



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Hampshire Downs

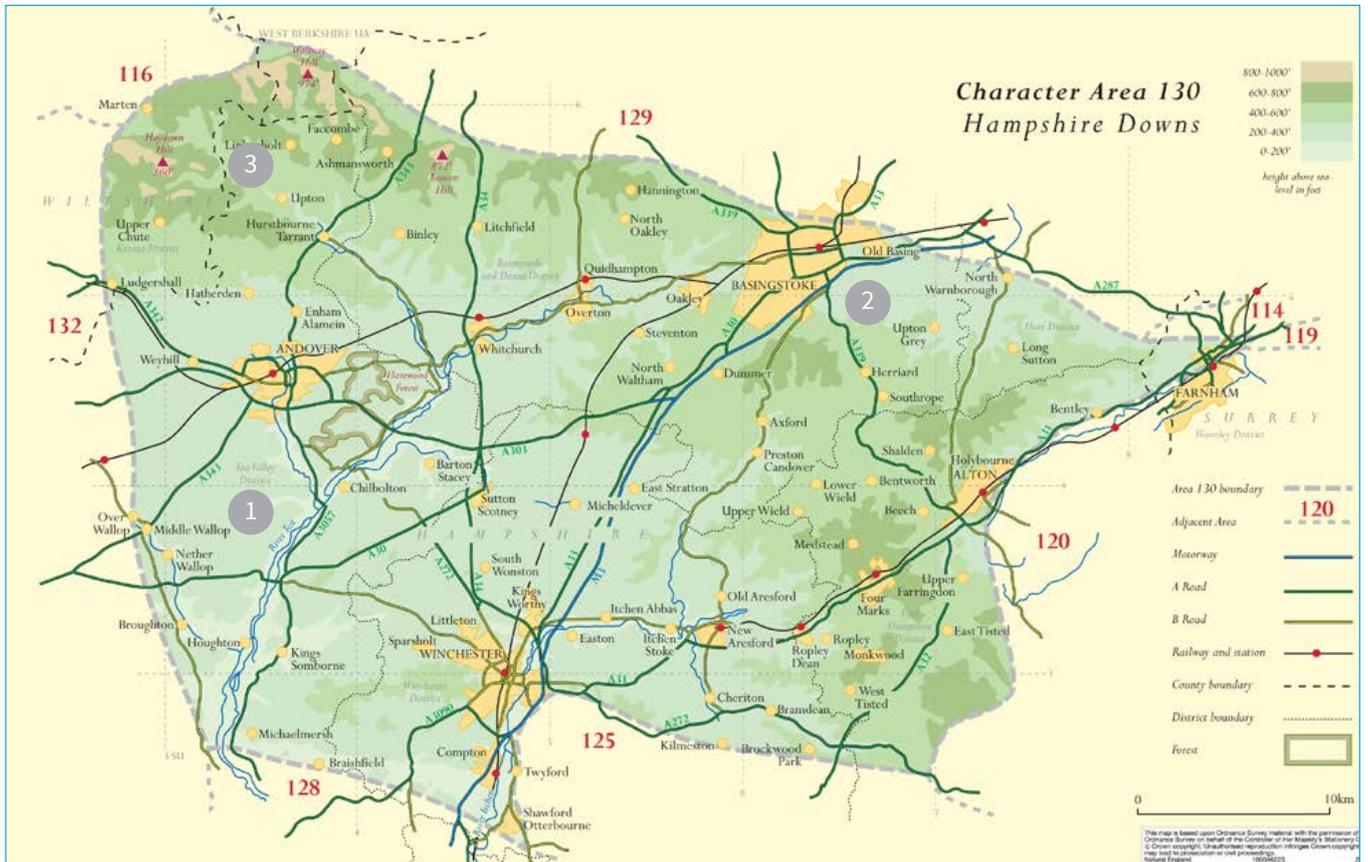
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 130



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: In the west of the area, settlement is predominantly located within the chalk stream valleys, resulting in long, linear settlements where most historic farmsteads were located, as here at Hurstbourne Priors. Here, there is a high-status farm with larger, timber-framed and thatched barns adjacent to the church. Smaller paddocks are found near the village, with fields of post-medieval piecemeal enclosure – with species-rich hedgerows – surrounding the village where there were once the open fields. Photo © Bob Edwards



The Hampshire Downs, showing the numbers of the surrounding Character Areas. The key sub-areas are:

1. The valley-based settlements of the west and south. Farmsteads were concentrated in villages and hamlets along the river valleys with later movement of farmsteads into the downs following enclosure, largely during the 18th and 19th centuries.
2. The north-east, where the topography is less dominated by river valleys and so small villages and hamlets are scattered across the downs. Here, there was a greater extent of piecemeal enclosure from the 15th century.
3. The north-west corner of the area, where villages and hamlets are often found on ridge-tops rather than in the valleys. These areas were also subject to earlier piecemeal enclosure, and there are some areas with higher densities of farmsteads within areas enclosed from woodland in the medieval period.

Summary

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

The Hampshire Downs form part of the broad belt of chalk linking the Dorset Downs and Salisbury Plain in the west with the South Downs in the east, and the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs in the north. Of the Character Area, 80% is cultivated, 6% is defined as urban whilst 25% lies within the East Hampshire and North Wessex Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), and 11% within the South Downs National Park boundary.

Historic character

- This area shares many characteristics with other downland landscapes of southern England. Very large arable-based holdings, by national standards, were provided with large and visually prominent courtyard farmsteads for crop processing and storage, which make the farmsteads of this area particularly prominent in the landscape. Some smaller-scale farmsteads survive within villages.
- Timber-framing was the predominant building technique used across the area for barns up to the 19th century, with flint and brick (with clay tile or Welsh slate roofs) used more widely from the late 18th century.

Significance

- Farmsteads Mapping shows that 71% of recorded farmsteads retain some traditional farmstead character, 50% retaining more than 50% of their historic form based on Ordnance Survey maps of c 1900. This rate of survival is average compared to the other Character Areas where farmsteads have been mapped in the south-east of England.
- This area has a relatively moderate survival of pre-1700 buildings on these farmsteads, with 19.7% of farmsteads having a pre-1700 farmhouse and 5.9% having a pre-1700 working building, whilst 3.2% of recorded farmsteads have both a pre-1700 farmhouse and a working building. These sites are of particular significance.
- Eighteen percent of farmsteads have an 18th-century farmhouse and 10% include an 18th-century working building, mostly barns. It was common to re-face earlier farmhouses in the 18th century and so earlier fabric is likely to survive within some houses.
- Complete farmsteads with threshing barns, stables, granaries and shelter sheds for cattle, are rare. These include some of the earliest surviving courtyard farmsteads (dating from the 18th century and earlier) in the country, relating to the exceptionally early development of large, capital-based arable farms in parts of the southern English downland.
- Survivals of small, village-based farmsteads are rare.
- The aisled barn is an iconic feature of the downland landscape and its settlements.

- Long-straw thatch roofing, once common, is now a rare and distinctive feature of this area.
- Boundary walls are dominant and critical to the setting, particularly of village-based farmsteads. Cob walls are a feature of the valley-based villages in the west of the area.

Present and future issues

- The Photo Image Project (2006) recorded below-average rates of conversion of listed buildings to non-agricultural (primarily domestic) uses (20-30%, the national average being 34%). This figure underestimates the present total, and the pressures for residential conversion will continue to increase.

Historic development

- This area shares many characteristics with other downland landscapes of southern England. Very large arable-based holdings, in a national context, were provided with large courtyard farmsteads for crop processing and storage, which make the farmsteads of this area particularly prominent in the landscape. Some smaller-scale farmsteads survive within villages.
- This was an intensively cultivated and settled area in the prehistoric period, much of the open down reverting to grassland in the Saxon period. The Church was a major landowner with Winchester, the richest bishopric in the country in the medieval period, at the heart of the area.
- Sheep-corn systems of agriculture dominated this area from the medieval period to the 19th century; sheep grazed on the open downs, provided wool and, through their manure and the process of folding the flock on the arable land, supported valuable corn production on the lower slopes of the valleys.
- This area, and other chalk landscapes of southern England, saw the early development of large-scale commercial farming from the late 15th and 16th centuries with the Church in particular moving from demesne farming to leasing out large holdings for a cash rent.
- The small farm buildings of the family farmers, who were unable to continue farming without the common flock manuring their fields after enclosure, were generally not replaced, but many of their houses survive.
- The pace of enclosure and ploughing up of the downland increased in the late 18th to early 19th centuries when the Napoleonic War forced up wheat prices.
- In the late 1870s, low wheat and wool prices forced some chalkland farmers to look to dairying, producing liquid milk for urban markets, which was one of the few profitable areas of farming. However, many farmers intensified wheat production, replacing sheep flocks with the new, artificial fertilizers that were available and which in turn allowed more downland to be ploughed up.
- Since 1940, this area has further developed into one of the most intensely-cultivated arable areas in England.

Landscape and settlement

West and south

- This has a predominant pattern of village-based settlement with a low density of isolated farmsteads. Linear villages are strung along the valleys of the Test and Itchen and their tributaries. Farmstead sites in villages and hamlets are often of medieval origin, when they related to the open-field cultivation of common fields. Where they survive (and pre-1750 farmhouses with no farm buildings are common) they are typically very prominent features. Farm buildings are typically sited close to village streets and are encountered on the edge of villages.
- Farmsteads, particularly at the edge of villages, can be seen in relationship to long rectangular fields – typically the result of pre-1750 enclosure of common fields – which extend up the valley slopes.
- On the downland are some medieval farmstead sites (often the result of settlement shrinkage).
- Downland farms are generally associated with medium to large or very large fields, predominantly created through enclosure

by agreement between the 16th and 18th centuries. These were sometimes associated with the creation of new farmsteads.

- Otherwise, the majority of isolated farmsteads were created or largely rebuilt post-1750. Enclosure of the once extensive downland increased during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, resulting in the large-scale, regular fields, particularly of the open, arable areas.

North-east

- In the north-east of the area there is not the strong pattern of river valleys to dominate the settlement pattern and so small nucleated settlements are scattered across the downs. There is a high survival of pre-1750 buildings in this part of the Character Area.

North-west

- In the north-west of the area, villages and hamlets tend to be located on the ridge tops.
- Irregular fields of early enclosure from woodland are concentrated in this area, where dairying and cattle rearing was a major element of the agricultural system.

Farmstead and building types

In common with other chalk downland areas in the south of England, the buildings of the farmsteads of the Hampshire Downs demonstrate the importance of arable farming, but rarely do they reflect the importance of sheep. This was an area of large and capital intensive farms, there being extensive evidence for large barns and courtyard layouts dating from the 17th century and sometimes earlier.

Farmstead types

- The chalklands were characterised by large, arable-based farms, which developed from the 15th century and by the 19th century were amongst the largest by national standards. Increases in grain production and yields in the 18th and early 19th centuries often led to the construction of an additional barn and, in many cases, the enlargement and adaptation of earlier barns. In this way, many farms were provided with two or more barns and, in some cases, a staddle barn (a type of threshing barn raised on staddle stones, found in the southern English downs).
- Loose courtyard plans are predominant, and, where bounded by buildings of 18th-century or earlier date, include the earliest surviving farmstead layouts in the country.

- Large farmsteads may have buildings on all sides of the yard whereas smaller holdings will have buildings on one or two sides of the yard only. Some courtyard groups may have subsidiary, individual ranges or buildings.
- Regular courtyard plan types, including some E-plan and full regular courtyard plans, are

usually found on 19th-century farmsteads associated with the enclosure of downland or larger estates.

- Some of the smaller farms in the north-west of the area had buildings set in an L-shape plan.

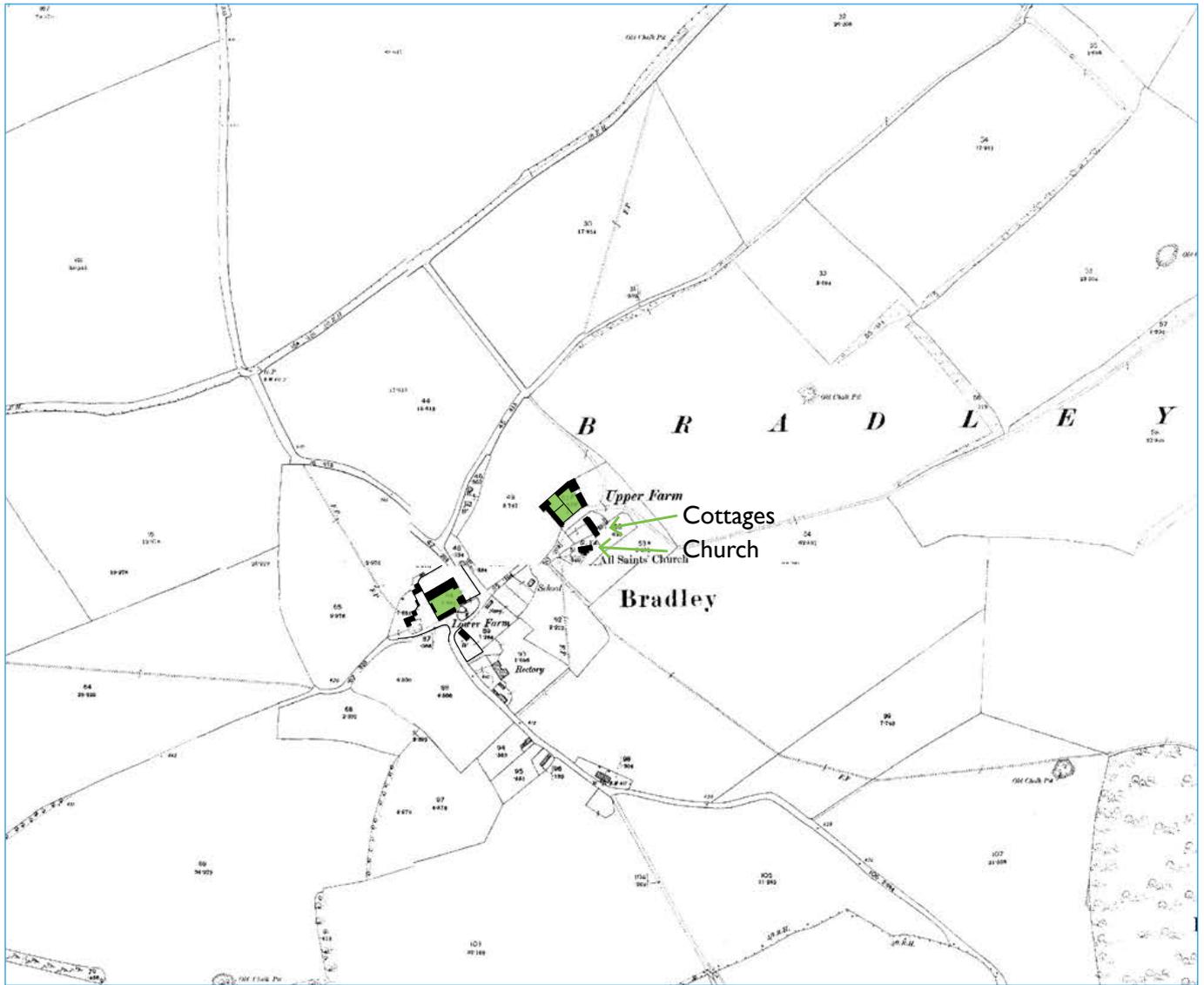
Building types

- This area, that stretches into the downland areas to the north, west and, to a lesser extent, to the south, lies within one of the main concentrations of timber-framed, aisled barns in the country. Barns are typically of five bays, sometimes being the result of the enlargement of three-bay barns.

- Staddle barns, a late 18th-century variation on the threshing barn, are occasionally found in the adjacent downland Character Areas.
- There are some examples of timber-framed hay barns, usually of 19th-century date, which reflect the greater emphasis on pastoral farming than in the Hampshire Downs to the



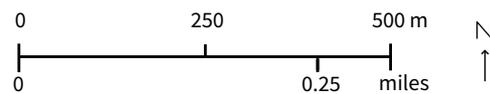
A mid-19th-century, regular E-shaped farmstead, an example of the investment in high-input high-output agriculture in this period. Photo © Bob Edwards



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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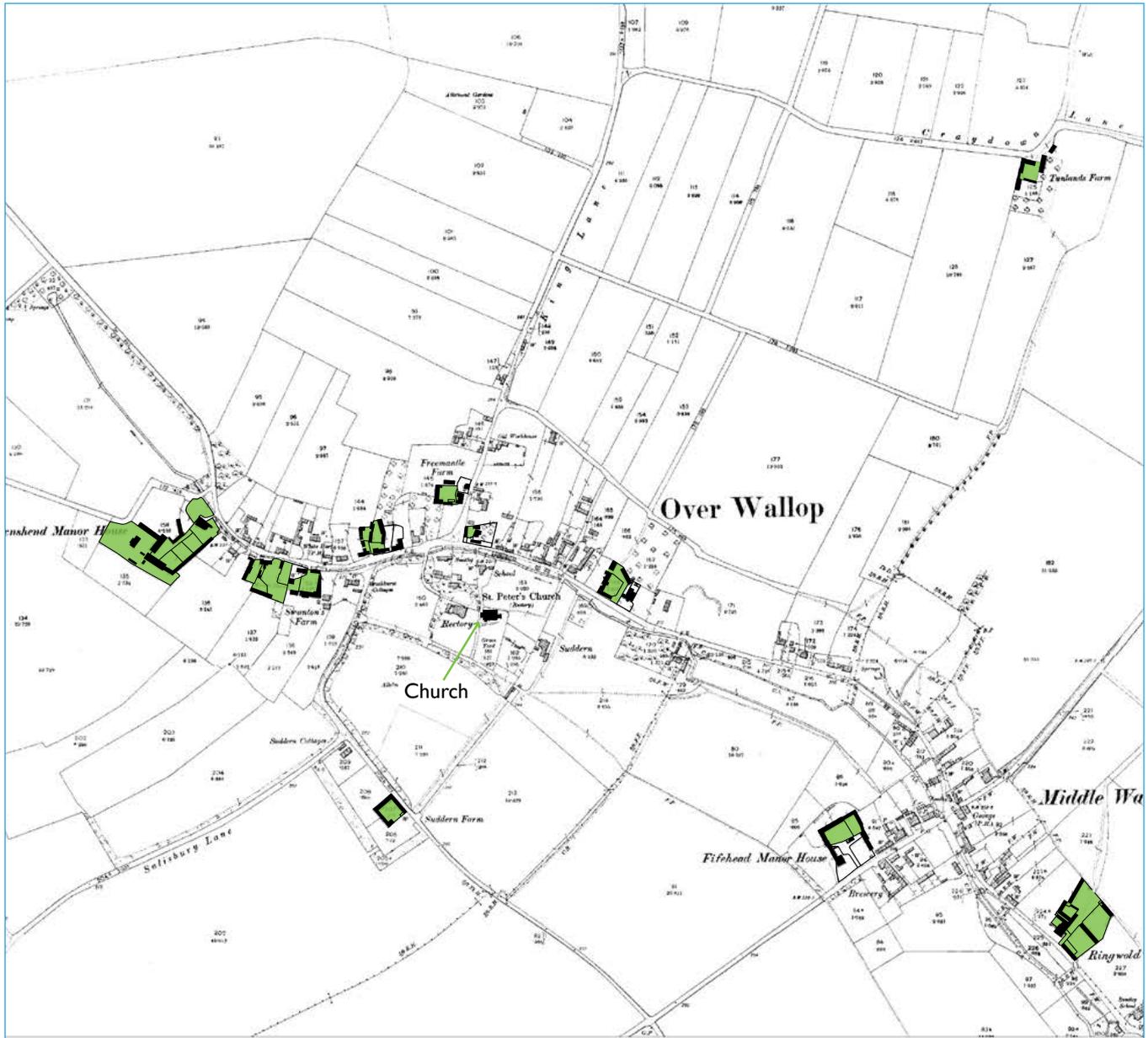


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



Bradley

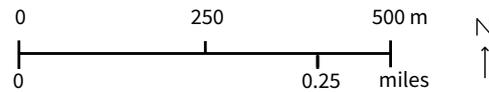
Bradley is typical of the small, irregular, nucleated settlements of the north-eastern part of the Hampshire Downs, in contrast to the linear villages lying along river valleys that dominate settlement elsewhere across this area. The village contains two large courtyard farmsteads and it is surrounded by irregular fields, which reflect a long process of piecemeal enclosure, with some straight boundaries that suggest later reorganisation and enlargement of fields. Large threshing barns are the principal buildings within the loose courtyard farmsteads in the villages and hamlets of this area.



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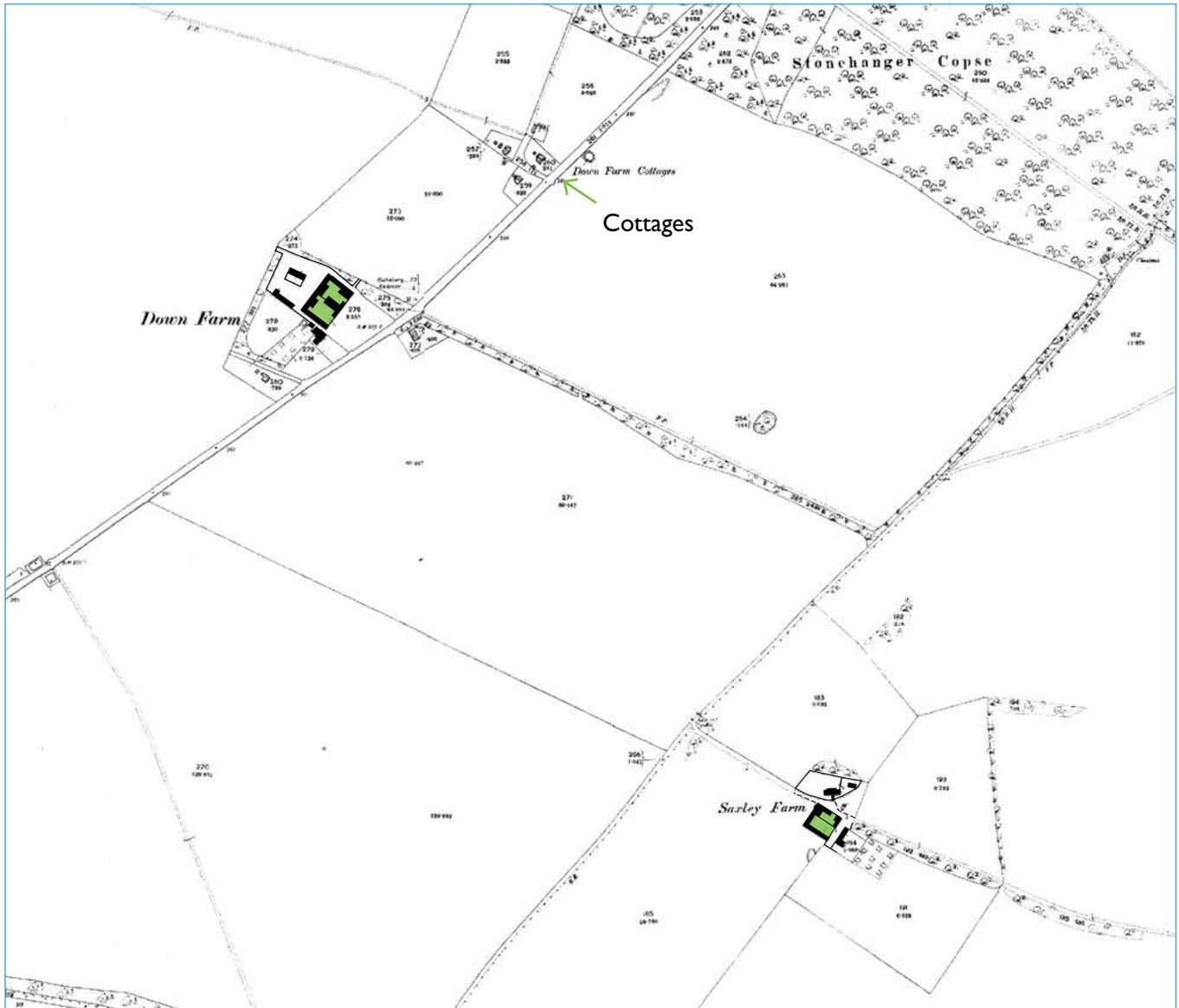


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



Over Wallop

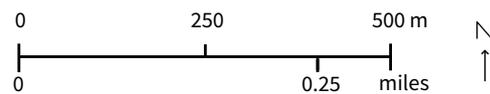
Over Wallop is one of three villages which lie end-to-end along a chalk stream valley in the western Hampshire Downs. Even after the enclosure of the open fields and downs in the late 18th century most, but not all, of the farmsteads remained in the village rather than moving out to the newly enclosed fields. Around the village are small closes, which reflect the former presence of the open fields, with larger, regular fields beyond, drawn out by the enclosure commissioners. Whilst several large farmsteads are clearly visible in the village at the end of the 19th century, most of the houses along the village street would have originally been the houses of small-scale farmers. These smaller farms were being amalgamated to form some of the largest farms in the country from the 15th century, which had correspondingly large farmsteads.



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



Abbots Ann Down

A large part of the downland in the area west of Winchester was subjected to enclosure by Parliamentary Act in the late 18th century, producing a landscape of large, regular fields and low, hawthorn hedges. Whilst many farmsteads remained located in river valleys, some of the enclosures were associated with the creation of new farmsteads, especially on the land of large estates. Down Farm is one of three regular E-plan farmsteads built on the enclosed downland south-west of Andover, whilst Saxley Farm is a regular U-plan farmstead. Notably, both farmsteads have cottages for farm labourers located nearby.



Within the linear valley-based villages of the chalk downs, as here at Over Wallop, historic farmsteads were located within the settlement and their buildings often fronted onto the street. This is a 16th- to 18th-century farmstead, partly built of earth (cob). Photo © Bob Edwards



Large parts of the higher downs were enclosed in the late 18th and early 19th century, some by Parliamentary Act. This is a typical area of such enclosure with large, regular fields and low, thorn hedges. Here, above Tichborne, an outfarm was built to serve the new fields which were some distance from the valley-based farmstead. Photo © Bob Edwards

Loose courtyard plans are the most common farmstead type seen in the Hampshire Downs. This group has two 18th-century, fully aisled, timber-framed barns, one of seven bays and one of five bays, with their distinctive hipped roofs. Also within the group is a stable, a granary and later shelter sheds for cattle. Photo © Bob Edwards



Loose courtyard plans continued to be used when solid walling was becoming common in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as at this farmstead associated with enclosure of downland in c.1800. The chalk of the Hampshire Downs was not suitable for building but the flint was widely used, especially from the later 18th century when it was combined with brick used for lacing courses, quoins and dressings to openings. Photo © Bob Edwards



A large, 19th-century, regular courtyard plan farmstead in the eastern downs with a covered yard range to the centre of the courtyard. Although there were many large estates in the Hampshire Downs, planned farmsteads are relatively uncommon and are mostly found in the eastern part of the area, where features such as covered yards can be seen. Photo © Bob Edwards



In the villages of the Test Valley and its tributaries, the large manor farms were, after the 15th century, typically leased by the gentry and sub-let to tenant farmers. They often developed as courtyard-plan steadings, such as this example with two barns: the late 16th-century aisled barn to the right and a 17th-century, ten-bay, aisled barn behind the farmhouse which itself dates from the 16th century. Photo © Bob Edwards



The massive bulk of the long-straw thatched roofs of two 17th-century, aisled, timber-framed barns set at right angles dominates the view across a chalk stream valley cutting through the downs. Note the projecting porch with its hipped roof. Photo © Bob Edwards



In the north-east of the Hampshire Downs there is a group of early 17th-century brick barns. These usually large barns were generally associated with high-status farmsteads. Photo © Bob Edwards



A large, eight-bay, aisled barn built in the late 18th century. As is often the case, this barn was added to a farmstead that had an earlier four-bay barn and there was another barn of five bays. Photo © Bob Edwards



A large, 19th-century, timber-framed threshing barn, clad in weatherboard, on an isolated farmstead created when extensive parts of the western downs were enclosed by Act of Parliament. Photo © Bob Edwards



A small, probably 17th-century, timber-framed building that may have been a small, multifunctional barn within a village. The majority of small, village-based, peasant farms had been removed from farming by the end of the 17th century, their owners becoming wage labourers on the fewer large farms. Most of the working buildings of these small farms have been lost, leaving only the former farmhouses; their small farm buildings are rare. Photo © Bob Edwards



A 17th-century, three-bay, timber-framed barn with a central threshing floor (marked by the large double doors) has later brick infill and an added bay to the far end. Photo © Bob Edwards



A timber-framed granary set on staddle stones. Most of the arable farms of the Hampshire Downs would have had a granary to store threshed grain ready for market or seed corn. The limited options for re-use of these buildings means that many have been demolished or are under threat through lack of maintenance. Photo © Bob Edwards



An unusual example of a granary built into the end of a barn, the brick arches providing ventilation below the granary floor. Photo © Bob Edwards



A small number of malthouses survive on farmsteads, although often they have few identifying features. Malthouses had a malting floor at first-floor level and a kiln to provide heat to germinate the barley. Examples retaining these features are extremely rare. Photo © Bob Edwards



A large, 18th-century stable with hayloft. Most surviving stables are built in brick or brick and flint with a plain tile or thatched roof. Early timber-framed stables are rare. Photo © Bob Edwards



The large arable farms of the Hampshire Downs required many implements and wagons which were stored in usually open-fronted sheds, although there are examples that show that one or more bays could be closed with doors. Cart sheds typically stood alongside a track into the farm or, where part of a planned range, would face outwards rather than into the yard. Cart sheds survive on many farms, often still used for the storage of small implements. Photo © Bob Edwards



Chalk mud, known as cob, was commonly used for cottages and boundary walls but is rarely seen in farm buildings. This is a cart shed with a hipped roof. Photo © Bob Edwards



Cob boundary walls to farmsteads are an important feature in many of the valley-based villages. The cob was built off a flint or brick plinth and needed to be capped, either thatch or clay tile, to prevent water getting into the wall and often the cob was left exposed or covered with a chalk slurry. Photo © Bob Edwards

Materials and detail

- Until the 17th century, timber-framing was the dominant building tradition. Timber-framing continued in use for barns and some other minor farmstead buildings.
- Brick generally replaced timber for housing by the 18th century and was often used to encase or front earlier, timber-framed buildings. There are some important examples of 16th and 17th-century brick barns.
- Plain tile is the predominant roofing material, and together with corrugated iron, this has largely replaced straw thatch.
- From the mid-19th century, slate became more common; on some estate buildings it was laid 'economically': leaving small gaps between each slate in the row to minimise the quantity required. Tile also continued to be used on new buildings.
- Chalk mud, known as cob, was commonly used for cottages and boundary walls but is rarely seen in farm buildings.



Historic England

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