

The **TARSET BASTLE TRAIL** takes you past the finest examples of the valley's bastles. There is a choice of routes, of various lengths and directions - see map and key on centre page.

**BASTLES** are fortified farmhouses and an important part of Tarset's heritage. They were built in the late 16th and early 17th centuries when protection was needed for local people against raiders from both sides of the Border.

By the mid 16th century, after hundreds of years of fierce Border warfare, farmsteads had been established in the valleys of the River North Tyne and most of its major tributaries.

Some of these permanent settlements were established on land previously used for summer grazing. Pressure from an increasing population and a deteriorating climate meant that survival became more difficult. At the same time local and cross-border raiding (**reiving**) increased.

Originally, the buildings were of wood. A report on the state of the Borders in the previous century describes the houses of the *heidsmen* (family heads) as built of *great square oak trees* with turf and earth roofs (1541).

Bastles are the first local stone-built domestic dwellings of the post-medieval period. In most cases they were later used as a source of stone for other buildings and dry-stone walls. None survives in its original form.

**RAIDS** During the reiving period, Tarset was again in the front line, just as it had been during the Border Wars. Nearly all the bastles you can see along this trail were repeatedly attacked.

On 30th August 1583, Kinmont Willie with some 300 other Armstrongs sacked eight farmsteads in Tarset, killing six people, taking 30 prisoners and driving away a large quantity of livestock.

There was far worse to come. Settlements again fell vacant in many parts of Tynedale as the Laird of Buccleuch, Keeper of Liddesdale, continued to lead fierce assaults. It was many years after the accession of James I in 1603 before peace finally returned to Tarset.

**REIVE** (reave) meant to rob or plunder, then became associated with loss, as in the current *be-reaved*.

## TARSET ARCHIVE GROUP

Tarset is full of history which Tarset Archive Group (TAG) has been working to explore and catalogue. In 2006 we published an atlas of archaeological and historical sites which forms the basis of a site database. We are a small voluntary group and there is still much work to be done.

## TARSET BASTLE TRAIL

Early in 2011 the Forestry Commission approached TAG to design an upgrade for the old reivers trail. TAG drew on its bastle studies (which culminated in the 2009 Bastle Exhibition) to design and produce the trail panels, and commissioned the hand-painted map from Mike Ritchie.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The trail is the result of successful and enjoyable partnership working between TAG and the Forestry Commission ; all funding came from the FC and Tarset 2050 CIC. In producing this leaflet TAG is grateful for the support of the Northumberland National Park Action Area fund, which also funded the Sidwood settlement panel .

We would also like to thank everyone we consulted, especially Richard Carlton of the Archaeological Practice, and all who permitted use of photographs and drawings to illustrate the rich wildlife of this bastle country as well as its bastles.

Thanks are also due to everyone we've worked with – panels were printed by Border Signs and Graphics, Dumfries; stands and way markers were made by Robin Watson Signs, Corbridge; and leaflets were printed by Robson Print, Hexham.



drawing of Shilla Hill by Jenny Purrett

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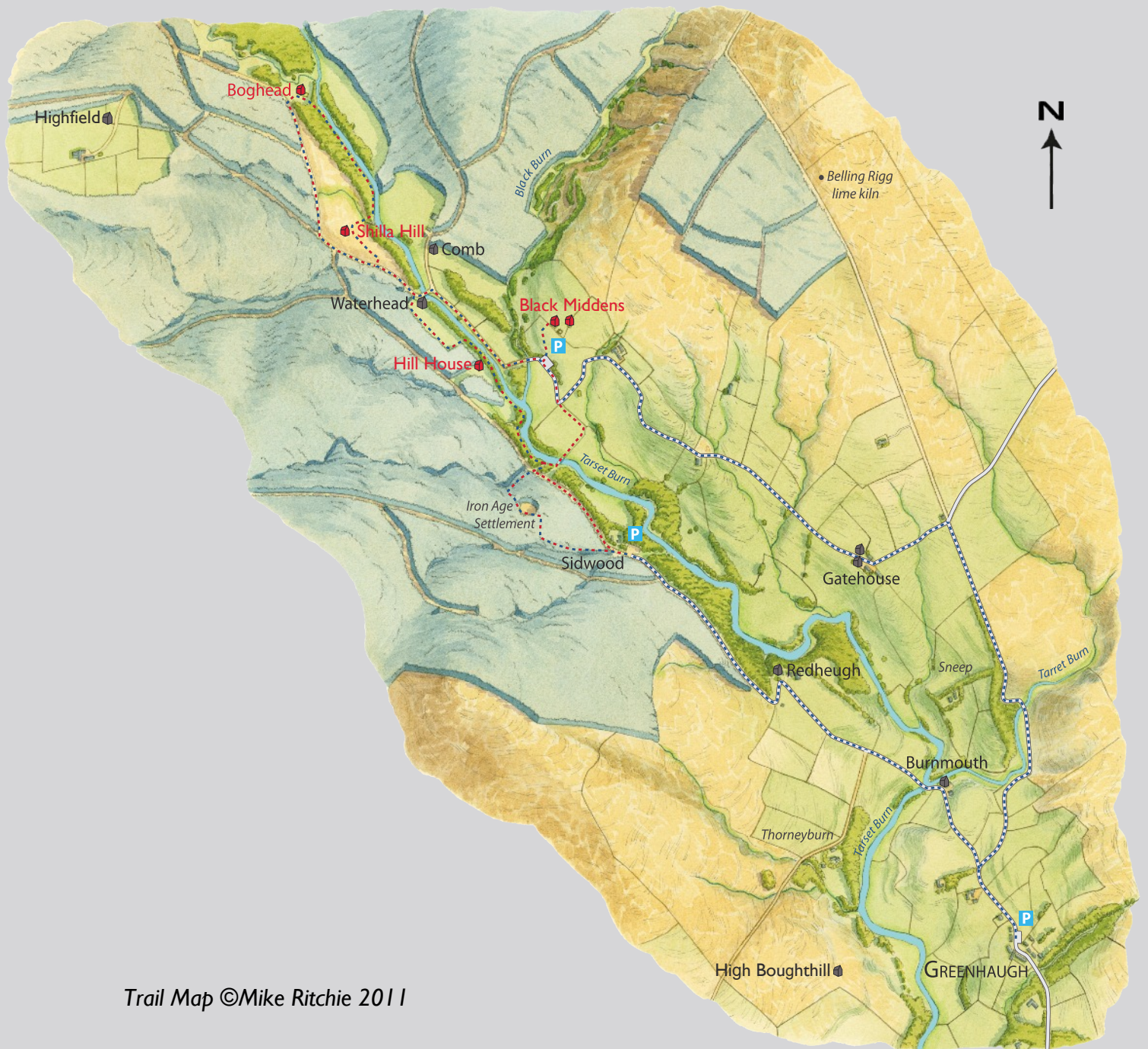
Forestry Commission  
England

Tarset  
Archive  
GROUP



# TARSET BASTLE TRAIL





Trail Map ©Mike Ritchie 2011

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### Trail Key

- ■ ■ ■ ■ Greenhaugh-Boghead-Black Middens-Greenhaugh circuit (13 kms / 8 miles)
  - ■ ■ ■ ■ Sidwood-Boghead-Black Middens-Sidwood circuit (7 kms / 4 miles)
  - ■ ■ ■ ■ Black Middens - Boghead - Hill House - Black Middens circuit (6 kms / 3¾ miles)
- bastle site open to the public  
■ bastle site private and not open to the public

### Access Information

- **Access Allowed** - You are welcome to explore bastles marked in red on the map. These are open to the public.  
*Please remember that the masonry is old and mostly ruined so be careful not to damage it - or yourself.*
- **No Access** - Bastles marked in grey on the map are on private property. They are not open to the public. Some can easily be seen from the road as you pass. Others are little more than a few stones, or have been incorporated into people's houses.

### Please follow the Countryside Code

- be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- leave gates, property and animals as you find them (if you think any animal or bird looks abandoned, please leave it where it is and let somebody know)
- protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- keep dogs under close control at all times and especially at lambing time
- consider other people, especially farmers and others working in the area