



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Oswestry Uplands

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 63

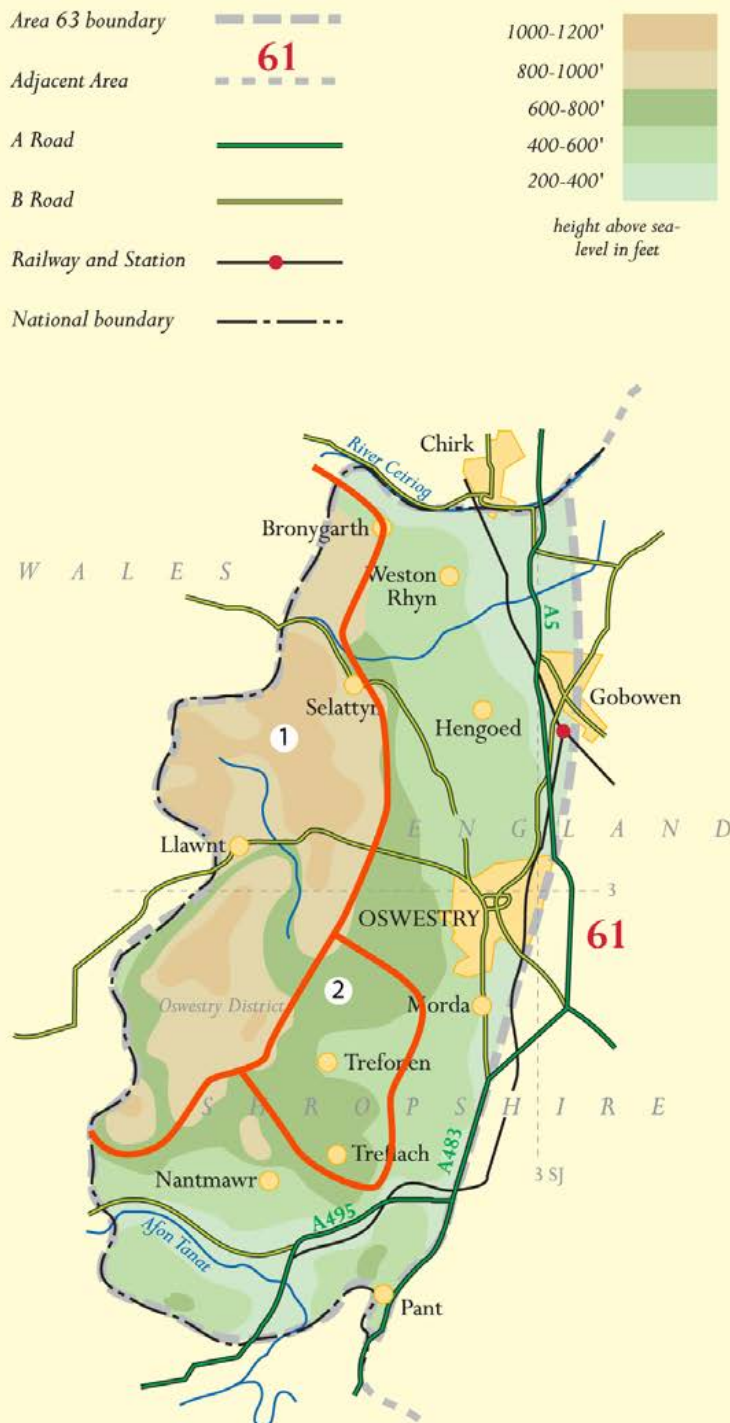


Introduction

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>).

Front cover: Medium to small-scale, loose courtyard groups, with houses and working buildings rebuilt in the mid-19th century, on Selattyn Hill. The rolling topography and sunken lanes across the uplands restrict views across the landscape of farmsteads, although there are many of them. Photo © Natural England.

Character Area 63 Oswestry Uplands



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This map shows the Oswestry Uplands, with the numbers of neighbouring National Character Areas around it. The area divides into two sub-areas:

Upland and Industrial

High densities of farmsteads were concentrated within the valleys, on the moorland fringe and on areas of former moorland enclosed for agriculture in the 19th century. Farmsteads were inter-mixed with areas of smallholdings, particularly at Trefonen, Llynclys and Llanymynech.

Lowlands

Larger-scale farms have developed, with extensive parks and designed landscapes, have developed around Oswestry.

Summary

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

This is a small area of steep-sided, flat-topped hills, lying within the county of Shropshire. It is bounded by the Shropshire Plain to the east and south, the Welsh hills to the west and the River Ceiriog to the north. Almost 5% of the Character Area is urban, 9% is woodland.

Historic character

- There is a strong pattern of dispersed settlement, and high to very high density of farmsteads in the landscape, lower in the eastern lowlands.
- The predominant pattern is of very small (45.1%) and small to medium-scale (22.4%) farmsteads, concentrated in upland and industrial sub-areas.
- Larger-scale, loose and regular courtyard farmsteads are concentrated in the lowland areas to the east, around Selattyn Hill and the southern part of the area around Afon Tanat.
- Two-storey multifunctional buildings are a key feature of the area, often combining barn, cattle housing, and stabling.
- A greater diversity of building types, particularly shelter sheds for cattle, is found in the lowland zone.

Significance

- There are very high rates of survival of traditional farmsteads, with 84% of those recorded from late 19th-century maps retaining more than half of their historic footprint.
- The extent of 19th-century rebuilding has resulted in very little earlier fabric remaining other than evidence for phasing in surviving buildings. There is some evidence for 15th- to 17th-century farmhouses, testament to the increasing prosperity of the border with Wales in this period.
- There is a strong, historic pattern of smallholdings in the upland and industrial zone, particularly around Trefonen. Legible survivals are exceptionally rare, 20th-century development on smallholding plots being commonplace.

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 (9.1%, the national average being 32%).
- The Photo Image Project also recorded an exceptionally high percentage (40%, the national average being 7.5%) of listed working farm buildings that show obvious signs of structural disrepair.

- Agricultural use of historic farmsteads has declined and given way to residential use so that the proportion of farmsteads used as

dwelling (64%) is similar to the average for the West Midlands region.

Historic development

- The area has a long history as a frontier landscape, reinforced by the presence of Old Oswestry, Wat's Dyke (around Oswestry), the later Offa's Dyke, the Norman castle which formed the focus for the growth of Oswestry, and motte and bailey castles.
- Deposits of lead and copper (for example Llanymynech) were being mined by the Iron Age and Romano-British period. There was some lead mining and extensive quarrying of limestone in the southern Treflach hills (with large-scale production commencing in the 18th century), which was burned and then exported as quicklime and moved along the Ellesmere Canal – opened in 1796 and replaced by a railway in the 1860s. Coal mining also occurred around Trefonen and in the northern part of the area.
- There is a long history of cattle rearing on the hill farms, with extensive sheep grazing from the late 18th century. More arable-based, mixed agriculture with cattle fattening developed on lowlands to the east and across most of the uplands in the 19th century.

Landscape and settlement

- The upland and industrial sub-areas are marked by a strong pattern of dispersed settlement – established by the 14th century, often as a result of woodland clearance – with isolated farmsteads connected by deep and winding tracks, and hamlets. As a result, farmsteads, though abundant, are not prominent features of the landscape.
- Small, irregular enclosure, generally of medieval date, is concentrated in the valleys where most ancient woodland also remains, with large-scale, planned enclosure with conifer plantations on Selattyn Hill and other higher ground.
- Concentrations of small holdings – particularly at Trefonen, Llyncllys and Llanymynech – developed in association with the mining and quarrying industries in the Treflach hills.
- Larger farms developed away from the villages in the eastern lowland sub-area, in association with piecemeal reorganised enclosure, reflecting the growth of farm holdings by the 19th century.

Farmstead and building types

Farmstead types

- Some dispersed multi-yards and clusters are found predominantly on the lower ground, in contrast to the more numerous dispersed driftway plans which are almost exclusively found in upland areas, particularly on tracks linking the hill pasture valley slopes and upstanding common land. These reflect their long development as sites for holding livestock en route to rough upland pastures and also into richer lowland areas for fattening.
- Loose courtyard plan farmsteads are common and found across the area. The smallest (with

a working building to one or two sides of the yard) are concentrated along the valley slopes of the upland and industrial sub-areas. They are associated with small fields with irregular boundaries, piecemeal enclosure and, to the south, squatter enclosure. Larger, loose courtyard plan farmsteads, with working buildings to three or four sides of the yard, are few in number and concentrated on the lower slopes and in the lowland sub-area.

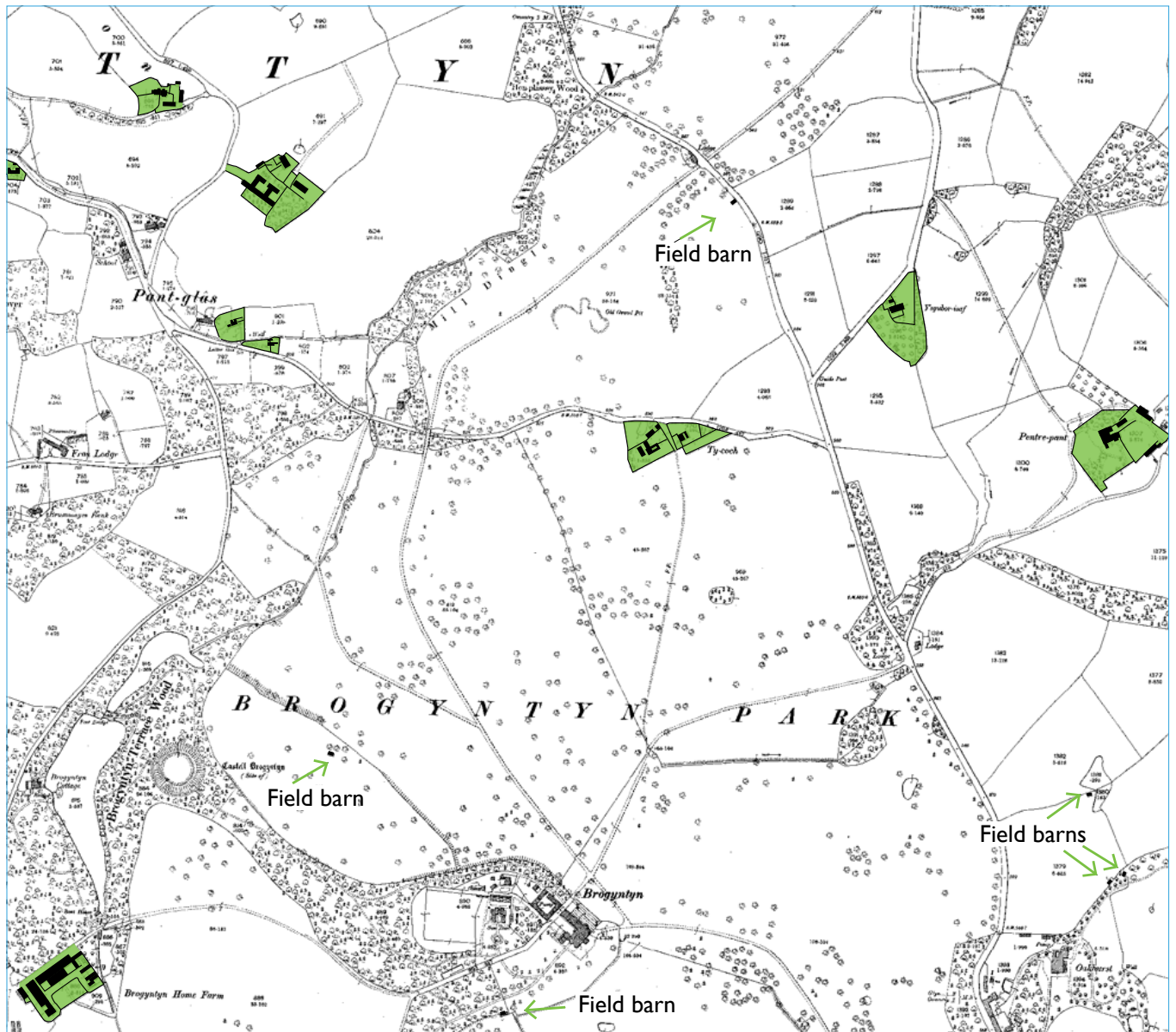
- Full, regular courtyard, U-plan and regular multi-yard plans are less common and concentrated in the lowland sub-area and along the valley of the Afon Tanat, with some in areas of regular late 18th- and 19th-century enclosure and enlarged fields in the upland and industrial sub-area.
- Linear farmsteads predominate around Llanymynech and the industrial areas to south. Lighter concentrations are seen

elsewhere along with L-plans (house attached), mainly in the hill farming areas. In other areas, these farmsteads are associated with more ancient field patterns of small, irregular fields, sometimes enclosed from the margins of common. Most were converted into housing as they fell out of use over the 20th century, and legible survivals are now uncommon.

- Some linear farmsteads incorporate longhouses of 17th-century and earlier date.
- There are dense concentrations of smallholdings around Llanymynech and the industrial sub-area to the south. Redevelopment on smallholding plots in the 20th century has resulted in extreme rarity of legible smallholding groups in this area.

Building types

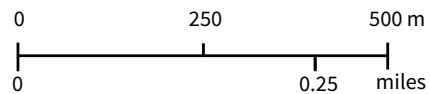
- Two-storey, multifunctional buildings – incorporating barn, stabling and cattle housing with fodder storage – are common across the area and constitute the principal or only structure in the farmstead group. The most common detached structures in the farmstead group comprise stables and detached cart shed or granary ranges.
- The increased importance of corn production and cattle fattening in the lowland sub-area is reflected in larger barns, cattle housing, stables and cart shed or granary ranges, with shelter sheds for cattle.
- Some dispersed plans, usually around the fringes of moorland, where the buildings and sometimes yards are dispersed within the boundary of the farmstead or dispersed along a routeway.



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.



Brogyntyn Park

Large-scale farmsteads and estates with parklands developed in the lowlands to the east. This area of landscape is dominated by the landscaped park of Brogyntyn, its large-scale, planned Home Farm lying on the edge of the park, to the south-west. Beyond the park, irregular fields, created through piecemeal enclosure – and possibly the clearance of woodland in the medieval period – have left numerous wooded shaws and small blocks of woodland. These are associated with medium-scale farmsteads, within fields that had been reorganised by the late 19th century with both the loss and the insertion or straightening of boundaries.



Almost all the surviving small-scale, linear farmsteads in the southern industrial part of this area are in residential use. This example stands close to a former quarry. Photo © Jeremy Lake



This linear farmstead in the uplands is strikingly similar in its overall form and character to those found on the other side of the border in Wales. It comprises a stable and cow house to the left of the threshing barn and a mid-19th-century symmetrically-planned house. Photo © Jeremy Lake



A loose courtyard group in the uplands, set close to a densely wooded valley, and within irregular fields resulting from the clearance of woodland. Photo © Bob Edwards



Large-scale, regular courtyard plans are usually encountered in the eastern lowlands and upland fringe of this area, where large estates were influential in the mid- to late 19th century. This example is at Brogyntyn Home Farm (p.4). Photo © Bob Edwards



Small-scale buildings for a variety of purposes (cattle housing to left, pigsties to right) were typical of the smallholdings of the industrial part of this area. Few survive. Photo © Jeremy Lake



This L-shaped range in the lowlands comprises cattle housing to the right. At the junction between the two ranges is brick walling to a former threshing bay – with a stable on its left and, further to the left, a brick-built cart shed or granary range. Photo © Jeremy Lake

The L-shaped courtyard ranges found across much of this area could also be single-storey, as with this cattle housing and interconnecting fodder room on an estate farm in the uplands. Photo © Shropshire County Council



From the mid-19th century, in the lowlands, brick was commonly used as well as – or instead of – local stone. Photo © Bob Edwards

Combined granary and cart shed ranges are a feature of the whole area, demonstrating in the uplands, as here, the expansion of arable farming in newly improved and enclosed areas. Photo © Jeremy Lake



A small-scale, combined cow house and stable in the uplands. Photo © Jeremy Lake

Materials and detail

- Local limestone rubble (sometimes whitewashed and occasionally rendered) is widely used, with brick being more common in the lowland areas. This can hide earlier timber-framed cores.
- There are gabled Welsh slate roofs.



Historic England

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