



Conserving farmstead heritage in the Herefordshire Plateau

One of the large brick ranges on this farm, this has a cellar for cider barrels below the cider mill and a kiln for drying hops. © Jeremy Lake/CCRI

NATURAL
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1 Introduction

From its inception over 30 years ago Agri-Environment Scheme (AES) policy has consistently recognised the importance of protecting and managing the historic environment, including traditional farm buildings, to secure a range of public goods for society. In 2021 Natural England commissioned research to review the uptake and values of AES options designed to support the maintenance of traditional farm buildings. This case study is one of a suite designed to illustrate the range of public benefits provided by this investment. Actual site locations are anonymised but are described with reference to the National Character Areas (NCA) in which they are located. Understanding the success and value of such funding is crucial in supporting future conservation decision making, especially for AES development.

This farmstead occupies a prominent position on higher ground, on the site of one of the many medieval manors and farmsteads scattered across this area, and contributes to the rich sense of history for which the **Herefordshire Plateau** NCA is noted.

2 Farmstead character

This Countryside Stewardship agreement has a single site with buildings covered by the traditional farm building maintenance option (HS1). Most of the buildings here were built in around 1800, and were built on the site of a medieval manor surrounded by its own fields which were reorganised in the 18th and 19th centuries. The result was a large farmstead of a type found in this part of England, retaining a medieval dovecote and a fine Georgian farmhouse which commands views over the landscape. All of the buildings shown on the 2nd edition OS map survive, and are set around three courtyards; modern buildings have been built to one side of the historic group, overlying the former farm pond. This site also has a wide range of building types – a hay barn and threshing barn, stables, hop kilns and cider mill and store - characteristic of this area which served its hop yards, cider orchards, pastures and arable fields. The construction of the weatherboarded timber frame barn and hay barn are typical of this area, and they are listed at grade II, and the tall unlisted brick buildings have a strong architectural presence that complements the fine farmhouse.



The weatherboarded hay barn and its attached waggon shed. © Jeremy Lake/CCRI

3 Public benefits

This farmstead is one of the 61 per cent of traditional farmsteads that have retained all or most (over 50%) of their historic character, which is a high figure by regional and national standards, this significance being enriched by its rich variety of functional types. It also occupies a very prominent position at the junction of several footpaths, and the agreement holder is often asked by walkers about the buildings. Over 70 per cent of field barns and outfarms have been lost from the landscape in this area, making the survival of a complete outfarm all the more remarkable.

The agreement helps to deliver the recommendations for conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment of this NCA set out in the **Statements of Environmental Opportunity** (SEO), particularly SEO 2:

Protect and appropriately manage the distinctive character of the Herefordshire Plateau's landscape, conserving and enhancing the historic landscape character, settlement pattern, geodiversity, tranquillity and sense of place. Protect and maintain public access to and the enjoyment of the wider countryside for residents and visitors.

4 Participating in the scheme

The agreement holder felt that the scheme recognised the work that they put into maintaining these buildings. He is strongly conscious of the history and sense of place that this fine farmstead offers to the wider area.

