



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

North Northumberland Coastal Plain

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 1



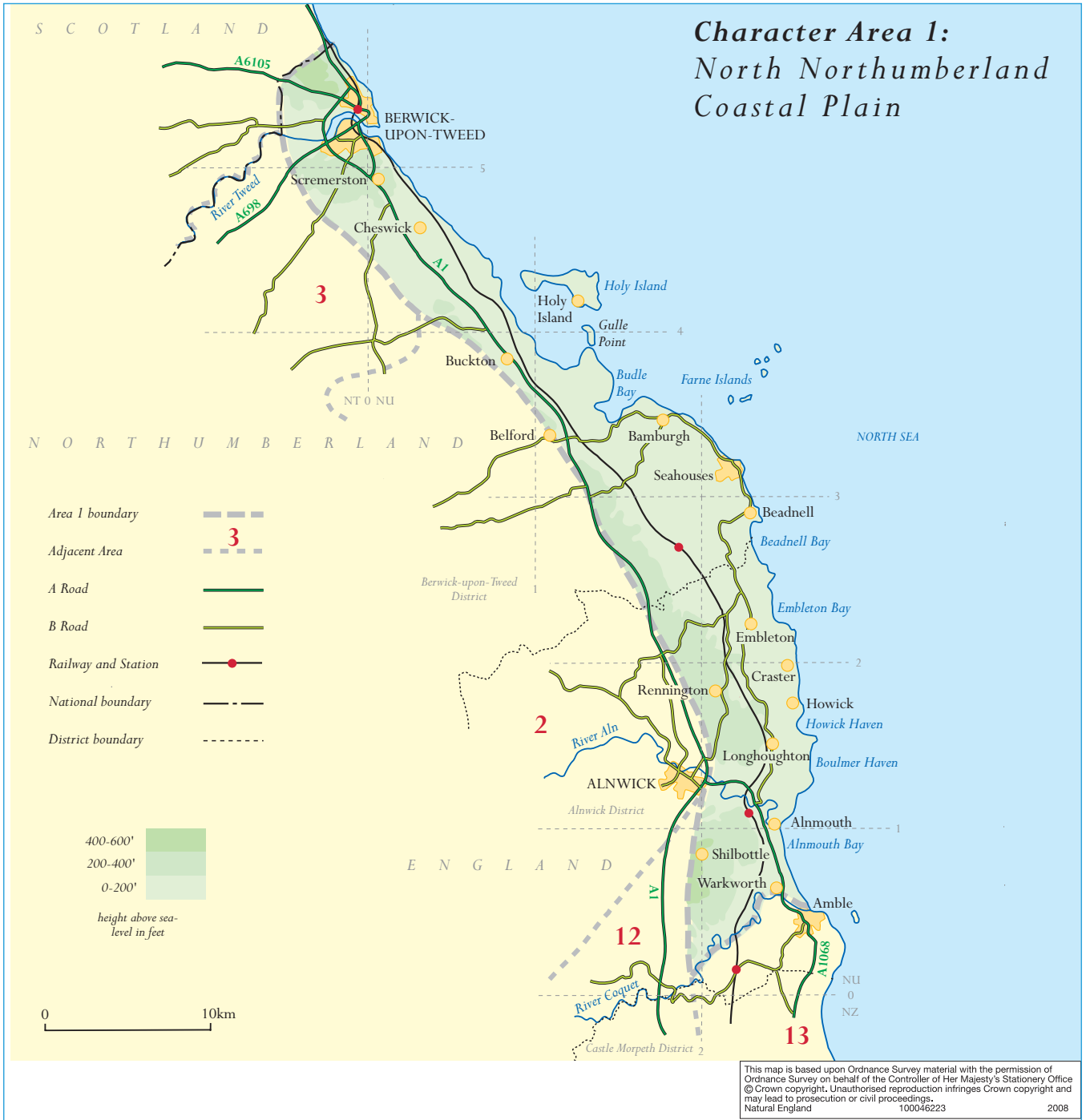
Introduction

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. These have been produced by Natural England using a wide range of environmental information (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profilesdata-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>) and are used to guide and monitor planning and land management across England. Each Farmstead and Landscape Statement is supported by Historic England's advice on farm buildings (<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/rural-heritage/farm-buildings/>), 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 is also forms part of additional research on historic landscapes, including the mapping of farmsteads in some parts of England (see <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/methods/characterisation-2/>).



Adderstone Mains west of Seahouses. One of a group of buildings and steadings associated with Adderstone Hall, sited one mile to the south. This large, isolated mid-19th-century farmstead has now been converted to domestic use as have many 19th-century estate farms in the area. Photo © Jen Deadman

Front cover: Cheswick from the south, showing the lines of rig cultivation in the landscape, Cheswick House to the left and East House to the right (see map on p 10). Photo © Historic England 28568/068



This map shows the North Northumberland Coastal Plain, 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 North Northumberland Coastal Plain fringes the North Sea between Berwick-Upon-Tweed and Amble, including Holy Island and the Farne Islands. An open, windswept landscape, it is characterised by dramatic rocky cliffs, sandy beaches and intertidal habitats, with farmland and intimate river valleys inland. Just 4% is urban area and only 3% is woodland. Of the land, 24% falls within the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), almost all of which lies within this Character Area.

Historic character

- Courtyard plan farmsteads – generally very large in scale – typically date from two or more phases of rebuilding from the late 18th century, in tandem with the reorganisation by estates of farmed landscapes with regular enclosure fields formed out of earlier enclosed landscapes and strip fields.
- These phases typically comprised a set of buildings and yards focused on the production of corn and manure from yard-fed cattle, followed by extension and sometimes complete remodelling from the 1860s for the fattening of cattle. Threshing and straw barns with engine houses reflect the requirements of mechanised threshing, and the large size of granaries, cart sheds and stables reflects the scale of arable agriculture. The range of cattle housing and its development over the 19th century reflects the importance of stock fattening, the increasing importance of liquid milk production and the importance of farmyard manure.
- These farmsteads swept away earlier phases of rebuilding village-based farms dating from the 12th to 13th centuries, leaving the earthworks of shrunken and abandoned settlements, and of earlier cultivation (ridge and furrow, and cord rig).

Significance

- The area's mechanised courtyard farmsteads, together with those in the Tyne Gap and Hadrian's Wall, Cheviot Fringe, Sandstone Hills and the South East Northumberland Coastal Plain, comprise a nationally significant testament to late 18th- and 19th-century agricultural improvement, matched only by the comparable scale of farmsteads and their enclosed landscapes in the Lothians and other parts of Scotland.
- The evidence for horse, water and steam-powered threshing is highly significant and early in a national context. Any surviving examples of internal machinery – the gearing for horse wheels, mill wheels, boilers and fixed threshing machines – are of exceptional rarity in a national context.
- Working buildings with 18th-century and earlier fabric, including traces of heather thatch, are of exceptional rarity.

- Tower houses and bastles are highly significant in a national context, for they reflect the unsettled history of the Anglo-Scottish borders and the nature of border communities into the 17th century. The yards and surrounding boundaries – dry

stone walls often representing the rebuilding or realignment of turf boundaries – can retain high archaeological potential for the development of bastles in their landscape context.

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 (16.7%, the national average being 32%).

Historic development

- Extensive settlement in the Romano-British and prehistoric period was followed by contraction of settlement and, from the 12th century, reorganisation of the farmed landscape and settlement. Cross-border conflict has provided a legacy of fortified buildings and strategically located coastal castles, some forming the basis for later great houses with extensive parklands and gardens (especially along the Coquet Valley).
- Large estates extending into the Pennine and Cheviot uplands of Northumberland have been a major influence on the landscape from the medieval period. As elsewhere in estate-dominated Northumberland, a first phase of the 16th to 18th centuries was followed by often total reorganisation and the final phase of enclosure in the late 18th and 19th centuries. This occurred in tandem with the reorganisation of many settlements and the appearance of large farmsteads with farm workers' (locally termed hinds) housing.
- The area has been dominated by arable cultivation since at least the medieval period. By the 19th century – and underpinned by tile drainage – it played a major role in the fattening of sheep and cattle. These were typically reared in the uplands, their manure, the use of artificial grasses, the application of lime (from the area's lime kilns) and the rotational cropping of roots and corn serving to boost productivity. The export of grain was facilitated by improvements to the road

network and the development of coastal ports.

- Major coastal towns and villages developed around fishing and the trade in agricultural produce, lime and coal. Mining and quarrying, principally for coal and whinstone, has a long history and its remains are commonplace, especially to the south-west of Berwick. These are associated with single-storey housing of the 19th century and earlier, two-storey housing usually dating from the early to mid-19th century.
- Sand and stone quarries are scattered across the area, together with some collieries with deep shafts sunk in the mid- to late 19th century; these were managed by the same estates, the Greenwich Hospital estate (which was responsible for the rebuilding of many Northumberland farmsteads) owning for example Scremerston Colliery. The coastal railway line opened new markets and supplies of materials (for example Welsh slate) from the 1840s, and stimulated the development of ports and seaside resorts. The production of liquid milk, and an increased emphasis on yard-fed cattle, marked the period from the 1870s when there was a general downturn in the price of wheat and other corn

Landscape and settlement

- The present pattern of large-scale isolated farmsteads and farm hamlets, set in a landscape of large-scale and regular enclosure, results from a radical reorganisation of the landscape driven by large estates in the late 18th and 19th centuries. It replaced an earlier pattern of nucleated villages with communal fields, including a large number of planned settlements, which date from the 12th and 13th centuries and later reorganisation by estates in the 16th and 17th centuries: this latter phase of reorganisation might still be evident in pre-18th-century buildings and wavy-edged field boundaries.
- The period from the late 18th century is characterised by large tenanted farms served by farmsteads that were frequently built on the site of former medieval settlements and replaced earlier villages: settlement and cultivation earthworks are often visible in the immediate settings of farmsteads. Smaller steadings are mostly found within or on the outskirts of villages, and in roadside locations.
- Areas of pre-18th-century irregular fields do survive, but the dominant patterns are those developed in the late 16th to 19th centuries – planned large scale enclosed fields separated by thorn hedgerows with few hedgerow trees and sandstone rubble walls. This enclosure affected the town fields around settlements and the formerly extensive areas of common pasture. Large-scale enclosure is most evident towards the coast. Further engrossment, field enlargement and boundary loss is typical of later 20th-century arable intensification. High survival of ridge and furrow is evident throughout on pasture land.
- Woodland clearance was extensive by the 14th century and survival of ancient woodland is sparse and largely restricted to river valleys. Coniferous shelterbelts and mixed plantations are a feature of the 19th-century farming landscape.

Farmstead and building types

- The area has very few pre-1750 farmstead buildings, which can include former longhouses (the remnants of the former village settlements, often as rebuilt in the 16th and 17th centuries) converted into outbuildings.
- Tower houses, mainly dating from the 13th to 16th centuries, offer the most dramatic evidence for unsettled conditions on the Anglo-Scottish border and the status of their owners. Today they often stand alone but were more usually part of a complex of manorial buildings. Defensible bastles, where the lower floor was used to house animals and the upper for domestic use, were most commonly built in the late 16th and 17th centuries – unsettled conditions and persisting after the Union of Crowns under James I and VI in 1603.
- The area's late 18th- and 19th-century farmsteads largely swept away earlier generations of smaller single-storey (and often thatched) buildings. The earliest buildings on farmsteads are typically the farmhouses, some of which in this area are early 18th-century cross-passage houses with the chimney stack backing onto the passage. Classical-style farmhouses are very much in evidence, together with single-storey workers' housing.

Farmstead types

- The 19th-century rebuilding of farmsteads (in some rare instances with fabric of the late 18th century) was commonly completed in two phases that comprised:
 1. building as a courtyard farmstead, usually powered by horse or more rarely steam or wind, focused on the storage and processing of corn and the production of manure from yard-fed cattle
 2. extension and sometimes complete remodelling from the 1860s for the fattening of cattle, often with additional wide-span cattle housing and covered yards.
- A key feature of this area, as in neighbouring parts of Durham and Northumberland, was the mechanisation of threshing from an early date. By the late 18th century, the horse gin, which had been used in mines for centuries, was adapted to provide rotary power for turning the first threshing machines. They are seen adjacent to a purpose-built threshing barn which is frequently connected through to other ranges in the yard. Water power and steam power also appeared at a remarkably early date in a national context: by the 1830s on large regular courtyard plan farmsteads. Many farmsteads have retained single-storey workers' (locally-termed hinds) cottages.
- Large-scale regular courtyard farms commonly developed into multi-yards and extended E-shaped plans around two to four yards. U- and L-shaped plan forms and loose courtyard plans are found on smaller farms, and some farms retain the evidence for linear farmsteads, with houses attached in-line to the working buildings. Archaeological and documentary evidence across Northumberland suggests that these, and longhouses where the domestic ends and byres for cattle were interconnected and shared the same entrance, were common prior to the 18th century. Most were swept away and lacked the capacity to be extended or adapted, although some buildings may retain evidence for alternate rebuilding and raising to two storeys.

Building types

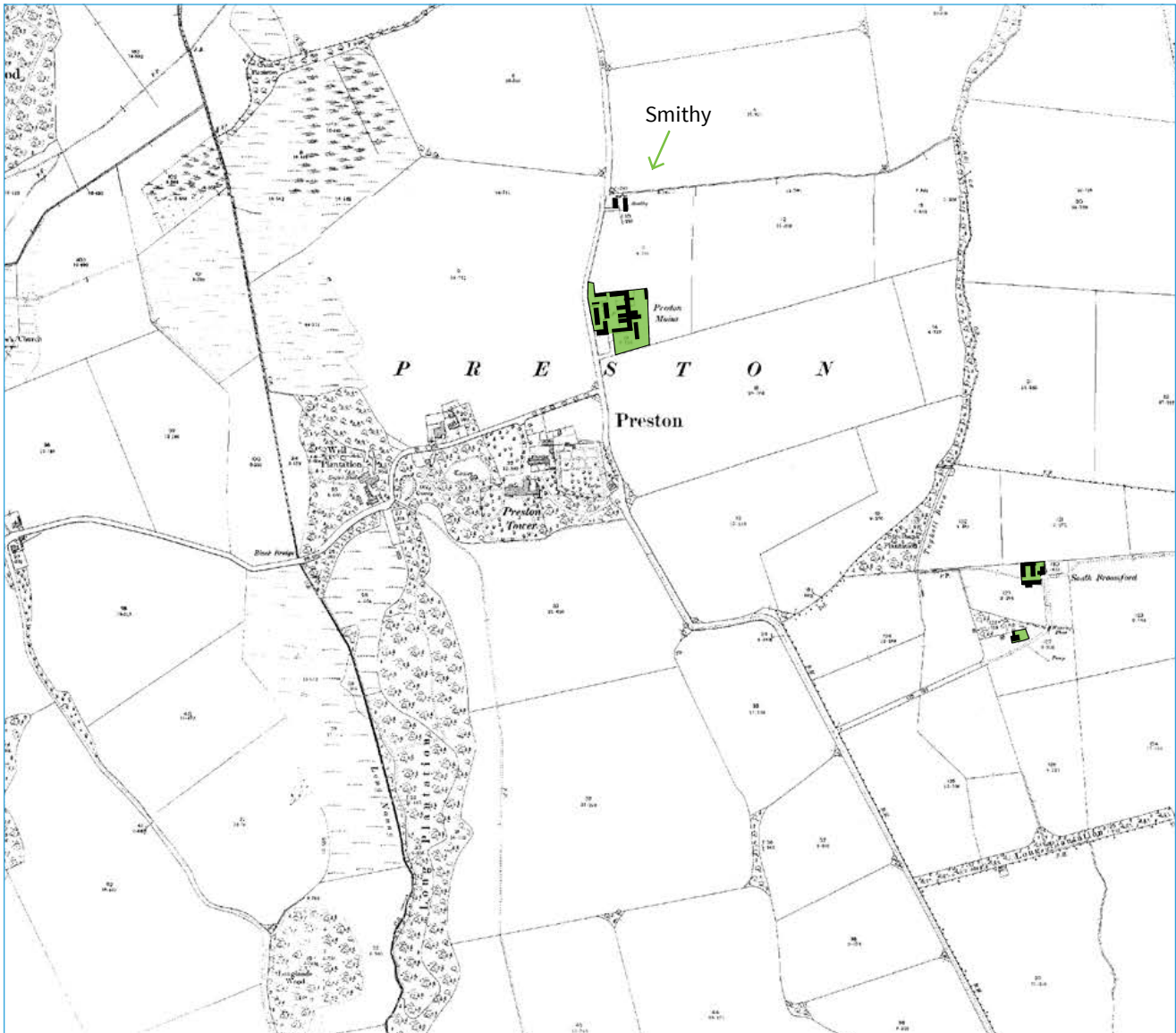
- Building types display the evidence for the scale of arable farming and cattle management in this area:
- Threshing and attached straw barns on larger farmsteads are a distinctive type of building associated with mechanised threshing, which extend into the Lothians and other parts of Scotland subject to agricultural improvement. The first floor of the threshing barn had doors for pitching in sheaves of corn and contained the threshing machine, the corn being bagged on the ground floor after it was threshed. The position of the hole which took threshed grain from the threshing machine into the grain bins below can be detected by the trimming of the joists around it, usually visible from below. The straw barn, positioned in-line or at right angles to the threshing barn, is typically lower with slit vents in the side walls, and housed straw before it was spread around the stock yards.
- Power could also be conveyed to animal-processing machinery in the ground floor of either building (most commonly the threshing barn).
- Wheel houses, locally termed horse gins, which had been used in mines for centuries, were adapted from the late 18th century to provide rotary power for powering threshing machines. They were built adjacent to the barn in which the threshing machine and other fodder-processing machinery was housed.
- Lean-tos were built for housing water wheels, the evidence for which can also be seen in the construction of a mill pond and a leat (sometimes underground) to convey the water to the wheel.
- Steam engine houses can be shown to have replaced earlier horse and water power. From

the early 19th century, the fixed steam engine was installed on some of the larger farms, appearing at the same time as horse-powered systems. Typically, little remains other than the boiler and engine, usually housed together in a lean-to against the side of the barn close to the chimney stack.


- Granaries, often marked by stone steps, were frequently built as an upper storey over a cart shed, stables or hemmel (see below), the free circulation of air below the floor helping to keep the grain dry.
 - Open-fronted cart sheds and implement sheds with lockable doors were usually sited next to farm entrances and facing routeways.
 - Stables were either lofted or single storey with ridge ventilators.
 - Low ranges of cattle sheds and associated yards often run in parallel or are linked around the perimeter of the yard. These include hemmels, a form of open-fronted shed for fatstock particular to north-east England. The increased importance accorded to fatstock
- in the second half of the 19th century is also reflected in evidence for the rebuilding of farmsteads with more yards and buildings for cattle, including loose boxes (marked by multiple doors), wide-span buildings and covered yards which also preserved the manure's nutrients. Most covered yards date from the early 20th century.
 - Byres (cow houses with stalls for the small numbers of milk cattle) and pigsties, the latter often marked by yards with feeding troughs, are usually placed close to the house.
 - Smithies were found on the largest farmsteads.
 - Farm workers' cottages and grieves' (managers') houses were most commonly associated with the largest courtyard farmsteads and sited (sometimes along with riding horse stables) close to the house.
 - Field shelters for cattle generally comprise open fronted sheds (hemmels) either with an associated yard, or open to the field.

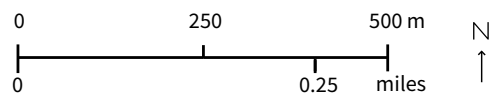


Farmstead outside the hamlet of Easington close to Belford with Bamburgh Castle in the far distance. It is set in a flat, open landscape of rich arable and pastoral farmland. The hamlet was known to have existed in the 13th century but by the end of the 18th century was reduced to two farmsteads. There is evidence for deserted crofts and tofts within the settlement although earlier field systems have been obliterated by later enclosure. Large farms are scattered throughout the parish. Photo © Jen Deadman



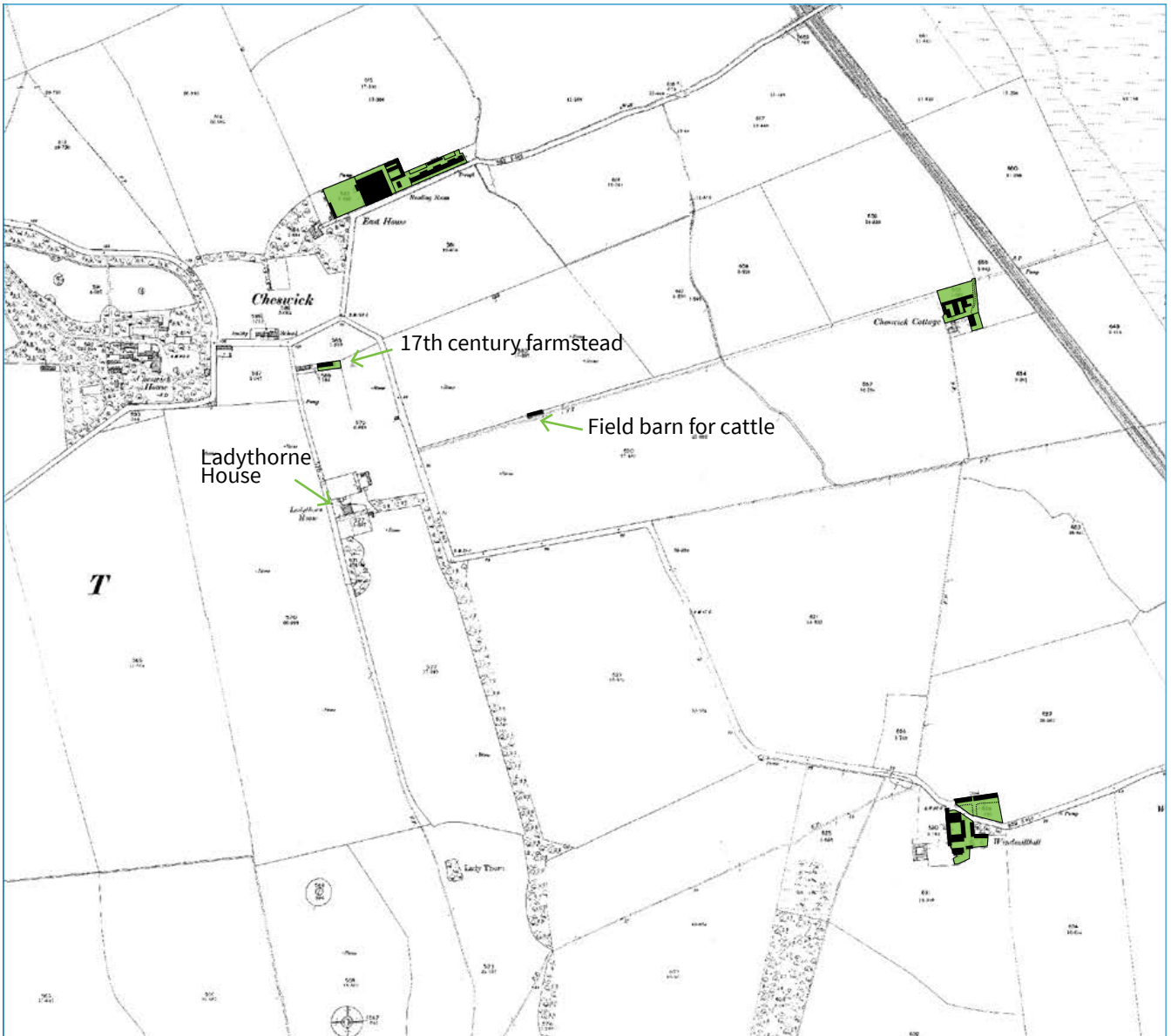
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 Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.




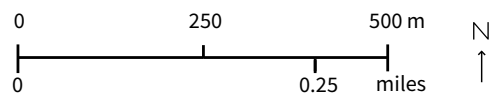
Preston

Preston, set in the south-west of the area, is a small hamlet on the site of a deserted medieval village of which only the 14th-century tower house remains. Preston Mains Farm, built between 1895 and 1897, appears to have replaced the earlier farmstead behind Preston Tower to its south. The tower and its later replacement – a 19th-century country house with large stable block and kennels – is set on the highest point of a steep north–south escarpment. Deep ridge and furrow is visible sweeping down the hillside to the north.



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.



East Cheswick

East Cheswick is a shrunken medieval settlement, documented as having a tower house and chapel. Cheswick House and its park was built in 1859–62, and East House Farm and its buildings in the early and mid-19th century. To its south is a 17th-century linear farmstead, the sole structure surviving from the shrunken settlement, and early 19th-century boundaries in part respect the lines of medieval rig cultivation. Ladythorne House, built in 1721, survives from an earlier phase of improvement, but otherwise the landscape was transformed in the early to mid-19th century – field shelters for cattle and the farmsteads to the east also date from the early 19th century.



A rare survival of a 17th-century linear farmstead – with a former dwelling and integral cow house/barn built to a longhouse design – can be found in the hamlet of Cheswick, south of Berwick on Tweed (as illustrated on front cover and map on p.10). The single-storey structure stands alone amongst former open fields evidencing strip cultivation and rig cultivation. On the front elevation, adjacent to the stack, is a doorway with a striking four-pointed arched lintel which provided access via a cross passage behind the stack to both the low (animal) end to right and upper (domestic) end to left. Corrugated iron replaces former thatch. A former stone walled enclosure is evident to the side and rear of the animal end. Photo © Jen Deadman



The farmstead at East House, Cheswick (see p 10), showing the barn dated 1808 to the left, the range added in 1879 to its east (right) and further to the right the row of eight farm workers' cottages built in about 1820. Photo © Jen Deadman



Detail showing cast-iron ventilator and the quality of the stone masonry. Photo © Jen Deadman



Detail showing doveholes over the entrance to the covered yards of 1879. Photo © Jen Deadman



Preston Mains, a planned farm of the mid-19th century (see p 9) with a terrace of workers' housing, was built to replace the last phase of agricultural buildings and cottages relating to the 15th-century Preston Tower. Today it presents a compact arrangement which combines both traditional and modern working buildings. Note the stack for the steam-powered threshing and fodder-processing machinery and the ridge and furrow sweeping down the hillside in the foreground. Photo © Jen Deadman



The compact arrangement of old and new buildings typical of this area is also evident on this isolated coastal farm south of Berwick on Tweed on the outskirts of Scremerston. Here, two yards are set either side of a gatehouse with modern buildings clustered to the rear. Photo © Jen Deadman



This early 19th-century farmstead set either side of the road is the main element of the former settlement of Bradford, now reduced to a small hamlet. Photo © Jen Deadman



The combination of a large cart shed over granary is a characteristic building type of the Northumberland Coastal Plain, extending north into the Lothians and south into Lincolnshire. Below is a late 19th-century remodelling of an early 19th-century, single-storey range. Photo © Jen Deadman



Here, on the outskirts of Rock village, this large arable farm has a granary set over cart sheds linked to a large, multifunctional building housing a corn drier. Photo © Jen Deadman

The evidence for raising to two storeys is seen in the contrasting colours of the stonework in the gable end and front elevation. At the gable end the line of the earlier lower roof is visible. Photo © Jen Deadman



This shelter shed for cattle is located on the roadside outside the estate village of Rock. Also termed 'hemmel', it provides cattle with open access to the small yard set in front. Troughs and mangers are ranged along the roadside elevation. There is pedestrian access to the shelter in the west gable. Photo © Jen Deadman



Field barns are typically found as shelter sheds for cattle, as here. Photo © Jen Deadman



Small field barn for cattle, formerly with its own yard, at Cheswick. Photo © Jen Deadman



A finely detailed and substantial example of an early 19th-century field barn for cattle. Photo © Jen Deadman

Materials and detail

- Traditional buildings are characterised by the use of local grey sandstone, with red pantiles or grey slate (Scottish and later Welsh) being the predominant roofing materials. Brick was used for quoins and dressings in the 19th century, some later 19th-century buildings being built of brick.
- Heather thatch was common before the 19th century, and evidence for this can be retained in steep-pitches retained in fabric: surviving examples are extremely rare.
- Timber-framing is largely confined to the villages.



Historic England

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