



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Clun and North West Herefordshire Hills

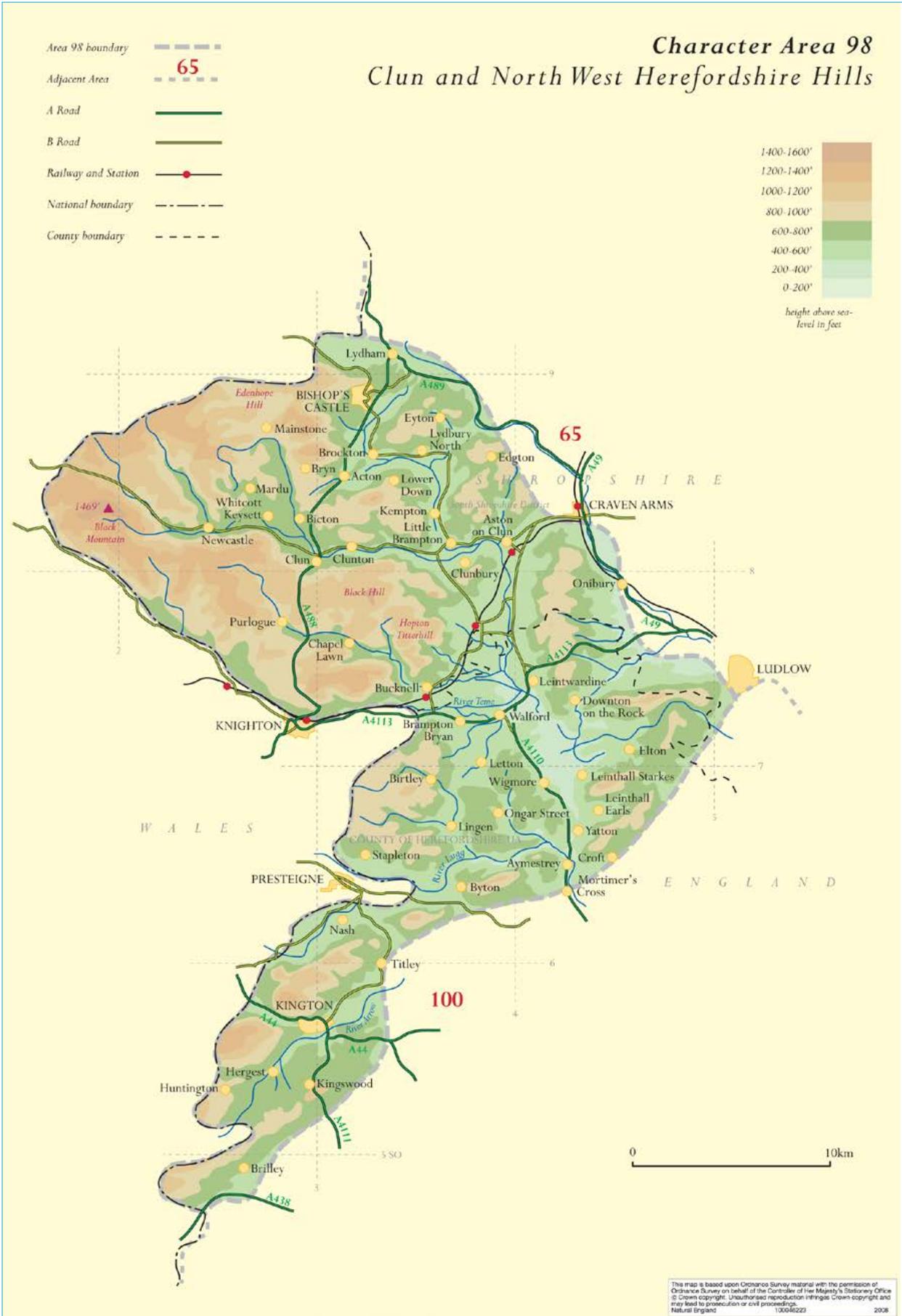
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 98



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: The large, regular courtyard plan farmstead at Wigmore Abbey was built to serve a mixed, arable-based holding which combined arable farming with the fattening of cattle. The Hereford breed was developed in this area. The high-status, late-medieval house, which later became a gentry house, faces away from the farmyard but is attached to a timber-framed range. Photo © Herefordshire County Council



This map shows the Clun and North West Herefordshire Hills, with the numbers of neighbouring National Character Areas around them.

Summary

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

This area lies within the counties of Shropshire and Herefordshire, and is bounded to the north and west by the Welsh border. To the east, the hills are divided by the rivers Clun and Teme, before rising to the Shropshire Hills. The western uplands are open and sparsely populated, becoming more densely settled in the valleys and hills to the east. Of the area, 45% lies within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), less than 1% is urban and 15% is woodland.

Historic character

- There is medium density of farmsteads in the landscape, with areas of high density around Clun Forest and a low density centred around the lowlands to the south, adjacent to the Herefordshire Lowlands.
 - The area displays a strong distinction between very small to medium-scale farmsteads to the Clun uplands, and very large-scale farmsteads adjacent to the Herefordshire Lowlands (NCA 100). Medium to large-scale regular courtyard farmsteads are concentrated on the large areas of planned 19th-century enclosure in upland areas and around the lowland river valleys, particularly around the floodplain of the Teme (Brampton-Leintwardine-Wigmore).
- They mostly comprise multi-yard plans and U- and L- plans with additional buildings to the third or (rarely) fourth side of the yard.
- There are slightly higher numbers of small to medium-scale farmsteads across the area, with strong localised distributions:
 - The smallest farmsteads – linear and L-plan (house attached) layouts – are often an integral part of earlier piecemeal and small-scale enclosures.
 - Small-scale, loose courtyard farmsteads – commonly with working buildings to two sides of the yard – and L-shaped farmsteads are



The landscape around this upland fringe farmstead has been enclosed on a piecemeal basis since the medieval period, with a mix of straight and irregular boundaries. The farmstead clearly originated as a linear range, and was later extended with animal housing into an overall L-shaped plan typical of this landscape type. Photo © Jeremy Lake

associated with medium to small-scale fields resulting from piecemeal enclosure of the upland fringe areas and the valleys sides.

- Dispersed driftway and cluster plans are strongly associated with the upland-edge farms (especially in the Clun area), and relate to ancient routes and tracks.
- There are small areas of smallholdings, very limited compared to the rest of Shropshire and Herefordshire.
- There are some early 19th-century and earlier threshing barns, but more common are 19th-century cattle housing and multifunctional ranges that stored and processed harvested corn, and housed horses, cattle and their fodder. There are some cider houses in lowland areas.
- Large outfarms, often with more than one yard or building, are associated with the planned enclosures of the uplands.

Significance

- The rate of survival for farmsteads is high, with 69% recorded from late 19th-century maps retaining more than half of their historic footprint.
- Some very rare examples of 18th-century or earlier single-storey and two-storey cow houses survive.
- Field barns and outfarms are now very rare.

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 (19%, the national average being 32%).
- The Photo Image Project also recorded a high percentage (23.5%, the national average being 7.5%) of listed working farm buildings that show obvious signs of structural disrepair.
- The proportion of farmsteads in residential use (63%) is high given very low economic mass but participation in business is low – whether measured by farmstead-based companies or directorship of substantial firms.
- On the sides of the valleys of the Stour and the Frome, there was some arable with better quality grazing on the floodplains.

Historic development

- Evidence exists for extensive clearance of woodland and use of eastern uplands for summer grazing from the prehistoric period. A co-axial field pattern on a NW–SE alignment is present in north-west Herefordshire, that represents the preservation of a prehistoric field pattern in the later field enclosure pattern.
- This Character Area has a long history as a frontier landscape, with a concentration of Roman forts and camps around the Roman town of Leintwardine, Offa's Dyke forming the west boundary of Saxon kingdom of Mercia, and late 11th- and 12th-century castles being sited in the central hills and vales. Estates developed from this period, often around these defensive foci, the area being strongly characterised by small manor houses (of medieval and later date) and landscape parks like Brampton Bryan and Croft, often developing in the post-medieval period from medieval deer parks.
- Planned, late 11th- to 13th-century settlements in lower valleys are often strategically sited at river crossings and range from planned boroughs such as Bishop's Castle and Clun to linear-plan villages with church and/or castle. The major market centre

of Kington, and Ludlow in the Shropshire Hills to east, developed from the 13th century. Richards Castle, Huntington, Stapleton are all walled, medieval settlements with markets: most failed or failing by the turn of the 14th century.

- Cattle and especially cattle rearing formed the mainstay of agriculture into the 20th century, with crops grown on a subsistence basis except in the broad valleys where, by the 19th century, larger farms had developed around fattening and corn production. The Wigmore Basin in the centre (focused on the

Teme and its tributaries) has a long history of more intensive arable production, and Wigmore Grange was a recognised centre for the breeding of Hereford cattle in the late 18th century.

- In the 20th century, there has been substantial agricultural improvement of the hills, particularly following the 1946 Hill Farming Act.

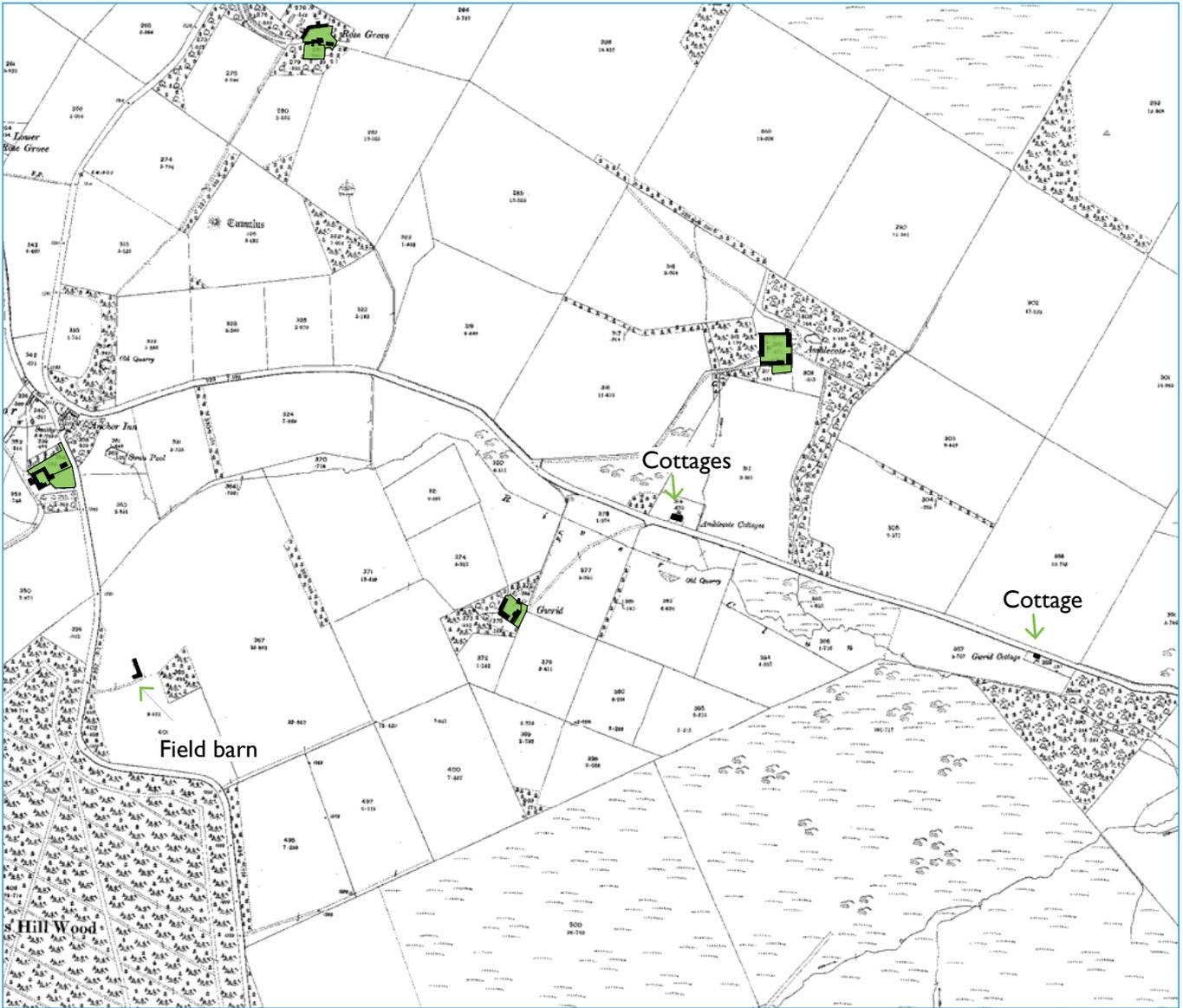
Landscape and settlement

- The uplands of the Clun are bordered by areas of small-scale irregular enclosure from rough ground and woodland dating from the medieval period. Within the upland there are large areas of planned enclosure dating from the mid- to late 19th century, and there are significant remaining areas of heathland and rough pasture and blocks of ancient and later (mostly post-1921 Forestry Commission) woodland. The result is a low density of farmsteads in the landscape, intermixed with cottages, increasing in density around the southern and eastern fringes. Farmsteads are relatively absent from the areas of later 19th-century enclosure to the south.
- Planned enclosure of the North West Herefordshire Uplands is mostly earlier (18th century).
- Small to medium-scale farmsteads developed around these upland areas, sited amongst mostly irregular and piecemeal, small to medium-scale fields resulting from the clearance of woodland and rough ground. Deciduous woodland is now concentrated on the steeper and more inaccessible upper valleys, but extensive areas of woodland and ancient hedgerows remain.
- Across the remainder of the National Character Area are generally low densities of farmsteads, particularly around the river valley of the Teme (Brampton-Leintwardine-Wigmore). Large-scale farmsteads are sited away from the villages (where smaller farms remained) in landscapes of piecemeal and regular enclosure.

Farmstead and building types

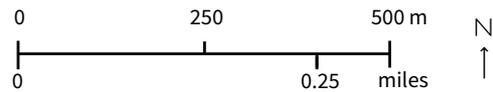
Farmstead types

- Medium to large-scale regular courtyard farmsteads are concentrated on the large areas of planned 19th-century enclosure on the Clun and NW Herefordshire Uplands and around the lowland river valleys, particularly around the floodplain of the Teme (Brampton-Leintwardine-Wigmore). They mostly comprise multi-yard plans and also U-plans and L-plans with additional buildings to the third or (rarely) fourth side of the yard.
- L-shaped farmsteads with additional detached buildings to three or (rarely) four sides of the yard are most commonly built to regular rather than loose courtyard plans. Some occur within the Clun Forest and they are generally



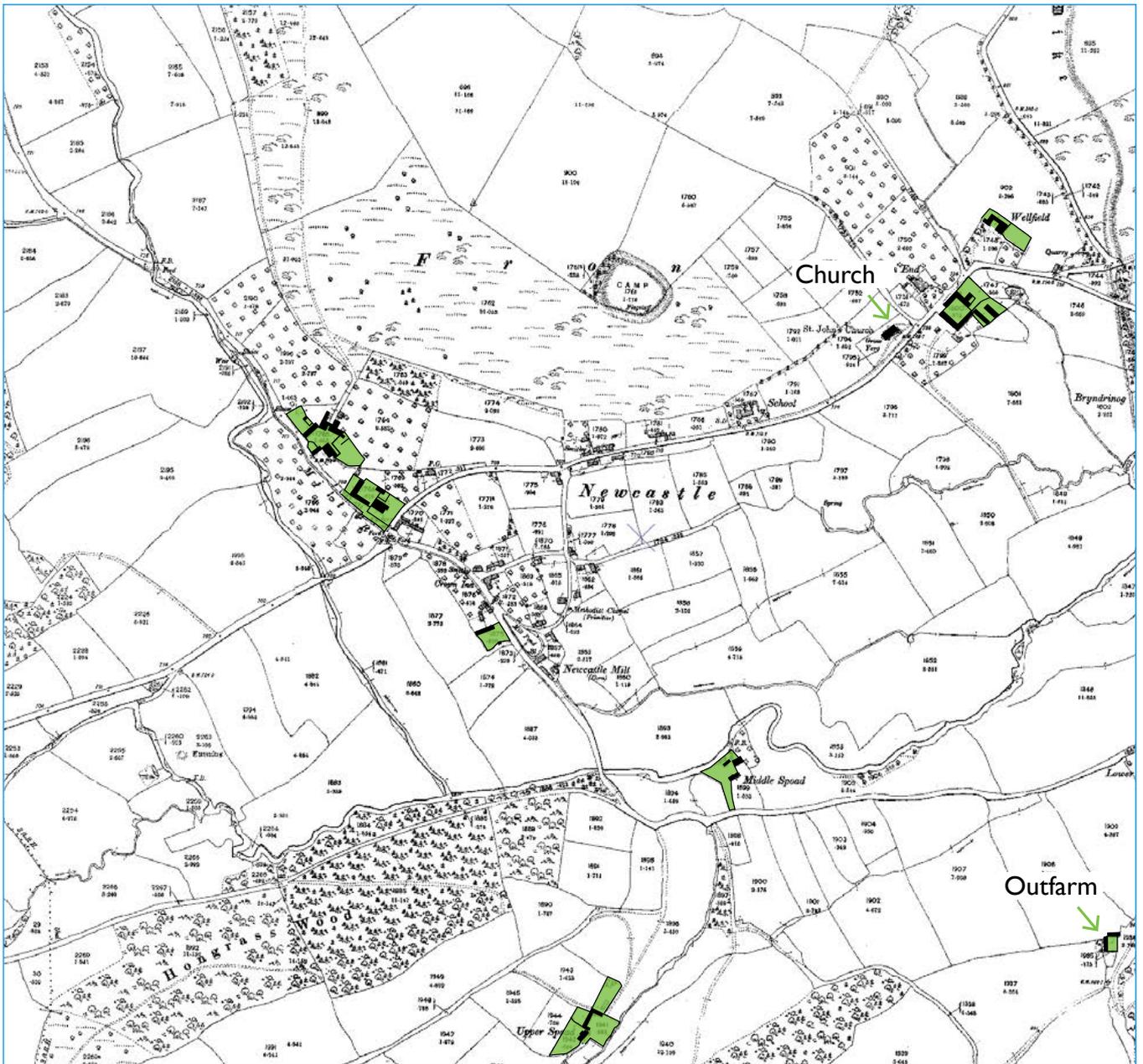
Maps are based on 2nd edition 25" Ordnance Survey maps, which show farmsteads after the last major phase in the building of traditional farmsteads in England.
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 Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



Amblecote

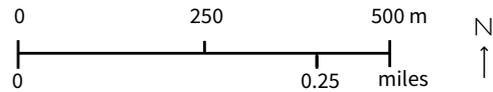
The upland areas of the Clun Forest were open moorland until the 19th century when large areas were enclosed with regular fields. Some plantations were also created, smaller ones often providing protection to new farmsteads built within the newly enclosed fields. These farmsteads were typically of regular courtyard plan. Occasionally, field barns were built within some of the more distant fields, but they are not a major feature of the landscape.



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.



Newcastle

Within the valleys, villages developed between the 11th and 13th centuries, often alongside equally ancient dispersed settlement. The pattern of fields within these areas is largely a product of piecemeal enclosure from former open fields and common, with some more regular enclosure from former moorland on areas of high ground. Many of the small to medium-scale farmsteads were established by the 17th century and are often of loose courtyard or regular L-plan form. The larger, regular courtyard plans relate to fields enlarged and reorganised in the 18th and 19th centuries.

associated with larger-scale fields than the L-plans without additional buildings.

- Larger-scale regular courtyard farmsteads are concentrated in the larger-scale enclosure landscapes of the broad valley floors and in the planned landscapes of the Clun Forest plateau: these mostly comprise steadings with buildings to all sides of the yard, with some regular courtyard U-plans and regular multi-yard plans.
- The remaining medium-scale regular courtyard farmsteads (mostly U- and T-plans) are concentrated in the areas of earlier piecemeal enclosure intermixed with woodland on the edge of the estate farmlands of the valley floors. Some also sit on the edge of areas of upland planned enclosure within the wooded farmland hills elsewhere in the area.
- Dispersed multi-yards are apparent across the area with significant numbers in valley areas, incorporating elements of regular plan form.
- There are slightly higher numbers of small to medium-scale farmsteads across the area, with strong, localised distributions.
- The smallest farmsteads – linear and L-plan (house attached) layouts – are generally concentrated in areas of the smallest farms within small irregular fields, resulting from either woodland clearance or squatter settlement around the uplands.
- Small-scale loose courtyard farmsteads – commonly with working buildings to two sides of the yard – and L-shaped farmsteads are concentrated on the edge of the uplands and in the areas of smaller-scale enclosure intermixed with woodland on the hills. Where they are found in the valley areas, they are often found associated with the smaller steadings that remained in settlements.
- Dispersed driftways and dispersed clusters are mainly found on the edge of areas of planned upland enclosure, reflecting their long development as sites for holding livestock en route to rough upland pastures and into richer, lowland areas for fattening.
- Small numbers of smallholding clusters developed on unimproved hill pasture and common, and in some areas of ancient enclosure from woodland on the southern and south-west edge of the high enclosed plateau. Here, linear farmsteads and L-plans (house attached) predominate. A small minority do occur within planned enclosure in the Clun Forest.



In striking contrast, very large-scale farmsteads were built within the landscapes in the Wigmore Basin, extending into the Herefordshire Lowlands, which were subject to the greatest degree of reorganisation of farms and farmland. Note the straight, thorn hedgerows resulting from late 18th- or 19th-century reorganisation of the fields. Photo © Jeremy Lake

- Outfarms are concentrated on the edge of 19th-century enclosed upland areas.

Building types

- Buildings are mostly multifunctional.
- Threshing barns are mostly integrated into combination ranges, including many of 18th-century or earlier date.
- Some very rare examples survive, of 18th-century or earlier single-storey and two-storey cow houses.
- There are five-bay and some three-bay barns, with some farmsteads having larger barns or groups of two or more barns. Many barns, including earlier examples form part of combination ranges with cattle housing with haylofts over or linked to form row plans.
- Stables include some timber-framed examples of early date and some with granaries above.
- Open-fronted shelter sheds for cattle are often attached to an earlier barn.
- Outfarms – mostly comprising a threshing barn and shelter shed – developed in areas of larger village-based farms and large-scale arable farm especially in the south-east. Historically, their distribution was almost exclusively restricted to areas of wholesale landscape reorganisation, driven by large estates such as the Ragley Estate (south of Alcester) in the late 18th and 19th centuries.
- Timber framing was used for buildings into the 17th century, but was subject to replacement by stone and brick. Timber frame is now relatively rare in the area.
- Red brick is sometimes found with blue brick or ironstone details. Blue and White, blue-grey Lias is found in the central part of the area, with red and brown ironstone dominant near the western fringe of the Northamptonshire Uplands.
- Plain clay tile is used for roofing.



A farmstead on the Clun Uplands, one of many built after the enclosure of the moorland in the 19th century. Photo © Bob Edwards



The area has a high survival of 17th-century and earlier timber-framed houses, often reclad in stone. This forms part of a linear farmstead group at Clunbury. Photo © Bob Edwards



Characteristic linear plans worked a diversity of landscapes, and some had developed by the 19th century into large-scale steadings with extensive cattle housing and first-floor hay lofts and threshing barns. Photo © Bob Edwards



Small, loose courtyard plans remained around areas of common land and mostly comprise buildings for cattle. Photo © Bob Edwards



Some of the larger-scale farmsteads in the lowland parts of the area have regular courtyard plans, usually built to fatten cattle which had previously been exported on the hoof. Photo © Bob Edwards



Very large timber-framed barns are associated with some lowland farms in this area, part of a distribution extending into the lowlands of Herefordshire where large farms developed from the 15th century. Photo © Bob Edwards



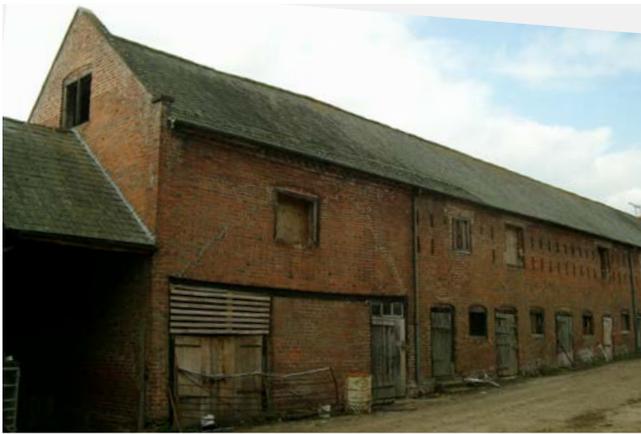
Large-scale, regular courtyard farmsteads often included large, combined threshing and hay barns attached to the cattle yards. This shows a stone-built combination barn with part open-fronted hay lofts either side of the central threshing bay. Photo © Bob Edwards



Houses were often attached to multifunctional timber-framed farm buildings, which included cider houses, stabling, cattle stalls and hay lofts.
Photo © Bob Edwards



Combination barns, which combined the housing of cattle and horses with areas for storing and processing the grain crop, can include timber-framed ranges of 18th-century and earlier date. These form part of a significant distribution extending from northern England and along the Welsh borders. Photo © Bob Edwards



The tradition of having hay lofts above cattle housing continued into the 19th century. This cow house range incorporates a granary/cart shed. Photo © Bob Edwards



The importance of winter fodder for livestock, and the increased numbers stocked in the mid- to late 19th-century, is reflected in the presence of 19th century hay barns. Photo © Bob Edwards



Granary over a cart shed forming part of a regular courtyard farmstead. These were built in the lowlands and on some of the larger upland farms which were built to serve arable holdings newly enclosed from moorland in the 19th century. Photo © Bob Edwards

Materials and detail

- There is a high concentration of timber-frame buildings dating from medieval period to the early 18th century.
- Weatherboarding is a common form of cladding for timber-framed buildings, particularly barns, often associated with tall, stone plinths and gable walls.
- Sandstone, including greyish Silurian sandstone to the west, is the predominant building material for 18th- and 19th-century buildings, and is often given a thin coat of render or limewash.
- Welsh slate is used for roofs, commonly with deep hipped profiles.



Historic England

This guidance has been prepared by Jeremy Lake with Bob Edwards.

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The **West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project**, led by English Heritage (now Historic England), has mapped the historic character, survival and use of farmsteads across the whole region which includes this NCA. For the Summary Report of 2009 see <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/west-midlands-farmsteads-landscapes/>

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