



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Herefordshire Lowlands

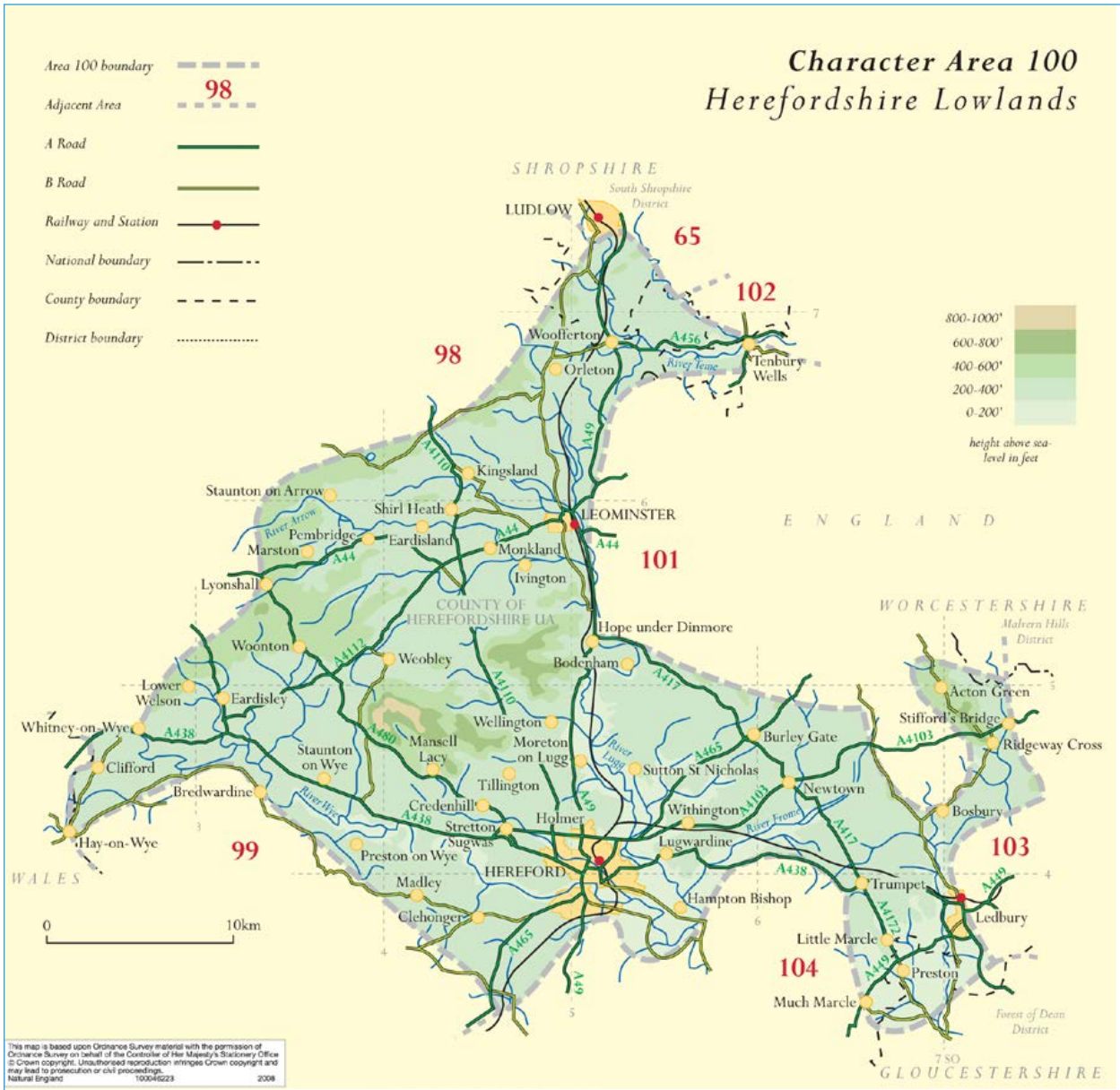
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 100



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: This exemplifies the large scale of farmsteads found across the area, including those built to a loose courtyard form as here. The house was rebuilt in the early 18th century and faces away from the farmyard, towards terraced grounds. Photo © Herefordshire County Council



This map shows the Herefordshire Lowlands, with the numbers of neighbouring National Character Areas around them.



A view across Marden, showing the church and the scale of the fields in its landscape. Photo © Herefordshire County Council

Summary

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

This area is almost entirely within Herefordshire, with small areas to the north and east in Shropshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. It is bounded by the North West Herefordshire Hills and the Black Mountains to the north and west, the Malverns and Bromyard plateau to the east and the Wye Valley to the south. Much of the area is fertile farmland with wide floodplains and undulating topography, with the hills of Dinmore and Wormsley rising above this. Of the Character Area, 4% is urban and 5% is woodland, whilst 1% lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Historic character

- Levels of dispersed settlement are high to very high, with 10.4% of farmsteads in hamlets and 2.1% in villages. There is low to medium density of farmsteads in the landscape.
- Large (39.4%) and very large-scale (29.5%) farmsteads are predominant, followed by small to medium-scale (22.6%) farmsteads which are concentrated east of Hereford. The dominant historic farmstead types are larger-scale regular courtyard plans with large numbers of smaller-scale steadings (mostly loose courtyards with working buildings to two or three sides of the yard) concentrated in areas around settlements and in areas with smaller-scale irregular enclosure.
- There is a rich variety of building types, often on the same farm, in particular:
 - hop kilns and cider houses
 - the large barns, stabling and cattle housing needed for a combined corn and fatstock area
 - single-storey and two-storey cow houses, including some rare examples dating from the 17th century.

Significance

- The rate of survival is high for farmsteads, particularly away from the towns, with 77% of those recorded from late 19th-century maps retaining more than half of their historic footprint.
- Medium to larger-scale farmsteads developed in this area from the 15th century, in association with the piecemeal enclosure and reorganisation of the fields.
- There is high survival of 18th-century and earlier farmstead buildings, sometimes with barns, hop kilns, cider houses and cattle housing on the same site. There are some rare surviving examples of cattle housing of 18th-century or earlier date.
- Rare examples survive of early weatherboarding with wattle infill to upper panels of barn ranges.
- Some farmsteads channelled water power from their surrounding landscapes, and evidence can survive in the form of leats, mill wheels etc.

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 (27.2%, the national average being 32%).
- The Photo Image Project also recorded an above-average percentage (21.3%, the national average being 7.5%) of listed working farm buildings that show obvious signs of structural disrepair.
- Low economic mass and inherited pattern of large-scale farms implies a higher proportion of farmsteads remaining in agricultural use (54%) than is typical of the West Midlands as a whole, with a higher tendency to farmstead diversification (numbers of holiday homes and workshops being above regional expectations).

Historic development

- There is extensive evidence for prehistoric activity and settlement throughout area and especially in the river gravels.
- The area includes Hereford and Leominster, which had developed as important ecclesiastical centres in middle-late Saxon period, and the medieval market centres of Pembridge, Eardisley and Ledbury.
- A high concentration of defensive manor sites includes motte and bailey castles (late 11th and 12th centuries) and moated sites (mostly 13th and 14th century and often sited close to churches), and of medieval deer parks, some of which developed into 17th- to 19th- century landscaped gardens.
- The medium to large-scale, corn-producing farms that are such a distinctive characteristic of this area developed from the 15th century, in association with the abandonment and shrinkage of earlier settlements and the piecemeal enclosure and reorganisation of the fields. The largest farms developed in the Wye, Lugg and Frome river valleys.
- Communally-managed water meadows developed from the 17th century along the broad river valleys (formerly used for seasonal grazing, fish ponds and corn mills) helped – alongside the production of clover and rotations using grasses – to boost cattle numbers and agricultural production. Underdrainage and enclosure for hay production of the water meadows from the mid-19th- century was associated with the rebuilding of large farmsteads for yard and stall-fed cattle.
- By the 17th and 18th centuries, the central Herefordshire plain was primarily a corn and livestock region, with wheat the dominant cereal. Cattle, many of which were bought in, were fattened for the butcher and pigs were also an important part of the system, often living in the orchards.
- Orchards were grown for cider making from at least the 14th century, and hop fields for the brewing industry from the 18th century.

Landscape and settlement

- The predominant settlement pattern of dispersed settlement mostly results from 14th- to 17th- century movement away from small villages. Farmsteads were resited in association with the piecemeal enclosure of the open fields that had expanded over most of the farmed area and blocks of common land. The growth of large farms across this area is reflected in the size of these fields: large, later 20th-century fields being a major element of the landscape east of Hereford.
- There is extensive evidence for medieval settlement and land use, in the form of shrunken villages, ridge and furrow and lynchets.
- Small villages remained concentrated along the Lugg and middle Wye valleys, and other villages developed into larger service and residential centres in the 19th and 20th centuries.
- Another distinctive feature is the church-manor groupings (often with large farms), which have pre-11th century origins and which developed as the focal point of the settlements within parishes.
- Older orchards, once very extensive, are now found mainly at the edges of settlements and farmsteads.

Farmstead and building types

Farmstead types

- Dominant historic farmstead types are larger-scale regular courtyard with large numbers of smaller-scale steadings (mostly loose courtyards with working buildings to two or three sides of the yard) concentrated in areas around settlements and in areas with smaller-scale irregular enclosure.
- Large-scale courtyard farmsteads are a dominant and distinctive feature of this area. They overwhelmingly comprise multi-yard plans. Also common are U-shaped plans, full regular courtyard plans with working buildings to all sides of the yard and E-shaped plans. These all reflect the importance of fattening cattle in yards. L-shaped plans with additional working buildings to the third side of the yard are concentrated to the north-east and south-east, those (less commonly) with buildings to the fourth sides again reflecting the distribution across the area of large-scale steadings.
- Loose courtyard farmsteads (most commonly with working buildings to two or three sides of the yard) are widely distributed across the area, and are often associated with smaller-scale field patterns and are also centred on the valley-bottom villages.
- There is a higher density of smaller-scale farmsteads to the east towards Tenbury Wells in the Teme Valley, and U-shaped plans are associated with the stock farms of the Dinmore and Wormsley Hills.

Building types

- There is a rich mix of building types, with hop kilns and cider houses as well as the large barns, stabling and cattle housing needed for a combined corn and fatstock area.
- Substantial barns are often more than one to a farm and are sometimes integrated into substantial combination ranges. Lean-tos for cattle are common, and open-fronted shelter sheds dating from the 18th century. Attached L-plan ranges comprising two attached barns, or a barn and animal housing, are a common feature.
- Rare examples survive – shared with other areas along the Welsh border – of 18th-century

or earlier single-storey and two-storey cow houses.

- Cider houses are distinguished by wide doors and are incorporated into 18th-century and later combination ranges which can include hop kilns – some of these buildings with

earlier, timber frame cores or recasings in stone of earlier timber buildings.

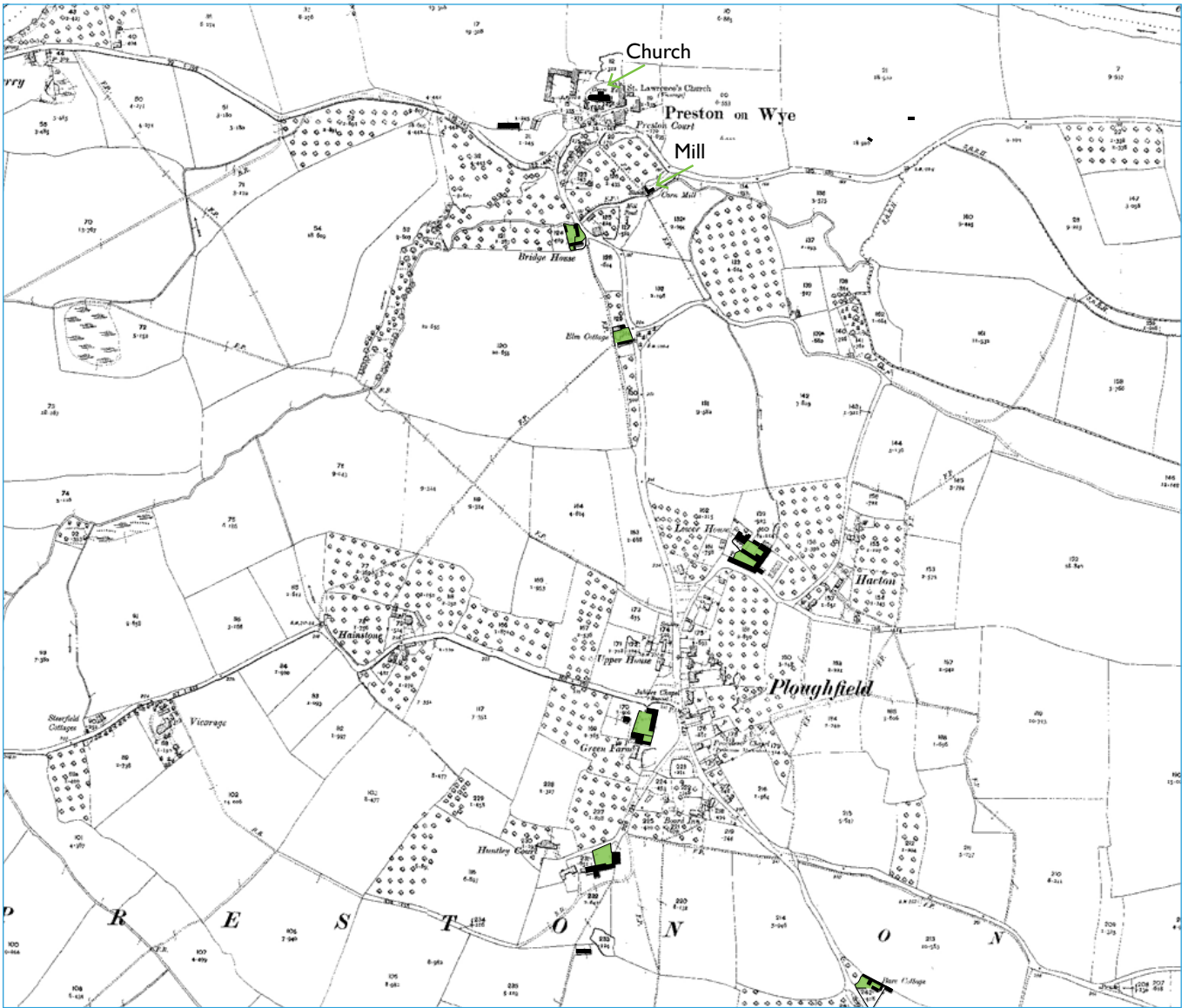
- Hop kilns are a distinctive feature: mostly 19th century and brick but some with evidence for their development from an earlier, timber-framed core.



This is an example of a regular plan farmstead with a covered yard that housed fatstock and their manure under cover. Photo © Herefordshire County Council



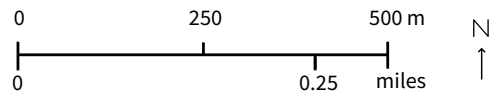
A symmetrically-planned three-bay house and L-plan farmstead of the early to mid- 19th century which occupies a roadside position within common land enclosed in the 19th century, on the eastern edge of the area. Farmsteads of this type are more commonly found in the Herefordshire Plateau to the north. Photo © Jeremy Lake



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



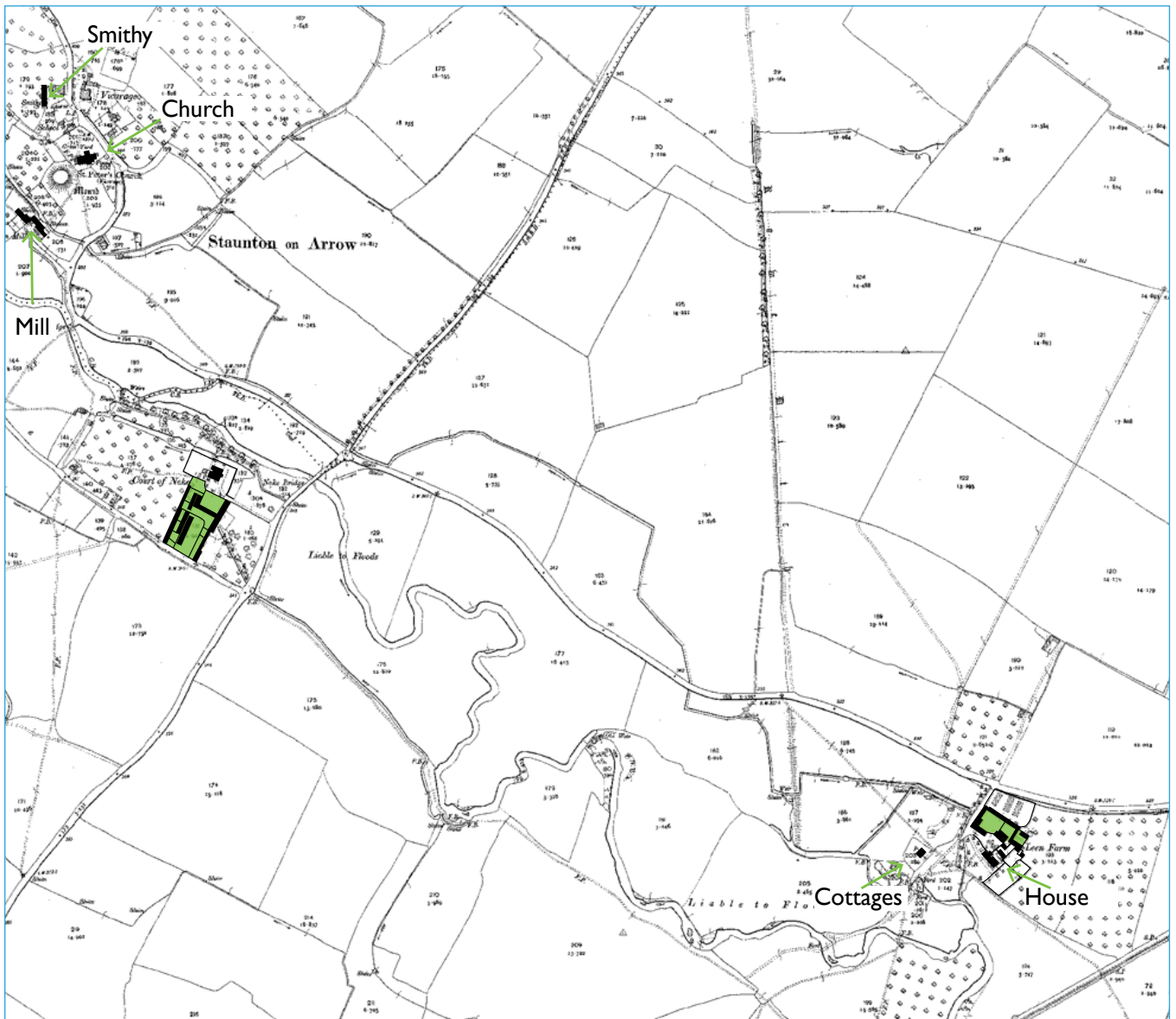
Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



Preston Court is one of a number of large, isolated and high-status farmsteads sited on the terrace overlooking the flood plain of the Wye Valley, often positioned adjacent to the parish church. Photo © Bob Edwards

Preston-on-Wye

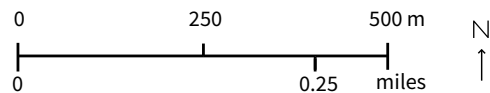
Across the Herefordshire Lowlands it appears that some of the manor and church groups and hamlets were formerly villages that were subject to shrinkage between the 14th and 17th centuries, as farms moved out of the villages to new dispersed sites. Preston Court and the church to the north probably represent one such former village that was surrounded by its open fields which were subject to piecemeal enclosure, creating medium-sized, irregular fields with wavy boundaries. The name of Ploughfield, the settlement to the south of Preston, possibly reflects part of the former open field, and the farmsteads were created as part of the movement out of the village. Once loosely clustered, the spaces between some of the farmsteads have been further developed, resulting in a new, small village, south of the original core.



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.



Staunton-on-Arrow

Many of the large farmsteads dispersed across the landscape in the Hereford Lowlands had moved out of the villages in the 14th to 17th centuries, possibly in association with the piecemeal enclosure of the open fields that spread across much of the area. The fields on this map appear to have been substantially reorganised to create medium to large fields with straight boundaries although the occasional curving or stepped boundary reflect the outlines of medieval strip fields. Many of the farmsteads within this landscape were also subject to enlargement and reorganisation, typically creating regular courtyard or regular multi-yard plans although substantial earlier buildings such as barns would be retained and form part of the new layout of the farmstead. Map based on OS 2nd Edition 25" map © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2005) Licence numbers 000394 and TP002



Large-scale, timber-framed barns had developed as a feature of this area by the 18th century, testifying to the large scale of farms that developed following widespread settlement change from the 14th century. This is a combination barn, with a cow house to one end of the threshing barn itself. Photo © Bob Edwards



The importance of arable farming on these large farms is exemplified in this granary built above a stable range, with a mid- 19th- century, four-bay cart shed with a granary above attached. Photo © Bob Edwards



The fattening of cattle also developed as a key part of the farming economy, this timber-framed building signifying its importance by the 18th century. Photo © Bob Edwards



Some cow houses had open-fronted haylofts resembling the lincays of South Wales and South West England. Photo © Bob Edwards



Many kilns for drying hops adjoin earlier, timber-framed structures, including some early kilns, which were converted into stowage rooms for storing and bagging up the dried hops. This brick building has an earlier timber-framed core. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Cider houses are marked by wide doorways for moving barrels. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Water was used for flooding meadows and powering mills and barn machinery, as shown here. 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

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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/](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/west-midlands-farmsteads-landscapes/)

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