



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Cotswolds

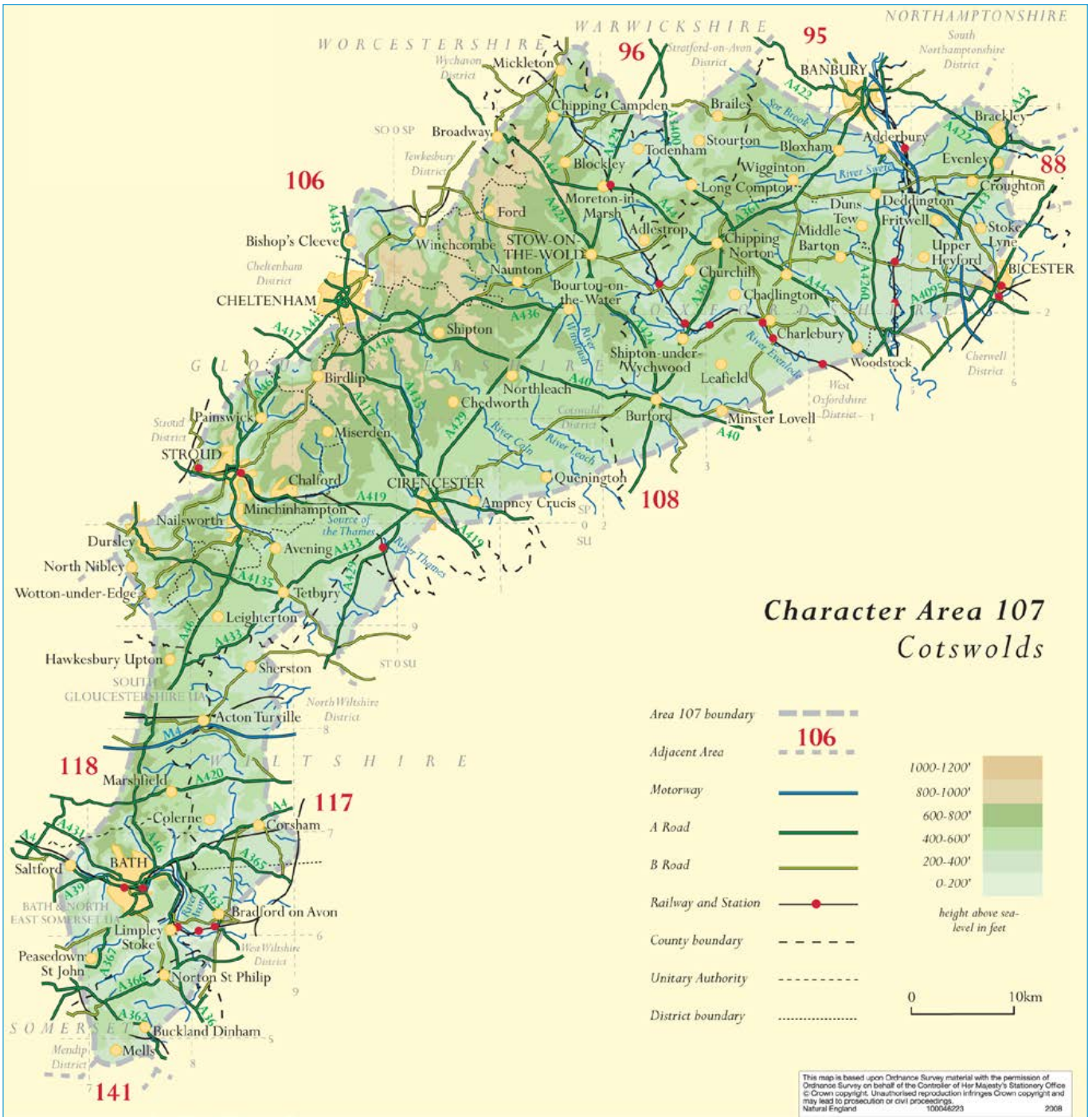
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 107



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 view of Farmington shows a theme common to the Cotswolds: the shrinkage of medieval settlements (clearly visible as earthworks in the foreground) and the development of farms which absorbed and reorganised the earlier medieval farmland into larger holdings, often with houses, barns and other buildings dating from the 16th century. Photo © Historic England 23328/11



This map shows the Cotswolds, with the numbers of 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.

The Cotswolds landscape forms part of the oolitic limestone outcrop stretching from Dorset to Lincolnshire. It is marked by a steep scarp to the west, open plateaux and gentler rolling hills. The Character Area extends from Mells in Somerset to Brackley in Northamptonshire and is nationally renowned for its distinctive landscape. Of the area, 65% lies within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Only 4% is classed as urban.

Historic development

- Farmsteads developed within villages, on the sites of shrunken medieval settlements in the wolds and within fields enclosed by hedgerows and dry stone walls from the open wolds and open fields from the 15th century and sometimes earlier.
- Farmsteads and their buildings testify to the historic importance of arable agriculture across this area. Medium to large-scale courtyard plans are predominant, the largest and most regular in their plan form being concentrated on the plateaux. The key building types, sometimes combined in one multifunctional range, comprise: large barns – often two or even more to a farmstead – stables, cart sheds and granaries.
- Farmsteads developed in close association with manorial sites and the centres of estates.
- The use of limestone for stone walling and slate roofing is a highly distinctive and consistent feature of this area.

Significance

- Traditional farmsteads are a visually prominent feature of landscapes and settlements in the Cotswolds. The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project showed (within Warwickshire) that over 70% of farmsteads recorded from late 19th-century maps retain more than half of their historic form.

Present and future issues

- The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project showed (within Warwickshire) that two-thirds of historic farmsteads are now in residential use.
- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a medium proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (34.5%, the national average being 32%).

Historic development

- The area was extensively settled from the prehistoric period and there was little woodland by the 11th century. Much of the land was in large estates and many smaller manor houses and gentry houses developed in this area. The 14th century witnessed abandonment and contraction of settlements, including some being replaced by sheep walks. The area's importance as a major centre of broadcloth production from the late 14th century is reflected in the quality of its churches (predominantly in late Gothic Perpendicular style), merchants' houses and domestic architecture – the latter including evidence for open attic areas for handlooms, lit by dormer or gable windows.
- Post-14th-century expansion of valley-bottom settlements in the centre and south of the area (eg Brimscombe) is linked to the development of fulling mills (including some double corn and cloth mills) along streams. In the 17th to 19th centuries, the cloth industry – which sold both 'white' and dyed cloth for export – concentrated in the valleys around Dursley, Stroud, Chalford and Painswick.
- Thin, well-aerated, brashy soils derived from limestone are common on the plateau and steeper slopes, particularly to the west. More fertile, deeper, clayey soils of alluvial origin are present along the valley floors and on lower-lying land to the south and east.
- The decline of open-field, arable agriculture, evident by the late 14th century, was followed in many areas by its conversion into open pasture for grazing sheep. By the 17th century, sheep rearing was concentrated in the north and cloth-making to the south. The next major phase in the arable exploitation of the Cotswolds was linked to agricultural improvements of the 18th and 19th centuries, including enclosure and arable-based farming on the plateaux. Much of the high ground of the plateau is now arable, with pasture in the valleys especially on the steeper slopes.
- The Kennet and Avon Canal, which connected Bristol to London and was completed in 1810, enabled the export of stone and coal from the area, and the import of sugar from Bristol and of other luxury goods (for example from the Potteries and Birmingham). It was supplanted after the opening of the Great Western Railway in 1841.
- There are very low to extremely low levels of dispersed settlement. The present predominant pattern of nucleated settlement had developed by the 12th century, replacing an earlier, more dispersed pattern of hamlets and farmsteads. Farmsteads developed, usually expanding in their scale, within or on the edge of villages, or around the wide central greens or commons typical of this area.

Landscape and settlement

- Some isolated farmsteads are located on medieval, high-status sites or relate to shrunken hamlets or villages, and can be associated with earthwork remains of medieval settlements and associated field systems. Others can represent new sites established from the 16th century, relating to piecemeal enclosure of the landscape of former open fields and concentrated on the western scarp, in Wiltshire and Warwickshire, in the valleys to the north and east of Stroud and the central valleys between Moreton-in-Marsh and Bourton-on-the-Water.
- Farmsteads associated with 18th- and 19th-century regular and large-scale enclosure, either of former open fields or of long-term pasture (including open fields laid down to grass from the medieval period), are most common on the thinner soils of the high wolds, particularly in the centre and east of the area. The high wolds have occasional woodland blocks and shelterbelts (typically 18th century or later) with dry stone walls but also with hedgerows.
- Common edge settlement, the result of increasing population resulting from the wool



Medieval estate farms were based along the western scarp, with access to the sheep pastures on the wolds, and within the wolds. This is the 13-bay barn, its roof built from base crucks, built between 1294 and 1306 to serve the estates of Gloucester Abbey during a peak period in the direct management of secular and ecclesiastical estates. It is one of a number of highly significant medieval barns within and around the Cotswolds. Photo © Bob Edwards

trade pushing at available space, is common in the Stroud Valley area.

- The valley bottoms throughout the area have water meadows and tree-lined scarp slopes, scrub, beech woodland, hedgerows and tree clumps, and some species-rich grassland.
- Irregular fields resulting from medieval woodland clearance are concentrated in the Stroud valleys. Medieval or earlier woodland is concentrated along the western scarp and valley edges, in the Stroud Valley area, in By Brook Valley in Wiltshire, around Chedworth,

in Cirencester Park and in the remnants of the Wychwood to the east.

- Designed landscapes, mostly dating from the late 17th century to early 20th-century Arts and Crafts, are a distinctive feature. Some of these are medieval in origin. These can be associated with 19th-century estate architecture such as on the Neeld estate around Grittleton in Wiltshire. Consolidation of the large estates from the 16th century stimulated the area's fine country houses and historic parks, with landscapes ranging from formal late 17th-century to picturesque 19th-century and early 20th-century designs.

Farmstead and building types

The so-called 'Cotswolds-style' of domestic architecture was established during a comprehensive period of rebuilding in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The use of multi-gabled facades, decorative stonework and stone-mullioned windows has its origins in the late medieval domestic architecture of the area, continued into the 18th century and was, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, re-introduced by Arts and Crafts architects and patrons. Some farmstead buildings relate to these earlier phases of rebuilding, the most notable being those on high-status estates, but most date from the 18th and 19th centuries.



Loose courtyard farmsteads in Winderton, where farms remained within the village after the last phase of enclosure around the village in 1854. Elsewhere in the parish the enclosures date from the 15th century, relating at first to the creation of large sheep runs in tandem with depopulation and the conversion of arable to pasture. The threshing barns and other buildings here indicate the development of a mixed system of farming by the early 19th century. Photo © Historic England 29178/004

Farmstead types

- Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant. The largest loose courtyard plans (with buildings to three or four sides of the yard) and regular courtyard plans are concentrated on the plateaux, areas most subject to 18th- and 19th-century regular enclosure, and those areas of reorganised piecemeal enclosure where large farms developed between the 15th and 19th centuries. These include those with multiple yards, U-shaped plans and full courtyards with buildings to all four sides of the yard.
- Smaller-scale, loose courtyard farmsteads with working buildings to one or two sides of the yard remained within settlements and are also found within the western scarp edges where it was very difficult to reorganise the medieval pattern of fields with species-rich irregular boundaries.
- Barns are stone-built; they are typically of five bays with a central threshing floor. Gabled roofs of stone slate, and porches (sometimes full height with first-floor granaries) and lean-tos for cattle are common.
- Combination barns, typically with cow house, stabling and first-floor granary, are a highly distinctive building type. Some are of early 18th-century or earlier date.
- Granary, cart shed and stable ranges are commonly attached to barns, sometimes making a distinctive overall L-plan to the principal building in the farmstead group.
- Shelter sheds to cattle yards are a common feature, and they include some rare surviving 18th-century examples.

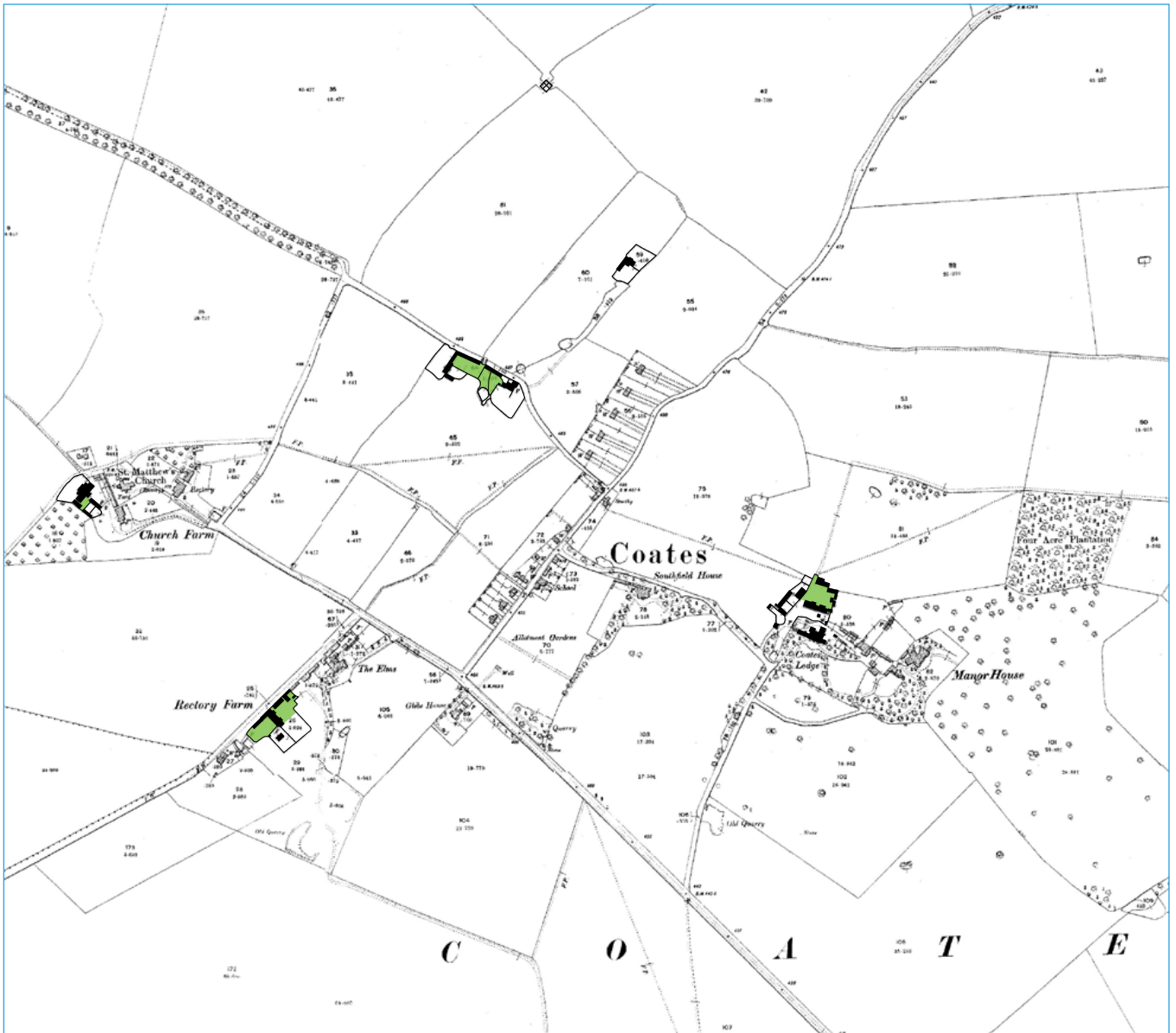
- Stables are a common feature, and on high status and gentry farmsteads they can be large in scale and architecturally ornate.
- Outfarms and field barns from the 19th century are found throughout the area, the former being concentrated on the high wolds.

Building types

- From the 15th century and sometimes earlier, farmsteads developed within villages: on the sites of shrunken medieval settlements in the wolds and within fields enclosed from the open wolds and open fields.
- Farmsteads and their buildings testify to the historic importance of arable agriculture across this area. Medium to large-scale courtyard plans are predominant, the largest and most regular in their plan form being concentrated on the plateaux. Large barns, often two or even more to a farmstead, stables, cart sheds and granaries comprise the key building types, sometimes combined in one multifunctional range.
- A distinctive feature are those farmsteads that developed in close association with manorial sites and the centres of estates.



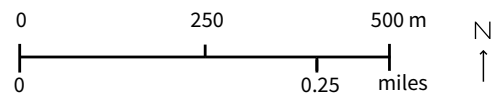
Village-based farmsteads in Little Barrington (TOP) and in a view towards Guiting Power (BELOW).
Photo © Jeremy Lake



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




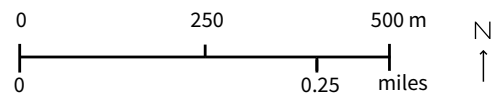
Coates

Coates is a hamlet of clearly planned groups of semi-detached cottages with four farmsteads loosely clustered around it. Two of the three farms are high status, Church Farm and the farm associated with the Manor House, and the third is the Rectory Farm. The two larger farms have regular multi-yard plans whilst the others have regular L-plan ranges consisting of a threshing barn and attached stables and shelter sheds. The Manor House has a small area of parkland to the east. South-east of Coates, the fields generally have straight boundaries although the occasional irregular boundary hints at this area being reorganised piecemeal enclosure. The straightness of the road to the south-east is typical of an enclosure road. To the north-west of the settlement are medium-scale, irregular fields of piecemeal enclosure, possibly enclosing former open fields.



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



Cherington

This map extract shows an area of higher ground on the north side of the valley of the River Stour in the north of the Character Area. Three villages lying almost end to end in the valley, and a fourth village to the west had land that stretched up the valley side to the downland on the top of Cherington Hill, a characteristic pattern of parish boundaries in many limestone landscapes. Whilst most of the farmsteads were located within the villages, isolated farmsteads developed on the higher ground – Burmington Grange probably being a former monastic grange farm located at the edge of the parish and associated with piecemeal enclosures, some boundaries with distinctive, shallow S curves suggesting the presence of former open field strips. The dog-leg turns in the parish boundaries on the south side of Cherington Hill, which do not relate to the present field boundaries, are also indicative of the headlands of adjacent open field systems. Further north, the parish boundaries become more sinuous, suggesting they were cutting across a less regularly enclosed landscape rather than an unenclosed landscape. Medium scale farmsteads, typically courtyard plans with an L-plan element and detached buildings, are set within the present fields that are probably 18th-century enclosures.



A village farmstead at Brimpsfield, where the house and attached stables face the village street and a courtyard lies to the rear. Photo © Jeremy Lake



This farmstead has a loose courtyard arrangement with an early to mid-19th-century barn, stables, cattle housing and granary built around all four sides of the yard. Photo © Jeremy Lake



The russet-coloured stone used for the barn at Swalcliffe in Oxfordshire, like the other traditional buildings in the village, is typical of the area around Banbury and extending northwards into the Northamptonshire Uplands. The barn of c.1400 was always the principal building within this loose courtyard arrangement of buildings, which were built to serve the estates of New College in Oxford. Photo © Historic England NMR 26946 011



View into a village farmstead at Duntisbourne Abbots north of Cirencester. Buildings from the 17th to 19th centuries include a threshing barn facing the road and a granary served by steps. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Regular courtyard arrangements, often with barns at the centre of multi-yard arrangements, are typical of the high plateaux. Photo © Jeremy Lake



High-status farmsteads, with high-quality stonework and architectural detail to farmhouses and barns, can be located on shrunken settlement sites within fields enclosed on a piecemeal basis between the 15th and 18th centuries, as here, close to Duntisbourne Abbots and west of Guiting Power. Photos © Jeremy Lake



An early 19th-century barn, like many of this date, built with an off-centre threshing floor and also with the high-quality dressed stonework and stone-coped gables typical of Cotswold farmstead architecture. Photo © Jeremy Lake

Lean-to outshots could provide open-fronted shelter sheds for cattle (right) or looseboxes for bulls and intensive fattening of stock. Photo © Jeremy Lake



A finely-detailed, early 18th-century regular U-shaped layout close to Stroud, with lofted stables flanking the barn. Photo © Jeremy Lake

This early to mid-18th-century barn west of Tetbury is attached to a granary or cart shed to the right. Photo © Jeremy Lake



This L-shaped arrangement is typical of the Cotswolds, as also is the incorporation of the stable and its granary (with external stone steps) in the end bay of the threshing barn and the low cow house in the foreground. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Another typical arrangement, on a farmstead that served fields enclosed in the 15th century on the eastern edge of Cleeve Hill, with a stable range extending from the barn and a small granary incorporated in the barn porch. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Staddle barns, where the threshing barn is raised off the floor by staddle stones, are a feature of the southern chalk downland of England. Most were built in the mid-18th to early 19th centuries, and surviving examples are very rare. This example has a horse walk for powering threshing machinery inside the barn, another very rare survival. Photo © Jeremy Lake



This large barn displays another commonly-encountered feature, which is the incorporation of a cart shed and stables into the barn and a throughway for offloading the harvested corn crop. Photo © Jeremy Lake





Open-fronted shelter sheds facing cattle yards are common. Photo © Jeremy Lake



A cart shed. Cart sheds were often built with gable entries, as shown here. Photo © Jeremy Lake

A stable with a first-floor granary, a large-scale example of a locally distinctive farmstead building. Photo © Jeremy Lake



A small, roadside field barn for cattle, a once-common but now rare building type. Photo © Jeremy Lake

A field barn with an attached stable close to arable land and meadows in Chedworth. Photo © Jeremy Lake



An outfarm, dominated by its threshing barn and with cattle yards, on the high wolds north of water meadows in the Windrush valley. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Modest, isolated shelter sheds for cattle are another distinctive feature of the Cotswolds. Photo © Bob Edwards



Many stone buildings display evidence for phasing in their construction. Corrugated iron was used in this area from the late 19th century. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Roman tiles and plain tiles were used, but in limited numbers. Photo © Jeremy Lake

Materials and detail

- The use of limestone for stone walling and slate roofing is a highly distinctive and consistent feature of this area.
- Quarrying had developed into a major industry by the medieval period, supplying stone for buildings in the area and further afield.
- Most farmsteads were built in local limestone and stone slates, small quarries and shallow 'delves' for extracting roofing stone being a feature of the area.
- There is occasional use of plain tile and Roman tiles, mostly dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



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 part of 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. For more detailed guidance on farmsteads in Wiltshire see the Wiltshire Farmsteads Guidance on the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre's website at <http://www.wshc.eu/visiting-the-centre/24-our-services/archaeology/253-wiltshire-farmsteads.html>

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