



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Isle of Wight

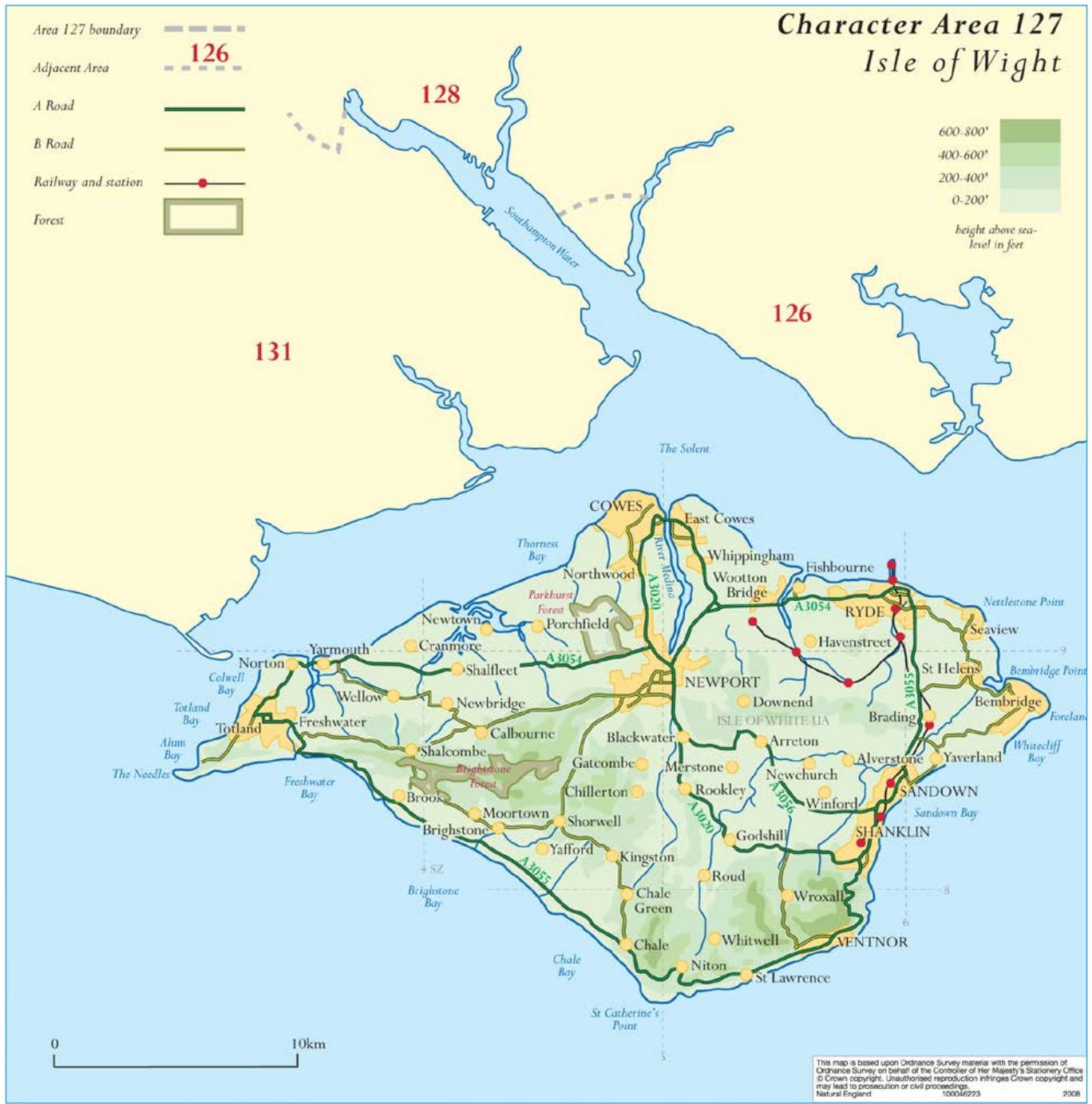
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 127



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: An unusual regular E-plan complex consisting of a barn with long ranges of open-fronted sheds, mostly shelter sheds for cattle with a cart shed at the end of the rear range. Photo © Bob Edwards



This map shows the Isle of Wight, with the numbers of neighbouring National Character Areas around it. The key sub-areas are:

1. Northern clay lands
2. Chalk downs
3. South coastal plain

Summary

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

The Isle of Wight is a small island off the south coast of England, separated from the mainland by the Solent. It has a diverse landscape exhibiting at a small scale the key characteristics of much of lowland England. About 50% of the island forms the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and half of the coastline is Heritage Coast, whilst 11% is defined as urban, 67% is cultivated and 12% is woodland.

Historic character

- There is a low density of village-based and isolated farmsteads in the landscape in the chalk downs, with higher densities in the northern claylands and south coastal plain.
- As with much of the downland of southern England, medium to large-scale loose courtyard plans, typically with two or three detached working farm buildings standing around a yard area, are the most common plan form. There are some large, regular courtyard plan farmsteads built for large estates.
- Barns are typically unaisled, of four or five bays. Many were 18th century and earlier. Two or three threshing barns, including some of more than five bays, can be found on some of the larger farmsteads within and adjacent to the downland.
- Outfarms and field barns are of 19th-century date.

Significance

- There are high numbers of recorded 18th-century and earlier farmstead buildings, except in the areas of smaller pastoral farming to the north.
- There are some large-scale estate farmsteads.
- Detached granaries have been especially vulnerable to loss.
- Complete traditional farmsteads – typical of the arable-based agriculture of the area, with threshing barns, stabling, cart shed and a granary, and sometimes with shelter sheds to yards – are very rare.
- Some rare examples survive, of long-straw style thatch roofing.

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 (at least 19.4%, the national average being 32%). The project also noted an above-average

percentage (8.7%, the national average being

7.5%) of listed working buildings showing obvious signs of structural disrepair.

Historic development

- By the end of the prehistoric period, much of the woodland on the island had been cleared on the areas of lighter soils such as the chalk downs and areas of gravels in the north of the island, whilst agricultural exploitation of some of the poor soils resulted in the development

of heathland. Large estates developed as a feature of the island in the Roman and medieval periods, followed by small-scale, gentry estates with many fine houses of the 16th to 18th centuries. Many of the manors were associated with deer parks.

Landscape and settlement

- Carisbrooke Castle was an important administrative centre, although the main urban centre lay a few miles away at Newport. Other towns developed at Newtown and Yarmouth in the early 13th century. Newtown failed as a borough and is now largely given over to fields.
- Generally, the good fertility of the soils, particularly on the greensand, encouraged a focus on arable crops, principally wheat. The downland of the chalk ridge running across the island carried large flocks of sheep. On the clays of the north of the island, permanent pasture predominated.
- Parts of the island, like the other chalk landscapes of southern England, saw the early development of large-scale commercial farming from the late 15th and 16th centuries.

This increased in the late 18th and early 19th centuries when the Napoleonic War forced up wheat prices, although the production of liquid milk for urban markets increased from the late 1870s, with low wheat and wool prices.

- The resorts of Shanklin, Ryde and Ventnor developed in the mid-19th century, especially after the development of the railway. The island increased in popularity as a tourist destination after Queen Victoria and Prince Albert chose Osborne House as one of their homes.
- In the 20th century there was some agricultural diversification with market gardening – especially in the east – and pig-rearing becoming more important elements of the local economy.

Farmstead and building types

Farmstead types

Across the island, generally nucleated settlement is intermixed with dispersed farmsteads and hamlets.

Northern Claylands

- Many small, isolated farmsteads are intermixed with small villages.
- Fields are generally small and irregular, representing enclosure through assarting or

piecemeal enclosure from the late medieval period. There are some relatively small areas of regular enclosure, especially to the south and west of Parkhurst Forest.

- There was some reorganisation of boundaries, creating larger fields and improving drainage.

- Relict wood pasture, and many small blocks of woodland, remain in this area.

Chalk Downs

- There is a low density of settlement with a small number of larger, isolated farmsteads and hamlets.
- Medium to large fields represent enclosure of the downs from the 15th century through to the 19th century. Later phases of enclosure resulted in regular field patterns.

South Coast Plain

- Small villages are intermixed with isolated farmsteads, many of which date from the 14th century or earlier.
- As with much of south-east England, loose courtyard plans, typically with two or three detached, working, farm buildings standing around a yard area, are the most common plan form.
- Regular L-plans, some being the result of a shelter shed being attached to an earlier barn, are found in all areas.
- There are few large, regular courtyard and multi-yard plan farmsteads, these being confined to improving estates of the mid to late 19th-century.

Building types

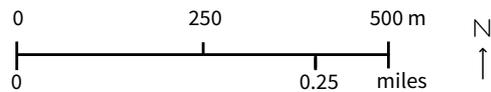
- Barns are typically of four or five bays and usually unaisled. Smaller, three-bay barns are found in the areas of wood pasture. Combination barn ranges, with two or three bays of animal housing in line with a five-bay barn, are sometimes the result of the extension of an earlier barn.
- Stables for working horses and, on larger farms, a separate stable for the riding horses is typical.
- Granaries were provided on most farmsteads. These may be free-standing buildings, typically timber-framed and raised on staddle stones, or be incorporated into another building such as a loft in a barn or above a cart shed.
- Buildings for cattle typically date from the 19th century and include open-fronted shelter sheds and cow houses arranged around yards and often connected to earlier barns.
- Cart sheds were a feature of the majority of farmsteads which would have required several wagons and other implements associated with arable cultivation.
- Pigsties were found on many farms, especially where dairying became a part of the farming enterprise in the 19th century. Many pigsties have been lost and so good, surviving examples are becoming rare.
- Sheep were rarely provided with buildings in the farmstead as the yards and shelter sheds could be used for shearing or lambing.
- Outfarms and field barns associated with enclosure of higher downland have mostly been demolished or are derelict.



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

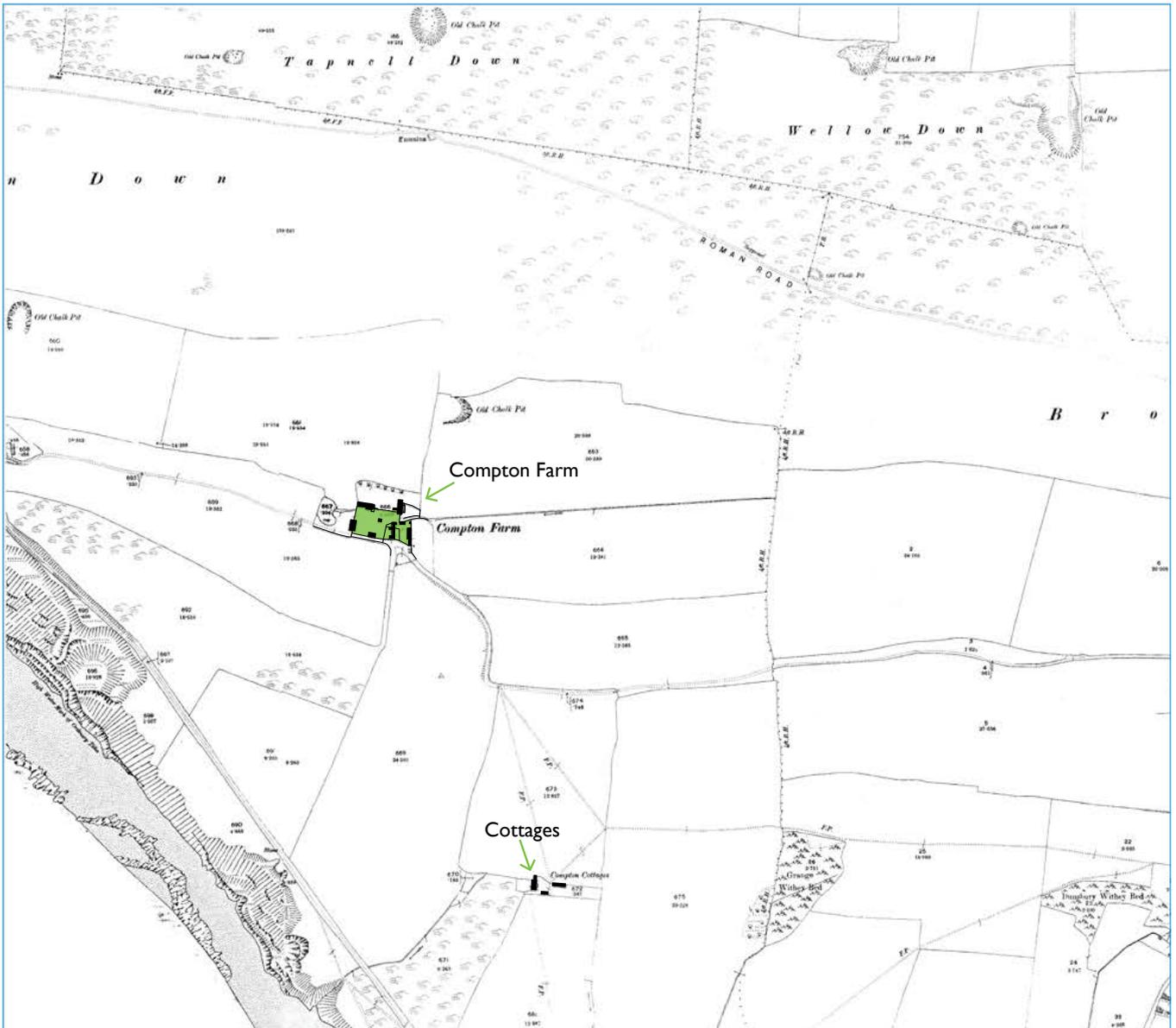


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



Staplers

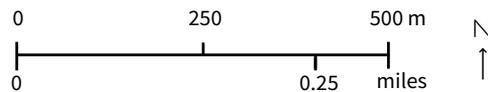
The northern part of the island is an undulating clay landscape containing small villages intermixed with numerous dispersed farmsteads. These are set within a pattern of small and medium-sized irregular fields. These enclosures were created through the assarting of woodland (creating small irregular fields as can be seen to the east of Staplers) or piecemeal enclosure resulting in medium-scale irregular fields (south of Little Pan). These early fields could be subject to reorganisation and boundary loss. Areas of common were subject to encroachment (for example north of Mornhill, where the curving boundary of the block of fields suggests earlier enclosure) and more formal enclosure in the 18th and 19th centuries, resulting in blocks of fields with straight, parallel boundaries. However, small pockets of unenclosed common survived into the late 19th century. Within the areas of ancient enclosure, small and medium-sized farmsteads, generally of loose courtyard form, contain stone-built barns of three to five bays sometimes linked to cattle housing. There are also occasional larger farmsteads, including regular multi-yard plans, such as Staplers Farm and Little Staplers. There were occasional field barns and outfarms within this landscape.



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



Compton Farm

In common with the other chalk down areas of southern England the chalk ridge that runs across the island was associated with large farms. The higher downs provided grazing for the sheep flocks, with arable fields on the lower slopes. Compton Farm lies within a dry valley on the south side of the ridge, with fields created through piecemeal enclosure, possibly dating from the 17th century when the farmhouse was built. The former downland was enclosed in the 19th century but largely remained as rough grazing. The farmstead is a typical downland farm with two barns, a staddle granary, stables and 19th-century housing for cattle.



An isolated farmstead set within a landscape of small and medium-sized fields with large, often wooded hedgerows. The fields are the result of piecemeal enclosure from the medieval period, although there has been a level of reorganization and amalgamation. Photo © Bob Edwards



Although this farmstead may have early origins, the regular fields bounded by low, thorn hedges were laid out in the late 18th or 19th centuries, either re-writing an earlier field system or enclosing an area of common. Photo © Bob Edwards



Small, loose courtyards with detached buildings facing into a yard are the predominant farmstead plan across the island. Photo © Bob Edwards



Regular L-plan ranges consisting of a barn and an attached shelter shed or cow house are also common. Photo © Bob Edwards



An unusual regular E-plan complex consisting of a barn with long ranges of open-fronted sheds, mostly shelter sheds for cattle, with a cart shed at the end of the rear range. Photo © Bob Edwards



Barns are typically between three and five bays; this range has a five-bay threshing barn with an additional two-bay element to the left, which may have provided stabling or cattle housing. Photo © Bob Edwards



A small, three-bay barn with an attached building for animals. It is common to find small barns set against the roadside. Photo © Bob Edwards



A large granary above a cart shed attached to a threshing barn, typical of the large arable farms of the chalk downs. Photo © Bob Edwards



A stable range with a wagon or trap house. At the end is a lower doorway to a loose box, possibly for calves. Photo © Bob Edwards



The banding of stone rubble is a characteristic feature of many farm buildings, especially barns, on the island. Additionally, the Isle of Wight is one of the few areas in southern England where chalk block was used for external walling. Photo © Bob Edwards

Materials and detail

- Timber-framing was typically used for medieval houses and continued in use for some farm buildings into the 19th century.
- Brick was widely used from the 18th century.
- Chalk block is one of the principal building materials on the island, and there are pockets of good building stone (Greensand at the base of the downs and limestone on the north coast near Quarr).
- Stonework is usually uncoursed rubble within wide, coursed bands: a distinctive building technique, characteristic of the island.
- Plain clay tiles are the most commonly encountered roofing material, although occasionally a combination of limestone slates and tile are seen on some of the oldest buildings.
- There are some rare surviving examples of long-straw style thatch roofing.



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