

FARM BUILDINGS AND AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENTS

FARM BUILDINGS

Farm buildings or 'steadings' vary from planned to gradually developed layouts. There is also considerable diversity in scale and regional character. A simple classification can be applied to all steadings, however varied, to show which buildings performed which function, and how they relate to each other. All the buildings within a steading can be located within one or other of four *systems* – **labour, livestock, grain** and **land**.

First **labour**, meaning accommodation for the workforce and their households plus those functions which are serviced from the home or met household needs.

The range of dwellings starts from the farmhouse, or a farm manager's house in the case of a home farm. The farmhouse might also contain quarters for servants employed in the house or dairy. The dairy is closely connected to the house and may form part of it. On non-dairy farms there might also be a small milking byre to meet household needs. In addition, one might expect small-scale pig-rearing facilities, based on domestic and dairy waste, and hens, fed by female members of the household. The larger and grander farms might also include a gig house and riding stables for use by the farmer's family. This combined **gig house and groom's house** is on this farm in **Linlithgow, West Lothian**.



Continuing down the social scale, there might also be housing for a grieve (foreman), cattleman, shepherd and hinds (ploughmen). Where the keep of a cow was part of a hind's fee, one would expect to find a servants' byre plus pig crays and the usual domestic offices such as privy, ash store and wash-house.

Further down still, in certain regions, would be the bothy (east-central Scotland) or chaumer (north-east Scotland), for hired farm workers. More primitive still was the sleeping accommodation over stables or elsewhere, provided for workers employed on the farm but fed in the farmhouse.

Next, **livestock**. In Scotland, livestock usually means cattle. Until the 1930s, commercial pig rearing was virtually unknown – except as an adjunct to dairying or malting. The limited range of buildings associated with sheep husbandry tended

to be dispersed across the farm or concentrated around a detached shepherd's house at a distance from the steading. Following the flow of materials, the livestock 'system' would comprise: buildings for processing and storing feed; buildings for storing bedding; cattle housing in the form of byres, boxes, hemmels and courts; bull and calf houses; commercial – as opposed to farmhouse – dairies; dungsteads; liquid manure tanks, and finally, killing houses.



This group of **cattle courts**, at **Stacks'** **West Lothian**, dates from the early 19th century.

Following a chronological sequence, processing and storage might include hay barns, turnip sheds, boiling and mixing houses or silos. There may be indications of chronological change in the introduction – and, possibly, obsolescence – of hay barns, later dutch barns and, later still, a succession of silos dating from the 1880s, 1920s and 1960s. Milking byres, already modified to meet the needs of 20th century legislation, may have been abandoned or modified to form milking parlours with bulk tanks in place of dairies.

The third system, grain, comprises: storage for harvested crops – usually stack yards; facilities for separating grain from straw and chaff, for grain drying; and finally, granaries and straw barns for storing the separated materials.



This fine granary at **Thurston Home Farm, East Lothian**, is sited (as usual) above cart bays.

All barns built before the mid 1780s were for hand threshing, but many have been adapted for machine threshing. Additions to house horse engines, windmills or water wheels are unlikely to pre-date the 1780s, or in the case of steam engine houses and chimneys, the 1800s. Grain dryers, needed for grain threshed in the field by combine harvester, are unlikely to pre-date the 1920s. Bulk storage of grain

in bins or silos post-dates the combine harvester and makes the granary redundant. Superimposed evidence of all of these stages may be found in any one building.

The last of the four systems concerns the land. It comprises: housing for the equipment and power sources used in cultivation (as well as its maintenance); and housing for inputs to the land, such as fertilisers and seed. Outputs from the land are accounted for within other systems.

The power needed to haul field equipment and to transport materials to and from the land is expressed in ox byres, stables with their associated storage for feed and harness and, most recently, in tractor sheds. The first change, from oxen to horses, took place in the late 18th century. In north-east Scotland, oxen were still being used as draft animals in the early 20th century. Tractors were first introduced in the 1900s, worked alongside horses until the 1950s and only since then have replaced them completely.



Purpose-built **cart bays** begin to appear at the very end of the 18th century. Most date from the 1820s to '60s, usually as a ground floor to a first floor granary. Unusually, this one in **Roxburghshire** has no granary over it.

Reapers come into use from the 1850s and the larger, more complex binder from about 1880. Purpose-built **implement sheds** therefore tend to be late – dating from

the second half of the 19th century onwards. This one is on a farm in **Glasserton parish, Wigtonshire**. Closely associated with these are the workshops, tool houses and farm smiddies where both field and steading equipment were maintained.



The land system also includes housing for inputs to the land, *via* carts and implements. These might include seed from the granary, manure from the midden

or dungstead, liquid manure from its storage tank and, a more exotic commodity, guano from the guano house.

To find out more:

Fenton, A. and Walker, D.B. *The Rural Architecture of Scotland* Edinburgh, 1981
Shaw, J.P. in Whitfeld, L. (editor) *Rural Buildings of the Lothians*. Edinburgh, 2000.

Looking at farm buildings

Farm buildings are not usually accessible. However, they can be examined at these and a few other sites open to the public:

- The Museum of Scottish Country Life, Wester Kittochside, East Kilbride, South Lanarkshire
- Auchindrain Museum, near Inverary, Argyllshire
- The Highland Folk Park, Newtonmore, Inverness-shire
- The North East Scotland Agricultural Heritage Park, Aden, near Mintlaw, Aberdeenshire

In all of these, information is provided to enable you to see how the buildings worked. Individual country buildings have also been preserved in a few places, and some large houses, which are open to the public, also have accessible farm steadings though they may have been reused, for example as cafes.

Understanding how a room has been used, let alone a building or the group of buildings that form a farm steading, is a complex process. **Think of the way in which your own house is used, and how this has changed over time.**

Look at everything and ask over and over again, 'why'?

- Why are the windows where they are? Why are they that size? Why do some buildings have windows and others not?
- Why are some rooms at the front and others at the back? Are there some which need to be close to the farmhouse?
- Where is the storage? What was stored in each place?
- Where were animals kept? What kinds of animals?

Try to imagine how you would have to move around to perform various tasks.

In a building of any age, such as the farmhouse at Wester Kittochside, different parts were built at different times, giving clues to the changing ways in which the building was used.

- ***Can you see*** differences in the kinds of stonework? (The rougher it is the older it may be). Or other materials to make the walls of the most recent buildings?
- ***What*** different types of roofing materials have been used?

Are there changes in the style of stonework – where an opening has been closed off or widened? Or a wall heightened? Why might this need to be done?