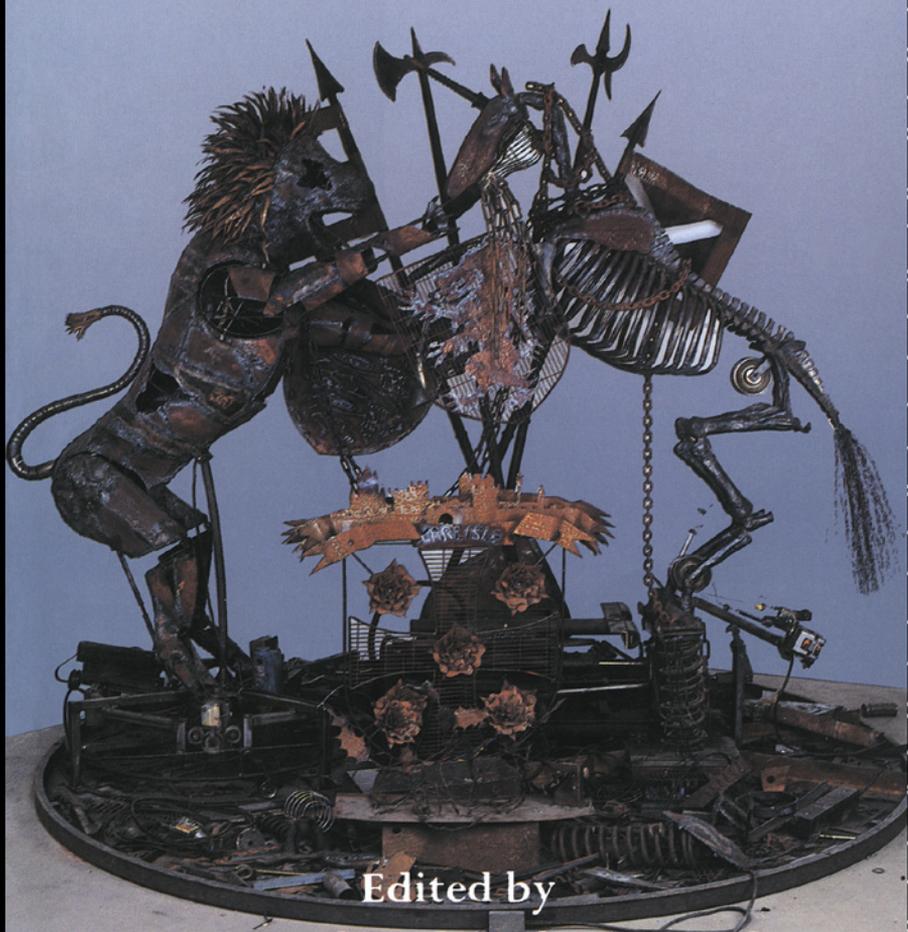


ROUTLEDGE

WAR AND BORDER SOCIETIES IN THE MIDDLE AGES



Edited by
Anthony Tuck and Anthony Goodman

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PREFACE

With the exception of the Introduction, the papers in this volume were originally presented at a conference held at Otterburn Hall, Northumberland, in September 1988 to commemorate the six-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Otterburn. The editors would like to express their gratitude to the University of Edinburgh and to the Scottish Universities Summer School for agreeing to act as co-sponsors of the conference. All the contributors wish to thank the management and staff of Otterburn Hall for their helpfulness and hospitality during the conference.

Anthony Goodman, Edinburgh
Anthony Tuck, Bristol
May, 1991

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	<i>Archaeologist Aeliana</i>
APS	<i>The Acts of the Parliament of Scotland</i> , ed. T.Thomson and C.Innes, 12 vols, Edinburgh 1814–75
BL	British Library
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
CDS	<i>Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland in HM Public Record Office</i> , ed. J.Bain, 4 vols, Edinburgh, 1881–8
CIM	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous</i>
CIPM	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem</i>
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
CWAAS	<i>Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
Foedera	T.Rymer, <i>Foedera, Conventiones et Litterae Patentis</i> , 20 vols, London 1704–35. (Where another edition has been used, it is fully cited at the appropriate footnote.)
Froissart	<i>Oeuvres de Jean Froissart</i> , ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, 15 vols, Brussels, 1867–71. (Where another edition has been used, it is fully cited at the appropriate footnote.)
GEC	<i>The Complete Peerage</i> , ed. G.E.Cockayne, 13 vols, London, 1910–40
JGR	<i>John of Gaunt's Register: 1372–76</i> (2 vols), ed. S. Armitage-Smith, Camden 3rd ser., vols xx and xxi, 1911; <i>1379–83</i> (2 vols) ed. E.C.Lodge and R. Somerville, Camden 3rd ser., vols lvi and lvii, 1937

ABBREVIATIONS

NCH	<i>A History of Northumberland</i> , 15 vols, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1893–1940
PPC	<i>Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council</i> , ed. N. H. Nicolas, 6 vols, London, 1834–7
PRO	Public Record Office (London)
RS	Rolls Series
<i>Rot. Parl.</i>	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum: The Rolls of Parliament</i> , 6 vols, London, 1783
<i>Rot. Scot.</i>	<i>Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londoniensi...asseruati</i> , ed. D. Macpherson <i>et al.</i> , 2 vols, London 1814–19
ScHR	<i>Scottish Historical Review</i>
SS	Surtees Society
VCH	<i>Victoria County History</i>
<i>Westminster</i>	<i>The Westminster Chronicle 1381–1394</i> , ed. L.C. Hector and Barbara Harvey, Oxford, 1982
<i>Chron.</i>	Andrew Wyntoun, <i>The Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland</i> , ed. D. Laing, 3 vols, Edinburgh 1872–9.
<i>Wyntoun</i>	(Where another edition has been used, it is fully cited at the appropriate footnote.)

INTRODUCTION

Anthony Goodman

The concept of 'frontier' as a tool for defining certain sorts of societies has recently been widely applied to the Middle Ages in a collection of essays entitled *Medieval Frontier Societies*.¹ One conclusion which emerges from the volume is that it is impossible to identify general social and institutional developments which can be typified as characteristic of medieval frontier societies. Geographical, cultural and political variables were too diverse for that, though remarkable parallels have been adduced between societies on different frontiers. In *Medieval Frontier Societies* Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay identify three broad categories of medieval borderlands—frontiers with few distinctive correlatives, ones which corresponded with sharp religious and political cleavages, such as the Christian-Muslim frontier in Spain, and a less clearly demarcated sort such as the 'non-linear, cultural frontier between the indigenous peoples of eastern Europe and the German immigrants who settled among them in the High Middle Ages'. Despite this diversity, there are some features which medieval frontier societies shared to a greater or lesser degree, notably militarization, together with institutional mechanisms and social values flowing from that militarization. These factors were prominent or not according to the group perception of the strength and continuity of the exterior threat they were designed to contain.²

Where should the Anglo-Scottish Borders in the later Middle Ages be placed among these profiles of medieval frontier societies? Geoffrey Barrow has argued that their frontier line in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was principally a line of

demarcation between two kingdoms.³ It was only in the fourteenth century that a perpetual state of either war or truce between the kingdoms led to the development in the Borders of special military institutions and an emphasis upon martial values still recognizably present there at the start of the seventeenth century. The ballads about the battle of Otterburn, despite the fact that they survive only in much later and therefore 'corrupt' versions, arguably provide unique literary evidence about the 'frontier mentality' of adjoining frontier societies in the later fourteenth century.⁴ The ballads attempt to give a framework of order to fragmented and precariously placed societies by emphasizing their possession of noble qualities and endowing them with a strong sense of autonomy. This balladry (like that of some other frontier societies) spells out the bleak predicament of borderers and insists that there can often be no honourable escape from the collectivism of local patriotism.

The ballads also define the embattled adjoining frontier societies as being similar in character. Acculturation is a notable feature in societies where the frontier line demarcates strong socio-religious divisions—it operates notably across the divide in later medieval Andalusia, a subject which Angus MacKay has explored.⁵ In the Anglo-Scottish Borders acculturation was the norm across the frontier before the later medieval attempts to transform it into a sharply defined political and military barrier. Thereafter, with the English Crown setting the pace, the development of new Border institutions was intended to cut across the historic grain of the region, providing a fuller means of regulating the frontier, ultimately in the interests of the kings. On the English side what we see is the influence of embryonic state authority being tentatively extended at its periphery. The local patriotism of the ballads (with its strong dash of sympathy for those 'on the other side') is therefore to be contrasted with the increasingly enhanced role in Border affairs, both in England and Scotland, of Crown and 'community of the realm'; these frontier societies had their character formed by the often uneasy interplay of nation and locality.

The battle of Otterburn and its circumstances, besides providing a striking example of how these forces interacted in the Borders, constituted, as far as England was concerned, a landmark in their development, with long-term repercussions

on national as well as frontier affairs. Government attempts before the campaign to reorganize Border defences in fact facilitated a catastrophe; in the aftermath, the English Crown was unable to provide solutions to the greatly increased defence and political problems. From the end of the fourteenth century, consequently, Border lords became inclined to intervene in national politics, with destabilizing effects in the following century.⁶

As Alexander Grant remarks, the battle of Otterburn has often been treated as if it was solely of significance in the history of Border raids and feuds, or as one of the notable chivalrous episodes of the later Middle Ages. In fact it was one of the most important battles of the fourteenth century. It had important immediate repercussions as well as long-term effects on the politics both of the two frontier societies and of the two realms. In the first place, Otterburn was an important battle of the Hundred Years War. For it was one of several military checks to the principal powers involved in the war which produced a political climate conducive to the making of truces and ultimately to the peace negotiations of the 1390s. There had also been the defeat of Juan I of Castile by England's ally, Portugal, at Aljubarrota in 1385 and the failures of the French attempt to organize an invasion of England in 1386, and of the English invasion of France in 1388. In the English domestic context, the Otterburn campaign and its background also illuminate the sorts of difficulties confronting the state in the late medieval/early modern periods when attempting to attach often poor and remote frontier regions firmly to a principality. The problems presented by frontier societies were important factors in stimulating advances in the authority of the state, inducing attempts to elaborate military institutions and the means of financing them, to increase political control and to inject a fuller and wider sense of national allegiance. Such wavering and partially successful exertions by the under-resourced early modern state called into existence in the English Borders what may be posited as a sub-category of types of frontier society, one whose strong regional character was much affected by sometimes disruptive influences from the interior of the realm.

These themes are explored in the following pages, after a discussion of the sparse sources for the campaign. Emphasis is

placed on the fact that the battle was not an isolated event of purely local significance, but the most important engagement in a particularly savage war between England and Scotland which lasted for a year. In the essays which follow, the regional and international contexts of this war are explored, the military significance of the battle is assessed and so is the import of the principal balladry describing the battle.

The particular day in August 1388 on which a Scottish army, encamped at Otterburn in the Northumbrian lordship of Redesdale, defeated a surprise attack by its English pursuers from Newcastle, was, as Colin Tyson shows, a matter of disagreement among contemporary chroniclers, and one which remains difficult to resolve. As is often the case with medieval battles, the site cannot be identified from chroniclers' accounts: none of those who wrote about the battle knew the area. The only grave pit which has been discovered is at Elsdon church, in whose parish Otterburn lay. However, as Tyson concludes, the traditional site of the battle, at the place called Battle Croft or Battle Riggs, is more plausible than the others which have been proposed; it is an excellent campsite for a large body of troops, and one strategically placed.

Otterburn was a battle which attained immediate fame. Large-scale battles were unusual in Border warfare: in the period Scottish defence in the face of major English invasions (such as those which had taken place in 1384 and 1385) relied on a strategy of 'scorched earth', withdrawals, guerilla attacks, and incursions across other parts of the frontier. English defence relied heavily on fortification: this is reflected in the programme of castle building in northern England in the 1370s and 1380s described by Barrie Dobson. The particular circumstances of the battle strongly appealed to the tastes for chivalric *contes* and ballads which permeated different levels of society down to the early modern period: the battle appeared as the dramatic peak of the family rivalry and personal enmity between James, earl of Douglas and Sir Henry Percy, 'Hotspur', son and heir to the earl of Northumberland. These scions of exalted Border families had by their prowess affirmed their leadership of the knightly *jeunesse dorée*. The fight at Otterburn saw heavy bloodshed and sharp changes of fortune; the Scottish victory and the capture of Percy were balanced by the death of Douglas in the field. All these facets of the battle are highlighted in the fullest and most

exciting account by a contemporary, that by Jean Froissart.⁷ Froissart's detailed reconstruction of the battle was written up within a year or so, based, he wrote, on the accounts of participants on both sides. We know from an independent source that one of his two informants from the county of Foix, a certain 'Jean de Cantiran', was captured by the Scots in the battle.⁸ Although Froissart had not lived in England since the 1360s, when he had enjoyed the patronage of the royal family and visited Scotland in 1365, he keenly collected information about fighting in the Borders in the 1370s and 1380s, and was in fact the only continental chronicler interested in the Scottish invasion of 1388. This interest stemmed not only from his past involvements, but also from his conviction that the protagonists in this border fighting were characteristic exemplars of the chivalrous values he admired. Froissart's account of the battle has remained the most influential one, a result of the lasting fame of his *Chronicles*, whose growing popularity is reflected in the survival from the fifteenth century of the *de luxe* editions produced for the nobility, and in Lord Berners' translation of them into English, published in 1523 and 1525.⁹

Other near-contemporary accounts of the battle emphasize, like Froissart's, the personal drama of Percy and Douglas. But they stress other important themes too. Those by English chroniclers illustrate southern awareness of the vulnerability of the north: this sensitivity is also reflected in the frequent notices of previous Scottish incursions during Richard II's reign in *The Westminster Chronicle* and the works of Thomas Walsingham. By the late 1380s, the anonymous monk of Westminster, who probably began writing up an account of national affairs from 1381 onwards, was well-informed and incisive; when writing about the 1388 campaign, he probably used a version of events circulating among courtiers and royal officials in the adjacent Westminster Palace.¹⁰ He is particularly interested in the reactions of Richard II and his council to the battle: as a result of the Scottish successes, they were heavily preoccupied with the war in the north up to the spring of 1389. The monk's concern with the failure in August 1388 to co-ordinate fully the levies of Northumberland and the bishopric of Durham (whose background is explained below by Barrie Dobson) probably echoes official concerns in planning the subsequent defence of the Border shires.¹¹ Walsingham was the most prolific English

chronicler of the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. As a monk of St Albans, one of the wealthiest and most prestigious Benedictine houses, within easy reach of London, and on main routes north from it, Walsingham was well placed to gather news. The *Liber Benefactorum* of the abbey, whose compilation was probably started in 1380, records the reception of royal and noble personages, among others, into the confraternity of St Alban, and their gifts to the monastery and its cells—the earl of Northumberland is recorded as as benefactor of Tynemouth priory.¹² Characteristically, Walsingham wrote about the campaign in a less analytical and more nationally biased way than the Westminster chronicler.¹³ Walsingham's particular interest in Northumbrian affairs sprang from the fact that Tynemouth priory was a cell of St Albans. His abbot, Thomas de la Mare, had been prior at Tynemouth, whose rent roll had declined as a result of Scottish raids, to which the priory was vulnerable by sea as well as by land.¹⁴ In the aftermath of Otterburn, in 1389, it was attacked by a Scottish raiding force; Walsingham's account of this and of the monastic cellarer's unfortunate experiences on this occasion, were probably derived by him from a monk there, either by word of mouth or through a newsletter.¹⁵ There is likely to have been a connection between Walsingham's refusal to put the blame on Henry Percy's rashness at Otterburn (which the Westminster chronicler regretted) and the generous succour with which Percy's father supported the priory after its vicissitudes in 1389.

Henry Knighton, a canon of Leicester Abbey, who probably began writing the history of his times in about 1390, was well informed for a southern Englishman about the Scottish nobles who campaigned in 1388; and he was the one English chronicler who appreciated that both English Marches faced simultaneous invasions then. Knighton's interest in Anglo-Scottish relations had probably been sharpened by the tenure of lieutenancies in the Marches between 1379 and 1384 by John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, and by his participation in invasions of Scotland in 1384 and 1385. As earl of Leicester, Gaunt was a patron of the abbey and lord of the borough of Leicester; he frequently stayed in the adjacent castle on journeys to and from the north in the early 1380s. Knighton had unique information about Gaunt's reception in Scotland in 1381 and about these

campaigns of 1384 and 1385, some of which he may have received from members of the duke's household; but in 1388 many of them were with the duke in Gascony.¹⁶

The importance of the invasion of the English West March is stressed in the most authoritative Scottish account of the 1388 campaign, by Andrew Wyntoun, canon regular of St Andrews and active as prior of Lochleven between 1395 and 1413. Wyntoun was working on his *Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland* in old age—he was a fervent admirer of Robert Stewart, duke of Albany, second son of Robert II, and Governor of Scotland during James I's captivity. As earl of Fife, Robert Stewart commanded the Scottish army in the West March during 1388 and in the confrontation of 1389, and it is due to Wyntoun's interest in his achievements that we owe some telling information about these campaigns. One has the suspicion that Wyntoun thought that Fife, not Douglas, ought to have been the popular hero of the 1388–89 war. This probably idiosyncratic bias makes one wonder how literally to take Wyntoun's statement that a considerable part of his narrative (including the 1388–89 section) was written by an author working in the reigns of David II and Robert II. If Wyntoun's dating of this mysterious work is correct, his narrative of Otterburn depends on an account written within about eighteen months of the battle.¹⁷

The lasting fame of Otterburn derives above all from the ballads it inspired—*The Hunting of the Cheviot*, the versions of it known as *Chevy Chase* and the closely related *Battle of Otterburn*, which are compared below by James Reed. The earliest ballad versions survive from c.1550; by then *The Hunting of the Cheviot* was part of the common repertoire of Scottish entertainers; so was a Percy-Douglas version of doubtless similar theme among English entertainers by c.1580.¹⁸ As historical evidence about the events of the Otterburn campaign, the ballads are worth-less: in Reed's phrase, this is 'fictional reportage'. However, there is reason to believe that these later versions metamorphosed from compositions made soon after the battle. The glorification of the Douglasses and Percies and the presentation of a society in the ballads which revolved around the two families and their mutual enmity were deeply anachronistic features by the mid-sixteenth century. The chief private cause of the two families' disputes—their rival claims to the castle, constablenesship and

forest of Jedburgh—had disappeared in 1404, when the earl of Northumberland surrendered these estates to Henry IV.¹⁹ The power of the earls of Douglas was destroyed by the forfeiture of 1455 and the Percies never regained their former dominance after the sixth earl of Northumberland's death in 1537. The world of the ballads would have accorded well with the sentiments one might have expected to exist in the households of the Douglasses and Percies only in the decades after the battle. They may well have originated in compositions by minstrels retained by them, or in amateur compositions by other Douglas or Percy retainers. We know that the ability to sing and to versify was valued and taught in the household of Henry Percy, hero of Otterburn. The writer John Hardyng, who started his education as an esquire there in 1390, acquired the ability to compose in the *genre* of the English rhymed chronicle.²⁰ New ballad compositions are likely to have spread from the noble household through the practice whereby lords sent their minstrels to perform in other noble households as a courtesy on feast days. So William earl of Douglas (d. 1384) sent his minstrel to entertain John of Gaunt's household at Leicester over the New Year's festivities in 1381.²¹ In February 1382 Gaunt rewarded a minstrel of Robert II, 'fessant son ministralcie en nostre presence a Londres'.²² Among the minstrels rewarded by the prior of Durham for entertainment on the feast of St Cuthbert in 1391 were those of Henry Percy and Gaunt.²³ The diffusion of a ballad through different levels of society was probably assisted by the gatherings of minstrels as members of guilds. In 1380 Gaunt backed the authority of whoever was the temporary 'roy des ministrals' within his honour of Tutbury (Staffs) to arrest any minstrels there who refused to do their service and minstrelsy at the accustomed annual gathering.²⁴

The social context in which the Otterburn ballads place the battle is worth considering, since it is probably based on contemporary local perceptions, and since the ballad view of Border society has been so influential both within and without it. The world which the ballads present is a simple rural one, with identical regional social pyramids topped by a princely figure on both sides of the frontier, structures linked by mutual tensions and by their recognition of shared martial qualities. The ballads as they evolved in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries reinforced regional beliefs that feud was an essential

ingredient of their society. In the 'civil society' whose values were penetrating the Borders in the sixteenth century, the ballads reinforced barbarous stereotypes of Border behaviour. They have since become a focus for Northumbrian patriotism and a paradigm for the view that a distinct 'frontier society' evolved, embracing regions on either side of the frontier during the period from the Scottish Wars of Independence to the Union of the Crowns (1296–1603). As a result of the failure of the two realms to make a lasting peace for over two centuries, special institutions did, indeed, develop in these regions, which can be compared with those in the frontier lands of Wales and Ireland as described by Rees Davies.²⁵ The local system of frontier law, the already ancient 'March Laws', was adapted and administered at the customary international meeting places on days of truce.²⁶ A new office developed, that of the Wardenship of the Marches, to control defences and maintain truces in a well-defined region, an office which Marjorie Boyle has shown attained its distinctive form in England in 1348.²⁷ There was, indeed, no other part of England and Scotland with similar special laws, courts and defence arrangements. Nowhere else in England was to be found such density and variety of fortifications and nowhere else were royal garrisons so important.

In so far as the ballads project the militarization of society and the control of its defence system by local magnates, they relate accurately to the character of the Borders' special institutions. But the 'ballad' images are concerned with society at war; they project a partial view which emphasizes unduly the uniqueness and isolation of Border society. For in some senses the whole of Scotland constituted a 'frontier society'; the lowlands were vulnerable in some parts to raiding from the highlands, in others from the English as well as the Scottish Borders. So in December 1388 the English captain of Berwick led a raid into Lothian as far as the Firth of Forth, 'taking prisoners and an enormous amount of booty all brought back with him to Berwick without interference from anyone'.²⁸ The Scottish Borders' distinctive defence institutions, the Wardenships and Marches, probably arose less from circumstances differentiating their society from that of the rest of Scotland than from the need to respond to the development of such institutions in the English Borders under the auspices of

the English Crown. Social institutions in the Borders were not markedly distinctive. Throughout Scotland the kindred was a prominent form of social grouping, prepared to protect its members through the prosecution of feud. As Keith Brown has written:

feuding was a Scottish experience, and not one which was a product of highland tribalism, or border lawlessness. Lowland society inhabited the same social and mental environment as these other regions, and the feud was understood throughout the kingdom.²⁹

Feud flourished too in the English Marches. In the social context the important distinction was not between the *mores* of a frontier society and those of other parts of Britain, but between a northern half of Britain where the kindred often still had a traditional importance in social regulation, and a southern half where it had become weakened and where a stronger public authority was evolving and forming a 'civil society' in which courtroom sanctions were replacing those of violence.

In the ballads a geographically and numerically small but important part of Border society is neglected—the towns and their inhabitants, whose regulation by borough/burgh courts and by merchant and craft guilds made them particularly susceptible to 'civil' values. Accounts of the 1388 campaign recognize the strategic importance of Newcastle, but the only one in which the presence of a substantial number of Newcastle levies in the battle is implied is the *Westminster Chronicle*.³⁰ Newcastle, as Anthony Tuck suggests, was perhaps one of the few urban 'success stories' in fourteenth-century England. Elsewhere in the Marches, boroughs followed the general declining trend. However, Henry Summerson demonstrates how Carlisle, besides being of great strategic value remained, despite its decline, a notable regional market centre. Burgesses in the Borders required military skills, but, especially when they were principally engaged in handicrafts or trade, their avocations inhibited whole-hearted participation in the political and cultural worlds of the ballads. Newcastle traders entered into the wider world of London and of ports on either side of the North Sea; as Tuck says, some Newcastle merchants had

complex and by no means subordinate relations with the Northumberland nobility. This urban élite may have been a channel for outside cultural influences to enter the shire. Both Newcastle and Carlisle depended for the maintenance of their privileges and prosperity on the favour of the Crown, whose castles were a dominant feature of their skylines. Spots of intense national feeling can develop in frontier regions, as the saga of Joan of Arc, denizen of an isolated dauphinist enclave in the duchy of Bar, was to demonstrate. As Summerson says, Carlisle had its mysterious female saviour in the siege of 1385. It was not the banner of the Greystokes, the Dacres or the Cliffords which she held aloft, but the royal standard—appropriately so in a shire where, Summerson shows, the Crown had a good deal of localized influence. Carlisle, isolated from the major shipping lanes and difficult of access from the south, was, however, closely linked by trade to Newcastle, and like-wise irradiated, if more faintly, a cosmopolitan culture. The Border higher nobility were, indeed, bound by all sorts of ties to a wider world and refracted its influence through their household culture. The Percy affinity, as Tuck remarks, was far from exclusively Northumbrian in character: the earl of Northumberland had notable Yorkshire knights among his retainers. Few Englishmen from other parts of the realm stayed in the Borders, but those who did (such as these retainers) had a high profile. Outsiders played significant parts in Border defence, partly because of the Crown's reluctance to allow Wardens' retinues and royal garrisons to be recruited locally.³¹ Wardens and captains of castles whose main landed interest were elsewhere naturally engaged soldiers in their own localities. Moreover, other parts of northern England had a role in emergencies in the defence of the Marches: in June 1388 commissions of array were appointed, who were to obey the Wardens, in the three Yorkshire Ridings, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.³² It is not clear whether any of these levies fought at Otterburn, but stray references suggest that it was not just the men of Northumberland who were caught up in the disaster. The Westmorland landowner Sir Matthew Redman had an important role in the battle. The keeper of Berwick, Sir Ralph Lumley, captured in the battle, was, after his father-in-law Lord Neville, the most important of the bishop of Durham's tenants, and might be expected to have had in his retinue men from the

bishopric and garrison soldiers from further south.³³ It is likely that many of those in Percy's retinue were also from south of the Tyne. Among those captured in the battle were his esquire Janico Dartasso, from Aquitaine, John de Cantiran, also from Aquitaine, and John Bryan, valet of the king's chamber.³⁴

The Scottish borders were near the heartlands of the kingdom. However, the English occupation deprived the Borders of their one important burgh, whose heavily reduced trade under English control included a trickle across *the de facto* frontier. The considerable increase in customs receipts from Edinburgh in the three decades after the English captured Berwick in 1333 probably stemmed in part from the diversion through its port of Border wool, fleeces and hides.³⁵ English domination across much of the frontier line in this period promoted ties between Scottish Borderers and the mainstream of Lowland society. The English threat to Scottish nobles' control of their Border estates and dependants—a more dire threat than they could pose in the English Borders—made them dependent on revenue and military assistance from other parts of Scotland. The Douglasses and Dunbars were not just Border magnates, standing in proud isolation against the English. Moreover, their ability to maintain frontier defences vitally interested almost equally vulnerable Lowlanders. The interdependence of Borders and Lowlands is seen in the scheme agreed on in the 1455 parliament (and likely to have been based on traditional arrangements), whereby a chain of beacons was to give warnings of invasions across the frontier between Berwick and Roxburgh, alerting the Lowlands levies to muster in strengths appropriate to the size of invasion.³⁶ Alexander Grant argues that the struggle to regain the menacing occupied enclaves in the 1370s was seen in Scotland as a national as well as a local one; his corollary is that the 1388 invasions were made to fulfil the long matured intentions of Robert II as well as of magnates to enforce a favourable peace, and were executed by the Scottish host, not simply Border levies. In this view, the battle of Otterburn was an episode in an elaborate and strenuous attempt to fulfil settled national aims, taking advantage of a phase of English internal dissension.

The Border aristocrats and the milieux in which they operated were parts of wider socio-economic and politico-cultural entities. The battle was the outcome of general as well

as local and national disputes—of disputes between opposed sets of allies as well as between two families and two realms. As Grant points out, some of the Scottish campaigns to regain the occupied enclaves and attack the English Borders in 1384–5 had had significant French military assistance. However, with the making of an Anglo-Scottish truce in September 1385 and its renewals lasting into the summer of 1388, the Scots more or less dropped out of the wider conflict with their English problem largely unresolved—just when that conflict intensified.³⁷ So relaxed were the English that Sir Henry Percy, who checked the Scots in a number of engagements after Richard II's withdrawal from Scotland in 1385, was diverted in 1387 to head operations against the French from Calais and in relieving Brest.³⁸ The pacific intentions of George Dunbar, earl of March (who was to be one of the commanders at Otterburn) are reflected in the three safe-conducts which he received in 1386–7 to pay a private visit to England.³⁹

In July 1386 John of Gaunt, who with his retainers had acted strenuously in diplomacy and war as a shield to the north since 1379, had sailed with some of the most distinguished of them to invade Castile. That autumn Charles VI threatened the invasion of south-east England with such unprecedented seriousness that levies were drawn for its defence, exceptionally, from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.⁴⁰ In the winter of 1387–8 northern levies (from Lancashire) were involved in the brief civil war in which Richard II's favourite, Robert de Vere, duke of Ireland, challenged the courtiers' opponents, the Lords Appellant.⁴¹ Yet the Scots still did not stir. The reasons may have been that their estates had not recovered from the exceptional devastation inflicted by Richard's army in 1385, and that they remained nervous about their control of the newly recovered parts of Annandale and Teviotdale. An indication of a change in Scottish policy was that the English envoys appointed to negotiate on 26 March 1388 failed to secure a renewal of the current truce, due to run out on 19 June.⁴² What prompted this policy reversal? Grant's answer is that the Scots were tempted to take advantage of the intense political crisis in England, at its height from the autumn of 1387 to the spring of 1388. Though the northern lords tried to keep aloof, the events inevitably had northern repercussions. One of those appealed of treason was Alexander Neville, archbishop of York, lord of the

archiepiscopal liberty of Hexhamshire in Northumberland, and Lord Neville's brother. He fled northwards disguised as a simple priest during the rising of the Lords Appellant and lay low—presumably in one of the family's castles in the bishopric of Durham or in the Neville town house in Newcastle.⁴³ If the earl of March acted on his safe-conduct dated 12 December 1387, permitting him to bring a retinue of one hundred to England, and, at the discretion of Lord Neville (Warden of the East March), to enter castles and towns, he and the gentlefolk of Berwickshire and East Lothian in his service doubtless became well apprised of these dramatic events.⁴⁴ The archbishop was to be captured the following June by Newcastle customs searchers, apparently after he had embarked at Tynemouth priory's port of North Shields. Despite the resistance of the mayor and bailiffs to his proffered bribes, he eventually escaped abroad.⁴⁵ Within days of his capture, on 19 June (the day the truce expired), his brother relinquished the Wardenship to Sir Henry Percy, according to the terms of the indenture the latter had made with the Crown on 12 April.⁴⁶ Lord Neville died at Newcastle on 17 October.⁴⁷ Richard's opponents may have planned his replacement as Warden because they suspected him of harbouring his fugitive brother—or simply because he was in ill health and thought to be unable to cope in the coming war. Doubtless the Scots sensed an opportunity in the difficulties of the Neville family; according to Froissart, the invasion force in August crossed the Tyne into the bishopric near Lord Neville's castle of Brancepeth and laid waste the vicinity, a boldness they are unlikely to have shown if Neville, whose military experience and reputation were outstanding, had been in full vigour and in command of the East March.⁴⁸

International affairs in 1388 also concurred to present the Scots with a favourable situation to attack—of a sort familiar in the later Middle Ages, which successive generations of Scots always found hard to resist. As John Palmer has shown, the English government was preparing for a major invasion of France in the summer of 1388. He has postulated the making of an Anglo-Breton treaty at the end of January; in March parliament granted a subsidy for the expedition against the French to be undertaken by the earl of Arundel, on which he was to set sail belatedly on 10 June.⁴⁹ Exchequer payments were made for the wages of reinforcements under Sir Thomas Percy

(the earl of Northumberland's brother) with which Gaunt was intended to launch an assault against the French Crown from his base in Gascony.⁵⁰ It was only on 18 August that Gaunt made a truce with the French royal lieutenant in Aquitaine and on 3 September that Arundel returned to England.⁵¹ Up to the time of the battle of Otterburn the Scots could reasonably anticipate that English resources would be chiefly concentrated on the war with France. So could the French royal council, which since the spring of 1387 had had good reason to fear a renewed vigour in English diplomacy and war plans. On 29 November 1387 instructions were given to Charles VI's envoys to Juan I of Castile (now an uncertain ally) to stress how their common English adversary

a fait de jour en jour arrester en son royaume tout le navire qui y est et qui vient d'autre pays et aussi a fait crier partout que tout son dit navire soit prest et appareille pour passer la mer a ceste prochaine nouvelle saison et dit on de certain que c'est pour passer en France ou en Castelle.⁵²

Charles's councillors had every reason to exaggerate a supposed mutual threat, but, as far as France was concerned, they were in earnest. On 19 December the French Crown ordered the levy of an *aide* in order to oppose the enterprises of John of Gaunt, alleging that he had recently arrived at Bordeaux and was levying soldiers there for the purpose of ravaging the realm.⁵³ Charles sealed an agreement with Juan (June 1388), affirming that the latter would send the naval assistance which he was obliged to do by treaty.⁵⁴ Less reassuringly for the French, the following month Gaunt made his personal peace with Juan at Bayonne, a development which held the threat of an Anglo-Castilian peace, an objective which Gaunt was to pursue strenuously.⁵⁵ His diplomacy was also worrying for the papal court at Avignon, from whose allegiance he had already detached Portugal in 1386 and might now succeed in detaching Castile and other Iberian powers.⁵⁶ So, for over a year before Otterburn was fought, the French court—and, indeed, the Clementist court—had every incentive to try to reactivate Scottish participation in the Hundred Years War. However, no evidence has been found that they did try to do

so—and the Scots certainly showed no inclination to bail out their ally and their pope until the early months of 1388. Then, in the spring, the incentives for the Scots to choose war may have proved irresistible. New opportunities were opened up by the toils of Lord Neville and by the English concentration on warfare in France. Moreover, Scottish royal councillors may have begun to speculate that, in the current posture of international affairs, with the resurgence of England, the renewal of the Anglo-Scottish truce might not be in the long-term Scottish interest. The threatened deterioration in the French Crown's diplomatic and military situation might induce it to make a peace neglectful of Scottish interests. This was to be the objective of English diplomacy in the winter of 1388–9, when the English hoped to make a separate peace with the French so that they could concentrate on imposing a final solution on the Scots.

The failure to renew the Anglo-Scottish truce gave the clearest indication to the English government that there would be war in the north in the summer of 1388. The indenture made with Percy for the keeping of the East March in April, with its provision of the unprecedented sum of £12,000 *per annum* to him in time of war, was intended as a defence measure for the summer.⁵⁷ On 8 June northern commissions of array were appointed for the defence of the Marches.⁵⁸ The Scots proved more aggressive; on 29 June they crossed the frontier on both the East and West Marches; the eastern force was notably successful, ravaging as far south as Tynemouth and returning, unresisted, in mid-July, having taken prisoner over 400 men of substance—a blow to Northumbrian defences and an encouragement to the Scots to take the initiative again.⁵⁹ The reason for the defensive posture of the northern lords in 1388—which was to prove so tragically irksome to Sir Henry Percy—was that they were waiting for the king to lead an expedition against the Scots, presumably bringing his land and sea forces up to meet the north-east levies at Newcastle. On 17 July an Exchequer payment was made for the costs of messengers sent out with privy seal letters addressed to the knights and esquires of the king's retinue, ordering them to come in the king's company against Scotland. Abbots and priors were ordered to aid the king with carts and carriage for his expedition. On the same date payment was made for the dispatch of privy seal

letters to the earl of Northumberland, Lords Neville, Clifford and Greystoke and other knights in northern parts ordering them to await the arrival of the earl of Arundel with his fleet. The earl was then operating in French waters; not for the first time, a Scottish threat halted action against the French Crown.⁶⁰

The defensive English strategy enabled both Scottish armies to sweep through the north, reaching at least the southern boundaries of the English Marches—the earl of Fife’s larger army in the West March at Brough (Westmorland).⁶¹ This army entered the March and pitched camp before Carlisle on Monday 3 August, according to a report to Richard II. The correspondent asserted that on their invasion 540 of their advance-guard (*Currours*) were captured or killed at no loss to the defenders. Among their captains he listed the earls of Douglas, Fife, March, Strathern, Moray and Sir Archibald Douglas, with the whole power of Scotland, 30,000 strong, against a defending force of 12,000. The letter ended with a plea for king and council to ordain a hasty remedy to avert the ills threatening the region.⁶² However, Cumberland levies were worsted in an encounter, for the sheriff and other local knights were captured.⁶³ The Crown’s recent arrangements for the tenure of Wardenships in this March may have hampered co-ordination in defence among local lords. On 1 July the power of the existing joint commission of local landowners—Lords Clifford and Greystoke, Lord Neville’s son Ralph and Lord Clifford’s son Thomas—had been superseded by the appointment of John Lord Beaumont.⁶⁴ This change may have been partly motivated by the Lords Appellants’ distrust of the Neville family and maybe too of Sir Thomas Clifford, a knight of the king’s chamber; partly, too, perhaps, by the militarily justifiable aim of concentrating power in a single authority. The youthful and well-connected Beaumont was likely to have been a more controversial replacement than even Percy may have been in the East March—he was a stranger, his principal estates being in Lincolnshire.⁶⁵ Lord Dacre, whose frontier barony of Gilsland made his resources crucial for defence, and who was appointed to head a Cumberland commission of array in June, seems to have been behaving petulantly, perhaps because of his persistent exclusion from the Wardenship: he had contracted with Percy to join the garrison at Berwick.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, despite the Scottish successes in the West March, Wyntoun’s

account of Fife's campaign is less glowing than his account of his campaign there in 1385.⁶⁷ Perhaps it was considered in Fife's circles that a big chance had been lost in the West March in 1388. If, as Wyntoun alleges, the agreed strategy was for a concentration of forces converging there from both the Scottish Marches and from Ireland, the diversion of one of these forces to operate separately in the Tyne valley seriously weakened the intended impact and, despite the glittering victory at Otterburn, negated the principal strategic aim.⁶⁸ Concentration against the West March made good sense: Summerson shows its vulnerability. Its defences had been weakened by the fall of its 'barbican', Lochmaben castle in Annandale, in 1384; its principal magnates lacked the prestige and wealth of the Percies, the Nevilles and the bishops of Durham, and it could not be so speedily reinforced from the south as the East March. Indeed, the prime original aim of the Scottish invasions in 1388 may have been to isolate and capture Carlisle and to occupy Cumberland, in order to bargain for a favourable peace. Carlisle had a greater symbolic significance than any other Border town, partly because of the inhabitants' well-known claim that they were under the protection of the Virgin Mary and partly because it was the seat of an Urbanist bishop. The occupation of the see would have paralleled John of Gaunt's achievement in 1386 of conquering an isolated and mountainous part of Castile (Galicia), so converting to the Urbanist allegiance the see containing the shrine of Spain's most prestigious saint, Santiago de Compostela. His use of a remote province as a bargaining counter to make a final peace might be emulated by the Scots.

The Scottish armies in both Marches withdrew soon after Otterburn, in the west across the Solway and in the east to Melrose.⁶⁹ Reactions to the campaigns further south in England showed an awareness of the gravity of defeat: the Scottish problem went to the top of the political agenda. On 13 August Richard II wrote indignantly to Gaunt in Gascony about the Scottish invasion, announcing his intention of setting out against the Scots in person and asking the duke to stir Gascon lieges into joining him for the purpose before the end of the month.⁷⁰ At a great council held at Northampton on 20 August, the decision was made to postpone a royal expedition to the following summer; the earl of Northumberland and Lord Neville were appointed to defend the Marches and arrayers in

northern counties were ordered to lead their levies in support.⁷¹ In the Cambridge parliament (September) the Commons earmarked part of the subsidy for the defence of the northern border.⁷² The government showed a new zeal for peace with France. A sticking point in the negotiations which commenced in the New Year was the English commissioners' determination to have the Scots excluded from any agreement. According to Walsingham, they argued that the Scots were the king of England's lieges who had disturbed his peace and deserved punishment.⁷³ Plans for retribution were concerted at an exceptionally well-attended great council which met at Westminster on 20 January 1389. It was decided that the king would invade Scotland on 1 August 'cum toto suo retenemento' in order to tame completely the savage spirit of the Scots; perhaps a reversion to Edwardian schemes of conquest was contemplated. Up to then, it was agreed, the earl of Northumberland and Lords Beaumont and Clifford would take charge of the West March and Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham, one of the king's opponents in 1387-8, would receive the East March, whose Wardenship had been held since just before the death of Lord Neville in October 1388 by another outsider, the well-reputed soldier Sir John Stanley.⁷⁴

However, in 1389, as in 1388, it was the Scots who took the military initiative. In February a force plundered the barony of Gilsland in Cumberland; in April Beaumont retaliated, penetrating deeply into Scotland and burning a market centre—possibly Falkirk.⁷⁵ The previous month Mowbray had indented with the Crown to keep the East March on the same terms as Henry Percy in 1388 and to retain a force of 400 men-at-arms and 800 archers during the crucial months of June and July.⁷⁶ His appointment on such advantageous financial terms caused debilitating divisions among the Border lords. According to the Westminster chronicler, their requests for shares in the northern defence budget were turned down by the royal council; the earl of Northumberland was to withdraw to court during the campaigning.⁷⁷ If, as Wyntoun says, Mowbray publicly disparaged the English action at Otterburn, this cannot have improved his relations with the Percy interest.⁷⁸ When he invaded Scotland on 25 June (possibly along the east coast), he had a force of only 1,500; he and Ralph Lord Neville dared not attack the larger Scottish

force which confronted them. This was probably the Scottish army under the command of the earls of Fife and Douglas (Archibald the Grim) and it may have been on this occasion that Mowbray refused Fife's challenge to fight.⁷⁹ The Scots boldly bypassed the invasion force, themselves entering Northumberland in force on 29 June and raiding as far south as Tynemouth. Mowbray retreated to Berwick.⁸⁰ The English had some minor successes. Sir Matthew Redman and Sir Robert Ogle, returning from Scotland, carried out a sharp attack on the rearguard of the Scottish army as it returned home. Lord Neville wasted with impunity in Scotland.⁸¹

Before enduring this further humiliation of a Scottish invasion at the end of June, the English government had abandoned plans for a grandiose expedition to Scotland, as a result of a combination of financial stringency and French intransigence. On 18 June an Anglo-French truce had been concluded; the Scots were to be given the option of inclusion. The English hoped to extract from the Scots payment of the outstanding instalments of David II's ransom and compensation for breaches of truce up to 1384. This depended on the willingness of the Scots to enter the truce; as Grant explains, Scottish opinion was sharply divided on the issue. Richard had to ratify an Anglo-Scottish truce in October without the strings he would have liked to have attached, though he continued to pursue the aim of compensation.⁸² The war of almost exactly a year between England and Scotland effectively ceased early in July 1389, when arrangements were made for French and English envoys to travel to the Scottish court.⁸³ The Scots had little more reason than the English to be pleased by the outcome of the war. They had started it, but they had not gained through it one foot more of Scottish land nor any abatement of English claims. Their consolations were that the English Marches had appeared vulnerable, that the English Marcher lords were incapable of mounting a serious challenge in Scotland, and that some Scots had gained financially through ransoms.

The battle of Otterburn was not an isolated event illustrating the supposedly enclosed nature of fourteenth-century Border society; it was the most dramatic occurrence in a war which was part of much longer Anglo-Scottish and European conflicts. The explanation for the ending of the war is to be sought in

continental diplomatic developments; so, probably, is its commencement. The Borders were remote from the principal centres of international conflict and diplomacy, but the system of alliances gave a European significance to their affairs. Otterburn was a significant link in the chain of events which brought the first, fourteenth-century phase of the Hundred Years War to a close.⁸⁴ Its revelation of Scottish strength prepared the English government for a compromise settlement with France, whose outlines were to emerge as a result of the renewals of the 1389 truce. The Anglo-French rapprochement helped to ensure the renewal of Anglo-Scottish truces till 1400, perpetuating the unstable and unsatisfactory relations between England and Scotland to which the Otterburn war had contributed.

More immediately, the battle had important political repercussions in England as well as those in Scotland explained by Grant. The defeat was a blow to the prestige of the regime set up by the Lords Appellant, helping the king to reassert himself by his declarations of determination to deal with the Scots—a plausible stance, since he had campaigned in Scotland in 1385. The new invasion plan probably assisted his coup against the Appellants in May 1389; it would have been dishonourable to the Crown and the realm to have a king of 22 who was still in tutelage at the head of an 'army royal'. Richard's attitude to the Scots during the war is instructive: he regarded them as rebels whose insolence must be punished; he burned to chastise them himself. Why then did he not become a hammer of the Scots? For he failed signally after 1389 to tackle a problem about which he had expressed strong feelings. The answer surely is that he regarded many of his English subjects as having been more culpably and dangerously rebellious, and dedicated his long-term efforts to seeking their punishment rather than to addressing England's Scottish problem.

The war of 1388–9 was a disaster for the English Borders comparable to their sufferings at Scottish hands after Bannockburn. Tuck and Summerson have indicated the devastating effects of the 1388 invasion in Cumberland and Westmorland.⁸⁵ It was probably as a general relief measure that the burgesses of Newcastle were authorized in the parliament at Cambridge (September 1388) to export to Calais 1,000

woolsacks of the growth of the Border shires, the bishopric of Durham and the lordship of Richmond in the North Riding of Yorkshire at a low rate of duty.⁸⁶ Besides theft and destruction, there was the burden of ransoming the many prisoners taken on raids, in which, contemporaries had no doubt, the profit balance lay with the Scots. At Otterburn alone, according to Knighton, twenty-one English knights were captured. Individual cases of penury illustrate consequent English hardships. Nicholas Reymes esquire was to receive 50 marks from the Crown 'in consideration of his great poverty as a result of the heavy ransom imposed by the Scots'. Robert Warde and John Preston of Yorkshire petitioned the keeper of the privy seal: their ransom sureties were imprisoned in Scotland and they relied solely on alms to raise money for the ransoms. They requested a new letter testifying to this.⁸⁷ This disastrous background helps to account for the growing tensions during the war between the Crown and northern lords over defence measures. In times of emergency, royal councillors were inclined to concentrate command in the pair or pairs of hands they considered most competent and were impatient of local rivalries and resentments at the appointment of outsiders. The war brought regional tensions to a head and on occasion hampered defence. Dobson reveals how the conflict between the Percies and Bishop Fordham of Durham significantly affected the Otterburn campaign. From then onwards such problems intermittently plagued English Border defences, producing uneasy co-operation between Crown and regional society.

For southern English folk generally, these issues doubtless reinforced their view that the Borders were a remote but omnipresent problem, and their inhabitants as much *sui generis* as they themselves made out to be—though of a less flattering species. To Chaucer's Reeve from Norfolk, the birthplace of John and Alan Strother was 'Fer in the north, I can nat telle where'. It was understandable to Walsingham that the earl of Northumberland loosed 'verba contumeliosa' in the royal presence, since it was 'more gentis suae'.⁸⁸ As we have seen, the king's council was so distrustful of Borderers that it sometimes tried to exclude them from its Border garrisons. The Westminster chronicler, recounting the ravaging of

Hexhamshire (Northumberland) by the Scots in the autumn of 1385, opined that

whereas in the old days our Northerners used to be very active and vigorous, they have now changed their tack and become lazy and spiritless, disdaining to protect their homeland against the wiles of the enemy by keeping watch and ward.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, for southerners the defence of the Borders appeared as a necessary burden—it was in the interest of their own security to administer to that far-off, weak and obtuse society the oxygen of war subsidies, tax remissions and companies of soldiers. Northerners and southerners could agree on the necessity of co-operating to maintain permanent forces on either side of the historic frontier, in order to prevent the far north from being gradually sucked into the Scottish social and political orbit. This was one sort of bond which helped to strengthen the concept of an English nation; it illustrates how the diversion of resources to the defence of frontiers assisted the development of nation-states. This was not just a matter of tentatively and painfully developing institutional and political rapport between the centres of government and frontier societies; it involved creating a common sentiment. Primarily because of his Border fighting, Sir Henry Percy became a popular hero in the south before Otterburn. His gallantry in the campaign seems generally to have enhanced that reputation, as may be inferred from the concern to secure his release and to help with his large ransom, as well as from chroniclers' attitudes. Hotspur's English reputation in the late fourteenth century has a place in the history of England's particular amalgam of nationality; he was what the Victorians would have termed a 'hero of the nation' in a more interesting sense than the chivalrous romancers' heroes such as the Black Prince or Sir John Chandos.⁹⁰

In this light the battle of Otterburn can be seen as a paradigm of national evolution. The ballads about it, in their reflection of the original Northumbrian form, contrastingly put forward a version of the battle stressing the role of localism in regions where strong and necessary outside influences and interventions were regarded ambivalently.

The frontier societies of the Anglo-Scottish Borders, despite their intense local pride, were to some extent produced by the competition and construction of princely powers. They differed from frontier societies formed as a result of the absence or decay of centralizing authorities. There was no equivalent in the Borders of the 1380s and 1390s of mercenary captains such as Merigot Marchès and Perrot le Béarnais, installed in Aquitanian lordships by force of arms, ruling them under standards of convenience. Some in the Borders doubtless aspired to similar roles. There was the obscure Scottish band of companions who seized Berwick castle during time of truce (1378) and refused to surrender it to the Warden of the East March, the earl of Northumberland. According to one account, they replied to him 'qils ne furount attendauntz al roy Descoce, ne a luy, ne a nulle autre, mes furount gentz de guerre et de purchas'; they intended to hold the castle 'a lour use demesne et les profiter en ceo qils purrount'. The Scottish Warden, the earl of March, co-operated with Northumberland against his fellow countrymen. The band rejected March's orders, refusing to give up the castle to either the king of England or Scotland, 'quinimmo servarent illud usibus regis Franciae contra omnes homines quamdiu viverent'.⁹¹ The castle was assaulted and these disturbers of the truce put to the sword. Principles of order, hierarchy and international harmony prevailed on this occasion, weighty factors highly valued in this sort of frontier society: as such, they militated against the tendencies to violence and political fragmentation which often flowed from the militarization of frontier societies and which, as far as these Borders are concerned, the events at Otterburn have come to symbolize.

NOTES

- 1 R.Bartlett and A.MacKay (eds), Oxford, 1989. I owe thanks for the comments of fellow contributors on earlier drafts of this introduction, particularly to Barrie Dobson.
- 2 Bartlett and MacKay, *Medieval Frontier Societies*, p.v.
- 3 *ibid.*, pp. 3–21.
- 4 F.J.Child (ed.) *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, New York 1965, iii, nos 161–2. For ballads of the Anglo-Scottish frontier in general see J.Reed, *The Border Ballads*, London, 1973.
- 5 Bartlett and MacKay, *Medieval Frontier Societies*, pp. 217–43
- 6 J.A.Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border magnates', *Northern History*,

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- iii, 1968, pp. 27–52; P.McNiven, *The Scottish policy of the Percies and the strategy of the rebellion of 1403*, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, lxii, 1979–80, pp. 498–530.
- 7 Froissart, xiii, pp. 200–57.
- 8 *ibid.*, p. 219; PRO, E403/521/2. ‘John Kantereyn of Gascony’ received a reward from John of Gaunt in 1392 (PRO, DL28/3/2). He may have been in Gaunt’s service in 1374 (JGR 1372–76, i, no. 76).
- 9 Froissart, xiii, pp. 219–20. For Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy’s MSS. of Froissart and for the magnificent Breslau copy, which belonged to his son Anthony the Great Bastard of Burgundy, see G.Doutrepoint, *La Littérature Française à la cour des Ducs de Bourgogne*, Paris, 1909, pp. 144, 146, 425–6. I owe thanks for this reference to Mr Graeme Small. The Breslau Froissart has an illumination showing the confrontation of Percy and Douglas at Newcastle and two of the battle, one with the death of Douglas, on ff. 341^v, 346, 348 (A.Lindner, *Der Breslauer Froissart*, Berlin, 1912).
- 10 Westminster, pp. 346–51; J.Taylor, *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century*, Oxford, 1987, pp. 83–9.
- 11 *Westminster*, pp. 348–9.
- 12 A.Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, ii, Ithaca, NY, 1982, p. 123; BL, MS. Cotton Nero D VII, f.III. The *Liber Benefactorum* has a miniature portrait of the earl of Northumberland.
- 13 Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H.T.Riley, RS, 1863–4, ii, pp. 175–6; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 123.
- 14 NCH, viii, pp. 97–9.
- 15 Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 402.
- 16 *Chronicon Henrici Knighton*, ed. J.R.Lumby, RS, 1895, ii, pp. 146–8, 203–4; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 178–81. Knighton has specific information not found elsewhere about the 1384 expedition, e.g. Sir John Fauconer’s capture of Sir Henry Douglas (*Chron. Knighton*, p. 203). Fauconer served then in the earl of Northumberland’s retinue (PRO, E101/40/5).
- 17 *Chron. Wyntoun*, in, pp. xi–xv, 32–8; for Wyntoun’s panegyric on Albany, see pp. 99–101.
- 18 Child, *Popular Ballads*, pp. 289, 303, 305.
- 19 J.M.W.Bean, *The Estates of the Percy Family 1416–1537*, Oxford, 1958, pp. 6–7, 112.
- 20 *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, ed. H.F.Ellis, London, 1812, p. 351n.
- 21 JGR 1379–83, i, no. 556.
- 22 *ibid.*, i, no. 714. Gaunt also rewarded three of Robert’s minstrels who were with him in London (*ibid.*).
- 23 *Extracts from the Account Rolls of Durham Abbey*, iii, SS, ciii, 1900: Rotuli Bursariorum, pp. 558–9; cf. pp. 579, 581–2, 585, 592, 594, 599.
- 24 JGR 1379–53, ii, no. 1077.
- 25 Bartlett and Mackay, *Medieval Frontier Societies*, pp. 77–100.
- 26 I owe thanks to Dr Summerson for letting me have a draft of his paper, ‘The early development of the laws of the Anglo-Scottish Marches, 1249–1448’.

- 27 M.L.Boyle, 'Early history of the Wardens of the Marches of England towards Scotland, 1296-1377', University of Hull MA Thesis, 1960.
- 28 *Westminster*, pp. 374-5. The captain in question was probably Sir John Stanley, who had been appointed keeper of Berwick on 9 October (*Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 94, 96). Scottish customs accounts for the year until March 1384 record the destruction by the English of the Edinburgh tron and the burning during their invasion of hides at Leith (*The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, ed. G.Burnett *et al.*, iii, Edinburgh, 1880, pp. 116-17, 124, 132).
- 29 K.M.Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland 1573-1625*, Edinburgh, 1986, p. 7.
- 30 *Westminster*, pp. 348-9.
- 31 J.A.Tuck, 'War and society in the medieval north', *Northern History*, xxi, 1985, p. 45.
- 32 *CPR 1385-89*, p. 475.
- 33 R.L.Storey, *Thomas Langley and the Bishopric of Durham 1406-1437*, London, 1961, pp. 108-9; for Lumley's capture, see PRO, E403/527/9.
- 34 For Dartasso and Cantiran, see PRO, E403/521/2; for Bryan, *ibid.*, 14. John Garro of Aquitaine, king's esquire, may also have been captured in the battle (PRO, E403/532/19). In 1392 Dartasso was going to join the earl of Derby in Venice (PRO, DL28/3/2). For his later career, see E.Curtis, 'Janico Dartas, Richard II's Gascon squire', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, lxiii, 1933, pp. 182-205.
- 35 A.A.M.Duncan, 'Foreign trade and the burghs 1327-1331, 1362-1366', in P.McNeill and R.Nicholson (eds), *An Historical Atlas of Scotland c.400-c.1600*, St Andrews, Conference of Scottish Medievalists, 1975, pp. 63-4 and map 69.
- 36 *APS*, ii, p. 44.
- 37 R.Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, Edinburgh, 1974, p. 198. A privy seal letter to Lord Neville dated 13 July 1387 refers to the truces made on 27 June 1386 and due to last until 31 May 1388 (PRO, E101/676/56).
- 38 *Chron. Knighton*, ii, pp. 210-11; *Westminster*, pp. 138-9, 196-7.
- 39 *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 86-7, 91.
- 40 On 12 September 1386, arrayers were appointed to raise a force of 1,100 northern archers, who were to join the King in London at Michaelmas (*CPR/1385-89*, p. 217). Just before then the Lancashire contingent was increased from 400 to 1,000 (*ibid.*, p. 242; cf. *CCR 1385-89*, pp. 89, 187, 253-4, 264-5).
- 41 S.Walker, 'Lordship and lawlessness in the palatinate of Lancaster, 1370-1400', *Journal of British Studies*, xxviii, 1989, pp. 339-43.
- 42 *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 92. For the earl of Northumberland's account of his negotiations with the Scots, for which he was absent from his manor of Seamer (Yorks) from 22 March to 19 April, see PRO E101/319/30.
- 43 *Chron. Knighton*, ii, p. 250. Lord Neville at his death held two messuages in Newcastle (CIPM, xvi, no. 733).

- 44 *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 91.
- 45 *Chron. Knighton*, ii, p. 250; *Westminster*, pp. 342–5; *Foedera*, vii, pp. 589–90.
- 46 CDS, iv, no. 377.
- 47 CIPM, xvi, nos 725–50. On 13 October 1388, at Newcastle, Lord Neville appointed his son and heir Ralph as principal executor of the will he had made in 1386 (T.Madox, *Formulare Anglicanum*, London, 1702, pp. 427–9).
- 48 Froissart, xiii, pp. 208–9.
- 49 J.J.N.Palmer, *England, France and Christendom 1377–1399*, London, 1972, pp. 127ff.
- 50 PRO, E403/519/8, 12.
- 51 Palmer, *England, France and Christendom*, pp. 129, 133.
- 52 Text in L.Suarez Fernandez, *Navegación y Comercio en el Golfo de Vizcaya*, Madrid, 1959, pp. 150–1.
- 53 Paris, Archives Nationales, Carton des rois, K73 no. 75.
- 54 Text in Suarez Fernandez, *Navegación y Comercio*, pp. 152–5.
- 55 J.J.N.Palmer and B.Powell (eds) *The Treaty of Bayonne (1388)*, Exeter, 1988.
- 56 According to a draft treaty of 1387 between Gaunt and Juan, they were to swear ‘quod fideliter laborabunt...pro unitate Sancte Matris Ecclesie modis omnibus quibus poterunt licitis et congruentibus, ita quod sit unum ovile et unus pastor’ (Palmer and Powell, op. cit., pp. 36, 49). Cf J.J.N.Palmer, ‘England and the Great Western Schism, 1388–1399’, *EHR*, lxxxiii, 1968, pp. 516–19.
- 57 R.L.Storey, ‘The Wardens of the Marches of England towards Scotland, 1377–1489’, *EHR*, lxxii, 1957, p. 600. 0
- 58 *CPR 1385–89*, p. 475.
- 59 *Westminster*, pp. 344–5.
- 60 PRO, E403/519/19 (17 July); cf. Palmer, *England, France and Christendom*, pp. 138, 141, n. 42. A royal sergeant-at-arms was dispatched to sail from Dover with letters for Arundel. John Hermesthorpe, chamberlain of the Exchequer, was sent to hold musters of the northern lords’ retinues (PRO, E403/519/20, 18 July). Froissart has information about their plans for an expedition to Scotland, but did not realize that a royal expedition was intended: xiii, pp. 203, 205–6.
- 61 *Chron. Wyntoun*, in, p. 34. Froissart’s allegation (xiii, pp. 209–10) that the eastern force invaded the bishopric of Durham is not corroborated by other chroniclers. A Durham stock roll of 1387–8 mentions the transport of cheeses across the Tees ‘in the time of flight because of the Scots’ (*Durham Account Rolls*, ii, SS, c.1898, Rotuli Instaurariorum, p. 314). On 13 August 1388 Richard II alleged that the Scots ‘usque Civitatem nostram Eborum pene accesserunt’ (*Foedera*, vii, p. 594). In October provision was made for the export of wool at preferential rates from both the bishopric and the lordship of Richmond in Yorkshire (*CPR 1385–89*, p. 520).
- 62 Edinburgh University Library, MS. 183, f. 94r., year omitted. Knighton refers to a Scottish reverse (ii, pp. 297–8); Froissart refers

- to their army's withdrawal from an encampment before Carlisle (xiii, p. 257).
- 63 *Chron. Knighton*, ii, pp. 297–8.
- 64 Storey, 'Wardens of the Marches', pp. 611–12.
- 65 GEC, ii, p. 61.
- 66 CPR 1385–89, p. 174. In letters of protection dated 13 June 1388, Dacre was said to be setting out for the garrison at Berwick (CDS, iv, no. 382).
- 67 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 29–30, 34.
- 68 *ibid.*, pp. 32–4.
- 69 *ibid.*, p. 38; Froissart, xiii, pp. 206–7.
- 70 *Foedera*, vii, p. 594.
- 71 *Westminster*, pp. 350–1, and n.2; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 95. There were momentary fears that a French invasion of southern England might ensue; commissions of array were appointed for Kent on 14 and 19 August (CPR 1385–89, p. 547).
- 72 J.A.Tuck, 'The Cambridge Parliament 1388', EHR, lxxiv, 1969, p. 241. Hermesthorpe held a muster at Durham of 200 men-at-arms and 400 archers led by the earl of Northumberland, Lords Neville and Greystoke and other local magnates, arrayed at royal wages for the month of October (PRO, E403/19/23).
- 73 Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 180; *Westminster*, pp. 374–7.
- 74 *ibid.*, pp. 375–9. On 27 January payment was made at the Exchequer to messengers sent north in great haste with privy seal letters summoning the earl of Northumberland, Lord Neville and neighbouring lords to come to London to the king's council (PRO, E403/521/16). For Stanley's appointment, see note 28 above.
- 75 *Chron. Knighton*, pp. 308–9. Beaumont entered Scotland 'per xl leucas et spoliavit forum de Fowyk'. I owe thanks to Professor Geoffrey Barrow for the suggestion that Falkirk may have been intended. The forms 'Faukirk', 'Fawkirk' and 'Fawkirc' occur in 1391 (W.F.H.Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place Names*, London, 1976, p. 15).
- 76 CDS, iv, no. 389.
- 77 *Westminster*, pp. 394–6.
- 78 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, p. 40.
- 79 *Westminster*, pp. 396–7. Mowbray dined at Durham Priory on Whit Sunday (6 June) and again, after the campaign and truce, in the first week of August (*Durham Account Rolls*, i, p. 49). It may have been on the latter visit that his retinue was mustered (PRO, E101/41/17, defective muster roll of 101 men-at-arms and 202 archers, dated 1 August). On 17 July Exchequer payments of war wages had been made to Mowbray and Beaumont as Wardens, and to royal messengers for taking commissions of array against the Scots to Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Westmorland, Cumberland and Northumberland (PRO, E403/524/14–15). In 1390 the earl of Moray and Sir David Lindsay received safe-conducts to fight, respectively, Mowbray and his brother-in-law the Lincolnshire landowner Lord Welles, whom the two Scottish lords had slandered (*Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 103–4; GEC, xii,

- part 2, pp. 441–3). This suggests that Mowbray, Welles and Lindsay took part in the 1389 campaign and that the challenges were exchanged in the mode made famous by Douglas and Percy the previous year, but to be settled more prudently. There is evidence suggesting that Moray participated in the attack on Tynemouth (Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 402). Welles had led a retinue on Gaunt's invasion of Scotland in 1384 (PRO, E101/40/5).
- 80 This account conflates *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 40–1, and *Westminster*, pp. 396–7. The force which Walsingham describes as attacking Tynemouth was probably Fife's army (Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 402).
- 81 *Westminster*, pp. 396–9.
- 82 *ibid.*, pp. 402–5. English commissioners were appointed in December 1389 to seek compensation (*Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 101).
- 83 *Westminster*, pp. 400–1.
- 84 For the background, see Palmer, *England, France and Christendom*, chapter 7.
- 85 Summerson, below, pp. 159–60; Tuck, 'War and society in the medieval north', pp. 233–4.
- 86 *CPR 1385–89*, p. 520.
- 87 *Chron. Knighton*, ii, p. 298; cf. Froissart, xiii, pp. 227–8. For Reymes, see PRO, E403/524/17; for Warde and Preston, see CDS, ed. G.G. Simpson and J.D. Galbraith, v, 1986, no. 863. The financial hardships to prisoners prompted the Crown, exceptionally, to make numerous contributions to ransoms, e.g. to those of David Holgrave esquire, the earl of Northumberland's esquire John Mareschall, and Robert, *alias* Richard de Cundclyf (PRO, E403/521/ 1, 3, 18); John Keghley and Sir Ralph Lumley (PRO, E403/527/8,9). Jean de Cantiran and Janico Dartasso also received royal aid (PRO, E403/521/21).
- 88 Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 44.
- 89 *Westminster*, pp. 138–9. Commenting on the reverse suffered by a Northumberland raiding party in 1378, Walsingham lamented the 'imprudencia' and 'superbia' which the Northumbrians had characteristically displayed (*Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 202).
- 90 Southern English chroniclers were rapturous about the spirit and deeds of 'Hotspur' (Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 144; *Chron. Knighton*, ii, p. 297). There was something like a national subscription to his enormous Otterburn ransom, mainly but not entirely through the agency of the Crown. The king made a second grant towards its costs 'ad supplicacionem et requisicionem comitatum et communitatis regni' in the 1390 parliament (PRO, E403/524/20). For contributions by the prior of Durham of £20 to Percy's ransom and £5 to Sir Ralph Lumley's, see *Durham Account Rolls*, iii, p. 596.
- 91 *The Anonimalle Chronicle 1333 to 1381*, ed. V.H. Galbraith, Manchester, 1970, pp. 125–6; *Chronicon Angliae*, ed. E.M. Thomson, RS, 1874, pp. 219–20.

2

THE OTTERBURN WAR FROM THE SCOTTISH POINT OF VIEW

Alexander Grant

From the 1320s through to the sixteenth century, Anglo-Scottish warfare followed a repetitive pattern, in which long periods of cold war—truces—were interspersed with much shorter periods of open hostilities. Thus in the later fourteenth century there was a sequence of truces from 1357, culminating in the long, fourteen-year truce agreed in 1369. When that expired, on 2 February 1384, open warfare broke out. Fighting continued, with raid and counter-raid (one of which produced the battle of Otterburn), until 1389. Then another period of continuous truce started, which lasted until the first year of Henry IV's reign.

On the face of it, therefore, what can for convenience be called 'The Otterburn War' was a typical episode in the long late-medieval Anglo-Scottish conflict. That is not, however, how Scottish historians have generally portrayed it. For example, in his magisterial work *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, Ranald Nicholson wrote of the period just before the outbreak of war in 1384: 'The wars of independence were over. A war of chivalry on the Borders was about to begin.'¹ In drawing that kind of contrast—with the implication that the warfare after 1384 was less worthy than what had gone before—Dr Nicholson was following in the footsteps of a long line of historians going back to the originator of modern Scottish historical scholarship, Patrick Fraser Tytler (the protégé of Sir Walter Scott). In volume three of his *History of Scotland*, published in 1829, Tytler wrote that 'we are obliged to regard [Border conflicts in the 1380s] as no longer the simultaneous efforts of a nation in defence of their independence, but the selfish and disjointed expeditions of a lawless aristocracy, whose principal object was plunder, and

military adventure'.² Tytler's general account of the 'Otterburn War' has been followed by most subsequent Scottish historians who have covered the period, right down to the present day. The main points of this consensus may be summarized as follows. The weak, aged Scottish king, Robert II, wanted peace with England, but could not control his nobles, who wanted war. Defying their king's wishes, the bellicose Border aristocracy flagrantly broke the truce in the later 1370s, and then in 1384 plunged the kingdom into full-scale warfare, which Scotland could ill afford. Their motives were purely selfish: chivalrous adventurism, the lust for booty and, in the case of the greatest noble family, the Douglases, a feud with the English house of Percy over possession of Jedworth, or Jedburgh, Forest (an extensive part of Border Scotland on the northern side of Carter Bar). One episode in this feud was the battle of Otterburn—which was more a private than a national affair.³

This kind of analysis is a good example of the 'Crown versus magnate' type of history, against which K.B.McFarlane inveighed so effectively—at least for England.⁴ Admittedly, evidence to support it can be found in contemporary Scottish and English sources, but only so long as the basic overall interpretation is first accepted. And that basic interpretation does not, in fact, derive, from either Scottish or English records and chronicles—but from two other sources, the *Chroniques* of Jean Froissart and the Border ballads about Otterburn. Froissart is the main source for the picture of the chivalrous nobility's disregard of their peace-loving king, the Otterburn ballads for the idea of the private Douglas-Percy feud. Together, they have been immensely influential in shaping the standard account of Scottish political history in the 1380s. That is hardly surprising. Given what by English standards are skimpy records and laconic chronicles, it is quite understandable that the complementary portrayal of the war provided by Froissart (with his apparent inside information) and by the ballads (with their insights into Border *mentalité*) should prove irresistible.

It will be argued here, however, that the impression of what was going on in the Otterburn War which Scottish historians have derived from the ballads and from Froissart is seriously oversimplified and even distorted. Let us first consider the ballads. Two sets of ballads relate to Otterburn: The Battle of

Otterburn', from, respectively, Percy and Douglas standpoints; and the later variants 'The Hunting of the Cheviot' and 'Chevy Chase', which bring in the battle of Humbledon (or Homildon) as well.⁵ In the 1540s, 'Hunttis of Chevet' was described as one of the 'sangis of natural music on the antiquite',⁶ which indicates its origins were some time in the fifteenth century. In that case, the origins of *The Ballad of Otterburn'* must be earlier; how much earlier is unclear, but the ending of the Percy version points to the beginning of the century. The last three stanzas are:

Thys fraye bygan at Otterborne,
 Bytwene the nyght and the day;
 Ther the Dowglas lost hys lyffe,
 And the Perssy was lede awaye.
 [The Douglas version ends here.]

Then was ther a Scottysh prisoner tayne,
 Syr Hewe Montgomery was hys name;
 For soth as I yow saye
 He borrowed the Perssy home agayne.

Now let vs all for the Perssy praye
 To Jhesu most of myght,
 To bryng his sowlle to the blysse of heven,
 For he was a gentyll knyght.⁷

That final stanza must date from after Hotspur's death at Shrewsbury in July 1403—but probably not long after, given the awkward way the RIP is worked in (the later 'Hunting of the Cheviot' does it much more neatly).⁸ By Shrewsbury, however, the Percy-Douglas feud was over; Douglas—then the fourth earl, Archibald—was actually fighting alongside Hotspur. He had been captured by Hotspur at Humbledon in September 1402, but at some time in the intervening ten months they had agreed to join forces against Henry IV.⁹ And after 1403, in fact, the Scottish magnate whom the Percies would have hated most was George Dunbar, earl of March. In 1400 March had quarrelled furiously with the son of the Scottish king and had defected to England; he fought beside Hotspur at Humbledon and was largely responsible for the English victory; but he subsequently fell out with the Percies, took service with Henry

IV, and gave crucial advice at Shrewsbury, when Hotspur was defeated and killed. He, more than any other person, could be blamed for the collapse of the Percy rebellion and the death of Hotspur.¹⁰ But March—who was probably the best Scottish soldier of his generation—had also attacked Percy-held territory in the 1370s, had had a major quarrel with the earl of Northumberland in 1377, and according to various chroniclers (including Froissart) had been prominent at Otterburn—indeed Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana* implies that March really won the battle.¹¹ Yet he is not mentioned at all in the ballad, whose list of participants otherwise corresponds quite closely with Froissart's. This may well be deliberate. The exclusion of the earl of March from a Percy ballad probably written not long after Shrewsbury seems to suggest a level of hostility between the Percies and the earl of March which was much more serious than the respectful, almost friendly, Percy-Douglas rivalry portrayed in the ballad. It would appear that the Otterburn ballad, at least in the Percy version is indirectly reflecting the early-fifteenth-century situation, not that of the 1380s.¹²

That does not mean, of course, that there was no Douglas-Percy rivalry in the later fourteenth century. In 1373 and 1374, the English government appointed special commissions from outside the Borders to settle the disputes between Henry, Lord Percy and William, earl of Douglas over Jedworth forest, and requested the Scots government to do the same.¹³ In 1398 the quarrel resurfaced, when major truce negotiations between John of Gaunt and David, earl of Carrick, heir to the then king Robert III, were disrupted by Hotspur's demands for the restoration of Jedworth. As Andrew Wyntoun's chronicle records:

Quhat at thai tretyt thare that day,
 In gud manere all dyd thai.
 Bot the Percy grevit wace
 At the Erle Archbald of Douglas
 Hade tane in Jedworte his herbry;
 To the Erle off Carrike he send for-thi
 And prayit hym, he wald ger all fre
 Jedworte til hym delyverit be,
 For thare he wont wes for to ly,
 For hym and his in til herbry.

But whereas in the ballads, as Anthony Goodman has written, ‘the issues motivating [Border] conflicts are local and personal, not national’, Wyntoun’s chronicle has a very different perspective.

Off Carrike the Erle maid ansuere rownd,
 He wald nocht for a thowsand pownd
 Byd the Erle off Douglas
 Out of his innys of Jedwort pas,
 For it wes the Kyngis land,
 Off Scotland quha-evyr ware King regnand:
 The Erle off Douglas, he said, for-thi
 Did rycht, to tak thare his herbry.¹⁴

The point is that although Douglas and Percy both had claims to Jedworth, through grants by Robert I of Scotland and Edward III of England respectively,¹⁵ that certainly does not mean, from the Scottish point of view, that they had equal rights to it. Admitting a Percy claim to Jedworth was the same as admitting the legitimacy of Edward III’s grant—which would be an outright denial of Scottish independence. Thus from the Scottish point of view the disputes over Jedworth do not constitute a Douglas-Percy feud similar to the famous Percy-Neville feud of the fifteenth century, because national sovereignty was at stake. For the Douglasses, of course, that meant that national and personal interests conveniently coalesced—but that is no reason for believing that the personal obscured the national, or that the first and second earls of Douglas were motivated any differently from their famous predecessor, Robert I’s companion ‘the Good Sir James’, at the height of the Wars of Independence. For the Percies, on the other hand, personal and national interests did clash, at least from about 1390; their personal interests required open war with Scotland, while their kings, both Richard II and Henry IV (for most of his reign), wanted to stay at truce.¹⁶ That is probably why Hotspur disrupted the 1397 negotiations; it helps to explain Percy dealings with both Richard II and Henry IV; and it tallies well with the message of the ballads. The Otterburn ballads appear to reflect the English, Percy, point of view rather more than the Scottish.

Now let us turn to Froissart. If, as has been argued, the ballads give a distorted impression of Anglo-Scottish relations in the 1380s, then the same applies to Froissart's *Chroniques*. What he presents is at best an extremely shallow, one-dimensional account of the Otterburn War. As the late J.W. Sherborne remarked in his study of Froissart's treatment of France and England in the later fourteenth century, s

Froissart was quite capable on occasion of inventing facts in order to enhance the verisimilitude of his narrative or of manipulating both facts and texts to achieve a dramatic purpose. If anything was sacred to Froissart it was not the facts but the demands of a strong storyline.¹⁷

Dr Sherborne's essay is one of the contributions to the book, *Froissart: Historian*. Almost all the contributions make exactly the same point: that Froissart tells a great deal about the aristocratic *mentalité* of the age, but that his facts and explanations cannot and must not be relied on uncritically.¹⁸ This is something which seems to be fully appreciated by the historians of all the countries covered in Froissart's *Chroniques*—except historians of Scotland, who have tended to rely heavily on what he wrote and, in particular, to have taken his storyline for the Otterburn war virtually at face value.

That storyline, as already indicated, has the Scottish nobles attacking the English in defiance of the peaceful wishes of their aged king; the theme is used successively in Froissart's accounts of 1384, 1385 and 1388.¹⁹ Froissart did not invent that theme altogether; as usual with the *Chroniques*, there was some truth behind it. Robert II, for instance, was certainly aged, being 72 at the time of Otterburn. In November 1384, ostensibly because of his age, he had been relieved of responsibility for the day-to-day administration of justice.²⁰ In the summer and autumn of 1384, moreover, while his ambassadors were negotiating Scotland's entry into the Anglo-French truces of that year, serious cross-Border raiding took place, probably led by the second earl of Douglas.²¹ It is even possible that there is some factual basis to Froissart's story of Robert sending a herald to England to explain that he did want to join the truce but could not control the earl of Douglas; an English safe-conduct for Lyon King of Arms was issued in June 1384, and Lyon had £6 from the Edinburgh customs for his expenses.²² But this may

well have been a negotiating ploy by Robert II, to forestall English retaliation; the episode will be discussed later. The basic point to be made here is that Froissart was oversimplifying, and that, having derived a good storyline from the events of autumn 1384, he applied it, unjustifiably, to the whole of the Otterburn War. The reality was much more complicated.

To explain this reality, it is necessary first to look back well beyond 1384, to the events of the reign of Robert II's predecessor, David II (1329–71).²³ Under David's father, Robert I, Scotland had been painfully liberated from English occupation. But after Robert died, Edward III reopened the war. In 1333 he besieged Berwick. A Scottish army led by Sir Archibald Douglas (brother of 'the Good Sir James' and then Guardian of Scotland) bungled an attempt to relieve the town, and was routed at Halidon Hill. Douglas, five earls and many other Scottish magnates were killed. It was a devastating defeat, and in its aftermath Scotland was overrun once more. Again the country had to be painfully liberated. That was not achieved until the 1340s—and then in 1346 the defeat at Neville's Cross (when David II was captured) brought fresh English occupation. The slow process of liberation resumed—only to lead to more disaster in the winter of 1355–6. In November 1355, during a truce, the earls of Angus and March took the town of Berwick by surprise and besieged the castle. Their efforts were hindered, according to the chronicler John Fordun, by discords among the magnates.²⁴ Some of these, including William, lord of Douglas (the future first earl), wanted to maintain the truce. That was sensible, because the news of the attack on Berwick brought Edward III storming back from Calais with a large army. He regained Berwick and then in February 1356 proceeded to devastate south-eastern Scotland, in the disastrous and long-remembered 'Burnt Candlemas'. This taught the Scots a bitter lesson. For the rest of David II's reign, while they resisted Edward III's claims on Scotland, they did not mount any serious attacks on the English occupied zone in southern Scotland. Indeed, when a final settlement was made between David II and Edward III in 1369, it was for a fourteen-year truce, during which the English would maintain possession of much of the Border region of Scotland and the instalments of David II's ransom would be paid annually.²⁵

The events of David II's reign demonstrate, therefore, that

while the Scots were always able to nibble away at English-held territory, gradually bringing the inhabitants back into the Scottish allegiance, too much success could be counter-productive, producing massive English retaliation which could send the situation back to square one. Berwick, in particular, was a problem. Once Scotland's major burgh, it was natural for the Scots to want to regain it—but when it was regained it had to be defended, for no English king would lightly countenance its loss. On one occasion the result was Halidon Hill, on another the Burnt Candlemas; after both, southern Scotland was occupied. Little wonder that the Scottish nobles disagreed over the advisability of capturing it in 1355. It is worth adding that when Berwick was at last regained by the Scots in 1461, its recapture was the main aim of Richard of Gloucester's 1482 campaign, which produced a major political crisis in Scotland.²⁶ A century earlier, in the 1360s, it is clear that David II and his nobles had come to the firm conclusion that it was far too dangerous to risk provoking another of Edward III's invasions through aggressive action against any part of the occupied zone, let alone the main strongholds of Berwick, Roxburgh, Jedburgh and Lochmaben.

In Dr Nicholson's account of David II's reign, it is stated that David 'was to leave Scotland just as free and independent as it had been at his accession'. In terms of territory, that is quite untrue: the occupied zone in the Borders still included parts of Annandale, Teviotdale, lower Tweeddale, and Berwickshire.²⁷ Not until that had been regained could the Wars of Independence be said to be over. In the initial years of Robert II's reign (the early 1370s), however, the policy of the 1360s was continued.²⁸ No moves were made against the occupied zone, and the instalments of David II's ransom continued to be paid. The reason for this is not hard to find: Edward III was still alive. Admittedly towards the end of his reign Edward was not so bellicose as he had been—what he wanted from Scotland was now probably just a quiet northern frontier²⁹ but the Scots leaders in the early 1370s were not to know that.

Who were the Scots leaders in the early 1370s? There was the king, Robert II, who had experienced all the disasters of David II's reign right back to the aftermath of Halidon in 1333. There were his two eldest sons, John, earl of Carrick, and Robert, earl of Fife, both born by 1340, who would have remembered the

Burnt Candlemas of 1356. There was the brilliant soldier George Dunbar, earl of March, also born in about 1340; he would have remembered the Burnt Candlemas too, and could have heard about Neville's Cross and Poitiers from his father, who had fought in both battles. And there were two Douglasses: William, the first earl, son of the Archibald Douglas who had led the Scots to defeat at Halidon; and Archibald, lord of Galloway, illegitimate son of 'the Good Sir James'. Both had probably been born in the 1320s, had had long involvement in the war with England, and had felt English might for themselves particularly closely at the battle of Poitiers. The age and collective experience of the Scottish leaders in the early 1370s is striking; they were surely not the kind of men to risk further disasters by idly provoking a full-scale English attack.³⁰

On the other hand, they did have a natural interest in wanting to regain the occupied zone. It was, after all, part of Scotland, and there is absolutely nothing to suggest that Robert II did not want it back. Also, a large part of it belonged, in Scottish terms, to March and the two Douglasses. March, the only leading Scottish magnate whose estates were predominantly on the Borders, was probably particularly conscious of this. Much of his earldom, to which he had succeeded in 1368, was in English hands; so was much of his lordship of Annandale, which he had been granted at either the very end of David II's reign or the beginning of Robert II's.³¹ And, as the grandson through his mother of Robert I's companion Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray, he was also the heir to Randolph's lordship of the Isle of Man. He took his claim to Man seriously: in Anglo-French truces he was included, as lord of Man, among the allies of the king of France; and when his sister married Sir James Douglas of Dalkeith in 1372, the jointure granted to her was initially one hundred librates in the Isle of Man. Sir James Douglas, the most businesslike Scottish noble of his generation, was understandably unhappy with that; but the lands he eventually received included the barony of Mordington, just outside Berwick, which must have been in English hands at the time.³²

It is therefore not surprising that the first Scottish attack on the occupied zone in Robert II's reign involved the earl of March. In May 1376 the chamberlain of Lochmaben (the *caput* of Annandale) accounted for severely depleted receipts, as

many of the tenants 'were completely ruined by the Earl of March of Scotland'. What actually took place we do not know; it might simply have been that March insisted that the tenants pay their rents to him, not to the English.³³ But it is no doubt significant that the action took place in 1375–6, when Edward II's health had collapsed. Then, once Edward was dead, Scottish pressure on the occupied zone escalated dramatically. March attacked Roxburgh in 1377, and in 1378 the earl of Northumberland reported that because of the 'dangerous state of the Marches, ...the warden of Lochmaben castle will remain there no longer.... Also that the Earls of March and Douglas, and the latter's cousin Sir Archibald, are harassing the English borderers by imprisonment, ransoms, and otherwise.'³⁴ By 1380 much of the occupied zone in Berwickshire and Roxburghshire had come back into Scottish hands, and serious cross-Border raiding (in both directions) was taking place. Although the 'great truce' of 1369 still had four years to run, and the English government tried hard to have it maintained, the Borders had slid into a state of virtually open warfare. This state of affairs continued, despite 'truces within the truce', until the expiry of the 'great truce' in February 1384—whereupon the earl of March and Sir Archibald Douglas immediately captured Lochmaben castle, and the earl of Douglas brought Teviotdale (that is the rest of Roxburghshire, apart from Roxburgh and Jedburgh castles) under Scottish control.³⁵

These actions by March and the two Douglases are generally portrayed as private, and, of course, there can be no doubt that their personal interests were involved. On the other hand, the escalation of activity in 1376–7 suggests a deliberate policy decision, presumably connected with Edward III's senility and death. Also, the attacks on the occupied zone were not indiscriminate: when in November 1378 some local Borderers captured Berwick castle by surprise, the earl of March (as Scottish Warden of the East March) allowed, and indeed was prepared to help, the earl of Northumberland to retake it.³⁶ Berwick was still too dangerous a prize for the Scots.

But how much was Robert II involved in this policy? There is a letter from him to Richard II (probably dating from 1380) which implies difficulty in making the earl of March promise to keep the truce—but should that be taken at face value?³⁷ The letter's tone certainly does not suggest any particular

conciliation on Robert's II part. Conciliation is, admittedly, indicated in the *Westminster Chronicle*, which states that on 14 December 1383 the king of Scots sent a humble letter to Richard II making excuses for Scottish attacks, which had been made without Robert's prior knowledge or permission. On the other hand, the Monk of Westminster also shows that this was not taken seriously in England, because the Scots were expected to receive large-scale military aid from France at any moment.³⁸ And Froissart (of all people) describes how in 1377 King Robert told the Scottish nobles that Edward III's death meant 'the time has now arrived when they might revenge themselves for all disgraces' suffered at the hands of the English. The Scots nobles replied that they would attack England 'whenever he pleased. This answer was very agreeable to the king of Scotland, who returned them his thanks for it'.³⁹ Whether or not that should be taken seriously cannot be said—but the passage certainly counters Froissart's later portrayal of Robert II.

More significantly, once Edward III was dead, not only did Scottish attacks on the occupied zone increase, but the annual payments of David II's ransom were stopped.⁴⁰ These two things must surely go together—but the decision to stop the ransom instalments could only have come from the king. Similarly, on 25 July 1378 Robert II issued a charter which transferred the (in Scottish terms) alien priory of Coldingham from Durham priory to Dunfermline abbey, because its monks threatened the Crown, the realm and its inhabitants; according to Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon*, Coldingham's English prior was convicted before the king and three estates for spying and exporting money illegally.⁴¹ And, in this context, it is also worth pointing to the account of a Scottish embassy in France in 1375. The issues were papal pressure on Scotland because of David II's divorce (although both David and his ex-queen were now dead), and piracy at sea committed by Norman sailors. Charles V had promised to help in both matters, but apparently had not done so. Robert II's displeasure at this was accordingly transmitted to Charles; the ambassadors excused themselves politely, but stated that their king had specifically instructed them 'de sa bouche propre' to tell Charles that if the French king could not be trusted to keep his word over these issues, how could Robert rely on him over the much more serious matters which had been promised and sworn between the two

of them.⁴² Here is clear evidence of personal toughness on the part of Robert II. In the light of this, there is surely no reason to suppose that he was merely a passive observer of Scottish policy towards England in the 1370s.

The same may be said about the outbreak of open war in February 1384. The Scots may not, in fact, have had any choice in the matter. Although in the later 1370s Richard II's government had wanted the truce (and the occupied zone) to be maintained, in 1383 English foreign policy had changed, towards peace with France and aggression within the British Isles. One indication of this change may be the instructions to English negotiators in May 1383 that no English-held land in Scotland was to be surrendered in any settlement. Another, almost certainly, is the commission to the earl of Northumberland and Lord Neville in January 1384 to demand reparations for breaches of the truce plus the balance of David II's ransom; if the Scots would not agree, they were to demand homage and fealty from Robert II to Richard II as superior lord of Scotland; and if that was refused, they were to raise an army and 'hostilely invade Scotland', to punish Robert II and his adherents for their rebellion. Richard II, it would appear, had no intention of prolonging the truce.⁴³

Despite what the Monk of Westminster wrote, it is unlikely that Robert II wanted to, either. In the early 1380s the Scottish government, not just the nobles, was clearly anticipating war. Between 1380 and 1383 almost £1,400 (a considerable sum by the standards of Scottish Crown expenditure) was spent on repairs, provisions and artillery for Edinburgh and Stirling castles; it included £96 on locating, cleaning and repairing the well at Edinburgh, which had been destroyed when Robert I had had the castle slighted after its capture in 1314.⁴⁴ Also, in August 1383, an agreement was made with the French government for French troops and money to be sent to Scotland the following year, should there be war between England and Scotland.⁴⁵ Robert II must clearly have been party to these preparations. Then, once war broke out, Robert, 'with the deliberation of the council', issued letters patent commissioning William, earl of Douglas to bring the inhabitants of Teviotdale (the last part of the English occupied zone) into the peace of the king of Scots; Douglas was empowered, 'for the common weal', to offer them the chance of recovering lands and possessions

which they had previously held elsewhere in Scotland.⁴⁶ This again, was a public, not a private, matter.

The deal over forfeited lands was attractive; Sir Robert Colville, who a year later was to sue under it for the Ayrshire barony of Ochiltree, had gone over to the Scots by 2 March 1384 (when orders were given for the forfeiture of his land in England).⁴⁷ By the end of the month, Teviotdale had probably been brought back completely into Robert II's peace.⁴⁸ That left only Berwick, Roxburgh and Jedburgh as major strongholds in English hands. It had been a swift, and so far painless, success, in which there is no need to envisage any significant disagreements between the king and the leading magnates.

With this success, however, the situation changed. What was now in Scotland's interests: a truce, or further warfare? In military terms a truce would, of course, save the country from English retaliation, while in diplomatic terms it would force English acceptance of all the Scottish gains since 1376, something which the English had refused to do during the previous fourteen-year truce. On the other hand, further warfare, while involving the risk of English invasion, was obviously attractive in terms of booty; Berwick, Roxburgh and Jedburgh were still held by English garrisons; and it was probably only by warfare that the English government could be brought to recognize Scottish independence. The arguments, in the late spring of 1384, appear finely balanced. What may perhaps have swayed Robert II was that the French did not honour their previous year's agreement; on 26 January they entered into a nine-month truce with England. Subsequent complaints that the French had left them in the lurch show that the Scots were hoping that England would have to fight on two fronts, and were expecting the shipment of French troops and money, as agreed in 1383. That would have made it much easier to carry on the war. As it was, in the absence of French support, Robert sent envoys to negotiate Scotland's entry to the truce.⁴⁹

The military and diplomatic situation was not all that changed, however, for in April 1384 the first earl of Douglas died. He was in his late fifties, and, as has been already said, was one of a remarkably large number of prominent Scots of the time who were at least middle-aged, and whose experience of dealings with England reached well back to the mid-

fourteenth century. But these middle-aged nobles had sons, whose experience did not go back nearly so far. Thus there was probably a significant generation gap within Scottish noble society at this time—a generation gap highlighted by the succession of James, the new, second, earl of Douglas, who was apparently in his late twenties in 1384. Earl James almost certainly gave a focus to what Wyntoun's chronicle called 'the yhowng chewalry', and it was presumably at their head that he 'offtysis rade in till Ingland/Wastand befor hym and brynnand'.⁵⁰ For Earl James and the young lords, the arguments for war were no doubt more cogent, and (although the Scottish chronicles do not say this directly) it was presumably he who led the Scottish raids across the Border which the English sources record in the summer and autumn of 1384.⁵¹

At that time, therefore, there must have been serious policy differences in Scotland, between doves and hawks, so to speak. This is no doubt what lies behind Froissart's garbled account of the events of 1384.⁵² The attitude of the 'doves', however, should not be exaggerated. It is quite conceivable that Robert II's envoys to Richard II and to the Anglo-French peace conference at Boulogne may have told the English that the Border raids were all a mistake, carried out against the king's wishes, and begged them not to retaliate. But, more aggressively, they also complained at Boulogne about the absence of French aid earlier in 1384, and—most significantly—there was no suggestion that any of the reconquered territory might be returned.⁵³ Thus any conciliation by Robert II was very strictly limited, and has to be seen in the context of the second half of 1384, not that of the entire war. Conversely, the extent of the 'hawks' should not be exaggerated, either. While Earl James of Douglas may have led raids across the Border in late 1384, there is no evidence that he was accompanied by the earl of March or Archibald Douglas of Galloway; Sir Archibald, indeed, was one of those who negotiated in July for Scotland to join the Anglo-French truce until October.⁵⁴ To think in terms of a clear-cut split between king and nobles, as Froissart implies and as so many Scottish historians have stated, is therefore probably mistaken.

One other important development took place in 1384. In November a council-general ordained that 'because the lord our

king for certain causes cannot continue in future to deal personally with the execution of justice and the law of the kingdom', responsibility for this was transferred to his eldest son, the earl of Carrick. The 'certain causes' were not elaborated; the king's age is the obvious explanation, but it is also likely that a limited *coup d'état* had taken place.⁵⁵ Now, although the transfer of executive power only concerned justice, it is possible that disagreements between doves and hawks over foreign policy was one of the factors. There might well, in particular, have been a link between the earls of Douglas and Carrick. Earl James's sister was married to Sir Malcolm Drummond, and his sister in turn was the wife of the earl of Carrick. These marriages can be seen as part of the creation of a 'Drummond faction' by David II and his queen, Margaret Drummond (Sir Malcolm's aunt) in the 1360s. This faction was still highly important politically in the late fourteenth century; it certainly included Carrick, and it is quite likely that the second earl of Douglas was drawn into it too.⁵⁶ If so, that would line Earl James up with Carrick against Robert II—which would help explain Froissart's disparagement of the king in his account of the later 1380s, for it is a reasonable guess that Froissart's information came from Frenchmen who had dealings with the earl of Douglas.

Yet even if Earl James and the hawks were gaining in political power at the end of 1384, that does not mean unrestrained bellicosity on the part of the Scottish nobles. In December 1384 Berwick was once again captured by surprise and during a truce by what was probably a band of Border freebooters. But no attempt was made to keep it in Scottish hands; the earl of Northumberland was allowed to regain it without hindrance.⁴⁷ There was still an awareness of the dangers associated with Berwick.

Similarly, at least according to Froissart, when a French force under John de Vienne came to Scotland in 1385, even the young warrior earl of Douglas took pains to dissuade de Vienne from his plans for a full-scale battle against the English. Whether or not Douglas showed de Vienne the great army which Richard II led into Scotland in 1385, as Froissart relates, the point was clearly made to the French that the best way to cope with an English invading army was *not* to engage it in battle—as, indeed, the indenture regulating the conduct of the joint Scoto-

French force emphasized.⁵⁸ That tallies, of course, with the policy of allowing Northumberland to retake Berwick the winter before. But the Scots in 1385 possibly did have their eyes on other strongholds. The Franco-Scottish army crossed the Border, took Wark and two other castles, contemplated attacking Carlisle, and then moved on to Roxburgh. Wyntoun's account implies that the initial raid was led by Earl James of Douglas, but that at Carlisle the army was joined by Archibald Douglas of Galloway, and at Roxburgh by Robert, earl of Fife, the king's second son: perhaps Fife and Sir Archibald were looking for more tangible gains from the campaign than merely Border booty. According to Wyntoun, however, the siege of Roxburgh got nowhere, because John de Vienne said he would only risk French troops on the condition that when captured Roxburgh would be given to the king of France. This demand—perhaps an illustration of the way the Laws of War concerning sieges could work at that time—not surprisingly brought the Franco-Scottish campaign to an end.⁵⁹ Thus in the Scottish chronicles it was the French who were to blame for the poor co-operation in 1385; that should be set against Froissart's strong condemnation of the Scots. But much more significant is the fact that the indenture regulating the joint campaign was drawn up by the Scottish royal council, in the name of Robert II and the earl of Carrick.⁶⁰ Even if it is assumed that King Robert was not personally involved with this, the indenture and ensuing campaign must be seen as part of the public Scottish war effort, not as a piece of private adventurism. The same can be said about the final Scottish campaign of 1385, when Robert, earl of Fife led a large army, including Earl James of Douglas and the lord of Galloway, into the northern Lake District, the region round Cockermouth, which apparently had not been attacked since the time of Robert I.⁶¹ This was another piece of tit-for-tat Border raiding, in retaliation for Richard II's invasion, but on a large and public scale, judging by Fife's leadership.

The emergence of the earl of Fife as a military leader in 1385 is particularly interesting. Fife (the future duke of Albany) was to become a bitter rival of his brother Carrick (the future Robert III); the feud between them is the main theme of Robert III's reign, and it seems already to have started in the 1380s.⁶² Now in Wyntoun's chronicle the description of the raid on Cockermouth is followed by the statement that,

The Erle off Fyffe welle prysyd wes
 Off governyng and gret besynes,
 And also off gud cumpany,
 Swa that the yhowng chewalry
 Off that rowte mare wilfull ware
 To ryde wyth hym, than thai war are.⁶³

Reading between the lines, it would appear that Fife, a most effective politician, was trying to gain the political support of 'the young chivalry' by taking over the leadership of the Scottish war effort in 1385. In that case, internal Scottish politics were affecting the war; but not in the oversimplified way suggested by Froissart and the Scottish historians who have followed him.

Be that as it may, if the hawks seem at least partly to have had their way in 1385, the following two years saw a distinct slackening of activity. In the spring of 1386 there was a Border raid, possibly the attack on Carlisle by Sir William Douglas of Nithsdale, an illegitimate son of the lord of Galloway, whom Wyntoun calls 'a yhowng joly bachelere'—the generation gap again.⁶⁴ But his father Sir Archibald Douglas, and the earl of March (who is referred to around this time as the 'dear cousin' of Richard II: his relations with England had obviously changed), and even James, earl of Douglas, all now appear to be more prominent in truce negotiations.⁶⁵ It would seem that the Scots had discovered in 1385 that even with French help they could not make any further headway in the war; therefore the arguments in favour of truce held sway once more.

Then in the summer of 1388, Wyntoun's chronicle relates that,

The Erle off Fyffe ane othir rade
 To mak in Ingland bowne hym made.
 He gadryd a fere mare cumpany,
 And passyd in Ingland hastily,
 For he thought ferrare for to ryde.

This was the start of the campaign that culminated in the battle of Otterburn. No explanations of why the campaign took place, nor of why the Scottish army was divided, are provided by either Wyntoun's or Bower's chronicles. We are simply told that,

The Erle Jamys off Dowglas,
 That had made cunnand for till pass
 Wyth the Erle off Fyffe in cumpany,
 Faylyd tharoff allwterly.⁶⁶

Froissart, on the other hand, provides plenty of explanations. His account of Otterburn states,

The barons and knights of Scotland, knowing of this, determined on an inroad to England, as the opportunity was favourable now the English were quarrelling among themselves, to make some return for some of the many insults they had suffered from them.⁶⁷

The English quarrels were, of course, those of the Appellants' crisis, though Froissart also mentions Percy-Neville rivalry over the wardenship of the Marches. The significance of the latter point is unclear, but it makes perfect sense for the Scots to be trying to take advantage of the political upheavals in England. Froissart goes on, however, to describe a secret meeting at Aberdeen in mid-August. That is less plausible, partly because the date is far too late, and partly in view of other clearly inaccurate references to Aberdeen in the *Chroniques*—Froissart, who went there in 1365, seems to have been obsessed with the city, and even located much of his *Méliador* there.⁶⁸

Similarly, it is doubtful whether much needs to be made of the statement that the Scottish nobles, 'having arranged everything concerning this business...separated, but never mentioned one word of their intentions to the king; for they said among themselves, he knew nothing about war'.⁶⁹ Probably all that means is that Robert II was not actively involved in planning the campaign, which is understandable enough in the political circumstances of the time. What certainly should not be inferred from Froissart is that this was in any way a piece of private Border raiding. Froissart's list of twenty-eight Scottish nobles who fought at Otterburn, for example, contains only six or seven who can safely be described as Borderers, pure and simple; the list is, in fact, a fair cross-section of the Scottish nobility of the period.⁷⁰ Admittedly it is dangerous to base any analysis on lists of names given by Froissart. But the nobles known from other sources to have

been at Otterburn—the earls of Douglas, March and Moray, Sir James Lindsay of Crawford in Lanarkshire, Sir Thomas Erskine of Alloa in Clackmannanshire, Sir James Montgomery of Ardrossan in Ayrshire, Sir John Swinton of Swinton in Berwickshire, and Sir Henry Preston—came from all over southern Scotland (March and Swinton are the only real Borderers), and in Moray’s case from the north.⁷¹ Moray’s presence is no doubt partly explained by the fact that he was the earl of March’s brother. But ‘following the banner’ of the earl of Moray was one of the points at issue in a dispute he had with the bishop of Moray, which was settled in the summer of 1389. The bishop must have been claiming that his tenants were exempt from the obligation of following the earl when the latter summoned the army of the earldom of Moray as part of the national army; it was agreed that because this partly concerned the king, it should be brought before the next parliament or council-general.⁷² Since the question was being dealt with in the year after Otterburn, it seems highly likely that it arose over a general call-up for the 1388 campaign. That that was on a larger scale than any previous Scottish activity during the war is suggested by Wyntoun’s chronicle, which speaks of 30,000 men with the earl of Fife and another 7,000 with the earl of Douglas, while the Monk of Westminster called it the most serious raid for one hundred years.⁷³

But, of course, it was not just one raid; the Scottish army divided. While the Scottish chroniclers say that the earl of Douglas simply failed to join Fife, Froissart states that this was a deliberate decision, taken in order to confuse the English defences.⁷⁴ Although Froissart’s story of the capture and use of an English spy is no doubt too good to be true, this time perhaps the basic point may be believed! Whether Froissart really knew what he was talking about, or whether he simply made a sensible guess, cannot be said; but although it is not impossible to envisage the earl of Douglas simply following his own inclinations, it is rather harder to imagine the earl of March (probably by far the best of the Scottish commanders) following suit. It is not impossible that the division of the army was on political lines: several of the leading nobles known to have been at Otterburn can be at least loosely associated with the Drummond faction referred to above (Sir Malcolm Drummond himself may well have been there),⁷⁵ while the then

leader of the other faction in Scottish politics, Robert, earl of Fife, commanded the other, larger, force, and was accompanied by Archibald Douglas of Galloway, who was certainly to become one of his close political associates.⁷⁶ This, however, is conjecture; there is not enough surviving detail for a thorough political analysis.

Whatever the reason for the division of the army, the summer of 1388 also witnessed a third raid on English territory—across the Irish Sea, led by the lord of Galloway's illegitimate son, Sir William Douglas of Nithsdale. He attacked Carlingford, in the north of Ireland, so seriously that the Dublin government had to call out 'the service of Carlingford', and then while returning to Scotland he pillaged the Isle of Man.⁷⁷ In 1388, therefore, it was a three-pronged assault that the Scots launched, something which was almost without precedent in Anglo-Scottish warfare. Almost—but not quite; there was one precedent. In 1327 Robert I had done something very similar, combining two major invasions of northern England with a secondary expedition to the north of Ireland.⁷⁸ The parallels between the plans of campaign of 1327 and 1388, while not exact, seem too close to be coincidental, and so it can be suggested that in 1388 the Scots were trying to copy the strategy of Robert Bruce. There is no reason to suppose that the men of 1388 did not know about Bruce's 1327 campaign; after all, the two main accounts of Robert I's reign, John Barbour's poem 'The Brus' and John Fordun's chronicle, were written in the 1370s and 1380s respectively, and the authors presumably obtained their information from contemporary nobles, such as Sir Archibald Douglas of Galloway, son of Robert I's companion-in-arms, 'the Good Sir James'.

The parallels between 1327 and 1388, moreover, are not confined to the campaigns. In 1327 Robert I went to war at a time of political crisis in England, following the deposition of Edward II. The weak English government of Isabella and Mortimer was unable to withstand the Scottish pressure, and agreed to make peace; in 1328, by the Treaty of Edinburgh, formal English recognition of Scottish independence was achieved.⁷⁹ Now, in 1388, England was suffering from the worst political crisis since 1327.⁸⁰ The Scots must have been well aware of the severity of England's troubles, and it is hard to believe that they were not hoping to capitalize from them in the

same way as Robert I had done in 1327–8. That interpretation would make the Scottish campaign of 1388—the Otterburn campaign—into an all-out effort to exploit the Appellants’ crisis and force the English to make peace on Scottish terms.

Sadly from the Scottish point of view (and indeed from the English, taking a long-term standpoint), the Appellants’ regime did not give in to Scottish pressure, at least not in the way that that of Isabella and Mortimer had done.⁸¹ Admittedly, a little help was sent to the north of England; the northerners were left to defend themselves against the Scots as best they could. Fife’s army did very serious damage in Cumberland and Westmorland,⁸² while at Otterburn, despite the death of the earl of Douglas, a humiliating defeat was suffered which was made worse by the capture of Hotspur and his brother, Sir Ralph Percy. Yet no peace treaty was to follow; the Scots had failed, to use the modern phrase, to bomb the English to the conference table.

Part of the reason is probably that, since 1327, the local machinery for defending the north of England had been greatly improved; that was one of the legacies of Edward III.⁸³ Also, like the young Edward III in 1327, Richard II was furious at the humiliation; the *Westminster Chronicle* states that he wanted to lead an army in person against the Scots. That did not happen, but one consequence of the Appellants’ bungling of the war with both Scotland and France in 1388 was that in the autumn Richard began to regain his political power.⁸⁴ Part of his manoeuvring included winning over the youngest Appellant, the earl of Nottingham—who was sent to the north as Warden of the East March. There, in the spring of 1389, he confronted a new invasion led by the earl of Fife and Sir Archibald Douglas. The Scottish and English chronicle accounts of what happened vary, but it is clear that Nottingham managed to block the invasion without risking a battle. What he must have demonstrated to the Scots was a continuing English commitment to resisting Scottish pressure and defending the March.⁸⁵

At the same time the situation in Scotland after Otterburn was very different from that of the mid-1380s. The battle had been a triumph, certainly, but the earl of Douglas’s death meant it was something of a Pyrrhic victory. Not only was the leading Scottish ‘hawk’ removed from the political scene, but also—as

was becoming evident as early as 18 August⁸⁶—his death would have serious consequences for Scottish domestic politics. The main problem was over the succession to the earldom of Douglas. Earl James had no legitimate children, and his heir-general was his sister, the wife of Sir Malcolm Drummond. Soon after Otterburn, Drummond claimed the great Douglas inheritance, and had a retour of part of it, the lordship of Selkirk, in his favour. However, Sir Archibald Douglas of Galloway then produced a charter dated 1342 limiting the descent of most of the Douglas estates to male heirs, and specifically including Sir Archibald himself in the entail. Unfortunately, the original of this charter does not exist; it is only known from a notarial copy made for Sir Archibald in 1391 and from a later copy of a version enrolled in one of the now-missing volumes of the register of Scottish royal acts, the *Register of the Great Seal*. Thus the authenticity of the entail to the lord of Galloway is not absolutely unimpeachable. Be that as it may, it was taken as genuine at the time; Sir Archibald Douglas received the entailed Douglas estates, and became the third earl of Douglas. The chancellor, meanwhile, was severely censured in parliament in April 1389 for issuing letters giving sasine of Selkirk to Sir Malcolm Drummond, and an appointment of Drummond as sheriff of Roxburgh was cancelled. Drummond submitted a written plea on his own behalf, but refused to come to parliament in person because he could not get an undertaking from the earl of Fife that he would be unharmed.⁸⁷ It seems clear that Fife and Sir Archibald Douglas had been acting together in this, against Drummond and his brother-in-law, the earl of Carrick. And, probably at least partly as a consequence of the Carrick/Drummond attempt to divert the Douglas inheritance, Fife replaced Carrick as lieutenant of the kingdom on behalf of his father, the aged Robert II.⁸⁸

Meanwhile a separate claim to part of the Douglas estates, the Border lordship of Liddesdale, seems to have been entered by Sir James Douglas of Dalkeith. He was probably in the right, for the acquisition of Liddesdale by the first earl of Douglas at the expense of Sir James's uncle was on distinctly dubious grounds.⁸⁹ But while Sir James also apparently had a retour of Liddesdale issued to him, he, like Drummond, was unable ultimately to gain possession of the lordship. The details of the

Liddesdale case are extremely obscure, but it seems to have produced a feud between junior branches of the house of Douglas that lasted for much of the 1390s.⁹⁰

As for Drummond, his immediate reaction was to consider defecting to England; on 19 June 1389 Richard II issued a special protection for Sir Malcolm Drummond and all his lands and possessions, in which almost all of the Douglas estates were listed. Similar protections were issued for Sir James Sandilands of Calder and Sir John Haliburton of Dirleton, men who probably had lesser claims on the Douglas estates.⁹¹ It is uncertain whether Drummond, Sandilands and Haliburton did actually go to England, but this gives a good indication of the tension unleashed in Scotland after the death of Earl James at Otterburn. The political upheavals, of course, were hardly comparable with those recently suffered by England; nevertheless they probably help to explain why there was no significant Scottish follow-up to Otterburn, and why the war eventually petered out in 1389.

When a final truce was agreed, in the late summer of 1389, Thomas Walsingham relates that the common people of Scotland were dismayed, because they had spent heavily on military equipment in the hope of fresh, lucrative raids across the Border. On the other hand the Scottish nobles, according to Walsingham, wanted and welcomed the truce, and took pains to ensure popular support for it.⁹² Here, then, there is evidence of disagreements over war and peace—but not the kind of disagreements that Froissart describes. And Wyntoun's chronicle tells that when English and French ambassadors came to Scotland to finalize the truce, the king, Robert II,

made rycht fayre cowntenawns
Till the twa messyngeris off Frawns,
And gert thaim honowryd be gretly.

This made the English ambassadors fear that the Scots and French were considering further warfare. Therefore they went to Sir Archibald Douglas (now the third earl) and begged him to agree to peace.

He sayd, 'Till oure Kyng off the land
And till the Wardane, as yhe may se,

That fallis, and litill, or noucht, till me.
 Than passyd thai on to the Wardane [i.e. the earl of
 Fife], And he awnsweryd thame agane,
 That all wes in the Kyngis wille,
 Till warray, or till hald hym still
 Thare-wyth thai till the kyng ar gane.

There they joined with the French ambassadors in urging peace, and Robert II—having taken advice, presumably from the council—formally swore to keep the truce.⁹³ No doubt, despite what Douglas and Fife are made to say, the decision was a collective one—but it was certainly one in which Robert II himself took part. In the last year of his reign, therefore, Robert appears once more to be closely involved with his country's foreign affairs. This may well be a consequence of Fife's ousting Carrick from the position of lieutenant, which as has been argued, was perhaps in part an indirect result of Otterburn.

But, given that the Otterburn campaign probably represented a major effort by the Scots to force the English to make peace on their terms, does the fact that only a truce was made mean that the campaign was in vain? Otterburn was certainly not a very decisive battle—but then neither were any of the battles of the Anglo-Scottish war, not even Bannockburn. In fact, after 1328, no Anglo-Scottish peace treaty was made in the late Middle Ages, just as there was no peace treaty between England and France, nor indeed in modern times between the Allies and Germany after World War II (until 1990). In each case, instead, there was simply a cessation of hostilities. After Otterburn this lasted for just a dozen years, but had Richard II kept his throne it would have been for many more. And when war broke out again, the events of Henry IV's reign demonstrate that, despite the use of the old rhetoric of overlordship, the reality of the warfare and the strategies involved had radically changed. No longer were the Scots reacting to English conquest; now it was a matter of warfare between two more or less equal neighbours. The Otterburn War, indeed, was the last Scottish war against English conquest.⁹⁴ It might well, to go back to the passage from Ranald Nicholson with which this essay began, have been a war of chivalry, but it was also, certainly, a part of the Wars of Independence. Its roots lie in the conquests made by Edward III, which were a resumption of those of Edward I. It was

argued above that there was a continuity in Scottish strategy from the last years of Robert I's reign to the campaign of 1388. But there is also, in a sense, a much greater continuity in the Anglo-Scottish warfare as a whole. It is a continuity, however, which ends with the truce of 1389.

That is why for a Scottish historian, taking the Scottish point of view, Otterburn stands out as an extremely important battle. It is not because it was one of the fairly rare major Scottish victories. It is, instead, because in the short term the battle set the seal on the gains of 1384; because in the medium term it marked the high point of one of the most successful periods, for the Scots, in the entire sequence of Anglo-Scottish warfare; and because in the long term it symbolizes the final, triumphant, conclusion of Scotland's Wars of Independence. And the latter, at least, is something worth commemorating.

NOTES

- 1 R.Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, Edinburgh, 1974, p.194.
- 2 P.F.Tytler, *History of Scotland*, iii, Edinburgh, 1829, p. 19; quoted in Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, p. 194. For the importance of Tytler, the author of 'the first history [of any country] in the English language based on personal research in the primary sources', see M.Ash, *The Strange Death of Scottish History*, Edinburgh, 1980, chapter 4.
- 3 For example, J.Hill Burton, *The History of Scotland*, 2nd edn, Edinburgh, 1873, ii, chapter XXVI; P.Hume Brown, *History of Scotland*, Cambridge, 1900, i, pp. 188-94; A.Lang, *A Short History of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1911, pp. 51-2; R.L.Mackie, *A Short History of Scotland*, revised edn, Edinburgh, 1962, pp. 198-200; W.C.Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, Edinburgh, 1961, pp. 198-200; J.Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War', in *Europe in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. J.R.Hale, J.R.L.Highfield and B.Smalley, London, 1965, pp. 207-11; Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, pp. 194-9.
- 4 K.B.McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, Oxford, 1973, pp. 2-3.
- 5 F.J.Child, ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Boston and London, 1882-98, iii, pp. 289-315 (nos 161, 162).
- 6 *ibid.*, iii, p. 303.
- 7 *ibid.*, iii, p. 298 (and see p. 293 for discussion of the Percy and Douglas versions).
- 8 *ibid.*, iii, pp. 309-10; here Percy kills Douglas but is then killed in turn, and 'the fourth Harry our Kyng' 'dyde the battell of

- Homyll-down' to avenge Percy's death. In reality, Humbledon (or Homildon) was won by Hotspur, who rebelled against Henry IV the following year, and was killed at Shrewsbury. 'The Hunting of the Cheviot' turns history on its head by making Henry IV mourn Percy and avenge him; it is obviously a piece of later Percy propaganda, intended to rehabilitate Hotspur.
- 9 Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, viii, ed. D.E.R.Watt, Aberdeen, 1987 [hereafter *Chron. Bower* (Watt), viii] pp. 45–9, 57–9; Thomas Walsingham, *Annales Henrici Quarti*, in *Johannis de Trokelowe...Chronica et Annales*, ed. H.T.Riley, RS, 1866, pp. 344–6, 365–8. It is difficult to say why Douglas joined forces with Percy. The best analysis of the episode, P.McNiven, 'The Scottish Policy of the Percies', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, lxii, 1979–80, pp. 498–530, stresses Henry IV's 'grant' of most of the earl of Douglas's possessions to the earl of Northumberland in March 1403 (*Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 163–4). McNiven argues that Hotspur's raid into Teviotdale in the late spring of 1403 was a serious attempt to make good at least part of that grant, and that the ensuing Percy rebellion was intended to take over the kingdom and thus ensure Crown finance for their Scottish conquests—which Henry IV had refused to provide. But in that case, why did Douglas support the rebellion? McNiven (p. 517, note) calls this 'an enigma', and suggests that we should accept the implication of Wyntoun's chronicle (*Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 90–1), that 'the warlike Douglas was simply relieved to be able to exchange captivity for freedom to fight Englishmen'. But Douglas was as much a politician as a warrior, and it is more likely that he persuaded the Percies to drop their claims to his lands as the price for his support. If they were successful, they would have plenty of opportunity for aggrandizement in England; and in Scotland, Douglas might have suggested they would be compensated with the earldom of March, which he had taken over following March's defection to England (first to the Percies, but subsequently to Henry IV). After Shrewsbury, when the earl of Northumberland surrendered his claim to the Douglas lands to Henry IV, this probably reflects Henry IV's desire for peace with Scotland, because it coincides with the extension of the Anglo-Scottish truce; but it may also have been at Douglas's instigation, for by then he was in Henry IV's hands and was establishing good relations with the king (see above, Introduction, pp. 7–8; *Foedera*, viii, pp. 363–4, 478; W.Fraser, *The Douglas Book*, Edinburgh, 1885, i, pp. 372–6, and iii, no. 52).
 - 10 *Chron. Bower* (Watt), viii, pp. 31–3, 43–51, 57–9; *Annales Henrici Quarti*, p. 344–5, 349, 364. March has never received the detailed treatment he deserves; for a brief account of his life, see *The Scots Peerage*, ed. J.B.Paul, Edinburgh, 1904–14, iii, pp. 270–3.
 - 11 Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H.T.Riley, RS, 1863–4, ii, p. 176; CDS, iv, no. 242; *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 9–12, 18–20; *Scotichronicon Johannis de fordun cum Supplementis et Continuacione Walteri Boweri*, ed. W.Goodall, Edinburgh, 1759 [hereafter *Chron.*

- Bower* (Goodall)], ii, pp. 384–5, 397–8, 405; *Westminster*, p. 350 (which states that March saved Hotspur's life); Froissart, xiii, p. 222. Cf. Bower's comment that March 'was accounted most fortunate in every fighting encounter, for his side always prevailed, whether he was the commander or in the company of greater men, as was clear in the battles of Otterburn, Nisbet, Humbledon, Shrewsbury and other laudable fights': *Chron. Bower* (Watt), viii, p. 117.
- 12 Cf. the comment by one contemporary English chronicler that George Dunbar 'desired the death of Henry Percy so that he might dominate more easily in the parts of Northumbria': *Incerti Scriptoris Chronicon Angliae*, ed. J.A.Giles, London, 1848, p. 33, quoted by J.A. Tuck, 'The emergence of a northern nobility', *Northern History*, xxii, 1986, p. 9.
 - 13 *Rot. Scot.*, i, pp. 955, 965.
 - 14 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, p. 66; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 139–40; A.Goodman, 'The Anglo-Scottish Marches in the fifteenth century: a frontier society?', in *Scotland and England*, ed. R.A.Mason, Edinburgh, 1987, p. 19.
 - 15 *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, v: *The Acts of Robert I*, ed. A.A.M.Duncan, Edinburgh, 1988, no. 167; CDS, iii, no. 1377.
 - 16 As is clear from the commissions to English negotiators, etc., recorded in *Foedera* and *Rot. Scot.*: see, e. g., *Foedera*, vii, pp. 714–18, 721, 725, 728–9, 850–1; viii, pp. 17–18, 35–6, 70, 363–4, 369–70, 384–6; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 121–2, 125–7, 157–9, 167, etc.
 - 17 J.W.Sherborne, 'Charles VI and Richard II', in *Froissart: Historian*, ed. J.J.N.Palmer, Woodbridge, 1981, p. 51.
 - 18 Palmer, *Froissart: Historian*, chapters II–VII, by, respectively, R. Barber, J.W.Sherborne, M.Jones, P.E.Russell, J.Van Herwaarden and P.Tucoc-Chala.
 - 19 Froissart, x, pp. 129–95, 334–5, 377; xiii, pp. 200–1.
 - 20 *APS*, i, pp. 550–1.
 - 21 See below, at note 51.
 - 22 Froissart, x, pp. 293–5; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 63; *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, ed. G.Burnett *et al.*, Edinburgh, 1878–1908 [hereafter *ER*], iii, p. 117.
 - 23 For which see Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, chapters 6, 7; Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War'; and A.A.M. Duncan, 'Honi Soit qui Mal y Pense: David II and Edward III, 1346–52', *ScHR*, lxxvii, 1988, pp. 113–41.
 - 24 John Fordun, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. W.F.Skene, Edinburgh, 1871–2, i, p. 373 [hereafter *Chron. Fordun*].
 - 25 *Rot. Scot.*, i, pp. 934, 938–9; CDS, iv, no. 154; the significance of the 'Burnt Candlemas' is particularly emphasized by Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War', pp. 200–1.
 - 26 C.Ross, *Edward IV*, London, 1974, chapter 12; N.A.T.Macdougall, *James III*, Edinburgh, 1982, chapters 7, 8.
 - 27 Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, p. 174; in fact, in 1371 the occupied

- zone was still as it had been fixed by the fourteen-year truce of 1369.
- 28 The most detailed modern account of Anglo-Scottish relations under Robert II is in Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, chapter 8; a different interpretation is given in A. Grant, *Independence and Nationhood: Scotland 1306–1469*, London, 1984, pp. 37–42.
- 29 This was probably true throughout the 1360s (for example despite Edward's aggressive tone in negotiations with David II, *Foedera* and *Rot. Scot.*, contain no indications of military preparations for war with Scotland, as had been the case in the 1350s), and became even more so once war with France broke out again in 1369.
- 30 For brief accounts of these men, see *Scots Peerage*, i, pp. 15, 17, 147; iii, pp. 148–53, 157–63, 260, 270–3.
- 31 This applies to the Berwickshire part of the earldom, and for Annandale see CDS, iv, nos 47, 223. Annandale had been granted to David II's stepson John Logy, but he had probably lost it in 1369–70 (W. Fraser, *The Red Book of Grandtully*, Edinburgh, 1868, ii, no. 73; cf. ER, ii, pp. lviii–lix), and Earl George had it by late 1372 (*Registrum Honoris de Morton*, ed. C. Innes, Bannatyne Club, 1853, ii, nos 131, 132).
- 32 *Foedera*, vii, p. 716; *Morton Reg.*, ii, nos 98, 131, 132.
- 33 CDS, iv, no. 231. On the East March, the tenants of Coldingham priory seem to have stopped paying rents to their lords, the monks of Durham, in 1374–5: *The Correspondence of the Priory of Coldingham*, ed. J. Raine, SS, 1841, Appendix of Inventories and Account Rolls, p. lxxv.
- 34 CDS, iv, nos 242, 260 and pp. 401–2; cf. *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 9–14; *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, pp. 384–5.
- 35 CDS, iv, nos 292, 295, 297, 299, 304, 315, 317, 318; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 21–60; APS, i, 552; *Chron. Fordun*, i, p. 383; *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 14–22; *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, pp. 391–2, 397–8, 400; Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, i, pp. 409–11, 437–8, 446–7; ii, pp. 41–2, 108–12, 115; *Westminster*, pp. 40–2, 50, 58; and, in general, J. A. Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', *Northern History*, iii, 1968, pp. 36–42.
- 36 *Chron. Fordun*, i, p. 382; Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, i, pp. 387–8; *The Anominalle Chronicle*, ed. V. H. Galbraith, Manchester, 1927, pp. 125–6; Froissart, ix, pp. 27–35; cf. CDS, iv, no. 333.
- 37 MS. Cotton, Vespasian F. vii, folio 35 (no. 30). This is dated at Edinburgh on 7 January of an unspecified year. Analysis of the place-dates of Robert II's *acta* (collected for the forthcoming *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, vii: *The Acts of Robert II and Robert III*, ed. A. L. Murray and A. Grant) shows that 1380 is much the most likely year.
- 38 *Westminster*, pp. 54–6; cf. the less explicit comment of Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 109. There is no other evidence for this letter, unless it is the same as that of 7 January? 1380 referred to in the previous note; or, since the Monk of Westminster goes on to refer to John de Vienne's expedition to Scotland, which actually

- happened in 1385, he may have confused his '14 December' letter with Robert II's conciliatory overtures in the second half of 1384 (see below, at notes 49, 53).
- 39 Froissart, ix, pp. 26–7; loose translation from *Sir John Froissart's Chronicles*, trans. T.Johnes, London, 1848, i, p. 529; cf. Froissart, ix, pp. 123–4, for a statement of Charles V's firm belief that Robert II and the Scots hated the English and wanted war with them.
- 40 CDS, iv, no. 265; ER, iii, pp. liv–lxi.
- 41 *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, pp. 161–3 (which recites the charter); discussed in A.L.Brown, 'The priory of Coldingham in the late fourteenth century', *Innes Review*, xxiii, 1972, pp. 91–4. 'In the seventies Prior Walworth alleged that at the last March-day between the English and Scottish wardens it had been agreed and publicly acknowledged that the barony of Coldingham should remain in the custody of the English king, but the clerk who wrote the indenture of the truce had, unknown to the English, changed it to read the custody of the Scottish king': *ibid.*, p. 99, note 37, citing *Coldingham Correspondence*, pp. 44–5. See also Professor Dobson's essay in this volume.
- 42 Edinburgh, Scottish Record Office [hereafter SRO] MS. PA. 5/4 (the 'Blak Buik'), folios 4–6; printed in W.Robertson, *The Parliamentary Records of Scotland*, London, 1804, pp. 129–31.
- 43 *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 51, 59. Cf. Walsingham's statement that late in 1383 Richard II would not agree to Scottish requests for a truce (Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 109; see also *Westminster*, p. 56). The sharp change in English foreign policy at this time is described in J.J.N.Palmer, *England, France and Christendom*, London, 1972, chapter 3, although it does not explore the Scottish dimension fully.
- 44 In all, £956 was spent on Edinburgh, £433 on Stirling: ER, iii, pp. 64, 80–3, 89, 653–5, 660, 665, 667. On the well, £33 was paid to 'diversis operariis per magnum tempus laborantibus ad inveniendum locum putei infra castrum de Edynburgh, qui fuerat destructus et ingnoratus, et ad purgandum ipsum puteum et ex toto mundandum et perficiendum': *ibid.*, iii, p. 81.
- 45 *Foedera*, vii, pp. 406–7; *APS*, xii, 19, no. 36; cf. *Westminster*, p. 56.
- 46 *APS*, i, p. 552.
- 47 *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 60; *APS*, i, pp. 553–4.
- 48 Douglas had liberated Teviotdale by the time of his death (*Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, p. 22; *Chron. Bower* [Goodall], ii, p. 400) which had happened before 25 April 1384 (SRO, MS. Crown Office Writs, AD.1/23).
- 49 *Foedera*, vii, pp. 418–22; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 63–4; ER, iii, pp. lxx, 117, 676; N.Du Bosc, 'Voyage pour négocier la paix entre les couronnes de France et d'Angleterre', in *Voyage littéraire de deux religieux bénédictins de la congrégation de Saint-Maur*, ed. E.Martène and U.Durand, ii, Paris, 1724, 332–3. See also Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War', p. 209, and Palmer, *England, France and Christendom*, pp. 48–57. The Anglo-French truce of 26

January 1384—‘the first break in the war since Richard II ascended the throne’ (ibid, p. 50)—had probably not been planned by the French at the time of the previous summer’s agreement with Robert II, but followed the new peace initiative made in the autumn by Michael de la Pole and John of Gaunt. To judge by their disruption of the subsequent negotiations (ibid., p. 51), the French were not sincere about making peace in January; it is more likely that they were trying to assess how much the English wanted it—and hence the extent of English vulnerability to French military force. Thus they were probably anticipating fresh warfare in 1384 or 1385, in which the Scots would be involved. They did arrange that the Scots could be included in the January truce, but perhaps did not know that the Scots planned immediate military action when the Anglo-Scottish truce expired on 2 February. There had been no Scottish representatives at the January negotiations, and the Scots would not have known about the Anglo-French truce until too late; English safe-conducts for French messengers to Scotland were only issued on 13 February (*Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 63). The English, meanwhile, may well have been hoping to keep Scotland out of the truce; that certainly seems to have been their intention in the negotiations during the summer of 1384—when the French, despite the harsh words of the newly arrived Scottish envoys, stood by their ally (see Du Bosc, ‘Voyage pour négocier la paix’, pp. 332–40).

- 50 *Scots Peerage*, in, pp. 153, 155; *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 23, 30.
- 51 Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 115; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 66–8. On 18 September Richard II ordered the earl of Cambridge and over sixty other earls and barons ‘to array men, and to go with them in the king’s company against the Scots, who have invaded England’: CDS, v, no. 857.
- 52 Froissart, x, pp. 289–95. This gives a completely different sequence of events to those narrated in *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 18–22, *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, pp. 397–400, Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, pp. 111–12, 115, and *Westminster*, pp. 58, 66, 86, 100; these all tally reasonably well with one another, and with the record evidence.
- 53 Du Bosc, ‘Voyage pour négocier la paix’, pp. 332–3. On 12 June a separate English embassy consisting of northern bishops and lords was commissioned to negotiate a truce with Scotland, and instructed to demand restitution for the Scottish breaches of the previous truce and the payment of the outstanding part of David II’s ransom; it quickly reached an agreement for Scotland to join the Anglo-French truce on 26 June, but in this there is no mention of restoring lands or paying the ransom: *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 62–4.
- 54 ibid., ii, p. 64.
- 55 *APS*, i, pp. 550–1; Grant, *Independence and Nationhood*, p. 180.
- 56 *Scots Peerage*, iii, pp. 153–4; vi, pp. 32–9; Grant, *Independence and Nationhood*, pp. 177–8, 180–3.
- 57 *Chron. fordun*, i, p. 382; Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 118; cf. CDS, iv, no. 333.

- 58 Froissart, x, pp. 379–81, 388–91; *APS*, i, pp. 554–5. The indenture stated that the joint army was to ‘view’ the castles in the Marches but only assault them if the commanders agreed they looked vulnerable; battle or serious losses were not to be risked.
- 59 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 23–5; *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, p. 401. The case is, unfortunately, not discussed in M.H.Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages*, London, 1965, but it is pointed out there (pp. 139, 149) that towns and castles captured in the cause of a prince became part of that prince’s lordship, and that clauses to that effect were usually included in indentures of war made at the end of Edward III’s reign. There is no such clause in John de Vienne’s commissions from Charles VI (Terrier de Loray, *Jean de Vienne, Amiral de France*, Paris, 1877, appendix, nos 90, 92), but these make it clear that de Vienne’s activities in Scotland were to be in the service of the king of France, ‘pour l’avancement de nostre guerre et pour bien et prouffit de nous et de noz subgiez...pour grever et dommager noz ennemis’ (no. 92). Wyntoun states that de Vienne ‘wald noucht his Lordis men/Ger gang to sa gret peryle then’; that tallies interestingly with the indenture regulating the campaign, but completely contradicts Froissart’s picture (Froissart, x, pp. 388–90).
- 60 *APS*, i, p. 554.
- 61 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 29–30; *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, pp. 402–3.
- 62 Grant, *Independence and Nationhood*, p. 184.
- 63 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, p. 30.
- 64 *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 80; *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 30–1; *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, 403.
- 65 *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 73, 85–6; *CDS*, iv, no. 336.
- 66 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 32, 34; *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, pp. 404–5.
- 67 Froissart, xiii, p. 200; trans. Johnes, ii, p. 361.
- 68 In his account of Richard II’s 1385 invasion, for example, Froissart states that the English reached Aberdeen, having burned Edinburgh, Dunfermline, Stirling, Perth and Dundee on the way (Froissart, x, pp. 392–3); in fact the English were in Scotland for only a fortnight, and never crossed the Forth. See A.H.Diverres, ‘Jean Froissart’s journey to Scotland’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, i, 1965, pp. 54–63, for Froissart and Aberdeen.
- 69 Froissart, xlii, p. 201; trans. Johnes, ii, p. 362.
- 70 Froissart, xiii, p. 227. The main estates of the nobles named by Froissart were situated in the following parts of Scotland (but note that most held lands in more than one region of the country). *Borders*: George, earl of March, Patrick Hepburn, Adam Glendenning, William Stewart (of Jedworth), William Wardlaw (?‘Warlan’), Robert Colville (?‘Colonne’), and John Swinton (‘Venton’). *Lothian*: William Lindsay (of the Byres), William Seton, John Sinclair, John Haliburton, Robert Lauder, and Alexander Ramsay; some of these may be regarded as semi-Borderers,

though not entirely, since their lands were so close to Edinburgh. *Ayrshire and Lanarkshire*: James, earl of Douglas (while he had vast estates on the Borders, he had much land elsewhere in Scotland, and cannot be regarded simply as a Borderer), James Lindsay (of Crawford), John Sandilands, Patrick Dunbar (of Cumnock), John Montgomery, John Maxwell (of Pollok), John Edmonstone, and David Fleming (?'Fluvin'). *North of the Forth*: John, earl of Moray, Malcolm Drummond, Thomas Erskine (of Alloa), Alexander Lindsay (of Glenesk), William Ruthven (?'Roduen'), and Alexander Fraser. 'Jehan Alidiel' has not been identified; some identifications are tentative; a few lesser men have been omitted. In general, however, this list of names is plausible. In contrast, the names of those said to have been on the west coast raid (*ibid.*, xiii, p.207) are much more garbled. The earl of Fife and Sir Archibald Douglas are said to have been accompanied by the earl of Sutherland (unlikely), the earl of 'Montres' (perhaps Menteith, but that earldom was held by the earl of Fife; more probably Sir David Graham of Montrose is meant), the earl of Mar (impossible), the earl of Strathearn (highly unlikely), Sir Steven Fraser (unidentifiable), and Sir George Dunbar (if the son of the earl of March, was more probably with his father).

- 71 The earls of Douglas, March and Moray are named in most accounts of the battle. For Lindsay (who was captured by the English), Erskine and Swinton, see, respectively, *Westminster*, pp. 350, 400; *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, p. 38; and *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, p. 406. Montgomery is said by both Froissart (xiii, pp. 226–7) and the ballad versions of 'The Battle of Otterburn' (Child, *English and Scottish Ballads*, iii, pp. 298–9, 301) to have captured Hotspur; there is no definite corroboration of this in record evidence, but the 'ix hunder punde of English gold' for which James Lindsay appears to have mortgaged land to Montgomery in 1389 (W.Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomerie Earls of Eglinton*, Edinburgh, 1859, ii, no. 22), presumably in connection with his ransom, most probably derived from money paid to Montgomery by Hotspur. As for Preston (who was probably a cadet of the Lothian family), he too received land (in Aberdeenshire) from Lindsay (who was his brother-in-law), 'for the ransom of Sir Ralph Percy'Z, Hotspur's brother (*Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scottorum, 1306–1424*, ed. J.M.Thompson, Edinburgh, 1912 [hereafter *RMS*, i], no. 801); was Lindsay in effect exchanged for Ralph Percy plus some of Hotspur's ransom? One third of Ralph Percy's ransom was also due to Malcolm Drummond (SRO, MS. Mar and Kellie, GD.124/1/1127), but since he was the earl of Douglas's heir-general, that was presumably the third due to the army commander (this calculates Ralph Percy's ransom at £1,800 Scots or £900 sterling, considerably more than the 500 marks sterling mentioned in *Westminster*, p. 400). Following Froissart, xiii, pp. 222–3, historians have often named Sir John Maxwell of Pollok as the captor of Ralph Percy, but there is no direct evidence to support this; Maxwell was also a brother-

- in-law of James Lindsay, which suggests Froissart may have confused him with Preston.
- 72 *Registrum Episcopatus Moraviensis*, ed. C.Innes, Bannatyne Club, 1837, no. 169.
- 73 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, p. 34; *Westminster*, p. 344.
- 74 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 32, 34; *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, pp. 404–5; Froissart, xiii, pp. 206–7.
- 75 Much research needs to be done before the ‘Drummond faction’ can be clearly identified, but my preliminary work suggests it would have included James Lindsay, Thomas Erskine, John Montgomery, and perhaps also the earl of March. Froissart names Malcolm Drummond (‘messire March Ardemens’; *ibid.*, xiii, p. 201) as having fought at Otterburn, along with at least four other probable political associates, James Sandilands, John Haliburton (see below, at note 91), David Fleming and William Stewart. See, in general, Grant, *Independence and Nationhood*, pp. 180–3.
- 76 Cf. their joint dealings over the inheritance to the earldom of Douglas, after Earl James’s death: *APS*, i, pp. 557–3.
- 77 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 32–4; *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, p. 404; A.J. Otway-Ruthven, *A History of Medieval Ireland*, 2nd edn, London 1980, pp. 321–2.
- 78 Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, pp. 118–19; for details, see R. Nicholson *Edward III and the Scots*, Oxford, 1965, chapters II, III, and R.Nicholson, ‘A sequel to Edward Bruce’s invasion of Ireland’, *ScHR*, xlii, 1963, pp. 30–40.
- 79 Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, p. 119; G.W.S.Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, 3rd edn, Edinburgh, 1988, pp. 251–61; N.Fryde, *The Tyranny and Fall of Edward II*, Cambridge, 1979, pp. 207–17.
- 80 See, e. g., A.Goodman, *The Loyal Conspiracy*, London, 1971; A.Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, London, 1973, chapters 4, 5; Palmer, *England, France and Christendom*, chapters 6, 7. ‘Worst’ is in terms of high politics; there was also, of course, the very different crisis of 1381, the Peasants’ Revolt, when John of Gaunt took refuge in Scotland (*Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 16–17), and, perhaps, dissuaded the Scots from any major cross-Border attacks at that time.
- 81 As Palmer in particular emphasized (*England, France and Christendom*, chapter 7), the Appellants were committed to an aggressive foreign policy; while Otterburn helped to make them abandon this (*ibid.*, p. 138), their attitude did not change. In 1327–30 Isabella, in contrast, had a policy of peace with both Scotland and France (a point recently stressed by E.King, *Medieval England*, Oxford, 1988, p. 172).
- 82 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 34, 39; *Chronicon Henry Knighton*, ed. J.R. Lumby, RS, 1895, ii, pp. 297–8; Tuck, *Richard II*, p. 132; see also Dr Summerson’s article in this volume.
- 83 Campbell, ‘England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War’, pp. 192–3.

- 84 *Westminster*, p. 350; Palmer, *England, France and Christendom*, pp. 139–43; Tuck, *Richard II*, chapter 5.
- 85 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 40–1; *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, pp. 414–15; Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, pp. 179–80; *Westminster*, pp. 394–6; *Chron. Knighton*, ii. pp. 308–9.
- 86 At a council-general held at Linlithgow on 18 August, the earl of Fife, as overlord of the barony of North Berwick, obtained royal letters patent ordering the barony and its castle (the major fortress of Tantallon) to be handed over to him, following the death of its tenant—the late Earl James of Douglas (*APS*, i, p. 555; *SRO*, MS. Register House Charters, RH.6/189). Both the record of the council-general and the royal letters patent are dated 18 August, which (as Anthony Tuck has pointed out, in ‘Richard II and the Border Magnates’, p. 44, note) shows that Earl James’s death, and hence the battle of Otterburn, must have taken place before then. There therefore seems no reason to doubt the date of 5 August given for the battle by Bower (*Chron. Bower* [Goodall], ii, p. 405) and some of the English chronicles. But since there was then a new moon, Froissart’s famous portrayal of the moonlight battle must be rejected; the Scottish chroniclers’ account of the battle at dusk (‘Rycht at the swynnys downe-gangyng’: *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, p. 37), in which Douglas took advantage of the setting sun (*Chron. Bower* [Goodall], ii, p. 406, and pp. 407–8, in the contemporary poem by Thomas Barry) seems much more likely.
- 87 *APS*, i, pp. 557–8; *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, vi: *The Acts of David II*, ed. B. Webster, Edinburgh 1982 [hereafter *RRS*, vi], no. 51; *RMS*, i, app. II, no. 790. Without either the original charter or the original register, it cannot be proved without doubt that the illegitimate Archibald Douglas had actually been named in the original 1342 entail; but there is a very strong likelihood that that was the case.
- 88 *APS*, i, pp. 555–6; Grant, *Independence and Nationhood*, pp. 180–1.
- 89 The (future) first earl of Douglas had Liddesdale counted as part of his paternal inheritance in 1354 (*RMS*, i, app. 1, no. 123), but his father’s right to it had been judged null and void by the royal council in 1342 (*RRS*, vi, no. 44), and David II had granted it to Sir William Douglas (subsequently) of Liddesdale (*ibid.*, vi, no. 45), a cadet of the main Douglas line; Sir James Douglas of Dalkeith was his nephew and heir-male. In 1353 the lord of Liddesdale was killed by his namesake William Douglas, the future first earl (*Chron. Fordun*, i, p. 370), and after Liddesdale’s recovery from English hands in the late 1370s (*CDS*, iv, no. 295), both the first and second earls of Douglas possessed it. But their title (*pace* Nicholson, *Later Middle Ages*, pp. 144, 159) was that which had been declared invalid in 1342, as Sir James Douglas of Dalkeith well knew, because the 1342 judgement and grant to his uncle were preserved among his muniments (*Morton Reg.*, ii, nos. 61, 63).
- 90 This is to be inferred from (mostly virtually illegible) items in the Morton, or Douglas of Dalkeith, cartulary (Edinburgh, National

Library of Scotland, MS. 72) which were omitted from the text published by the Bannatyne Club as *Registrum Honoris de Morton*. The feud was with George Douglas, illegitimate son of the first earl of Douglas and himself lord (created 1389) and subsequently earl (1398) of Angus. It seems to have dragged on for at least ten years, but to have eventually been settled through the arbitration of Archibald, earl of Douglas (whether the 3rd or the 4th earl is unclear), with George Douglas eventually gaining possession of the lordship of Liddesdale. See National Library of Scotland, MS. 72, folios 33^r–39^v, 32^v, and folio 2^v, items 94, 97, 98 and 101 in the MS. table of contents; also SRO, MS. Morton, GD. 150/78 (one of the four rolls listing the Douglas of Dalkeith muniments in c.1400), lines 3–12.

- 91 *CDS*, iv, no. 391. Sandilands was the son of the first earl of Douglas's sister; Haliburton's relationship is unclear (*Scots Peerage*, viii, p. 380; iv, pp. 332–3).
- 92 Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, pp. 182–3.
- 93 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 42–3; cf. *Westminster*, pp. 398–402; *Foedera*, vii, p. 683, also pp. 630–1, 636–9, 651–3; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 142–3; ER, iii, p. lxxvi.
- 94 Thus, in contrast to what happened in 1333, 1346 and 1357, there was no lasting English follow-up to the victory at Humbledon; see above, note 9, and in general, Grant, *Independence and Nationhood*, pp. 42–57.

3

THE BATTLE OF OTTERBURN

When and where was it fought?

Colin Tyson

It is, I think, fair to say that no battle fought on English soil has exercised a greater hold on the imagination of succeeding generations than the battle of Otterburn, the 600th anniversary of which was celebrated in 1988. The reasons for the peculiar fascination which this battle has exercised are not difficult to discern. For one thing it was a battle begun at dusk and fought throughout the night under the light of the moon—a highly unusual and perhaps somewhat romantic occurrence. Moreover, we are told that it was fought merely over the possession of a pennant, which had been snatched from Percy's lance during a skirmish outside the walls of Newcastle and gleefully carried off by the Scottish leader, the earl of Douglas. But what particularly captivated the attention of later times was that it brought together in a fierce and bloody contest two young and illustrious men who were representatives of the great rival houses of the Border—Percy and Douglas. As Thomas Walsingham puts it: 'Erat ibidem cernere pulchrum spectaculum, duos tam praeclaros iuvenes manus conserere et pro gloria decertare'¹ And outstanding bravery was shown by the combatants of both sides. Froissart declares:

Of all the bataylles and encountrynges that I have made mencion of here before in all this hystory, great or smalle, this batayle that I treate of now, was one of the sorest and best foughten, without cowardes or faynte hertes. For there was nother knyght nor squyer but that dyde his devoyre and fought hande to hande.²

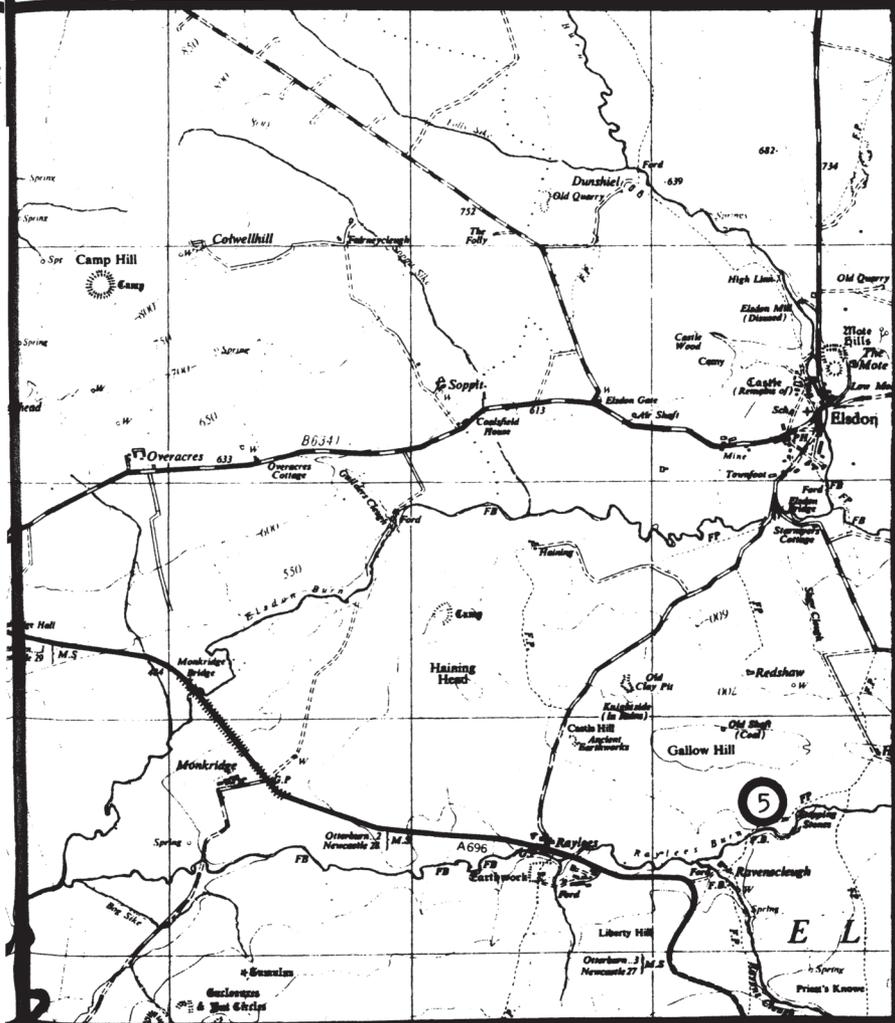
Thus the battle of Otterburn captivated the attention of the minstrels and writers of ballads. Their work has great vigour

THE BATTLE OF OTTERBURN, 1388

1 Battle Croft or Battle Riggs : *Traditional site of the battle*

Other suggested sites :

- 2 Blakeman's Law 3 Otterburn Mill 4 Fawdon Hill 5 Gallow Hill



and colour, but the evidence from which a coherent account of the battle can be built up has to be sought elsewhere.

There are in fact eight medieval accounts to which we can turn for information about the battle of Otterburn. Much the longest, that written by Jean Froissart, may be regarded as a neutral source, three are Scottish and the rest English. The Scottish and English sources, being all of them partisan, offer widely differing perspectives upon the battle. No eye-witness account of the battle exists, but of course, as much of the action took place during the hours of darkness, any such account could only have had limited value. Two accounts were, however, set down shortly after the battle was fought. Of these, the more widely read is the account written by Froissart, but no less important is that to be found in the *Westminster Chronicle*, the author or authors of which are unknown.

Froissart tells us that in 1389 he met several participants; two of them, Sir John de Chateaufort and John de Cautiron, whom he met at Orthez, were from Foix and had fought on the English side, while at Avignon in the same year he met a Scottish knight and two esquires of the household of the earl of Douglas. Froissart's account of the battle, based largely on the conversations he had with these five participants, was probably written in the year 1390–1.

The text of the *Westminster Chronicle* was first published in the Rolls Series in 1886 as an appendix to the *Polychronicon* of Ranulf Higden, a monk of St Werburgh's, Chester. But it is certainly not Higden's work, nor that of his continuator John of Malvern. The *Westminster Chronicle* was published in its own right as recently as 1982. It is arguably the best and most detailed chronicle of the period. The editors of the text published in 1982 declare: The authors of the *Westminster Chronicle* were not only well provided with written sources: they encountered face to face many of the actors in the scenes which they described³ The date of the Otterburn narrative in the *Westminster Chronicle* could well be no later than 1391, possibly 1390.

As to the other medieval sources, all are somewhat later in date, and with one exception were written by monks. On the Scottish side a vigorous, colourful and dramatic account of the battle is to be found in the *Orygynale Cronykil*. The authorship of this chronicle has been traditionally ascribed to Andrew of

Wyntoun, Prior of St Serf's, Loch Leven. In fact, as Wyntoun himself cordially acknowledges, his chronicle incorporates a substantial section sent to him by a friend, whose identity he does not reveal. The account of the battle of Otterburn comes from this section of text. It has been suggested that the work of the unknown contributor was set down soon after 1390, some twenty years before the chronicle as a whole was completed.⁴ The *Orygynale Cronykil* is written in rhyming couplets, and is one of the earliest examples of vernacular literature in Scotland. Wyntoun himself refers to the language in which he wrote as 'Yngles sawe'.⁵ It has a close resemblance to the dialect spoken between the Tees in the south and the Tay in the north during the early fifteenth century.

Another Scottish source is the poem written about the battle by Thomas de Barry, Canon of Glasgow and the first Provost of Bothwell. This comprises some 350 lines of turgid Latin verse, and it is clear that the author was much more concerned about the fashioning of his rhymes and figures of speech than about the narration of historical facts. Barry no doubt wrote the poem in praise of victory won by representatives of families to whom he owed some of his church preferments: George, earl of March and James, earl of Douglas. Having held appointments at Dunbar and Ancrum, Barry was well acquainted with the area of the Borders. His poem was probably written soon after he became Provost of Bothwell in 1398. It is reproduced by Walter Bower, Abbot of Inchcolm, in his continuation of John of Fordun's *Scotichronicon*. Bower himself wrote an account of the campaign and battle of Otterburn. This is a straightforward, scholarly narrative in Latin prose. But it is late in date—Bower did not begin writing the *Scotichronicon* until about 1440—and it is not an independent account, for the author draws heavily on the *Orygynale Cronykil*.

Turning now to the medieval English sources, it has to be said that none possesses the authority and stature of the *Westminster Chronicle* already mentioned. A useful narrative of the campaign and battle is given by Thomas Walsingham in his *Historia Anglicana*.⁷ This account supplements the information given in *Westminster* regarding English plans and movements. Walsingham was a monk at the abbey of St Albans: the abbey was second only to Westminster as a centre of affairs, and much material of importance must have passed through

Walsingham's hands. Another, but brief, account, also in Latin prose, appears in the *Chronicon* of Henry Knighton, a canon of St Mary's Abbey, Leicester.⁸ It was almost certainly written only a few years before his death, c.1396. Of greater interest, however, is the account given in the *Chronicle* of John Hardyng, written in English verse and first set down some fifty years after the battle of Otterburn was fought. Hardyng's narrative, though short and late in date, is nevertheless important. For one thing, it corroborates the information given in the *Westminster Chronicle*. Moreover, this is the only medieval source for the battle which is written by an individual with first-hand battle experience himself.

Hardyng was born in 1378, and at the age of twelve, only two years after the battle of Otterburn was fought, he entered the household of Sir Henry Percy (Hotspur). He became Hotspur's esquire, and was present at the battle of Shrewsbury in 1403 where his lord was killed. Shortly afterwards he entered the service of Sir Robert Umfraville, lord of Redesdale, and fought with him at the battle of Agincourt in 1415. Clearly Hardyng must have received Sir Henry Percy's own account of the battle of Otterburn as also that of Sir Robert Umfraville, who with his brother Sir Thomas led a flank march carried out by the English during the battle.

The reference to Hardyng leads to a point of some importance in regard to the credibility of the medieval sources. The actual participants in medieval battles were not necessarily literate, and the accounts of these battles have been largely handed down by monks who were certainly not present themselves and who had in fact no personal experience of warfare at all. The same comment is true also of Froissart. Professor Contamine writes:

il ne semble pas que Froissart se soit jamais battu en personne. A-t-il connu d'expérience le poids de l'armure sur le corps? S'est-il jamais exercé au maniement de l'épée ou de la lance? Le courage et la peur ont-ils été pour lui autre chose que des abstractions?¹⁰

In passing it might be said that this lack of experience and dimension is not confined only to the medieval sources for the battle of Otterburn. Just as Hardyng stands out alone among

the medieval writers as a military man with actual experience of war, so also among the modern writers there is really only one who stands out with this important—one might say indispensable—dimension: Lt. Col. A.H. Burne, whose classic study of the battle of Otterburn we shall be looking at in some detail later. And it will also be seen later that even so distinguished a historian as Sir James Ramsay is capable of postulating absurdities when venturing into the sphere of military matters.

How then is it possible to build up a coherent account of the battle of Otterburn on the basis of the evidence which we have in our possession? Lt. Col. Burne describes his own methodology as follows:

My method here is to start with what appear to be undisputed facts, then to place myself in the shoes of each commander in turn, and to ask myself in each case what I would have done. This I call working on Inherent Military Probability. I then compare the resulting action with the existing records in order to see whether it discloses any incompatibility with the accepted facts. If it does not, I then go to the next debatable or obscure point in the battle and repeat the operation.¹¹

Thus Burne's notion of Inherent Military Probability—which he calls IMP for short—provides a key which can be effectively used to cope with the various problems that arise from the omissions, exaggerations, distortions, errors, even deliberate fabrications which may occur in the medieval sources. It is my own firm conviction that Burne has provided by far the most coherent, scholarly and convincing modern account of the battle of Otterburn, and certainly he is the only modern writer who has taken the trouble to examine all the medieval sources in relation to the topography of the Otterburn area.

But of course it really is a question of *tot homines quot sententiae*, and there are indeed many differing ideas expressed about the battle of Otterburn by modern writers. Use of the word 'modern' in this context demands explanation: effectively, anything written on the subject since the beginning of the nineteenth century. This is not just an arbitrary choice: the first recorded attempt to carry the battle of Otterburn away from its

traditional site comes as early as 1812. In February of that year James Ellis, occupant and owner of Otterburn Tower, wrote to Sir Walter Scott as follows:

The place where the Scottish Army was encamped, and where the battle commenced, is tolerably well ascertained, not only by intrenchments still remaining, but by the description given by Froissart, as lately translated by Mr Johnes. It is on the summit of a considerable eminence called Fawdon Hill, belonging to me...and is distant more than a mile from the place called Battle Croft.¹²

In September of the same year Sir Walter Scott and his family stayed overnight at Otterburn Tower and he no doubt heard James Ellis on the same subject at some length. It will be seen later that Fawdon Hill was to be proposed as the site of the battle of Otterburn again, this time by R.H.Walton in 1961. A description of this site and an assessment of its candidature will be given in due course.

There is a further reason why one needs to go back to the nineteenth century in reviewing the work of modern writers relating to the battle of Otterburn. In 1857 came what may justly be described as the standard work on the battle. Robert White's *History of the Battle of Otterburn* is a study of considerable scholarship and a mine of information. It is the most detailed and independent study of the battle which has yet been made. All subsequent writers on the battle of Otterburn have relied to a greater or lesser extent on the work of White, sometimes without acknowledgement. The only conceivable criticism which one can make about this fine work is that because its author lacked any first-hand experience of war there is some lack of military sense in the text.

I turn now to the precise date of the battle of Otterburn. Mercifully the year is not a matter of dispute, but there is some disagreement as to the month and much as to the day. The earliest date I have seen given is 21 July.¹³ The great majority of writers settle for August, but there is a wide choice of day, with the fifth and nineteenth commanding most support. These are the two dates which are to be found in the medieval sources. Bower in the *Scotichronicon* and Hardyng in his *Chronicle* both say that the battle was fought upon St Oswald's Day, i.e. 5 August.¹⁴ Knighton, plainly ignorant of the Northumbrian

saints, gives the date as ‘die Mercurii proximo ante festum sancti Laurentii in vespere’,¹⁵ the evening of Wednesday 5 August. Barry, with his usual prolixity, takes six lines to tell us that the battle was fought on Wednesday 5 August 1388:

Ottirburnense bellum novitate recense:

Augusti mense gens plurima corrui ense...

Quinta dies mensis, fuerat quae Mercurialis,

Agminibus densis mors imperat exitialis.

Annis millenis, centum quater, hinc duodenis

Expertis, plenis miscentur gaudia threnis.¹⁶

On the other hand, Froissart with commendable brevity states that the battle was fought on the nineteenth day of August.¹⁷ The other near-contemporary source, the *Westminster Chronicle*, supplies no date for the battle, but gives the date for the Scottish invasion of England as 12 August. From what is known of the Scottish campaign in England, this date would accord very well with 19 August as that of the battle itself.¹⁸

There is, however, another factor of importance for the determination of the date of the battle of Otterburn. Elsewhere in his account of the battle Froissart writes: ‘The night was farre on, but the mone shone so bryght as and it had ben in a maner daye; it was in the moneth of August and the wether fayre and temperate’.¹⁹ This information is crucial. Froissart’s informants, who participated in the battle, could perhaps have forgotten or mistaken the precise date, but they *must* have remembered it was fought when there was a moon, and told him that. In the year 1388 Easter Day fell on 29 March, and the Paschal Full Moon was 26 March. This gives the 6th as the date of the new moon in August, and the date of the full moon as 20 August.²⁰ From a military point of view such evidence renders 5 August as an unlikely date for the battle. Common sense, no less than military experience, would indicate that Sir Henry Percy, however impetuous, could not have been so foolish as to commit himself and his army to a night battle at such a time: even in bright moonlight an encounter would have to represent a calculated risk. On the other hand one can well imagine the Scots, anxious to avoid discovery on their progress south, slipping into England shortly after the new moon.²¹

As we have seen, Bower and Hardyng both say that the battle of Otterburn was fought on St Oswald's Day, which is in fact 5 August. This assertion need not unduly worry us; it could be a simple mistake for that of St Oswin, which is 20 August. Confusion with regard to the names St Oswald and St Oswin is not uncommon, and it is invariably to the detriment of the latter.

If a choice has to be made between 5 and 19 August, there can be no doubt that militarily speaking the latter is the date to be preferred. It is, however, necessary to enter a *caveat* before leaving the matter of the date. The possibility exists, of course, that *both* the dates given by the medieval sources are incorrect. As Dr Grant shows elsewhere in this volume,²² a council-general was held at Linlithgow on 18 August 1388, where it was proposed by the earl of Fife that since the barony of North Berwick and its castle (Tantallon) were held of him and the tenant was now dead, he should take them into his own hands at this time of open war, until the heir of the late tenant obtained possession by due process of law. The late tenant was in fact James, earl of Douglas, leader of the expedition into Northumberland and Durham. On this evidence he must have already been dead on 18 August; and Fife, of course, must have returned from *his* raid on the English West March by then.

Conversely, there is other documentary evidence to show that Richard II was calling up fighting men to resist an invasion by the Scots as late as mid-August,²³ and on 20 August—the date is significant—he appointed the earl of Northumberland and John Lord Neville of Raby Wardens of the Marches.²⁴ On 22 August the king urged upon his council a punitive expedition against the Scots.²⁵ None of this evidence fits in with a date of 5 August for the battle of Otterburn.

I come now to the subject about which there has been much speculation, and indeed some controversy, especially in recent years, that is, the precise location of the battle fought at Otterburn in 1388. Perhaps even that statement ought to be rephrased, because in fact the latest suggestion put forward as to the location of the battle would take it away from Otterburn altogether, to a site about a mile south of Elsdon. But of that more later. There are altogether five different sites which have been proposed during the last hundred years or so.

The medieval sources are, regrettably, not at all helpful in

respect of supplying topographical information about the battle site. Six do mention Otterburn by name, the *Orygynale Cronykil* and the *Scotichronicon* go a little further by adding 'in Riddisdale' after the name, while Barry refers to the Scots returning 'ad fluvium Rede'.²⁶ Walsingham and Knighton do not mention a place-name at all. Froissart, whose account of the battle is much the longest, gives us a modicum of topographical information, but as always when we read this author we need to exercise the utmost care. Lt. Col. Burne rightly observes that 'the chronicler suffered from an incorrigible habit of embroidering, and even of fabricating the story in order to heighten the effect'. The reliability of Froissart's *Chronicles* has been called in question by historians for well over a century, most recently in the collection of essays edited by J.J.N.Palmer, which examines the historical value of his work in considerable detail. Elsewhere in this volume Dr Grant assesses the value of Froissart's account of the Otterburn war.²⁷

An indication of the events immediately preceding the battle must now be given. After a brisk campaign of destruction and plunder south of the Tyne, the Scottish army under the command of the earl of Douglas appeared outside the walls of Newcastle. Sir Henry Percy and his brother Ralph had already arrived in Newcastle to take command of the troops gathered there. Formidable walls and a powerful garrison precluded any possibility of the Scots taking the town; moreover, although there was some skirmishing outside the gates (during which Douglas is said to have seized Henry Percy's pennant), the English could not be enticed into fighting a battle with the Scots in the open. The latter accordingly withdrew very early in the morning—my belief is, on Tuesday 18 August—making back for Scotland with such booty, mainly cattle, as they had stolen during their expedition into England. Their way brought them first to Ponteland, where they attacked and took the pele tower, and by evening they had reached the valley of the Rede at Otterburn. Here they set up camp for the night, and the following morning they attacked Otterburn Tower, but without success. The exact location of the Scottish camp is of crucial importance in any attempt to reconstruct the subsequent battle on a particular site.

After the failure of the attack upon Otterburn Tower some of the Scottish leaders would have been pleased enough to return

home with the booty already won. Douglas, however, mindful of Percy's vow that he would not allow the Scots to leave England without having retrieved his pennant, successfully persuaded his army to stay, in the hope of defeating the English, whom he rightly guessed would follow as soon as they had discovered the whereabouts of the Scottish army.

Before noon of that same day English scouts galloped into Newcastle with the exciting news that the Scots were encamped at Otterburn. After a hastily convened council of war Sir Henry Percy led an army out of Newcastle in hot pursuit. The die was cast.

It is necessary to think about the routes which the two armies could have taken to reach the valley of the Rede, for again this is an important consideration in determining the site of the battle. The modern road from Newcastle to Jedburgh over the Ottercops follows a different course from that which existed in medieval times. Still sometimes referred to as the 'new line', it was not in fact made until the later eighteenth century. Previously the road north came via Belsay, Cambo, the Steng Cross at Harwood Forest and so downhill to Elsdon. This is the so-called drove road, which from Elsdon continued north-westwards over the wild country of Davyshiel Common to meet the Roman Dere Street at the Golden Pot, south of the Chew Green camps. It might be added that Davyshiel Common is the gathering ground of the Otter Burn, the small river which joins the Rede in Otterburn village (behind the Percy Arms Hotel). Percy's army could have come to Otterburn that way, from the drove road on Davyshiel Common down the Otter Burn; more likely, however, it would have followed the line of the road which still exists between Elsdon and Otterburn, and entered the Rede valley by this less arduous route. The Scottish army, incidentally, could possibly have gained access to and egress from England by way of the drove road north of Elsdon, but this is extremely unlikely: armies even today prefer to march via river valleys and, of course, an ancient trackway existed along the floor of Redesdale. Looking at the map as a Scotsman might, the river Rede points like an index finger to the more fertile lands of the south.

So we come to the various battle sites which have been proposed. The traditional site of the battle of Otterburn, which I am convinced is where the battle did in fact take place, is to be

found a half-mile north-west of Otterburn village, to the north of the modern road (A696) which follows the line of the ancient trackway along the valley of the river Rede. Between the last houses of the village and Otterburn school some 1,000 yards further ahead, lies the open ground known as Battle Croft or Battle Riggs. Near the road, surrounded by a small coppice, stands Percy's Cross, erected in 1777 to mark the site of the battle. The area in question has from time to time yielded up battle relics during ploughing, such as fragments of swords, spears and the iron trappings of horses. Percy's Cross replaces a much earlier monument, though not at precisely the same spot. This was the so-called Battle Stone, which stood about 165 yards north-east of the present cross and further away from the road. The Battle Stone comprised an obelisk some three feet in length, set in a socket or base too large for it, so causing the upright stone to lean over at an oblique angle. It is said to have been placed by the Scots on the spot where the body of their dead leader the earl of Douglas was found after the battle. The story of Percy's Cross is that in 1777, when the new road along Redesdale was being laid down, the then duke of Northumberland, wishing to commemorate his illustrious ancestor, applied to the owner of the land, a certain Henry Ellison of Otterburn Hall, for permission to raise a monument on the field. Ellison, supposing that the duke might later claim the land on which the monument was to stand, refused permission, but said that he would erect a monument himself. This he did at trifling expense to himself by simply taking up the original Battle Stone and using its socket to crown a circular pedestal some five tiers high which was built of rough stone much nearer the road; an upright obelisk was then inserted into the socket. It is said that this obelisk was an old architrave removed from the kitchen fireplace at Otterburn Hall.

If the ground just described is the battlefield of Otterburn, where then was the Scottish camp? Hodgson, White, Robson, Barrett, Addleshaw (with some reservation) and Warner all say that the Scots utilized a prehistoric camp which is situated on a small plateau running along the 700 foot contour on the lower slopes of Blakeman's Law.²⁸ This earthwork, directly above the farm of Greenchesters, is north-west of the traditional site of the battle and Otterburn village, about half a mile from the former. It gives commanding views both of upper Redesdale and Battle

Croft. There are, however, serious objections to this site. For one thing, the earthworks are only slight and would have offered the Scots little protection. Moreover, the camp is small. The notion that it could provide accommodation for the Scottish army and its impedimenta is unacceptable. Yet again, no water is readily accessible, and water would have been necessary not only for men and their horses, but also for the livestock which had been taken during the campaign in England.

Froissart as we have seen is the only medieval writer who supplies us with any topographical information. About the location of the Scottish camp he says: 'They [i.e. the Scots] placed their baggage and servants at the entrance of the marsh on the road to Newcastle, and the cattle they drove into the marsh lands'²⁹ We learn from him later that the first attack which the English made was upon the servants' quarters. Froissart then seems to be telling us that the servants' quarters were in front, the marsh and the fighting men being in the rear. Considering that Douglas had deliberately waited at Otterburn for the English to come and fight him, this is military nonsense. If, however, Froissart's expression 'the entrance of the marsh' is taken in conjunction with the accounts of other medieval writers who, unlike him, refer to an English flanking movement during the battle to attack the Scottish camp in the *rear*, a position for the Scottish camp can well be postulated.

Lt. Col. Burne, in his classic study of the battle of Otterburn, published in 1952, places the Scottish camp astride the road to Scotland with its right flank protected by a distinct bend in the river Rede and its left by wooded hills to the north. The farm of Greenchesters is now situated on this site. With the keen eye of the professional soldier he looks very closely at the topography of Battle Croft a few hundred yards ahead, and his account of the battle successfully harmonizes the specific features of the terrain with what information has come down to us about the battle from various medieval sources. The subsequent accounts of Smurthwaite, Sadler and myself are all directly based on Burne's study, and I believe that this is the nearest anyone will ever get to the reality of what happened at Otterburn in August 1388.

The modern Percy's Cross which marks the traditional site of the battle stands in the centre of a slight ridge, which descends

to the river Rede from the higher ground in the north. This ridge is some 500 yards in advance of the site suggested by Burne for the Scottish camp. Here the ground would be naturally drained, and would offer an excellent location for the Scots to receive the English if they came. It must be remembered that they had deliberately chosen to wait for the English and offer battle; they would want to fight a 'formal' battle in the open and, of course, on ground of their own choosing. What must have made this piece of ground even more attractive to Douglas is that behind the crest of the hill at the north end of the ridge there is a depression which runs along the natural ground contour, and which would afford admirable cover for a movement of troops from the Scottish camp to attack the English right flank if battle were to be joined on the ridge. This deliberate planning on the part of the Scots is well attested by Froissart, who tells us that 'they had well examined the country around, and said among themselves, "Should the English come to beat up our quarters, we will do so and so", and thus settled their plans beforehand'.³⁰

Froissart's narrative of the battle itself is the longest of all the medieval accounts if only because of his immense capacity for embroidering a story. It is, for example, palpably obvious that in the midst of a battle fought at night no one could be in a position to observe or to hear the kind of things Froissart narrates with such gusto, and it is somewhat astonishing that his stories have retained so much credibility. In reality his account of the battle is seriously defective. His greatest error is a failure to mention that a flank attack was carried out by part of the English army after it arrived at Otterburn; such an attack is attested by several of the medieval sources, including the near-contemporary *Westminster Chronicle*.

With some indication of the topography of the ground and the medieval accounts to help us, we are now in a position to reconstruct the course of the battle of Otterburn on the traditional site at Battle Croft.

It has already been seen that Sir Henry Percy left Newcastle with his army very soon after hearing the exciting news that the Scots were encamped at Otterburn. This was early in the afternoon. The English covered the thirty-two miles from Newcastle to Otterburn with remarkable speed, and arrived at Otterburn shortly before dusk. There has been much

speculation as to the feasibility of this performance, but such a march is indeed possible. The current record (held by 29 Commando of the Royal Marines) for a march with full pack over a marathon distance is a little over four and a half hours, that is, about six miles an hour. In any case the troops which Henry Percy and his brother Ralph led out of Newcastle may have all been mounted and only a part of the total force they commanded at Otterburn: it is likely that the Percies were joined *en route* by other contingents, for example by the Umfravilles in Redesdale. What is remarkable is that, having reached Otterburn, Hotspur decided to commit his army into battle without delay. He was perhaps relying on the intelligence which, according to Froissart, he had received in Newcastle from his scouts that the Scottish army at Otterburn was not above 3,000 all told, and thus he anticipated no real difficulty in dealing with it. Froissart does indeed say that the English were three to one at Otterburn. This, however, is very debatable.

The English arrived at Otterburn by way of the road from Elsdon to the valley of the Rede. Before moving forward to meet the Scots, Henry Percy made his dispositions for the battle. He himself and his brother Ralph were to move directly ahead with the main part of the army. The other part of the army was ordered to make a wide detour of the battle area and fall upon the Scottish camp from the flank or rear. This plan is clearly set out in the *Westminster Chronicle* and also by Walter Bower in the *Scotichronicon*. Hardyng actually gives a list of the principal commanders involved:

He [Percy] sent the lorde syr Thomas Umfreuyle,
His brother Robert, & also sir Thomas Grey,
And sir Mawe Redmayn beyond the Scottes that whyle,
To holde them in that they fled not awaye.³¹

The choice of Sir Thomas Umfraville and his brother to lead the flank march was a sensible one, for Sir Thomas was lord of Redesdale and would be particularly knowledgeable of the local terrain. Hardyng as we have seen earlier did of course have close associations with both the Percies and the Umfravilles, and there can be no reason to doubt the accuracy of this information.

The arrival of the English army at Otterburn took the Scots by surprise: Douglas had expected that Percy would come, but not as soon, and still less that he would attack at night. Henry Percy was not known as Hotspur without good reason! A particularly graphic and dramatic account of what followed is given to us in the *Orygynale Cronykil*. It narrates that the Scots were in their camp and about to settle down for the night when a mounted scout galloped in with the news that the English had come: 'He cryid, "Hawis armys spedily."' ³² We are told that in the hurry which ensued the earl of Moray forgot to put his helmet on, and that Douglas had no time to don his armour at all. In haste the Scots rushed from their camp to take post on the ridge where Douglas had determined that the battle should be fought, and Douglas himself made ready to lead the troops assigned to the manoeuvre which would bring them down upon the English right flank.

Battle was joined on the ridge just as darkness fell, and the contest was fierce all along the line. Meanwhile the force led by Sir Thomas Umfraville had carried out its flank march and successfully dealt with the Scots who had been left to guard the camp—as Walsingham says, no doubt with satisfaction, 'irruens super eos in tentoriis constitutes, et magnam stragem faciens de eisdem'. ³³ None of the sources clearly indicates from which direction the English attack upon the camp had come, but it must have been made from the hilly ground to the north of the camp; an attack from the south would have been impossible because of the interposition of the river Rede. Moreover, Thomas de Barry's statement in his poem, 'Angli descensum montis consulte lucrantur', ³⁴ must surely mean that Umfraville had made a wide detour to attack the Scots camp downhill from the north.

Unfortunately Umfraville and his companions-in-arms did not follow up their success. Had they moved out to catch the Scots on the ridge from the rear, the result at Otterburn might have turned out very differently. Hardyng somewhat lamely says that they 'knewe nothyng whetherwarde he [Henry Percy] was gayn'. ³⁵ Admittedly darkness had fallen by this time, but the noise of battle on the ridge should have indicated the general direction for them to take.

It was the manoeuvre executed by Douglas which was to determine the final outcome of the battle. As previously

planned, he and his men 'skirted the side of a mountain which was hard by'³⁶ and then rushed downhill to hit the English right flank. The shock of this irruption was terrible indeed. The English flank crumpled, and the survivors were pushed inextricably into the centre, increasing the confusion in that part of the field. Douglas himself fell to the ground mortally wounded and the battle raged on over his corpse, the Scots unaware that their leader had been killed. With the passage of time an important physical factor became increasingly obvious. The English, it must be remembered, had had a long march before the battle was joined, and they also fought on empty stomachs; by contrast the Scots went into battle both rested and fed. Hotspur's unwise decision to launch an immediate attack placed the English at a grievous disadvantage in another respect. A night battle prevented them from adopting tactics which had given their armies considerable success in many previous battles: they were unable to use the formidable fire-power of their archers. At length, after hours of severe fighting, the English fell back, and dawn found the Scots in undisputed possession of the ridge. Henry Percy and his brother Ralph had both been captured, the latter grievously wounded. But the English showed themselves formidable even in defeat. During the pursuit conducted by the victors after the battle, running fights occurred over a wide area of countryside south and east of Otterburn, in which the Scots sustained considerable losses. Thus they left off the chase, and made their way back to their own country.

Though Battle Croft or Battle Riggs has been traditionally regarded as the site of the battle of Otterburn, several writers have called into question the accuracy of this identification and proposed alternative sites.

I turn first to the study of C.R.B.Barrett. In the century which preceded Lt. Col. Burne's two volumes on English battlefields, only one book was published which could claim to have any comprehensive over-view of the subject; this was C. R.B.Barrett's *Battles and Battlefields in England*.

Like Hodgson, White and Robson, Barrett believed that the prehistoric camp on the plateau about the 700-foot contour on the lower slopes of Blakeman's Law was the site of the Scottish camp. According to him the Scots increased the strength of this camp by an earthwork on the north side where it was weak and

by felled trees which were arranged to form a breastwork. They placed their impedimenta and booty under guard in a camp which they established immediately east of the prehistoric camp, and in the direction from which the English might be expected to approach. Froissart says that after the Scots took their decision to remain at Otterburn and await the English they 'strongly fortified themselves', making huts of trees and branches and placing their baggage and servants at the entrance of the marsh on the road to Newcastle.³⁷

Barrett avers that the battle ensued after the English army moved north-west along the drove road, then crossed the Otter Burn about two miles north of Otterburn village and made straight for the Scottish camp. Hotspur himself led the main attack by veering off to the left, while a detachment of the English army led by Sir Thomas Umfraville carried on the original line as far as Shittlehaugh Pele higher up the slopes of Blakeman's Law before turning south to attack the camp. The first contact was made when Hotspur fell suddenly upon the camp set up by the Scots for impedimenta and booty in advance of their main camp. This was captured after a desperate defence by those guarding it, who were all slaughtered. Meanwhile the Scots in the main camp, alerted to the danger, made ready for action, and Douglas himself led out a force to gain the high ground north of the camp, his object being to work round in close proximity to the fighting and then attack the right flank of the English. This high ground was precisely the area in which Umfraville's detachment was operating, and Barrett declares that the Scots simply missed it by good luck.

The battle was now raging fiercely on the plateau around the prehistoric camp; the English were steadily gaining the upper hand, and the Scots were on the verge of collapse. It was the sudden appearance of Douglas on the right flank of the English which dramatically changed the situation. The English were now pushed back from the plateau, downhill towards Otterburn. By this time Umfraville had taken possession of the Scottish camp. Realizing that the tide of battle had rolled down the hill, he left a guard in the camp and then went off in search of the Percies. His arrival on the English right, however, did very little to restore their fortunes, and they continued to give ground. The fighting was now on the ridge where the modern

Percy's Cross stands. It was here that Douglas was slain, the two Percies were taken prisoner and the general flight of the English began.

There are difficulties with Barrett's reconstruction. Apart from the objections which have already been made with regard to the identification of the prehistoric earthwork on Blakeman's Law as the site of the Scottish camp, it seems unlikely that the Scots would have had the time—or the ability—to fell trees in order to make their defences stronger. But the most serious criticism to be made of the account is that Barrett has the Scottish leader Douglas wheeling in semi-darkness, with a considerable force of men, through three-quarters of a circle the diameter of which is less than 300 yards: it is hard to see how such a manoeuvre could have been carried out.

Another site for the battle is that postulated by Sir James Ramsay in the second volume of his *Genesis of Lancaster* published in 1913. Ramsay places the Scottish camp in the meadows by the river Rede, which denotes his acceptance of Froissart's assertion that the Scots placed their baggage and servants at the entrance of the marsh on the road to Newcastle. The precise location of the camp is marked on his battle map as being across the road from the modern Otterburn Mill, and near the bridge which carries this road over the river Rede. The land adjacent to the river, especially near the confluence of the Rede and the Otter Burn, is low-lying and inclined to be marshy. To the north the site is overlooked by the main road from Elsdon and Newcastle, which descends quite sharply into Otterburn village at this point, down the side of a wooded hill—in effect, the lower slopes of Fawdon Hill.

According to Ramsay this is the road along which the English army approached Otterburn. As it began the descent into the village it discovered the Scottish camp in the meadows by the river down below. Hotspur now made his dispositions for battle. He despatched part of his army to descend upon the Scottish camp from the left and rear. This attack he entrusted to Matthew Redmayne and Robert Ogle.³⁸ Hotspur himself with the main force remained stationary on the road, taking advantage of a slight depression which occurs about half a mile from the village to conceal his movements. He intended presumably to await the outcome of the attack upon the camp, and then to advance with his main force down the road in

order to cut off the retreat of the Scots at the crossing of the Otter Burn, which joins the Rede just south of the village. We are told that Douglas, however, detected Hotspur's manoeuvre, and taking his best men out of the camp, he led them by a circuitous route along the meadows, through the village, past Otterburn Tower and so to the woods above the road on which Hotspur's army still remained stationary, watching the sack of the Scottish camp. Douglas now fell upon the right flank of the English. Ramsay, who follows Wyntoun's narrative closely at this point, tells us that the English were so completely taken by surprise that they were unable to 'knit' their ranks together. This flank attack occurred 'rycht at the swynnys downe-gangyng', and the action which followed went on well into the night.³⁹ Douglas was killed, but eventually the English were routed and the Percies were taken prisoner.

It is, however, unlikely that so experienced a commander as Douglas would have chosen a site for his camp so near the marshy confluence of the Rede and Otter, and completely overlooked by the main road into Otterburn along which the English might well come. Equally unlikely is the suggestion that Hotspur calmly waited in a depression on the main road with the bulk of his army while his subordinates went off to attack the Scottish camp. The road could not possibly have concealed so considerable a force of men, and thus the idea that a large battle could have been fought at this point seems improbable.

Nearly fifty years later R.H.Walton offered another interpretation of the battle, this time with a site on the top of Fawdon Hill/one mile north-east of the village and directly opposite the main entrance to the Otterburn Hall estate.⁴⁰ Walton's account is well illustrated by maps, photographs, and a series of battle-plans. He makes some reference to Bower and Wyntoun, but his narrative is mainly based on what he refers to as the 'long and accurate account' of Jean Froissart. He explains:

I came to the conclusion that the physical features of the battlefield as described in the account [Froissart] were incompatible with a site such as that generally ascribed to the battle on or near the 'Percy Cross'... In the summer of 1961 I began a search for another site more in keeping with Froissart's description. Eventually I was fortunate to

find what I was seeking for on Fawdon Hill about a mile north of the village....

The misconception of the true location of the battle field has been due to a lack of faith in the accuracy of Froissart's descriptive powers and to a pre-conceived idea that the battle was fought on a particular spot.⁴¹

Walton had great confidence in Froissart's military acumen:

Over and over again he shows a grasp of military technique which encourages the reader to rely implicitly on his judgement, not least in his account of the battle of Otterburn.⁴²

Walton argues that the castle which the Scots attacked during the morning after they arrived was not the Otterburn Tower because that does not fit the description in Froissart, who says that it 'sits in a marsh'.⁴³ He offers the suggestion that a castle fitting Froissart's description must be the bastle at Girsonfield, on the lower slopes of Fawdon Hill, which does sit in a marsh and of which fragments remain. Walton also adds that there was no castle on the site of Otterburn Tower before 1415. There is, however, documentary evidence to suggest that it existed as early as 1245, and it may well be the 'capital messuage' referred to in the will of Gilbert de Umfraville in 1308.⁴⁴

Walton's choice of site for the battle depends on his identification of the name *Combure* as Camp Hill, an earlier name of Fawdon Hill. The name *Combure* appears only once in each of the two versions of Froissart which he himself used: an early French printed text (Lenoir, 1505) and the translation of the *Chroniques* into English made by Lord Berners, 1523–5. It is not found, however, in Lettenhove or Mirot, the two authoritative and standard modern texts of the *Chroniques*; clearly *Combure* is nothing other than a mistaken form or reading for Otterburn. The explanation of this textual confusion is not difficult to discover. It is known that Froissart himself displayed no great talent for spelling place-names. The copyists and the early French printers who followed were to produce wonderful mis-spellings of their own, particularly in regard to foreign names. In his translation into English, Berners made no real effort to correct these mis-spellings, nor did he even trouble to correct the work of his own English printers. Thus occurred

‘an elaborate process of disfigurement’ which has led to many textual problems associated with proper names in Froissart.⁴⁶

Fawdon Hill is the western extremity of a range of high ground which lies to the north of the road linking the villages of Otterburn and Elsdon. The eastern end of this range is Colwell Hill, and between the two hills is a large plateau of rough and lonely moorland. The area is close to the drove road running in a north-westerly direction from Elsdon. Both Colwell and Fawdon Hills possess prehistoric camp sites, and it is the one on Fawdon Hill which Walton selects as the position of the Scottish camp in 1388, with the knights and infantrymen in and around the earthwork and the servants in front. It must be said that the earthwork here is much more impressive than that above Greenchesters, but again there is only limited accommodation and the site is conspicuously without water.

Walton’s account of the battle can be quickly told. The English army approached the Scots position by way of the drove road, and in a densely-packed column led by the Percies fell upon the baggage camp of their enemy situated in advance of the main camp. A subsidiary English force led by Robert Umfraville⁴⁷ had meanwhile circled round to carry out a rear attack on the main camp. Once the Percies had fought their way clear of the baggage and the servants they were met by the main strength of the Scottish foot, arriving somewhat piecemeal but in ever-increasing numbers, and the fighting was now severe. It was the sudden arrival of the Scottish leader Douglas on the left flank of the English which, however, turned the tide of battle. He charged uphill to carry out this attack, which caused the English to weaken their centre and right. The flank movement by Douglas was the crucial manoeuvre of the battle and it led, though after further heavy fighting, to the English defeat.

There are, however, difficulties about Walton’s reconstruction of the battle, quite apart from the question of ‘Combure’. In the first place, the positioning of the Scottish baggage camp on the Newcastle side of the main camp, that is, the direction from which the English would be expected to come, seems unlikely. It is hard to believe that Douglas should, as Walton puts it, ‘secure his front’⁴⁸ by exposing his servants, his baggage and his booty to the first onslaught of the enemy. It is also difficult to accept that Douglas would have delivered his flank attack upon the English uphill.

Walton's final plan in the sequence relating to the battle reconstructs the situation at Fawdon Hill in the afternoon of the following day, that is, after the English army had been defeated and had fled the battlefield pursued for a time by the Scots. By now another English force, led by the bishop of Durham (probably John Fordham, not Walter Skirlaw)⁴⁹ had temporarily appeared on the scene. Walton suggests that the Scots had already prepared for such an eventuality. Across the eastern side of the high and lonely piece of ground between Fawdon and Colwell Hills, and running from north to south, there are three very clearly defined, indeed substantial, linear earthworks. Each of these triple dikes is over 600 yards long. Walton argues that these earthworks were built by the Scots in the twelve hours or so after the defeat of the English and in preparation for any further English attack which might ensue. He estimates that after the battle there would have been a sufficient number of Scots and prisoners to cut the 1,800 yards of dike at a ratio of one man for every yard of dike at least. The spades for this enterprise could, he says, have been looted from farmsteads during the Scottish campaign in England. If however, as is argued later, the traditional estimates of the numbers of men involved in the battle are much inflated,⁵⁰ it seems unlikely that such a large-scale project as the digging of these dikes could have been undertaken at this or any other stage in the battle. Walton also claimed that he had identified 'over a hundred single and mass graves' on the site at Fawdon Hill.⁵¹ No tangible evidence in the form of bones, armour or weapons was however discovered in those which he excavated.

Much more recently, C.F. Wesenraft has identified another hill site, Gallow Hill or Gallow Law, as the location of the battle of Otterburn.⁵² This site is not actually in Otterburn at all; it is, in fact to be found about a mile south of the village of Elsdon. In so far as he too places great reliance on Froissart's account, Wesenraft's starting point is similar to that of Walton, and like Walton, he is concerned to elucidate the name *Combure*. As we have seen, Walton identified Combure as Camp Hill, otherwise Fawdon Hill; but Wesenraft identifies it as Cambo, a small village on the road northwards from Belsay. It is the tower at Cambo, says Wesenraft, which the Scots attacked shortly before the battle, not Otterburn Tower, and his subsequent narrative of events hinges upon this identification. Indeed, he

suggests that the error has been partially responsible for much of the confusion regarding the site of the battle. Like Walton, Wesencraft argues that Otterburn Tower was not built until twenty-seven years after the battle, but he does not offer a date for the building of Cambo Tower.

Gallow Hill, or Gallow Law, the site chosen by Wesencraft for the battle, rises to some 840 feet between the old drove road leading from Cambo to Elsdon and the modern Newcastle to Jedburgh road over the Ottercops. On its southern side the Raylees Burn meets the Ravens Cleugh to form a natural amphitheatre discreetly hidden from view. Wesencraft argues that Douglas made his camp on the top of Gallow Hill, and placed his cattle, guarded by grooms, on its lower slopes, in the amphitheatre just described. The English army marching north from Cambo along the drove road saw the light from fires in the camp of the grooms and, veering left from the road, dropped down to attack the camp. They were in the process of doing so when Douglas with his fighting men charged down the slopes of Gallow Hill and fell upon their right flank. Meanwhile the earl of Dunbar had come down to reinforce the camp in the valley. To the left of Douglas a further attack was made on the right of the advancing English column. Wesencraft says that this was led by Menteth (presumably Menteith) though in fact the earldom of Menteith was possessed at this time by Robert Stewart, earl of Fife, third son of Robert II, who was in command of the Scottish army which had entered England via Carlisle.

The reconstruction of the battle which Wesencraft presents is both interesting and attractive. But he relies too heavily on the account of Froissart. Apart from the textual issue of *Combure* already mentioned, this reliance leads him firmly to deny that the English carried out a flank attack on the Scots during the course of the battle, though as we have seen such an attack is attested by several medieval sources. His is the only reconstruction of the battle which fails to incorporate this important feature, and it is the only one which carries the battle away from Otterburn altogether.

One final question remains which perforce needs to be considered in association with the two examined in this paper. It is, simply, how many men were involved in the battle of Otterburn? No precise answer can be given to this question. Froissart says that when the Scots assembled at Jedworth in

August 1388 prior to the invasion of England their combined host numbered 1,200 men-at-arms ('spears') and 40,000 others. The *Westminster Chronicle* and the *Orygynale Cronykil* each give a figure of 30,000 for this united force. Most of it was to invade England by way of Carlisle, and only a small army under the command of the earl of Douglas was to cross the Redeswire and attack Northumberland and Durham. The size of this latter force is given by Froissart as 300 or 400 men-at-arms and 2,000 infantry and archers, all mounted. He later says that the English scouts who rode into Newcastle informed Percy that the Scots army did not consist of more than 3,000 men 'including all sorts'. The English army under Percy's command was put by Froissart at 600 men-at-arms and upwards of 8,000 infantry. He says that during the actual battle the English were three to one. However, the *Orygynale Cronykil* gives nearly 7,000 as the size of the Scottish force and 10,000 as the size of the English. The same figures are given by Bower in the *Scotichronicon*, but this is probably not corroborative evidence as Bower lifted a great deal of material from the former chronicle. Little can be inferred from these various figures except to say that the English and Scottish forces in the battle of Otterburn may have been much more evenly matched than Froissart would have us suppose. And over all of them hangs a big question mark. Population figures for both England and Scotland in the late fourteenth century are impossible to determine with any precision, but it is possible that the entire population of Scotland in 1388 was only about half a million. A combined host of 40,000 at Jedworth would therefore represent a ratio of one in twelve of the whole population of Scotland! Similarly, if Percy's army in Newcastle did in fact number 10,000 men this may well have exceeded the total population of the town at the time. There can be little doubt that *all* the figures given by the medieval writers for the campaign and battle of Otterburn are much inflated.

As to casualty figures, only Froissart gives detailed information: on the English side 1,840 slain either in the battle or during the pursuit afterwards, 1,000 badly wounded and 1,040 taken prisoner; on the Scots side 100 killed and 200 taken prisoner while engaged in the pursuit. He says that this information came to him from Scots who had fought in the battle, which might account for the extraordinary imbalance between the two sets of figures. As always, of course, Froissart's

information must be treated with the utmost caution. In the *Scotiichronicon* we read that the English lost 1,500 killed; then Bower, significantly, adds 'plures etiam ex parte Scotorum occubuerunt'.⁵⁴ The *Westminster Chronicle* states that the English suffered great slaughter, losing 550 or more killed. Knighton says that 1,000 were killed in the battle. The *Orygynale Cronykil*, observing that the combatants 'ware nere all the nycht slayand' then continues:

Sum sayis as thowsande deyd thare;
Sum fyftene hundyr; and sum, mare.⁵⁵

Thomas de Barry, as usual, is more concerned to present a polished couplet than to impart precise information:

Multi sunt caesi, multi sunt carcere capti
Multi sunt laesi, de perstando minus apti.⁵⁶

In a strange kind of way, however, Barry sums up the story of Otterburn more poignantly than any of the other writers. What comes through very clearly is that the battle of Otterburn was no mere border skirmish; the ground about Percy's Cross on that fatal night in 1388 must have been a veritable killing-field.

In 1877, during the restoration of St Cuthbert's Church Elsdon, which in medieval times was the parish church for all Redesdale, the skeletal remains of men, chiefly young and middle-aged, were found under the north wall of the nave, in rows tightly packed together. This part of the church was built about 1400, and the wall had shallow foundations, presumably to avoid disturbance of bodies not yet decomposed. Dr E.C. Robertson, who carried out the work in 1877, estimated that the remains removed from the church during the restoration belonged to about 1,200 individuals all told. He concluded that the remains found under the north wall of the nave 'formed part of the harvest of dead reaped at the battle of Otterburn in 1388'.⁵⁷ Robertson's paper on this somewhat grisly subject was read at Otterburn in July 1881.⁵⁸

Many uncertainties surround the story of the battle fought at Otterburn in August 1388. Maybe these very uncertainties, which in themselves create sparks to light the imagination, have made their own particular contribution to the awe in which through six centuries this celebrated medieval battle has been held.

NOTES

- 1 Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H.T.Riley, RS, 1863–4, ii, p. 176.
- 2 *The Chronicle of Froissart, Translated by John Bouchier, Lord Berners*, ed. W.E. Henley, London, 1902, p. 220.
- 3 *Westminster*, Introduction, p. liv.
- 4 *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F.J.Amours, i, Edinburgh, for the Scottish Text Society, lxiii, 1914, p. xciii, note 2.
- 5 *Chron. Wyntoun*, i, p. 4.
- 6 *Scotichronicon Johannis de Fordun cum Supplementis et Continuatione Walteri Boweri*, ed. W.Goodall, Edinburgh, 1759.
- 7 Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, pp. 175–6. For a discussion of the date of composition of Walsingham's Chronicles, see Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, ii, Ithaca, 1982, pp. 123–6, 142.
- 8 *Chronicon Henrici Knighton*, ed. J.R.Lumby, RS, 1895, ii, pp. 297–8.
- 9 *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, ed. H.F.Ellis, London, 1812.
- 10 P.Contamine, 'Froissart: Art militaire, pratique et conception de la guerre', in *Froissart: Historian*, ed. J.J.N.Palmer, Woodbridge, 1981, pp. 133–4.
- 11 A.H.Burne, *More Battlefields of England*, London, 1952, p. ix.
- 12 Quoted in R.White, *History of the Battle of Otterburn*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1857, p. xv.
- 13 G.Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, trans. from Latin by J.Aikman, Glasgow, 1827, ii, book 9, p. 60.
- 14 *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, p. 405; *Hardyng*, p. 343.
- 15 *Chron. Knighton*, ii, p. 298.
- 16 *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, p. 407.
- 17 Froissart, trans. Lord Berners, p. 231.
- 18 But see the discussion by Dr. Grant, above, pp. 62–3, note 86.
- 19 Froissart, trans. Lord Berners, p. 217.
- 20 White, *History of the Battle of Otterburn*, p. 133.
- 21 But see *Westminster*, p. 346 n. 1, where the editors say: 'The probable date of the battle is 5–6 Aug. (when the moon was new), and, if so, the Monk has misdated the Scottish invasion of England.'
- 22 Above, pp. 62–3, note 86.
- 23 *Foedera*, vii, p. 594.
- 24 *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 95.
- 25 *Westminster*, p. 350.
- 26 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, p. 35; *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, pp. 405, 408.
- 27 Burne, *More Battlefields of England*, p. 130; Palmer, *Froissart: Historian*; Grant, above, pp. 35–6.
- 28 In addition to those cited elsewhere, modern studies of the traditional battle site are: J.Hodgson, *History of Northumberland*, part II, vol. i, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1827; J.Robson, *Border Battles and Battlefields*, Kelso, 1897; C.R.B.Barrett, *Battles and Battlefields in England*, London, 1896; G.W.O.Addleshaw, *The Battle of Otterburn*, Sunderland, 1952; P.Warner, *British Battlefields 2—The North*, Reading, 1972; D.Smurthwaite, *The Ordnance Survey Complete Guide to the*

- Battlefields of Britain*, Exeter, 1984, pp. 82–3; J.Sadler, *Battle for Northumbria*, Morpeth, 1988, pp. 77–84; J.C.Tyson, 'The Battle', in *The Battle of Otterburn, 600th Anniversary 1388–1988*, Newcastle upon Tyne, for the Redesdale Society, 1988, pp. 9–14.
- 29 *Sir John Froissart's Chronicles*, trans. by T.Johnes, London, 1839, ii, p. 366.
- 30 *ibid.*, p. 367.
- 31 *Westminster*, pp. 346–50; *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, p. 405; *Hardyng*, p. 342.
- 32 *Chron. Wyntoun*, in, p. 36.
- 33 Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, ii, p. 176.
- 34 *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, p. 410.
- 35 *Hardyng*, p. 342.
- 36 Froissart, trans. Johnes, p. 367.
- 37 *ibid.*, p. 366.
- 38 Redmayne is the only leader referred to by name in *Westminster*, pp. 346–50; but both Redmayne and Ogle are mentioned in *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, p. 36, and by *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, p. 405.
- 39 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 37–8.
- 40 R.H.Walton, 'The Otterburn story', *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, xxxv, part 3, 1961, pp. 217–55.
- 41 *ibid.*, pp. 217–18
- 42 *ibid.*, p. 222.
- 43 Walton, 'The Otterburn story', p. 231.
- 44 H.Pease, 'Otterburn: the tower...and the lordship or manor of Redesdale', AA, 3rd series, xxi, 1924, pp. 121–31.
- 45 The relevant editions are Lettenhove, vol. xiii, and vol. xv of the edition published for the Société de l'Histoire de France, ed. A.Mirot, Paris, 1975.
- 46 Froissart, trans. Lord Berners, p. xxxiii.
- 47 Robert Umfraville was the younger brother of Thomas. Both are mentioned as participants in the attack upon the Scottish camp, and the elder brother is generally assumed to have led the attack. See above, pp. 70 and 80.
- 48 Walton, 'The Otterburn story', p. 235.
- 49 See below, pp. 128–9.
- 50 See above, p. 90.
- 51 Walton, 'The Otterburn story', p. 217.
- 52 C.F.Wesencraft, *The Battle of Otterburn 19th August 1388*, Doncaster, 1988, p. 56.
- 53 *Westminster*, p. 346; *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, p. 34; Froissart, trans. Johnes, p. 367.
- 54 *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, p. 406.
- 55 *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, p. 38; *Westminster*, p. 348; *Chron. Knighton*, ii, p. 298.
- 56 *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, p. 413.
- 57 E.C.Robertson, 'Elsdon, the church', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne*, iii, no. 30, 1888, p. 315.
- 58 E.C.Robertson, 'On the skeletons exhumed at Elsdon, and their probable connection with the Battle of Otterburn', *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, ix, part 3, 1882, pp. 506–99.

4

THE BALLAD AND THE SOURCE

Some literary reflections on
The Battle of Otterburn

James Reed

Border ballads spring from a school of eloquence that was for centuries misread, misunderstood, patronized and rejected by educated men and women, almost all of whom were alien to the language and manners of the Anglo-Scottish border. However deeply affected by the sentiments (and it is clear that in this respect the ballads made their mark), men of letters on both sides of the border choked on verses they considered obscure in vocabulary, uninteresting in subject-matter and primitive in style. Even Sir Philip Sidney, in his famous passage on *Chevy Chase*, qualifies his praise when he writes:

Certainly, I must confess my own barbarousness: I never heard the olde song of *Percy* and *Duglas* that I found not my heart mooued more then with a trumpet; and yet it is sung but by some blinde Crouder, with no rougher voyce then rude style; which being so euill apparelled in the dust and cobwebbes of that unciuill age, what would it worke trymmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?¹

The cautionary 'and yet' is perhaps stronger than a casual reading may register; Shakespeare's Cleopatra accords the words their true force when she responds fearfully to the messenger from Rome:

O—I do not like 'but yet', it does allay
The good precedence, fie upon 'but yet'.

Sidney, of course, is hearing the ballad not simply through the ear of a soldier but through that of a cultivated literary courtier

in an age which was often more appreciative of style than of content, a characteristic which exasperated Hamlet's mother: 'More matter with less art' she reproves Polonius.

These references are not idle flourishes. To appreciate the true nature of ballads as part of the literature of folk history, we must try to understand them literally as well as metaphorically on their own ground, a place denied them in literary annals as long as terms like 'provincial', 'regional', 'local' remained persistently pejorative. For some readers they still are. Such an aberration of judgement will repay consideration as a prelude to discussion of the ballad itself. Shakespeare fell victim to precisely the kind of literary taste against which the early ballad collectors had to contend. John Dryden, for instance, along with other Restoration dramatists, felt it necessary to 'improve' even 'the divine Shakespeare'. In the preface to his revision of *Troilus and Cressida* (1679) he defended this practice:

It must be allowed to the present age that the tongue in general is so much refined since Shakespeare's time, that many of his words, and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand, some are ungrammatical, others coarse; and his whole style is so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure.

A few years earlier, in December 1661, John Evelyn wrote in his diary, 'I saw *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* played; but now the old plays begin to disgust this refined age, since his Majesty's being so long abroad.'²

Shakespeare was not rescued from his Restoration refiners, William Davenant and Nahum Tate prominent among them, or from eighteenth-century 'restorers' like Pope and Theobald until well into the nineteenth century, a pattern of literary taste which makes the work of the early ballad collectors even more admirable. Almost a century after Dryden's comment, Joseph Addison quotes Sidney with approval, but is guarded in his own admiration of a later version of *Chevy Chase* (Child, 162 B):³

Earl Piercy's Lamentation over his enemy is generous, beautiful and passionate; I must only caution the reader not to let the simplicity of the Stile, which one may well

pardon in so old a Poet, prejudice him against the Greatness of the Thought.⁴

In his second essay on the ballad he is even more generous:

Had this old song been filled with Epigrammatical Turns and Points of Wit, it might perhaps have pleased the wrong Taste of some Readers; but it would never have become the delight of the Common People, nor have warmed the heart of Sir *Philip Sidney* like the sound of a trumpet; it is only Nature that can have this Effect, and please those Tastes which are the most unprejudiced or the most refined. I must however beg leave to dissent from so great an authority as that of Sir *Philip Sidney*, in the Judgement which he has passed as to the rude Stile and evil Apparel of this Antiquated Song; for there are several Parts in it where not only the Thought but the Language is majestick, and the Numbers sonorous; at least, the Apparel is much more *gorgeous* than many of the Poets made use of in Queen Elizabeth's time.⁵

They are not, of course, writing of the same text, but it is worth noticing that where Sidney writes of listening to a minstrel, Addison writes of reading a poet, and even feels it necessary to excuse his own use of Latin in quotations on the grounds that his own judgement 'would have looked too singular on such a Subject, had I not supported it by the Practice and Authority of Virgil'.⁶ Recognition of a kind there may be here, but the complete acceptance of folk literature with understanding on its own terms is still some way off.

It was this disappearance of folk song into literature that made the work of the eighteenth-century collectors so vital. These pioneers, Thomas Percy (1729–1811), David Herd (1732–1810), and Joseph Ritson (1752–1803) began a movement in ballad collection whose value has been both confirmed and enhanced by their successors. Herd and Ritson understood the ballad vocabulary and the nature of its rhetoric; they remained relatively undisturbed by its remoteness from fashionable poetic diction. Percy, who did not, was diffident in offering his material to the public, and edited or 'improved' it as he thought appropriate, bringing down upon himself as a result the wrath of the vitriolic Ritson. In fairness to Percy, however, it must be

said that the Scottish correspondents to whom he appealed for help were equally tempted to beautify what they found. In a letter to Sir David Dalrymple, Percy observes that certain ballads 'rec'd some beauties in passing thro' your hands—This was not only an allowable freedom (if they did) but absolutely necessary to render them worth attention.... You will hence infer that I take the same liberty myself.'⁷

Nevertheless, one sometimes catches a hint of Percy's excitement in discovery: at the end of 1762 he writes to Dalrymple: 'in the Cotton Library (British Museum) I found a very ancient *Song on the battle of Otterbourne*, much more true to History than the ballad of Chevy Chace'.⁸ Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs and other Pieces of our Earlier Poets* is a very uneven collection, particularly in the light of modern ballad research; nor is it entirely made up of folk songs, containing as it does lyrics by Marlowe, Raleigh and Shakespeare. Perhaps it is on this account that Percy has rarely received the credit he deserves either for the discovery of this ballad or for his perception of its quality. Nor, as I hope to show, has the ballad been accorded the attention it merits. The movement towards ballad respectability was furthered in very different ways by the poetry of Allan Ramsay (1686–1758), Robert Fergusson (1750–74), Robert Burns (1759–96), and James Hogg (1770–1835), but the dominant pattern was set for almost a century by the publication of Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802, 1803). Since that time Border ballads have been more fully understood and appreciated as regional songs, and accepted, aside from their value as entertainment, as one kind of record of the people's past, rather than as crude poems unworthy of serious attention.

Scott was no musician; in his *Journal* for 30 July 1827 he writes:

I have often wondered whether I have a taste for music or no. My ear appears to me as dull as my voice is incapable of musical expression, and yet I feel the utmost pleasure in any such music as I can comprehend, learned pieces always excepted.

But he was an historian; what he contributed importantly (and sometimes, like a true minstrel, in partisan fashion), was an

appreciation of the essential element of locality in ballads. It was Scott who first drew serious attention to the relevance in these songs of place-names, family and to-names, history and tradition within a specific region with its own language, laws and way of life:

Tradition depends upon locality. The scene of a celebrated battle, the ruins of an ancient tower, the 'historic stone' over the grave of a hero, the hill and valley inhabited of old by a particular tribe, remind posterity of events which are sometimes recorded in their very names.¹⁰

The year after he wrote these words, 1805, he was taken to task by Francis Jeffrey reviewing *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*:

We really cannot so far sympathise with the local partialities of the author as to feel any glow of patriotism or ancient virtue in hearing of the Todrig or Johnston clans, or of Elliots, Armstrongs, and Tinlins; still less can we relish the introduction of Black John of Athelstane, Whitslade the Hawk, Arthur-fire-the-Braes, Red Roland Forster, or any other of those worthies who

Sought the beeves that made their broth
In Scotland and in England both

into a poem which has any pretensions to seriousness or dignity. The ancient metrical romance might have admitted those homely personalities; but the present age will not endure them; and Mr Scott must either sacrifice his Border prejudices, or offend all his readers in the other parts of the empire.¹¹

But these are the very features amid which battle, reif, love, revenge and revenance emerge to distinguish Border ballads from most other British folk songs, though David Buchan in *The Ballad and the Folk*¹² has restored some of them to their Aberdeenshire origins.

There can be no doubt, however, about the relevance and vitality of places and names in *The Battle of Otterburn*, and I propose to discuss now the only substantial version we have of it (that is, Child 161A), setting aside speculation about two other ballads on a similar theme, *The Hunting of the Cheviot*

which survives in a late-sixteenth-century manuscript, and the vulgarized reworking of its narrative as a seventeenth-century broadside, *Chevy Chase* (1624). It is to the first of these that Sidney's comments refer, Addison's to the second (Child, 162A and B). These two tell a story of Percy and Douglas engaged in a territorial hunting dispute, an occasion, however likely, neither historically recorded nor directly relevant to this discussion.

Historical or not, however, *Chevy Chase* remains the ballad which caught popular imagination in both literature and art. For almost three centuries after Sidney alludes to it, the ballad turns up in a variety of contexts. Sidney's admiration is followed by Ben Jonson's claim (according to Addison) that 'he had rather been the Author of it than of all his Works'. It is one of the popular performances of the milkmaid in Isaak Walton's *Compleat Angler* (1653), and Henry Compton, Bishop of London 1675–1713 and a former soldier, commissioned a minor poet, Henry Bold, to make a Latin translation¹³. It opens:

God prosper long our noble king	Vivat rex noster obilis
Our lives and safetyes all!	Omnis in tuto sit,
A woefull hunting once there did	Venatus olim flebilis
In Chevy Chase befall	Chevinus luco fit

and after sixty-four stanzas concludes:

God save our king, and blesse this	Sit Rex et Grex beatulus
land with plentye, ioy and peace,	Pace, et Copia,
And grant henceforth that foule	Ac absit a magnatibus
debate twixt noble men may cease	Malevolentia

In the 1720s Daniel Defoe recorded a journey through Northumberland:

We had the Cheviot Hills so plain in view, that we could not but enquire of the good old women every where whether they had heard of the fight at Chevy Chase. They not only told us they had heard of it, but had all the account of it at their fingers' end; and, taking a guide at Woller to show us the road, he pointed out distinctly to us the very spot where the engagement was, here, he said, Earl

Percy was killed, and there Earl Douglas, here Sir William Withington fought upon his stumps, here the Englishmen that were slain were buried, and there the Scots.¹⁴

The traveller's closeness to Cheviot appears to have led him into confusion with the battle of Homildon Hill, just outside Wooler, fought between Archibald Douglas and Henry Percy in September 1402. Neither leader was killed, but the victorious Percy took Douglas prisoner. The good old women of Wooler were perhaps less confused than opportunist.

In the nineteenth century, the theme becomes a popular subject for the painter: Edward Bird, in 1811, produced *The Field of Chevy Chase after the Battle*; in 1868 William Bell Scott decorated the upper storey of the central hall at Wallington with scenes from the conflict; while Sir Edwin Landseer saw the occasion mainly as a hunt, and as an excuse for representing horses, deer and dogs. Most curious of all is the Chevy Chase Sideboard made by a Newcastle woodcarver, Gerrard Robinson (1834–91); a vast piece of furniture twelve feet wide, ten feet high and nearly five feet deep. It represents the story of the fight in six deeply-cut panels, and is now in the lounge of the Grosvenor Hotel, Shaftesbury. I have found no references to *Chevy Chase* in the twentieth century beyond the name of an American comedian.

The case of *The Battle of Otterburn* (Child 161A and C) is quite different. After Percy's *Reliques* of 1765, with the exception of *John Bell's Rhymes of Northern Bards* (1812), where both versions of *Otterburn* are included as well as *Chevy Chase* and *The Hunting of the Cheviot*, the appearance of the sixteenth-century text in popular ballad collections is surprisingly intermittent before Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's *Oxford Book of Ballads* (1910). Of the two existing versions, the later was cobbled together by Scott and James Hogg from a version which originally appeared in David Herd's *Scottish Songs* of 1776, together with verses collected by Hogg in Etrick Forest from 'a crazy old man and a woman deranged in her mind'. Both men had a hand in the refining: 'Sure', Hogg wrote, 'no man will like an old song the worse of being somewhat harmonious.'¹⁵ This is the text James Kinsley chose for his 1969 revision of *The Oxford Book of Ballads*.

The earlier of the two, my subject here, has survived in a manuscript dated about 1550 by Child, though given slightly

earlier provenance, still in the sixteenth century, by more recent research.¹⁶ It clearly presents an English view of the conflict.

I originally called this paper 'Heroism and the popular imagination', and this remains one of my themes; but the present title, 'The ballad and the source', is more representative of my purpose; it will no doubt be recognized as a theft from the novel by Rosamond Lehmann, and its appropriateness concerns the way in which historical 'truth' and popular fiction become interwoven. This novel is based on

a young girl's romantic conception ('the ballad') of an older woman and the contrasting, rather grim truth ('the source') gradually revealed, about the older woman's life and character. The sour facts are like the raid or killing, hateful in themselves, which in later years the balladist will turn into an heroic tale. Miss Lehmann rightly insists that ballad as well as source has its own validity; literary 'realism' which leaves out entirely the noble fantasies we weave around other people, and the unreasonably high expectations we base on our fantasies impoverishes the sense of life.¹⁷

With this in our minds, let us look at the English ballad of *The Battle of Otterburn* to see what the folk made of history, and how the making achieves literary quality in a broad sense not available to the cultivated metropolitan tastes of men of letters before the more robust mind of Sir Walter Scott entirely changed the course of certain forms of verse and prose over the European literary map.

Three major features of this ballad call for comment:

- a) the use of locality
- b) structure and style
- c) hero and minstrel

It is clear throughout the ballad that we are *listening* to a reciter or minstrel, not *reading* a scribe; on some fifteen occasions the recurrent personal intrusions create an individual presence, an awareness of life in the narrative of a kind not commonly present in literary compositions; for example:

- 8 I tell you withowtten drede (doubt)
 17 For soth as I yowe saye
 18 For soth withowghten naye
 20 A wache I dare well saye (sentinel)

One such example, in stanza 35, 'The cronykle wyll not layne' (deceive), has frequently been taken to be the balladist acknowledging his authority. This seems to me to be unlikely. We have no reason to suppose that the singer was literate, or that he was interested in written history in the way we are. It is more a remark of the kind, 'It must be true; it's in the papers', made whether the speaker has read the papers or not.

The minstrel or common folk presence is felt too as early as the second stanza with the resigned, head-shaking line: 'The grete wolde ever to-gether ryde', and as late as the last stanza, where the singer exhorts his audience to pray for the soul of Percy, captured and ransomed in the ballad but apparently dead (that is, at Shrewsbury, 1403) by the time of this performance.

As I have suggested, the establishment of locality is a factor too often lightly dismissed in ballad discussion. We have already seen how Defoe got it wrong, confusing ballads, places and personalities. There is no chance of this in our case. *The Battle of Otterburn* is not unique, but it is exceptional in the precision of place in the first eight stanzas. I used earlier what might be seen as a very risky phrase, 'the popular imagination', as if such a nebulous folk concept really had meaning. I am clear that this can apply only to a specific regional folk, a small group whose members share a common understanding and experience of local affairs:

all oral tradition is necessarily regional or group lore, a generalisation too often overlooked. There is never any one folk from the point of view of folklore, but indeed many folk groups, as many as there are regional cultures or occupations or racial groups within a region.¹⁸

In a more conventional literary context, T.S.Eliot has expressed the same thought:

What I mean by tradition involves all those habitual actions, habits, and customs, from the most significant religious rite to our conventional way of greeting a stranger, which represent the blood kinship of 'the same people living in the same place'.¹⁹

Place names are a common, indeed an essential element of the Riding ballads, usually closely associated with personal and family names, kinship and allegiances. One can plan an interesting tour of the Borders through ballad heroes such as Jamie Telfer, Kinmont Willie, Jock o' the Side, Hobie Noble, where incursion, affray and Wardens' Courts take place in areas identified by named pele towers, hills and fords. In *The Battle of Otterburn* the occurrence of local names has not quite the same bearing, but before we reach those, let us look for a moment at the way the ballad begins.

The first stanza establishes the time of year—Lammas tide (August)—a time not only for northern farmers to get in their hay but a traditional raiding period. Sir Robert Carey (1560–1630), Warden of the West March in the 1590s, recorded that border thieves

will never lightly steale hard before Lammas [August 1]
for feare of the assises, but being once past, they returne to
their former trade: and unless in such years as they cannot
ride upon the wastes by reason of stormes and snowes,
the last moneths in the yeare are theyr cheife time of
stealing: for then are the nights longest, theyr horse hard
at meate, and will ride best, cattell strong and will drive
furthest.²⁰

The time of the battle consequently allows the balladist to introduce his account of a historical incident in the manner of a Riding ballad. Douglas and his men come into England 'to take a praye' just as in the ballad of *Jamie Telfer of the Fair Dodhead*:

It fell about the Martinmas tide (November 11)
When our border steeds get corn and hay
The captain of Bewcastle hath bound him to ryde
And he's ower to Tividale to drive a prey.

According to Froissart, the Scottish force divided in the forest of Jedburgh, the main body advancing west through Carlisle. For James Douglas and his men, the most obvious route south from Jedburgh to Newcastle would resemble the one we use today: over Carter Bar and down Redesdale. In both English and Scottish ballad accounts the Scots laid waste Northumberland on the way, quite contrary to Froissart who writes that they

rode a great pace under covert, without doying of any pyllage by the waye, or assautyng of any castell, towre, or house, but so came into the lord Percyes land and passed the river of Tyne without any let.²¹

Only then did they resort to fire and sword.

So the ballad transforms this swift and secret progress into a devastating invasion: the 'cronykle' may not lie, but the balladist concerned more with drama than with history makes free with the record.

The route described in the third stanza by Ottercops Moss, Rothley Crag and Greenleighton, not so exactly noticed either in Froissart, Knighton, Wyntoun, The Westminster Chronicler, or in the other ballads, appears as a vivid localizing prelude to the action proper and supports the possibility of invention by a local minstrel for his own bardic purposes. Some four miles south of Rothley Crag lies the hamlet of Scots Gap, a name adding to the likelihood that the Douglas force was following a traditional route south. In the ballad, it is only after laying waste the county that one of the Scots rather belatedly suggests a secret advance on Newcastle. Such an operation, involving the harrying of Bamburghshire, is not only inconsistent with the historical record but also topographically improbable. Froissart returned through Northumberland in 1365 after a six months' visit to Scotland where he was for a time the guest of the Douglas family. He describes the country much as it must have appeared twenty-three years later in 1388:

a savage and wylde cuntry, full of desartis and mountaignes, and a ryght pore cuntry of every thyng, saving of beastis; throughe the whiche there ronnych a ryver ful of flynt and great stones, called the water of Tyne.²²

Douglas and his men would have had to traverse the very inhospitable tract of Cheviot country which separates by some thirty miles Redesdale from the gentler land between Wooler and Bamburgh on the east coast; an exhausting and unnecessary deviation but, at the same time, a diversion which, unexamined, has a brave resonance in the ballad.

Similarly, Percy is introduced in terms of locality, not as an

Englishman but as a Borderer, the identification pinned into place by the name of Berwick:

- 8 Syr Henry Perssy laye at the New Castell,
 I tell yow withowtten drede; (doubt)
 He had byn a march-man all hys dayes,
 And kepte Barwyke vpon Twede.

From 1384 until 1388 Percy was Warden of the East March and Keeper of Berwick. In April 1388 he undertook to keep the East March and Berwick for three years from June at £12,000 a year to be reduced to £3,000 during peace. By July 1389 he is being called 'late warden'.²³

The first eight stanzas act as Prologue, establishing the protagonists in place and season. The style is unadorned and direct, eschewing the rhetoric of romanticism and making very sparing use of epithets which, when they do appear, are in traditional, conventional phrase like 'the dowghtye Douglas' of the opening stanza.

The next phase, opening the direct conflict between Percy and Douglas, begins with their dialogue over the walls of a besieged Newcastle and the challenge (stanzas 9–17) in which the battle ground is offered with handsome courtesy by Percy. He chooses Otterburn, recommending it like a travel agent in terms of its comfort, natural beauty and hunting opportunities:

- 14 The roo full rekeles ther sche rinnes (roe)
 To make the game and glee;
 The fawken and the fesaunt both,
 Among the holtes on hye.
- 15 'Ther mast thow haue thy welth at wyll,
 Well looged ther mast be;
 Yt schall not be long or I com the tyll',
 Sayd Syr Harry Perssye.

Douglas agrees, and the promised meeting is pledged over 'a pype of wyne' at Percy's invitation. (A similar exchange but without the drinking occurs in the Scottish version.)

It is a curious passage, and again suggests to me 'the ballad' rather than 'the source'; that is to say, a minstrel's imaginative reconstruction of a meeting of aristocratic antagonists,

chivalrously conducted by heroes but in the telling engaging the listeners' sympathies with Percy.

The second stage of the action continues from stanza 18 with Douglas leading his men north to Otterburn and preparing there for the coming encounter. (Unlike Froissart, the ballad gives no details of this journey, not even mentioning the sacking of Ponteland tower and town.)

The Newcastle dialogue of the two leaders in the battle is unhistorical and, again favouring Percy, omits the incident of Douglas winning Percy's pennant in combat and challenging him to come and get it, fully detailed in Froissart. (Percy's defeat, without mention of the pennant, is given in Scott's version.)

From the point of the meeting in Newcastle, the focus shifts from locality and movement to character and action, and to understand the uniqueness of this ballad we need to examine with some care the manner in which the two commanders are presented.

Child writes of 'this transcendently heroic ballad' (III, 293), and it is worth recalling that it was the Virgilian heroic nature of the theme of *Chevy Chase* that drew Addison's praise. What, one might first ask, is a ballad hero? Has he definable characteristics, and have Percy and Douglas qualities of spirit and conduct which link them with such borderers of ballad renown as Johnie Armstrong, Kinmont Willie, Hobie Noble, Jock o' the Side, and other folk heroes?

Traditionally, northern European heroic qualities tend to be balanced between the virtuous and the violent; they are clearly manifested for example in the Icelandic sagas. On the one hand the hero is revered for his courage, generosity, strength of purpose, intelligence; on the other for his vengefulness, ruthlessness and cunning. The two sides are bonded by the sacred duty of hospitality. Of *Njal's Saga*, for example, Magnus Magnusson remarks:

The author could also use the known social fabric to create subtleties of behaviour which we might overlook. Formal hospitality was an integral part of this social structure, and the occasional breaches of the etiquette of giving and accepting hospitality had enormous significance. It is fitting that *Njal's Saga* should end with the formal test of

Flosi's character through his capacity for hospitality, when his enemy, Kari, deliberately goes to his house for shelter.²⁴

The custom is touchingly expressed by Scott in *The Lady of the Lake* (1810); when James Fitz-James (an alias of the king) asks for help from his enemy, Roderick Dhu, the highlander replies:

It rests with me to wind my horn,—
 Thou art with numbers overborne;
 It rests with me here, brand to brand,
 Worn as thou art, to bid thee stand:
 But not for clan, nor kindred's cause
 Will I depart from honour's laws;
 To assail a wearied man were shame,
 And stranger is a holy name;
 Guidance, and rest, and food, and fire,
 In vain he never must require. (Canto Fourth)

The matter is taken up by an admiring Froissart as he concludes his account of the meeting at Newcastle, before he goes on to the record of the battle:

I, auctor of this boke, in my youthe had rydden nygh over all the realme of Scotlande, and I was as than a fyftene dayes in the house of erle Wyllyam Duglas, father to the same erle James, of whome I spake of nowe, in a castell a fyve leages fro Edenborow, in the countrey of Alquest [Dalkeith]; the same tyme I sawe there this erle James, a fayre yonge chylde, and a suster of his, called the lady Blaunche. And I was enfourmed by bothe these parties how this batayle was as sore a batayle fought as lyghtly hath been hard of before of such a nombre, and I beleve it well. For Englysshmen on the one partye and Scottes on the other party are good men of warre: for whan they mete there is a harde fight without sparynge; there is no hoo bytwene them as longe as speares, swordes, axes or dagers wyll endure, but lay on eche upon other. And whan they be well beaten, and that the one part hath obtayned the victory, they than glorifye so in their dedes of armes and are so joyfull, that suche as be taken, they shall be raunsomed or they go out of the felde, so that

shortely eche of them is so contente with other, that at their departynge curtoysly they wyll saye, God thanke you. But in fyghtynge one with another there is no playe nor sparynge; and this is trewe, and that shall well apere by this sayd rencounter, for it was as valiantly foughten as coulde be devysed, as ye shall here.²⁵

Such chivalry may occasion references to the Christian faith;

34 Thus Syr Hary Perssye toke the fylde,
 For soth as I yow saye:
 Jhesu Cryste in hevyn on hyght
 Dyd helpe hym well that daye

in this instance demonstrating the partiality of the minstrel, since all Christian associations are made with Percy, not with Douglas. But these phrases are little more than conventional interpolations and appear hardly at all in the Riding ballads, where the stress remains largely on physical courage and cunning, with admiration for the reiver and for the little man's successful defiance of power and of the establishment. Kinmont Willie, betrayed by authority into captivity, is cheerfully rescued:

37 Then the red Rowan has hente him up,
 The starkest men in Teviotdale:
 'Abide, abide now Red Rowan,
 Till of my Lord Scroope I take farewell.

38 'Farewell, farewell, my gude Lord Scroope!
 My gude Lord Scroope, farewell!' he cried;
 'T'll pay you for my lodging-maill
 When first we meet on the border-side.'

39 Then shoulder high, with shout and cry,
 We bore him down the ladder lang;
 At every stride Red Rowan made,
 I wot the Kinmont's aims playd clang.

40 'O mony a time,' quo Kinmont Willie,
 'I have ridden horse baith wild and wood;
 But a rougher beast than Red Rowan
 I ween my legs have neer bestrode.

- 41 'And mony a time,' quo Kinmont Willie,
 'I've pricked a horse out oure the furs;
 But since the day I backed a steed
 I never wore sic cumbrouss purs.'

Similarly, Dick o' the Cow is the shrewd simpleton who outwits both enemies (the notorious Armstrongs) and masters, keeping craftily just within the law.

In *The Battle of Otterburn*, however, the heroes *are* the establishment, and though the opening, where

- 1 Yt fell abowght the Lamasse tyde,
 When husbondes wynnes ther haye,
 The dowghtye Dowglasse bowyned hym to ryde,
 In Ynglond to take a praye.

has all the marks of a Riding ballad, the conduct of the central figures is heroic in a very different way. In the first place, the agreement to meet at Otterburn and fight there (stanzas 13–17) is conducted with some regard to the hospitality of enemies I have outlined, with Percy's recommendation of Otterburn as a congenial spot, and his ritual offering of wine. A brief interlude begins at stanza 36, just before the battle is joined, when a messenger arrives announcing that Percy's father and the baron of Greystoke are approaching with reinforcements; Percy rejects the offer of help as representing a stain on his honour.²⁶ After the exchange with this messenger, the third phase begins; Percy, having declared that the issue is entirely a matter between him and Douglas, bids the archers shoot; in fact they took no part in the historical battle because it was dark.

The battle sequence itself is simply but interestingly structured (stanzas 43–66). After Percy's exhortation to his minstrels to play heartily (and perhaps, as oral historians, to keep a mental record of the event), and to his men to make the sign of the cross, alternating verses describe the Douglas and the Percy coats of arms, one side calls upon St Andrew, the other upon St George, and then the fighting begins. In stanza 50 the two leaders meet in single combat: this forms the true climax of the ballad action, and here the narrative style rises suddenly to the level of literary imagery:

51 Tyll the bloode from ther bassonnettes ranne
 As the roke doth in the rayne. (vapour)

Apart from an occasional conventional epithet and the mildly lyrical description of Otterburn in stanzas 14–15, this is the only elaboration of a literary nature in the ballad; its uniqueness points up the simplicity of the pervading and characteristic unadorned style. Percy kills Douglas, and the partisan balladist goes on to give victory to the English (again contradicting ‘the cronykle’), with a roll of the dead on either side; a list to which Addison took exception: ‘The familiar sound of these names destroys the majesty of the description’, he wrote.²⁷ Some grossly distorted statistics demonstrate the valour of Percy’s men; their leader is taken prisoner and ransomed.

The ballad now modulates to a dying fall; after the battlecries and the bloodshed; after the last roll-call and the departure of the survivors, daybreak:

67 Then on the morne they mayde them beerys
 Of byrch and haysell graye;
 Many a wydowe, wyth wepyng teyres,
 Ther makes they fette awaye.

Froissart, as we have seen, has little leisure for grief, but the balladist, in a single evocative stanza, remembers it in terms which echo closely another Border song of violent bereavement and sorrow, *The Lament of the Border Widow*, whose husband has been murdered by the king:

He slew my knight, to me sae dear;
 He slew my knight and poin’d his gear;
 My servants all for life did flee
 And left me in extremitie.

I sew’d his sheet, making my mane;
 I watch’d his corpse, myself alane;
 I watch’d his body night and day;
 No living creature came that way.

I took his body on my back,
 And whiles I gaed, and whiles I sate;
 I digg’d a grave and laid him in,
 And happ’d him with the sod sae green...

We may remember too a moving passage in Chapter XV of Scott's *Waverley*, where the young Rose Bradwardine describes the aftermath of a Highland raid:

Three of the highlanders were killed, and they brought them in wrapped in their plaids, and laid them on the stone floor of the hall; and next morning, their wives and daughters came, clapping their hands and crying the coronach, and shrieking, and carried away the dead bodies, with the pipes playing before them. I could not sleep for six weeks without starting and thinking I heard these terrible cries, and saw the bodies lying on the steps, all stiff and swathed up in their bloody tartans.

(There is, indeed, much of 'the ballad and the source' in this novel too.)

The tale of Otterburn ends, untypically for a Border ballad but consistently with the tone of this one, with the singer's prayer for Percy's soul.

In terms of form, it is the battle narrative which provides the structure, a simple movement in roughly six stages from the prelude which establishes the theme in terms of character, place and motivation, followed by (a) the Newcastle meeting of Douglas and Percy; (b) the Scots' preparations at Otterburn; (c) Percy's arrival and the renewal of the challenge; (d) Percy's refusal of help from his father; (e) the battle; (f) the aftermath.

Throughout, the tone is consistent, a piece of fictional reportage favouring the English, respecting the Scots. The style too is homogeneous, lacking those revealing images that betray a literary, 'improving' hand at work. One might draw from the eclectic Scottish ballad, for example, Douglas's most memorable lines:

19 'But I have dream'd a dreary dream
 Beyond the Isle of Skye;
 I saw a dead man win a fight,
 And I think that man was I.'

However rich and evocative, such language breathes a literary rather than a folk eloquence, calling to mind the pen of a Coleridge rather than the voice of an Elsdon minstrel. An example of the very reverse of this romantic manner is to be found, incidentally, in the same ballad. The Scots minstrel does

less than justice to his hero in stanza 20 where he says of Douglas:

He belted on his guid braid sword,
 And to the field he ran,
 But he forgot the helmet good
 That should have kept his brain.

Forgot his tin hat? This brave but amnesic borderer going into the fray without his steel bonnet? It seems improbable. Froissart describes him as 'so well armed that he bare well of such strokes as he received', though the ballad account echoes Wyntoun:

The Erll James wes sa besy
 For till array his oste haly,
 And for to fecht sa egyre was,
 That he tuke not on in that place
 His cot armour, bot wes forzet;
 The Erll of Murraffis basnet,
 Men sais, wes forzet alsua,
 And other mony lordis ma.²⁸

Returning to the English version, in conclusion: the presence of the common man is evident throughout in the minstrel's asides. These are not only conventional phrases as 'For soth as I yow say', but include more pointed expressions such as:

- 2 The grete wolde ever to-gether ryde
- 35 The cronykle wyll not layne
- 70 Now let vs all for the Perssy praye

where the singer turns momentarily away from his narrative to address his hearers *in propria persona*. The tone of that first example, 'The grete wolde ever to-gether ryde' catches exactly the feeling of insignificance of the common man that we find for instance in *The Raid of the Redeswire*:

To deal with proud men is but pain
 For either must ye fight or flee.

In the end, what we have in this English ballad is the celebration of a rough, bloody, and largely pointless Border affray, filtered through time, memory and the common

imagination in such a way that both 'Ballad'—the heroic fiction we make of the event—and 'Source'—the bleak truth of the killing and the bereavement—share in the shaping of that haunting residue of the past that we call History. In it, Percy is eulogized but Douglas is not vilified; the tone of the narrative is neutral, employing neither anger and abuse on one side nor empty rhetorical glorification on the other. Years have softened the injury but they have not removed, nor indeed changed, the locality, and what I remain conscious of when I look at the ballad is not the fact that the battle of Otterburn took place, but that it took place *here*.

In these few pages I have tried to show that one version of the ballad is worthy of study in its own local right, and having examined the reciprocal nature of Ballad and Source, I offer in conclusion two quotations which seem to me relevant to both. The first is from Robert White's account of 1857:

If it is true no high national destinies depended upon it; for when the banners were furled which had waved above its warriors, and when those slain in the field were honourably covered with the green turf, the people on each side of the Border, save those who had sustained the loss of kindred, observed no change whatever, either in their public or private relations of life. But arising as it did from the aspiring rivalry of two eminent and powerful chieftains, in its commencement, its progress, and termination, it forms by far the most brilliant example we have of what chivalry could accomplish when it kindled into flame the martial spirit of our heroic ancestors encountering each other, and performing prodigies of valour during a whole night, under the mellow beams of a full harvest moon—all combined to form a subject of most marvellous interest to baron and peasant, knight and squire, man-at-arms and archer, over the whole length and breadth of both kingdoms.²⁹

The sonorous emptiness of such Victorian romanticism is in illuminating contrast with the directness of the balladist. There is, of course, one sense in historical terms in which the ballad *is* the source, and I feel I can do no better for the reputation of *The Battle of Otterburn* and its like than end with the words of Hugh Trevor-Roper, borderer and historian:

We are at all times tempted to make history more scientific than we find it to be: to reduce it from its beginnings in literature, myth or poetry, to a regular system, with iron laws. But in the end we have to admit that such a process, though it can be refined, can never be perfected. We refine away, reducing the ingredient of Fortune or human freedom, but if we should ever succeed in eliminating them altogether, behold: we have killed the subject.³⁰

THE BATTLE OF OTTERBURN

(Child 161A)

- 1 Yt fell abowght the Lamasse tyde,
Whan husbondes Wynnes ther haye,
The dowghtye Dowglasse bowynd hym to ryde,
In Ynglond to take a praye.
- 2 The yerlle of Fyffe, whthowghten stryffe,
He bowynd hym over Sulway;
The grete wolde ever to-gether ryde;
That raysse they may rewe for aye.
- 3 Over Hoppertope hyll they cam in,
And so down by Rodclyffe crage;
Vpon Grene Lynton they lyghted dowyn,
Styrande many a stage.
- 4 And boldely brente Northomberlond,
And haryed many a towyn;
They dyd owr Ynglyssh men grete wrange,
To batell that were not bowyn.
- 5 Than spake a berne vpon the bent,
Of comforte that was not colde,
And sayd, We haue brente Northomberlond,
We haue all welth in holde.
- 6 Now we haue haryed all Bamborowe schyre,
All the welth in the worlde haue wee,
I rede we ryde to Newe Castell,
So styll and stalworthlye.

- 7 Vpon the morowe, when it was day,
 The standerds schone full bryght;
 To the Newe Castell the toke the waye,
 And thether they cam full ryght.
- 8 Syr Henry Perssy laye at the New Castell,
 I tell yow wythowtten drede;
 He had byn a march-man all hys dayes,
 And kepte Barwyke vpon Twede.
- 9 To the Newe Castell when they cam,
 The Skottes they cryde on hyghte,
 ‘Syr Hary Perssy, and thou byste within,
 Com to the fylde, and fyght.
- 10 ‘For we haue brente Northomberlonde,
 Thy erytage good and ryght,
 And syne my logeyng I haue take
 Wyth my brande dubbyd many a knyght.’
- 11 Sir Harry Perssy cam to the walles,
 The Skottyssch oste for to se,
 And sayd, And thou hast brente Northomberlond,
 Full sore it rewyth me.
- 12 Yf thou hast haryed all Bamborowe schyre,
 Thow hast done me grete envye;
 For the trespasse thow has me done,
 The tone of vs schall dye.
- 13 ‘Where schall I byde the?’ sayd the Dowglas,
 ‘Or where wylte thow com to me?’
 ‘At Otterborne, in the hygh way,
 [T]her mast thow well logeed be.
- 14 [T]he roo full rekeles ther sche rinnes,
 [T]o make the fame a[nd] glee;
 [T]he fawken and the fesaunt both,
 Among the holtes on hye.
- 15 ‘Ther mast thow haue thy welth at wyll,
 Well looged ther mast be;
 Yt schall not be long or I com the tyll,’
 Sayd Syr Harry Perssy.

- 16 'Ther schall I byde the,' sayd the Dowglas,
 'By the fayth of my bodye:'
 'Thether schall I com,' sayd Syr Harry Perssy,
 'My trowth I plyght to the.'
- 17 A pype of wyne he gaue them over the walles,
 For soth as I yow saye;
 Ther he mayd the Dowglasse drynke,
 And all hys ost that daye.
- 18 The Dowglas turnyd hym homewarde agayne,
 For soth withowghten naye;
 He toke hys logeyng at Oterborne,
 Vpon a Wedynsday.
- 19 And ther he pyght hys stander downyn,
 Hys gettingyng more and lesse,
 And syne he warned hys men to goo
 To chose ther geldynges gresse.
- 20 A Skottysshe knyght hoved vpon the bent,
 A wache I dare well saye;
 So was he ware on the noble Perssy,
 In the dawnyng of the daye.
- 21 He prycked to hys pavyleon-dore,
 As faste as he myght ronne;
 'Awaken, Dowglas,' cryed the knyght,
 'For hys love that syttes in trone.
- 22 'Awaken, Dowglas,' cryed the knyght,
 'For thow maste waken wyth wynne;
 Yender haue I spyed the prowde Perssy,
 And seven standardes wyth hym.'
- 23 'Nay by my trowth,' the Dowglas sayed,
 'It ys but a fayned taylle;
 He durst not loke on my brede banner
 For all Ynglonde so haylle.
- 24 'Was I not yesterdaye at the Newe Castell,
 That stondes so fayre on Tyne?
 For all the men the Perssy had,
 He could not garre me ones to dyne.'

- 25 He stepped owt at his pavelyon-dore,
 To loke and it were lesse;
 'Araye yow, lordynges, one and all,
 For here bygynnes no peysse.
- 26 'The yerle of Mentaye, thow arte my eme,
 The forward I gyve to the:
 The yerlle of Huntlay, cawte and kene,
 He schall be wyth the.
- 27 'The lorde of Bowghan, in armure bryght,
 On the other hand he schall be;
 Lord Jhonstoune and Lorde Maxwell.
 They to schall be wyth me.
- 28 'Swynton, fayre fylde vpon your pryde!
 To batell make yow bowen
 Syr Davy Skotte, Syr Water Stewarde,
 Syr Jhon of Agurstone!'
- 29 The Perssy cam byfore hys oste,
 Wych was ever a gentyll knyght:
 Vpon the Dowglas lowde can he crye,
 'I wyll holde that I haue hyght.
- 30 'For thou haste brente Northomberlonde,
 And done me grete envye;
 For thys trespasse thou hast me done,
 The tone of vs schall dye.'
- 31 The Dowglas answerde hym agayne,
 Wyth grett wurdes vpon hye,
 And sayd, I haue twenty agaynst thy one,
 Byholde, and thou maste see.
- 32 Wyth that the Perssy was grevyd sore,
 For soth as I yow saye;
 He lyghted dowyn vpon his foote,
 And schoote hys horsse clene awaye.
- 33 Euery man sawe that he dyd soo,
 That ryall was euer in rowght;
 Euery man schoote hys horsse hym froo,
 And lyght him rowynde abowght.

- 34 Thus Syr Hary Perssye toke the fylde,
 For soth as I yow saye;
 Jhesu Cryste in hevyn on hyght
 Dyd helpe hym well that daye.
- 35 But nyne thowzand, ther was no moo,
 The cronykle wyll not layne;
 Forty thowsande of Skottes and fowre
 That day fowght them agayne.
- 36 But when the batell byganne to ioyne,
 In hast ther cam a knyght;
 The letters fayre furth hath he tayne,
 And thus he sayd full ryght:
- 37 'My lorde your father he gretes yow well,
 Wyth many a noble knyght;
 He desyres yow to byde
 That he may see thys fyght.
- 38 'The Baron of Grastoke ys com out of the west,
 Wyth hym a noble companye;
 All they loge at your fathers thys nyght,
 And the batell fayne wolde they see.'
- 39 'For Jhesus love,' sayd Syr Harye Perssy,
 'That dyed for yow and me.
 Wende to my lorde my father agayne,
 And saye thow sawe me not wyth yee.
- 40 'My trowth ys plyght to yonne Skottysch knyght,
 It nedes me not to layne,
 That I schulde byde hym vpon thys bent,
 And I haue hys trowth agayne.
- 41 'And if that I w[e]ynde of thys growende,
 For soth, onfowghten awaye,
 He wolde me call but a kowarde knyght
 In hys londe another daye.
- 42 'Yet had I lever to be rynde and rente,
 By Mary, that mykkel maye,
 Then ever my manhood schulde to reprovyd
 Wyth a Skotte another day.

- 43 'Wherefore schote, archars, for my sake,
 And let scharpe arowes flee;
 Mynstrells, playe vp for your waryson,
 And well quyt it schall bee.
- 44 'Euery man thynke on hys trewe-love,
 And marke hym to the Trenite;
 For to God I make myne avowe
 Thys day wyll I not flee.'
- 45 The blodye harte in the Dowglas armes,
 Hys standerde stode on hye,
 That euery man myght full well knowe;
 By syde stode starres thre.
- 46 The whyte lyon on the Ynglyssh perte,
 For soth as I yow sayne,
 The lucettes and the cressawntes both;
 The Skottes favght them agayne.
- 47 Vpon Sent Androwe lowde can they crye,
 And thrysse they schowte on hyght,
 And syne merked them one owr Ynglysshe men,
 As I haue tolde yow ryght.
- 48 Sent George the bryght, owr ladyes knyght,
 To name they were full fayne;
 Owr Ynglyssh men they cryde on hyght,
 And thrysse the schowtte agayne.
- 49 Wyth that scharpe arowes bygan to flee,
 I tell yow in sertayne;
 Men of armes byganne to joyne
 Many a dowghty man was ther slayne.
- 50 The Perssy and the Dowglas mette,
 That ether of other was fayne;
 They swapped together whyll that the swette,
 Wyth swordes of fyne collayne:
- 51 Tyll the bloode from ther bassonnettes ranne,
 As the roke doth in the rayne;
 'Yelde the to me,' sayd the Dowglas,
 'Or elles thow schalt be slayne.

- 52 'For I see by thy bryght bassonet,
 Thow arte sum man of myght;
 And so I do by they burnysshed brande;
 Thow arte an yerle, or elles a knyght.'
- 53 'By my good faythe,' sayd the noble Perssye,
 'Now haste thow rede full ryght;
 Yet wyll I never yelde me to the,
 Whyll I may stonde and fyght.'
- 54 They swapped together whyll that they swette,
 Wyth swordes scharpe and long;
 Ych on other so faste thee beette,
 Tyll ther helmes cam in peyses downyn.
- 55 The Perssy was a man of strength,
 I tell yow in thys stounde;
 He smote the Dowglas at the swordes length
 That he felle to the growynde.
- 56 The sworde was scharpe, and sore can byte,
 I tell yow in sertayne;
 To the harte he cowde hym smyte,
 Thus was the Dowglas slayne.
- 57 The stonderdes stode styll on eke a syde,
 Wyth many a grevous grone;
 Ther the fowght the day, and all the nyght,
 And many a dowghty man was slayne.
- 58 Ther was no freke that ther wolde flye,
 But styffely in stowre can stond,
 Ychone hewyng on other whyll they myght drye,
 Wyth many a bayllefull bronde.
- 59 Ther was slayne vpon the Skottes syde,
 For soth and sertenly,
 Syr James a Dowglas ther was slayne,
 That day that he cowde dye.
- 60 The yerlle of Mentaye he was slayne,
 Grysely groned vpon the growynd;
 Syr Davy Skotte, Syr Water Steward,
 Syr Jhon of Agurstoune.

- 61 Syr Charlles Morrey in that place,
 That never a fote wold flee;
 Syr Hewe Maxwell, a lorde he was,
 Wyth the Dowglas dyd he dye.
- 62 Ther was slayne vpon the Skottes syde,
 For soth as I yow saye,
 Of fowre and forty thowsande Scottes,
 Went but eyghtene awaye.
- 63 Ther was slayne vpon the Ynglysshe syde,
 For soth and sertenlye,
 A gentell knyght, Syr Jhon Fechewe,
 Yt was the more pety.
- 64 Syr James Hardbotell ther was slayne,
 For hym ther hartes were sore;
 The gentyll Lovell ther was slayne,
 That the Perssys standerd bore.
- 65 Ther was slayne vpon the Ynglyssh perte,
 For soth as I yow saye,
 Of nyne thowsand Ynglyssh men
 Fyve hondert cam awaye.
- 66 The other were slayne in the fylde;
 Cryste kepe there sowlles from wo!
 Seyng ther was so few fryndes
 Agaynst so many a foo.
- 67 Then on the morne they mayde them beerys
 Of byrch and haysell graye;
 Many a wydowe, wyth wepyng teyres,
 Ther makes they fette awaye.
- 68 Thys fraye bygan at Otterborne,
 Bytwene the nyght and the day;
 Ther the Dowglas lost hys lyffe.
 And the Perssy was lede awaye.
- 69 Then was ther a Scottysh prisoner tayne,
 Syr Hewe Montgomery was hys name;
 For soth as I yow saye,
 He borowed the Perssy home agayne.

- 70 Now let vs all for the Perssy praye,
 To Jhesu most of myght,
 To bryng hys sowlle to the blysse of heven,
 For he was a gentyll knyght.

NOTES

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18. Louise Pound, 'Folklore and dialect', *California folklore Quarterly*, iv, 1945. See Buchan, *The Ballad and the folk*, p. 3.
19. T.S.Eliot, *After Strange Gods*, in his *Selected Prose*, ed. J.Hayward, Harmondsworth, 1953, p. 20.
20. *Calendar of Letters and Papers relating to the affairs of the Borders of England and Scotland*, ed. J.Bain, Edinburgh, 1896, ii, p. 391.
21. Here and elsewhere I have used Lord Berners' translation (*The Chronicle of Froissart*, ed. W.E.Henley, London, 1902) in the paper itself, but I cite the French text in the footnotes. '[IIs]...cheminèrent

- le bon pas tout à la couverte du pays sans entendre a pillage nul, ne assaillir chastel, tour, ne forte maison, et vindrent en la terre au seigneur de Persy et passèrent la rivière de Thyn sans nul empeschment.' Froissart, xiii, pp. 208–9.
22. 'sauvage pays, plains de désiers et de grandes montagnes, et durement povres pays de toutes coses fors que de bestes. Si keurt parmi une rivière plainne de cailliaus et de grosses pierres que on nomme Thin.' *ibid.*, ii, p. 133.
 23. C.H.Hunter-Blair, 'Wardens and Deputy Wardens of the Marches of England towards Scotland in Northumberland', *AA*, 4th ser., xxviii, 1950, p. 54.
 24. *Njal's Saga*, trans. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, Harmondsworth, 1960, p. 17.
 25. 'je, acteur de ceste histoire, chevauchay parmy le roiaulme d'Escoce et fus bien quinze jours en l'ostel du conte Guillemme de Douglas, père de ce conte James dont je parle présentement, en ung chastel a cinq lieues de Haindebourg, que l'on dist ou pays Dalquest; et ce conte James, je l'avoie veu, jeune fils et bel damoiseil et une sienne suer que on appelloit Blance, et fus infourmé des deux parties, et tout en la saison que la bataille avoit esté, et bien se concordoient les ungs et les autres, mais ils me dirent que ce fut une aussi dure besoingne et aussi bien combatue que bataille peust oncques estre, et je les en croy bien, car Anglois d'un costé et d'autre costé Escots sont très-bonnes gens d'armes, et quant ils se treuvent en rencontre et ou party d'armes, c'est sans espargnier: il n'y a entre euls nul tropel. Tant que lances et haches, espées et dagues et alayne leur pèvent durer, ils fierent et frappent l'un sur l'autre et n'y a point de ho. Et quant ils se sont bien batus et combatus et que l'une partie obtient, tellement ils gloriffient en leurs armes, et sont si resjoys que sur les champs ceulx qui sont pris et créantés, ils sont raenchonnés, et saves-vous comment? si trestost et si courtoisement que chascun se contente de son compaignon et que au droit département ils dient: 'Grant mercis!' Mais en combatant et faisant armes l'un sur l'autre il n'y a point de jeu ne d'espargne; ainchois est tout acertes et bien le monstrèrent là ainsi que je vous diray avant que je me parte de la besoingne, car ce recontre fut aussi bien demené au droit d'armes que nulle chose puet oncques estre.' Froissart, xiii, pp. 219–20.
 26. The baron of Greystoke: Ralph Lord Greystoke (1353–1418): not mentioned in the Otterburn connection by Froissart or others. Joint Warden of the East and West Marches 1379–82 with Henry earl of Northumberland (Hotspur's father), John Lord Neville of Raby, and Roger Clifford: Hunter-Blair, 'Wardens and Deputy Wardens', p. 50.
 27. Addison, *Spectator*, p. 231.
 28. *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F.J.Amours, vi, Edinburgh, for the Scottish Text Society, vii, 1908, p. 328.
 29. R.White, *History of the Battle of Otterburn*, lvii, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1857, pp. 59–60.
 30. H.R.Trevor-Roper, 'Valedictory Lecture, Oxford', in *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 July 1980.

THE CHURCH OF DURHAM
AND THE SCOTTISH
BORDERS, 1378–88

Barrie Dobson

Of all the savage battles fought on the Scottish Marches, perhaps none has been more successfully mythologized than the confused and bloody contest at or near Otterburn 600 years ago. No wonder therefore that it elicited from the late Sir George Trevelyan, who as a boy took his first steps towards becoming the most popular historian of his age at Wallington only ten miles away, the most elegiac of all accounts of Border society and of Border warfare. 'In Northumberland alone, both heaven and earth are seen.' In many ways Trevelyan's account of *The Middle Marches*, published in 1914, still provides the most evocative introduction to the *genius loci* of Redesdale, to that Northumbrian scenery which allegedly 'throws over us, not a melancholy, but a meditative spell'.¹ In an essay generally too eloquent to be particularly informative, Trevelyan did however make the not unimportant point that the clash of arms at Otterburn must have been fought within the parish of Elsdon, 'the yet unviolated shrine of the tradition of the English Border'.²

It follows that Otterburn must have been a battle with especial significance for the bishop and monks of Durham cathedral. Not only was Elsdon one of the only four medieval parishes in Northumberland known to have been dedicated to St Cuthbert; but Durham historical tradition maintained that the church of Elsdon was one of the first of the many stoppingplaces of St Cuthbert's body, his legendary corsaint, in the winter of 875, at the beginning of that erratic seven-year-long posthumous journey which took him from Lindisfarne to Chester-le-Street.³ However, and as will be seen, St Cuthbert

worked no miracles at Otterburn in 1388. Nor need we be surprised; for how could a saint so closely associated with his own pre-Norman, pre-Viking, pre-Border, undivided Northumbria be expected to choose between a Melrose and a Holy Island, a Percy and a Douglas? It has often been said that in the 300 years of more or less regulated armed violence unleashed on the Anglo-Scottish Border from the 1290s onwards there were no real victors; but it may well be argued that in 1388, as earlier and later, St Cuthbert, his bishops and his monks, with their claims to spiritual jurisdiction on both sides of the Tweed, were perhaps the greatest casualties of them all.⁴

Such at least seems to have been the church of Durham's dispiriting fate in the case of the Otterburn campaign itself. From a battle which became celebrated for its outstanding deeds of heroism on both sides, the leader of St Cuthbert's church, the bishop of Durham, managed to emerge with a reputation tarnished by being among neither the victors nor the vanquished. All allowances made for chronicle sources which can be tantalizing cryptic or positively fanciful, it seems that the bishop's unexpectedly late arrival on the road to Otterburn cost Lord Henry Hotspur and the English troops, already engaged and indeed defeated in the battle, not only a clear-cut victory but the lives of many of their fellows. Admittedly, like nearly all the issues raised by the detailed chronology of events which followed the decision of the earls of Fife and Douglas to launch their major raid on northern England in the early summer of 1388, the precise movements of the bishop of Durham are by no means easy to ascertain.⁵ Trevelyan himself, eager to think the romantic best of all his protagonists, discounts the possibility that the bishop of Durham was either negligent or otherwise culpable; and positively praises his efforts as he and his men 'marched hard over the moors and streams by the light of that moon which was glinting on the flash of swords at Otterburne', only to arrive after the English defeat and Hotspur's capture.⁶

All in all, it seems difficult to accept quite so charitable an interpretation of the non-appearance of the Durham troops at Otterburn. Admittedly the Scottish chroniclers' accounts of the campaign, perhaps understandably, make no mention of a bishop of Durham who only reached the battlefield after the Scots had begun to retreat northwards.⁷ More surprisingly,

neither Thomas Walsingham nor Henry Knighton, usually quite well-informed on Scottish affairs, provide a detailed description of Otterburn.⁸ Much more valuable is the hostile account of the bishop of Durham's actions afforded by the *Westminster Chronicle*, all the more interesting because it seems to represent the official interpretation of the defeat accepted by Richard II and his court when the news reached Westminster in late August 1388. In the chronicle's own words,

And so it was that 550 and more of our people perished by the edge of the sword because the bishop of Durham failed to come to their aid in the way previously concerted between himself and Sir Henry Percy. For the bishop was quite close at hand at the time, with a large armed force under his command; but owing to the darkening night, he declined to approach the battle field.

Instead he returned to Newcastle upon Tyne, where if he had waited for sunrise he would allegedly have been stoned by the bereaved wives of Tyneside husbands dead on the battlefield. In what looks like a well-informed attempt to account for the humiliating disaster, the Westminster chronicler went on to offer three different explanations for the defeat—Hotspur's 'excessiva audacia', the tactical mistakes made by the English troops who succeeded in killing each other rather than the Scots when laying about them in the darkness, and finally (yet again) the bishop of Durham's negligent and probably cowardly failure to appear at Otterburn quite soon enough.⁹

Nor does the bishop of Durham emerge any more creditably in Froissart's much longer, much more verisimilitudinous, and therefore (as ever) probably most insidiously mendacious, account of the battle. On the slightly dubious assumption, however, that Froissart aimed to produce a reasonably undistorted summary of the news about the battle he had received from his well-placed informants, the bishop was indeed supposed to be reinforcing Hotspur in early August 1388 and had a force of some 10,000 (sic!) men at his disposal for that very purpose. After leading his troops through Newcastle upon Tyne on the very day of the battle, he set out on the road to Otterburn after night had fallen only to find English fugitives flying south from the battlefield. According to

Froissart, the bishop accordingly postponed a direct attack on the Scots until the following day. However, during the next morning, and three miles before the Durham troops reached Otterburn, the Scots produced a sound like the proverbial devils of hell from their horns and drums with the result that the bishop, after consulting a few knights, decided 'not to launch an attack and so turned back again without taking action'. For Froissart and his informants, the bishop of Durham's men 'had more to lose than to gain'—quite possibly the correct military decision but not of course one calculated to win the bishop of Durham much popularity with the Percies, the burgesses of Newcastle upon Tyne, or indeed the other inhabitants of Northumberland during the reign of Richard II.¹⁰

It therefore seems sufficiently clear that the major contribution of the church of Durham to the English cause at Otterburn was a negative contribution—the failure of the bishop to actually reach the battlefield. Whether the bishop himself is to be personally blamed for that failure is perhaps a more open question. Although the two-pronged Scottish invasion of the East and West Marches in late July 1388 was in some ways an entirely predictable consequence of the escalation of Border warfare during the previous decade, there can be little doubt that it must have caught the bishop of Durham as unawares as it undoubtedly did the English government. It seems absolutely clear from the highly alarmed letter of instructions which Richard II sent to John of Gaunt from Westminster as late as 13 August that the king had only then just heard the news of these major Scots invasions, allegedly involving 'the burning and wasting of his realm, the killing of children in the cradle and even the advance of the enemy almost to the city of York'.¹¹ By 13 August, however, the very date of that letter, the battle of Otterburn had already been fought and lost and the Scots were home again north of the Tweed. A few days later, on or before 20 August, Richard had heard the news of this withdrawal at Northampton; and even before the Cambridge parliament assembled on 9 September the king had called off his own projected military expedition to Scotland.¹² Even by the tumultuous standards set by Richard II's reign as a whole, the summer of 1388 was an exceptionally turbulent one; and it seems absolutely clear that there can never have been enough time for the bishop of Durham to receive an

official royal request to array troops from his palatinate before the battle of Otterburn actually took place. How many troops—and what kind of troops—the bishop did lead to Newcastle upon Tyne in early August must remain uncertain; but at least it seems to be to his credit that he levied them on his own initiative, probably (if the Westminster chronicler is to be believed) after consultation with the Percies.¹³ Once the Otterburn raid was over, on 20 August 1388, the *status quo ante* was officially restored when the Crown ordered the bishop of Durham not to attend the opening of parliament at Cambridge but to stay in his diocese and co-operate with Hotspur's father, Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland, and Lord John Neville of Raby in case the Scots should invade England again.¹⁴

These letters close of 20 August 1388 were addressed to John, bishop of Durham, thereby helping to resolve another issue of some significance—the identity of the bishop who led his Durham contingent to Otterburn, if only too late to be of assistance to the English cause. The unprecedented series of changes of personnel on the English episcopal bench forced upon Richard II in the spring of 1388 meant that there were two bishops of Durham in that year. It has sometimes been assumed that the prelate who might have fought (but failed to fight) at Otterburn was the second of these, the highly experienced royal chancery clerk and keeper of the Privy Seal, Walter Skirlaw, whose papal bull of translation from the diocese of Bath and Wells had been dispatched from Urban VI, then in Perugia, as early as 3 April 1388.¹⁵ However, the temporalities of the see of Durham were not released to Skirlaw until 13 September, a fact which makes it highly unlikely that he exerted military authority in the north before that date: only thereafter did the new bishop begin to appoint laymen and clerks to his most important temporal offices.¹⁶ Conversely, his predecessor, John de Fordham (bishop of Durham since 1381) had suffered the unique fate of episcopal 'demotion' to the see of Ely by Urban VI in early April; but Fordham too did not receive the Ely temporalities until 27 September, the day he finally did arrive at the Cambridge parliament and make his profession to Archbishop Courtenay of Canterbury at Barnwell priory.¹⁷ Despite the lack of clear-cut evidence (neither Fordham's nor Skirlaw's activities at Durham are well recorded), there can be no doubt that the church of Durham's highly ineffective

participation in the Otterburn campaign was the last contribution of Bishop Fordham rather the first contribution of Bishop Skirlaw to the problem of the Borders. It may indeed be possible to go further still. Although John de Fordham's career is exceptionally 'evasive', even by the standards of his colleagues on the episcopal bench, Dr Richard Davies has suggested the existence of a certain 'estrangement' between the bishop and the Percies in the 1380s. Might it even be that the Percies used their influence to have Fordham removed from the see of Durham by making his departure a condition for their support to the Lords Appellant in early 1388?¹⁸ If so, before his final removal (in Tout's famous phrase) 'from the flesh-pots of Durham to the more meagre temporalities of Ely', Fordham had one last, if unfortunate, opportunity to demonstrate his inability to co-operate with the Percies.¹⁹ If the most powerful magnates of the north were so eager to see Bishop Fordham ejected from his see of Durham in early 1388, perhaps it should occasion no great surprise that Bishop Fordham was so slow to come to Hotspur's support at Otterburn a few months later?

1388, in the history of the church of Durham as well of the Scottish Borders, was no doubt an exceptional year. Nevertheless the ambiguities surrounding Bishop Fordham's conduct immediately before and at the battle of Otterburn make clear by force of contrast the highly important military role all bishops of Durham played, and were expected to play, in Anglo-Scottish relations before, during and after the reign of Richard II. However, and by a paradox central to the history of the bishopric of Durham in the later Middle Ages, that role was largely played on the Crown's behalf. No prelate in the realm would seem better placed, in terms of geography, administrative autonomy, wealth and prestige, to play an independent and potentially troublesome part in English politics than the bishop of Durham; but in practice, and after the pontificates of Antony Bek and Lewis of Beaumont, it would be hard to find a series of bishops anywhere in the kingdom who gave the English Crown fewer grounds for concern.²⁰ The main reason for such harmony is well known, namely the care with which successive kings nominated to the see of Durham only the most trusted and responsible senior clerks in their Westminster-based administrative service. Only occasionally, as in 1437, might a monarch be persuaded or

tempted to do otherwise: in that year, as Professor Storey first demonstrated in his study of Bishop Thomas Langley, Henry VI pressed Robert Neville upon the prior and chapter of Durham on the grounds that 'hit is right necessary and expedient...to set and purvey of such a notable and myghty persone to be heed and bisshop thereof as may puissantly kepe thayme best to the honour of God and the defence of this our royaume'.²¹ However, Robert Neville, together with Archbishops Alexander and George Neville of York in the late fourteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries respectively, were very much the exceptions to the general rule; and they were exceptions too which demonstrated the dangers of elevating members of prominent northern magnate families to northern sees.²²

It followed that at most times in the later Middle Ages the Crown entrusted responsibility for the defence of the north to prelates who had served him in Westminster and London and who had no previous vested interest in the north. The great majority of the thirty bishops of Durham from 1083 to the Reformation were born very far south of the Tees indeed. More pointedly still, every single bishop of Durham from 1333 to 1437 served as keeper of the royal privy seal at one time or other of his career.²³ Of the three bishops during Richard II's reign Fordham was unusual in his apparent lack of a university education and first emerged from obscurity in the early 1370s as a king's clerk and one of the Black Prince's secretaries.²⁴ By contrast, Bishops Thomas Hatfield (1345–81) and Walter Skirlaw (1381–1406), although of different generations, both belonged to that great East Riding clerical affinity associated with Archbishops Melton and Thoresby of York, an affinity which controlled much of the English state's bureaucratic machine during the reign of Edward III. Both Hatfield and Skirlaw were accomplished administrators and diplomats; and both could hold their own as munificent founders and patrons of architecture, even in the age of William of Wykeham.²⁵ However neither Hatfield nor Skirlaw, and far less Fordham, could have contemplated using their financial and military resources as bishops of Durham except in furtherance of the policies pursued by the royal masters to whom they owed their very appointment. In practice as opposed to juridical theory, the capacity of the bishops and church of Durham to play an autonomous role on the Anglo-Scottish Border was virtually

non-existent: rarely could they ever be anything but junior partners, even to the Nevilles and the Percies. The reason for this comparative inferiority is obvious enough. Although the bishops of Durham had managed to consolidate the greatest liberty held peacefully for any length of time in late medieval English history, this 'considerable accumulation of privileges remained a patchwork, lacking the unattainable essential which could give them cohesion and independent growth'. Might it even be, to cite another remark of Mrs Jean Scammell, that by the reign of Richard II, the Liberty of Durham was no longer anything more than 'an enormous estate situated in a remote part of England and hedged by supernatural sanctions'.²⁶

It would indeed be unwise to over-estimate the political strength of the late medieval bishops of Durham; but in confronting the problems posed by the Scots in the late fourteenth century the English government could not afford to ignore completely the twin assets of that 'enormous estate' and those 'supernatural sanctions'. In the first place, it is absolutely clear from royal letters as well as parliamentary petitions throughout the fourteenth century that the lords and commons as well as the king of England positively expected the bishop of Durham to be resident in his diocese when there was any prospect of Scottish invasion. That the defence of the north from the Scots should be the responsibility of the *Northumbrenses* themselves is often said to be Edward III's (highly successful) solution to the English strategic problem of how to fight on two fronts during long periods throughout the Hundred Years War; and it is indeed easy enough to detect a note of impatience and irritation in parliament when the northern lords failed to hold the Scots at bay.²⁷ As it happened, Bishop Thomas Hatfield was accompanying Edward III on the Crécy campaign when the cathedral church of Durham itself faced its single most dangerous threat from the Scots during the later Middle Ages; but the letters sent to Hatfield by Prior John Fossor during the summer and autumn of 1346 make absolutely explicit his monks' determination to resist 'the iniquities and perverse machinations of the Scots'.²⁸ In Hatfield's absence, Archbishop William Zouche had played a prominent role during the Neville's Cross campaign, a testimony to the fact that the bishops of Durham were not the only prelates to lead armies against the Scots. In July 1377 Archbishop Alexander

Neville was excused attendance at Richard II's coronation because of the likelihood that he might need to defend the north against 'les gentz d'Escoce'; and in 1417 Archbishop Bowet's appearance at the head of a force of belligerent priests allegedly put to flight the Scots who were then besieging Berwick upon Tweed.²⁹ However, and for obvious reasons, it was the bishop of Durham rather than the archbishop of York who was most often, as before the battle of Otterburn, entrusted with the levying of troops against the Scots at short notice. In September 1383, for example, Bishop Fordham had been ordered to array all his available men—men-at-arms, hobelars and archers—between the ages of sixteen and sixty in order to resist a Scottish invasion.³⁰ To judge from the details of the military array of the clergy of the county of Durham made on St Giles's Moor in 1400, the bishop delegated the inspection of his troops to the constable of his castle and other commissioners.³¹ When faced (as in 1388) with a particularly dangerous Scottish invasion south of the Border, both the king and the northern lords still assumed that the bishop himself should personally lead his Durham levies into battle, preferably with the banner of St Cuthbert flying before him.

In practice, however, and especially after the front-line defence of northern England increasingly came to be entrusted to lay Wardens of the March during the late fourteenth century, the medieval bishops of Durham were to be found much less frequently on military expeditions than on diplomatic missions in Northumberland and the Borders.³² They were regularly appointed, almost as a matter of course indeed, to the endless series of royal commissions designated to treat with the Scots, to renew the truces on the Border and to redress the grievances of the king's English subjects which arose out of Marcher problems. In the decade before Otterburn, as indeed earlier and later, it was the common practice to include on such commissions six or seven individuals, most notably Henry Percy, first earl of Northumberland, his son Hotspur, Lord John Neville of Raby, two or three Northumbrian or Cumberland knights, one or two clerks and the bishop of Durham. On 26 March 1388, for example, when the Earl Douglas must already have been plotting the raid which ended at Otterburn, Bishop Fordham found himself appointed by Richard II to treat with the Scots in the company of Henry Percy, earl of

Northumberland, Lord John Neville of Raby, Sir Brian Stapleton and others. Four years earlier, on 6 July 1384, Bishop Fordham together with Lord John Neville and Master John Waltham, sub-dean of York Minster, had been instructed to discuss the extension of the prevailing truce with three representatives of the Scottish kingdom at the chapel of Ayton, six miles north of Berwick.³³ Ayton was a chapel within the church of Durham's own spiritual franchise of Coldinghamshire, north of the Tweed; and throughout the tortuous course of Anglo-Scottish relations during the later fourteenth century not the least of the contributions of the Lothian liberty of St Cuthbert was to provide a series of suitable and comparatively tranquil meeting-places (not least at Coldingham itself) for discussions between English and Scottish diplomatic missions.³⁴

As in the case of English diplomatic activity as a whole, it usually proves difficult and often impossible to know which of the royal commissioners appointed to treat with the Scots actually undertook the laborious work involved. In many cases one suspects that in practice the detailed negotiations were conducted by one or more of the royal clerks nominated to the commission. For example, it seems probable that the Englishman most experienced in Anglo-Scottish relations and Border problems during the first few years of Richard II's reign was neither a Neville nor a Percy nor Bishop Fordham himself but rather Master John Waltham, residentiary canon of York Minster, whose name is never absent for long from the relevant pages of *Rotuli Scotiae*: he was still being appointed an envoy to Scotland by the English government in the year (1384) he died.³⁵ However, this is not to disparage the diplomatic skills undoubtedly possessed by many bishops of Durham themselves. Indeed one of the great advantages to the Crown of recruiting their bishops of Durham from the senior members of the chancery or privy seal office was the knowledge that most such careerist administrators in royal service must have had some, and often much, prior experience of diplomatic work. Of the three bishops of Durham during the 1380s, Walter Skirlaw exemplifies such expertise as a negotiator to perfection. In many ways this ex-secretary of Archbishop Thoresby of York played a central role in Anglo-French diplomatic relations during the highly difficult early years of Richard II's reign. In addition to at least a dozen

diplomatic missions to the French court between 1378 and 1388, he was sent on other expeditions to gain support for the English cause in Brittany, Flanders, Germany and at the Roman Curia.³⁶ This experienced envoy had also spent several weeks on a mission to Scotland itself eight years before he became bishop of Durham.³⁷ It is accordingly no surprise that the new Bishop Skirlaw of Durham seems to have used his diplomatic gifts to restore a reasonable degree of tranquillity to the Borders in the years immediately after Otterburn. In 1394 the bishop was sent north of the Tweed to attempt to secure a marriage alliance with the Scottish royal family;³⁸ thereafter relations between the two kingdoms were to remain, however precariously, stable until the end of the century.³⁹ A generation earlier, Bishop Thomas Hatfield, throughout a pontificate of thirty-six years (1345–81), had been even more committed than Walter Skirlaw to strenuous diplomatic work on the Borders. A member of almost innumerable royal commissions to deal with Scottish issues from the late 1340s onwards, Hatfield was naturally heavily involved in the complications caused by the payment of King David II's ransom after his capture at Neville's Cross; and the bishop was present as a matter of course at the Treaty of Berwick in October 1357.⁴⁰ During the Anglo-Scottish crises of the 1370s Bishop Hatfield was still regularly being ordered to remain in the north, just as he was acting as a Warden of the East March within a few years of his death in 1381.⁴¹ It was for his many and various services in helping to secure his Scottish frontier that Edward III had undoubtedly valued Thomas Hatfield most. By contrast, Bishop Fordham, his successor, was considerably less conspicuous in Anglo-Scottish affairs during his seven years as bishop of Durham, partly because of the ascendancy of the Percies in the north during the 1380s and partly no doubt because of his own political unpopularity in the kingdom at large as one of the young Richard II's favourite clerks.⁴² Nevertheless, John Fordham too was appointed one of the Wardens of the East March on no less than five occasions between March 1382 and July 1384.⁴³ Although Fordham was licensed to delegate the responsibilities of this Wardenship to deputies, there were several other occasions in the years immediately before Otterburn when he performed what amounted to the

traditional obligation of bishops of Durham and conducted peace negotiations with the Scots.⁴⁴

At the very least therefore the three bishops of Durham during the decades before and after the battle of Otterburn were expected to pour a little oil on the invariably troubled waters of the Borders, even if sometimes they did so (especially during Fordham's short tenure of St Cuthbert's see from 1381 to 1388) with comparatively little success. Indeed it would be dangerous to suppose that these bishops seemed quite as powerful figures to contemporaries as they have often done to posterity. By the standards of the retinues available to John of Gaunt, Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland, and Lord John Neville of Raby, the military forces at the disposal of Bishops Hatfield, Fordham and Skirlaw were comparatively modest and no doubt difficult to raise. It might accordingly well be that 'the bishop of Durham's frequent appearance in royal mandates shows him not as the strongest but as the most amenable of the northern magnates'.⁴⁵ Although positively useful to the English monarch, it would indeed be hard to claim that the diplomatic or military assistance furnished to the royal cause by the church of Durham was often absolutely critical in securing success north of the Border. To that extent at least the ambiguities of the Otterburn campaign were typical rather than unrepresentative of Durham's role in the defence of England against the Scots at most times of the later Middle Ages.

However, it is even more important to emphasize that the bishops of Durham had their own material as well as spiritual reasons for wishing to play the roles of peace-maker and defender of the English borders south of the Tweed. Perhaps the most significant material reason was their possession—as an integral part of their palatine franchise—of Norhamshire and Islandshire. Although nearly a century and a half have passed since the publication of James Raine the elder's massive *The History and Antiquities of North Durham*, the peculiarly complex development of those two shires still awaits its historian. Whether or not one supposes, with the late Sir Edmund Craster, that Norhamshire owes its origins and subsequent special attachment to the church of Durham to that distant period when St Cuthbert's body migrated to Norham, by the end of the Middle Ages the two shires in question had become the fossilized and truncated rumps of what was probably part of

the original patrimony of St Cuthbert.⁴⁶ Presumably detached at some unascertainable time in the Anglian past, from the twelfth century onwards Northumberland and Islandshire together made up not much more than an equilateral triangle, of some ten miles a side, immediately south of the Tweed. As is still highly apparent to travellers by road or train from Newcastle upon Tyne to Berwick upon Tweed, the two shires comprise reasonably good agricultural land, capable during the Middle Ages of supporting a cluster of parish churches and chapelries as well as of generating a respectable amount of profit for the monks of St Cuthbert, either on Holy Island or at Durham, as well as for the bishop himself.⁴⁷

For the bishop and monks of Durham it was to be the most cruel irony of the Anglo-Scottish wars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that this otherwise ideally sited outpost of their bishopric should become the most vulnerable part of Northumberland. From the 1290s onward no bishop of Durham would have thought it advisable to stay in Northumberland for long, if at all, and it went without saying that he delegated the task of defending his lordship and controlling his affairs there to the man on the spot. The spot in question was naturally Norham Castle, twelve miles up the river Tweed from Berwick, and the effective centre of both military power and civil government in North Durham throughout the Anglo-Scottish wars of the later Middle Ages.⁴⁸ Not surprisingly, the senior episcopal officials based at Norham, a castle highly vulnerable to Scottish raids and even sieges (as in 1327), were usually members of prominent northern Northumbrian families; and in several instances, as in the case of the Humes north of the Tweed in the early fifteenth century, such families were to become the main beneficiaries of the Anglo-Scottish wars. The most coveted office of all was the constablership of Norham castle itself, a position increasingly combined with those of bishop's justice, steward, sheriff and escheator of Northumberland and Islandshire. From the mid-fourteenth century onwards, the office of constable of Norham was held by such well-known Northumbrians as Robert de Maners (1345), Sir John Heron (1375) and Sir Gerard Heron (1386). In June 1395 Bishop Skirlaw replaced the latter as constable by a Thomas Gray who was almost certainly the son of the author of the

Scalacronica. Eventually, however, it was to be the violent Sir Robert Ogle, whose father had fought at Otterburn, who acquired the constablership for life in 1403; his family continued to monopolize the office throughout the first half of the fifteenth century.⁴⁹ Perhaps no Northumbrian family profited more from the turbulent state of the Border in the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV than did the Ogles, who owed their steady rise to prominence and noble rank, as well as their role as the most influential lay patrons of St Cuthbert's monks on Holy Island, primarily to their power-base at Norham castle itself.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, and however rarely he resided on the Borders, the major financial responsibility for repairing and maintaining the fabric of Norham castle in a defensible state pertained to the bishop of Durham and not his constables there. Here again the military strength of the late medieval bishops of Durham must not be exaggerated. Although often impressive, most obviously so in the case of his castle at Durham itself, the bishop's fortified strongholds anywhere in northern England were comparatively few in number. According to a well-known list of thirty-seven Northumbrian *castella*, quite probably prepared for Henry V's attention in 1415, the bishop of Durham then held only one castle, Norham, in the area while the king had four (Newcastle, Bamburgh, Berwick and Roxburgh) and the Percies at least another four (Alnwick, Warkworth, Langley and Mitford).⁵¹ On the other hand, Norham itself was undeniably the largest and probably the strongest Border castle on the English side of the Tweed; and in many ways the greatest contribution of the bishops of Durham to the English cause on the Border during the later Middle Ages was to maintain Norham Castle as a formidable obstacle to marauding or invading Scots.⁵² Preserving the fortifications at Norham in a state of preparedness was no easy or inexpensive matter; but in the years before Otterburn at least, the bishop of Durham's repairs and renovations to the castle proved to be not only an excellent investment against assault but also stimulated a major transformation of English castle design in the north.

For it was under the initial patronage of first the monks and then the bishops of Durham that in the late fourteenth century the king and lords of Northumberland came to secure the services of the most accomplished of all late medieval English

military architects. Appropriately enough, the first known reference to John Lewyn, mason, occurs in 1364 when he was sent by Prior Fossor and the monks of Durham to undertake some unspecified building works at their daughter house of Coldingham priory.⁵³ Three years later Lewyn was engaged on his masterpiece, the Prior's Kitchen at Durham Cathedral; and at about this period he is likely to have been responsible for rebuilding the keep of Bishop Hatfield's castle at Durham itself.⁵⁴ Already by 1368–9, however, this 'Bishop's Mason' had been appointed by the Crown to repair Bamburgh castle; but it is still not fully appreciated that during the two subsequent decades (and more especially after 1378) Lewyn presided over the most intensive campaign of castle building seen in northern England since the twelfth century. In 1378 itself, and in obvious response to the revival of Scottish aggression on the Borders in that year, Lewyn contracted to build a new tower with gate and barbican at Carlisle castle for a sum of 500 marks; and it was also in 1378 that he began an enormous protective wall, thirty feet high with three towers of fifty feet in height, to defend the Crown's most strategically sited but highly isolated castle of Roxburgh.⁵⁵ At more or less the same period, during the decade immediately before the battle of Otterburn, John Lewyn was supervising the construction of an entirely new castle at Bolton in Wensleydale for Sir Richard le Scrope; and he is highly likely to have thoroughly remodelled the Yorkshire castles of Sheriff Hutton and Wressle for the Nevilles and Percies respectively at this time. Among his other commissions for the Neville family were extensive repairs and renovations to their two greatest castles in county Durham, Raby and Brancepeth.⁵⁶ Of the two most formidable castles in Northumberland to be renovated, rebuilt and strengthened in the 1380s, John Lewyn certainly had a hand in the building works at John of Gaunt's Dunstanburgh and probably too at Warkworth, the most ingeniously designed of all the Percy castles in the north; and only two years before the Otterburn campaign he was working for the Crown on the defences of Berwick upon Tweed.⁵⁷ Appropriately enough for this greatest of all English-born military architects, in the years immediately before Otterburn John Lewyn (last recorded as late as 1398) served as one of Bishop Fordham's commissioners of array.⁵⁸ By any standards Lewyn's association with this remarkable spate of sophisticated castle building in the north,

unparalleled since Edward I's day, raises some interesting grounds for believing that both Richard II's government and his northern magnates may have been exceptionally nervous of Scottish invasions during the 1380s; and here too may be confirmation, to adopt a discrimination once made by Anthony Goodman and Professor Ranald Nicholson, that the wars of Scottish independence were over and the wars of Anglo-Scottish chivalry had already begun.⁵⁹

However, John Lewyn owed his initial rise to fame as a military architect to the patronage of the prior and chapter of Durham, a community which could of course afford no castle. Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was usually the monks of St Cuthbert who suffered more acutely than either king, bishop or magnate from the sustained Anglo-Scottish enmity of the period. From the 1290s to the dissolution of their house in 1539, the economic welfare of the Benedictine community of Durham—and especially of those of its members who served the cathedral priory's three cells at Coldingham, Holy Island and Farne—was at regular risk from Scottish raids across the border; and it might even be argued that this risk was never greater than during the ten years before Otterburn. The destabilization of Anglo-Scottish relations and the consequent escalation of Border warfare during the first decade of Richard II's reign is discussed elsewhere in this volume. It seems absolutely clear that the allegiance of the two kingdoms to rival popes after the outbreak of the Great Schism in 1378 was as much a consequence as a cause of increasing hostility between England and Scotland; but that the Schism unsettled the situation, especially for a cathedral priory which held estates, churches and even the daughter house of Coldingham north of the Tweed, there is no doubt at all. Much more unsettling however was a perennial problem in Scottish history: the lack of an effective monarch gave the Scottish and especially Border nobles and lairds the opportunity to take their own initiatives and exploit what they saw—on the whole quite rightly—as England's weakness under a boy king.⁶⁰ Certainly the 1380s are a decade when it seems as if the English government, quite untypically, was usually negotiating with the Scots from a position of weakness. Many of these hesitations no doubt derived from Richard II's uncertainty as to how to handle the problem of the rivalry between the Nevilles and the Percies, the

issue which Anthony Tuck has taught us all to see as central rather than peripheral to the politics of the reign.⁶¹ Even the most powerful magnate of late fourteenth-century England, John of Gaunt, enjoyed little success in his various attempts to pacify the Scots: for example, Gaunt's negotiations with the Scots at Coldingham priory in June 1381, conducted at exactly the time that Wat Tyler's rebels were burning down his Savoy palace in London, led to no effective result.⁶² The same is notoriously true of the massive expedition, the largest ever led by Richard II himself, taken north of the Border for only a couple of weeks in the late summer of 1385.⁶³ On the available evidence, much of it admittedly emanating from the perhaps exaggerated lamentations of the victims, it seems that during the 1380s, as at no time since the crisis years after Bannockburn, northern England was largely defenceless against a series of very unco-ordinated but highly mobile Scottish *chevauchées*. Of these the earl of Douglas's expeditionary force which won the battle of Otterburn is itself the most famous but not the largest example. The dangers presented by these raids, and the exceptional vulnerability of Northumberland during the 1380s, was indeed recognized by James Campbell over twenty years ago. In the words of the canons of Hexham when petitioning Archbishop Alexander Neville in 1378 for the appropriation of the church of Ilkley in Yorkshire to relieve their misery, 'the wars with the Scots these days have become more or less continuous, *quasi continua*'.⁶⁴

It accordingly need occasion no surprise that it was during the years before Otterburn that Scottish raids seem to have come closest to attacking and plundering the *terra sancta* of St Cuthbert himself, the island of Lindisfarne. The small colony of three to five Durham monks who served the priory church of Holy Island in the late fourteenth century were inured to the need to keep a watchful eye on the activities of the Scots on the mainland across the causeway; and during the campaign which ended in the battle of Neville's Cross, for instance, they spent 6d on the services of a watchman on the 'Snoke' of the island especially employed to observe the movements of the *incursus Scottorum*.⁶⁵ However, the Holy Island account rolls never give an impression of more hectic military activity on the island than they do between 1380 and 1388. During these years the monks and their messengers

went frequently not only to Durham but also to seek consultation with the Percies and Nevilles as well as with other magnates of both Scotland and England.⁶⁶ A generous gift of over £25 to the prior of Holy Island from Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland, in 1384–5 suggests a desire to strengthen the defences of the island; and, sure enough, in the same year Holy Island was being equipped with the novelty of an artillery expert and two guns.⁶⁷ Within only a year or so after the first clear indication that the Scots too were beginning to make use of gunpowder, the English community on Lindisfarne was therefore sufficiently at risk in the mid-1380s to warrant the addition of artillery to their other weapons against marauding Scots.⁶⁸ In the event, and just possibly because of those two guns, Holy Island apparently remained unmolested during the Otterburn campaign itself, though its estates—and those of its mother house on the Borders—certainly did not escape scot-free. Throughout the 1380s the priory of Holy Island's revenues from the Northumbrian mainland (*super terrain*) had already been seriously reduced by its inability to collect its now wasted lesser tithes from such outlying parts of Islandshire as Tweedmouth, Scremerston and Ord; and in the annual account which survives for the year of Otterburn (7 May 1388 to 27 May 1389) to these losses was added a new misfortune, the decline in value of yet another farm owed to the Holy Island community, now 'vastata per inimicos Scotie'.⁶⁹

An even more melancholy commentary on the vulnerability of the patrimony of the church of St Cuthbert in north-eastern Northumberland emerges from the account rolls (unfortunately missing for the years from 1385 to 1390) of St Cuthbert's smallest cell at Farne. Admittedly, the late medieval monastic settlement on the Inner Farne had never been anything but small and inadequately endowed. During the early 1380s only one master and a monk fellow were in residence on the island; and with a total income of often less than £30 p.a. their survival there was completely dependent upon an annual subsidy of £20 from the proctor of Norham as well as a fee farm of £9 13s. 4d. recently charged upon the mayor and burgesses of Newcastle upon Tyne by Edward III.⁷⁰ Such seclusion and poverty no doubt sometimes fostered the practice of the ascetic and contemplative life on the Inner

Farne, notably by the celebrated Durham 'monk-solitary' who lived there in the middle of the fourteenth century.⁷¹ Not that the Durham monks on the Farne Islands were completely isolated from events on the mainland nor protected from a number of visitors. Indeed in the 1360s the Farne monks were capable of prosecuting an extensive building campaign which led to the complete reconstruction of both St Cuthbert's Hall (probably a guest hall on the beach) and a new chapel: in 1371–2 it could be proudly stated in the annual Farne account roll that 'Capella Sancti Cuthberti bene perficitur laudes deo'.⁷² Much of the cost of these new buildings was met by donations from local magnates and other notables, several of them from north rather than south of the Tweed; and there seems every likelihood that during the closing years of the reign of Edward III the Farne Islands were the object of a not insignificant number of pilgrimages on the part of the Scots as well as the English.⁷³ It was accordingly all the more distressing for the two Durham monks on the Inner Farne when the revival of Anglo-Scottish warfare in the late 1370s led to what seems to have been a positively disastrous decade for their little settlement. In 1376–7 the master and his monk *socius* had to take shelter from the Scots in Bamburgh; and in 1380–1 they were not only having to replenish their stock at Farne with items 'quia deprehendabantur per Scottos' but also to furnish a room in their so-called *castello* for a watchman.⁷⁴ So frequently does 'causa guerre' occur as an explanation for expenditure within the surviving Farne account rolls of the early 1380s that one can well understand why the master on the island for most of that decade, Richard de Birtley, finally petitioned for release from his office not only because of his own infirmities but because of the 'exui exilitatem' of that place.⁷⁵

Although Durham's little monastic community at Farne was to survive for almost as long as its mother house at Durham, it might well be argued—on the evidence of the cell's fifteenth-century annual *compoti*—that it never altogether recovered from the economic dislocation caused by Anglo-Scottish warfare in the years before the battle of Otterburn.⁷⁶ Whether there occurred a similarly permanent reduction of all the other revenues, primarily tithes rather than rents, enjoyed by the later medieval monks of Durham on or near the Border, must remain a more open question. So many were these sources of income,

and so complex were the administrative methods used to exploit them, that it is by no means easy to trace either short- or long-term trends in their financial value to the church of St Cuthbert. In particular, and somewhat surprisingly in view of the interesting revelations they have to offer, no serious use has yet been made by northern economic historians of the long series of accounts submitted to Durham cathedral priory by the proctors of Norham from the tithes of that and neighbouring parishes. Not that there is any doubt of the general melancholy message the fourteenth-century accounts of these proctors, usually monks of Durham themselves, convey; by the 1370s and 1380s there was no prospect at all of any proctor ever accounting for an income remotely as high (nearly £300) as that recorded during 1300–1, the year in which the first of these accounts survives.⁷⁷ However, the detailed effect of Anglo-Scottish hostilities upon the revenues, churches and tenants of the monks of Durham in Northumberland remains an issue about which there is still much to be discovered and explained. Suffice it here to point out that when in the late 1430s Prior John Wessington of Durham (1416–46) was preparing a detailed explanation of his community's acute financial crisis, he was able (thanks to the richness of the cathedral's archives even then) to take an unusually long view. It transpired that the two greatest fiscal calamities to have befallen the monks of St Cuthbert since 1293 were, firstly, the collapse of their income from their spiritualities north of the Tweed in the first half of the fourteenth century; and, secondly, the more recent '*guerra inter regna, et precipue in Northumbria, ubi diverse dictarum ecclesiarum sunt situatae*'.⁷⁸ Even the most cursory examination of Prior Wessington's sources, above all the convent's bursars' account rolls still carefully preserved at Durham, confirms the essential truth of his diagnosis. For the monks of Durham the greatest financial disasters had no doubt come before the Black Death, for by that time their income from their churches in Scotland had more or less vanished for ever. The cathedral priory's revenues from the churches of Norham and Holy Island, however, had continued to hold up to as much as £110 or so a year in the 1350s, only to fall to as little as £23 in 1392, four years after Otterburn.⁷⁹ These figures were rarely to be as low again, providing yet another reminder that the first half of Richard II's reign was a calamitous low point in the community

of St Cuthbert's own entanglement with the course of the fourteenth-century Anglo-Scottish wars.

However, the decade before the battle of Otterburn presented the monks of Durham with a greater calamity still— unquestionably the one new initiative taken by the Scots during this period which most alarmed the monks of Durham and one which would no doubt have horrified St Cuthbert himself. For it was at Perth on 25 July 1378 that Robert II of Scotland formally granted Coldingham priory, nine miles north of Berwick upon Tweed and for long Durham cathedral's most wealthy and prestigious daughter house, to Dunfermline abbey.⁸⁰ So dramatic a means of cutting the peculiarly intricate Gordian knot created by the presence of a colony of English monks well within the frontiers of the Scottish kingdom was perhaps not entirely unanticipated. The Durham chapter's ability to retain control over Coldingham priory and its estates had been intermittently at risk ever since the outbreak of the Anglo-Scottish wars in the 1290s; and had it not been for Robert Bruce's own veneration for St Cuthbert in the early years of the fourteenth century, the handful of Durham monks still performing the *Opus Dei* at Coldingham might have been ejected long ago.⁸¹ However, the decision taken in 1378 by the Scottish king to align himself with Dunfermline abbey's more or less non-existent claims to lordship over Coldingham was as provocative as it was sudden. At one level it inaugurated that long and tortuous series of legal disputes and acts of violence which finally ended with the complete expulsion of the last English monks from Scottish soil exactly a century later in 1478.⁸² At another level it was Robert II's brutal attempt to wrest Coldingham out of Durham hands in 1378 which did more than anything to politicize not only the *causa de Coldingham* itself but also the attitude of the church of Durham to the Scottish realm. Never a very powerful force for compromise on the Borders perhaps, the bishops and monks of Durham progressively made less and less attempt to be so.

For the community of St Cuthbert therefore the most pressing issue during the decade before the battle of Otterburn was the struggle to regain control over Coldingham priory; and conversely for many of the senior Scottish clergy during these years the major objective was the permanent ejection of

Coldingham's English monks. Indeed nothing in the turbulent earlier history of the priory quite prepares one for the intense xenophobia of the accusations brought against the Durham monks at Coldingham in the consistory court held before the bishop of St Andrews at Holyrood in late April 1379.⁸³ At the heart of the savage indictment then brought against Robert Claxton, prior of Coldingham since 1374, together with his two or three fellow monks recently resident at the cell, was the belief that they had acted as a centre of Border espionage, informing English raiding parties north of the Tweed when and where to strike. So treacherous were the Coldingham monks alleged to have been that they had refused to employ Scottish servants in their kitchen for fear that the latter would inform on their conspiracies. More seriously still, the Durham monks of Coldingham had supposedly conveyed large quantities of Scottish bullion south of the Tweed; and they had even had the effrontery to send back to Durham the bones and relics of Scotland's most celebrated female saints, Ebba and Margaret.⁸⁴ Whatever one should make of these 'nationalist scare stories', they were undoubtedly used by the Scottish church to confirm Prior Claxton's deprivation, with the result that throughout the 1380s (not least during the Otterburn campaign itself) he and the other Coldingham monks were forced into exile at their mother house. Robert Claxton was still styled prior of Coldingham but was actually resident in Durham at the time of Bishop Fordham's visitation of the cathedral priory in May 1383.⁸⁵ Not surprisingly, the dispossessed Prior Claxton joined two military expeditions from Durham into Scotland in 1383–5, on at least one occasion to carry the banner of St Cuthbert.⁸⁶ During the summer of 1388 there were certainly no Durham monks at Coldingham and probably none present at the battle of Otterburn either: but if there had been, the ejected prior of Coldingham would have been the most obvious candidate. However, within a very few years of the battle of Otterburn a small group of Durham monks, if not Prior Claxton himself, were to be resident at Coldingham again. It would be hard to claim that this unexpected change of fortune was a consequence of the Otterburn campaign in any way; and it was perhaps only when northern English military strength gradually reasserted itself after its temporary reverse at the battle that the Scottish government (which became party to a truce between England

and France in June 1389) found it unwise to take too intransigent a stand on the Coldingham cause.⁸⁷ By that date, however, it was much more important that the acquisitive instincts of the Benedictine monks of Dunfermline were being challenged by a well orchestrated counter-campaign on the part of their Durham adversaries: in June 1387, Prior Robert Walworth had excused himself from attendance at the Black Monk Provincial Chapter then meeting at Northampton on the grounds that he was strenuously engaged 'on the recovery of our cell of Coldingham and other possessions located in those parts, to the value of 1,000 marks and more, long withdrawn and detained from us by the force of the king of the Scots'. Moreover, there seems little doubt that the single most powerful weapon in the armoury of the prior and chapter of Durham was a spiritual rather than a temporal one. It may be the case, as Anthony Goodman has suggested in another context, that the sanctity of St Cuthbert gradually lost potency, especially for the Scots, as the later Middle Ages progressed.⁸⁸ Nevertheless there is every indication that it was the Durham chapter's astute appeals to St Cuthbert's great reputation which did more than anything to enable them to retain their purchase on Coldingham until at last St Cuthbert himself seemed to have lost interest in their cause nearly a century later.⁸⁹ Perhaps the single most important revelation of Professor A.L. Brown's article on the vicissitudes of Coldingham's history in the late fourteenth century is the way in which, after the battle of Otterburn, George Dunbar, earl of March, was ready to protect the monks of Durham and reinstate them at Coldingham in return for the status he thereby received as St Cuthbert's greatest patron in Scotland. Here was more or less exactly foreshadowed the position held a half-century later by those new powers on the Border, Alexander and David Hume, the two brothers who finally turned and destroyed the Durham monastery in Scotland which had helped to create their family's fortunes.⁹⁰

All in all, therefore, and despite occasional fears in the Durham cloister that their great patron had fallen asleep, in 1388 St Cuthbert was still a name with which to conjure profitably. And not by the Durham monks alone. Few passages in the late sixteenth-century *Rites of Durham* are more eloquent than the pages devoted to

that goodly and sumptuous banner, with pipes of silver to be put on a staff, being five yards longe...so sumptuouslie finished and absolutely perfitted, was dedicated to holie St Cuthbert of intent and purpose that the same should be alwaies after presented and carried to any battell as occasion should serve; and which was never caryed or shewed at any battell but by the especiall grace of God almightie and the mediacion of holie St Cuthbert: it browghte home the victorie.⁹¹

As that quotation suggests, and whatever may have been true in the case of the saint's other legendary insignia, Cuthbert's celebrated banner had a highly practical purpose. As a banner intended to ensure not just military victory, but victory against the Scots, it was conspicuous near St Cuthbert's feretory in the cathedral from at least the late twelfth century.⁹² Edward I began requiring Durham monks to carry the banner on his expeditions against the Scots in the 1290s, a precedent followed on Edward II's first Scottish campaign in 1307, and again by Edward III in the 1330s.⁹³ More crucial still in providing St Cuthbert's relics with their unrivalled reputation for ensuring success in battle was their appearance in the custody of Prior Fossor of Durham at the startlingly successful English victory at Neville's Cross in 1346.⁹⁴ For understandable reasons, and long before its greatest contribution to English arms at Flodden in 1513, this was not a banner likely to endear the reputation of St Cuthbert to the Scots.⁹⁵ In a military context, and more obviously than elsewhere within his astonishing cult, Cuthbert had ceased to be an impartial saint.

However, of the banner's value, as an increasingly nationalist emblem of English superiority over the Scots, to any expeditionary force riding north of the Tyne and Tweed there could be no doubt whatsoever.⁹⁶ It need therefore occasion no surprise that during the violent years of armed conflict which preceded the battle of Otterburn, St Cuthbert's banner seems to have been in greater demand than ever before or since. Thus the surviving accounts of the Durham obedientiaries, and notably those of the convent's feretrar and bursar, mention expenses 'pro vexillo portando' to the Borders in 1383-4 (when it was taken to Holy Island as well as Scotland), in 1385 and again in 1389-90.⁹⁷ But what of the year of Otterburn itself? The

Durham feretrar's account roll of June 1388 to June 1389 records, as usual, the receipt of over £30 in offerings at the pyx of St Cuthbert in the cathedral; and the bursar's roll for the same period contains a more intriguing reference to a payment made to the earl of Douglas for the ransom ('pro redempcione') of Willington and Wallsend on the Tyne in this very year.⁹⁸ Neither of these accounts however records the dispatch of St Cuthbert's Banner to any destination whatsoever. No doubt it would be unwise to rest too much weight on arguments *ex silentio* from medieval obedientiary accounts. But could it be that one of the many mistakes made by the English forces at Otterburn in August 1388, made above all by John Fordham in his last weeks as a northern bishop, was an error of omission—not to bring the banner of St Cuthbert from Durham to help them in battle against the Scots? Here at least was a year in which an English victory was not 'browghte home'.

NOTES

1. G.M.Trevelyan, *Clio, A Muse, and Other Essays, Literary and Pedestrian*, London, 1914, pp. 153–6.
2. *ibid.*, p. 180; R.N.Hadcock, 'A map of medieval Northumberland and Durham', *AA*, 4th ser., xvi, 1939, p. 167; cf. (for nineteenth-century discoveries in Elsdon church of the skeletons of men probably killed at the battle of Otterburn) J.Hodgson, *History of Northumberland*, part II, vol. i, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1827, pp. 1, 82; G.N.Taylor, *The Story of Elsdon*, Newcastle upon Tyne, c.1984, pp. 10–12.
3. A.Hamilton Thompson, 'The MS list of churches dedicated to St. Cuthbert, attributed to Prior Wessyngton', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, vii, 1935, p. 172.
4. Particularly instructive in placing Durham's economic losses on and near the Border within a general context are E.Miller, *War in the North*, University of Hull, 1960; J.A.Tuck, 'War and society in the medieval north', *Northern History*, xxi, 1985, pp. 33–52; A.J.L. Winchester, *Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria*, Edinburgh, 1987; A.Goodman, 'Religion and warfare in the Anglo-Scottish Marches', in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, ed. R.Bartlett and A. MacKay, Oxford, 1989, pp. 245–66.
5. No Durham episcopal register survives for the pontificates of either Bishop John Fordham or Bishop Walter Skirlaw: see D.M. Smith, *Guide to Bishops' Registers of England and Wales*, Royal Historical Society, 1981, pp. 268–9. Nor do the chancery enrolments of these two bishops (PRO, Dur. 3/32, 33) throw any light on their movements in the summer of 1388.

6. Trevelyan, *Clio*, p. 182. The role of the bishop of Durham in the Otterburn campaign is often simply omitted in standard accounts of the battle, e.g. J.H.Ramsay, *The Genesis of Lancaster, 1307–99*, Oxford, 1913, pp. 259–61; A.Steel, *Richard II*, Cambridge, 1941, pp. 166–7; R.Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, Edinburgh, 1974, pp. 198–9.
7. *Chron. Wyntoun*, iii, pp. 34–7; *Scotichronicon Johannis de Fordun cum Supplementis et Continuatione Walteri Bowen*, ed. W.Goodall, Edinburgh, 1759, ii, pp. 410–11.
8. Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H.T.Riley, RS, 1863–4, ii, pp. 175–6; *Chronicon Henrici Knighton*, ed. J.R.Lumby, RS, 1895, ii, pp. 297–8.
9. *Westminster*, pp. 347–51.
10. Froissart xiii, pp. 226–31; *The Chronicles of Froissart*, ed. G.C. Macaulay, 1895, pp. 370–81.
11. CCR 1385–89, p. 610.
12. CCR 1385–89, pp. 604, 610; A.Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, London, 1973, p. 133.
13. *Westminster*, pp. 348–9, ('prount inter eos erat conductum').
14. CCR 1385–89, p. 604.
15. Lambeth Palace Library, Reg. W.Courtenay, fo. 321v; Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae, 1300–1541*, vi, London, 1963, p. 108.
16. PRO, Dur. 3/33, mm. 1–6; CPR 1385–89, p. 504.
17. Cambridge University Library, EDR: G/1/3 (Reg. J.Fordham), fos. 1–3; CPR 1385–89, p. 510.
18. For this suggestion see R.G.Davies, 'The episcopate and the political crisis in England of 1386–88', *Speculum*, li, 1976, pp. 683–6.
19. T.F.Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England*, Manchester, 1920–33, iii, p. 436.
20. For a *locus classicus* of episcopal loyalty at Durham to the royal government in the fifteenth century, see R.L.Storey, *Thomas Langley and the Bishopric of Durham, 1406–1437*, London, 1961, pp. 22–46, 135–63.
21. Dean and Chapter of Durham (henceforth DCD), Locellus xxv, no. 96; Storey, *Langley*, p. 144.
22. See., e.g., R.B.Dobson, 'Beverley in conflict: Archbishop Alexander Neville and the Minster clergy', in *Mediaeval Art and Architecture in the East Riding of Yorkshire*, ed. C.Wilson, British Archaeological Association, 1989, pp. 149–64; R.B.Dobson, 'Richard III and the Church of York', in *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. R.A.Griffiths and J.Sherborne, Gloucester, 1986, pp. 130–54.
23. *Handbook of British Chronology*, ed. E.B.Fryde et al., 3rd edn, Royal Historical Society, 1986, pp. 93–5; R.B.Dobson, *Durham Priory, 1400–1450*, Cambridge, 1973, pp. 203–4.
24. Tout, *Chapters*, iii, p. 330; v, pp. 46–7.
25. J.L.Grassi, 'Royal clerks from the archdiocese of York in the fourteenth century', *Northern History*, v, 1970, pp. 30, 33; Tout, *Chapters*, v, pp. 19–20, 48–9; B.Wilkinson, *The Chancery under Edward III*, Manchester, 1929, pp. 178, 207.

26. J.Scammell, 'The origin and limitations of the liberty of Durham', *EHR*, lxxxi, 1966, pp. 472-3. In his *The County Palatine of Durham*, Harvard, 1900, pp. 75-6, G.T.Lapsley long ago concluded that the regality of the bishop of Durham, increasingly regarded with 'perplexed toleration' by the Crown, had passed its zenith by the fourteenth century.
27. Precisely such a charge had been made publicly against Archbishop Alexander Neville and Richard II's other favourites a few months before the battle of Otterburn (*Rot. Parl.*, iii, p. 230); cf. J.Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War in the fourteenth century', in *Europe in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. J.R.Hale, J.R.L.Highfield and B.Smalley, London, 1965, pp. 192-5.
28. BL, Cotton MSS., Faustina A. vi, fos 42-3, 47; *Historical Papers and Letters from the Northern Registers*, RS, 1873, pp. 385-9.
29. *Letters from Northern Registers*, pp. 412-13; Storey, *Langley*, pp. 151-2. By contrast, in the summer of 1388 Archbishop Alexander Neville was already in disgrace and exile: he had been captured in June, with £30 in his possession, by two royal officials near Tynemouth (J. Rymer, *Foedera*, The Hague, 1739-45, vol. III, iv, p. 26).
30. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 54.
31. *Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres*, SS, ix, 1839, pp. clxxxv-clxxxvii; cf. Lapsley, *County Palatine*, pp. 305-6.
32. See., e.g., *Foedera*, ed. cit., vol. III, i, pp. 58, 68, 72, 76, 78; ii, pp. 63, 139, 171; *Rot Scot.*, ii, pp. 42-4.
33. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 64-5, 72.
34. For some examples at Coldingham Priory see R.B.Dobson, 'The last English monks on Scottish soil', *ScHR*, xlvi, 1967, p. 6 n.1.
35. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 12, 22, 28, 64-5; A.B.Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500 (BRUO)*, Oxford 1957-9, iii, pp. 1973-4.
36. *Foedera*, ed. cit., vol III, iii, pp. 16, 58, 72-3, 75, 90, 119-20; BRUO, iii, pp. 1708-10.
37. BRUO, iii, p. 1709. Bishop Skirlaw also accompanied Richard II on his ill-fated Scottish campaign of 1385, to which he brought an armed *comitiva* of thirty esquires and thirty archers (Tout, *Chapters*, V, p. 48).
38. *Foedera*, ed. cit., vol. III, iv, p. 102; BRUO, iii, p. 1709.
39. Nicholson, *Scotland*, pp. 216-18; Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War', pp. 212-16; A.Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border magnates', *Northern History*, iii, 1968, pp. 44-52.
40. *Foedera*, ed. cit., vol. III, i, p. 151; cf. *English Historical Documents*, iv, 1327-1485, ed. A.R.Myers, London, 1969, pp. 101-3.
41. *Foedera*, ed. cit., vol. III, ii, p. 192; iii, pp. 6, 51; R.L.Storey, 'The Wardens of the Marches of England towards Scotland, 1377-1489', *EHR*, 2 xxii, 1957, p. 609.
42. According to the *Anonimale Chronicle*, John Fordham (then keeper of the privy seal and bishop-elect of Durham) was in serious danger of losing his head if he had not sought refuge in the Tower

- of London on 13–15 June 1381; *The Anonimale Chronicle, 1333 to 1381*, ed. V.H. Galbraith, Manchester, 1927, p. 139.
43. Storey, 'Wardens of the Marches', pp. 610–11.
 44. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 42–3, 44, 54, 64–5, 70, 92.
 45. Scammell, 'Liberty of Durham', p. 471. By the late fourteenth century it was not unusual for the Crown to order the bishop of Durham to send all the troops he had arrayed within his palatine franchise to a specified lay nobleman who would lead them on campaign; self-evidently this does not seem to have been the case in the summer of 1388. See PRO, Dur. 3/32, m. 4v; Lapsley, *County Palatine*, pp. 305–7.
 46. E.Craster, 'The patrimony of St. Cuthbert', *EHR*, lxi, 1954, pp. 187–9. James Raine's *The History and Antiquities of North Durham*, London, 1852, written as a memorial to the Durham liberties immediately south of the Tweed which were finally absorbed into the county of Northumberland in 1852, makes little attempt to analyse the constitutional bases of these franchises.
 47. Hadcock, 'Map of Medieval Northumberland and Durham', pp. 159–88; Storey, *Langley*, pp. 81–2, 135–47. Not surprisingly, Northumberland and Islandshire were a regular source of salmon and other fish frequently sent to Durham (see, e.g., the 150 salmon dispatched from Northumberland in 1300–1: DCD, Proctor of Northumberland's Account).
 48. As Sir Robert Bowes was to observe in 1551, 'That castle standeth marvellously well for the defence and the reliefe of the countrey as well from incourses of enemyes in tyme of warre as from thefts and spoiles in tyme of peace, for it standeth upon the utter frontier': Raine, *North Durham*, p. 296, and cf. pp. 284–99, *passim*; H.E.H. Jermyingham, *Norham Castle*, Edinburgh, 1883.
 49. PRO, Dur. 3/31, m. 5; 3/32, m. 7; 3/33 mm. 14, 15; Raine, *North Durham*, pp. 45, 46, 286, 287; GEC, x, 1945, pp. 26–9.
 50. For Durham correspondence relating to the Ogle family in the fifteenth century (including the accusation of a prior of Holy Island that Richard Ogle 'wald haf the gudds of Sanct Cuthbert'), see DCD, Reg. Parv. ii, fos 1, 3, 55, 112; cf. Holy Island Accounts, 1410–21; J.S. Roskell, *The Commons in the Parliament of 1422*, Manchester, 1954, p. 152.
 51. T.H. Rowland, *Medieval Castles, Towers, Peles and Bastions of Northumberland*, Morpeth, 1987, pp. 10, 14–15, 96; *The History of the King's Works*, ed. H.M. Colvin, 1963, i, pp. 409–22; ii, pp. 554–8, 563–71, 745–8, 749–50.
 52. For various attacks on Northumberland (rarely successful) during the later Middle Ages, see *Letters from Northern Registers*, pp. 344–5; E.W. M. Balfour-Melville, *James I King of Scots, 1406–1437*, London, 1936, p. 68; Nicholson, *Scotland*, pp. 119, 405, 552, 601, 604.
 53. DCD, Miscellaneous Charters, no. 1392; *The Correspondence, Inventories, etc. of the Priory of Coldingham*, SS, xii, 1841, p. xlv.
 54. J. Harvey, *English Mediaeval Architects*, 2nd. ed., Gloucester, 1984, pp. 181–4.

55. CPR, 1377–81, p. 257; L.F.Salzman, *Building in England down to 1540*, Oxford, 1952, pp. 456–9; *History of the King's Works*, ii, pp. 599, 819–20; J.Harvey, *The Perpendicular Style*, London, 1978, p. 116.
56. Salzman, *Building*, pp. 455–6; Harvey, *Mediaeval Architects*, pp. 182–3.
57. JGR, 1379–83, ii, no. 9220; Harvey, *Mediaeval Architects*, pp. 182–4; *History of the King's Works*, ii, pp. 568–9.
58. Harvey, *Mediaeval English Architects*, p. 183; and for Durham cathedral priory's debts to John Lewyn and his junior colleague as master mason, Peter Dryng, see DCD, Bursars' Accounts, 1386–7.
59. Nicholson, *Scotland*, pp. 194–9; cf. A.Goodman, 'The Anglo-Scottish Marches in the fifteenth century: a frontier society?', in *Scotland and England, 1286–1815*, ed. R.Mason, Edinburgh, 1987, pp. 18–33.
60. Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, i, pp. 435–8; ii, pp. 105, 109, 115, 133; Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War', pp. 206–14; J.S.Roskell, *The Impeachment of Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, in 1386*, Manchester, 1984, pp. 101–3.
61. A.Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border magnates', pp. 36–52; 'War and society in the medieval north', pp. 48–51.
62. S.Armitage-Smith, *John of Gaunt*, London, 1904, pp. 250–1; cf. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 38–9.
63. N.B.Lewis, 'The last medieval summons of the English feudal levy, 13 June 1385', EHR, lxxiii, 1958, pp. 1–26.
64. *The Priory of Hexham*, SS, 1864–5, ii, pp. 149–51; cf. Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War', pp. 209–16.
65. Raine, *North Durham*, p. 90. It is clear from a letter of Richard II written three years before Otterburn that the Durham monks on Holy Island would have much liked to be relieved of the responsibility of defending their buildings, 'kernellati et tamquam castrum afforciati' (*ibid.*, pp. 121–2).
66. DCD, Holy Island Accounts, 1380–9. In 1384–5 the Master of Farne travelled on the business of his cell (once to Durham but three times to Dunbar (Farne Accounts, 1384–5).
67. DCD, Holy Island Accounts, 1384–5; Bursars' Accounts, 1384–5; *Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham*, SS, 1898–1901, iii, p. 594.
68. *Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, 1878–1908, iii, p. 672; Nicholson, *Scotland*, pp. 195–6.
69. DCD, Holy Island Accounts, 1385–9.
70. The Farne Accounts now preserved at Durham commence in 1357–8 and survive in several long consecutive series thereafter; cf. Dobson, *Durham Priory*, pp. 314–15.
71. W.A.Pantin, 'The monk-solitary of Farne: a fourteenth century English mystic', EHR, lix, 1944, pp. 162–86; H.Farmer, 'The Meditations of the monk of Farne', *Studia Anselmiana*, 4th ser., xli, 1957, pp. 141–245.
72. DCD, Farne Accounts, 1360–1, 1369–70, 1370–1, 1371–2; Raine, *North Durham*, pp. 345–6.
73. For a reference to those for whom prayers were offered at Farne see DCD, Farne Accounts, 1362–3: the accounts abound with

- references to the heavy use made of the community's boat or coble.
74. DCD, Farne Accounts, 1376–81.
 75. BL, Cotton MSS., Faustina A. vi, fos 12v–13.
 76. The average annual income of the Farne community had decreased to only £15 in the early fifteenth century; and it was valued at no more than £12 in the 1530s: Dobson, *Durham Priory*, pp. 309, 314–15.
 77. DCD, Proctor of Norham Accounts, which survive in great numbers except for a large unfortunate gap between 1367 and 1401.
 78. DCD, Reg. II. fos 356v–7; *Scriptores Tres*, pp. ccxlviii–ccl.
 79. DCD, Bursars' Accounts, 1351–8, 1391–8; cf. *Scriptores Tres*, pp. ccxlviii–ccl.
 80. *Chron. Bower* (Goodall), ii, pp. 161–3; A.L. Brown, 'The priory of Coldingham in the late fourteenth century', *Innes Review*, xxiii, 1972, pp. 91–2. The fourteenth-century account rolls of the priory printed in *Coldingham Correspondence* make it clear that after the 1290s there can rarely have been more than four or five Durham monks resident there, as compared with the thirty projected in the 1230s: *Scriptores Tres*, p. xliii.
 81. DCD Miscellaneous Charters, nos 633–5, 1014; *Coldingham Correspondence*, pp. 3–8, 244–5; Raine, *North Durham*, Appendix, pp. 17–18; Dobson, 'Last English monks', p. 3.
 82. Dobson, *Durham Priory*, pp. 316–27; and for a guide to the complexities of Coldingham priory's history after the withdrawal of the Durham monks, see M. Dilworth, 'Coldingham priory and the Reformation', *Innes Review*, xxiii, 1973, pp. 115–37.
 83. DCD, Miscellaneous Charters, no. 663; *Calendar of Papal Letters*, iv. p. 236.
 84. Raine, *North Durham*, no. 591; cf. Dobson, 'Last English monks', p. 5.
 85. DCD, 1.8. Pont. 7; *Coldingham Correspondence*, pp. 45–67. Not surprisingly, none of Robert de Claxton's accounts as prior of Coldingham survive.
 86. DCD, Bursars' Accounts, 1383–4, 1384–5; *Durham Account Rolls*, iii, pp. 593–4.
 87. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 142–3. The truces between England, Scotland and France were regularly renewed until the end of the century (Nicholson, *Scotland*, pp. 216–17; Campbell, 'England, Scotland and the Hundred Years War', p. 210). Arrangements for collecting the ransoms incurred by Englishmen captured at Otterburn were still being made at Ely in December 1389 (Cambridge University Library, EDR: G/1/3, fo. 10v).
 88. *Scriptores Tres*, pp. clvi–clvii. But see the letters of fraternity issued by the Durham prior and chapter to Scottish lords in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: *The Obituary Roll of William Ebchester and John Burnby, Priors of Durham*, SS, xxxi, 1856, pp. 107–9.
 89. Goodman, 'Anglo-Scottish Marches in the fifteenth century: a frontier society?', p. 28.
 90. Brown, 'Priory of Coldingham in the fourteenth century', pp. 94–100; Dobson, *Durham Priory*, pp. 321–7.

91. *Rites of Durham*, SS, lvii, 1903, p. 26; cf. pp. 94–5.
92. *Libellus de vita et miraculis Sancti Godrici*, SS, xx, 1847, p. 83; VCH, *Durham*, 1905–28, iii, p. 14.
93. C.M.Fraser, *A History of Antony Bek, Bishop of Durham, 1283–1311*, Oxford, 1957, pp. 129–30, 212; *Durham Account Rolls*, ii, p. 529.
94. *Rites of Durham*, pp. 23–9; *Letters from Northern Registers*, pp. 387–9.
95. Although very heavy, St Cuthbert's banner could be carried by one bearer, usually a Durham monk. However, no less than three members of the community accompanied the banner to Flodden Field in 1513: see DCD, *Feretrars' Accounts, 1513–14*; *Bursars' Accounts, 1513–14*; J.Raine, *Saint Cuthbert*, Durham, 1828, p. 167.
96. For Henry IV's use of the banners of both St Cuthbert and St John of Beverley in 1400, see A.L.Brown, 'The English campaign in Scotland, 1400', in *British Government and Administration*, ed. H. Header and H.R.Loyn, Cardiff, 1974, p. 45.
97. DCD, *Bursars' Accounts, 1383–4, 1384–5*; *Feretrars' Accounts, 1385–6*; *Durham Account Rolls*, ii, p. 441; iii, pp. 593–4.
98. DCD, *Feretrars' Accounts, 1388–9*; *Bursars' Accounts, 1388–9*.

RESPONSES TO WAR

Carlisle and the West March in the
later fourteenth century*Henry Summerson*

Endurance and survival were the keynotes of life on the English West March in the later fourteenth century, as the region's natural disadvantages, in terms of climate, terrain and distance from centres of national power, were repeatedly compounded by the ravages of plague and war. The whole of northern England stood under threat from the latter, but this chapter is principally concerned with northern Cumberland, as the region fronting on to the Scottish border, and with Carlisle, its most important community and only city. Carlisle was not a large place in the reign of Richard II. Its population was certainly larger than the 1,017 suggested by J.C.Russell,¹ but even with the 1400 or 1500 inhabitants which a close reading of the 1377 poll tax return,² and of other documents contemporary with it, would seem to indicate, it was still a modestly sized town, not to be compared in this respect with major northern communities such as York (11,000 inhabitants) or Newcastle (nearly 5,000).³ Sharing the problems of its region, Carlisle was fairly insignificant in its size but important by reason of its functions. Containing as it did both a castle and a cathedral, the former made it a centre both of local government and of regional defence, the latter the focal point of a diocese; an important local market centre, its place in the regional economy must have been enhanced by its role in meeting the needs of the garrison in the castle and of the canons who served the cathedral. Carlisle's strategic, indeed sovereign, importance—it was described by the men of Cumberland in a petition to parliament in 1378 as 'le souverain resuit et governaille de tout le Countee'⁴—was such as to make it impossible (in spite of

numerous petitions suggesting the contrary) for the king's government to allow it to fall to attack or become indefensible. The sources for the city's fortunes in the Middle Ages are largely those generated by central government. This is accidental, in that most of the local sources have perished, but still appropriate, as a reflection of Carlisle's place in the defence of England's northern border and, as a consequence of that, of its importance to the region around.

City and region were probably at their lowest ebb in the middle of the fourteenth century, immediately after the first outbreak of the Black Death, which appears to have killed at least a third of Carlisle's population and to have been widely destructive in Cumbria. In 1352 Edward III granted Carlisle a confirmation and extension of privileges on the grounds that

the said city is situated on the frontier of Scotland, to be a defence and refuge of the adjacent parts against the Scots, and that it is now wasted and more than usually depressed, as well by the mortal pestilence lately prevalent in those parts as by the frequent attacks of the said enemies.⁵

Recovery from this depressed condition was slow, any improvement always liable to be reversed. There were further visitations of the plague in 1362, 1369, 1380 and probably 1391, and there were also the effects of war. The Treaty of Berwick in 1357, which secured the release of the Scottish king David II from English captivity, had stipulated that there should be a truce until his ransom was paid, and in later negotiations there was a more precise provision for a truce until 1384. But the cessation of hostilities which followed was never more than partial. The early years of the period between 1357 and 1384 were, indeed, peaceful by comparison with the 1340s, in that whole armies no longer crossed the Border, but the ill will and belligerent habits learnt in the previous sixty years were not going to be easily eradicated, and the 1360s and 1370s were still decades of raids and skirmishes, of cattle-lifting and taking prisoners for ransom, and all the uncertainties of war. In 1368 the English king had to forbid his subjects in the north to make raids into Scotland in retaliation for those which the Scots were making into England.⁶ In 1371 John de Whitlowe, Carlisle's

chosen representative for the Winchester assembly summoned to discuss a proposed subsidy on parishes, proved unable to attend it—he had been ‘taken and held in prison in Scotland’.⁷ In 1374 the lease of property at Etterby, just north of Carlisle, prescribed that the lessees must leave the houses in good condition, ‘except in the event of burning or other destruction by our enemies of Scotland’.⁸ In that same year Wigton church was found to have been crenellated without licence, and men from Cumberland were reported to have been raiding into English-held Annandale.⁹ In 1378 another English raid into south-west Scotland was caught in an ambush, a defeat which was later described as ‘a misadventure then suffered by our people of the west march at the hands of the Scots, whereby our people of that march were enfeebled and the Scots strengthened’, and which led, in an atmosphere of ‘great dread...in the country round of the Scots our enemies’, to the reinforcement of the Carlisle garrison.¹⁰ The men of the northern counties of England complained of the injuries they had suffered under colour of a truce more damaging to them than open war,¹¹ and prepared for just such war in conditions barely distinguishable from it. In April 1380 Gilbert de Culwen requested and received licence to crenellate his manor-house at Workington, which, even though it stands on the coast south of Maryport, was now described as ‘next the March of Scotland’;¹² only a month later Gilbert was appointed a Warden of the West March, and may be supposed to have known what he was talking about.

He must soon have been thankful for his precautions, for the year 1380 also saw the first of a series of large-scale Scottish raids into Cumberland. The royal demesnes round Carlisle were devastating as the invaders made their way through Inglewood forest (reducing the king’s rents there by three-quarters as they passed, and taking, it was believed, 40,000 head of cattle) to Penrith, where they arrived during the town’s annual fair, an event which gave them a rich crop of prisoners and booty.¹³ It was with good reason that when in the following year Mary de Stapilton of Edenhall, a village only a few miles from Penrith, demised a messuage in Carlisle to John de Levynghton, she did so with the reservation that ‘if it should happen that a sudden Scottish attack should occur in Cumberland, it shall be lawful for Mary to enter that messuage and retain it as she did

before'.¹⁴ Not that Carlisle was necessarily very much safer, for two years later another invading force was said to have approached the city as they made their way back home and to have shot fire over the walls, setting one of the streets alight. An escheator's inquest, held the following year into the lands of that very John de Levyngham to whom Mary de Stapilton had made over her holding, found that he had held three messuages in the city, which used to be worth 20s. p.a. but were now worth nothing, as they were 'burnt by the Scots and by the fire of the Scots'.¹⁵ The English, for their part, were not reluctant to retaliate, even in the dead of winter. At the beginning of January 1384 a raiding party set out by sea for Galloway, only to find when it got there that the enemy had been alerted by a beacon, lit by a Scotswoman long resident in England.¹⁶ It seems likely that the beacon existed to warn the English of the approach of the Scots, and that both sides raided by sea as well as by land.

And all this, it should be stressed, had been going on while there was a truce in being, if hardly in force. The hostilities of which the battle of Otterburn formed the most striking episode had been a long time preparing, and when they came they differed in scale, but not in kind, from what had gone before them. Scottish armies were not paid by the Crown, and the prospect of booty was therefore an important inducement to the performance of military service. The truce of 1389 was much more readily accepted in Scotland by the nobility than by commoners, who had hoped for *lucrum multum* from a further invasion of England.¹⁷ They had taken much already. Indeed, devastation and plunder were among the essential objects of such invasions, since the Scots had no aspirations after conquest—even if they did regard their operations after 1384 as part of a national war of independence, the fact remains that destruction in England was their chosen means of achieving their ends. There were two major Scottish incursions into north-west England after the ending of the truce in February 1384; both caused enormous damage. In August 1385 a force of Scots and French, taking advantage of the absence of many of the region's usual defenders on Richard II's invasion of Scotland, crossed the Solway, took £200 from the monks of Holmcultram for not burning their abbey down,¹⁸ and devastated their way down to Cocker mouth. Then they seem to have turned inland,

for Knighton records another attack on Penrith, and Froissart an invasion of Westmorland,¹⁹ before they made their way back north. Plans for an attack on Carlisle came to nothing, perhaps deterred by the three new guns now placed on the castle walls,²⁰ but the countryside round was wasted—'miserably destroyed and burnt by attacks of our enemies of France and Scotland'²¹—and it was probably now that the prior of Lanercost was captured and held to ransom for money and eighty quarters of corn.²² It was the opinion of the French that during this year 'they had burnt in the bishopricks of Durham and Carlisle more than the value of all the towns in the kingdom of Scotland'. The French set a low value on things Scottish, but of the scale of the destruction there is no doubt. In 1386 all arrears on all taxes, lay and clerical, which were due from Cumberland were commuted for a lump sum of £200, 'considering the great mischiefs and destructions which are done to and inflicted on the people of the holy church and the commons of the county of Cumberland by the invasions of our enemies of Scotland'.²³

Three years later, after a series of short truces, those enemies were back. This was part of a double-pronged attack on both the English Marches, and it was made in depth. Just as in the east the Scots did not start to plunder until they were level with Newcastle, their onset causing alarms as far away as York,²⁴ so in the west they went far into Westmorland. Their movements in Cumbria cannot be traced in detail, but since in the north of Cumberland there was destruction at Burgh-by-sands on the Solway, at Westlinton and Alstonby due north of Carlisle, and at Irthington north-east of the city, near the Roman Wall, it looks as if they advanced on a wide front before moving down the Eden valley, their passage marked by devastation at Sebergham on the western side of Inglewood forest, and on into Westmorland, where they ravaged the north of that county and destroyed Appleby.²⁵ On their way back, they may have been contemplating an attack on Carlisle—they certainly stayed long enough round the city to render the royal demesnes there valueless once more²⁶—when news of Otterburn made them decide to withdraw, taking with them some 300 prisoners. One of these was the sheriff of Cumberland, Peter de Tillioll, who had to pay a ransom comprising £1,000 in cash and sixty chalders of malt.²⁷ Early in 1389 the country round Carlisle was

wasted again,²⁸ before the Scots became parties to the Anglo-French truce negotiated during that year. In March 1390 the three northern shires of England were granted remission of all their arrears to the Exchequer, 'in consideration of the frequent burning and destruction of their tenements, goods and chattels by the French and Scots',²⁹ and many more such remissions were granted during the 1390s and afterwards; no doubt it was the destruction inflicted in wartime that was foremost in the king's mind, but there is no reason to suppose the truce of 1389 was any better observed than that of 1357 had been. Scottish criminals were active on English soil (and with English assistance)³⁰ and in 1397 there were complaints in parliament that the Scots were breaking the truce.³¹

It is impossible to doubt that so much conflict brought much suffering with it, and had effects for the regions involved that were on the face of it unmitigatedly disastrous. The destruction inflicted by the Scots on Cumberland was widespread. The north of the county certainly took the brunt of it, but there was also devastation down the coast as far as Cockermouth, at Penrith and the villages around it, at the southern end of the county, and in Inglewood forest, as well as round Carlisle. There were shortages of food, no doubt exacerbated by Scottish piracy which limited Cumbrian contacts with Ireland³²—in 1384 the Warden of the West March received £100 in compensation for money spent by him as a result of 'the scarcity of victuals at present in Carlisle and the parts around'³³—and there were also reports of shortages of people, particularly in Carlisle; a petition to parliament shortly after the invasion of 1385 claimed, with some exaggeration, that 'the great part of the commons of that city have deserted the city and still more wish to'.³⁴ War impinged heavily on urban life. A certain carelessness towards the claims of civic defence is suggested by the theft in 1376 of the iron chains on Carlisle's Caldewgate gate,³⁵ but by 1380 the Wardens of the March were being instructed to compel the citizens to 'array and fortify' their city,³⁶ and in 1386 the townsmen were ordered to keep watch 'as they were wont to watch and ward before these times'.³⁷ The appearance of an officer described as 'serjeant of the watches of the town and castle of Carlisle', with a lodging in one of the towers in the circuit of city walls,³⁸ shows the extent to which an old civic duty had become a present military necessity. An equally

unwelcome intrusion must have been the additions to Carlisle's garrison, soldiers who, billeted on the townsfolk, all too often refused to pay for their lodgings, and who in 1390 involved themselves in a dispute among the cathedral canons which provoked considerable disorder.³⁹ Outside the walls, the digging of ditches to strengthen the defences ruined a number of the tenements and gardens which enabled townsmen to supplement their diets or their incomes,⁴⁰ and those who went beyond the shelter of the walls risked being captured by the Scots. By 1390 John de Blenkinsop, who was several times mayor of Carlisle, had twice been captured and held to ransom, though since his ransom was still unpaid in 1401 the experience may have been less ruinous than he claimed.⁴¹ A number of citizens disposed of weapons or armour in their wills,⁴² while the early rolls of the Carlisle mayor's court record actions over such commodities as helmets, swords, lances and arrows.⁴³

The opportunity to meet the needs of the fighting man represents, indeed, a potential source of profit, but against this must be set a sort of inbuilt impermanence afflicting the whole of society. As far as property-holders were concerned, this can be seen in the terms of leases, some of which have been cited already. To give one further example, in 1383 a dispute over dower from lands in Skelton and Kirkandrews was settled by the grant of a 40s. life-rent from the properties in question, with the qualification that 'if those lands or tenements should be partly or wholly destroyed or damaged in war by the king's enemies from Scotland or by other enemies', then the rent might be reduced by up to a third.⁴⁴ This case, which was the subject of litigation in 1392, is of particular interest because its sequel shows how fear of Scottish attack affected other, lesser, people, for around the beginning of August 1384,

as it had come to the ears of the then warden of the march that the king's enemies of Scotland wished to enter the land of England shortly, burning houses and buildings, taking and killing men, and doing many other evil deeds, a proclamation was made by that warden that all who wished to save their houses and buildings from burning and destruction should have those houses and buildings unroofed, under peril of the consequences.

Raiders usually destroyed houses by setting fire to their thatch, which caused their walls to crumble; clearly it was assumed, no doubt rightly, that they would not set about demolishing the walls of houses which they found already roofless. Just as in Scotland the lowland peasantry learnt to take to the forests with their cattle when English forces approached, and made light of the destruction of their homes, 'saying that with six or eight stakes they would soon have new houses',⁴⁵ so in Cumberland people learnt how to minimize war damage, albeit at what must have been a high price in terms of discontinuity and social dislocation.

And yet it would be wrong to argue that life on the West March become just a blind struggle for survival, conducted at the lowest levels of social and economic activity compatible with the avoidance of anarchy. Struggle there certainly was, but in spite of often immense difficulties people showed considerable resilience, greatly helped by the fact that the social fabric, though perhaps pulled somewhat out of shape to meet the strains imposed upon it, did not disintegrate, not least because Carlisle and Cumberland retained their places in networks of royal command, ecclesiastical organization and commercial activity extending across northern England. No doubt the consciousness that they formed a part of larger units, as well as the material benefits which such contacts provided, helped to sustain the men of Cumberland, but their morale was not upheld by royal writs and trading links alone, and they looked for support to higher agencies as well. Knighton's story is well known, of how the Scots were deterred from attacking Carlisle in 1385 by a woman who announced the imminent arrival of the English king and his army, the woman being believed to be 'the glorious virgin Mary, the patron of Carlisle', bringing aid to its inhabitants as she had often done before.⁴⁶ Although there is no record of relics of the Virgin in Carlisle cathedral, the dedication of that building to her, the lights endowed to burn before her altars there and in St Cuthbert's (the city's other parish church), the statue to which one testator bequeathed a silver belt,⁴⁷ her representation on the seals of both city and priory, all point to the development of a cult which provided an important focus for civic loyalties. It was a cult which would appear to have developed at least as much in the expectation of earthly advantages as in the hope of spiritual

rewards, and the same was probably true of some of the other cults observed in Carlisle. For instance, there is known to have been a light in the cathedral dedicated to St Zita,⁴⁸ an Italian saint invoked, according to *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 'by housewives and domestic servants, especially when they lost their keys or were in danger from rivers or crossing bridges'.⁴⁹ In a city surrounded by rivers and approached over bridges in constant need of repair,⁵⁰ this was a saint with solid benefits to confer. The foundation of St Alban's chantry in Carlisle market-place had as its essential aim the salvation of the soul of Robert de Tibay. But in the present context, that of the secular expression of spiritual exercises, it is not unimportant that among the others for whom prayers were to be offered in it was 'the community of the whole city of Carlisle',⁵¹ thus once more linked with its heavenly defenders.

County and city had earthly defenders as well, of course. Of all the possible responses to war, perhaps the most obvious is to take part in it. War had its profits, in the shape of plunder and ransoms—though the case of John de Blenkinsop, cited earlier, may indicate that on the Anglo-Scottish Borders, as in France, more was sometimes promised in the way of ransoms than was actually received. One or two actions in the Carlisle mayor's court in the early fifteenth century appear to have related to ransoms owed by Scots,⁵² but it seems inherently unlikely that townsmen often gained in this way. The profits of war, such as they were, went to the lords of the region and their retainers. They led the resistance, to the Scots, which might take the form of active retaliation, as in the raids which burnt Dumfries in 1384 and Peebles in 1388,⁵³ and their importance in this role received acknowledgement in the frequency with which orders were issued that they should live on their estates and see to the victualling and manning of their fortresses.⁵⁴ Indeed, there seem to have been fears that the latter process was being taken too far, for in about 1385 the men of Carlisle complained that 'the *seigneurs* of the county around, who used to repair to the city in wartime, have raised castles of their own on account of its weakness, and many knights, esquires and others no longer come to the city for the same reason'.⁵⁵ This is not borne out by the evidence, however, which shows that most of the great families of the region, the Percies, the Cliffords, the Dacres, and later the Nevilles, possessed and continued to possess property

in Carlisle, as did the Westmorland family of de Roos of Kendal, and a number of the local gentry—Dentons, Parvings, Salkelds and the like. There are few perceptible cases of important families withdrawing, although the Montague earls of Salisbury, who made their Cumberland estates over to the Stapiltons, provide one example;⁵⁶ the de Lucy lords of Cockermouth died out, but their lands passed to the Percies. Nor was it only through the possession of houses in Carlisle that such families were linked to the city, for it was not unknown for them to number leading burgesses among their tenants in the countryside. The *Inquisition post mortem* into the lands of Margaret Dacre in 1362, for instance, found that her tenants included one ex- and one future mayor and a former bailiff;⁵⁷ Amand de Mounceux, mayor in 1390, was a tenant of both the de Lucies and the Dacres, and also a tenant-in-chief of the Crown.⁵⁸ The northern lords formed a cohesive group, bound together by kinship, marriage and shared interests. Consequently Carlisle and its region, far from subsisting in total isolation at the end of chains of command beginning hundred of miles away, should rather be considered as tied into networks of tenurial relationships stretching right across northern England. This was the world in which the Durham architect John Lewyn not only rebuilt Carlisle castle gatehouse for the king in the years between 1378 and 1383, but also worked for such patrons as the bishop of Durham, the duke of Lancaster, Lord Neville of Raby and Lord le Scrope of Bolton.⁵⁹ In each case his work was of an essentially military character, thereby providing a neat illustration not only of the shared interests of his employers but also of the opportunities their common outlook provided.

Against the role of the northern lords in maintaining the West March's powers of resistance, however, has to be set an inevitable reduction in the latter's capacity for independent action. The responses to war affecting the conduct of affairs in the parts round Carlisle were not always those of the people who lived there. The latter were in no position to influence the Scots anyway, and they might also be dragged into action at the heels of a Dacre or a Percy prosecuting their quarrels against the Douglasses or simply pursuing ransoms and loot, *their* ability to fight positively enhanced by their resources elsewhere. And the West March was also very much affected, though in a

different way, by the policies of another outside power, namely the king. For nearly all the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the king was the greatest single power in Cumberland, his predominance based on his control of Carlisle and—often overlooked—the forest of Inglewood, a great block of land in the centre of the county. As long as Inglewood remained firmly in the king's hand, all other lordships were quite literally peripheral. Richard II and his advisers appear to have appreciated this. A perambulation of the forest in 1380 ensured that its ancient borders were maintained as before, while an inquest in 1387 ruled out an enclosure in Inglewood on the grounds that it would be 'to the great destruction of the said forest and the king's prejudice'.⁶⁰ All the same, the king had to do more than simply retain what was traditionally his, and his position was not in fact at all straightforward.

The problem facing the Crown in its dealings with the north of England in the later Middle Ages is well known, and can be restated briefly. The king had to defend Carlisle and the West March because they were vulnerable parts of his realm which needed his protection, and he had to maintain his own position there lest he lose control of that region to a group of his subjects which, though numerically small—great lordships were not in fact common in Cumberland—nevertheless threatened to become dangerously powerful. But the nature of the war fought on the Border was such that the king could only protect his subjects there by employing the services of just those magnates whose power he needed to restrain, but whose local predominance he was, for all that, obliged to maintain and all too often increase, because the immediate consequences for the north would have been disastrous had he failed to do so. Had the defence of the Marches been a question of sending large armies north at regular intervals under the command of a royal cousin or uncle, in order to engage in pitched battles with similar Scottish forces coming south, all might have been well. But periods of open war were rare, and even during these the Scots generally refused to try to meet the English on equal terms, as Richard II found in 1385; the battle of Otterburn would probably never have been fought had Percy not contrived to come upon Douglas unawares and very late in the day. A war of raids and skirmishes had to be left to the men on the spot, sometimes in co-operation with regional and local

assemblies which have left little evidence for their activities. But in 1355 it is recorded that there was a council held at York 'per magnates et communitatem partium borialium',⁶¹ while in December 1360 the Wardens of the West March instructed the sheriff of Cumberland to summon the knights and other leading men of the county to a meeting at Carlisle early in the new year for discussions on the safe-keeping of the March.⁶² Wardens and sheriff were royal officers, but there is nothing to show that the king was involved. Royal authority served local ends, just as royal office, particularly the Wardenship of the Marches, added to the powers of the local magnates. The king's money, paid in wages to soldiers who as local men were likely to be those magnates' tenants, worked to the same effect. In 1345, when ill-feeling between the garrison and citizens of Carlisle had exploded into a ferocious riot by the former, who had rampaged through the city shooting arrows through windows and threatening to set fire to houses, it had been a cause for complaint by the townsmen that the men responsible were not local people.⁶³ Perhaps the situation had been unusual in 1345, or perhaps the complaint was heeded; certainly the garrison in 1356 seems to have consisted entirely of Cumbrians, and included no less than seven future sheriffs of Cumberland.⁶⁴ This may have suited local tastes and interests, but it implied a further loss of control for the king.

Ultimately the king had two options, neither of them simple, though they are easily stated.⁶⁵ He could end the war or he could change the men who directed it. Richard II tried both, with results disastrous for himself. But neither policy could be implemented in a hurry and, after early attempts at control through John of Gaunt had come to nothing, he had no choice for several years but to provide the means for defence and maintain the existing system. In fact, it seems clear that the king helped the people of north-west England to endure the pressures of war whether he was financing war or pursuing peace. Remissions of taxation or, in Carlisle's case, of its annual *feefarm*, must have been welcome, even though it was only because of war that they were granted. Work on the fortifications of Carlisle, carried out at regular intervals between 1378 and 1396, with the rebuilding of the castle gatehouse as their centrepiece, not only helped to maintain the city's defensibility but must also have given a stimulus to the local

economy which it badly needed; several of the workmen can be identified as inhabitants of Carlisle, but it seems likely that the programme of works also drew in craftsmen and labourers from a wide region outside. Payments made in wages to the garrison must have had a similarly beneficial effect, especially as that garrison could be a large one. In June 1384 John Lord Neville undertook to safeguard castle and city with a retinue of 120 men-at-arms and 240 archers;⁶⁶ in 1400, when a Scottish attack was believed to be imminent, the earl of Northumberland was to protect the March with 200 men-at-arms and 400 archers *besides* the garrison.⁶⁷ Since wages were 12d. a day for men-at-arms, 6d. for mounted archers and 2d. or 3d. for foot archers, it is easy to see how the presence of so many men with money to spend (assuming, that is, that they were paid—the ability of the local lords to pay their men out of their own pockets and collect reimbursement from the Exchequer later was an additional factor making it hard for the king to dispense with their services) could have had an invigorating effect on Carlisle's economic life, tiresome though these men may have been in other respects.

All the same, one may doubt if this was more than partial compensation for the disruption and damage caused by war. Richard II's ambitions to act as a peace-maker in the latter years of his reign are well known. It is possible that he was helped, or at least encouraged, by the co-operation of those who neither regarded war as the be-all and end-all of their existence (it is worth remembering 'the great dread there was in the country round of the Scots our enemies' said to have been prevalent in 1378) nor welcomed the prospect of the near-surrender of north-west England to that region's magnates. Some, at least, of the numerous gentry of Cumbria, men who became justices of the peace and might even be retained by the king for an annual fee,⁶⁸ may well have looked to the Crown for protection against the great lords. What may be described as civil government continued. Inglewood was still administered as a royal forest, the escheator remained active, inquisitions *post mortem* and *ad quod damnum* went on being held. In some spheres, indeed, the inhabitants of the region positively wanted the intrusion of royal power. Petitions to parliament show them demanding that the king order the northern lords to fulfil their defensive duties on the March, demanding that the king also concern

himself with their defence, demanding manifestations of government which only the king could provide. In 1382 the Commons asked that royal justices hold their assizes in the northern counties twice a year, adding that there had been no such sessions for two years now.⁶⁹ Royal justice was clearly valued, even though other means of settling disputes existed. In 1403 William de Aglionby, a man with important interests in and around Carlisle, made arrangements for settling a recent quarrel between himself and the abbot of St Mary's of York: first the matter should be entrusted to four arbitrators, then, if they could not agree, to a single umpire, and only if he, too, could not bring things to a satisfactory conclusion would the matter at issue be placed before the justices of assize when they next came to Cumberland.⁷⁰ But a few years earlier, in 1396 or 1397, the same William was prepared to complain to the chancellor that he had been assaulted on his way into Carlisle one evening, and concluded his petition with a request that a writ of oyer and terminer be directed to the next Cumberland assize justices.⁷¹ Although it has been argued that Richard II made himself generally unpopular in the north of England by his policies of interference and pacifism,⁷² one may wonder just how far down society his unpopularity extended. Certainly rumours of his escape and survival were circulating in the English Borders soon after 1399,⁷³ and were still circulating nearly twenty years after his deposition; as late as 1417 a man was executed at Newcastle for treasons which included claiming that Richard II was still alive.⁷⁴

That the king had his own motives for making his authority real on the Marches did not stop Carlisle and Cumberland benefiting from the material support the king had to offer. There is no reason to suppose that the men of north-west England wanted to be left in isolation, at the mercy of the Scots and the local lords, and what may be called the royal connection helped to counter this possibility, and also brought other advantages, as can be seen in a remarkable and possibly unique project intended to encourage the export of wool from the region. Under this scheme, devised probably in 1395 by the Treasurer John Waltham, Richard de Ridenesse, a Carlisle merchant, was licensed to export a hundred sacks of wool grown in Cumberland and Westmorland *via* Hull to the staple at Calais, paying customs at only 20s. instead of the usual 50s. per

sack.⁷⁵ Cumbrian wool—which by the late fourteenth century was regarded as being of poor quality and low value—was usually exported from Newcastle. Perhaps the road from Carlisle to Newcastle had become unduly dangerous in the 1370s and 1380s, causing dealings between the two towns to languish. For Richard de Ridenesse, who had connections with York anyway⁷⁶ it was probably easy to arrange to ship his wool from York's port at Hull instead. He certainly does not seem to have had any trouble collecting his hundred sacks. It is possible that Scottish raids had disrupted the Cumbrian wool trade, but his operations suggest that its basic mechanisms still functioned. Forty-five sacks were bought by Richard or his agents directly from the wool-growers in three different places, at Lazonby and Edenhall in the Eden valley, not far from Penrith, and at Warcop south of Appleby; in this last case, in particular, the purchase must have been prearranged, for Richard would hardly have gone so far from Carlisle without being certain that the wool would be there for him to collect. As for the fifty-five sacks which he bought in Carlisle, it is likely that most of these too came to the city by prearrangement, and in particular the forty-seven sacks which the abbot of Shap sent from his remote Westmorland house. The means still existed whereby Carlisle could fulfil its traditional role as entrepôt for its region's produce, but the city may have needed reviving in that capacity. In fact the scheme all but foundered because the customs officers at Hull refused to allow the wool to leave, claiming that it had been grown in Yorkshire, and it is not known to have been repeated. But it is significant that the project was intended to benefit the Crown as well as north-west England, being described as 'a thing profitable to us and a new source of gain'. Perhaps that gain was seen in purely financial terms, but the scheme may also have represented a first attempt to make peace profitable for the men of the West March, thereby, incidentally, undermining somewhat the position of the local lords and their fighting retainers who profited more from war than anybody else.

It is in fact in their trade that the positive responses of the men of north-west England to their predicament can be most clearly seen. In the thirteenth century Carlisle had had a place in a network of commercial contacts stretching from Ireland to Newcastle, and from York into southern Scotland.⁷⁷ This pattern

persisted in the fourteenth century, with links weakened at some points, perhaps, but with developments at others—by about 1400 Carlisle citizens were joining the Trinity Guild in Coventry,⁷⁸ probably in the hope of taking advantage of that town's unrivalled position at the centre of the trade of midland England to promote sales of Cumbrian cloth, a fairly low-quality product which would have needed all the help it could get. In spite of the effects of war, there were still some dealings between Carlisle and both Ireland and Newcastle, while for continued links with York there is not only the career of Richard de Ridenesse to call in evidence, but also the protection given early in 1381 to Robert Karlell, one of Carlisle's burgesses in that year's parliament, but on this occasion described as 'master of a small ship called *La Clement* of York', while he supplied victuals to Carlisle castle.⁷⁹ But in the present context it is most significant that there was still trade with Scotland, significant not least because it was only too often carried on in the teeth of efforts to stop it. No doubt it was inevitable that attempts should have been made to prevent the English king's subjects from trading with that king's enemies; it was certainly inevitable that the English Borderers should have ignored their ruler's prohibitions.

The essential unity of the Border area, in terms of its language, social structures and economic life, has been many times remarked upon. It was too strong to be eradicated by national conflict, as the continued development of the March Laws, needed to resolve cross-border disputes, amply demonstrates. People moved freely from north to south and back again, sometimes with the aid of safe-conducts, sometimes without. This is not to say that they did not know or care whether they were English or Scots. Nationality appears to have depended upon place of birth and to have required an administrative act to change. The woman who lit the beacon to warn the men of Galloway of the impending raid of January 1384, mentioned above, later came before gaol delivery justices at Penrith. The English jury testified that she had done all that she was accused of, but added that

Alice was born and begotten in the country of Scotland called Galloway, and was always under the allegiance of the Scottish king and never sworn to the king of England

nor to the warden of the march of England for the time being, but they say that Alice from the first plague until yesterday stayed in England on the march and married an Englishman, and had sons and daughters, and they say her husband died long ago.

The justices adjourned the case for discussion, but in the end it was decided that

because it is found by that verdict that Alice was born in Scotland and was always until today in the Scottish king's allegiance, having never taken oath to the king of England or the warden of the English march, it is decided that she go *sine die* of that indictment and verdict.

In the fifteenth century March Wardens might issue written instruments testifying that Scots had taken the necessary oath.⁸⁰ But few such survive, and the alien subsidy rolls of the same period show considerable numbers of Scots as having taken up residence in England without having felt the need to acquire denizen status.⁸¹

People went backwards and forwards across the Border, and so did goods. Streams of orders issued from the English chancery, forbidding cross-border trade generally, and more particularly the export of bullion and coin, the receipt of Scottish coin (no longer now maintaining parity with English), the export of corn in time of scarcity, the carriage of wool to Scotland—sometimes on the backs of living sheep, taken over the March at shearing time, and coming back shorn—all by their repetitiveness providing eloquent testimony to their own futility. The men of north-west England took the king's money when it was given them and were presumably thankful, but they did not therefore obey the king's orders. Before 1384 the situation may have been complicated by the fact of parts of southern Scotland being under English rule, especially Annandale. Lochmaben was sometimes supplied directly from Carlisle,⁸² and men from Annandale are often recorded in the city. These men were still Scots, but they could not easily be excluded from trade with England; goods which went to Annandale, however, might not always stay there. An inquest held in 1369, when there was a truce in force but the Scots were nevertheless being described as 'the king's enemies of Scotland',

names thirteen men as responsible for illicit exports into Scotland. No less than six of them came from Annandale, as well as two from Carlisle and one from Penrith.⁸³ The goods involved were mostly victuals, but there were also some weapons, horseshoes, saddles and horses, all of them sold 'contrary to prohibition, to the grievous damage of the country', and 'to the prejudice of the king'. It seems unlikely that the men involved in this trade shared the central government's opinion as to the damage they were doing to the country, or that they were much bothered about the prejudice of the king.

Horses did not only go across the Border from south to north. An order of 1371 forbidding Scots to export them to England shows that they went the other way,⁸⁴ and no doubt they continued to do so in the years which followed, until the truce of 1389 legalized cross-border commerce. The extent of that trade at the end of the fourteenth century is amply attested by a return of the customs paid on all goods (except wool, wool-fells and hides) passing between England and Scotland between June 1398 and August 1399,⁸⁵ which shows men of both nations—the same names appearing time and again—regularly trading over the border. The Scots exported practically nothing but livestock, almost all of it in the form of horses and cattle, the only exceptions being sixteen sheep and a solitary stag. The cattle sometimes came in large herds of sixty or eighty beasts, but more often in smaller numbers, just ten or fifteen at a time. From England the Scots received above all cloth and leather, the cloth sometimes in its undyed and unfinished state, but more often in the form of 'chekers' or 'cordelys' or 'crisdalles', the last probably a local manufacture taking its name from Grisedale in Westmorland. The leather goods were predominantly saddles, boots and shoes, bringing to mind Froissart's observation that in Scotland 'there is neither iron to shoe horses nor leather to make harness, saddles or bridles', as well as demonstrating that the chronicler was mistaken in his belief that the Scots could only obtain these things in Flanders.⁸⁶ The balance of trade revealed in these figures favoured the Scots; the total value of all the goods covered by the return was reckoned to be £425.17s., of which from the English point of view exports made up £189.18s.4d. and imports £235.18s.8d., a deficit of £46.0s.4d. It is possible that the figures are distorted by the omission of wool, wool-fells and hides, as well as by

smuggling, which certainly continued.⁸⁷ A less detailed customs account for 1395/96 records the export from England of thirty-two sacks of wool and twenty-two tanned hides⁸⁸ which three years later, if taken in isolation, would undoubtedly have been sufficient to balance England's commercial budget, at the very least. It cannot be automatically assumed, however, that the value of England's exports of wool and leather to Scotland exceeded that of her imports of the same materials, since these were also Scotland's principal exports, even though the Scottish wool trade was in decline by the late fourteenth century.⁸⁹ In fact, whatever the monetary imbalance, it seems clear that the trade recorded in the customs returns was of equal importance for the communities on both sides of the Border. Carlisle's revenues from tolls in the 1370s amounted to a quarter of its feefarm,⁹⁰ so any restraints on the county's trade, on which, by an ancient arrangement, these tolls were paid, would have hurt the city's finances severely. For the men of south-west Scotland Carlisle was probably a trading venue at least as important as any market-centre nearer home. On 8 August 1366, for instance, the bishop of Carlisle, as Warden of the West March, issued a safe-conduct for all Scots wishing to attend Carlisle fair,⁹¹ which opened on the 15th, while among the Scots trading to Cumberland in 1398/99 were Thomas Smyth and John Michelson—common names, no doubt, but in 1400 those of the the baillies of Dumfries.⁹² Cases in the early mayor's court rolls of Carlisle recording actions against Cumbrians who had become sureties for Scots⁹³ suggest that then, as later, Scots had to find such guarantors in their dealings in the city, and hence that they came often enough for such regulations to have become necessary.

The lawful trade of the 1390s may have involved more, and so more valuable, goods than did the illegal trafficking of earlier decades, but the evidence from 1369 indicates that it differed little in kind, while the prohibitions in between show that such dealings persisted throughout the period, royal prohibitions and the disruptions of war notwithstanding. That persistence is a striking testimony to the resilience, not to say independence, of the society concerned. Evidence for life in the Cumbrian countryside is scarce, but the recovery shown by the manor of Burgh-by-sands between 1384 and 1399 points to a similar recuperative capacity,⁹⁴ as does Carlisle's response to the

fire of 1391, which destroyed nearly all the city. This appalling disaster, which may have been accompanied by the fourth visitation of the plague in little more than forty years, was said to have led to many townspeople leaving the city and others threatening to follow them.⁹⁵ Yet somehow they rallied, and possibly encouraged by rumours of a tin pot full of gold found among the ruins,⁹⁶ set about rebuilding their community, a task sufficiently advanced by the end of the century to have given rise to litigation in the Bench and at the assizes. But they did not achieve this without help. The recovery of Burgh-by-sands may have been assisted by the firm rule in Galloway of Archibald Douglas the Grim,⁹⁸ a nobleman well able to restrain raids from south-west Scotland into England should he wish to do so, while the rebuilding of Carlisle was certainly facilitated by a grant from Richard II. He not only remitted the city's feefarm for four consecutive years but also gave 500 oaks from Inglewood—they were, moreover, to be 'dry at the top, bearing no leaves', this being the nearest medieval builders usually got to seasoned timber. Since 496 trees had been taken by 1395, the rebuilding must have been well under way by then.⁹⁹ The West March and its city kept going, in spite of a long series of disasters, because they had their place in long lines of influence and communication, and so could draw on a wide range of support and assistance to back up their own vitality and powers of resistance. The determination that life should go on in Carlisle and the countryside around was not only that of those who lived there. That this was so helps to explain how it was that they survived battles which were no less real for not being confined to a single place on a single day, and in the process provided reassuring proof that it was not only dead men who won them.

NOTES

This paper is based on the relevant chapter in a forthcoming history of medieval Carlisle, in which many of the points made here are discussed in greater detail.

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23. PRO, E159/164, *brevia directa*, Michaelmas, rot.11d.
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25. PRO, E372/233, m.48.
26. PRO, E159/166, *brevia directa*, Michaelmas, rot.17.
27. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 72; *Chron. Knighton*, ii, p. 297; PRO, E159/173, *brevia directa*, Trinity, rot.3.
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29. CPR 1388–92, pp. 203–4.
30. PRO JUST/3/183, m.8d.
31. *Rot. Parl.*, iii, p. 354.
32. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 91–2.
33. PRO, E404/13/88, no. 44.
34. PRO, SC8/101, no. 5046.
35. PRO, JUST/3/165A, m.2.
36. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 21.
37. *ibid.*, p. 85.
38. CPR 1401–05, p. 167.
39. CPR 1385–89, p. 110; CPR 1388–92, pp. 218–19.
40. CPR 1385–89, p. 8; PRO, E199/7/16, m.2.
41. CPR 1388–92, p. 199; PRO, E28/8, no. 52.
42. *Testamenta Karleolensia*, ed. R.S.Ferguson, CWAAS, Extra Series, ix, London and Kendal, 1893, nos 15, 103, 137, 146, 151.

43. e.g. CRO, Ca3/1/2, mm.1, 2; Ca3/1/3, m.3; CA3/1/7, mm.3d, 5.
44. PRO, JUST/1/1500, m.36.
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46. *Chron. Knighton*, ii, p. 205.
47. *Testamenta Karleolensia*, no. 147.
48. *ibid.*, no. 157.
49. D.H.Farmer, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford, 1978, pp. 418–19.
50. CPR 1381–85, p. 100; CPR 1388–92, p. 20.
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66. PRO, E404/13/88, no. 43.
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72. A.Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, London, 1973, p. 196.
73. CDS, iv, no. 604.
74. *Select Pleas in the Court of King's Bench*, ed. G.O.Sayles, vii, Selden Society, lxxxviii, 1971, pp. 236–9.
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76. CPR 1396–99, p. 368; CPR 1405–08, p. 128.
77. See H.Summerson, 'The place of Carlisle in the commerce of northern England in the thirteenth century', in P.R.Coss and S. D.Lloyd, ed., *Thirteenth Century England: I*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1986, pp. 142–9.
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81. e.g. PRO, E179/90/30 recording sixty-four aliens in Cumberland, all of them Scots, c.1442.
82. CDS, iv, no. 23; E101/40/6, m.10.
83. CIM, iii, no. 734.
84. T.I.Rae, *The Administration of the Scottish frontier 1513–1603*, Edinburgh, 1966, p. 66.
85. PRO, E122/39/8.
86. Froissart, trans. Johnes, ii, p. 36.
87. PRO, E122/39/10.
88. PRO, E122/39/7.
89. R.Nicholson, *Scotland, The Later Middle Ages*, Edinburgh, 1974, p. 265.
90. CIM, iii, no. 897.
91. CRO, DRC1/2, f.156.
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93. CRO, Ca3/1/7, mm.1, 5; Ca3/1/8, m.2d.
94. R.L.Storey, 'The manor of Burgh-by-sands', CWAAS, 2nd ser., liv, 1955, pp. 127–8.
95. CPR 1388–92, p. 430.
96. PRO, E159/168, *commissiones*, Easter, rot.1.
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THE PERCIES AND THE
COMMUNITY OF
NORTHUMBERLAND IN
THE LATER FOURTEENTH
CENTURY

Anthony Tuck

In recent years a number of monographs on county and regional society have appeared in which a central purpose has been an analysis of the gentry. Much of this work still remains unpublished, though Dr. Given-Wilson has recently provided us with a valuable synthesis of some of it in his *English Nobility in the Later Middle Ages*.¹ It is perhaps too early to attempt to draw many general conclusions from these studies about the nature of English political society in the later Middle Ages, though we can already be fairly confident that we must modify older views about the dominance of the higher nobility in provincial society. We can be less confident than George Holmes more than thirty years ago that the great magnates were central to the political and social history of England in the fourteenth century,² and we should probably agree with Professor Richmond's warning against the assumption that the magnates had 'things all their own way' in the shires.³ Aristocratic power now seems to have been more precarious than was once supposed, and we realize more clearly that the great magnates might have had to compete for gentry support in the counties. The relationship between the Crown and the gentry, too has been explored recently, not least by Dr Given-Wilson, who has stressed the extent to which both Richard II and Henry IV sought to retain members of the gentry class, notably in the early 1390s and between 1400 and 1406.

Little, however, has so far been published on the gentry in the extreme north of England in the late fourteenth century, and indeed in analysing the structure of power in the Border

counties emphasis has generally been placed on the importance of the great noble families who, increasingly towards the end of the century, came to monopolize the office of Warden of the Marches.⁵ But despite Northumberland's exceptional nature as a marcher county, and despite the powers enjoyed by the Wardens of the Marches, it is important to ask what sort of relationship existed between the great magnate families, particularly the Percies, and the gentry families of the county. The answer to this question might serve to modify the assumption which runs, if often unstated, through much work on northern society in the latter Middle Ages, that the great magnates possessed, or came close to possessing, a monopoly of power and influence in the Border counties, and that the gentry families, along with most other lesser men, were willingly at their service.⁶

The Percies were not, of course, a family with deep roots in Northumberland. From the late eleventh century onwards to the early fourteenth century the main centre of their influence lay in Yorkshire, around Leconfield in the East Riding, Topcliffe in the North Riding, and Spofforth in the West Riding.⁷ For all that they were influential in the affairs of the Marches in the fourteenth century, with Warkworth castle as the favourite residence of the first earl of Northumberland, the Percies' Yorkshire lands remained important, and, as we shall see, they maintained close links with some of the gentry families in those parts of Yorkshire where their territorial interests lay. The growth of the Percies' interests in Northumberland during the fourteenth century forms a familiar story:⁸ by purchase, by royal grant, by absorption of the Lucy and part of the Umfraville inheritances, together with the attempt to acquire, for the benefit of cadets, the inheritance of David earl of Atholl (which included the Atholl share of the inheritance of Aymer de Valence, earl of Pembroke) the Percies had become, by the mid-1380s, the most substantial landowners in the border counties. The title of earl of Northumberland, which Richard II conferred on Henry, fourth Lord Percy of Alnwick, in 1377, was an appropriate recognition of the family's arrival in the front rank of English magnates.

About a year before Henry Percy received his earldom, the abbot of Alnwick held a feast in his honour. The chronicler of Alnwick abbey has preserved part of the guest list at that

occasion,⁹ and it makes interesting reading, for we may assume that those whom the abbot invited were amongst Henry Percy's closest associates and followers. Amongst the knights who feasted with Henry Percy at the abbot's expense were some of the familiar figures in the public life of Northumberland in the 1370s, such as Sir John Heron, Sir Alan Heton and Sir Thomas Ilderton.¹⁰ But the guest list is very far from a roll-call of the Northumbrian gentry, for many of the guests were knights whose main interests lay in Yorkshire and who had little to do with Northumberland. Sir Richard Tempest, for example, had lands in the West Riding and was keeper of Scarborough castle. He had been granted, for good service, the manor of Hetton in Northumberland in 1351 by Henry Percy's father, and was one of his executors; he had served from 1357 to 1361 as sheriff of Roxburgh and then as keeper of Berwick, but his main interests lay in Yorkshire. He died in 1379, but his great nephew, also Sir Richard, maintained the family's links with the Percies, bringing a contingent of men to the earl of Northumberland's retinue for war in 1384. In 1386 he was appointed keeper of Berwick jointly with his kinsman Sir Thomas Talbot. Under the terms of their indenture Tempest and Talbot were required to recruit all but forty of their 489-strong garrison from south of Richmondshire and Craven. This was by no means an unusual condition, but the Yorkshire connections of both men perhaps made it easier for them to fulfil it. Tempest's youngest brother, Robert, formed a connection with the Umfravilles, who themselves had close links with the Percies. He was apparently a member of the household of Sir Thomas Umfraville in the 1380s, and he was associated with Sir Thomas's brother Robert in an attack on the property of Isabella de Fauconberge in Allertonshire in the winter of 1395–6. Henry earl of Northumberland had a reversionary interest in Isabella's dower lands further east in Skelton and Marske, and he was already a life-tenant of the remaining land in the two manors. There was a long-standing feeling that Isabella had been over-generously provided for on the death of her husband, and Northumberland's associates may not have been above putting some pressure on her.¹¹

Another guest, Sir William Aton, was also a Yorkshireman close to the earl. He was an old man at the time of the abbot of Alnwick's feast, and he died in 1387. No doubt because of his

age he did not serve in the earl's retinue for war in 1384, but there is good evidence for his closeness to the Percy family. He had married Isabella, the earl's aunt, and the earl's father had obtained for him an exemplification of the proceedings whereby his father had been recognized as heir to the lands in Malton formerly held by William Vescy.¹² Aton's youngest daughter married Sir John Conyers of Sockburn, whose lands straddled the boundary between Durham and Yorkshire and who was also present at the abbot of Alnwick's feast. So too was Sir Thomas Boynton of Acklam in the North Riding, who appears to have been Conyers's brother-in-law. He was in the earl's retinue for war in 1384, and his son Henry was to be executed after the Percy rising in 1403. He held office in the North Riding, and, like these other Yorkshiremen, had only tenuous links with Northumberland.¹³ Sir Ingram de Umfraville, probably a member of the Scottish branch of the family and another guest at the feast, had been granted an annuity of £10 and two-thirds of the manor of Wharram Percy for life by Henry Percy for good service in 1374, and the witnesses to the deed of grant were three of the other guests at Alnwick, Aton, Tempest and Boynton. He succeeded Tempest as keeper of Scarborough castle in 1378.¹⁴

The guests at Alnwick thus seem to have been a group of Henry Percy's close military supporters, and Yorkshiremen had a strong presence amongst them. In the 1370s the Percies evidently still maintained a sizable affinity in Yorkshire, and Henry Percy himself held office as JP in each of the three ridings in the 1370s and 1380s. In the latter decade, by virtue of his acquisition of the Lucy inheritance, Percy extended his affinity into Cumberland. Thomas Motherby, who was MP for Northumberland in the two parliaments of 1384, was originally from Cumberland, and his presence in Northumberland society may owe something to Percy's influence.¹⁵ A more clear-cut case is Sir Matthew Redman, who was in Percy's retinue in 1384 and who apparently played a famous part in the last stages of the battle of Otterburn. His family came from Westmorland, and he held lands in that county. He had served on campaign with John of Gaunt in the 1370s, he was keeper of the West March in 1380, and may have played a part in the incident in June 1381 when Percy refused Gaunt entry to any royal castle in his custody. By this time, therefore, Redman may well have

established links with the Percies: Armitage-Smith believed that Gaunt's order in July 1381 to distraint Redman's goods and chattels to compensate Archibald Douglas for damage done during the truce was an act of revenge for Redman's part in the incident. It was probably through his Percy connections that Redman came to hold civil as well as military office in Northumberland. He was JP in the county in 1381, 1382, 1385, 1389 and 1390, commissioner of array in 1388 and 1392, and held other minor civilian offices in the 1380s and 1390s.¹⁶

Thus the Percy affinity was very far from exclusively Northumbrian in character; but to what extent did the family none the less dominate the county from which the first earl took his title and where he preferred to reside? The answer is, perhaps, that its ascendancy was not as complete or unchallenged as has sometimes been supposed. The Percies had to contend with other nobles and, from the early 1390s, with the Crown for the loyalty of the gentry, and this element of insecurity in their position may help to explain their political behaviour in Richard II's reign, particularly the first earl's conflict with John of Gaunt.

The expression 'dominate the county', of course, begs a number of important questions, particularly the extent to which the county can be regarded as a coherent and self-conscious social unit. This has been called in question by some recent work, notably Geoffrey Astill's thesis on the Leicestershire gentry and Christine Carpenter's thesis on political society in Warwickshire,¹⁷ and it may be that no generalization is adequate: some counties were more cohesive than others. Northumberland, however, presents a number of exceptional features so far as English counties are concerned, though there are some similarities with the Welsh Marches. Substantial parts of the west of the county enjoyed exceptional jurisdictional privileges, while social and territorial links with neighbouring regions north of the border had weakened considerably in the course of the century. To the south lay the bishopric of Durham, with its exceptional administrative position and a considerable degree of social cohesion of its own, exemplified in the early fourteenth century, as Jean Scammell pointed out,¹⁸ by its ability to raise substantial sums of money to buy off Scottish raiders. Several Northumbrian gentry families held lands in the bishopric, and of course one of the most important of the lay

noble families of the bishopric, the Nevilles, held the baronies of Bywell and Bolbec in Northumberland. But to the extent that the Northumbrian gentry held office under the bishop of Durham, it tended to be in Northamptonshire, Northumberland and North Yorkshire, which were socially if not administratively part of Northumberland. The county therefore occupied a geographical position which may have encouraged a higher degree of cohesion and self-consciousness amongst its gentry families; while military service and garrison duties provided a focus for the gentry families, which, again, was lacking in other parts of England (except, obviously Cumberland), although there may be parallels in the Welsh Marcher lordships. On the other hand, the military offices on the Border to which appointment was made by the Crown were not the exclusive monopoly of the local gentry, and they often brought into the county men from outside, such as Sir John Strivelyn (or Stirling), a Scottish knight who made a career of military service under Edward III and was rewarded with land in Northumberland, including Belsay.¹⁹

Another important, and perhaps unusual, characteristic of the Northumbrian gentry was their links with the main urban centre of the region, Newcastle upon Tyne. Newcastle may have enjoyed some degree of prosperity in the last decades of the fourteenth century; its wealth was derived in part, no doubt, from its strategic position and the opportunity it provided for merchants such as John of Denton to make money out of the war; but the real basis of its wealth was probably wool, cloth, and, increasingly from the late fourteenth century onwards, coal.²⁰ Men such as Sir William Acton and Sampson Harding held office both in Newcastle and Northumberland in a way that suggests that the relationship between the urban élite and the county gentry was more complicated than the oft-repeated generalization that the wealthy élite invested its wealth in land and aspired to the ranks of the country gentry.²¹ The relationship also seems to have been closer than that suggested for other counties such as Leicestershire or Warwickshire.²² It is the simultaneous nature of, for example, Harding's involvement in office-holding in both town and county that seems significant, and suggests some degree of cohesion between urban and rural society, at least in this part of England, in the late fourteenth century.

Much of the recent work on the gentry in late medieval England has applied the test of office-holding as a measure of gentry status, and has built up a picture of an administrative élite that was also a social élite.²³ Such a definition is certainly tenable for Northumberland, but both there and in Cumberland it is complicated by the existence of a series of military offices which have no parallel in other parts of the country. These offices were not merely the Wardenships of the Marches, with the far-reaching powers attached to them, but also the constablerships of the royal castles of Newcastle and Bamburgh, the keepership of Roxburgh castle, and the whole administrative system of Berwick upon Tweed and the varying parts of south-east Scotland under English control. In the mid-fourteenth century members of Northumbrian (and Cumbrian) gentry families aspired to the Wardenships of the Marches: only in the 1380s did they become an aristocratic preserve.²⁴ But the keeping of royal castles was often entrusted to local gentry throughout the century, and the administration, military and civil, of Berwick upon Tweed was largely, though not exclusively, the preserve of local men. These offices were of active military significance: those who held them could expect to take military command, and had to maintain the castles and defences in good order. Such men also held civilian office in Northumberland, as we shall see shortly; and equally there were other gentry families who did not hold military office but who played an important part in the civil administration of the county. It would be an exaggeration to suppose that the civil administration of Northumberland was monopolized by an élite of semi-professional soldiers. Indeed it is doubtful whether the gentry of Northumberland were substantially more involved in soldiering than their counterparts in other counties. Nigel Saul, for example, has shown how large a proportion of the office-holding gentry in Gloucestershire had served on military campaigns, and Dr Astill has made a similar point about the Leicestershire gentry.²⁵ As far as Northumberland is concerned, the difference lies not so much in the proportion of gentry who had military experience, but in the fact that the war was on their doorstep.

The society of Northumberland resembled that of other parts of the country, too, in the lack of family continuity in office-holding. There were, it is true, some families who gave service

over three generations in the second half of the fourteenth century, but they are a minority. More striking are those individuals such as Sir John Mitford, who rose from obscurity and enjoyed a career in the élite of county society, or those families who because of lack of heirs dropped out of county society altogether. But although the fortunes of individual families fluctuated greatly, the size of the county élite does not seem to have changed very much during the second half of the century. In this period no more than thirty families shared office among themselves, though only about half that number bore the main burden of administration in Northumberland.²⁶

Two of these families, the earls of Atholl and the Umfraville earls of Angus, belonged nominally to the nobility and received personal writs of summons to parliament, but it would be hard to show that they were the equals in wealth of their fellow earls or even some of the barons who received personal writs of summons.²⁷ They occupied an anomalous position in English, as well as in Northumbrian, political society, and by the 1380s both families had failed in the direct male line, leaving the Percies as the main beneficiaries of their economic, social and biological difficulties. David, the last earl of Atholl, left co-heiresses who were both married to cadet branches of the Percy family;²⁸ while Sir Aymer de Atholl, younger brother of the last earl, was a leading member of the Northumbrian administrative élite in the 1360s, 1370s and 1380s; but he died c.1388, and he too left two co-heiresses.²⁹ As far as the Umfravilles are concerned, it has been surmised that Henry Percy first earl of Northumberland bought the reversion of the wealthier part of the Umfraville inheritance, the barony of Prudhoe.³⁰ Their lordship of Redesdale, which was excluded from the reversion of 1375, passed to a collateral branch of the family,³¹ but despite their aristocratic antecedents the Umfravilles of Redesdale were of no greater significance than many gentry families in Northumberland whose origins and history were a great deal more humble. Sir Thomas Umfraville, for instance, who inherited Redesdale from the last earl of Angus and who fought at Otterburn was MP for Northumberland twice, in February 1388 and January 1390; he was JP four times between 1382 and 1390, and held a series of other offices and commissions.³² Yet by the criterion of office-

holding he was scarcely even in the forefront of the county élite, despite his illustrious ancestry.

Apart from the Umfravilles, the leading families in Northumberland in the last quarter of the fourteenth century were the Delavals, the Eures, the Grays of Heton, the Herons of Ford and Eshot, the Hetons, the Ildertons, the Mitfords, the Monbouchers, the Ogles, Raymes, Strothers, Surtees and Widdringtons. By the end of the century the families of Felton, Fenwick and Lilburn were becoming prominent, perhaps owing to Percy patronage. Amongst these families links with the Percy family are not hard to find, though the Percies were very far from enjoying a monopoly of influence over the Northumbrian gentry. Sir Alan Heton, for example, who died in 1387, held land at Lowick and Ingram. His family intermarried with the Lilburns, Swinburnes and Fenwicks, and he had a distinguished military career. He fought at Neville's Cross, was keeper of Berwick between 1364 and 1367, Warden of the West March in 1369 and Warden of the East March in 1372. He also had a prominent civilian career, as MP for Northumberland in 1365, 1368, 1371 and 1379, collector of the subsidy in 1377, and commissioner for minor matters on numerous occasions in the 1360s, 1370s, and 1380s.³³ His combination of military and civilian service is typical of many gentry families in these years. His links with the Percies are exemplified by his presence at the abbot of Alnwick's feast and by his possession of a tenement within the bailey of Alnwick castle.³⁴

Sir Thomas Surtees of Gosforth was a contemporary of Sir Alan Heton. He was MP for Northumberland in 1361 and 1372 and sheriff in 1372 and 1378, the year of his death. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace three times in the 1370s, and held other minor offices. He married Alice, daughter of one of Henry Percy's retainers Sir William Hilton, and in 1365 he appears as one of the first earl's father's feoffees for Leconfield.³⁵ Sir John Felton of Edlingham, on the other hand, was a younger man than Heton or Surtees and his career blossomed some twenty years later. He was MP for Northumberland in 1390, sheriff in the same year, JP four times between 1389 and 1394, and held other offices. He brought a retinue of four esquires to join Percy's retinue in 1384, and he fought at Otterburn.³⁶ Sir John Lilburn, a contemporary of Sir John Felton, was MP for Northumberland in November 1384

and held other offices in Northumberland in Richard II's reign, though he was not as prominent in the administration of the county as Heton, Surtees and Felton. Like Heton he was present at the abbot of Alnwick's feast, and when his son was christened in 1387 the earl of Northumberland stood as godfather.³⁷

The Percies thus had their loyal supporters in Northumberland; but there were other men within the gentry class whose allegiance could not be so readily taken for granted, and in the early 1380s the competing influence of John of Gaunt seems to have been especially significant. Indeed, it is parallel to his 'aggressive interest' in local government which Dr Astill identified in Leicestershire.³⁸ Gaunt's territorial position in Northumberland was far from extensive compared with that of Percy; indeed, he held only the barony of Embleton with Dunstanburgh castle. However, Richard II appointed him Lieutenant in the Marches in February 1379. He was reappointed with fuller powers in September 1380, and again in May 1381 and May 1382. He was still described as the king's Lieutenant in the Marches in the royal ratification, on 10 June 1384, of the agreement he reached with Henry Percy in the previous April, but his powers seem then to have lapsed. Indeed, the agreement with Percy was no doubt intended to give Gaunt an acceptable way out of a position which had become untenable.³⁹ For Gaunt's position on the Marches had given rise to considerable tension between him and the earl of Northumberland, and this tension seems to have been reflected in competition for the allegiance of some of the Northumbrian gentry, as the career of Sir Thomas Ilderton illustrates. Ilderton was one of Gaunt's retainers, and was described by him in 1380 as his 'dear and well-beloved bachelor'. He was receiver and constable of Dunstanburgh castle before 1380, and in July 1381 Gaunt appointed him constable for life. He was MP for Northumberland in February 1383, and JP in 1380, 1381 and 1382:⁴⁰ significant dates in view of Gaunt's position in the Marches and his dispute with Percy. But Ilderton was far from being merely a client of the duke of Lancaster: when the earl of Northumberland was keeper of Berwick in 1377 Ilderton held office in the civil administration there as chancellor and chamberlain; he was present at the abbot of Alnwick's feast, and he brought a contingent of seventeen men to

Northumberland's retinue for the Scottish war, perhaps in 1385.⁴¹

Another man who had links with both Gaunt and Percy, and who seems to have been close to Ilderton, was Sir John Heron, a younger son of Sir William Heron of Ford and Eshot and father of Gerard Heron, whose career will be discussed shortly. Heron, like Ilderton, was present at the abbot of Alnwick's feast: he was MP for Northumberland in 1379, sheriff in 1360–1, and JP in 1372.⁴² But by 1381 he had formed links with John of Gaunt, and in 1383 was appointed sheriff of Northumberland again.⁴³ Another of Gaunt's retainers, Sir Walter Blount, also had links with the Percies.⁴⁴ He too was at the Alnwick feast, though there is no evidence that he contributed to Percy's retinue for war in 1384. None the less, if Gaunt was attracting into his affinity men from Yorkshire as well as Northumberland and who had earlier been connected with the Percies, the earl of Northumberland's anger becomes even more understandable. For some men, however, these links with Gaunt proved temporary. As we have seen, Ilderton was in Percy's retinue for war, possibly in 1385; while Sir William Swinburne and Sir John Fenwick, who were both described as bachelors of John of Gaunt in the 1380s, subsequently established links with the Percies. Swinburne was MP for Northumberland in 1395 and Hotspur's receiver-general for Denbigh from 1400 to 1402, while the earl of Northumberland was godfather to Fenwick's grandson, who was born in 1401.⁴⁵

It is possible, too, that John of Gaunt played a part in the extension of the territorial power of the Neville family in Northumberland. This family could scarcely be described as belonging to the gentry, but Gaunt's relationship with them perhaps serves to make the same point as has been made in connection with his links with lesser families in Northumberland. The Neville family had its roots, of course, in the bishopric of Durham, with castles at Raby and Brancepeth; but they also had a significant presence in Yorkshire, and in the last quarter of the fourteenth century they acquired substantial lands in Northumberland and Cumberland. In 1331 the earl of Richmond received licence from Edward III to grant the barony of Bywell, which had been a Balliol possession before the war, to his niece Mary of St Pol, countess of Pembroke, for life; and in 1336 the king granted the reversion of the barony to Ralph

Neville of Raby.⁴⁶ Forty years later, in the last year of her life, the countess was licensed by the king to surrender her estate in the barony to Ralph Neville's son John. It is not entirely clear why she did so: Neville paid the king 100s. for the grant of the licence to her; but she had already attained a great age, and in the nature of things the reversion would soon fall in. Some years earlier John Neville's father had complained that countess Mary had wasted the barony to the extent of half its value, and by 1376 the aged dowager may simply have been ready to part with it.⁴⁷

The feudal geography of south Northumberland, however, was complicated. The barony of Bywell interlocked in an intricate territorial pattern with the barony of Bolbec,⁴⁸ and it is not surprising that John Neville sought to unite the two baronies and develop a unified estate between the boundary of the bishopric of Durham and the boundary of the archbishop of York's liberty of Hexhamshire. The barony of Bolbec had been partitioned between the two heiresses of Hugh Bolbec II, who had died in 1262, but Robert de Harle, a descendant of Bolbec's elder daughter, had succeeded in reuniting the two halves. He died without heirs, however, and the lands passed to his sister Margaret, wife of Sir Ralph Hastings, whose main interests lay in Yorkshire.⁴⁹ In 1379, however, Sir Ralph granted the reversion of the barony to Sir John Neville and his heirs by a fine levied in the court of common pleas. The reversion fell in at Sir Ralph's death in the autumn of 1397, and Sir John's son Ralph, now earl of Westmorland, thus came to hold both the barony of Bywell and the barony of Bolbec, giving him a very significant presence in south Northumberland.⁵⁰ Both Neville and Hastings were retainers of Gaunt in the 1380s; Hastings' father had been the earl of Lancaster's steward of the honour of Pickering in the 1330s: while one of the parties with Hastings to the fine of 1379 was Sir Richard le Scrope, one of Gaunt's retainers.⁵¹ The circumstances of the grant of the Bolbec reversion to Neville remain obscure, but the enhancement of Neville influence in Northumberland could not but act as something of a counterweight to the Percies, and would have been quite consistent with Gaunt's attitude in the 1380s.

After 1384 Gaunt's influence in Northumberland seems to have diminished; but in the 1390s the influence of the Crown itself became a factor to be reckoned with as Richard II began to retain members of the Northumbrian gentry, as part of a policy

which has been described and assessed in general terms by Dr Given-Wilson.⁵² Sir Thomas Gray of Heton, for example, was retained for life by the king in 1389, and at the same time appears to have formed links with Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham during Mowbray's brief period of office as Warden of the East March.⁵³ Gray married Joan, Thomas Mowbray's sister, and in 1392 was described as 'late' lieutenant of Thomas earl of Nottingham.⁵⁴ Mowbray's period of influence in the East March proved limited, however. He had few territorial interests there, and few links with the local gentry. Indeed, it is possible that his influence, such as it was, had to be exercised through royal retainers. Gray was MP for Northumberland in January 1397, and JP in February and July 1397. He had links not only with the king and Mowbray, but with other great lords in the reign as well: in December 1396 the bishop of Durham appointed him sheriff of Northamptonshire and constable of Northampton castle for life, while in 1398 Ralph Neville earl of Westmorland gave him the castle and lordship of Wark: both grants probably indicate Gray's standing at court.⁵⁵

Gerard Heron, son of Sir John Heron whose career was discussed earlier, was retained for life by the king in 1393. In 1386 the bishop of Durham had appointed him sheriff of Northamptonshire and Northampton for life, though in 1396 he resigned the office in favour of Sir Thomas Gray.⁵⁶ Heron was MP for Northumberland in 1391, 1393, 1394, and, significantly, 1397; he was appointed chamberlain of Berwick in December 1391, JP in July 1397, and held numerous other offices in Northumberland in the 1390s.⁵⁷ But his administrative career in Northumberland was outshone by another royal retainer, John Mitford, who was retained for life by the king as one of his esquires in the same year as Heron, 1393.⁵⁸ Mitford's origins were modest: indeed, he has been described as the 'founder of the family',⁵⁹ but he was active in administration in Northumberland over three decades. He was MP for Northumberland in 1372, January 1377, October 1385, both parliaments of 1388, and through the 1390s, though not the parliament of September 1397. He was JP from time to time over the same period, including 1397, and a commissioner of array in 1392.⁶⁰ An analysis of office-holding in Northumberland in the 1390s might lead one to conclude that Gerard Heron, Thomas Gray and John Mitford were running

the county, and were in office to do the king's bidding, especially in the summer of 1397. But although it may very well be true that royal influence in the county was increasing in these years, the earl of Northumberland continued to exercise formidable power through his family's grip on the Wardenship of the Marches and the keepership of Berwick, while the earl acted as sheriff of Northumberland from November 1384 until January 1387 and again from November 1391 until November 1397. Although the Percies did not rule unchallenged, they were far from being eclipsed.⁶¹

The principal competing influences in Northumberland in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, therefore, were the Percies, John of Gaunt, and, by the 1390s, the Nevilles and the Crown. But other noble families too had links with some of the gentry families of Northumberland. The Strothers, for example, who were a notable military family with lands around Kirknewton, had links with the earl of March and with the relatives and heirs of the earl of Pembroke. Alan Strother was one of March's sub-contractors for his expedition to Brittany in 1375,⁶² and he and his brothers and nephews appear also to have had links with the court. His nephew Henry Strother was at Felton a tenant of Mary of St Pol, countess of Pembroke; after her death in 1376 Sir William Beauchamp had custody of some of her estates, and it may have been through this connection that Alan Strother achieved immortality as one of the heroes of Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*. Chaucer had links with Sir William Beauchamp,⁶³ and it seems inconceivable that he did not know, or know of, Alan Strother, for he describes him as living 'far in the north', and makes him speak with a northern accent.⁶⁴ With the death of Mary of St Pol, however, the links between some Northumbrian gentry families and the Pembroke connection, if we may call it that, seems to have dwindled into insignificance; and the Strothers' links with the earl of March seem to have been purely military in nature. For the gentry of Northumberland, the magnates who mattered, and who competed for influence in the county, were the Percies, the Nevilles, and, in the 1380s, Gaunt. The power of the Percies remained immense throughout Richard II's reign, but at no time in the last quarter of the fourteenth century could they feel that their ascendancy over the gentry of Northumberland was complete and unchallenged.⁶⁵

NOTES

1. C.Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages*, London, 1987.
2. G.A.Holmes, *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth Century England*, Cambridge, 1957, pp. 1–2.
3. C.Richmond, 'After McFarlane', *History*, lxxviii, 1983, pp. 46–60, esp. p. 59.
4. C.Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity*, New Haven, 1986, especially chapter IV.
5. See, for instance, R.L.Storey, 'The Wardens of the Marches of England towards Scotland', *EHR*, lxxii, 1957, p. 594; J.A.Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border magnates', *Northern History*, iii, 1968, pp. 22–39; and Tuck, 'The emergence of a northern nobility 1250–1400', *Northern History*, xxii, 1986, pp. 1–17.
6. R.L.Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster*, London, 1966, pp. 105–12; Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border magnates', p. 39.
7. *VCH, East Riding of Yorkshire*, iv, p. 126; *North Riding of Yorkshire*, ii, pp. 72–3.
8. Told in outline in J.M.W.Bean, *The Estates of the Percy Family 1416–1537*, Oxford, 1958, pp. 3–11.
9. 'Cronica Monasterii de Alnewyk', ed. W.Dickson, *AA*, 1st ser., iii, 1844, pp. 43–4.
10. *ibid.*
11. *The Percy Cartulary*, ed. M.T.Martin, SS, cxvii, 1911, no. DCXL; CDS, iv, nos 69, 166, 335, 360; *Rot. Scot.*, i, pp. 802, 858, 864; PRO, E101/40/5; A.P.Burke, *Family Records*, London, 1897, pp. 582–4; CIPM, 1–6 Henry IV, no. 429; *CPR 1364–67*, pp. 370–1, 446; 1396–99, p. 94. For instances of Yorkshiremen serving in the Berwick garrison in the period 1377–86, see *CDS*, v, ed. C.G.Simpson and J.D.Galbraith, Edinburgh, 1986, nos 4036, 4046, 4051, 4052, 4062, 4121, 4159, 4200, 4226, 4240, 4262, 4279.
12. *Percy Cartulary*, DCXLIII; *VCH, North Riding of Yorkshire*, i, pp. 532–3, ii, p. 442.
13. *Testamenta Eboracensia*, i, SS, 1836, p. 287; PRO, E101/40/5; *VCH, North Riding of Yorkshire*, ii, p. 222; *CPR 1377–81*, pp. 359, 472; 1381–85, p. 503; 1385–89, pp. 81, 82.
14. *CDS*, iv, nos 226, 270; *CPR 1377–81*, pp. 188, 319.
15. For the names of members of parliament for Northumberland, I have relied on C.H.Hunter-Blair *et al.*, 'Members of Parliament for Northumberland (September 1327–September 1399)', *AA*, 4th ser., xi, 1934, pp. 21–82.
16. PRO, E101/40/5; S.Armitage-Smith, *John of Gaunt*, London, 1904, pp. 251–4; Froissart, xiii, pp. 232–8; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 21; *CPR 1377–81*, p. 572; 1381–85, p. 140; 1385–89, pp. 81, 475; 1388–92, pp. 30, 60, 136, 343; 1391–96, pp. 94, 729. *JGR 1379–83*, i, no. 573. Anthony Goodman has kindly shown me an extract from his forthcoming book on John of Gaunt, in which he reassesses the 1381 incident between Gaunt and Percy.

17. G.Astill, 'The medieval gentry: a study in Leicestershire Society, 1350-1399', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Birmingham, 1977, esp. p. 193; Christine Carpenter, 'Political society in Warwickshire 1401-1472', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1976, pp. 45-6. I am grateful to Dr Astill and Dr Carpenter for permission to cite from their unpublished theses.
18. Jean Scammell, 'Robert I and the north of England', *EHR*, lxxiii, 1958, pp. 385-403.
19. For the career of Sir John Stryvelyn, see J.Hodgson, *A History of Northumberland*, part II, vol. i, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1827, pp. 356-7.
20. C.M.Fraser, 'The life and death of John of Denton', *AA*, 4th ser., xxxvii, 1959, pp. 303-25. W.G.Hoskins argued for the relative prosperity of Newcastle in the later Middle Ages: 'English provincial towns in the early sixteenth century', in *Provincial England*, London, 1965, pp. 70-1, and *The Age of Plunder*, London, 1976, p. 17. His view was questioned, especially in respect of the fifteenth century, by A.E.Butcher, 'Rent, population and economic change in late-medieval Newcastle', *Northern History*, xiv, 1978, pp. 67-77. On the growth of the coal trade in the later fourteenth century, which may have contributed to some degree of prosperity in Newcastle in the period covered by this paper, see J.B.Blake, 'The medieval coal-trade of north-east England: some fourteenth-century evidence', *Northern History*, ii, 1967, pp. 1-26, and for a general discussion of Newcastle's trade in the later Middle Ages, see C.M.Fraser and K.Emsley, *Tyneside*, Newton Abbot, 1973, pp. 24-7.
21. *CPR* 1361-64, p. 290; 1370-74, p. 307; 1374-77, pp. 58, 143; 1381-85, pp. 253, 357; 1385-89, p. 81; 1388-92, pp. 144, 518; 1391-96, pp. 233, 292, 437, 488, 590; 1396-99, p. 98; Hunter-Blair *et al.*, 'Members of Parliament'; C.H.Hunter-Blair, 'The Mayors and Lord Mayors of Newcastle upon Tyne 1216-1940', *AA*, 4th ser., xviii, 1940, pp. 7-9.
22. Astill, *Leicestershire Gentry*, p. 5; Carpenter, *Political Society*, p. 6.
23. Given-Wilson, *English Nobility*, especially chapter 3.
24. Storey, 'Wardens of the Marches', p. 594.
25. Astill, *Leicestershire Gentry*, p. 257; N.Saul, *Knights and Esquires: the Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century*, Oxford, 1981, pp. 56-9.
26. This calculation is based on an analysis of the Calenders of Close, Fine and Patent Rolls and of the MPs for Northumberland listed in Hunter-Blair *et al.*, 'Members of Parliament'.
27. For some evidence of the difficulties faced by the Umfravilles in the fourteenth century, see *NCH*, xii, pp. 101-2.
28. A.Tuck, 'The emergence of a northern nobility', pp. 12-13.
29. *CPR* 1361-64, p. 454; 1364-67, p. 431; 1367-70, pp. 50, 52; 1374-77, pp. 51, 330; 1381-85, p. 357; 1388-92, p. 518.
30. Bean, *Estates of Percy Family*, p. 8.
31. Hodgson, *History of Northumberland*, part II, vol. i, p. 46; *CCR* 1377-81, p. 435.
32. *CPR* 1381-85, pp. 140, 248, 253; 1385-89, pp. 81, 384, 475; 1388-92, pp. 30, 54, 56, 60, 136, 144, 343.
33. *Rot. Scot.*, i, pp. 883, 935, 949; *CDS*, iv, no. 137; *CPR* 1364-67, pp.

- 205, 371, 431; 1367–70, pp. 52, 194, 264; 1374–77, p. 143; 1377–81, p. 359; 1385–89, p. 172; NCH, xv, pp. 325–7; *Calendar of Fine Rolls 1377–83*, p. 56.
34. *Percy Cartulary*, DCCCCLXXII.
 35. *Percy Cartulary*, DCXLVII; W.Percy Hedley, *Northumberland Families*, i, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1968, pp. 57–9; CPR 1370–74, p. 239; 1374–77, p. 330; 1377–81, p. 38.
 36. PRO, E101/40/5; CPR 1388–92, pp. 136, 144, 343, 442, 518; 1391–96, pp. 94, 292, 437, 727, 729; Froissart, xiii, p. 227.
 37. *Calendar of Fine Rolls 1377–83*, p. 56; CPR 1391–96, p. 727; J.C. Hodgson, 'Proofs of age of heirs to estates in Northumberland', *AA*, 2nd ser., xxii, 1900, p. 119.
 38. Astill, *Leicestershire Gentry*, p. 152.
 39. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, pp. 14, 27, 36, 42, 62; Storey, 'Wardens of the Marches', pp. 595–8.
 40. JGR 1379–83, i, p. 7 and no. 303; ii, no. 1102; CPR 1377–81, pp. 515, 572; 1381–85, p. 253.
 41. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 2; BL Cotton Roll XIII 8. This document is difficult to date: in a later hand it is described as 'Rotulus de retinencia Henrici de Percy primi istius cognominis Northumbrie comitis in bello Scotico', but without a date. The names of the members of the retinue are similar, though not identical, to those given in the retinue roll for 1384, PRO, E101/40/5. The list is headed by 'le count de Northumbr', so it does not relate to the Otterburn campaign: 1385 is perhaps the most probable date. Many of the more important names on the roll are listed in E.B.de Fonblanque, *Annals of the House of Percy*, London, 1887, i, part 2, pp. 508–10. De Fonblanque dated the roll to the period 1383–5. Sir Richard Tempest, Sir Matthew Redman, Sir John Felton, and Sir Thomas Boynton also served in this retinue.
 42. PRO, Lists & Indexes, ix, p. 97; Hunter-Blair *et. al.*, 'Members of Parliament'; CPR 1370–74, p. 194.
 43. CDS, iv, no. 305; PRO, Lists & Indexes, ix, p. 98.
 44. JGR 1379–83, i, p. 7.
 45. Hedley, *Northumbrian Families*, i, pp. 101–3; Simon Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity 1361–1399*, Oxford, 1990, pp. 23, 34; Hodgson, 'Proofs of age', p. 124.
 46. CPR 1330–34, pp. 124–5; CDS, iii, no. 1202; CPR 1374–77, p. 366.
 47. CPR 1374–77, p. 366. For Mary of St Pol, see Hilary Jenkinson, 'Mary de Sancto Paulo, Foundress of Pembroke College, Cambridge', *Archaeologia*, lxvi, 1914–15, pp. 401–6, esp. p. 443; *CIM 1307–49*, p. 354.
 48. NCH, vi, pp. 14–19, 221–3.
 49. *ibid.*, pp. 225–8; VCH, *North Riding of Yorkshire*, i, p. 559.
 50. CIPM, xvi, p. 280; xvii, p. 386.
 51. JGR 1379–83, i, p. 7; R.Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster*, London, 1953, p. 356.
 52. Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, pp. 212–17.

53. *ibid.*, p. 285; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 96; PRO, E101/41/7, retinue roll of Thomas earl of Nottingham temp. Richard II.
54. *Visitations of the North, Part III* ed. C.H.Hunter-Blair, SS, cxliv, 1930, p. 53; T.B.Pugh, *Henry V and the Southampton Plot*, Gloucester, 1988, p. 103; *CPR 1392–96*, p. 32.
55. *CPR 1396–99*, pp. 98, 237, 410; NCH, xi, p. 41; J.Raine, *The History and Antiquities of North Durham*, London, 1852, p. 46.
56. *CPR 1391–96*, p. 244; Raine, *North Durham*, p. 46.
57. *Rot. Scot.*, ii, p. 113; *CDS*, iv, no. 444; *CPR 1391–96*, pp. 83, 94, 232, 233, 239, 290, 353; 1396–99, pp. 52, 237, 308, 597.
58. *CPR 1391–96*, pp. 226, 244.
59. Hunter-Blair *et.al.*, 'Members of Parliament', p. 55.
60. *CPR 1370–74*, p. 239; 1374–77, p. 330; 1377–81, p. 515; 1381–85, p. 253; 1385–89, p. 81; 1358–92, pp. 136, 343; 1391–96, pp. 94, 292, 437; 1396–99, p. 98.
61. Storey, 'Wardens of the Marches', pp. 611–12; PRO, Lists & Indexes, ix, p. 98.
62. NCH, xi, pp. 131–7; vii, p. 240; S.Walker, Profit and loss in the Hundred Years War: the subcontracts of Sir John Strother 1374', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, lviii, 1985, pp. 100–6.
63. NCH, vii, p. 240; Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. J.M. Manly, London, n.d., Introduction, pp. 21, 41.
64. Chaucer, *The Reeve's Tale*, ed. Manly, ll. 4013–15, 4022–3 and p. 561.
65. I am grateful to Dr Chris Given-Wilson of the University of St Andrews for reading and commenting on a draft of this paper.

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