



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

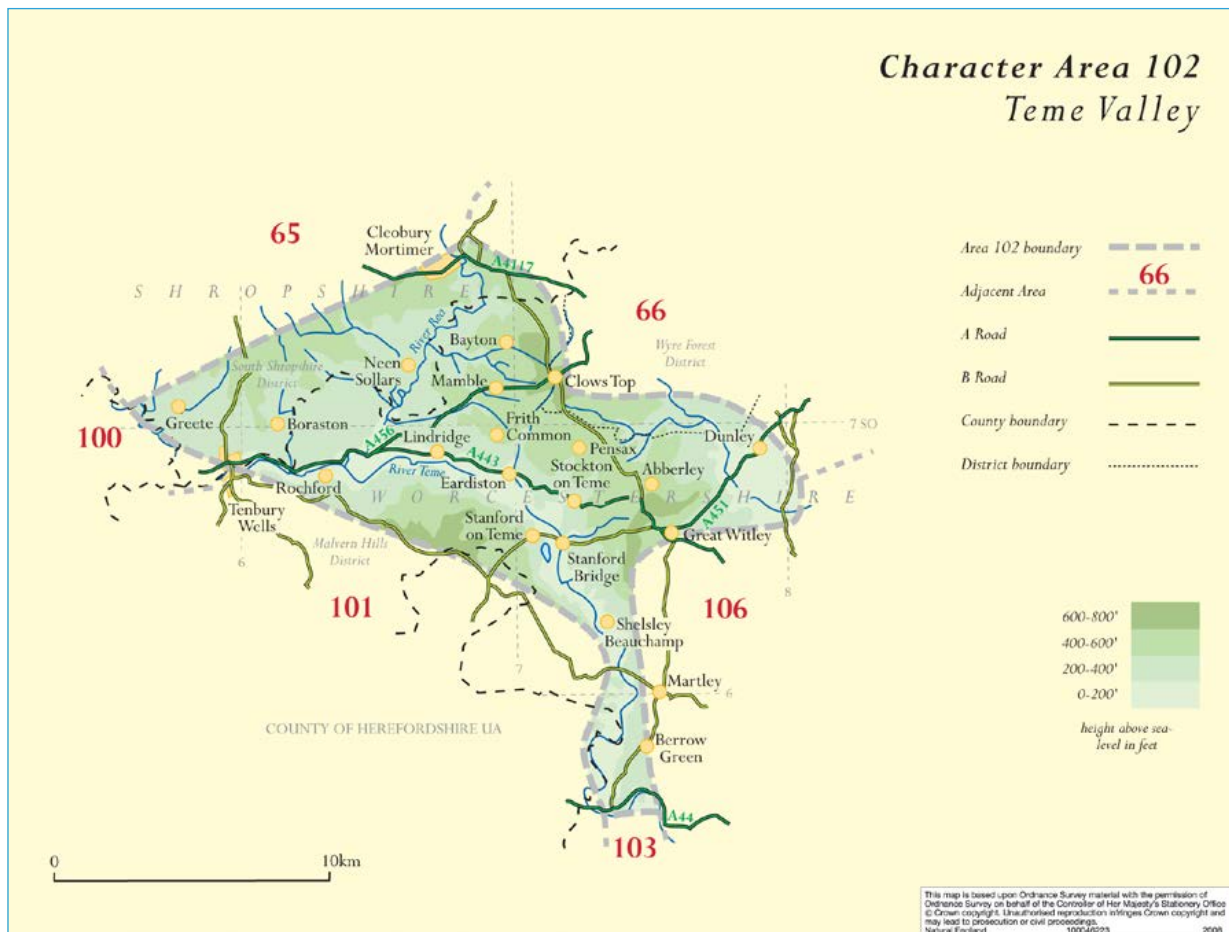
# Teme Valley

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 102



# 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 map shows the Teme Valley, with the numbers of neighbouring National Character Areas around it.

**Front cover:** Large farms developed along the sides of the Teme Valley after the 15th century, resulting in the large farmsteads with 18th-century or earlier houses and substantial ranges of working buildings. Photo © Sam Hale

# Summary

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

The Teme Valley lies mostly within north-west Worcestershire, but also stretches into Shropshire and Herefordshire. It is a complex, undulating landscape with rich, red soils derived from the underlying mudstones giving rise to fertile farmlands, and is dissected by the meandering River Teme. The region remains an important fruit-growing area, the majority of the orchards being located on the warmer, south-facing slopes to the north of the Teme. Less than 1% of the area is urban, 12% is woodland and there are no special designation areas. The Teme Valley is an area with a generally high density of dispersed settlement intermixed with some small villages set within anciently enclosed fields interspersed with woodland.

## Historic character

- Nucleated settlements are concentrated along river valleys, with a medium density of farmsteads in the landscape across the centre of the area, very high to the west and high to the east.
- A broad range of scales is represented, but medium (26.9%) and large-scale farmsteads (30.5) are predominant. Medium to small-scale loose courtyard plans are very common, usually with working buildings flanking one to three sides of the yard. Some linear plans are located in common-edge areas and to small, valley-based farms. The L- and U-shaped plans are often the result of the linking of earlier buildings to enclose two or more sides of a yard, particularly in the southern part of the area.
- Regular multi-yard farmsteads are concentrated in the Teme Valley, where larger farms resulted from the piecemeal enclosure of open fields around settlement nuclei.

## Significance

- There are high rates of survival of farmsteads, with 70% of those recorded from late 19th-century maps retaining more than half of their historic footprint.
- There is a medium density, by national standards, of pre-1750 farm buildings in this area.
- Timber-framed threshing barns can have weatherboarding with wattle infill to upper panels.
- Some very rare, early surviving examples survive, of hop kilns, cider houses and cow houses, typically timber-framed and often embedded with later rebuilding in brick.
- Over 70% of field barns and outfarms have been lost or demolished since the late 19th century.

## 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 (28.2%, the national average being 32%).
- The Photo Image Project also recorded an above-average percentage (11%, the national average being 7.5%) of listed working farm buildings that show obvious signs of structural disrepair.
- Despite its low economic mass, this area has relatively high participation in non-agricultural farm-based business (8% of farmsteads are company registered offices) and high resident participation at director level in substantial businesses (36 directorships per hundred farmsteads).

## Historic development

- The evidence is extensive for prehistoric and Romano-British occupation.
- The development of corn-livestock farming is broadly similar to that of the Herefordshire Plain and Plateau, but the more varied and hilly topography resulted in a general pattern of small to medium rather than large-scale farms.
- Historically, arable cultivation is concentrated in river valleys with mixed agriculture elsewhere.
- 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 from the 18th century, typically planted on the valley floor of the Teme and intermixed with arable.
- Water meadow systems along the wide river valleys developed from 17th century.
- There was coal mining around Abberley and on the Witley Court estate.

## Landscape and settlement

- The predominant settlement pattern is of very high levels of dispersed settlement. Many hamlets and farmsteads in the Teme Valley in common-edge locations are indicative of continuing woodland clearance and subsidiary settlement in the medieval period.
- The predominant patterns are of large-scale, reorganised piecemeal enclosure of common fields and common land, reflecting the growth of large farms away from the hamlets and small villages of the low-lying flood plain. These farms developed around the formerly extensive water-meadow systems and hay meadows in the valleys. Underdrainage of the water meadows from the mid- 19th century was associated with the rebuilding of large farmsteads for yard- and stall-fed cattle.
- Away from the valleys there are areas of small-scale irregular enclosure and small farms resulting from woodland clearance in the medieval period. There are small, scattered blocks of semi-natural woodland.
- Orchards and hop yards were formerly extensive.
- There were many small commons with smallholdings, for example Frith, Bleathwood in Little Hereford and Sapey Common.

# Farmstead and building types

There is a medium density, by national standards, of pre-1750 farm buildings in this area.

## Farmstead types

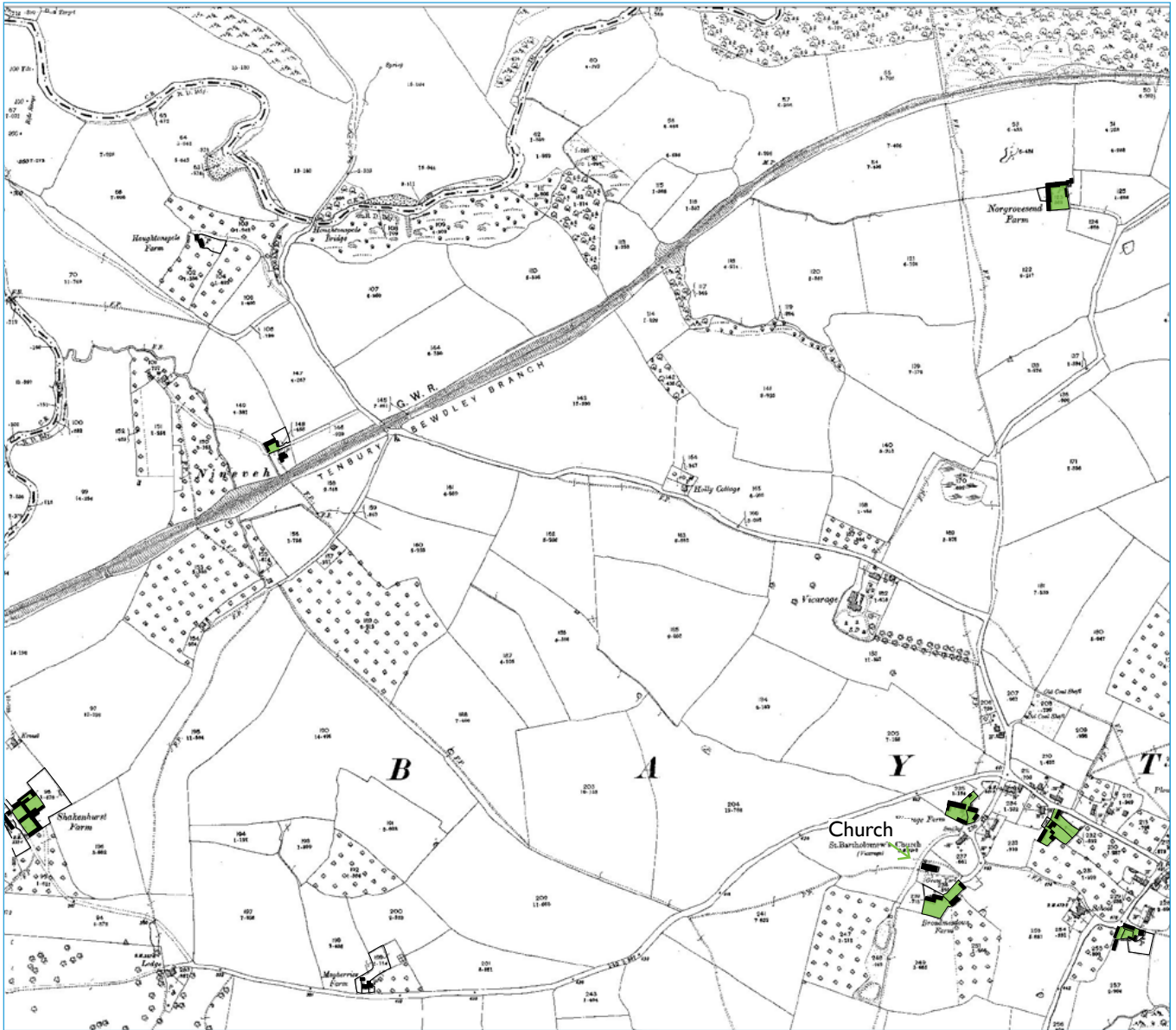
- Regular L- and U-plans concentrated away from the valley floor. Also smaller-scale loose courtyard plans, usually with working buildings to two sides of the yard which comprise the most common farmsteads of this type across the area.
- Regular multi-yard farmsteads often located within or around settlements in the Teme Valley – reflecting a gradual process of farm enlargement. These are concentrated to the south-west of the area and also east of Abberley.
- Linear farmsteads are concentrated in areas of common-edge smallholdings, roadside locations and small farms.

## Building types

- Threshing barns, often with lean-tos buildings for cattle, either enclosed cow houses or open-fronted shelter sheds dating from the 18th and, more commonly, the 19th century.
- Rare surviving examples – shared with other areas along the Welsh border – of 18th-century or earlier single-storey and two-storey cow houses.
- Hop kilns, mainly dating from the 19th century, are a distinctive feature.
- Cider houses, distinguished by wide doors, incorporated into 18th-century and later combination ranges which can include hop kilns – some of these buildings with earlier timber-frame cores.
- Field barns were a distinctive part of the landscape. The cattle within them played a vital role in supplying manure to fertilise the orchards and hop yards within which they were situated. There are some examples of isolated threshing barns, which also served dispersed holdings, and outfarms for processing harvested corn and producing manure.



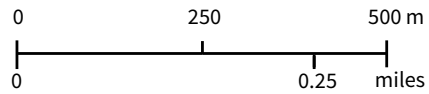
The smallest farms developed away from the valleys or in areas with topographical constraints where large-scale farms were less able to expand and develop. Photo © Peter Gaskell



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

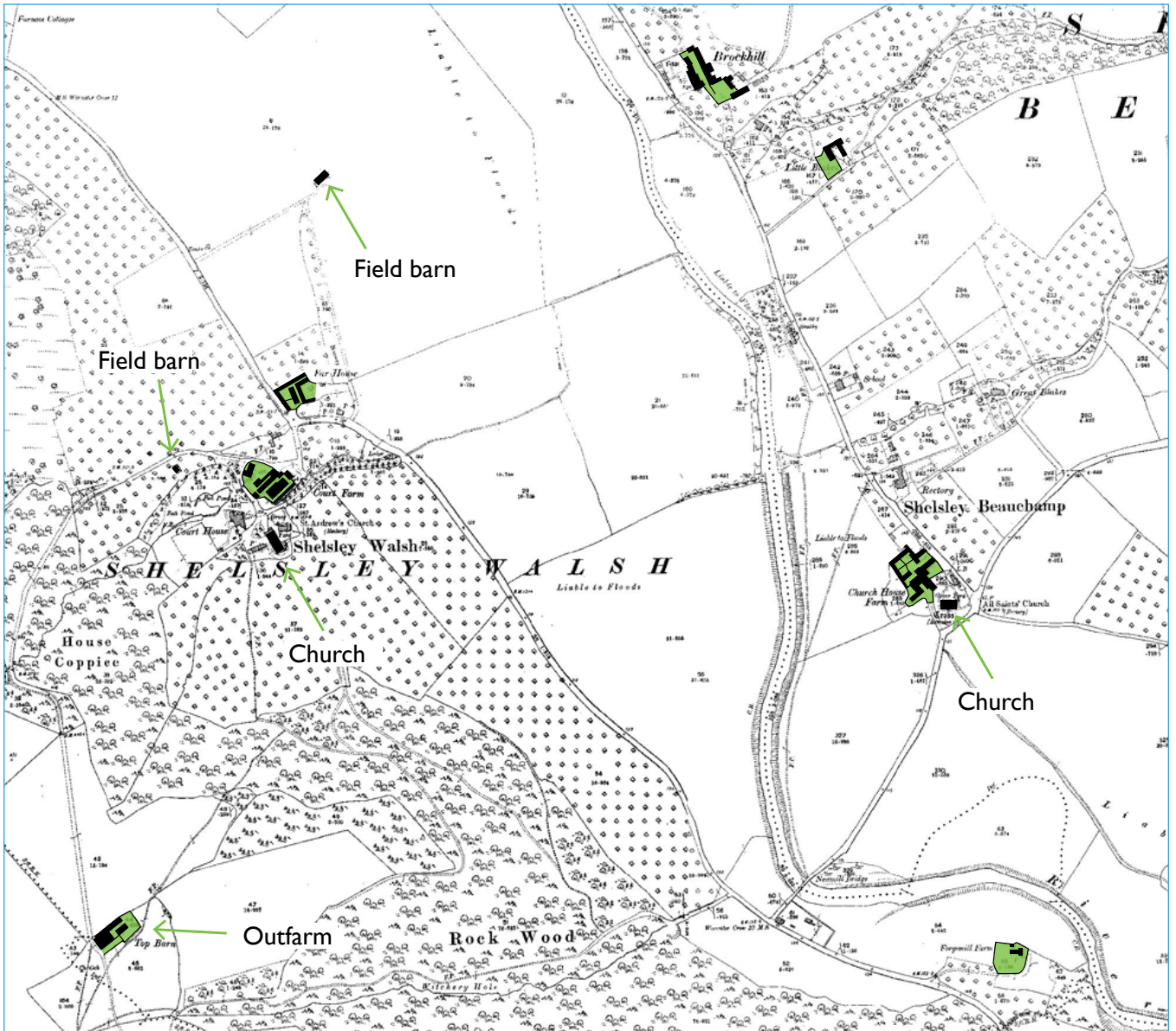


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



## Bayton

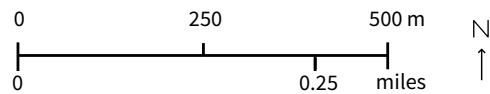
Bayton lies on the higher ground to the north side of the Teme Valley. The village itself contains a number of farmsteads but there are also a number of medium to large dispersed farmsteads within the surrounding landscape. The fields and the village are irregular, possibly representing piecemeal enclosure and some clearance from woodland in the medieval period. To the south-west, an area of parkland extends into the area, together with its large, regular E-plan farmstead, although most farmsteads are small to medium-scale, including occasional examples of wayside linear farmsteads of both medieval and post-medieval origin.



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.



### Shelsley Walsh and Shelsley Beauchamp

Shelsley Walsh and Shelsley Beauchamp, two small hamlets possibly representing shrunken medieval settlements, lie on opposing sides of the Teme Valley. Between them, the flood plain of the river provided fertile land suitable for hop gardens. The valley sides are covered in orchards and woodland with small and medium-sized fields created through the early, piecemeal enclosure of arable surrounding Shelsley Beauchamp. High-status farms with 17th-century and earlier buildings absorbed into regular layouts lie at the heart of the two hamlets, whilst several isolated farmsteads may represent farms that have moved out of the hamlets as they were depopulated in the 15th to 17th centuries.



The Home Farm at Stanford Court was built within an extensive pasture which has retained the earthworks of meadows. The loose courtyard arrangement of buildings, including a timber-framed threshing barn and a timber-framed stable and cowhouse range, date from the mid- 18th century. There is also a dovecote dating from the early 17th century to the rear, facing Stanford Court. Photo © Historic England 29438/001



Farmsteads developed along routeways in landscapes subject to early enclosure with mature hedgerows, as here in the shrunken medieval hamlet of Rochford with its 12th- century church and earlier motte and bailey castle. Photo © Historic England 29440/048





LEFT: The largest farms, often built on an industrial scale, were built around the broad valleys and their water meadows. Photo © Bob Edwards



An L-plan farmstead with an earlier attached house. Photo © Worcestershire County Council



A 17th-century linear farmstead with an attached barn and cow house accessed from the gable end. This is a very rare surviving example of its type. Photo © Bob Edwards



An early 19th-century combination barn with a cow house to the left and a threshing barn to the right. Photo © Bob Edwards



Five-bay barns are commonly found on the farmsteads in this area. Photo © Bob Edwards



A small, loose courtyard group with buildings to two sides of a yard set on higher ground overlooking the valley. Photo © Sam Hale



A cow house with ventilation holes marking the first-floor hay loft. Photo © Bob Edwards



Timber-framed combination barns are common within this area. This barn (combined with cattle housing) has the characteristic woven panels to high level, a feature seen across Herefordshire with brick – possibly replacing framing – to the lower walls. Photo © Natural England



17th- century and earlier farmstead groups in timber frame testify to the development from the 14th century of prosperous farms across the Teme Valley. Many houses of early date, some reclad in brick or stone, are dispersed across the landscape and have long been detached from agriculture. Photo © Worcestershire County Council

## Materials and detail

- There is a high concentration of timber-framed buildings, including a high proportion of 16th-century or earlier date.
- Weatherboarding is a common form of cladding for timber-framed buildings, particularly barns, and is often associated with tall, stone plinths and gable walls.
- Brick and Old Red Sandstone largely replaced timber-framing from the mid- to late 18th century.
- Plain clay tile and Welsh slate are the predominant roofing materials.



An example of a combination barn with storeyed cattle housing in timber-frame with weatherboard. The Teme Valley includes some very rare examples of 18th-century and earlier cattle housing, part of a distribution that is concentrated along the Welsh borders.  
Photo © Bob Edwards



A two-storey, timber-framed cow house, this being a very rare survival.  
Photo © Worcestershire County Council



Hop growing was a particular feature along the fertile flood plain of the river and some large, industrial-scale hop kilns were built to process the crop.  
Photo © Peter Gaskell



On many farmsteads, hop kilns were an addition to existing buildings in the late 19th century. Here, a timber-framed building serves as the stowage for dried hops adjacent to the kilns. Photo © Bob Edwards



# 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/> For more on farmsteads in Worcestershire see the Worcestershire Farmsteads Guidance at [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/archaeology/farmsteadsguidance](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/archaeology/farmsteadsguidance)

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