

# USE OF THE LAND



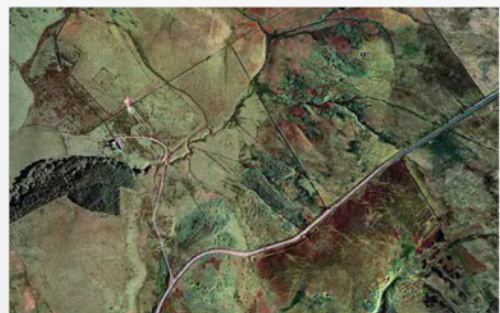
Measuring the head dyke on Thorneyburn Common



Aerial view of Lightning Bog, showing D-plan enclosure



D-plan boundary bank at Lightning Bog



Aerial view of Birchope, showing D-plan enclosure



The team at Birchope D-plan dyke

## Farming Practice

Farming practices were highly regulated in ways that might surprise modern farmers. The regulation was enforced by the manor courts, and dates were set for certain annual activities within an area. In particular these dictated dates for the movement of stock.

## Transhumance

The seasonal movement of stock to the out-bye land enabled crops and fodder to be grown in-bye in the summer months. Stock was moved to the shieling grounds beyond the head dykes, which were then closed to prevent their return.

This practice is recorded from the early medieval period, and existed in parts of Scotland and Ireland into the 19th century. Stock normally consisted of sheep, cattle and oxen.

It appears to have lasted in the north of England until the early 17th century. It quickly disappeared after the restoration of peace in the Borders when the remaining shielings often became permanent settlements.

## Contemporary description

In 1599 Camden visited the Roman Wall, Redesdale, Gilsland and Cumberland and recorded his observations.

*Here every where round about in the 'wasts' as they tearme them, as also in Giliesland, you may see as it were the ancient 'Nomades', a martiall kinde of men, who from the moneth of Aprill unto August, lye outscattering and summering (as they tearme it) with their cattell in little cottages here and there which they call 'Sheales' or 'Shealings'.*

**Shielings** Family members accompanying the stock to the summer pasturing stayed in rough huts for the duration, known as shielings. These huts consisted of one or two rooms, turf or stone-built with turf or heather roofs. They are found singly or in clusters.

There are very few clear remains of these huts in Tarsset's uplands, though TAG has identified some possible sites at Lightning Bog (Gleedlee), Emblehope and Burdonside. Many will have been destroyed by later enclosures, land improvement or afforestation.

Several local names contain references to the original shieling grounds – e.g. Gibshiel, Shipley Shiel, Shilla Hill, Shield Law, Longhaughshields.

**In-bye and out-bye land** These terms may have originated from the practice of transhumance.

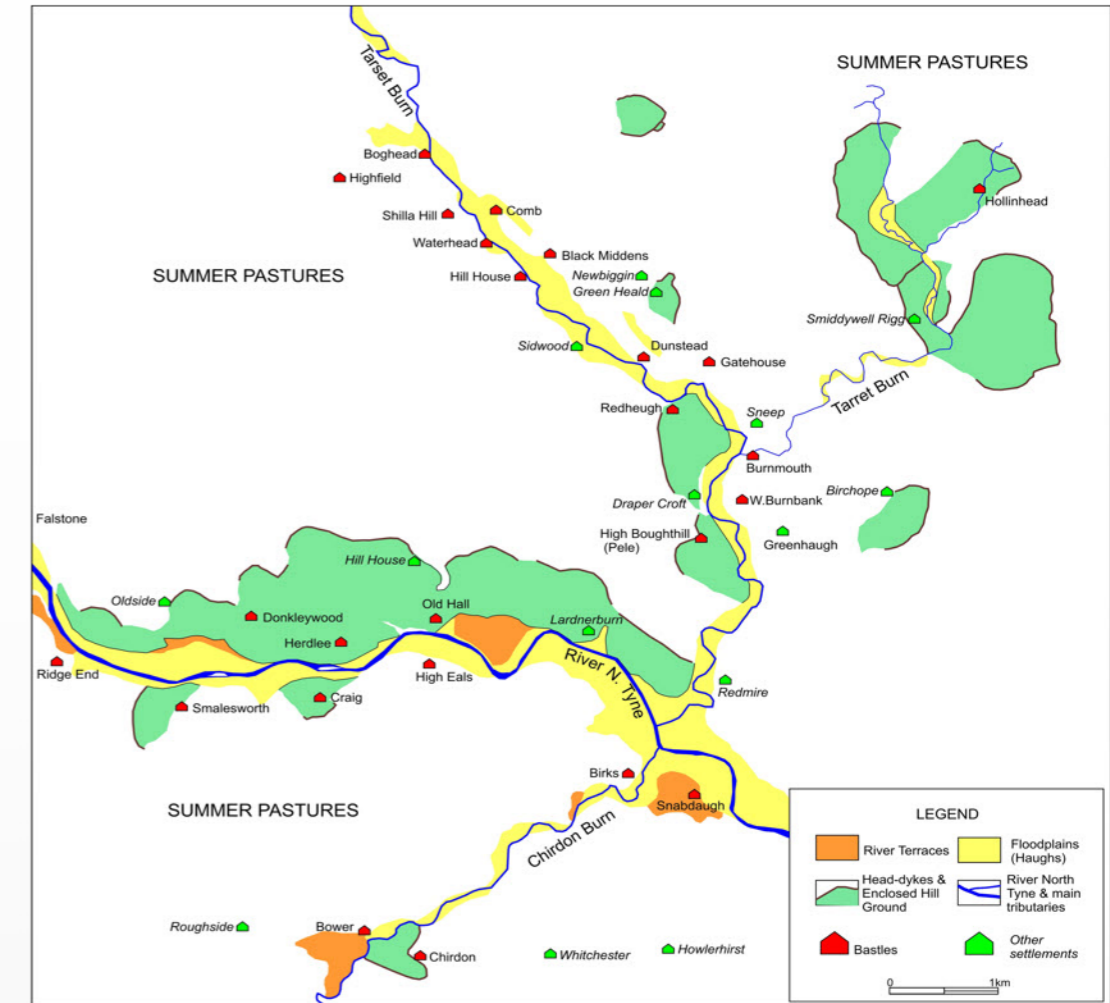
They are still widely used in areas of northern England to distinguish land lying near the farmstead from the outer or upland areas, which would have been beyond the head dykes.

**Head dykes** The head dykes were sod-cast (earth) boundaries, often 2m high and probably topped with quickthorn or blackthorn. There was a deep ditch on the outer side as a further deterrent to ingress. They appear to have had a dual purpose as a defensive barrier against marauders during the reiving period.

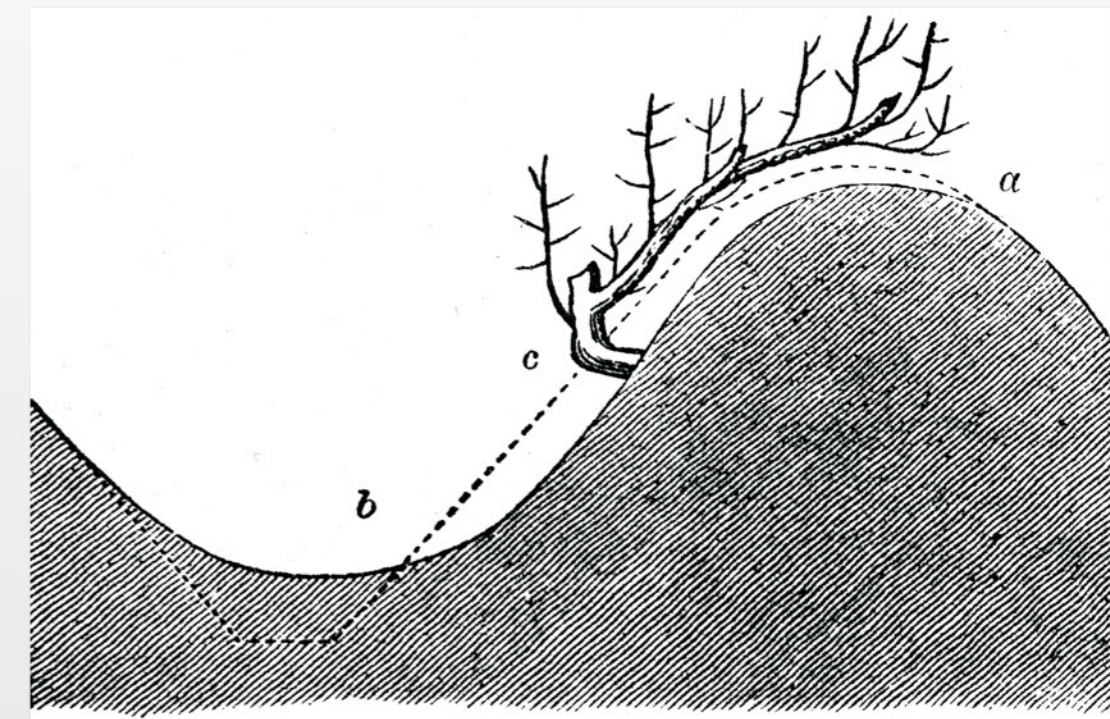
**Building the head dykes** This would have been a huge undertaking as some were at least 8km in length and often about 2m high. The man-hours required to build a kilometre would have been considerable.

**Tarsset's head dykes and enclosures** For the first time a significant number of large ditch-and-bank earthworks, thought to be Tarsset's head dykes, have been identified and mapped by TAG from field walks and air photographs. These are associated with or enclose most of the main settlements known from 16th century documents.

**The D-plan enclosure** A characteristic shape of detached enclosure has also been identified by TAG and named the D-plan enclosure, indicated by its rough shape. The straight line of the D is usually a burn.



Map showing head dykes and summer pastures Topography based on OS Landplan Maps 1:10 000 scale. Crown copyright 2004. All rights reserved. Licence number 100043254. Some geological information derived from Geological Survey maps at various scales, published 1940-1980, amended by TAG 2009.



Sketch of a typical thorn breasted bank and ditch  
a top of hedge bank b bottom of ditch c main stem cut through