



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Charnwood

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 73



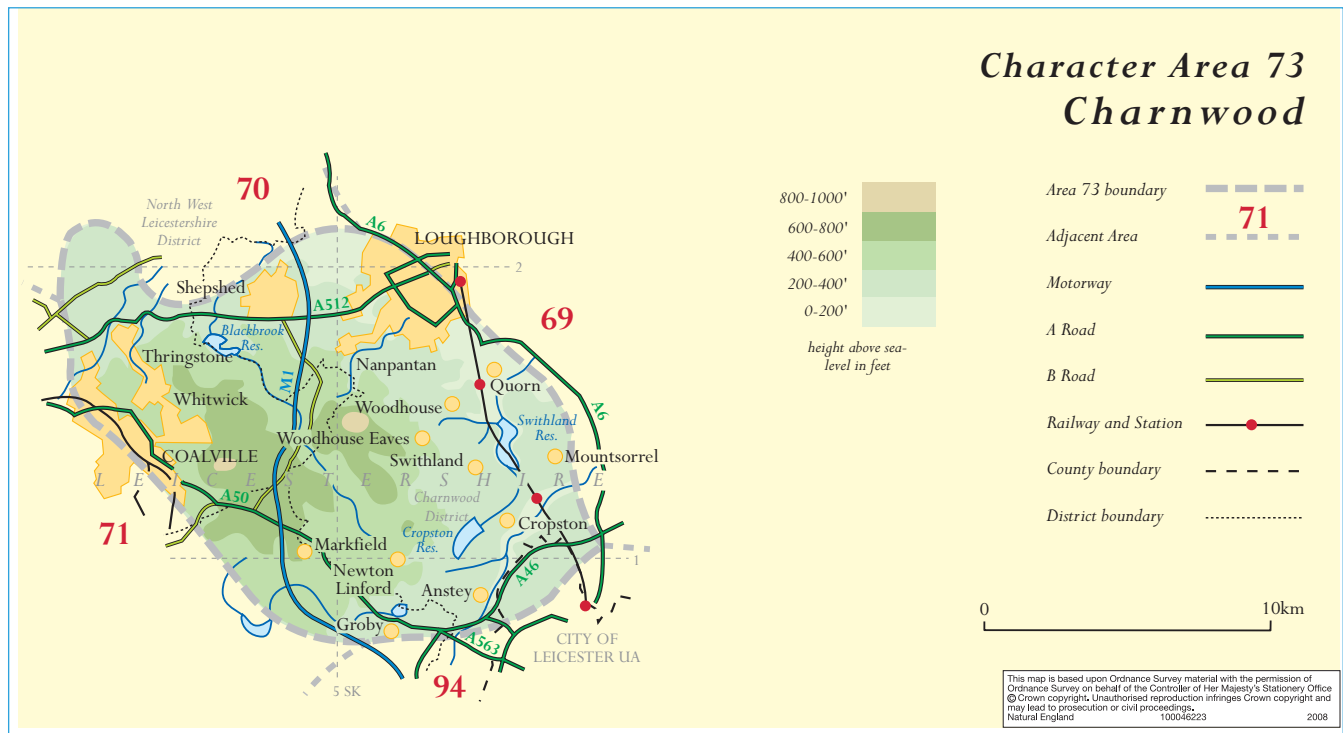
Introduction

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>).



To the south of the area, this compact multi-phased steading with its mix of brick and stone buildings and slate and pantile roofs sits amongst regular fields of 19th-century parliamentary enclosure carved out of former woodland. Photo © Jen Deadman

Front cover: Remains of an outfarm, possibly with origins as a smallholding, located on the outskirts of Swithland village. It sits on the western edge of the Brand Hills, a wooded area and focal point of early slate mining. Formerly set on open marshy ground the site is now encroached upon by woodland. Granite and slate are the dominant building materials. Slate quarrying in the area dates back to Roman times and was an important activity within the village between the 13th and 19th centuries. Photo © Jen Deadman



This map shows the Charnwood with the numbers of the 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.

Charnwood is a distinctive ‘upland’ landscape, in striking contrast to the surrounding vales, with heathlands, stone outcrops, and woodlands. Situated between Coalville, Loughborough and Leicester, it is on the fringe of a series of several urban areas but retains a rural, remote character. The area is 17.1% urban. It is a relatively well-wooded landscape with 10.6% woodland. The western part of Charnwood is within the National Forest.

Historic character

- Regular courtyard plan farmsteads of late 18th- to mid-19th-century date, predominate on the enclosed heathlands, with combination barns and threshing barns serving cattle yards.
- Farmsteads within and on the edge of villages tend to be looser courtyard layouts, developing after or in tandem with the piecemeal enclosure of open fields and the shrinkage of medieval settlements.

Significance

- The area has a low level of survival of pre-1750 farm buildings, principally barns and construction in timber and cruck-frames, although there are many farmhouses of 16th- to early 18th-century date.
- Farmsteads relating to the earthworks of shrunken and abandoned settlement are a distinctive feature of this area.
- The use of local granite and Swithland slate, laid to diminishing courses, is a highly distinctive characteristic.

Present and future issues

- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a medium proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (25%, the national average being 32%).

Historic development

- Although the area was long used as a source of stone, the poor soils at the heart of Charnwood Forest do not seem to have attracted settled occupation until the emergence of small, linear villages around the fringes of the central heaths and woodlands in the medieval period.
- Further colonisation took place in the 12th and 13th centuries, encouraged by a rising

population and the establishment of monastic houses such as Ulverscroft in more remote areas, but for the most part, Charnwood remained sparsely populated, open to grazing or enclosed within a number of large, medieval deer parks.

- Monastic settlement was widespread in the Forest, probably because it provided seclusion and cheaply available land for cultivation. These religious houses spread the reclamation of land out of the valley bottoms and further into the higher ground until they were the largest landholders in the Forest. They also owned extensive fishing, hawking and hunting rights.
- The release of monastic estates after the Dissolution of the Monasteries stimulated the development of country houses and landscape parks in the 16th century, and later, the development of estates. The growing market value of dairying and cheese manufacture saw many areas of ridge and furrow cultivation laid to grass and

enclosed from the 15th century onwards. The subsequent agricultural history of Charnwood is principally pastoral and, until the mid-18th century, based around the movement of stock between narrow village pastures on the low-lying claylands and extensive areas of unenclosed upland grazing and wood pasture located on the upper heaths. Long, strip-like parishes result from this process, linked by a network of tracks and droveways.

- There were comparatively few major changes in land use in the post Medieval period, until the demand for timber and charcoal for the early Industrial Revolution contributed to a further loss of woodland. By the end of the 18th century, most of the woodland had disappeared.
- Quarrying became a more significant feature of the landscape from the late 18th century, with large areas to either side of Loughborough being exploited for setts and road stone.

Landscape and settlement

- Nucleated settlement dominates this area. Ridge and furrow earthworks, and evidence for shrunken settlement, remain as common, if fragmentary, elements in the small pastures surrounding villages.
- The pattern of piecemeal and irregular enclosures was followed from the mid-18th century by the enclosure of the previously uncultivated land, open fields and common land, and its division into many privately owned farming units marked out with hedges or stone walls. Most of the land which could be used for arable crops was drained and brought into cultivation. The upland heaths

were largely enclosed for the first time in the later 18th and early 19th centuries, a practice reflected in the regular, rectilinear fieldscapes and the presence of isolated farmsteads.

- Centuries of clearance has removed most of the ancient woodland from Charnwood, although pockets, and some larger woods (for example at Buddon and Swithland), survive due to the infertility of the soil or from their use as managed resources or parkland features.

Farmstead and building types

Pre-1750 farmstead buildings, mainly threshing barns, remain clustered in settlements, and include a significant proportion of cruck-framed structures.

Farmstead types

- Regular courtyard plans predominate on the enclosed heathlands, with combination barns and threshing barns serving cattle yards. These mostly comprise E-, U-shaped and multi-yard plans, with houses facing away from working yards.
- Farmsteads within and on the edge of villages, although often resulting from the amalgamation of holdings, tend to be smaller in scale and of looser courtyard layouts, or semi-regular with buildings added around L-plan ranges. Farmhouses often face village streets and are set to one side of or attached to farm buildings.

Building types

The scale and range of buildings illustrate the importance of mixed arable farming:

- Barns are five-bay and some three-bay, with some farmsteads having larger barns or groups of two or more barns. Many barns, including earlier examples, form part of combination ranges including stables and cattle housing.
- Stables include some timber-framed examples of early date and some with granaries above.
- There are open-fronted shelter sheds and loose boxes for cattle.
- Outfarms – mostly comprising a threshing barn and shelter shed – developed in areas of larger, village-based farms and large-scale arable farms.



A small, early 19th-century farmstead within Swithland village which includes a former smithy and barn. Of a linear arrangement, it sits on a small enclosure which is bounded by a stream to the south. Built of slate and granite rubblestone, the buildings are roofed in Swithland slate. Corner dressings are of brick. The barn has lancet-shaped ventilation slits, also a feature of the area. Photo © Jen Deadman



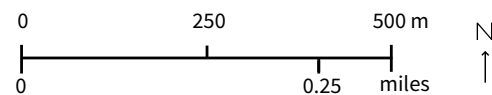
Regular plan forms, with linked buildings set around four sides of a south-facing yard, are commonly found in steadings built at or around the time of 18th- and 19th-century regular enclosure. They are most commonly found as isolated farms set away from nucleated settlements. Longcliffe Lodge Farm was built in the early 19th century as a sheep farm, and includes a series of linked ranges to the rear dominated by a large, two-storey combination barn. 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.
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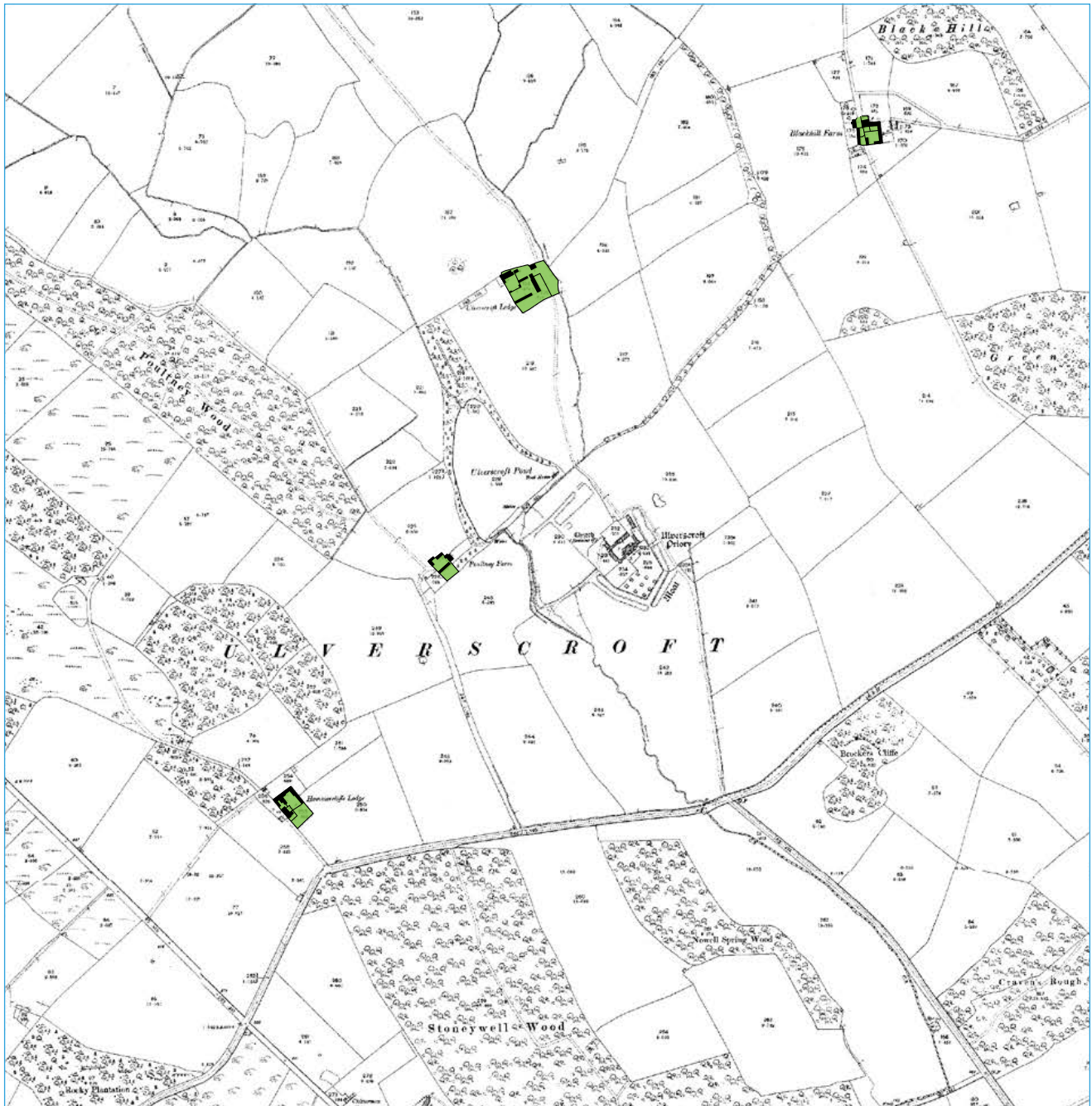


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



Newton Linford

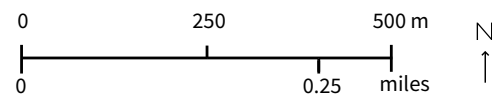
Newtown Linford is sited next to the River Lin and to the west of Bradgate Park, and comprises a classic example of a village laid out on a single street flanked by medieval strip fields. The estate rebuilt many of the thatched and timber-framed houses in local granite and Swithland slate in the 19th century, by which time many of the larger farms had amalgamated smaller plots and developed as courtyard plans.



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



Ulverscroft Priory

Ulverscroft Priory (founded 1134–50) in the centre of this map, includes the ruined priory buildings, three arms of a moat and three fishponds. All of the farmsteads were rebuilt as regular courtyard plans from the mid-18th century, but despite much reorganisation of fields dating from this period, the semi-regular form of much of this fieldscape is probably inherited from the demesne farm around the priory.



A lofted combination barn, its long brick elevation dating from the early 19th century and having pitching doors to the loft above a central winnowing door. It forms part of a regular courtyard steading. The farmhouse is of early 18th-century origin, rebuilt in the early 19th century. Photo © Jen Deadman



Substantial stable ranges are a characteristic of this area, illustrating the importance of arable farming particularly in the early to mid-19th century. This example with wooden roof ventilators is built of granite and slate rubble stone with brick dressings. It has a moulded brick gable cornice and a Swithland slate roof. Photo © Jen Deadman



A late 19th-century brick-built stable, probably c 1870, with a granary or hay loft at first-floor level. The upper storey is accessed by external iron steps. This farmstead is located south of Shepshed in the north-west of the area on the Garendon estate. Photo © Jen Deadman



Larger, village-based farms, as here at Thornton close to the former mining village of Bagworth in the south of the area, often required cart entries providing access to yards which developed within the narrow crofts indicative of the settlement's medieval origins. Farmhouse and barns are 18th century and sometimes earlier in date, whilst other buildings are of a later 19th-century date. Photo © Jen Deadman



A threshing barn with cart entries to the village street and the threshing floor on the right. To the left is an open loft which extended over the main entrance way to the yard and is lit by a small dormer on the rear elevation. Photo © Jen Deadman



The loft floor above the entrance way is of lime mortar laid on straw and ceiled from below with plaster laid between the joists. The imprint of the straw is visible on the undersides of the floor and some is still visible between floor and ceiling plaster. Photo © Jen Deadman



A 19th-century farmstead – probably dating from around 1840 – located on the outskirts of Newbold Verdon in the south of the area, which formerly served as a small dairy farm. It comprises a simple, U-shaped steading with linked buildings, including the farmhouse, set around three sides of a yard which is accessed directly from the roadside. The east side of the yard comprises a lofted stable with an adjacent barn all of one build. The barn is lofted with two first-floor pitching doors to the rear. Photo © Jen Deadman



Single-storey cattle housing, either for stalling dairy cattle, or for the loose housing of fatstock, is a characteristic of this area. Doors provide access to adjoining paddocks including milking yards. Photo © Jen Deadman

Materials and detail

- Older village buildings and farmsteads are commonly constructed in local granite with local Swithland slate roofs and some thatch roofs.
- There is some 17th-century and earlier timber-framing including cruck frames.
- Farmsteads on the enclosed heathlands were often built in local granite with Swithland slate roofs.
- Welsh slate was commonly used in the 19th century.
- Brick mostly dates from the 19th century, but use was made for houses and some barns and stables in the 18th century.



Historic England

This guidance has been prepared by
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