



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Yardley & Whittlewood Ridge

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 91



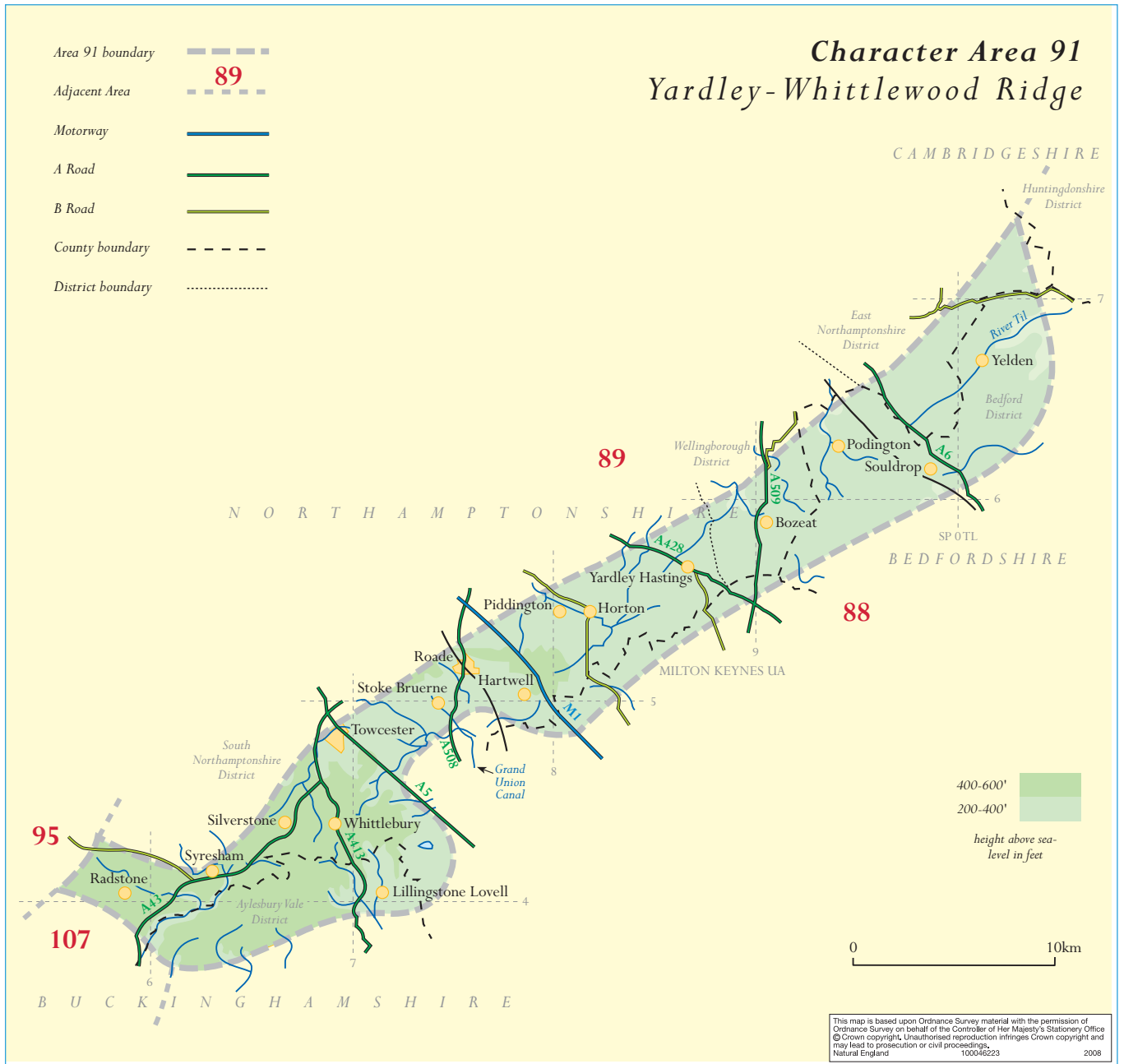
Introduction

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>).



The earliest farm buildings are found in villages, as here with this 18th-century or earlier thatched building at The Glebe House, Lillingstone Lovell. Photo © Jeremy Lake

Front cover: A mid-19th-century, multi-yard farmstead at Blenley to the east of Yardley Hastings. Photo © Jeremy Lake



This map shows the Yardley & Whittlewood Ridge with the numbers of the 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.

Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge is a broad, low ridge with a mosaic of woodland, pasture and arable land which extends from Brackley in the south-west to Raunds in the north-east and lies between Northampton to the north and Milton Keynes and Bedford to the south. Less than 3% of this area is 'urban'.

Historic character

- Most farmsteads were rebuilt in the 19th century as regular courtyard plans, following the movement of farmsteads out of villages and heavy investment by estates in agricultural improvement including enclosure and the reorganisation of farmland. Outfarms are found in these areas.
- Patterns of piecemeal enclosure are best retained around villages, where houses and some farm buildings retain evidence for earlier phases of rebuilding and changes in rural communities.

Significance

- Coherent traditional farmstead groups are rare, particularly in settlements where 16th- and 17th-century buildings (surviving in whole or in part) relate to the development of larger farms over this period.

Present and future issues

- The Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a medium proportion in this National Character Area of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (26.3%, the national average being 32%).

Historic development

- There was extensive prehistoric settlement in this area, and early settlement patterns persist in the continued use of Roman roads and settlement locations (Towcester and Irchester).
- This was an area of mixed farming – underpinned by a varied mix of well-drained limestone and poorly draining clay – with a strong emphasis in the 19th century on arable production including, as a result of draining, some of the area's heavy clays, and stock fattening with some dairying: rich pastures were offered by the area's extensive grazing marshes. Many parks and estates developed from the 16th century (for example Castle Ashby, Hinwick Hall and Stowe Park). Smaller

manor houses and gentry houses are another distinctive feature.

- The areas of medieval Royal Forest (Whittlewood, Salcey, Yardley Chase) saw increasingly extensive episodes of piecemeal clearance from the 15th century. They were

later taken into the estates of the Dukes of Grafton, who was, by the early 19th century, investing heavily in agricultural improvement and removing some areas of ancient woodland almost entirely. Nevertheless, this area is nationally of significance for its retention of ancient woodland.

Landscape and settlement

- Small 'forest villages' with open fields are set along the clayland fringes of the ridge, with limited access to wood pasture, forest 'lawns' and other woodland rights. Routeways, now with wide verges and species-rich hedgerows, provided access into this area.
- Much settlement has also developed from a high number of small, medieval woodland-edge hamlets (for example Paulerspury and Puxley), and throughout the area, earthwork remains indicate the presence of shrunken, small settlements. moated sites from the 12th

to 14th centuries are found in these areas of dispersed settlement.

- Throughout the area there are coherent pockets of piecemeal and 18th- or 19th-century regular enclosure, but also important is the extent of post-1950 boundary removal, especially to the north of Salcey Forest.
- There are fragments of ancient woodland, especially extensive in Salcey Forest with its veteran oaks, and much (for example Yardley Chase) has been replanted with conifers from the 19th century onwards.

Farmstead and building types

Pre-1750 farmstead buildings, mostly comprising barns, are almost wholly confined to settlements. These include barns converted to housing in the 19th century, which appear to date from a 17th-century phase of rebuilding reflected in many of the area's houses and also row houses of the 17th and 18th centuries, suggesting the development of large farms in that period.

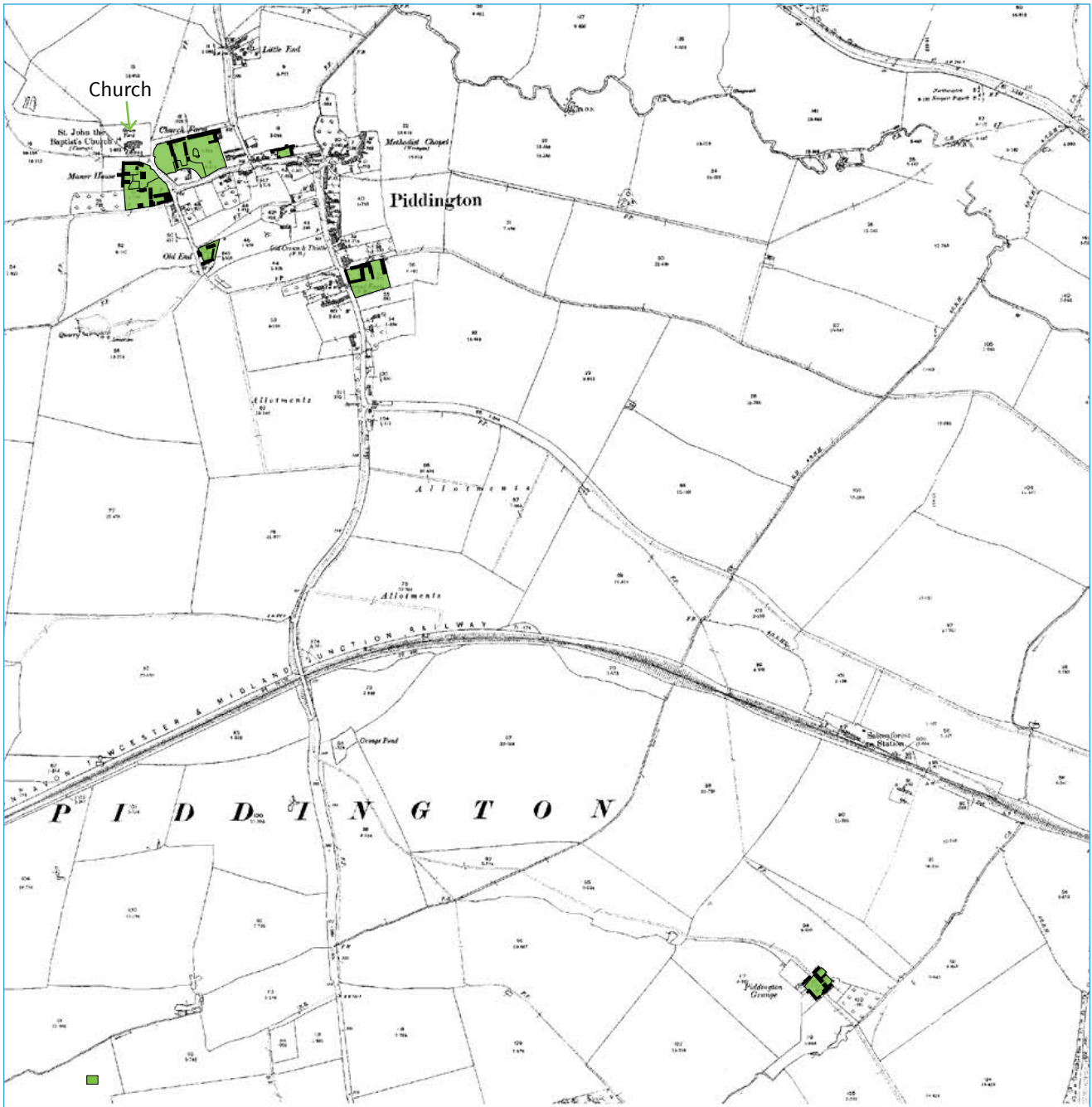
Farmstead types

- Most farms were rebuilt or extended as large-scale courtyard plans in the early to mid-19th-century: regular multi-yards that illustrate piecemeal development being most common within settlements.
- Outfarms, built to compact regular courtyard plans, are a feature of those areas with the largest farms and most intensive 19th-century investment.

Building types

- These illustrate the development of large-scale arable farms from at least the 17th century. Threshing barns are most commonly of five bays or more, and large-scale combination barns with stables, cart sheds

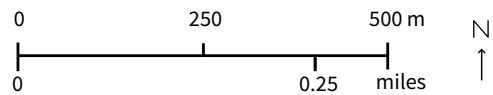
and granaries, linked to cattle yards with shelter sheds and loose boxes for fatstock, are a feature of 19th-century farmsteads.



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

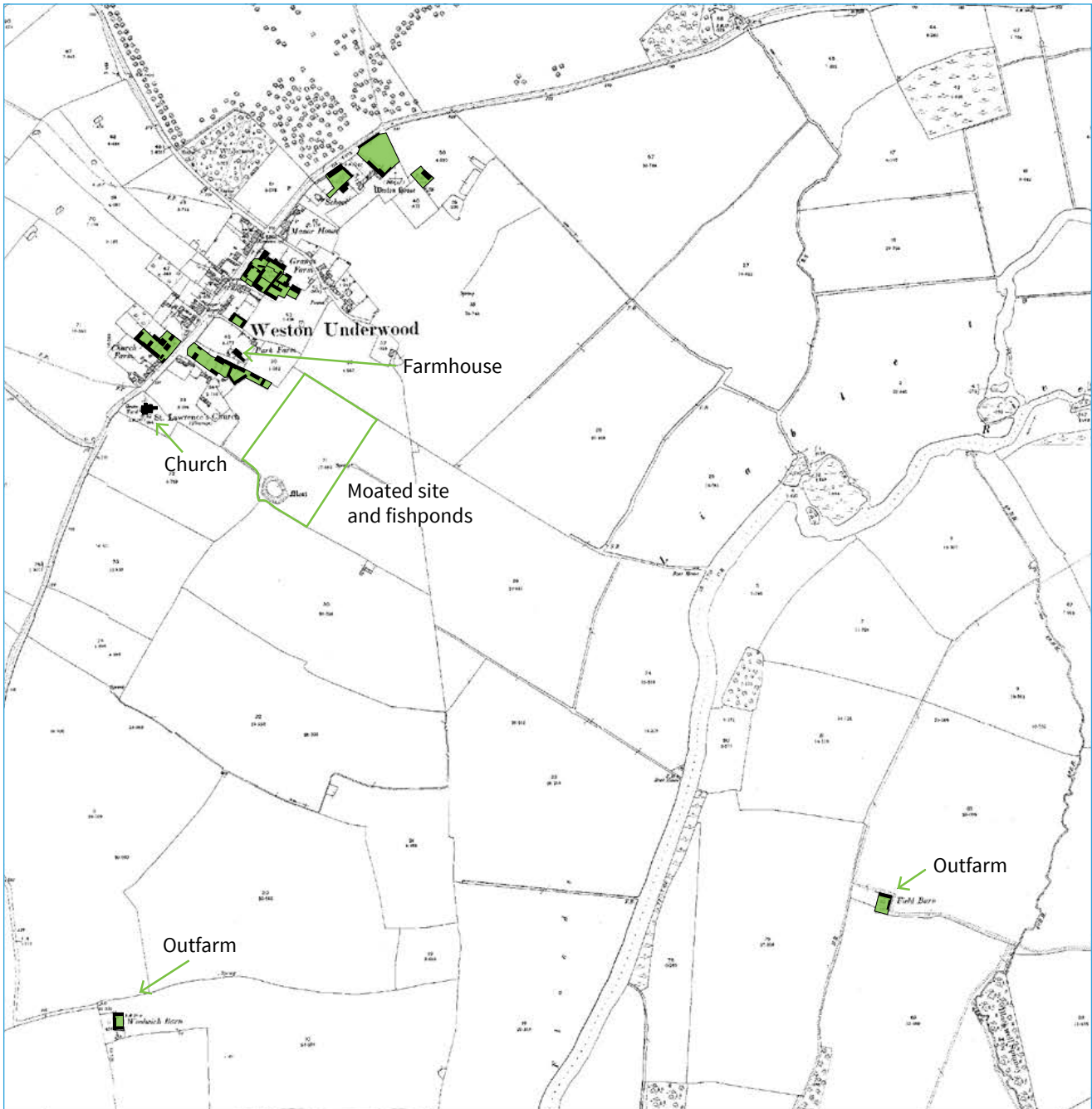


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



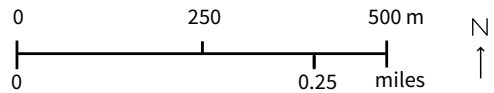
Piddington

Large, regular multi-yard farmsteads developed in Piddington, to the north of Salcey Forest, between the 15th and 19th centuries, illustrating the development of large farms which worked the farmland enclosed on a piecemeal basis around it: farmhouses that fell out of farming use were often converted to cottages. Piddington Grange with its 18th-century house and barn to the south is one of very few isolated farms found in 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.



Weston Underwood

This area reflects a similar story of historic development to that of Piddington, outfarms being required to help work the land farmed from the large farms that remained in the village. The significant difference is the retention of many 17th-century and earlier houses within the village, including one that became the residence of the writer William Cowper from 1786 to 1795. The moated site and fishponds, dating from around 1315, mark the site of the manor house of the Pevers family.



Historic buildings in the villages of this area display evidence for successive phases of rebuilding linked to the emergence of larger, village-based farms. Many houses date from the 17th century, but have long been decoupled from agricultural use. Large farmsteads associated with the rebuilding of the High Farming years of the mid-19th century required large workforces, to the left of this large farmstead at Lillingstone Lovell being a row of farm workers' cottages. Photo © Jeremy Lake



A mid-19th-century cow house attached to a thatched, 17th-century house at Paulesbury. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Large, regular multi-yard farmsteads developed in Piddington, to the north of Salcey Forest, between the 15th and 19th centuries, illustrating the development of large farms which worked the farmland enclosed on a piecemeal basis around it: farmhouses that fell out of farming use were often converted to cottages. Piddington Grange with its 18th-century house and barn to the south is one of very few isolated farms found in this area.



A mid-19th-century outfarm near Yelden, set within newly enclosed fields and with clay drainage pipes serving to ventilate the cattle housing. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Materials and detail

- Major constructional materials are red brick and Oolitic limestone, the latter often as frontages to brick buildings. Roofs are plain tile, pantiles and Welsh slate, with some surviving thatch.



Historic England

This guidance has been prepared by
Jeremy Lake.

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