

6.4 Dating Evidence for Recorded Historic Farmsteads

The existing stock of traditional farm buildings results from centuries of change and development. As a general rule, farmhouses pre-date farm buildings, even in areas of 18th- and 19th-century enclosure. Larger-scale and higher-status buildings, which were consistently used for the same purpose or capable of being adapted to later uses, generally have the greatest chance of survival. It follows that barns are the overwhelming type of building to have survived from before 1750, and that steadings adapted or built anew in the later 18th and 19th centuries have retained evidence for a greater diversity of functions.

By utilising date information held within listed building and Historic Environment Record data, farmsteads can be assigned a date representing the earliest surviving building within the group. The date of the farmhouse and any listed agricultural buildings was recorded separately. This enables the patterns of inherited farmstead character (including survival and change) to be assessed in relationship to our understanding to the historic character of the landscapes around them.

Date_Cent		Earliest century date based on presence of listed building or map evidence (Codes as per Date_HM below)
Date_HM (Date of House based on presence of dated building or Map evidence)	MED C17 C18 C19L C19	Pre-1600 17 th century 18 th century 19 th century (based on presence of a listed building dated to 19 th century) 19 th century (based on presence on historic map)
Date_WB (Date of Working Building based on presence of dated building)	MED C17 C18 C19L	Pre-1600 17 th century 18 th century 19 th century (based on presence of a listed building dated to 19 th century)

Farmsteads by Date	<i>Recorded Date (combined)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Recorded Date: House</i>	<i>Recorded Date: Working Building</i>	<i>Recorded Date House & Working Buildings</i>
Pre 1600	384	6.6%	352	18	14
C17	668	11.4%	496	106	66
C18	475	8.1%	304	122	49
C19L	143	2.4%	125	10	8
C19	4176	71.4%	4176	-	

Table 9: Date of surviving farmsteads according to earliest dated fabric on site

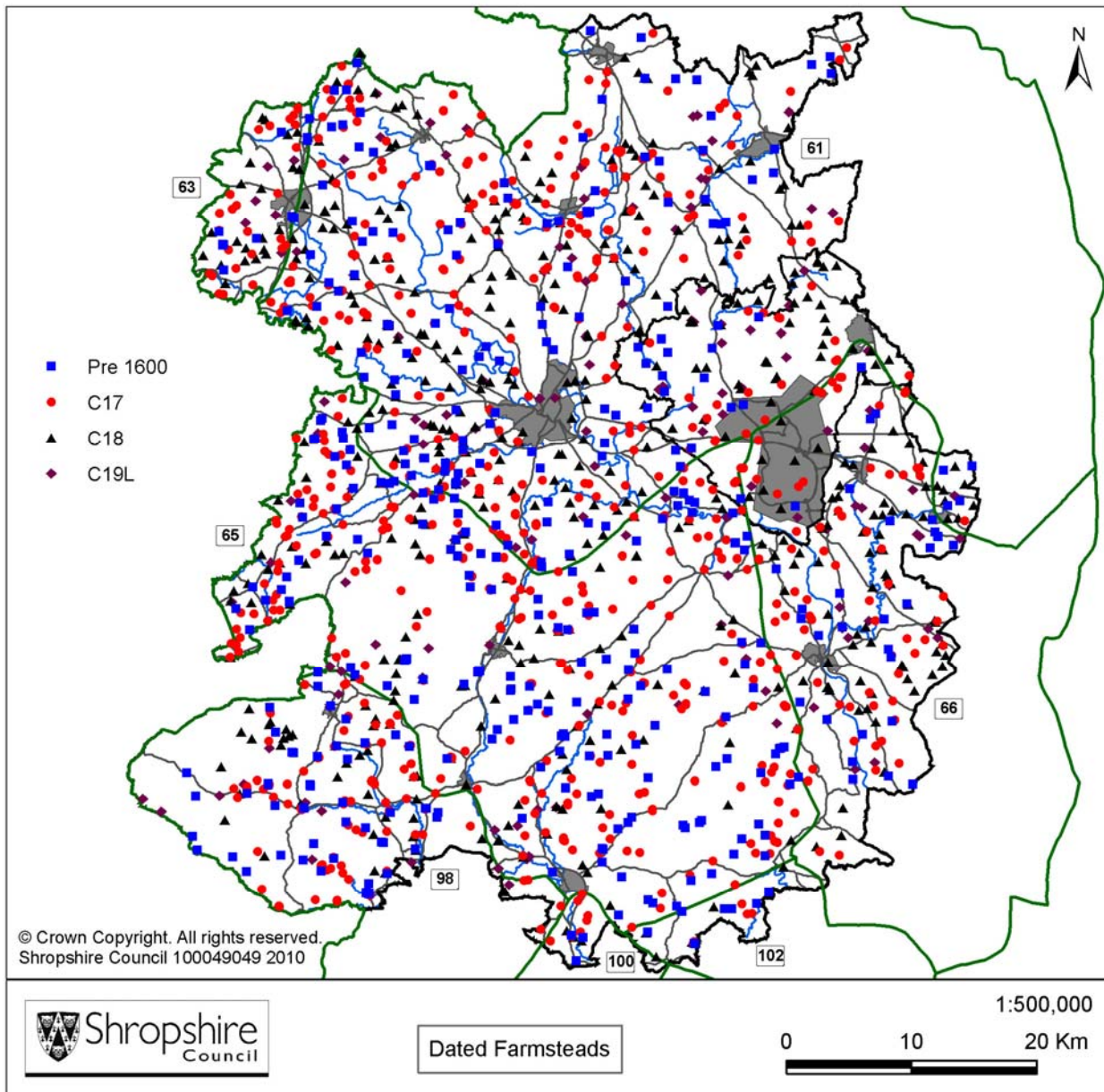


Figure 21: Distribution of all farmsteads, dated by the earliest building on site

32 farmsteads have working buildings older than their farmhouse. Of these the vast majority of farmhouses have been replaced in the 19th century. Of the listed 19th century farmhouse in this category, 2 are associated with pre-1600 farm buildings, 7 with 17th century farm buildings and 17 with 18th century farm buildings. These farmsteads focus in landscapes of large-scale capital investment in the 1840-70 period.

		Working Building			
		Med	C17	C18	C19L
Farmhouse	Pre-1600	14	46	24	3
	C17	2	66	37	7
	C18	4	27	49	5
	C19L	0	7	17	8
	C19	0	9	20	4

Table 10: Correlation of Farmsteads, where both the Farmhouse and the working buildings is dated

Farmsteads by Date	Recorded Date: House	Recorded Date: Working Building
Pre-1600	369	32
C17	570	218
C18	386	235
C19L	159	33
C19	4543	-

Table 11: Total number of all individually dated buildings

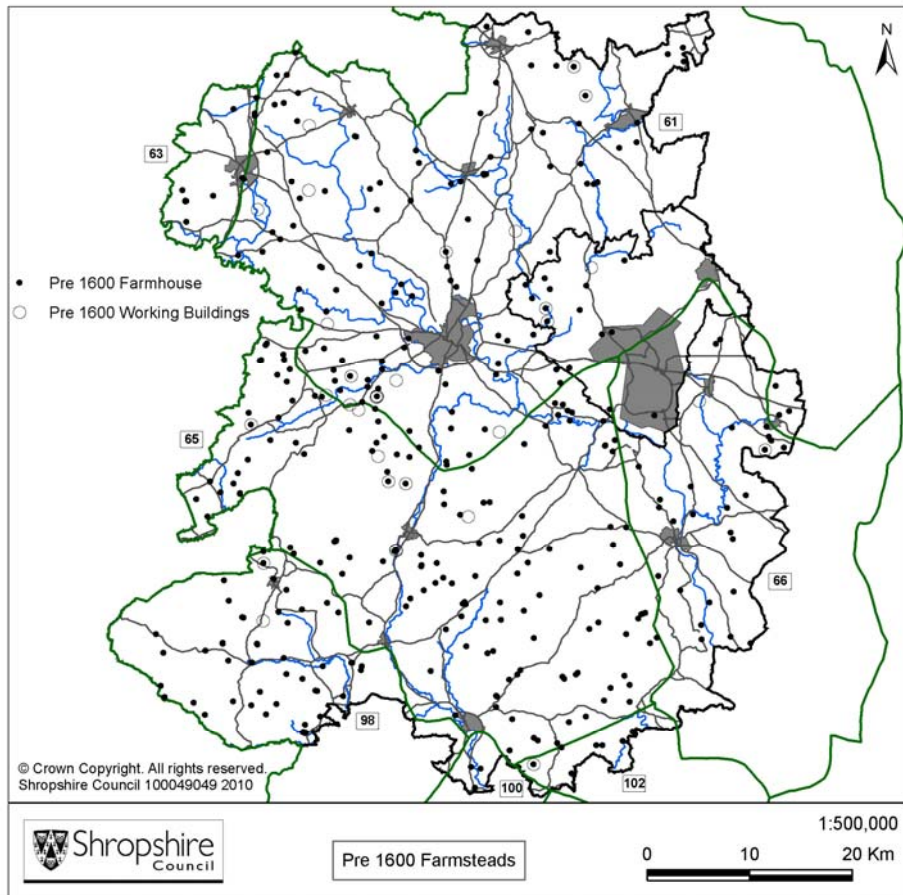
□ *Analysis by NCA*

	Med	C17	C18	C19L	C19
Area 61 Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain	134 (5.2%)	245 (9.4%)	228 (11.1%)	67 (2.6%)	1927 (74.1%)
Area 63 Oswestry Uplands	11 (3.9%)	25 (9.0%)	22 (7.9%)	6 (2.2%)	215 (77.1%)
Area 65 Shropshire Hills	150 (7.7%)	238 (12.2%)	102 (5.2%)	33 (1.7%)	1433 (73.2%)
Area 66 Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau	30 (4.5%)	68 (10.1%)	79 (11.7%)	23 (3.4%)	470 (70.1%)
Area 98 Clun and North West Herefordshire Hills	51 (9.1%)	85 (15.1%)	39 (6.9%)	15 (2.7%)	372 (66.2%)
Area 100 Hereford Lowlands	3 (6.6%)	8 (17.8%)	4 (8.8%)	0 (0.0%)	30 (66.7%)
Area 102 Teme Valley	8 (9.5%)	5 (5.9%)	6 (7.1%)	0 (0.0%)	65 (77.4%)

Table 12: Date of all farmsteads according to earliest dated fabric on site

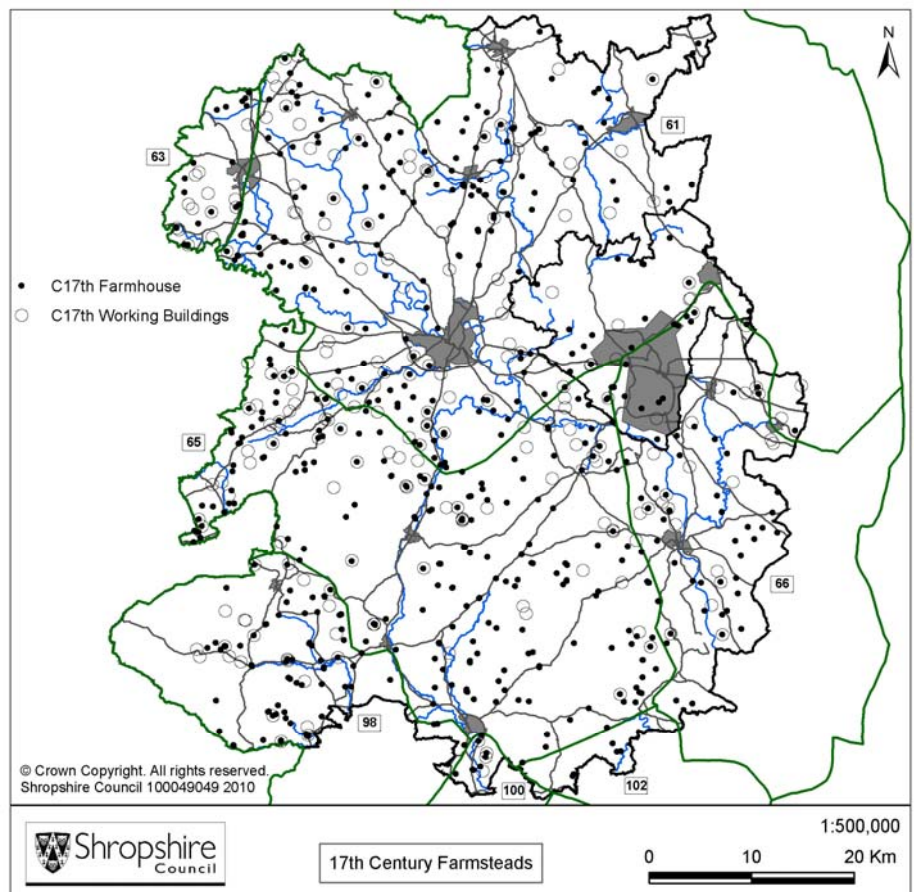
The Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain character area exhibits significant time depth with large numbers of farms dating from pre-1600 right through to the 19th century. Although the difference is slight, 18th century farmsteads have the highest percentage in the area. It also has the second highest percentage of 19th century farmsteads, with the Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau having the highest. Large areas of the plain were subject to large-scale reorganisation and improvement during the 18th and particularly 19th centuries, and this is reflected by capital investment in new farmsteads and the rationalisation and improvement of the wider landscape. Well established farmsteads were also improved, so that older farmhouses are often found in association with newer farm buildings and in some cases older working farm buildings have been encased in later brick buildings.

Within the Oswestry Uplands NCA the majority of dated farmsteads are attributed to the 17th and 18th centuries. In comparison to the rest of Shropshire, it has the smallest percentage of pre-1600 farmsteads, reflecting the relative lack of recorded medieval settlement evidence in the area. Where they do occur, they are located in lowland areas around Oswestry and to the north, or in the southern upland area where they are associated with a long history of cattle rearing on hill farms. In most cases they are either associated with small irregular fields or piecemeal enclosure, previously part of the open medieval field systems. The distribution of 17th and 18th century farmsteads reflects the colonisation of the uplands, with several of these farms associated with extensive areas of planned enclosure.



Left, Figure 22: Map showing the distribution of pre-1600 farmhouses and pre-1600 farm buildings

Right, Figure 23: Map showing the distribution of 17th century farmhouses and 17th century farm buildings

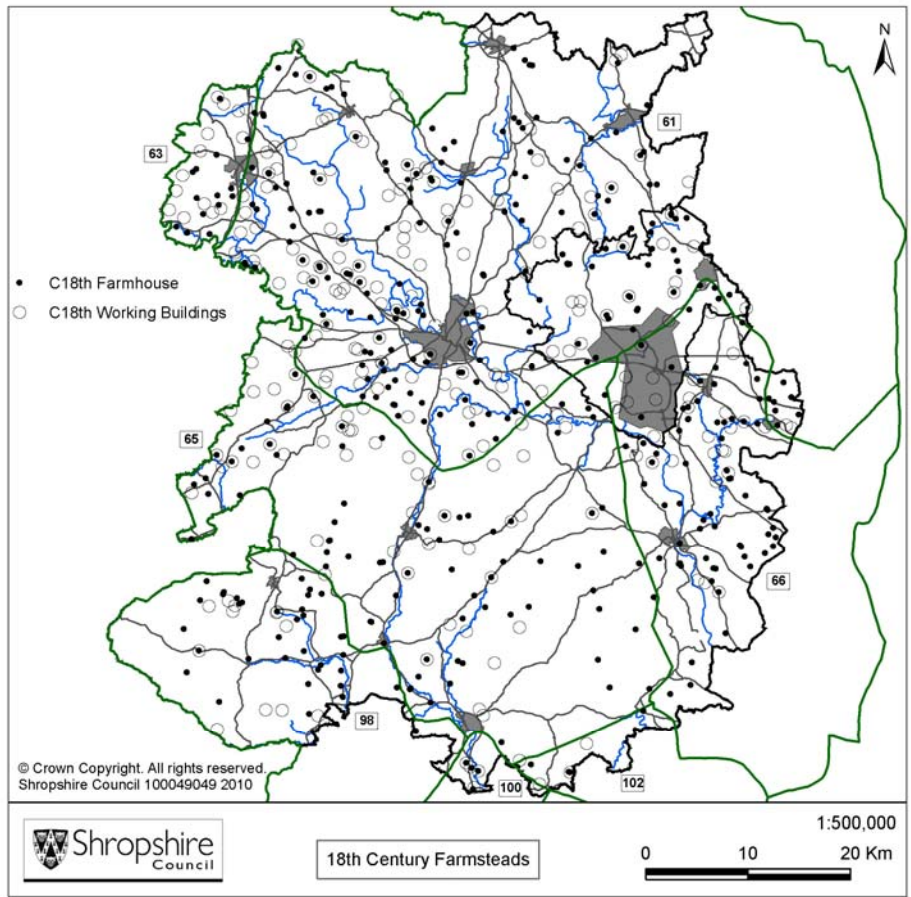


Significant growth is also apparent around the southern Treflach hills, associated with the mining and quarrying industries that commenced large-scale production in the 18th century. There are also significant concentrations in lowland areas where mixed arable-based agriculture developed, particularly to the north. The uplands were subject to further improvement in the 19th century, and listed 19th farmsteads are evident surrounded by planned field systems. In the eastern lowland zone larger farms developed away from the villages in association with reorganised piecemeal enclosure, reflecting the growth of farm holdings by the 19th century.

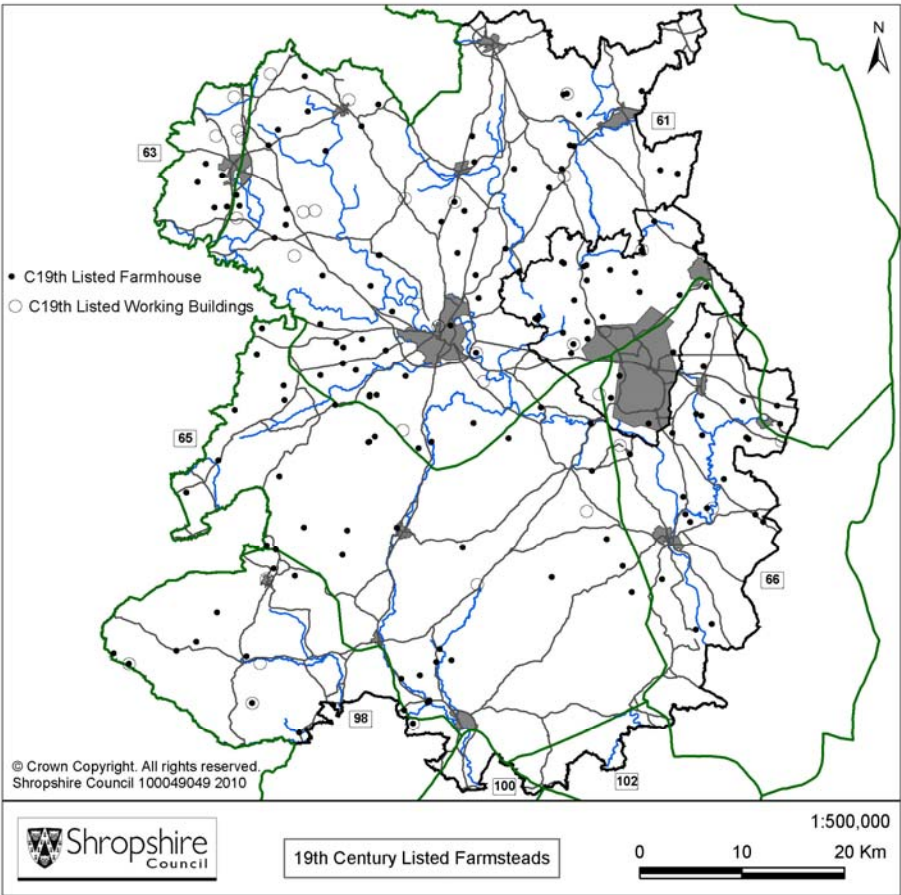
The Shropshire Hills NCA has the higher percentages of pre-1600 and 17th century farmsteads, with fewer 18th and 19th century farmsteads. The majority of early farmsteads focus along the vales and the pasture hills where the earliest settlements were established. Here the vast majority are associated with small irregular fields or the piecemeal enclosure of the open fields. Rising population from the 16th century onwards was closely linked to the increase in lead and coal mining and quarrying, with pre-1600 and particularly 17th century farmsteads apparent in the moorland edge areas where these industries developed - particularly the Clee Hills and on the western flanks of the Stiperstones. 18th and 19th century farmsteads are generally found in the vales, and on the plateau farmland or high in the uplands; they are far less evident on the pasture hills. Along the vales the 18th and 19th century farmsteads are often associated with areas of reorganised piecemeal enclosure, and in the uplands with areas of larger-scale planned enclosure driven by estates wanting to improve pasture for cattle and/or secure mineral rights.

The Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau has the highest percentage of 19th century farmsteads. Despite this pre-1600 farmsteads survive along the valleys, taking advantage of both the arable land in the former open field systems and the common grazing on the higher ground. The latter areas were gradually enclosed, and by the 17th century further expansion onto the sandstone plateau is evident by the wider distribution of farmsteads of this date, located on the edge of piecemeal enclosure and often associated with small irregular field systems. The estate influence on the Sandstone plateau is very evident as landowners improved their wider estates during the 18th and 19th centuries. Large numbers of 18th century farmsteads are evident on the sandstone plateau east of the Severn Gorge, often dated by large 18th century threshing barns reflect the predominantly arable-based agriculture in this area. To the west of the Severn Gorge and in the southern part of the character area, there are fewer 18th and 19th century farmsteads. Here the survival of earlier farmsteads is slightly better and their distribution falls more in line with that of the plateau farmland of the Shropshire Hills. Many farms have been lost in the Shropshire Coal fields due to the expansion of Telford. Of those that do remain the majority are of 18th century date reflecting the height of industry during this period.

The Clun and Northwest Herefordshire Hills have greater number of pre-1600 and particularly 17th century farmsteads, concentrated in the valleys and estate farmlands. Higher up the slopes they sit on the edge of the high plateau, as common edge encroachments surrounded by small irregular fields. These areas have some of the oldest field patterns, particularly along the south west side of the uplands along the Teme Valley. These areas have been far less affected by the re-organisation of land in the valley estate lands and the planned enclosure of the high plateau above in the 18th and 19th centuries. The 18th and 19th century farmsteads are focused in the valleys or on the high plateau, where they are largely associated with areas of planned enclosure. Surprisingly only a small proportion of these are associated with the reorganisation of the piecemeal enclosure.



Left, Figure 24: Map showing the distribution of 18th century farmhouses and 18th century farm buildings



Right, Figure 25: Map showing the distribution of Listed 19th century farmhouses and Listed 19th century farm buildings

	HLC Type	Farm Count	Area/Sq km	Average per km	Farmhouse			Working		
					Med	C17	C18	Med	C17	C18
Assarting										
37	Small assarts	150	47.92	3.13	8	13	7		6	3
38	Large assarts with sinuous boundaries	10	10.46	0.96		1	3			1
39	Late clearance/ assarts	42	24.85	1.69		5	1		2	
Small Fields										
40	Small irregular fields	853	315.44	2.7	44	72	39	2	30	34
45	Other small rectilinear fields	167	74.83	2.23	4	11	5		6	2
Piecemeal										
41	Piecemeal enclosure	272	236.59	1.15	16	17	10	2	6	6
42	Reorganised piecemeal enclosure	319	518.45	0.62	14	17	16	2	7	16
Large Fields										
46	Other large rectilinear fields	9	42.27	0.21	1		2		1	3
47	Large irregular fields	149	307.07	0.49	6	7	5		7	4
Planned										
44	Planned enclosure	588	467.02	1.26	10	16	18	1	5	12
48	Very large post-war fields	138	571.08	0.24	4	7	7	1	2	3

Table 13 shows the correlation between farmstead dates and the Historic Landscape Characterisation, focusing on field patterns.

By looking at the relative percentages of the number of 18th century or older farmstead in each type of field pattern, it becomes clear the greater emphasis and better survival there is of earlier farmsteads in the smaller and more ancient field systems. So although there appears to be a considerable time depth on the planned enclosure, you are still far less likely to find earlier buildings in these landscapes that you are in areas of small assarting and the small irregular fields.

- 18.7% of farmhouses are 18th century or older on small assarts
- 18.2% of farmhouses are 18th century or older within small irregular fields
- 15.8% of farmhouses are 18th century or older within piecemeal enclosure
- 14.7% of farmhouses are 18th century or older within reorganised piecemeal enclosure
- 12.1% of farmhouses are 18th century or older within large irregular fields
- 7.4% of farmhouses are 18th century or older within planned enclosure

Small Fields

Small irregular fields, small rectilinear fields and small assarts often show a long time-depth, with significant numbers dating from the medieval period, peaking during the 17th century. Some of the small fields are likely to be medieval in areas beyond the common open fields, having been enclosed directly from woodland, forming the basis for the mainly pastoral economy (Victoria County History IV, 119). In the 14th century increasing numbers of licences were issued to enclose pasture and meadow away from the common fields, for specialist livestock farming (Victoria County History IV, 83-4). The rest will have been enclosed during the 17th and early 18th century as thousands of acres of woods, waste and common land were improved. These fields often escaped the improvements and reorganisation under the estates in the 18th and 19th centuries, reflecting the higher proportion of small individual holdings in these areas, and the likely pastoral nature of the economy where there was less need to enlarge fields. Despite the small nature of the field pattern, the plan forms exhibit

significant variation, with the majority of dated farmsteads generally of a medium to larger size, suggesting a long process of enlargement for a minority of the farms set within small-scale field systems. For example in the north of Shropshire several medium size farms include linear plan arrangements, a possibly indication of their original form, before enlarging as the dairying industry flourished in the area.

Piecemeal enclosure

Areas of piecemeal enclosure derived from the enclosure of medieval open fields systems. They are typically associated with greater numbers of farmsteads dating to the medieval and 17th century. The farmsteads often remained in the villages and hamlets which these fields surrounded or were established on new sites within the fields. These fields are generally larger, most often located in mixed arable based areas, resulting in fewer farms than the smaller fields, and often larger farmsteads.

Reorganised piecemeal enclosure

Reorganisation of piecemeal enclosure into larger fields occurred in the 18th and mainly 19th centuries. Whilst these field patterns have similar origins to the piecemeal enclosure field systems, they are frequently associated with later farmsteads of 18th and 19th century date. New farm buildings were added to older sites, or completely new farmsteads were built, as landowners set about improving their wider estates. These areas are dominated by the larger plan forms, particularly the planned regular farmsteads.

Large fields

Although the field systems within these categories have varied origins, many result from rationalisation and improvement in the 18th and 19th century, again resulting in fewer larger farmsteads set within these fields. Some however may have been enclosed directly from common and waste by the end of the 17th century.

Planned enclosure

Planned field systems usually exist in areas that were enclosed by Parliamentary Act or private agreement between the late 17th and 19th centuries. In some instances, planned enclosure patterns were also created where earlier, ancient field patterns were completely reorganised during this period. For example the landscape around Sandford Hall has been completely replanned from small irregular fields, originally improved from heathland. In these areas pre-1600 and 17th century farmsteads are likely to remain. The last areas to be enclosed in the 19th century were often the poorest agricultural lands. Large-scale investment was often needed to improve the land, and these estate lead ventures resulted in large planned 19th century farmsteads and large-scale planned enclosure. Heathland areas were much easier to enclose, but much less profitable resulting in the greater numbers of smaller farm holdings and smaller planned enclosure.