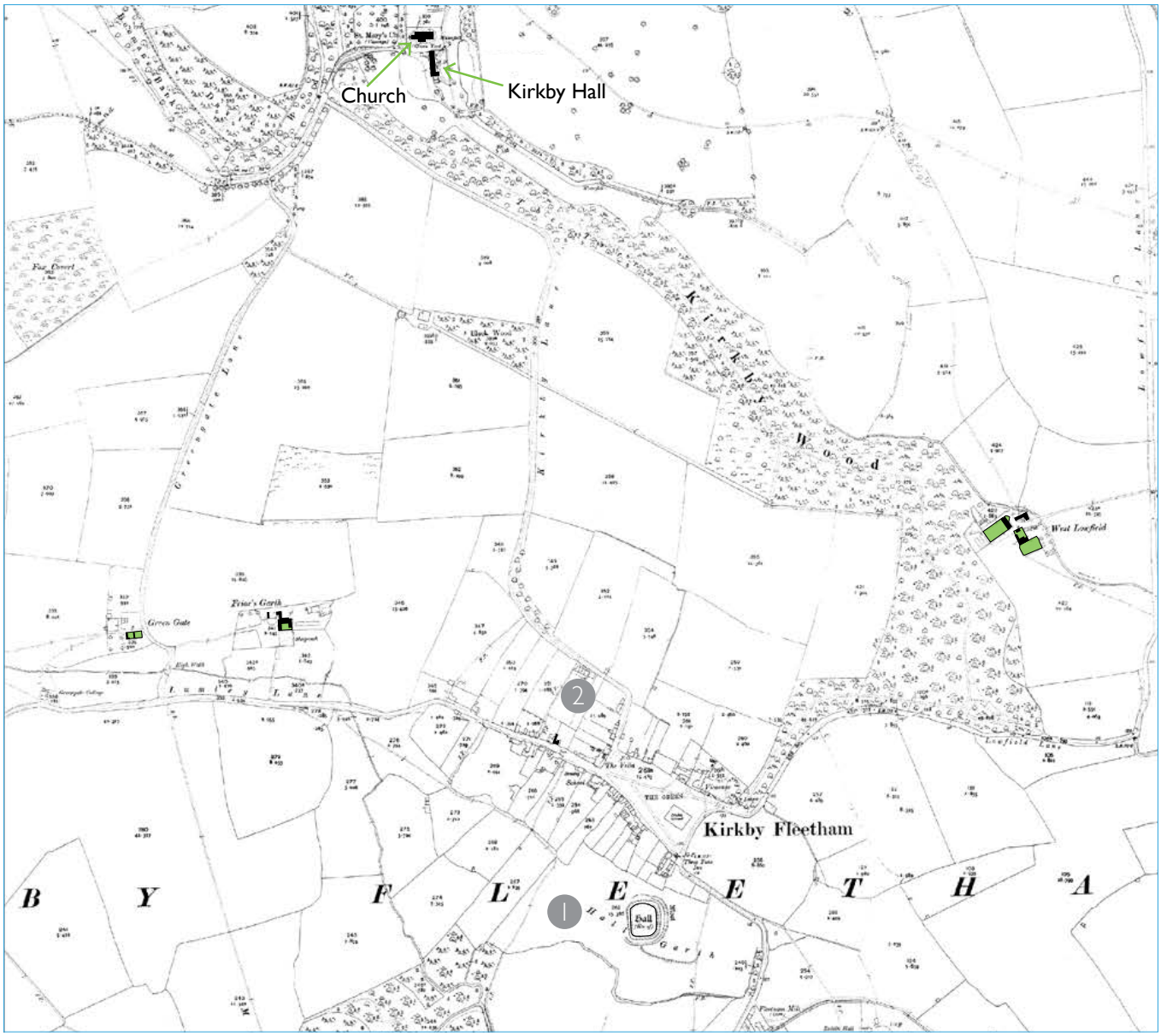
Farmstead and building types

- The area's late 18th- and 19th-century farmsteads largely swept away earlier generations of smaller single-storey (and often thatched) buildings, although some farmhouses and occasional agricultural buildings retain elements of older timber-framed or single-storey construction. The earliest buildings on farmsteads are generally farmhouses and threshing barns, although these, if cobble-built, are difficult to date. The 19th-century rebuilding of farmsteads was commonly completed in two phases that comprised:
  - a farmstead with functions usually powered by horse or more rarely steam or wind, focused on the storage and processing of corn and the production of manure from yard-fed cattle
  - an extension and sometimes complete remodelling from the 1860s for the fattening of cattle.

Farmstead types

- Linear farmsteads and L-shaped plans with attached houses are uncommon, in contrast to the uplands either side. Evidence for the long house or a long house derivative plan form is rare, although there is documentary evidence for this in the Vale of Mowbray.
- The courtyard arrangement is the most commonly found plan form and comprises:

View east across the Vale towards the Hambleton Hills and ultimately the North York Moors. Isolated late 19th-century brick steading set in undulating countryside in fields of piecemeal enclosure. Light tree cover with small scattered deciduous and conifer plantations. Hedgerows with hedgerow trees predominate. Photo © Jen Deadman



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.

0 250 500 m

0 0.25 miles

N

Kirkby Fleetham

Kirkby Fleetham lies between the River Swale, which forms its eastern boundary, and the Roman road which joins Catterick and Boroughbridge on the west side of the Vale. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1087, Kirkby and Fleetham were distinct places with separate manors. Of the houses of Kirkby, nothing remains, but it was located north of Fleetham (now known as Kirkby Fleetham) in an area where Kirkby Hall, mostly rebuilt in the late 18th century, is sited. The Hall stands isolated in its own parkland, with no evidence of enclosure between the Hall and the river. It is possible the village was cleared to make way for the Hall and its parkland.

Kirkby Fleetham to the south, is a large village, set around a green. To the south-east are earthworks representing a motte and bailey castle (1), a well-defended manor house rather than a military garrison, with the associated earthworks of medieval peasants' properties close by. The professional lawyer Henry le Scrope was granted licence to crenellate (add defences to) the manor house in 1314. As elsewhere in the area, early enclosure dates to the 16th and 17th centuries, although any buildings related to that or earlier piecemeal enclosure are elusive. Buildings and farmsteads within the village are late 18th and early 19th century in date, including a linear farmstead with an attached house and barn (2), with larger courtyard farmsteads set in outlying fields of later enclosure.

- a loose arrangement of buildings set around two or more sides of a yard
- long ranges set around a yard and frequently interlinked. Multiple yards are found on some of the larger estate farms, most notably in the centre and to the north of the vale.

Building types

Building types mainly comprise:

- Multi-functional ranges, also termed combination barns. These had a wide range of purposes – threshing barn, cow housing, stabling, hay lofts – or comprised threshing barns with full-height central threshing floor flanked by lofted bays for animal housing at either end and external openings for pitching hay. By the 19th century they are frequently seen to form a unit with threshing barn and horse gin.
- Wheel houses, locally termed horse gins. From the late 18th century, the horse gin, which had been used in mines for centuries, was adapted to provide rotary power for powering threshing machines. The horse gins were built adjacent to the barn in which the threshing machine and other fodder-processing machinery was housed, and are usually connected to other ranges in the yard – most commonly a straw barn with easy access to the cattle yard and a granary above a cart shed or cattle housing.
- Engine houses. A progression from the wheel house, these are purpose-built, two-storey extensions located at right angles or in-line with the threshing barn. they housed a stationary engine above which was a granary with access from the room below. Often the cart house below a pre-existing granary was converted to take the stationary engine.
- Granaries. Prior to building an engine house with a granary over, granaries were either free standing, often set above a cart shed, or accommodated in the combination barn. In either case, they were accessed by external steps.
- Cart and implement sheds. These are a common yard building and are frequently open-fronted and divided into a number of bays, reflecting the importance of carts and implements for arable cropping in this area. Entries can be arched or supported by cast iron columns. They can be freestanding or part of a range and are often set below a granary.
- Low ranges of cattle sheds, linked to other ranges and set around the perimeter of the yard. On later 19th-century planned farms, covered fold yards – often set in parallel ranges – were introduced.
- Byres, cow houses with stalls for milk cattle, set on the perimeter of yards. These were often later replaced by brick-built dairies in the 20th century.
- Outfarms, buildings and yard without farmhouse. Dating from 19th and 20th centuries, they were built to house cattle in the field with associated working buildings.
- Stables are frequently incorporated into a yard range and are generally lofted over. The importance of horse breeding in the 19th and 20th centuries is emphasised by the presence of planned stable yards on some of the larger gentry farms.
- Pigeon lofts. These are frequently seen in the gable ends of houses and barns.
- Pigsties. These are often marked by yards with feeding troughs, usually placed close to the house.
- Field barns, mostly built for the overwintering of cattle and the storage of hay, are uncommon. This partly reflects the importance accorded to yard-fed cattle within farmsteads.

Crakehall, situated on the western side of the Vale, is centred on a large, village green. The majority of the surrounding land was enclosed in the 17th century and by the 18th century, landowners were consolidating the local holdings into larger farms. Some, such as Crakehall house, on the far side of the green were improved and gentrified in the middle of the century. The agricultural buildings flanking the house to the left, including a large threshing barn, are of a similar date. Crakehall Hall, an early 18th-century manor house with later modifications, is sited close by on the green. Photo © Jen Deadman

The small farming hamlet of Middleton Quernhow, in the west of the area, comprises a scattering of late 18th- and 19th-century working farms set loosely around a small green. The fabric of many of the buildings is an eclectic mix of sandstone, limestone, brick and cobble. Unlike Crakehall, Middleton Quernhow failed to thrive. The 17th-century manor house, now a ruin, lies close to the village green. Photo © Jen Deadman

Mid-18th-century farmhouse on Middleton Quernhow village green. The lobby entry plan form is standard for 18th- and 19th-century houses in this area. The working yard is to the left, with access onto the green. Photo © Jen Deadman

Kirkby Fleetham is one of a line of settlements set on low-lying ground to the west of the river Swale. Farmsteads play an integral part in the village streetscape. The farmhouse range fronts the yard with the house facing out onto the road. This farm, dated at 1797, is built of coursed rubble and cobble. Photo © Jen Deadman

Farmstead set behind the main street of East Cowton – a linear village in the north of the area. The buildings are early to mid-19th century in date, the huddle of pantile roofs and mellow brick work a characteristic feature of the Vale landscape. Photo © Jen Deadman

One of several dispersed farmsteads near Kirby Wiske in the south of the area, on low-lying land close to the flood plain of the river Swale. The landscape of the central Vale is dotted with substantial brick-built early and mid-19th-century courtyard farmsteads. Photo © Jen Deadman

Farmstead with mid- to late 19th-century buildings situated on the edge of a small hamlet 6 miles north of Northallerton in the centre of the Vale with a view to the Hambleton Hills in the far distance. There is a moated site behind the village, evidencing former medieval settlement. The village brick works, now ruinous, are sited to the east. Photo © Jen Deadman

19th-century farmstead on the outskirts of Northallerton in the centre of the Vale set in fields of piecemeal enclosure. Field boundaries of dense hawthorn hedges are characteristic of the area Photo © Jen Deadman

Field barn near Cowesby, on rising ground below Cowesby wood and moor on the edge of the Hambleton Hills. Photo © Jen Deadman

Isolated hilltop farmstead outside Boltby, in the south-east of the area. Immediately to the east lies the long swathe of Boltby Forest and the escarpment marking the edge of the Hambleton Hills. Brick gives way to sandstone as the predominant building material. Photo © Jen Deadman

Thimbleby, lying south of Osmotherly in the extreme north-east of the area, close to the Cleveland Hills. The linear village is set on rising ground above the Vale in fields evidencing piecemeal enclosure and relict medieval strip fields. Above and stretching onto the moors is a large area of forestry plantation. Similar 20th-century forestry management is evident north south along the moor edge. Typically, this small village farm faces onto the road. In contrast to the brick buildings of the vale, it is built of squared and dressed coursed sandstone blocks, highly characteristic of the area and of the North York Moors to the east. Photo © Jen Deadman

Linear plans

Newby Wiske village. Late 17th-century, former linear farmstead and rare example of a long house derivative plan form. The building formerly accommodated house body, granary, and a lofted or part lofted combination barn incorporating a threshing floor and cattle housing. The three areas were set under one roof line, but it is not known if they were interconnected. It is possible the building may contain timber elements of an earlier structure built to the same plan form.
The barn is an example of Victorian or earlier conversion to domestic use. The ventilation slits for the barn are still visible. The porch is sited where the cart entry would have been located. Photo © Jen Deadman

Courtyard plans

Mid-19th-century, brick built farmstead with combination barn, granary and cattle sheds interlinked around a central yard. The farmhouse forms part of the yard curtilage but faces away from the working buildings. Photo © Jen Deadman

Smallholding close to Exelby, on the west side of the Vale. Late 19th or early 20th century in date, with range of working buildings set against the roadside and small yard with later buildings behind. The limestone barn appears to pre-date the brick buildings. There are many examples of 19th- and early 20th-century farmsteads in the Vale. Photo © Jen Deadman

This farmstead is set in a designed landscape of regular enclosures. The farmhouse was built in 1768 by the architect John Carr for the Earl of Holderness. The farmstead, like other large-scale arable farms in this area, developed over the 19th century with additional cattle housing into a regular multi-yard layout. Photo © Historic England 28523/037

Borrowby, a hill village located below the Hambleton Hills and one of six in the locality, formerly in the Northallertonshire Bishopric of Durham. Here, two substantial farmhouses sit cheek by jowl on the roadside. That to the right fronts a small yard with two, single-storey, parallel ranges. Evidence would suggest that the farmhouse has been raised from one to two storeys, possibly in the 17th century. One of the ranges to the rear is a single-storey, four or five bay cruck barn, which may be indicative of the earlier form of the farmhouse. The yard has gradually evolved to form the U-shaped plan form evident today. Photo © Jen Deadman

A stable with a loft over adjoins the farmhouse on the roadside. To the right is a cruck-framed range encased in stone. Photo © Jen Deadman

Combination barns

Greatly altered late 18th- to early 19th-century, nine-bay barn replacing earlier, smaller barn on the same alignment. Brick built under a pantile roof it originally comprised threshing floor, stabling for three horses, trap or cart shed and harness room with hay lofts over. A granary with grain hoist was sited at the northern end. A corn mill had been introduced below the granary by 1920 and stabling resited to the south end of the barn. A horse engine house, now demolished, adjoined the rear elevation. To the rear of the building is a corrugated lean-to, built to house a tractor-driven hammer mill in the early 1940s. Photos © Jen Deadman

L-shaped combination barn occupying a corner plot on planned, 19th-century farmstead, providing animal housing, hay and fodder storage. Photo © Jen Deadman

Four bay, cruck-framed, single-storey, multifunctional range with an early 20th-century cart shed and granary adjoining The range comprises threshing barn with two byres and a cart shed set under one roofline. To the rear behind the threshing barn is a horse engine house, now ruinous. The position of the drive shaft can be located on the rear wall of the barn. Photo © Jen Deadman

Materials and detail

- There was extensive rebuilding of the rural building stock from the middle of the 18th century, with sandstone (either rubble or dressed) and brick replacing clay and timber. Occasionally the older timber-framed buildings – both post and rail and cruck – were retained and clad in brick or stone. Earlier walls were of wattle and daub set between upright studs. Possibly, turf and clay were also used. Evidence for altered eaves lines and the raising of buildings from one to two storeys can be seen in subtle alterations to the building fabric, particularly in the gable end.

- Due to little quarry stone being available, particularly in the middle of the Vale, many extant buildings are of loosely coursed, poor quality sandstone rubble, boulders and cobble. Underlying glacial moraine extends in a north-south band along the western edge of the area and accounts for the extensive use of cobble as a building material. Boulders are often face-dressed and inter-coursed with thin sandstone or brick. Below the Cleveland and Hambleton Hills, the rubble and cobble begins to give way to evenly sized and squared sandstone masonry laid in regular courses, frequently dressed with the distinctive herring bone tooling characteristic of the North York Moors to the east.

- Brick and tile was first imported from the Low Countries. Vernacular use of brick in the 17th century increased in the 18th century and generally replaced sandstone by the late 19th century. Dressings to openings in stone buildings are frequently picked out in brick in a variety of colours from cream to dark red. Dentilled eaves and string courses are common to both domestic and agricultural buildings. ‘Tumbled’ brickwork on the gable eaves is a feature frequently seen in buildings from the 17th through to the 19th century, protecting the cut-bricks of gable tops from the weather.

- Orange clay pantiles, common to many areas on the eastern side of the country, began to replace thatch as a roofing material from the 18th century onwards. In turn, it was replaced in the mid-19th century with the cheap import of blue, Welsh slate made possible by the arrival of the railway system. Stone slate roofs set in diminishing courses are rarely found and are more characteristic of western upland areas.

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