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# ABSTRACT

## W.E.L. Broad: 'Northumberland at War'.

At the Battle of Towton in 1461 the Lancastrian forces of Henry VI were defeated by the Yorkist forces of Edward IV. However Henry VI, with his wife, son and a few knights, fled north and found sanctuary in Scotland, where, in exchange for the town of Berwick, the Scots granted them finance, housing and troops. Henry was therefore able to maintain a presence in Northumberland and his supporters were able to claim that he was *in fact* as well as *in theory* sovereign resident in Northumberland. For three years and four months he was able to be maintained in this state and to offer a real challenge to Edward IV. This thesis seeks to answer the question, 'how was it possible that the Lancastrian presence survived for such a long time?'

This under-researched episode in English history is the subject of this dissertation. It examines the lack of zest of Henry VI and how his wife, Margaret of Anjou, and some of her knights, notably Sir Ralph Percy and Henry, Duke of Somerset, made up for this by bravery and resource. It examines the lacklustre performance of the Scots and the reluctance of the French to get fully involved in England's most northern county. It shows that the claim of almost all historians that Northumberland was a Lancastrian county is altogether false and that the number of local people who were involved in the fighting was in fact very small.

This dissertation interrogates the secondary sources and tests them against both the primary sources and the logistical possibilities and restrictions of fifteenth-century warfare. The result is a retelling of a familiar story with surprising results.

# Northumberland at War

A Critical Examination of the Struggle between  
Lancastrians and Yorkists in Northumberland between  
1461 and 1464.

A Master of Arts Dissertation at Durham University.

By Canon William Ernest Lionel Broad,  
Master of Arts, Master of Letters.

Durham University

September 2015

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# Abbreviations

<i>Annales</i>	<i>The Annales of England</i> , begun by John Stow, Citizen of London (London, 1631).
Cal. Close	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office... Edward IV, 1461 – [1476]</i> (London, 1949).
Cal. Pat.	<i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office... Edward IV, 1461 – 67</i> (London, 1897).
Chastellain	Chastellain, P., <i>Les œuvres de Pierre Chastellain et de Vaillan</i> , ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, vols. 1 – 6 (Brussels, 1863 – 65).
Fabyan	Fabyan, R., <i>The New Chronicles of England and France</i> (London, 1811).
Gregory	<i>Gregory's Chronicle, The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century</i> , ed. J. Gairdner (Camden New Series vol. 17, 1876).
Gillingham	Gillingham, J., <i>The Wars of the Roses</i> (London, 1983).
Goodman	Goodman, A., <i>The Wars of the Roses</i> (London, 1981).
Hall	<i>Hall's Chronicle</i> – otherwise Hall, E., <i>The Union of the Two Noble Families of Lancaster and York</i> (London, 1809).
Hardyng	Hardyng, J., <i>The Chronicle of John Hardyng</i> (London, 1812).
Parl. Rolls Ed IV	<i>The Parliamentary Rolls of Medieval England, 1275 – 1504: 1<sup>st</sup> Edward IV 1461 – 1470</i> , vol. XIII, ed. R. Horrox (Woodbridge, 2005).
Scofield	Scofield, C. L., <i>Life and Reign of King Edward IV</i> , vol. 1 (London, 1923).
Warkworth	Warkworth, J., <i>A chronicle of the first thirteen years of the reign of King Edward the Fourth</i> , ed. J. O. Halliwell (Camden Old Series vol. 10, 1839).
Waurin	Waurin, J. de, <i>Recueil des croniques et anchiennes istories de la Grant Bretagne : a present nomme Engleterre</i> , ed. W. Hardy, vols. 1 – 5 (London, 1864 – 91).
Weir	Weir, A., <i>Lancaster and York: the Wars of the Roses</i> (London, 2009).
Worcestre	Worcestre, William, 'Annales Rerum Anglicarum' in <i>Letters and Papers illustrative of the wars of the English in France during the reign of Henry the Sixth, king of England</i> , ed. J. Stevenson vol. 2 (London, 1861 – 64).

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# Dedication

To the memory of Margaret of Anjou, and to Diana Dunn, Helen Maurer and Helen Castor, who rescued her image from that of a she wolf of France, so unfairly attributed to her by William Shakespeare.

# Foreword

The Wars of the Roses lasted (according to some historians) from 1453 to 1487, a total of 34 years. For three of these years the centre of action was in Northumberland, and this period from 1461 to 1464 has not received the scholarly attention it deserves. In an attempt to repair this fault, I have chosen to write an MA, confining my methodology to a thorough review of the secondary sources, and then testing their conclusions with reference to primary sources and the acid test of logistics. A great deal more might be done from archival sources in the National Archives, but this must be left to others.

I have certain unusual qualifications for writing a dissertation about the Wars of the Roses in Northumberland (1461 – 1464). First, I began writing when I was 73 years old and had studied English military history in an amateur capacity for 60 years. Second, I have been a keen walker and have, as such, explored all the sites of political or military action during the struggle. Thirdly, I have been involved in relevant maritime activities for over thirty years. From 1983 to 1990 I ran the Cirdan Sailing Trust in Essex, which involved the rebuilding, running and at times skippering, the 23 metre wooden ketch, Queen Galadriel, one of England's famous Tall Ships. From 1991 to 1999 I ran the Faramir Sailing Trust from Hartlepool, during which time I skippered a number of Sail Training vessels (22 metres long or less) along the Northumbrian coast and have entered every harbour and port along the coast, as well as used nearly every anchorage. From 2010, I was Chairman of the Great Glen Shipping Company which traded and chartered on the West Coast of Scotland, using a number of modern coasting vessels.

Whereas other writers have read about the Wars of the Roses in Northumberland over many years and these may well include keen walkers, I have never encountered or heard of a fellow mariner and ship owner who, with my experience, has written about these wars. In consequence, I write about the French invasion of 1462 with inside knowledge that I do not believe can be challenged. The reader must therefore accept what I say or reject it; I cannot justify it with recourse to external sources.

I would like to thank the Department of History at Durham University for permission to write this dissertation and especially Dr. Christian Liddy for supervising it.

# Introduction

The dates of the Wars of the Roses are often given as those from 1453, when Richard, Duke of York, rebelled against Henry VI, his lawful king, to 1487, when Henry VII finally defeated the Yorkist forces. Three times during these wars there was serious doubt as to who was actually king of England and this doubt was resolved by trial of battle. From 1459 to 1461, it took six battles to establish that Henry VI should be supplanted by his Yorkist cousin. From 1469 to 1471 three battles were fought when Henry VI tried but failed to recover the throne from Edward IV, while at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 and at the Battle of Stoke in 1487 the usurping king Henry VII established the new Tudor Dynasty at the expense of those Yorkists who supported Richard III. Each battle was almost invariably preceded by a long march by one or both sides and the battle was generally decisive. The defeated army often disintegrated and the victorious army was generally dismissed from service by its commander. Of sieges there was virtually none (except in Northumberland) and the battles were generally set piece engagements. After the Battles of Towton, Tewksbury and Stoke there was a long period of peace throughout most, if not all, of England.

This brief military sketch of the Wars of the Roses merely serves to highlight that the war fought from April 1461 in Northumberland, where Henry VI established his base after the Battle of Towton, to July 1464, when the Castle of Bamburgh fell to the forces of Edward IV, was very different. This three-year war was a see-saw affair of many sieges and a time when areas of Northumberland changed hands again and again. During these three years Northumberland was twice invaded by Scottish troops and once by the French and it was a county where participants changed sides, in some cases several times. It was unlike any other period of the Wars of the Roses. For three or more years Henry VI as a reigning king was in, or close to, Northumberland and for a time had Bamburgh as his capital, meaning that in England there were *two* capitals and *two* kings.

How was this possible? Northumberland was a sparsely populated county and the Lancastrian forces had received a devastating blow at Towton. Why did the struggle continue in Northumberland when nearly all of England seemed ready to settle down under the rule of Edward IV? The answer suggested by most secondary sources is that Northumberland was a Lancastrian county and its inhabitants, reinforced by supporters from the rest of England as well as from France and Scotland, proved difficult for Edward IV to subdue. It was only in 1464 when the Lancastrian forces were finally destroyed at the Battles of Hedgley Moor and Hexham that the war in Northumberland came to an end. A variant to this answer is that although Edward could have occupied Northumberland without difficulty, had he done so he would have faced an expensive and exhausting period of military occupation with constant threat of guerrilla activity and the nagging threat of Scottish involvement.

This thesis will examine these answers and find them unsatisfactory, and the reasons for this conclusion are four. First, careful logistical examination of the troops available will make it clear that it was not possible for Henry's forces to mount a military challenge to Edward's armies. Secondly, exhaustive analysis of the families of the Northumbrian nobility and gentry will establish that Northumberland was *not* a Lancastrian county; there were as many, if not more, Yorkists in the county as there were Lancastrians. Thirdly, it will become clear that though the presence in Northumberland of Lancastrian knights from the rest of England was not inconsiderable, they were

effectively individuals; their lands were attainted and such of their affinity that accompanied them was limited to household servants. Finally, it will be shown that the Scots displayed a limited interest in the struggle; their forays into Northumberland showed very little sense of commitment.

Yet Northumberland was, from the Yorkist perspective, a county in revolt and hence a beacon of hope for all Lancastrians in England and abroad who still hoped for the restoration of Henry VI. His presence in Northumberland, with the trappings of a reigning king, was a constant challenge to the Yorkist regime. Clearly it behoved Edward to get rid of him by destroying the Lancastrian regime in England's most northerly county. If, as seems clear from what has been written above, Edward could have conquered Northumberland but didn't, there must have been reasons, and it will be the purpose of this thesis to discover what these reasons may have been. The answer may be found to be a purely military one, or it may be political, or it may be a bit of both. To find which, it is essential to establish the methodology to be used.

## **Methodology**

There are four types of primary source on the military action in Northumberland between 1461 and 1464; parliamentary rolls, foreign correspondence, personal correspondence and chronicles. All offer limited information. However, there are over seventy modern accounts of the Wars of the Roses written over the last 130 years. The first task is to see whether it is possible to assemble these stories into one coherent account and then to find out whether there are inconsistencies, omissions or contradictions in this account. The second task is to examine critically the information provided by each chronicle and to find out exactly how much of it there is and whether it can be shown that some of the secondary sources have misapplied information provided by a primary source. The third task is to examine the biographies and correspondence of contemporary magnates, to see who was involved, where they came from and what happened to them after the struggle came to an end. The fourth task is to assess the logistical possibilities of what is suggested by the primary sources. Considerable work will be done to see what sort of fleet Margaret of Anjou might have been able to launch, the type of ships it could have contained and the number of troops and supplies it could have carried. Other stories are also relevant; the siege of Coroumbr (see page 47) and the attack on Newcastle (see Appendix 2) will have to be examined to see if and when they could have happened.

When the above tasks are completed, I will examine the possible numbers of troops in Northumberland, the distances they might have marched or sailed and assess the available sources of finance, so that the most accurate picture possible may be given of the struggle in Northumberland. The final part of the dissertation will be to produce a short military history of this period, using the primary sources in a thorough but critical way. This study will reveal whether Northumberland was in fact a county like others in England with a constant undercurrent of rebellion, or whether the Lancastrians really had produced a stable area of control. It will indicate why the war in Northumberland lasted so long.

## **A County with Two Kings**

Alongside the military consideration of the war in Northumberland is the political question of kingship. According to the Close Rolls, issued by the royal chancery, Edward IV began his reign of



England and Wales in March 1461 and Henry VI ceased to reign from that time.<sup>1</sup> This view of history can be challenged by events in the north east of England; Henry VI can arguably be said to have reigned in Northumberland from the time of the Battle of Towton (March 1461) until the fall of Bamburgh (June 1464). Lancastrians can therefore (with some justice) claim that his reign was from 1422 to 1464 and that Edward IV began his reign in the latter year. Yorkist supporters, followed by the vast majority of history books, set the start of Edward's reign in 1461. During the period from March 1461 to June 1464 there were therefore *two* kings of Northumberland: Edward IV, whose base was in the south of England, and Henry VI, whose base was in Scotland but who, from time to time, was resident in Northumberland. The Lancastrians in Northumberland, whether they were natives of that county or immigrants, claimed that Henry VI was the true king of England and hence that he was the true king of Northumberland. Edward IV, whose claim to be king of England depended partly on dynastic right but mainly upon his crushing victory of Towton, had to insure that *he* was recognised by Northumbrians as their king or else accept that his predecessor and rival was an ever present threat to his reign over England. Northumberland was a vital area, and Edward IV needed to gain undisputed control of it. This task did not just involve military occupation but the eradication of the idea of Henry's sovereignty in Northumberland.

Northumbrians had a real sense of regional identity which was rooted in their history. When the Roman legions withdrew from Northern Europe in the fifth century CE, Britain broke up into a number of states, one of which was the Kingdom of Northumbria. According to Rollason:

At the height of its territorial power at least from the mid-seventh century to the ninth, the kingdom of Northumbria extended from the Humber in the south, northwards on the east side of the country to the Firth of Forth, westward to the Irish Sea and the southern coastlands of the Solway Firth, and northward of that, at least transiently, to take in modern Ayrshire.<sup>2</sup>

The core realms of Northumbria were the kingdoms of Deira, south of the Tees and north of the Humber, and Bernicia, north of the Tees, the capital of which was Bamburgh.<sup>3</sup> In 867 Viking invasions ended the existence of this state,<sup>4</sup> and it was not until the last Viking king, Eric Bloodaxe, was killed in 954 and the kingdom of England started to appear, that the old kingdom of Deira re-emerged as the earldom of Bamburgh.<sup>5</sup> Early in the Norman Conquest, the political situation further stabilised, with Northumberland becoming a county in the Norman English state, with the newly established county of Cumberland to its west.<sup>6</sup> So the concept of a king in Northumberland harks back to a time when the county had not been on the periphery of the Kingdom of England and Wales, but in the middle of things and reminds the reader that during the three years, 1461 to 1464, it was so again. The two kings of England were establishing their right to rule over England by first establishing their right to reign as sovereigns in Northumberland. The county was for this period the centre of events

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<sup>1</sup> Cal. Close, pp. 212 – 219.

<sup>2</sup> D. Rollason, *Northumbria, 500 – 1100: Creation and destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> D. Rollason, 'Northumbria: A Failed European Kingdom' in *Northumbria: History and Identity; 547 – 2000*, ed. R. Colls (Chichester, 2007), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1; R. Lomas, *County of Conflict* (East Linton, 1996), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Rollason, 'Northumbria: A Failed European Kingdom', p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Lomas, *County of Conflict*, p. 13.

while Bamburgh once again had the semblance a royal capital. A key point in this dissertation is to examine the true nature of this disputed territory.

## **Kingship in the Fifteenth Century**

Edward's claim to the throne was made plausible by the inability of Henry VI to rule effectively. 'Henry VI was only one year old (when he began to reign) and was thus rather a Weak King; indeed the Barons declared he was quite numb and vague. When he grew up, however, he was such a Good man that he was considered a Saint, or (especially by the Barons) an imbecile.'<sup>7</sup> This description in a famous spoof of English history is, as is so often the case, extremely pertinent, for it highlights the main problem for the English during Henry's reign; he was ineffective. For though, by the fifteenth century, the king of England was subject to the law, the law itself was made largely *by* the king and in many senses it seemed that he *was* the law. As Watts puts it:

*The personal will of the king was the one essential prescription for public acts of judgement and so, by analogy, for all legitimate acts of government* (my italics). This meant that there was an important sense in which the king was, like parliament today, unrestrained. Under normal circumstances he could not be resisted within his realm, since it was only by his authority, which depended upon his personal will that acts were done while he was king.<sup>8</sup>

Thus the king might expect to rule unchallenged provided he fulfilled certain basic requirements. 'A willingness [for kings] to work with the straightforward regimes of counsel and to attend to the obligations of defence and justice was all that was fundamentally necessary.'<sup>9</sup> By counsel was meant that he must listen to his nobility and work with them, for they were his key subordinates.<sup>10</sup> A king who recognised this and worked with his nobility would be secure. The question of course was what was to happen if he failed to meet those requirements, and the answer was baronial revolt. Edward II and Richard II were wrong headed and intractable, would not comply with the need for counsel and so forced their subjects to 'break the rules' and get rid of them. The problem posed by Henry VI was what to do when a king was too compliant and ready to listen to almost anyone; one moreover who was clearly subject to mental instability on occasion. A simple answer could be to provide him with a suitable Protector who, with the support of the nobility, might direct his steps. The quarrel which led to the Wars of the Roses was initially about who that Protector should be.

The obvious choice was Henry's cousin and (until the birth of Edward of Lancaster) his heir, Richard, Duke of York,<sup>11</sup> and he, when repeatedly prevented from becoming Protector by Henry's inner court, resorted to force of arms.<sup>12</sup> The political nation divided between *Lancastrians* (those who wanted Henry to continue to rule unchallenged) and *Yorkists* (who, initially, wanted Henry to rule with Richard of York as Protector). However, after the Battle of Northampton in 1460, the latter sought to abandon the role of Protector and become King Richard. Parliament refused to support this radical

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<sup>7</sup> W. C. Sellars and R. J. Yeatman, *1066 and all that* (London, 1975), pp. 53 – 54.

<sup>8</sup> J. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 16 – 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution of England, c. 1437 – 1509* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> M. A. Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses* (Newhaven and London, 2012), pp. 12 – 21.

<sup>12</sup> Gillingham, pp. 51 – 75.

step but agreed an Accord whereby on Henry's death, York would succeed him and, in the meantime, be his chief minister. Even though this disinherited his son and meant that he would be little more than a puppet king, Henry accepted the Accord. From that time onwards Lancastrians looked to his French wife, Margaret of Anjou, for the leadership which she was to provide.<sup>13</sup>

The Accord did not last long. The Lancastrians defeated and killed Richard of York at the Battle of Wakefield in the dying days of 1460 and the Yorkists, claiming that this nullified the Accord, insisted that York's eldest son was *de facto* Edward IV. On 29<sup>th</sup> March 1461 at Towton in Yorkshire the issue as to who ruled England was put to trial of battle and, in a major military encounter, Henry lost. Edward was thereafter king indeed, though not yet secure as such, for Henry with his son, his queen and a few nobles escaped north and was granted asylum in Scotland.<sup>14</sup> The struggle for the throne was not over.

### **A King in Northumberland**

The effect of the Battle of Towton on England was, however, seismic. The whole nation saw that the huge army of Henry of Lancaster, which included the great majority of the peerage of England, had been annihilated by Edward of York and that the latter now ruled England.<sup>15</sup> Many nobles accepted the new status quo, changed side and joined him.<sup>16</sup> Others, while disapproving of the removal of Henry VI, accepted the verdict of battle, returned to their homes and tried to take no part in the continuing struggle.<sup>17</sup> A few however wanted to fight on and restore Henry to actual as well as nominal kingship but were uncertain if and how they could do so.<sup>18</sup> Everything therefore depended on the reaction of Henry and Margaret to this most challenging situation.

Henry could have gone into exile in France where Margaret was a royal princess. There he could have remained as a constant threat to the new regime by rightly claiming that he was the true king of England, much as James II of England (and VII of Scotland) was to do in 1690.<sup>19</sup> Instead Henry sought to continue the struggle on English soil. Northumberland was a county that had a border with Scotland and, if the Scots were prepared to support him, he had an unassailable base in their country.<sup>20</sup> Initially uncertain, the Scots weighed up their options and decided that, in exchange for the keys of the town of Berwick, they would indeed provide Margaret of Anjou with refuge, troops and a safe haven for the Lancastrian court during the continuing struggle.<sup>21</sup> For the next three years Henry was either in Scotland or resident in the county of Northumberland.

To continue the struggle, the Lancastrians had to recruit a new army; their field force having been all but lost at Towton. Their recruiting ground was tiny, consisting as it did of the inhabitants of Northumberland. Chapter 1 examines the number of people living in England in 1460 and finds it well above two million, while the number of those living in Northumberland was around twenty five thousand (or 1.25% of the total; approximately 1 person in 80). This meant that, theoretically, if the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 239 – 245; **Scotfield**, pp. 91 – 107.

<sup>14</sup> Goodman, p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> Hicks, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 167; Sadler, *Towton*, pp. 124 – 125.

<sup>16</sup> Lord Greystoke for example, see table 2, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> The Heron family, for example, see table 2, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup> Sir William Tailboys is a prime example, see Table 2, p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> D. Chandler, *Marlborough as Military Commander* (London, 1973), pp. 35 – 36.

<sup>20</sup> C. Ross, *Edward IV* (London, 1974), p. 45.

<sup>21</sup> A. I. Dunlop, *The Life and Times of James Kennedy, Bishop of St. Andrews* (Edinburgh, 1950), p. 221.

Lancastrians recruited 250 men from Northumberland, the Yorkists, using similar methods, *could recruit 20,000* from the whole of England. There was no chance whatsoever of the Lancastrians raising a force that could hope to compete in a major campaign with the Yorkists. They could only hope that by waging a vigorous campaign, they would cause widespread disaffection to appear in England and this would lead to the eventual overthrow of Edward IV and his Yorkist regime. Their methods showed surprising enterprise, including pacts with the Scots and with the French, as well as the skilful use of fortresses and the undertaking of sudden raids. The war in Northumberland was, as has already been said, unlike any other period of the Wars of the Roses.

## **Aims of the Dissertation**

The key aim of this dissertation is to find out how it was that Henry VI was able to be a king in Northumberland for three years and four months in the face of the overwhelming Yorkist forces that could be recruited in almost all the counties of England. The dissertation further seeks to establish whether the three years of war in the north were a struggle as essentially between Northumbrians, with the involvement of Yorkist, Scottish and French troops from elsewhere, or a conflict between Scots, French and Lancastrians (from elsewhere in England) and Edward's armies, for which Northumberland provided the battleground.

As will be shown in Chapter 2, nearly all historians have regarded Northumberland as a predominantly Lancastrian county.<sup>22</sup> This dissertation examines something of the history of nobles and gentry who lived in Northumberland during this period and establishes beyond doubt that this is far from the truth; a substantial percentage of the Northumbrian gentry were neutral and an equal number were Yorkist. Historians have frequently paid too little attention to these supporters of Edward IV. In particular, the Ogle and Manners families, who were centred on Norham castle, were keen Yorkists and their activities seriously affected Lancastrian strategy. To establish himself as a king in Northumberland, Henry had to establish that the Lancastrians in the county had the upper hand and so they had to establish a military presence capable of doing this.

For this reason, it is also important to know how many troops were recruited by the Lancastrians and hence the size of their armies. Historians who have used the chronicles of the period uncritically have suggested impossible numbers of troops in a given situation. Gillingham and Haigh, for example, set the number of Lancastrians at the Battle of Hedgley Moor as 5000.<sup>23</sup> Yet, as is established in Chapter 4, the largest conceivable force that Lancastrians could raise in the county must have been little over 1000 men. Troops in the Lancastrian armies in Northumberland were numbered in hundreds rather than thousands. A realistic assessment of the forces engaged in battle must be a key part of this dissertation and, if this cannot be established by reference to written historical sources, it must be estimated by other means.

Hand in hand with this, and almost unremarked by historians, is the effect the Lancastrian lack of money had on their ability to raise troops. Henry and Margaret may have been royally lodged in

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<sup>22</sup> Weir, p. 288; Goodman, p. 56; Scofield, p. 175.

<sup>23</sup> Gregory, p. 220; Gillingham, p. 152; P. A. Haigh, *The Military Campaigns of the Wars of the Roses* (London, 1997), p. 80.

Scotland but they were bankrupt and had no means of raising money other than by loans and gifts.<sup>24</sup> Their estates were now in the hands of Edward IV, and he, and not they, could receive revenue from parliament. Henry and Margaret simply could not pay for troops. Most of the nobles who remained loyal Lancastrians were attainted and separated from their lands, relying for subsistence on what treasure they could carry with them or loans from friends. Only a very few Lancastrian nobles actually lived in Northumberland and all of these were attainted. The official records, produced by the government at Westminster, refer only to taxes paid and laws enacted by Edward IV. There are no records of Henry's subjects paying taxes to him or of him calling a parliament to enact legislation. All Henry and Margaret could do was to use the royal prerogative to perform such acts as ceding Berwick to the Scots or offering a Dukedom to the Earl of Angus. Part of the purpose of this dissertation is to discover what authority was wielded by Henry during this period and when and how he used it.

## Structure

Following this introduction, the dissertation breaks down into four chapters and a conclusion:

Chapter 1 begins with a retelling of the conventional story of the war in Northumberland provided by modern sources, followed by a critical analysis of the use made of these sources by most modern writers. There then follows an assessment of the primary sources, which concludes with the acceptance that these are sparse.

Chapter 2 involves an examination of the personnel who lived and fought in Northumberland, their allegiance and their commitment. A crucial discovery in this chapter is that, contrary to unanimous opinion, Northumberland was not a Lancastrian county; Northumbrian Yorkists fought against Northumbrian Lancastrians and there was little difference in the numbers of each.

Chapter 3 looks at the part played in this war by Scotland and France. It examines the three invasions by Scotland: at Carlisle in 1461, at the relief of the siege of Alnwick in 1463 and at Norham later in the same year. The conclusion is that these were half hearted. The size of the French invasion of 1462 is also revealed to have been very small.

Chapter 4 reassesses the part played in the war in Northumberland by some of the key figures of the age. It concludes that some of the issues raised by this struggle are of great importance to the historian. It stresses the lack of attention given by writers to this period of English history and that, though there is a paucity of information available, further research is perfectly possible. Above all, the chapter offers reasons why such a one-sided contest lasted so long.

This is an MA dissertation, limited by time and by length to an examination of primary literature such as chronicles, parliamentary rolls and contemporary correspondence, secondary literature available in books and papers written in the last 130 years, and a considerable knowledge of the land and sea in and around Northumberland. The 48,700 words which comprise this dissertation reveal a whole

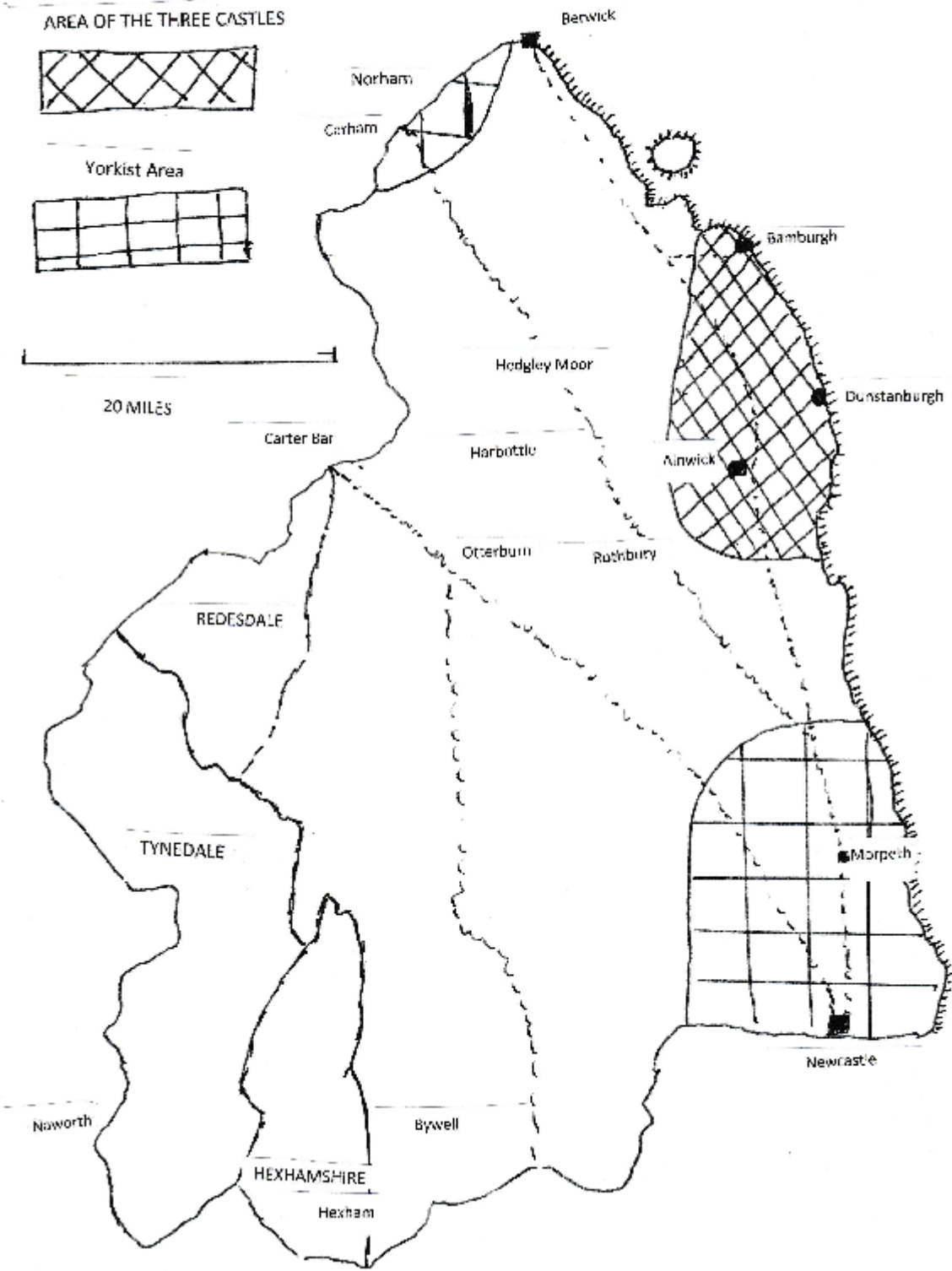
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<sup>24</sup> Waurin, vol. 5, pp. 169–170; *The Paston Letters: A.D. 1422–1509*, ed. J. Gairdner, vol. 3 (London, 1904), p. 307 gives details of how people like Sir John Fortescue and friends helped fund the impecunious Lancastrian royals. See also p. 58 below, for the gift of the King of Brittany.

area and period which has attracted very limited interest from historians and which show an opportunity which others might research in greater depth.

MAP A (not to scale)

Northumberland: 1461 - 1464



# Chapter 1: The Conventional Tale of the War in Northumberland from 1461 –1464.

The story of the war in Northumberland is told in the seventy or so books about the Wars of the Roses that have been written in the last 130 years and these provide the conventional overview of the subject. However it is clear that to some degree these accounts rely on one another as much as on the primary sources, and this has led to a number of misconceptions. The aim of this chapter is to test the facts upon which the opinions expressed in the secondary literature are based and to find whether their assessments can be justified from the primary sources.

Of the seventy or so books mentioned above, the following are the ones that I have found most helpful in reaching an understanding of this section of history. Sir James Ramsay was the first modern historian to write about the Northumberland war between 1461 and 1464 and compiled as he did so a list of references from primary sources that other writers have found very useful.<sup>25</sup> However Ramsay has a tendency to use the primary sources uncritically, merely stating what one source says on an issue without exploring alternative statements by others. His work was followed and expanded by that of Cora Scofield,<sup>26</sup> who devoted more pages than any other writer on the subject and whose notes and reference excelled even those of Ramsay, notably with attention paid to foreign correspondents. However, Scofield's work, like that of Ramsay, suffered from her uncritical use of primary sources and in this she differed from R. B. Mowat,<sup>27</sup> who wrote twenty five years after Ramsay, but who, by using the same sources critically, was able to give what I regard as a more balanced opinion on what may have happened in the Northumberland.

These three books set a pattern which was interrupted by the mould breaking work of K. B. McFarlane in 1945.<sup>28</sup> He detached the history of the Wars of the Roses from the view that it was all about the doings of kings, queens and nobility and adopted a more social approach to history. To him the wars of the fifteenth century were to do with social change and the development of society. He was followed by Charles Ross' book on Edward IV, which, in its chapter 'The Defence of the Throne', concentrated on the importance of Yorkist diplomacy in disrupting Lancastrian alliances with Scotland and France.<sup>29</sup> These last two writers impinged on John Gillingham, whose book, written in 1981, challenged the widely held view that the Wars of the Roses were a catastrophic national upheaval,<sup>30</sup> and on Christine Carpenter, who wrote in 1997 and looked at the Wars as a struggle of constitutional issues.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile in 1990, Anthony Pollard approached the subject as part of a study of the North East of England,<sup>32</sup> and though he was perhaps more concerned with

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<sup>25</sup> J. H. Ramsay, *Lancaster and York: a Century of English History AD 1399–1485*, vol. 2 (Oxford 1892).

<sup>26</sup> Scofield.

<sup>27</sup> R. B. Mowat, *The Wars of the Roses 1377 - 1471* (London, 1914).

<sup>28</sup> K. B. McFarlane, *England in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1981).

<sup>29</sup> Ross, *Edward IV* (London, 1974), pp. 45 – 62.

<sup>30</sup> Gillingham.

<sup>31</sup> Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses*.

<sup>32</sup> A. J. Pollard, *North – Eastern England during the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War, and Politics 1450 – 1500* (Oxford, 1990).



Yorkshire than Northumberland, he gives details of the struggle against the backdrop of the Neville – Percy feud.

More recently, four books have enlarged the perspective. In 2003 Helen Maurer,<sup>33</sup> followed by Helen Castor in 2011,<sup>34</sup> endeavoured to understand the character of Margaret of Anjou from a feminist point of view and so provided a welcome departure from Shakespeare's 'She Wolf' image of his play, *Henry VI; Part 2* (see Chapter 2). Alison Weir in 2009 provided an excellently researched book, a fact partly disguised by the fact that her style of writing tends to be that of a novelist.<sup>35</sup> Harking back to the era of Ramsay and Scofield, she has a tendency to include all stories available (e.g. Margaret of Anjou's escapes after Hexham from robbers and, later, from a rascal called Cork),<sup>36</sup> without full investigation of the facts. Finally in 2012, Michael Hicks wrote a major work,<sup>37</sup> with the vital contribution that he rescues Henry VI from being a kind of passive imbecile. Hicks sees Henry as more proactive in his role as King of England than any other writer.

Yet these and other works on the Wars of the Roses devote a very small portion of their scholarship to the three crucial years of the war in Northumberland. Hicks' recent work gives less than 3 of its 276 pages (1%) to it.<sup>38</sup> Gillingham's *The Wars of the Roses* offers the subject 18 out of its 257 pages (7%), while Weir's *Lancaster and York* gives 11 pages out of 440 (2.5%). Scofield in her *Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth*, devotes no less than 50 pages to the subject, 5% of her voluminous writing on the matter, while Bertram Wolfe, writing on Henry VI, and Charles Ross, writing on Edward IV offer 1% and 5% respectively.<sup>39</sup> Anthony Pollard in his *North – Eastern England during the Wars of the Roses* devotes 30 pages out of 440 pages (7%) to the war in Northumberland. John Sadler has written two books on the subject, *War in the North*,<sup>40</sup> which provides 40 pages, and *Towton: the Battle of Palm Sunday Field*,<sup>41</sup> which provides 20 pages in its appendices, though these are both essentially military histories. Together these writers provide a comprehensive picture of the conventional tale of the struggle in Northumberland, the tale of which must now be told.

After the crushing defeat of Towton, the Lancastrian army ceased to exist. Some of the nobility, former supporters of Henry VI, made their peace with Edward and then collected what remained of their affinities and went home.<sup>42</sup> Others (Lord Greystoke and Robert Claxton, for example) used their forces to support the new regime.<sup>43</sup> However, a small party consisting of Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou, their son Edward and a few nobles, successfully escaped from York and made for Scotland, where they were royally lodged by the Scots.<sup>44</sup> They then had to decide what to do next.

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<sup>33</sup> H. E. Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou* (Woodbridge, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> H. Castor, *She-Wolves* (London, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> Weir.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 316 – 317.

<sup>37</sup> Hicks, *The Wars of the Roses*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177 – 179.

<sup>39</sup> B. Wolffe, *Henry VI* (London, 1981); Ross, *Edward IV*.

<sup>40</sup> D. J. Sadler, *War in the North* (Bristol, 2000).

<sup>41</sup> Sadler, *Towton*.

<sup>42</sup> A. W. Boardman, *The Battle of Towton* (Stroud, 2002), p. 132.

<sup>43</sup> Scofield, pp. 166 – 167.

<sup>44</sup> Goodman, pp. 56 – 57.

For better or worse,<sup>45</sup> Henry and Margaret opted to try to establish a foothold in Northumberland, provided the Scots could be guaranteed to support them there. From the Scottish point of view there were good reasons why they should not do so, for after Towton there seemed every chance that Edward, rather than Henry, would now be the English king. On the other hand, Margaret of Anjou was offering to surrender Berwick to them, a prize that could not be rejected, and so the Scots swallowed their misgivings and were handed the keys of Berwick in exchange for safe lodging and also money and troops to assault Carlisle which the Scots could keep if they could capture it. In May, a small army of Scots and Lancastrians set out to besiege Carlisle, but, though they burned its suburbs, the besiegers were dispersed by Lord Montagu and the Scots withdrew.<sup>46</sup>

Also in June 1461, presumably while Warwick's eyes were elsewhere, Henry VI with a collection of Lancastrian troops attempted to attack Durham; his troops, which included Sir William Tailboys, Sir Humphrey Dacre and Humphrey Neville, got as far as the latter's seat of Brancepeth.<sup>47</sup> Lawrence Booth, Bishop of Durham, called out the clergy and (with the powerful forces of the Nevilles of Middleham close at hand) chased off the Lancastrians. Warwick was then appointed Warden of the East and the West Marches and Sir Robert Ogle was ennobled, these two acts strengthening the Yorkist position in Northumberland. Sir William Bowes assumed the keepership of the stronghold of Alnwick and Sir Ralph Percy submitted to Edward's grace and held on to the keepership of Dunstanburgh.<sup>48</sup> It began to look as though the Lancastrian initiative had completely failed and that Northumberland was under the heel of the Yorkists. That this was not the case is shown by the actions of Sir William Tailboys and Sir Humphrey Dacre, who had not been dismayed by their failure before Durham and returned to fight again, the former capturing Alnwick, the latter Naworth Castle (his ancestral seat) which, although just in Cumberland was important to Lancastrian forces in Northumberland because it held control of the Tyne gap.<sup>49</sup> There was still life in the Lancastrian movement in Northumberland.

1462 must be referred to as the year of the French. The Lancastrian-supporting Charles VII of France had died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1461 and was replaced by his pro-Yorkist son, Louis XI.<sup>50</sup> Scotland was always very sensitive to French alignment and as a result of this change, some in Scotland became pro-Yorkist as well. Scottish military activity on behalf of Henry ceased, and both Naworth and Alnwick were recaptured by the Yorkists by the end of July.<sup>51</sup> The queen mother of Scotland, Mary of Gueldres, now sought a treaty with the Yorkists (a move opposed by Bishop Kennedy) and met with English delegates twice, though neither meeting was a success.<sup>52</sup> Warwick responded by raiding Scotland and captured a castle leading to a third meeting with Mary of Gueldres and a truce between the Yorkists and the Scottish crown.<sup>53</sup> The hopes of the Lancastrians were increasingly focussed on the efforts of Margaret of Anjou to obtain French support. How far she succeeded is detailed in Chapter 4, but the results of her success, such as it was, are sketched out here.

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<sup>45</sup> See Chapter 1, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Parl. Rolls Ed IV, p. 132.

<sup>47</sup> Gillingham, p. 138.

<sup>48</sup> Goodman, p. 57.

<sup>49</sup> Sadler, *War in the North*, p. 21.

<sup>50</sup> Scofield, pp. 188 – 189.

<sup>51</sup> Worcestre, p. 779.

<sup>52</sup> Scofield, p. 247.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248; Paston Letters, vol. 4, p. 44.

On 25<sup>th</sup> October 1462, Northumberland was invaded by a force of French troops (reports of the number of which vary dramatically, the most popular suggestions are 2,000<sup>54</sup> and others 800<sup>55</sup>) under Margaret of Anjou and Pierre de Brézé, in a fleet said to consist of as many as 52 vessels or as few as 12 (see Chapter 3), landed at Warenmouth. Sir Ralph Percy at Dunstanburgh declared for Henry but, crucially, ‘without a Percy earl spurring them forward, the Northumbrian gentry awaited Edward’s reaction before donning their armour.’<sup>56</sup> The country people, finding that Margaret had brought so few French auxiliaries with her, remained passive.<sup>57</sup> Indeed the peasantry of Rock and Beadnell seem to have proved themselves particularly vigilant in the Yorkist interest.<sup>58</sup>

These are crucial assertions. If there was to be a resurgence of Lancastrian activity it had to be at this moment; the whole purpose of the French invasion was to encourage a rising of the Northumberland gentry as a prelude to the conquest of England and the reversal of Towton. Yet nothing happened; the country people remained ‘at home.’ The omens for the Lancastrians were poor indeed.

Nonetheless, Sir Ralph and de Brézé were able to capture Alnwick, so the three great castles of central Northumberland were in Lancastrian hands.<sup>59</sup> This apparent resurgence of Lancastrian power alarmed Edward IV and a massive Yorkist force of perhaps as many as 40,000 troops,<sup>60</sup> led by the Earl of Warwick, approached from the south. Unable to oppose it, the French soldiers either joined the garrisons of the three castles or retreated by ship to Berwick. Those who chose the latter course were shipwrecked on Holy Island and their whole force of about 400 troops were either killed or captured by Yorkist forces under Ogle and Manners.<sup>61</sup> From mid - November Lancastrian troops, made up of some Scots, some French and some local Lancastrians, together numbering considerably less than 1,000 troops, were confined to garrisoning the three castles in the face of a major Yorkist force. Unsurprisingly the castles prepared to surrender; Bamburgh on 26<sup>th</sup> December and Dunstanburgh on the following day, the Duke of Somerset submitting to Edward’s grace.<sup>62</sup> No doubt Alnwick would have followed suit, but there was relief at hand.

George Douglas, Earl of Angus brought a substantial Scottish force from Scotland and, assisted by Pierre de Brézé, relieved the castle of Alnwick. There was a confrontation between the two armies but no battle; Warwick allowed Douglas to withdraw the bulk of the garrison unmolested and Douglas did not attack Warwick, to the disgust of de Brézé. The Lancastrian forces withdrew to Scotland and Warwick accepted the surrender of Alnwick on the following day.<sup>63</sup> Once again Northumberland was free of Lancastrian troops, but once more it was not to be for long.

Following the surrender of Dunstanburgh and Bamburgh in December 1462, Sir Ralph Percy submitted to Edward IV (again) and was granted the governorship of both castles. Such forgiveness

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<sup>54</sup> Goodman, p. 59; Sadler, *Towton*, p. 151; Weir, p. 311.

<sup>55</sup> Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 241; Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 205 et al.

<sup>56</sup> Rose, *Kings of the North*, p. 526; also Gillingham, p. 142; Sadler, *Towton*, p. 151; Scofield, p. 151.

<sup>57</sup> Worcestre, p. 780.

<sup>58</sup> C. J. Bates, *The History of Northumberland* (London, 1895), p. 196.

<sup>59</sup> Scofield, pp. 261 – 262; Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 50.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51; Weir, p. 312.

<sup>61</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 51; Weir, pp. 312 – 314; Goodman, p. 60.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 61; Gillingham, pp. 144 – 145.

<sup>63</sup> Scofield, p. 266 et al.

is staggering unless it is realised that Edward was playing for very high stakes. If he could, through generosity, enlist the Duke of Somerset and the effective leader of the powerful Percy clan in the ranks of his supporters, he had every reason to believe that the Lancastrian threat in Northumberland would be nullified. He miscalculated, for Sir Ralph's new found Yorkist sympathy lasted less than three months; by the end of March he (and the castles) were Lancastrian again!<sup>64</sup> In May Ralph Grey brought Alnwick over to the Lancastrians as well.<sup>65</sup> So worried was Edward that he urged the Archbishop of York to 'call out the clergy' and send them to Durham to defend the line of the Tees.<sup>66</sup> But the Scottish invasion, when it came, got no further than Norham Castle, which was besieged for eighteen days by Scottish, French and Lancastrian forces before it was relieved by the Earl of Warwick and Lord Montagu 'using local forces'.<sup>67</sup> In the ensuing rout, Margaret of Anjou was separated from her supporters and was captured, and then rescued, by bandits, before rejoining her forces at Berwick.<sup>68</sup> There was much acrimony between the French and the Scots after the rout, the French blaming the Scottish government for lack of support. Margaret and de Brézé, realising that decisive support was lacking in Scotland and that there would be no further help from France, left for Burgundy by the end of July.<sup>69</sup>

Yorkist strategy now changed. Whereas in 1462 they had committed huge numbers of troops to recapturing the three castles, in 1463 they left them unmolested and concentrated on securing truces with France and Scotland.<sup>70</sup> When they achieved success; with the French in October and with the Scots in December; the Lancastrian forces were isolated.<sup>71</sup> Indeed military activity might have ceased altogether had it not been for the actions of the Duke of Somerset, who re-defected to the Lancastrians at the end of the year.<sup>72</sup> Though he failed in a plot to capture Newcastle upon Tyne for the Lancastrians, he was able to inspire them to military action in the Tyne Valley, resulting in the capture of the castles of Bywell, Langley and Hexham.<sup>73</sup> With Henry now on Northumberland soil and six castles in Lancastrian hands, the Yorkists seemed to be on the defensive. However, disaster confronted the Lancastrians. A formal peace treaty between the Yorkist government and Scotland was being discussed and in April 1464 Lord Montagu was sent to contact the Scottish ambassadors, who were waiting at Norham Castle, and escort them to Newcastle.<sup>74</sup> Obviously such a treaty was not in Lancastrian interests and so attempts were made to waylay Montagu on his ride north. Failing to ambush him with 80 spearmen and bowmen near Newcastle, 5,000 Lancastrians opposed the passage of his reinforced troops at Hedgley Moor on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1464 and were roundly defeated, Sir Ralph Percy meeting his death on the battlefield.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Pollard, *North-Eastern England*, pp. 292 – 294.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287; Sadler, *Towton*, p. 153.

<sup>66</sup> Scofield, p. 292.

<sup>67</sup> Goodman, p. 62.

<sup>68</sup> Weir, p. 316; see also Appendix 1.

<sup>69</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 205; see Appendix 1, pp. 90 – 92.

<sup>70</sup> Gillingham, p. 149.

<sup>71</sup> Goodman, p. 63.

<sup>72</sup> Scofield, pp. 312 – 313.

<sup>73</sup> Weir, pp. 321 – 322.

<sup>74</sup> Haigh, *Military Campaigns*, p. 80.

<sup>75</sup> See page 21.

Rather than repeat their strategy of retreating to their castles, the Lancastrians then made for their recently acquired territory in the Tyne Valley, taking Henry VI with them. This resulted in disaster. Their depleted forces were trapped and routed by a much larger Yorkist force under Lord Montagu and all but one of their leaders captured and executed.<sup>76</sup> Only Henry escaped, and he went into hiding for more than a year.<sup>77</sup> In June Alnwick and Dunstanburgh surrendered, but Bamburgh held fast, and it was not until heavy cannon had opened fire upon it that it too yielded and the Henry's claim to kingship in Northumberland was over.<sup>78</sup>

## **Problems with the Conventional Story**

This dissertation challenges the conventional story in four ways.

First, it argues that the numbers of soldiers involved (particularly on the Lancastrian side) must have been very much smaller than is sometimes asserted in the correspondence and chronicles of the time and frequently accepted uncritically by modern writers. With the exception of the Yorkist troops who flooded into Northumberland to counter the French threat of 1462 and the Scottish riposte to this in January 1463 under the Earl of Angus, the size of military actions was probably quite small. This matter is investigated below and in Chapters 3 and 4.

Secondly, it argues that Northumberland was emphatically not a Lancastrian county and that there were far more Yorkists in Northumberland than has hitherto been remarked. It further points out that the Lancastrians had predominance in less than 20% of the county. This matter is examined in detail in Chapter 2.

Thirdly, it looks at the question of how kingship was viewed by the people of Northumberland. Edward, quondam Earl of March, latterly Duke of York, was accepted in London on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1461 as Edward IV by a hastily gathered parliament which contained only a minority of the peers of England.<sup>79</sup> His justification for thus usurping the throne was that Henry VI had broken the Accord by being complicit in the 'murder' of the Duke of York and so voided his sovereignty. This argument was extremely dubious. Two factors made it acceptable to most people in England; Edward's overwhelming victory at Towton, and his undoubtedly attractive personality, with all its charm, youth and vigour (it must not be forgotten that he was a large boy of nineteen years old). Wherever he went, people seem to have found him a joy to meet.<sup>80</sup> However, since he did not go north of Newcastle, his charm was not experienced by the Northumbrians. Weak and vacuous Henry VI may have been, but, from the retreat after Towton to the Battle of Hexham, he was either in the county or just over the border in Scotland. The question must be asked; 'was there a real Lancastrian feeling among the Northumbrians which the absence of Edward fostered?' This will be looked at in Chapter 4.

Fourthly, it is my conviction that the true story of the conflict in Northumberland, from 1461 to 1464 has never been fully researched and this matter will be discussed now. One reason for this lack of

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<sup>76</sup> Sadler, *Towton*, pp. 159 – 162 et al.

<sup>77</sup> Hicks, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 180.

<sup>78</sup> Haigh, *Military Campaigns*, pp. 87 – 88.

<sup>79</sup> Gillingham, p. 131; Watts, *The Politics of Kingship*, p. 362; Scofield, p. 152.

<sup>80</sup> Weir, pp. 292 – 293 gives a detailed list of those who had either met him, or heard of those who had, and found him extremely attractive.

interest is that most histories of England date Edward IV's reign as commencing in 1461,<sup>81</sup> and writers not unnaturally shift their emphasis from Henry to Edward as the *de facto* if not *de jure* king of England. So Griffiths' massive work of 900 pages, *The Reign of Henry VI*,<sup>82</sup> finishes with the Battle of Towton and the 400 pages of Wolffe's *Henry VI* give less than three pages to Henry's activities in Northumberland.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, in secondary literature which focuses on Edward IV, the struggle receives scant attention. For example, Ross' *Edward IV* sees the campaign in Northumberland as a rebellion by Lancastrians against the new Yorkist king rather than a last defence of Henry VI against the usurping Duke of York. None of these writers seems to fully embrace the importance of the dispute about sovereignty in Northumberland. An examination as to why this lasted for so long in Northumberland is crucial to the thesis.

## Limitations and Failings

One result of the limited attention paid by writers to this period of history has been that research is limited and secondary writers often depend on one another. Another failing is that careful analysis of the logistics of an activity is infrequently undertaken.

An example of this latter failing is seen in Weir's account of the movements of Margaret of Anjou after the Battle of Northampton. Weir writes: 'Queen Margaret now left Denbigh and sailed from Wales around the coast to Berwick, intending to seek refuge in Scotland.'<sup>84</sup> This is an unlikely suggestion since such a voyage must have involved a journey of 500 miles through dangerous waters around the very country she wanted to visit. If Margaret wanted to establish contacts with the Scottish court, Kirkcudbright (a port used by Margaret to sail to France in 1462 and a mere 100 miles away) or Glasgow (160 miles) would have been much more easily and much more safely reached. Maurer is agnostic as to which port Margaret used, and merely says, 'From Wales they [Margaret and her party] took ship to Scotland.'<sup>85</sup>

An excellent example of the former failing can be seen in a passage by Haigh describing events in late 1461: 'another raiding party from Scotland led by Sir William Tailboys recaptured Alnwick Castle. They then marched on to Dunstanburgh where [Ralph] Percy... opened the gates to them.'<sup>86</sup> Sadler reports this 'event' with fewer details: 'Sir William Tailboys, leading a Lancastrian raid from over the border, easily retook Alnwick.'<sup>87</sup> Unlike Haigh, who gives no reference, Sadler cites Gillingham as his source, when all the latter actually says is: 'Within a few months (of July 1461) Sir William Tailboys had retaken it [Alnwick] for the Lancastrians.'<sup>88</sup> Reading and combining these accounts I originally formed the theory that Tailboys had collected his affinity from Redesdale (15 miles away) and swooped down on Alnwick, holding it for seven months at least. Reference to primary sources immediately reveals that none of the above accounts can be justified. All that the chronicles have to offer is that Alnwick was yielded by appointment to Lord Hastings at the end of July, though William Worcestre adds that it was held by Tailboys until July 30<sup>th</sup> 1462, when he surrendered it to Sir Ralph

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<sup>81</sup> Hicks, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 169 et al.

<sup>82</sup> R. A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI* (London, 1981).

<sup>83</sup> Wolffe, *Henry VI*.

<sup>84</sup> Weir, p. 246.

<sup>85</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 187.

<sup>86</sup> Haigh, p. 71.

<sup>87</sup> Sadler, *War in the North*, p. 21.

<sup>88</sup> Gillingham, p. 141.

Grey and was himself (and those of his troops who wished) allowed to withdraw to Scotland.<sup>89</sup> These accounts are the only ones available in the primary sources. Haigh and Sadler seem here to be guilty of invention.

The lack of logistical analysis is shown in Haigh's *The Military Campaigns of the Wars of the Roses* where his reconstruction is based on inadequate research. Since the issue centres on the assertion that there were 5,000 Lancastrians at the Battle of Hedgely Moor, the matter needs careful examination. Haigh feels able to give a detailed account of the battle and writes:

Montagu's force, arriving at Hedgely Moor, formed up almost directly opposite the Lancastrians. For some time both sides adjusted ranks, separated by only 1,500 yards of open moorland. The battle opened with the customary exchange of archer fire. This was followed by the advance of Montagu's entire force. As the Yorkists crossed the open ground towards Somerset's position the Lancastrians suffered a major blow to their chances of victory when the left flank, under the command of Lords Hungerford and Roos (some two thousand men-at-arms), faltered, broke and scattered before Montagu could bring his force into close combat. Somewhat surprised at this unexpected departure of a third of the Lancastrian army, Montagu was obliged to halt his force for a short time while the Yorkists readjusted their lines and consolidated their front to allow Montagu to bring up the bulk of his force against the remaining Lancastrians, by now marching forward to engage with the Yorkists. As the two armies clashed the Lancastrians, their force already depleted by the departure of Roos and Hungerford, gave way under the impetus of the Yorkists' advance. Either in the ensuing melee or perhaps even just before the final engagement Sir Ralph Percy was deserted by all, including the Lancastrian commander Somerset, except his own household retainers. The remaining Lancastrians put up a brave fight but were hopelessly outnumbered. The battle did not last long, Percy himself and most of the remaining Lancastrians being soon slain by the vastly superior Yorkist force.<sup>90</sup>

Sadler also gives a detailed account. 'Somerset', he begins, 'by mustering every man he could command and stripping the garrison from Alnwick may have brought his strength up, as Gregory asserts, to 5000 in all.' He goes on to give a similar account of the battle to that of Haigh.

However all that the only primary source to comment on the battle, *Gregory's Chronicle*, has to offer is:

And in the way forward there met with him [Lord Montagu] that false Duke of Somerset, Sir Ralph Percy, the Lord Hungerford and the Lord Roos, with all their company, to the number of 5000 men of arms. And this meeting was upon Saint Mark's day and that same day was Sir Ralph Percy slain. And when that he was dead all the party was discomforted and put to rebuke. And every man avoided and took his way with full sorry hearts.<sup>91</sup>

This account is summarised by Gillingham: 'All we know about the engagement is that the rebels were disheartened by the death of Ralph Percy and fled,'<sup>92</sup> while Scofield simply quotes Gregory.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p. 150; C.L. Kingsford, ed., *Chronicles of London* (Dursley, 1977), p. 178; *Fabyan*, p. 652; *Six Town Chronicles of England*, ed. R. Flenley (Oxford, 1911); p. 163; Worcester, p. 779.

<sup>90</sup> Haigh, *Military Campaigns*, pp. 80 – 81.

<sup>91</sup> Gregory, p. 224.

<sup>92</sup> Gillingham, p. 152.

<sup>93</sup> Scofield, p. 330.

It is reasonable to ask, how is it that noted historians like Haigh and Sadler come to what amounts to an invention of history? I believe that the answer hinges on an accurate survey of the topography of Hedgley Moor, where tradition has it that the battle took place and with it the uncritical acceptance of the figure 5,000 for the number of Lancastrian troops engaged. Obviously Haigh is engaged in intelligent guesswork, based on how a fifteenth century army of about 5,000 soldiers would be handled in a set piece battle, fought against a force of similar size advancing towards them on ground of the former's choosing. He clearly had not read or had dismissed the statement by Mowat: 'The number of Lancastrians is said by the chronicler Gregory to have been 5,000; it is more likely to have been a few hundreds, as they made no stand against Montagu's comparatively small force.'<sup>94</sup> For Mowat had picked up the essential point; there is no reference to the number of Yorkists, either by Gregory or by anyone else.

The whole reconstruction hangs upon the accuracy of the figure '5,000'. If, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, such a figure is impossible due to a lack of manpower, and if, as will be shown in the same chapter, the true figure is unlikely to have exceeded 500, Haigh's whole reconstruction falls to the ground and should be ignored. For similar reasons, Sadler's suggestion (based on no evidence) that 5,000 troops may have been raised by stripping the garrison of Alnwick of troops must be discarded for, as will be shown in Chapter 4, such a garrison would have contained not more than 300 soldiers.

If reconstruction is to be undertaken and Montagu's force really was to be counted in thousands and Somerset's in hundreds, a set piece battle is the last thing the latter would have wanted. With a choice of ground, an ambush followed by 'hit and run' tactics would be the obvious way to fight. So it could be suggested that the Lancastrians engaged in such tactics but early in the struggle Percy was killed and his Northumbrians melted away, in much the same way as the followers of his grandfather 'Hotspur' did when he was captured at the Battle of Otterburn in 1388.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, de Fonblanque quotes from the Grafton Chronicles of England to say: 'the Lancastrians were so greatly outnumbered that after a mere show of resistance the commanders fled from the field.'<sup>96</sup> This certainly suggests a skirmish rather than a set piece battle. If, on the other hand, the idea of a large Yorkist force is discounted, the Battle of Hedgley Moor was probably little more than an ambush.

The significance of the above must be understood. Gregory's Chronicle tells of the presence of a number of Lancastrian leaders and of one Yorkist leader (Lord Montagu), all of whom were known to be in the county and liable to be engaged. It tells of the death of Sir Ralph Percy, a fact discussed in from other sources.<sup>97</sup> *But apart from these points, it offers only the figure 5,000 for the number of Lancastrians engaged* and in no way justifies this figure by reference to eyewitnesses or other sources. There is no reason why writers (such as Haigh and Sadler) cannot engage in intelligent reconstruction provided they clearly state that this is what is being done and also provided that the primary sources are used critically. The time has come to inspect these sources.

## The Chronicles

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<sup>94</sup> Mowat, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 184.

<sup>95</sup> Rose, *Kings of the North*, p. 408.

<sup>96</sup> E. B. De Fonblanque, *Annals of the House of Percy* (London, 1887), pp. 584; *Grafton's Chronicle of England*, vol. 2 (London, 1809), p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> Bates, *The History of Northumberland*, p. 201.



The establishment of a printing press in England by William Caxton in 1477 was something which was to change forever the role of the scribe and transformed the elitist nature of publication to a much more democratic one.<sup>98</sup> Before that invention, works for widespread distribution had to be copied by hand, an expensive procedure normally undertaken by religious houses which gave the Church authority over what was and what was not copied. Books were few and pamphlets limited in their numbers. However, the fifteenth century saw developments in the writing of such chronicles.

Originally, chronicles were written in Latin or French, but by the fifteenth century they were being written in the vernacular, a practice which Gransden describes as 'the most remarkable historiographical development of the century.'<sup>99</sup> These chronicles were normally written on parchment and frequently have the appearance of histories. Forty-four of them survive in manuscript form and, surprisingly, all are anonymous and, equally surprising, seem not to have been written for sale or by professional scribes but by their owner keepers, who were, in the main, lay people.<sup>100</sup> Given-Wilson declares: 'History was not a profession in the middle ages. It required no specialist training. Nor did it provide formal career pathways. It was, nevertheless, distinct from other forms of literature, and what especially distinguished it was its claim to be presenting the truth.'<sup>101</sup> The main source material for the chronicles was, in fact, other chronicles, a process that created interdependence and so decreased their objective value, which means that although they claimed to be concerned with truth, they frequently failed to provide it.<sup>102</sup> Hicks warns of the danger of uncritical acceptance of their evidence: 'Written years in arrears, they often err in dates and details, generalise too much in their chronology and seek constantly to improve on their data.'<sup>103</sup>

Gransden lists eleven principal sources for the reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV and points out that three are written in French by continental authors (Monstrelet, Waurin and Commyne), three were written in monasteries (Whethamstead of St. Albans, and the two Crowland Continuations – two of these in Latin) and the remaining five were written in English.<sup>104</sup> Further, although the chronicles are often marginalised by writers on the Wars of the Roses, McLaren points out that they provide the most of the contemporary records available. They do tend to concentrate particularly on the doings of the royal family, on pageants and processions and on the weather, but they also write about battles and sieges. Gransden and McLaren also point out that the chroniclers tended to be Londoners and that Londoners tended to be Yorkist, seeing in the triumph of the House of York a restitution of order over the chaos produced by the Lancastrians.<sup>105</sup> Hence a lot of attention is paid by chroniclers to the Second Battle of St. Albans, coming at the end of Margaret of Anjou's hideous march south, which culminated in the recapture of King Henry VI, who completes the picture of disorder by knighting some of the perpetrators of the march. The triumph of the new king Edward

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<sup>98</sup> See E. Childs, *William Caxton; A Portrait in a Background* (London, 1976).

<sup>99</sup> A. Gransden, *Historical writing in England*, vol. 2 (London, 1974 – 82), p. 220.

<sup>100</sup> M-R. McLaren, *The London Chronicles of the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 15, 25; C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London and New York, 2004), pp. xx – xxi.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> M. Hicks, 'The Sources', A. J. Pollard, (ed.), *The Wars of the Roses* (London, 1995), p. 29.

<sup>104</sup> Gransden, *Historical Writing*, vol. 2, p. 501.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

over these forces of disorder and corruption is seen as the restitution of order and harmony,<sup>106</sup> and that is also seen in descriptions of military activity in Northumberland.

‘Medieval Chroniclers believed that history must have didactic significance,’ writes Given Wilson, ‘in other words, that “universal truths” to be deduced from any specific episode were just as important as the need to provide an incontestably factual account of that episode.’<sup>107</sup> This is shown in battles; victorious armies are shown as well disciplined, well commanded and well ordered. The loser is shown as chaotic, disordered, affected by divided command. Chroniclers showed battles not as they were but as they *should have been*. A good example of this point is from Warkworth’s Chronicle, referring to the Battle of Hexham, which carries the following passage:

Also in the iiiith yere of Kynge Edwarde, the monthe of Maij, the Duke of Somersett, the Lorde Roos, the Lorde Moleyns, Tailboys the Erle of Kyme, Sire Philip Wenterworth, Sire Thomas Fyndherne, gadred a grete peple of the northe contre. And Sere Jhon Nevelle, that tyme beyng Erle of Northumberlonde, with [10,000] men come upon them, and there the commons fleede that were with them, and ther the foreside lords were takene and afterward behedede.<sup>108</sup>

The author of this Chronicle, John Warkworth, is thought to have been a native of the diocese of Durham, named from the Northumberland village of Warkworth,<sup>109</sup> and further has a reputation for having a pro-Lancastrian bias.<sup>110</sup> Worcestre’s *Annales Rerum Anglicarum* (written in Latin) declares that there were not more than 500 Lancastrians and 4,000 Yorkists, led by Lord Montagu, with Lords Greystoke and Willoughby.<sup>111</sup> Although the troops credited to the Yorkists vary from chronicler to chronicler, it is likely that William of Worcestre is right and it is unlikely that there were more than 4,000 Yorkist soldiers and that the Lancastrian forces arrayed against them were only 500 strong, as indicated by Worcestre.<sup>112</sup> Warkworth’s ‘grete peple of the northe contre’ is a deliberate attempt to demonstrate Montagu’s victory far greater than it was.

The realisation that the primary sources offer very limited information about the War in Northumberland makes it necessary to challenge some of the basic assumptions underlying the conventional story and to question how much is actually known about this war. In Chapter 4 there will be an analysis of all the numbers of troops involved in the campaigns. However, there is another way of approaching the subject, and that is by examining what we know of the participants, their background, motivation and sincerity of purpose. This is one of the purposes of Chapter 2.

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<sup>106</sup> McLaren, *London Chronicles*, p. 84

<sup>107</sup> Given Wilson, *Chronicles*, p. 2.

<sup>108</sup> *Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, ed. J. Gairdner (London 1880), p. 26.

<sup>109</sup> E. D. Kennedy, ‘Warkworth, John’ in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edn., 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28747>]), p. 1.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> Worcestre, p. 782.

<sup>112</sup> See Chapter 4 for a logistical examination of the troops available in this battle.

## Chapter 2: Northumberland: A Lancastrian County?

Throughout this dissertation, there is tension surrounding the question as to whether Northumberland was a battleground over which others fought or whether it was a homeland over which Northumbrians themselves struggled. The question is asked; did many Northumbrians see themselves as part of an England that was now Yorkist and the Northumbrian Lancastrians as rebels against the new sovereign? Did many others see the Yorkist Northumbrians as usurpers and wish Northumberland to continue under the kingship of Henry VI. Above all, did the senior protagonists of the Wars of the Roses see the Northumbrians as pawns in the great struggle taking place in England, or were they concerned for the rights and livelihood of Northumbrians?

### **Northumberland: Society on the Eve of War**

‘England [in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries]’, writes Waugh, ‘was loosely organized into a hierarchy of self governing communities, stretching from villages, through hundreds, boroughs and counties to the kingdom as a whole.’<sup>113</sup> It was also a kingdom, ruled by a king and dependent on that king from whom all authority ultimately devolved.<sup>114</sup> However, the king could not be a tyrant; since Magna Carta he was subject to the laws that he had made.<sup>115</sup> As was demonstrated by the short-lived revolt under Simon de Montfort in 1264, the king had to consult with the nobility of England; who became effectively his first tier of management. He could not rule effectively without them and they could not survive effectively without him.<sup>116</sup> The contract that existed between the king and the nobility was essential for the running of the kingdom.<sup>117</sup>

By the fifteenth century another tier of the governing elite had emerged. The lesser gentry (knights, esquires and gentlemen) had separated from the lords and held power in their own right, becoming the justices of the peace, sheriffs and commissioners of array. These were those who had acquired land and with it power, as the lives of the well-documented Pastons were to demonstrate.<sup>118</sup> ‘The basis of political power in pre – industrial England,’ writes Barker, ‘was land, its possession, exploitation and management... Manorial estates were administrative units as well as agricultural assets.’<sup>119</sup> So when a barony eroded, perhaps because the line of barons had died out or because the baron had fallen foul of the king and been attainted, knights or esquires in charge of manors might acquire an increasing independence. On the other hand a baron might, by marriage and favour from the king, acquire more titles and manors and become very powerful, as an examination of the career of Richard, Earl of Warwick (see below) demonstrates.

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<sup>113</sup> S. L. Waugh, ‘England: Kingship and the Political Community, 1272 – 1377’ in *A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. S. H. Rigby (Oxford, 2003), p. 213.

<sup>114</sup> Watts, *Politics of Kingship*, pp. 16 – 18.

<sup>115</sup> Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 28.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>117</sup> See page 8.

<sup>118</sup> Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses*, pp. 47 – 49.

<sup>119</sup> B. A. Barker, (2003) ‘The Claxtons: A Northeastern Gentry Family in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries’, Teesside University Theses, p. 2.

It is important to accept that the medieval society of north eastern England had the same structure as pertained in the rest of England. A. J. Pollard sums up the situation so succinctly that he is worth quoting extensively:

Two broad conclusions may be drawn about landed society in north-eastern England. The first is that in the distribution of land between laity and clergy, and lords and gentry, and in the practices relating to marriage, the management of inheritance, and the settlement of property the north-east was like the rest of England. The region's landed elite was part of one single English aristocracy. The second conclusion is that no qualitative difference can be drawn between lords and gentry... Lords and gentry were all part of the same class: in chivalric and continental terms, gentry were but lesser nobility. Lords were the richer, the legally more privileged, and the more powerful; but they were still *primi inter pares*, not a caste apart.<sup>120</sup>

However, the England of the fifteenth century had acquired a government bureaucracy at Westminster and this meant that Northumbrians differed only from the central core of England (except Cornwall) in that they were a very long way from it.<sup>121</sup> This in turn meant that their nobility had greater significance – and probably autonomy – than their counterparts who lived near London. This situation was especially true of the Percy family and, to a lesser degree, of their neighbours and rivals, the Nevilles.

Originally from a Yorkshire family, Henry Percy bought the Barony of Alnwick from the Bishop of Durham in 1309 and rapidly the Percies became the most powerful family in Northumberland. Indeed, one writer to describe their family history entitled his work 'Kings of the North'.<sup>122</sup> Rose describes how the leading Percy became Earl of Northumberland and then squandered his opportunities in rebellion against King Henry IV, how he and his son 'Hotspur' lost their lives and how they were both attainted.<sup>123</sup> He goes on to describe how, on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1416, Henry Percy was restored to the title of Earl of Northumberland by King Henry V and began to receive the restoration of the estates lost by his father. Indeed, he actually gained four more manors in Northumberland, thus meaning that by 1461 the Percy inheritance in Northumberland was greater than ever before.<sup>124</sup>

However, the Nevilles (also originally a Yorkshire family) were now their rivals and had built up a large body of supporters from among the northern gentry (mostly in Yorkshire) at the expense of the Percies, and this included their being granted the Barony of Styford (Bolbec).<sup>125</sup> The Nevilles had further the advantage of possessing greater wealth: Richard Neville, like the Duke of York and the Bishops of Durham had incomes of about £3,500 a year, while the Earls of Northumberland received only about £2,000 annually.<sup>126</sup> The kings of England, be they Lancastrian and Yorkist, played off

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<sup>120</sup> Pollard, *North Eastern England*, p. 120.

<sup>121</sup> A. Goodman, *A History of England from Edward II to James I* (London, 1977), pp. 94 – 95.

<sup>122</sup> Rose, *Kings of the North*.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 387 – 453.

<sup>124</sup> J. M. W. Bean, *The Estates of the Percy Families 1416 – 1537* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 69, 79 – 80.

<sup>125</sup> Storey, *House of Lancaster*, pp. 112 – 116.

<sup>126</sup> M. Weiss, 'A Power in the North? The Percies in the Fifteenth Century', *The Historical Journal* 19 (2), (1976) p. 503.

Neville and Percy against one another to prevent either obtaining too much power, a process that continued until the Wars of the Roses became imminent. (The Ogles were but one family that changed their allegiance as a result of this policy.)<sup>127</sup> Then, as the junior branch of the Nevilles (referred to as the Nevilles of Middleham)<sup>128</sup> became principal supporters of the Yorkists, Henry VI increasingly relied upon the Percies. The third Earl of Northumberland, as he waited the Yorkist assault at Towton, may have had more lands than his illustrious great grandfather, but his standing in the county was far less. Nonetheless, his death 'on the bloody meadow' was an unqualified disaster for the House of Lancaster. His son, the fourth Earl, was in Yorkist custody and though the third Earl's brother, Ralph Percy, was to be a major player in the Northumberland war, it was as a soldier rather than a landholder (see below).

Belief in the absolute dominance of these two families over the Northumbrians in the fifteenth century has recently been undermined. A. J. Pollard points out that this period saw the increasing decline in the power of both families. The disastrous support of the Percies for the Lancastrians led to the deaths of the second Earl in 1455 and the third Earl in 1461, which meant that there was no Earl of Northumberland resident in the county during the struggle. The rift in their family between the Nevilles of Raby, who were Lancastrians, and the Nevilles of Middleham, who were Yorkists,<sup>129</sup> limited their power, particularly in Northumberland, for the baronies of Bolbec and Bywell (the Neville holdings in Northumberland) were under the Nevilles of Raby.

There were other important members of the landholding nobility and gentry in Northumberland and many of these were involved in the war. Some were the lords of the ancient baronies, while others were landowners who attained importance by advantageous marriage, by purchase or by conduct in war. Sir Robert Ogle, for example, became a baron because of good service to the king in war, while knights and esquires, like his neighbour, Robert Manners, enlarged their property to become castles and through them extended their authority. To understand the full significance of this development, it is necessary to look at the military situation

Since the twelfth century, wars on English soil had been either civil wars or *border wars with Scotland* and those who lived on the Scottish border suffered accordingly. 'The only regions which suffered general and repeated rural devastation', writes Goodman, 'radically affecting prosperity and social structure, were those northern parts most exposed to Scottish raids.'<sup>130</sup> Occasionally these raids involved the deep penetration of a full scale invasion, such as the campaign of Neville's Cross in 1346,<sup>131</sup> but much more frequently there was bickering between the two sides in which there was shallow penetration (normally not more than fifteen miles from the border). In spite of garrison towns at Carlisle and Berwick on Tweed and border castles at places like Wark on Tweed

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<sup>127</sup> H.A. Ogle (Baronet), *Ogle and Bothal* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1902), p. 122.

<sup>128</sup> The senior branch of the family, known as the Nevilles of Raby or the Nevilles of Brancepeth, adhered to the Lancastrian party – see Hicks, *Warwick*, pp. 23 – 24.

<sup>129</sup> A. J. Pollard, 'Use and Ornament: Late-Twentieth-Century Historians on the late Medieval North-East', *Northern History* 42 (2005), pp. 64 – 65.

<sup>130</sup> Goodman, *History of England*, p. 257.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169; D. Smurthwaite, *Battlefields of England* (London, 1984), pp. 80 – 81.

and Norham, small bodies of Scots continually raided into England (as did the English into Scotland) and those living on the border were subjected to constant harassment.<sup>132</sup>

MacDonald Fraser, in his book *The Steel Bonnets*, offers a vision as to what he sees as the devastating effect these raids had on the people of Northumberland and Cumberland. He writes:

Between England and Scotland, there was prolonged and terrible violence, and whoever gained in the end, the Border country suffered fearfully in the process. It was the ring in which champions met: armies marched and counter-marched and fought and fled across it; it was wasted and burned and despoiled, its people harried and robbed and slaughtered, on both sides, by both sides. Whatever the rights and wrongs, the Borders were the people who bore the brunt... War after war was fought on it, and this, to put it mildly, had an effect on the folk who lived there.<sup>133</sup>

Visitors to the border towns in the 'Reiver season', when the lives of the raiders are celebrated, will gain the impression that Macdonald Fraser's vision is an accurate one.<sup>134</sup>

In an attempt to limit this lawlessness, both Scots and English established what were known as the Marches. In 1249 a joint Anglo-Scottish commission finally defined the border between the two countries and established what became known as the March laws to handle the prosecution of border homicide and theft.<sup>135</sup> These might have remained the responsibility of the sheriffs of the various relevant counties and liberties but the outbreak of the Three Hundred Years War in 1296 made this solution impossible. Two defined 'Marches' were therefore created, the East March covering Northumberland and the West March covering Cumberland. Each March had a warden, the English one being a dominant figure in Northumbrian society,<sup>136</sup> one who was appointed by the king and had the twin responsibilities of defending the border in time of war and keeping order in time of peace. For the former responsibility he was given what was in fact a private army paid for by the king and authority over a royal castle (Berwick in the east and Carlisle in the west).<sup>137</sup> The Warden of the East March could also call on the services of the Constable of Norham, a man appointed by the Bishop of Durham to defend the border against Scottish attack.

However, as Macdonald Fraser and Neville make plain, the March laws might limit but could not prevent cross border raiding, and this failure bred an intense parochialism. Northumbrians from border areas might well join an English army to fight a Scottish invasion, as the campaigns of

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<sup>132</sup> G. MacDonald Fraser, *The Steel Bonnets* (London, 1995), pp. 42 – 49.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>134</sup> 'A border reiver (in the popular understanding of the term) was one who made his living by robbing and pillaging his neighbours across the national boundary and then escaping back to his own country. Border towns, in Scotland particularly, still celebrate the activities of these people. In reality they were criminals and murderers of a high order, but, like the appalling pirates of the Caribbean, they acquired a romantic image in Victorian times, which continues to excite admiration today.' This is a digest of the definition of a reiver posted outside the tourist information centre at Hawick.

<sup>135</sup> C. J. Neville, *Violence, Custom and Law* (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> Goodman, *History of England*, pp. 141 – 43; it was not unusual for a Percy to be Warden of the East March and a Neville to be Warden of the West March.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30; Lomas, *County of Conflict* p. 161. Lomas provides a brief digest of the much fuller works by Reid (R. R. Reid, 'The Office of Warden of the Marches; its Origin and History', *English Historical Review* 32 [1917], pp. 479 – 496) and Storey (R. L. Storey 'The Wardens of the Marches of England towards Scotland, 1377 – 1489', *English Historical Review* 72 [1957], pp. 593 – 615).

Otterburn and Homildon Moor reveal,<sup>138</sup> but the fear of the attack upon their own homesteads made them reluctant to do so except in a national emergency. To defend their land they built castles; between 1276 and 1378 licence to crenelate was granted to twenty-two landholders in Northumberland, eight of these being for a single tower or pele.<sup>139</sup> This period was, as Bates points out, just the beginning of a massive building programme.

Hitherto there has been nothing exceptional in the number of castles and towers in Northumberland; as many and more might be met with in the beginning of the fourteenth century in an equal area in the midland shires. But after the devastation caused by the army of David of Scotland before the battle of Neville's Cross (17<sup>th</sup> October, 1346), there can be little doubt that the Crown, instead of regarding the erection of fortified houses on the Scottish Marches with jealousy, did all in its power to forward it.<sup>140</sup>

By 1415, when a list was drawn up, there were thirty seven castles and seventy eight pele towers, with a further 20 being added in the first half of the fifteenth century.<sup>141</sup> 'It is therefore clear,' writes Lomas, 'that war and the threat of war had wrought significant changes in Northumbrian life, and established a number of significant differences between it and less vulnerable counties.'<sup>142</sup> So while most of the English gentry were modifying their old baronial castles or replacing them with comfortable houses, the gentry of Northumberland had defence as well as comfort on their minds. Whereas a knight in Wiltshire would keep his armour ready for a tournament or for a carefully announced foray into France at the head of his affinity, his opposite number in northern Northumberland kept his ready for instant action and his affinity knew all too well the need for constant armed vigilance. The borderer worked the land with sword, spear and bow in reach, ready for instant action. His home needed defending and was modified to this end. Castles and keeps were part of the lives of Northumbrians; Northumberland became a county of castles. Such is the vision that Walter Scott and George MacDonald Fraser set before their readers.<sup>143</sup>

However, it must be recognised that the methodology of both these writers may be considered as outdated, consisting as it does in collecting anecdotal evidence, which is, by its nature, the evidence of the interested party. Andrew King's methodology is altogether different, for he examines the financial records of his period and argues that this building of towers and peles was as much a matter of architectural style as a fortification.<sup>144</sup> He further suggests that the idea of North Northumberland as an area constantly devastated by war may be wrong. He points out that: 'The deliberate and systematic exaggeration of war damage practised by Northumbrian inquest juries

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<sup>138</sup> Rose, *Kings of the North*, pp. 405 – 406, 423 – 426.

<sup>139</sup> C. J. Bates, 'The Border Holds of Northumberland', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 14 (1891), pp. 6 – 12.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21 – 22. Bates provides a complete list of these castles and towers (pp. 14 – 19).

<sup>142</sup> Lomas, *County of Conflict*, p. 57.

<sup>143</sup> W. Scott, *The Border Antiquities of England and Scotland*, (London, 1814).

<sup>144</sup> A. King, 'Fortresses and Fashion Statements; Gentry Castles in Fourteenth-Century Northumberland', *Journal of Medieval History* 33 (2007), pp. 372 – 397.

stemmed from an obvious motive, for the jurors were usually the neighbours and colleagues... it was to the advantage of every Northumbrian landowner to talk up the level of devastation.<sup>145</sup>

To me his argument has considerable merit, but only so far as putting a limit to exaggerated claims. Anyone looking at the surviving pele towers such as those at Corbridge and Holystone must realise that they were built with local defence in mind and their proliferation must indicate a people expecting local incursion of armed intruders. Further, King's argument does not impinge on the stultifying effect this proliferation of towers has on the defence of the county. Northumbrians, regarding their home pele as their primary sphere of defence, would naturally be reluctant to quit it and go fighting elsewhere. This intense localism prevented a county wide strategy of defence and there is no sign of the whole of Northumberland combining during the struggle for Northumberland in the Wars of the Roses. Rather there is a likelihood that it would breed neighbourly rivalry and hence it is no surprise to find next door neighbours at war with one another during the three year period of the war in Northumberland. It is time to look at the ancient baronies and the new castles and fortified towers built by gentry in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

## Baronies and Castles in Northumberland

In England, the term *baron* 'was used especially and increasingly exclusively to describe the greater tenants-in-chief of the Crown.'<sup>146</sup> In other words, they were the senior figures in the pyramid of the landed hierarchy with the king at its apex and the peasants at its base. Granted their positions originally by the king, baronies were hereditary. According to Hedley,<sup>147</sup> twenty-two feudal baronies were in existence in Northumberland from 1166. By 1460, some had become extinct, others had merged or been lost but some remained and these were almost all significant to the struggle in Northumberland. A table of the baronies is set out below, together with the liberties of Redesdale and Tynedale and a number of castles which were built by those of the nobility and gentry who acquired land at the expense of these baronies. This was partly due, as Table 1 (pages 30 and 31) reveals, to the natural wastage caused by baronies dying out but also due to the political situation.

As the examination proceeds a very surprising trend will emerge, for it will be found that the facts contradict opinion about the political allegiance of Northumberland. There has been a general consensus of belief among scholars that Northumberland was at heart a county in which those who favoured the Lancastrians predominated. Examples of this belief proliferate; for example Charlesworth says that Northumberland followed the lead of the Percies 'who have the hearts of the north, and always have had.'<sup>148</sup> Weir asserts that the north of England was still strongly Lancastrian in sympathy and so Edward did not dare go further north than Newcastle in 1461.<sup>149</sup> Scofield says that after Towton, 'Farther north than Newcastle Edward did not attempt to go, for beyond lay hostile Northumberland.'<sup>150</sup> Sadler offers the view that: 'There is a general perception that the

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<sup>145</sup> A. King, (2001) *War, Politics and Landed Society in Northumberland, c.1296 – c.1408*, Durham University Theses, p. 4.

<sup>146</sup> R. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings: 1075 – 1225* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 212 – 213.

<sup>147</sup> Lomas, *County of Conflict*, p. 19; W. P. Hedley, *Northumberland Families*, vol. 1 (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1968), p. 11.

<sup>148</sup> D. Charlesworth, 'Northumberland in the Early Years of Edward IV' in *Archaeologia Aeliana* (4<sup>th</sup> Series 31, 1953), p. 70.

<sup>149</sup> Weir, p. 288.

<sup>150</sup> Scofield, p. 175.



northern shire of England was solidly Lancastrian in sentiment.<sup>151</sup> Hicks expresses the same view, saying: 'There was actually no Yorkist presence in the Percy country north of Tynemouth and Newcastle... and all the major castles remained in hostile hands.'<sup>152</sup> Ross declares that: '[after Towton] the problem of subduing the hostile county of Northumberland, where the word of Percy counted for more than the king's commands, was left to the Nevilles.'<sup>153</sup> Indeed I have been unable to find any work which offers a contrary view on this subject. However, an inspection of the allegiances of Northumberland families reveals clearly that *there were as many Yorkists in the county as Lancastrians*. This is a ground breaking claim, for it gives an entirely new perspective on Northumberland in the fifteenth century and so requires a detailed examination of the facts to justify it. Tables 1 and 2 show the main seats and families of the nobility and major gentry in Northumberland and include the Cumberland castles of Greystoke and Naworth as particularly relevant. Greystoke was the main seat of Lord Greystoke who also held Morpeth and was active in the Hexham Campaign, while Naworth, just over the border, was important to the Lancastrians in Northumberland as guarding the Tyne gap.

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<sup>151</sup> Sadler, *War in the North*, p. 18.

<sup>152</sup> Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 238.

<sup>153</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 45.

**Table 1: Lay Landholdings in Northumberland** (as well as Greystoke and Naworth in Cumberland)

<b>Baronies</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>State in 1460</b>
Alnwick	Percy	Bought in 1309	See Percy (above)
Beanley	Percy	Bought 1329	See Percy (above)
Bolam	Strivelyn		Extinct
Bolbec (Styford)	Nevilles of Raby	Held since 1400s	See Neville (above)
Bothal	Ogle/Bertram	Held Ogle since 1100	See Ogle/Bertram (A)
Bradford	Wetewood		Name change
Bywell	Nevilles of Raby	Acquired 14th Century	See Neville (above)
Callerton	Delaval		
Chevington	Lumley		See Lumley (B)
Dilston	Claxton	Acquired 1370	See Claxton (H)
Ellingham		Lost in 1300	
Embleton		1400 to Crown	
Kirkley	Eure (Evre/Evers)		See Evers (X)
Greystoke (in Cumberland)	Greystoke		
Gosforth	Surtees		
Hadston	Swinburne		See Swinburne (X)
Langley	Percy	From Umfraville	
Morpeth	Greystoke		Greystoke ((C)
Prudhoe	Tailboys	From Umfraville	
Wark (Carham)	Grey of Heaton	Originally of de Ros	See Grey of Heaton (G)
Warkworth	Percy	Originally of Clavering	
Whalton	Scrope of Masham	Held since 1332	See Scrope (X)
Wooler		Lost 1400	See Wooler Castle

<b>Lordships</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>State in 1460</b>
Redesdale	Tailboys	From Umfraville	See Tailboys (D)
Tynedale	Bourchier	Granted by Edward, 2nd Duke of York	
<b>Castles</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>State in 1460</b>
Ford	Heron		See Heron (E)
Widdrington	Wodrington		
Etal	Manners		See Manners (G)
Bamburgh	Crown	Built 11th Century	Held by Forster
Dunstanburgh	Duchy of Lancaster	Built 14th Century	Held by Ralph Percy
Norham	Bishopric of Durham		Held Robert Ogle (A)
Chillingham	Grey of Heaton		Held Ralph Grey (G)
Bedlington	Collingwood		
Chipchase	Heron		See Heron (E)
Belsay	Middleton		
Seaton	Mitford		See Mitford (X)
Naworth (in Cumberland)	Dacre		Ralph Dacre (X)
Wooler	Conyers		

It can be seen from the above table that there is insufficient report on eight of these twenty-two baronies (Bolam, Bradford, Bywell, Callerton, Ellingham, Embleton, Gosforth and Wooler) and two of the castle holders (Bedlington and Belsay) to be of relevance to the dissertation. The Percies and Nevilles have been discussed already. For the remainder:

(A) Bothal (Ogle and Bertram – a divided family)

The Barony of Bothal was originally held by the Ogle family; the de Ogle's tenure of Bothal dates from a grant from William the Conqueror.<sup>154</sup> It was a turbulent family because Sir Robert Ogle (1306 – 1363) married Helen Bertram of Bothal, and in 1403, on her deathbed, she conferred Bothal upon her great-grandson John, who consequently took the name of Bertram. John's elder brother, Robert Ogle, was the heir to the Ogle dynasty and the brothers 'fell out' over the inheritance. Sir Robert Ogle assembled a significant force of mercenaries, intent on securing by force his right to Bothal Castle. In the ensuing struggle the castle was virtually destroyed and though parliament in 1410 'bound over' Sir Robert not to threaten his brother further, there seems considerable doubt as to who actually owned and occupied the Castle for the next fifty years.<sup>155</sup> Both Ogle and Bertram described themselves 'of Ogle' (Ogle of Bothal and Bertram of Ogle). Like the Nevilles, they were united in blood but divided in allegiance.

Sir Robert Ogle is discussed on page 44 but the Bertrams may be assessed here. John Bertram, in spite of the family rift, was knighted in about 1415 and was heavily involved in county affairs; he was sheriff on five occasions and knight of the shire for as many years. He was succeeded by his son William, who was a knight of the shire in 1434 (with Sir Robert Ogle) and then from 1449 to 1459. In 1435 he was retained by the Earl of Northumberland for life in the sum of £13 6s 8d and was also sheriff of Northumberland in 1459 (surely a Lancastrian appointment) and, according to the Richard III website,<sup>156</sup> William died fighting for the House of Lancaster on the field of Towton.

William had no known issue but his uncle not only succeeded to the property of Bothal but fathered ten children, one of whom was Sir Robert Ogle and others married into the families of Harbottle, Mitford, Heron, Manners and Middleton. Indeed it seems he was related to the nobility of the county with the sole and significant exception of the Percies.<sup>157</sup> With the death of William Bertram at Towton, Sir Robert Ogle (see below) exercised considerable if not total authority in this barony during this period of history.

(B) Chevington (Lumley)

This was held by the Lumley family; the incumbent in 1460 was Sir Thomas Lumley. Born at Morpeth in 1408, in 1436 he became joint commissary general for the West Marches and from 1450 to 1464 he was a conservator of the truce with Scotland. In 1455 he was appointed Constable of Scarborough and it was the Lumley family who held Newcastle for Edward IV in the period 1461 to 1463.<sup>158</sup>

(C) Morpeth and Greystoke

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<sup>154</sup> Ogle, *Ogle and Bothal*, p. 24.

<sup>155</sup> C. Rawcliffe, 'Bertram, John (d. 1450) of Bothal, Northumberland' in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1386 – 1421*, eds. J. S. Roskell, L. Clarke and C. Rawcliffe (Woodbridge, 1993), p. 117.

<sup>156</sup> This website: [http://www.richard111.com/roll\\_call\\_of\\_Towton.htm](http://www.richard111.com/roll_call_of_Towton.htm) is not a serious academic research site. It is mentioned because a great deal of amateur research has gone into producing it; some of which is relevant to this dissertation.

<sup>157</sup> The details of the relationship between the Bertrams and Ogles is given in detail in the Ogle section of J. A. Burke, *A General and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerages of England, Ireland, and Scotland, Extinct, Dormant, and in Abeyance...* (London, 1831).

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29 – 31.

Ralph, Lord Greystoke (1414–1487) attended parliament from 1441 to 1485, was retained by the Earl of Warwick at Barnard Castle and was apparently a Yorkist.<sup>159</sup> However, he was with Margaret of Anjou on her march south but was to desert to Edward and received the submission of Beverley to the Yorkists.<sup>160</sup> He was to fight as a Yorkist at the Battle of Hexham.<sup>161</sup>

(D) The Lordship of Redesdale

This was held by the Umfraville family from the twelfth century until 1436, when, on the demise of the family, the Lordship of Redesdale passed to the Tailboys family. William Tailboys (c.1415–26 May 1464) was born in Kyme, Lincolnshire, the son of Sir Walter Tailboys (d. 1444) who was *de jure* sixth Baron of Kyme in Lincolnshire (where he had been High Sheriff in 1423) and had inherited considerable estates in Northumberland (from the Umfravilles). His son, William, was Justice of the Peace for Lincolnshire and for Northumberland from 1441 and in 1445 became Member of Parliament for Lincolnshire. He espoused the Lancastrian cause and was knighted at the Second Battle of St Albans in 1461. The rest of his colourful story is told below (see pages 41 to 43).

(E) The Castle of Ford (Heron)

This was held by the Heron family. In 1440, 1443, 1451 and 1457 John Heron was appointed Sheriff of Northumberland; from 1441 to 1448 he became a knight of the shire;<sup>162</sup> he was Constable of Bamburgh for life in 1452, knighted in 1456 and, in 1460, ambassador to Scotland under the Yorkist administration.<sup>163</sup> He was clearly a person of some note who rejected the Accord, fought for the Lancastrians at Wakefield and at Towton, where he died.

(F) The Castle of Etal (Manners)

This was held by the Manners family. In 1403, Sir John Manners of Etal married Agnes, daughter of Sir John Middleton, a wealthy landowner of the north of England. This marriage, together with the defeat of the Scots at Homildon Hill the previous year (which ended the destructive Scottish raiding for a time), led to a great increase in the fortunes of the Manners, and established them as one of the better known families in Northumberland. Sir John died in 1438 and was succeeded by his second son, Robert, who was Sheriff of Northumberland in 1454 and MP in 1459 and who married Joan (Janette), daughter of Sir Robert Ogle, a union which produced another Robert, who was to succeed his father on the latter's death in 1461. This latter Robert was therefore a nephew of the Constable of nearby Norham Castle, a relationship which helped to build a pro-Yorkist bloc in Northumberland.

(G) The Castles of Chillingham and Wark.

These were held by the Grey family who were to turn out as one of the more complicated families of Northumberland. One of their numbers, Sir Ralph Grey, was born about 1429<sup>164</sup> and was originally a Yorkist (see pages 45 – 46).

(H) Dilston

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<sup>159</sup> G. E. Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom, Extant, Extinct or Dormant*, vol. 2, (London, 1910 – 1998), p. 197; Pollard, *North Eastern England*, p. 253.

<sup>160</sup> Scofield, pp. 135, 166 – 7.

<sup>161</sup> Haigh, *Military Campaigns*, p. 84.

<sup>162</sup> E. Mackenzie, *An Historical, Topographical, and Descriptive View of the County of Northumberland*, vol. 1 (Newcastle, 1825), p. 493.

<sup>163</sup> Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage*, vol. 2, p. 41.

<sup>164</sup> Hedley, *Northumberland Families*, vol. 1, pp. 224 – 231.

The Barony of Dilston (which controlled Corbridge Bridge) was held by the Claxtons, a family from Horden in the bishopric of Durham, who acquired the barony in 1370.<sup>165</sup> At a similar time, John Neville of Raby acquired the baronies of Bolbec and Bywell, giving the Nevilles a power base in part of Northumberland that is south of the River Tyne.<sup>166</sup> John Neville became the 'good lord' of the Claxtons and Barker insists that 'the attachment of the Claxtons to the Nevilles of Raby was so complete that their political positions cannot be separated.'<sup>167</sup> Sir Robert Claxton (the scion of the Claxtons during the Wars of the Roses) therefore espoused the Lancastrian cause and accompanied the Nevilles of Raby to Ludford Bridge and followed the Queen to St. Albans in 1461. However, when Towton was lost, Sir Robert submitted to the Yorkist king and joined Bishop Booth in his defence of the bishopric.<sup>168</sup> When Lancastrian activity in Northumberland ceased, Sir Robert was appointed a commissioner to treat with the Scots.<sup>169</sup>

(X) The remaining baronies and castle holders

The Barony of Seaton was held by Robert Mitford, who became a Commissioner of Array under Edward IV.<sup>170</sup> The Barony of Evre [Evre could be written also Evers or Eure] was held by the Evers family, whose main seat was at Witton-le-Wear in the bishopric of Durham.<sup>171</sup> Sir William Evers was Sheriff of Northumberland in 1436;<sup>172</sup> his son Ralph was however killed at Towton, and there seems to be no evidence of further involvement by the Evers in the Wars of the Roses. The Barony of Hadston was held by the Worcestre based Swinburnes who seem to have kept away from Northumberland during the Wars of the Roses.<sup>173</sup> The Barony of Whalton had been held by the Scopes of Masham in Yorkshire since 1332;<sup>174</sup> the incumbent in 1461 (Thomas, fifth Baron) was a Member of the House of Lords from 1459 to 1472 and was granted £40 for good service against the rebels in 1459 and then conducted investigation of the property of the Duke of York in Yorkshire 1460, which means that at that time he was on the side of Lancaster.<sup>175</sup> He seems to have been uncommitted during the war in Northumberland and wisely stayed in London (or Yorkshire). On the other hand his cousin, Lord John Scope of Bolton, was a committed Yorkist, wounded at Ferrybridge in 1461,<sup>176</sup> and appointed Captain of Newcastle in 1464.<sup>177</sup> Naworth Castle was in the care of the Dacre family; Humphrey Dacre and his elder brother Ralph were keen Lancastrians and were with Henry's army as it prepared for Towton (where Ralph died.)

As has been seen in the above table and its following highlights, there is a fourfold division in the political alignment of the nobility and gentry of Northumberland: Lancastrian, Yorkist, neutral, and

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<sup>165</sup> Barker, 'The Claxtons', p. 21.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>169</sup> Mackenzie, *Northumberland*, vol. 1, p. 493.

<sup>170</sup> Cal. Pat., Appendix.

<sup>171</sup> Mackenzie, *Northumberland*, vol. 1, p. 184.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 493.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96 – 142.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22.

<sup>175</sup> Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage*, vol. 11, p. 529.

<sup>176</sup> *The Paston Letters*, vol. 3, p. 267.

<sup>177</sup> Scofield, p. 312.

those who changed alignment from one party to the other. To study this more clearly, Table 2 shows the pattern of alignment or change.

**Table 2: Affiliation of Landholders to York or Lancaster**

<b>Baronies</b>					
<b>Estate</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Loyalties</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Died</b>	<b>CA</b>
Alnwick	Percy	L	Alnwick	Towton	
Beanley	Percy*	L	Alnwick	Towton*	
Bolam	Extinct	DN	Morpeth		
Bolbec (Styford)	Nevilles of Raby	Y	Hexham		
Bothal	Bertram	N	Morpeth	Towton	
Bradford	Wetewood	DN	Bamburgh		
Bywell	Nevilles of Raby*	N	Hexham		
Callerton	Delaval	DN	Blyth		
Chevington	Lumley	Y	Morpeth		CA
Dilston	Claxton	L/N	Hexham		
Ellingham	Lost	DN	Morpeth		
Embleton	Crown	Irrelevant	Dunstanburgh		
Kirkley	Eure (Evers)	L/N	Ponteland	Towton	
Greystoke	Greystoke	Y	Cumberland		CA
Gosforth	Surtees	DN	Newcastle		
Hadston	Swinburne	N	Amble		
Langley	Percy*	L	Hexham		
Morpeth	Greystoke*	Y			
Prudhoe	Tailboys	L	Hexham	Hexham	
Wark (Carham)	Grey of Heaton	Y/L	Norham		
Warkworth	Percy*, ex Clavering	L	Amble	Towton*	
Whalton	Scrope	L/N	Morpeth		



Wooler			cf. Wooler Castle		
<b>Lordships</b>					
Redesdale	Tailboys*	L		Hexham*	
Tynedale	Isabelle, C. of Essex	Y			
<b>Castles</b>					
<b>Estate</b>	<b>Castle Holder</b>	<b>Loyalties</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Died</b>	
Ford	Heron	L/N	Norham	Towton	
Widdrington	Wodrington	Y	Morpeth		CA
Etal	Manners	Y	Norham		
Bamburgh	Crown				
Dunstanburgh	D. of Lancaster				
Norham	Ogle	Y			CA
Chillingham	Grey of Heaton	Y/L	Wooler	Bamburgh 1464	
Bedlington	Collingwood	N	Morpeth		
Chipchase	Heron*	L/N	Hexham	Towton	
Belsay	Middleton	Y	Morpeth		
Seaton	Mitford	L/Y	Morpeth		CA
Naworth	Dacre	L/N	Cumbria	Towton	
Wooler	Conyers <sup>178</sup>	Y	Wooler		

\* Means repeated family/person/place; L = Lancastrian; Y = Yorkist; N = Neutral; DN = Don't know: CA = Appointed Commissioner of Array by Edward IV in 1461.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>178</sup> According to Pollard, *North-Eastern England*, p. 92, Sir John Conyers owned this castle.

<sup>179</sup> Cal. Pat., p. 569.

From this table it will be seen that of the families mentioned who lived in Northumberland, eight were Lancastrian at the time of Towton, but of those eight Mitford and Claxton became Yorkists after the battle and the families of Bertram, Eure and Heron lost a senior family member on the bloody meadow and took no further part in the war in the north. The Percy and Dacre families also lost their lord but fought on and William Tailboys did the same. Only the Scropes of Masham seem to have taken no part in any military activity. On the other side the families of Greystoke, Lumley, Widdrington (but see below), Manners, Conyers and Ogle were Yorkists, six in all. So too was Sir Ralph Grey of Heaton, Wark and Chillingham and he was to be the only one of the Yorkist knights who switched allegiance to Lancaster during the war (except Somerset and Sir Ralph Percy who switched to York and then back to Lancaster.) The Liberty of Tynedale had been granted by Edward, 2nd Duke of York to Isabelle, Countess of Essex, who, as aunt to Edward IV, was naturally a Yorkist.<sup>180</sup> The older branch of the Nevilles held to Lancaster (see Sir Humphrey Neville) and the younger branch (see Warwick and Montagu) held to York. The suggestion that Northumberland was a predominantly Lancastrian county seems to be palpably false. When the protagonists who lived in the county are examined in greater detail, the belief seems more dubious still.

There is, however, something else to be considered. If the areas of conflict in Northumberland during the Wars of the Roses are examined, they are found to be extremely limited. For, with the exception of the siege of Naworth in Cumberland in 1462, the eighteen day siege of Norham in 1463 and the brief activity in the Tyne valley in 1464, almost all military activity in Northumberland was limited to the area of the three great castles of central Northumberland (Alnwick, Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh). This area makes up less than 15% of the County.<sup>181</sup> Areas of Yorkist control (Newcastle, Morpeth, Wooler, Tynedale and the Tweed valley) are far larger, as reference to any map of Northumberland will reveal.<sup>182</sup> Lancastrian control was far smaller than the whole of Northumberland. Whether this apparent weakness of the Lancastrians is borne out by inspection of the main personalities of Northumberland must now be assessed.

## Lancastrian Residents

Three key figures of Northumbrian society fought for Lancaster – Sir Ralph Percy, Sir William Tailboys and Sir Ralph Grey (and the last for only the final 12 months of the struggle in Northumberland) – while another two, Sir Humphrey Neville and Lord Dacre, lived just outside the county. Though Tailboys and Grey had considerable military significance during the war in the north, for the former it was mainly at Alnwick and for the latter at Alnwick and Bamburgh, so the influence of Ralph Percy was important to Lancastrian achievements in Northumberland, and it is clear that he was the key Lancastrian resident.

Of all those who fought at Towton, the Percy brothers showed their family commitment to the House of Lancaster to the full. Henry, Earl of Northumberland died on that fateful day. Richard, his second youngest brother, though subject to sociopathic bouts which led to alcoholism, probably fought at Towton, Hedgley Moor and Hexham, though his maladies and incompetence made him a

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<sup>180</sup> P. A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York, 1411 – 1460* (Oxford, 1988), p. 26.

<sup>181</sup> The Ordnance Survey maps give Northumberland an approximate area of 1930 square miles. A rough measurement of the area including Alnwick and the two coastal castles is 290 square miles, while that of the Yorkist area is in excess of 450 square miles.

<sup>182</sup> See Map A, p. 13.

subject of no interest to contemporary writers.<sup>183</sup> Sir Ralph, his youngest brother, who had been left to guard the important castle of Dunstanburgh, was therefore the only significant representative of the House of Percy left in the shire.<sup>184</sup> Unlike Henry, Ralph was not attainted,<sup>185</sup> and is next heard of negotiating the surrender of Dunstanburgh Castle in September 1461 and, on its surrender, continuing as its governor for the Yorkists.<sup>186</sup> In October 1462, when Margaret's ships were off Scotland, Ralph Percy changed his allegiance and declared for Lancaster, though few Northumbrians were to join him.<sup>187</sup> When, however, a vast force under the Earl of Warwick appeared in Northumberland, Sir Ralph surrendered on terms and was allowed to continue as governor not only of Dunstanburgh but also of Bamburgh.<sup>188</sup>

In the following spring he again had an apparent change of heart and the month of March saw both castles returned to the Lancastrians.<sup>189</sup> Yorkist strategy now concentrated on switching the allegiance of the Scots and the castles were left (comparatively) in peace. In April 1464, Sir Ralph left his fortifications along with Duke of Somerset in an attempt to disrupt a Yorkist – Scottish meeting and was part of the Lancastrian defeat at Hedgley Moor, where he met his death.<sup>190</sup> Tradition has it that as he died, he uttered the cryptic words 'I have saved the bird in my bosom', interpreted as meaning that he had, at the last, been faithful to the House of Lancaster (a sentiment undoubtedly echoed by the Duke of Somerset after Hexham.) The place where he is supposed to have died is named on local maps as 'Percy's Leap'.<sup>191</sup>

There is almost certainly another side to Sir Ralph's 'perfidy' and here may be one of the answers to the question asked earlier, 'who paid for the Lancastrian troops?'<sup>192</sup> When a commander surrendered 'on terms', he, and the troops of his garrison, could change sides or withdraw to an area of his choice. If his troops chose to change sides, they would often serve their former opponents, sometimes keeping their commander.<sup>193</sup> So every time a Lancastrian garrison changed sides and joined the Yorkists, they may well have been paid.<sup>194</sup> Further, and of great importance to this dissertation, the chopping and changing of Sir Ralph Percy meant that Edward continually hoped for a diplomatic solution to the conflict and, deciding against the quick solution of 'fire and sword', allowed the Lancastrian presence in the county to linger on.

Sir William Tailboys was to prove as redoubtable a fighter for Lancaster in the north as anyone else and this was to cost him all his possessions and ultimately his life. He fought at Towton and escaped to Scotland; he was attainted and his lands were denied him.<sup>195</sup> On May 14<sup>th</sup> 1461 his estates in

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<sup>183</sup> Hedley, *Northumberland Families*, vol. 1, p. 16.

<sup>184</sup> Rose, *Kings of the North*, pp. 522 – 523.

<sup>185</sup> Cal. Pat., p. 43.

<sup>186</sup> Sadler, *War in the North*, p. 21.

<sup>187</sup> Gillingham, p. 142.

<sup>188</sup> Scofield, p. 265

<sup>189</sup> Fabyan, p. 653.

<sup>190</sup> Gregory, p. 223 – 224.

<sup>191</sup> Rose, *Kings of the North*, p. 530; Bates, *The History of Northumberland*, p. 201.

<sup>192</sup> See Appendix 3, p. 95.

<sup>193</sup> 'On terms' means that agreement was reached between the two parties as distinct from 'on quarter', which meant lives were to be spared or 'unconditionally', which meant exactly what it said.

<sup>194</sup> See Appendix 3.

<sup>195</sup> R. Virgoe, 'Sir William Tailboys', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), p. 1.

Lincolnshire were forfeited to the crown,<sup>196</sup> and on 10<sup>th</sup> August the following year, they were bestowed on the Duke of Clarence.<sup>197</sup> More seriously, on January 28<sup>th</sup> 1462, his lordship of Redesdale and his castle at Harbottle (the two valued at £72 annually) were granted to Robert Ogle, a grant that was confirmed on April 5<sup>th</sup> 1465.<sup>198</sup>

When, in June 1461, Henry VI led the raid into Durham that got as far Brancepeth, those who went with him included Sir William Tailboys. When the raid was repulsed, the Yorkists in their turn invaded Northumberland and Alnwick surrendered on 13<sup>th</sup> September.<sup>199</sup> However it was to be recaptured later in the year, probably by Tailboys, who then became its governor. According to the London Chronicle Vitellius A XVI, the Six Chronicles of England and Fabyan's Chronicle, it was yielded by appointment to Lord Hastings at the end of July. According to Worcestre, it was held by Tailboys until July 30<sup>th</sup> 1462 when he surrendered it to Sir Ralph Grey and was himself (and those of his troops who wished) allowed to withdraw to Scotland.<sup>200</sup> There is no record of Tailboys participating in the further siege of the castles but he is recorded as being at Hedgley Moor and Hexham. His actions after the battles are described by Gregory:

Ande be syde Newecastelle, the same monythe, [th]er was take Taylbosse in a cole pyt, and he hadde moche mony with hym, bothe golde and sylvyr, that schulde have gon unto Kyng Harry and yf [it] had come to Harry, lat Kyng of Ingelonde, hyt wolde have causyd moche sorowe, for he had ordaynyd harneys and ordenance nowe, but the men wolde not go one fote with hym tulle they had mony. And they waytyd dayly and howrely formony that thys Taylebosse schulde have send unto hem or brought hyt; the summa was iij MI marks. And the lordys mayny of Montegewe were sore hurte and seke, and many of hys men werslayne by for in the grete jornays, but thys mony was departyd amonge hem, and was a very holsum salfe for him. And in the day folowyng Taylebosse loste hys hedde at Newecastelle.<sup>201</sup>

It is a good story, but I have the gravest doubts that it does justice to Sir William, whose conduct during the Wars of the Roses seems to have been exemplary and compares well with any other Lancastrian knight. How he fought for Margaret of Anjou at the Second St. Albans and Towton, how he followed her to Scotland and took part in the Brancepeth raid, how he captured Alnwick, almost certainly serving at his own considerable cost, has already been described. He fought on in 1464 and escaped from Hexham (as did many others) and hid from the pursuing troops. His possession of the Lancastrian war funds almost certainly has a perfectly innocent and indeed laudable explanation – he was trying to keep them from the Yorkists. To allow the writer of a London-based chronicle (who almost certainly was writing on the basis of second hand rumour) to tarnish his reputation seems decidedly unjust.

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<sup>196</sup> Parl. Rolls, p. 34.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., pp. 113 – 114, 466.

<sup>199</sup> Goodman, p. 57; Scofield, p. 204.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. p. 150; *Chronicles of London*, p. 178; Worcestre, p. 779; Fabyan, p. 652; *Six Town Chronicles of England*, p. 163.

<sup>201</sup> Gregory, p. 219.

Lord Dacre of Gilsland and John Witherington clearly had Lancastrian sympathies. On 6th March 1461 Edward IV issued a lengthy proclamation, partly to justify what he had done and partly to call his subjects to arms, referring to himself as their sovereign lord.<sup>202</sup> Having condemned such people as the Dukes of Somerset and Exeter as ‘moved and stirred by the spirit of the Devil’, he went on to offer amnesty to all who submitted within ten days to King Edward’s grace, exempting from this pardon twenty two named persons, such as Anthony Trollope. However three persons were taken by Edward IV ‘under his special protection’, for every man was, on pain of death, forbidden to rob or trouble any tenants of Lord Dacre of Gilsland (see below) and John Witherington (Widdrington) as well as the Yorkist Sir Ralph Grey (see page 45).<sup>203</sup> The suggestion is surely that the two were believed to have Lancastrian sympathies and that Edward hoped to win them over to his side. The effect of this proclamation had a very different outcome for all three.

Sir John Widdrington was the lord of the manor of that name and was sheriff three times (in 1426, 1430 and 1432), his son Roger also three times (1435, 1442 and 1449), and his grandson, Gerard, in 1464.<sup>204</sup> This latter appointment at the time of the ending of the war in Northumberland which suggests that the Widdringtons may have been closet Yorkists. The name Witherington or Widdrington does not appear in any of the chronicles or correspondence of the time and there is no evidence of one of their immediate family having fought at Towton. Edward’s proclamation had possibly removed a potential threat and Sir John was appointed a Commissioner of Array in 1461.<sup>205</sup>

However, the proclamation had no effect upon the Dacres. Ralph, Lord Dacre and his younger brother, Sir Humphrey, who succeeded him to the title, both fought at Towton where Ralph died (he famously removed his helmet for a drink of water and was killed by an arrow) and was buried; his tomb being almost the only Lancastrian one on the battlefield.<sup>206</sup> Humphrey was one of those who accompanied Henry VI and Lord Roos on their raid on Durham in 1461.<sup>207</sup> He then re-captured his own castle at Naworth and held it until the following summer.<sup>208</sup> It seems as though this was the end of his activities in the war, for he fades from history until his attainder was reversed in 1467 and he was restored to by order of Edward IV favour on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1468.<sup>209</sup>

Brancepeth stands four miles to the west of the city of Durham and, in 1460s was under the lordship of a member of the elder branch of the Neville clan who held Raby and Brancepeth and remained loyal to the house of Lancaster.<sup>210</sup> Humphrey Neville fought for Henry at Towton and returned to Durham to take part in Henry VI’s foray into Durham before being chased off by local forces under Laurence Booth.<sup>211</sup> Humphrey was captured, attainted and held for a time in the tower before escaping. He then sued for pardon and was admitted into the king’s grace and knighted.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Cal. Close, pp. 55 – 56; Scofield, pp. 154 – 157.

<sup>203</sup> Cal. Close, p. 56; Scofield, pp. 154 – 157.

<sup>204</sup> Mackenzie, *Northumberland*, vol. 1, p. 493.

<sup>205</sup> Cal. Pat., Appendix.

<sup>206</sup> W. E. Hampton, *Memorials of the Wars of the Roses: a biographical guide* (Upminster, 1979), pp. 228 – 229; Boardman, *Towton*, pp. 79 – 81.

<sup>207</sup> Parl. Rolls Ed IV, p. 78; Scofield, p. 186.

<sup>208</sup> *Chronicles of London*, p. 178; Worcestre, p. 779; *Fabyan*, p. 652; *Six Town Chronicles of England*, p. 163.

<sup>209</sup> Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage*, vol. 4, pp. 19 – 20.

<sup>210</sup> A. J. Pollard, ‘Neville, Sir Humphrey’ in *The Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2008), p. 1.

<sup>211</sup> Goodman, p. 57.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58; Scofield, p. 314.

Notwithstanding this clemency, Sir Humphrey (as he now was) rejoined his former colleagues in time for the Battles of Hedgley Moor and Hexham and escaped with his life from Bamburgh where after he is said to have hidden in a cave on the banks of the River Derwent as a freebooter for five years before emerging to fight for Lancaster in the time of the Readeption.<sup>213</sup> This was to be the end of him, 'Sir Humphrey Nevell after lurkyng in a Cave, was taken in Holdernesse, and at York behedded.'<sup>214</sup>

## Yorkist Residents

The Yorkists occupied castles in two particular zones: around the Morpeth area, where the Ogles,<sup>215</sup> Lumleys and Scopes held territory, and around Norham, where the Ogles (holding Ford as well as Norham), the Greys of Heaton and the Manners had four castles between them.

Norham Castle in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was a place of great strategic importance, guarding the first fords for crossing the Tweed upstream from Berwick. Under the lordship of the Bishop of Durham, it was in the first line of defence for England against Scotland. Its importance was greatly increased in 1461 when the Lancastrians ceded the defended town of Berwick to the Scots; for this made it the only major English castle on the lower Tweed, (Wark was at this time seriously damaged as is discussed later in this chapter). Norham was supported by two nearby but smaller castles, those of Etal (owned by the Manners family) and Ford (owned by the Herons but after Towton under the control of Lord Ogle). These three castles formed what I have called the 'Norham bloc', the key figures of which were Lord Ogle and Sir Robert Manners, whose details are given here.

The leaders of the Ogle family were of great importance and acquired the post of constable of Norham castle early in the fifteenth century. The constable was paid to carry out various duties, included providing bed, board and guards (including artillery) at Ogle's cost and, at one stage, Ogle was granted his own household: 'Sir John Bertram (his cousin), Sir John Manners and Sir Robert Herbotyll, and esquires, Robert Manoiers (Manners), Thomas Ildreton, Robert Raymes, Thomas de Hageson (Haggerson) and Will Muschamys.'<sup>216</sup> This meant that as a mere knight he had authority over three other knights as well as five esquires.

Robert Ogle (b. 1406) was by far the most significant Yorkist to live in Northumberland during the time of the war and, as very little attention is paid to him either by contemporary writers or by modern historians, special attention will be given to his story here. He first appears in history when he and his father are recorded as commissioners to prevent violations of the then truce with Scotland. In the course of his duties he was captured by the Earl of Angus at the Battle of Piperdon but released and, after his father's death in 1436, had 'livery of his lands in Ogle, Hepple etc. and was appointed constable of Norham castle, seneschal, sheriff and escheator in Norhamshire and Islandshire for 20 years.'<sup>217</sup> He was therefore a power in the county and (probably) formed an early association with the Earl of Warwick, for in 1455 he is shown to have Yorkist sympathies. In his book, *Ogle and Bothal*, Sir Henry Ogle writes: 'Six hundred men were brought from the Marches (for the

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>214</sup> Grafton, pp. 3 – 4.

<sup>215</sup> See page 34.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>217</sup> Ogle, *Ogle and Bothal*, p. 45.

First Battle of St. Albans), some suggest under the Earl of Warwick, warden of the West March; others give the credit to Sir Robert Ogle.<sup>218</sup> Four years later, however, Sir Robert is referred to as the *late* warden of Roxburgh, so his office as such must have been terminated, either because he had completed twenty years' service, or perhaps because of his behaviour in support of the Yorkists.<sup>219</sup> This latter attachment did not prevent Sir Robert later in the year from being an ambassador to treat with the Scots or Henry's administration appointing him (with Sir Ralph Grey) as a keeper of Roxburgh.<sup>220</sup> He remained a Yorkist, for he was with Edward IV as he made his way to Towton.

On his return to Northumberland after the battle, Ogle was given a commission to receive the castle of Harbottle and the Lordship of Redesdale (see Map A) after the attainting of Sir William Tailboys.<sup>221</sup> He was then appointed (with Lord Montagu and William Ogle) Commissioner of Array and, on 26<sup>th</sup> July, he was summoned to parliament as Lord Ogle of Ogle, becoming a Justice of the Peace and ambassador plenipotentiary of England to treat with deputies from Scotland.<sup>222</sup> He was certainly the most high profile Yorkist to be born in the county, and with the death of Henry, third Earl of Northumberland, at Towton, perhaps the most important nobleman living in the county.

Sir Robert Manners<sup>223</sup> main claim to fame during the war was in his frustration of the French invasion which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. He was a relative of Lord Ogle and his next door neighbour at Etal. Further, though Sir John Heron, the owner of nearby Ford castle, was a staunch Lancastrian, he died on the battlefield at Towton, leaving Ford to his son and heir who was a minor. Lord Ogle was immediately directed by Edward IV to seize both Ford Castle and John's son and heir, who, because his father had been with those who killed Richard, Duke of York, was attainted.<sup>224</sup>

Sir Ralph Grey of Heaton (Heton) was a Knight of the Shire (with Sir John Heron) in 1448 and a Sheriff of Northumberland in 1456 and 1460 (both by governments under the control of Richard of York).<sup>225</sup> There is an unconfirmed report on the 'Richard III Society' website that Sir Ralph fought at Towton on the Yorkist side,<sup>226</sup> but certain is it that three months later he was commissioned by the Yorkist government to help raise a fleet to oppose a possible French landing.<sup>227</sup> In July 1462 he was one of Lord Hastings' colleagues in receiving the surrender of Alnwick from Sir William Tailboys.<sup>228</sup> He is next heard of receiving a commission of Oyer and Terminer touching insurrection on 21<sup>st</sup> November,<sup>229</sup> and pressing the siege of Dunstanburgh,<sup>230</sup> so who surrendered Alnwick to the Scots is not known. However, it may well have been Sir Ralph, for when it was recaptured in January 1463, Sir John Astley, not Grey, was made governor,<sup>231</sup> with the result that in May 1463, the latter opened

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>221</sup> Cal Pat., p. 113; Ogle, *Ogle and Bothal*, p. 47.

<sup>222</sup> Neville, *Violence*, p. 153.

<sup>223</sup> For details of Sir Robert, see Chapter 3, p. 33.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. 47, Cal. Pat., p. 29.

<sup>225</sup> Mackenzie, *Northumberland*, vol. 1, p. 493.

<sup>226</sup> [http://www.richard111.com/roll\\_call\\_of\\_Towton.htm](http://www.richard111.com/roll_call_of_Towton.htm).

<sup>227</sup> Parl. Rolls Ed IV, p. 33.

<sup>228</sup> See page 42.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>230</sup> *The Paston Letters*, vol. 4, pp. 59 – 60.

<sup>231</sup> Goodman, p. 62.

the gates of Alnwick to the remnants of the French troops and handed Sir John into French custody.<sup>232</sup> He is therefore unique in that he was the only senior soldier who began as a Yorkist and who changed to the side of Lancaster during the war.

As a Lancastrian who had defected from the Yorkists, Sir Ralph was liable to be executed for treason and his estates were forfeit to the crown.<sup>233</sup> He joined the band of Lancastrians who fought at Hedgley Moor but after this defeat he did not follow them to Hexham but returned to command the garrison of Bamburgh. When this was the only Lancastrian castle in Northumberland yet to surrender, Edward IV offered to receive the garrison into his grace, but excluded Sir Humphrey Neville and Sir Ralph Grey from this generosity.<sup>234</sup> After Bamburgh fell, Sir Ralph was beheaded at Doncaster on the charge of betraying Sir John Astley to the French.<sup>235</sup>

### **Activities of the Norham Bloc in 1462**<sup>236</sup>

Norham Castle stands little more than six miles from Berwick, twelve miles from Lindisfarne, nineteen miles from Bamburgh and under thirty miles from Alnwick. Significantly, it is also six miles from the main road between Berwick and Morpeth.<sup>237</sup> The activities of the bloc are directly to be seen in the aftermath of the shipwreck of 400 French troops on Lindisfarne in November 1463 when Manners and Ogle were able to force their surrender of these 400 Frenchmen with a force of a suggested 200 troops.<sup>238</sup> In Chapter 3 I emphasise my belief that the Norham bloc was the key to whole campaign.

As will be shown in that chapter, the four ships chartered by Margaret of Anjou and Pierre de Brézé with possibly 400 French troops aboard sailed from Warenmouth, presumably aiming for Berwick. The fact that a force of 400 soldiers (notoriously suspicious of boats) was prepared to sail to Berwick rather than to march the fourteen miles there encourages the belief that they feared attack. In other words, the Norham bloc almost certainly provided a force in being that threatened communication between the Scottish-held Berwick (at a time when Scotland supported Henry and Margaret) and the Lancastrian heartland of Bamburgh, Dunstanburgh and Alnwick, effectively cutting these castles off from their support north of the border. Norham, and hence Lord Ogle and Robert Manners, was a real thorn in the side of Lancastrian strategy.<sup>239</sup>

In March Sir Ralph Percy yet again turned his coat and handed over Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh to Henry and in May Sir Ralph Grey followed suit with Alnwick.<sup>240</sup> It seemed that both sides were back to where they were in November the preceding year, when, among other things, the Norham bloc threatened communications between the castles of Northumberland and Berwick. Scottish and Lancastrian interests combined in seeking to make an end to this thorn and in July a combined force under Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou, Mary of Gueldres, James III (a very young boy) and Pierre de

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<sup>232</sup> Worcestre, pp. 781 – 782.

<sup>233</sup> Cal. Pat., p. 294.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>235</sup> Warkworth, pp. 38 – 39; Worcestre, p. 789.

<sup>236</sup> The term 'Norham bloc' is mine.

<sup>237</sup> I have personally measured each distance by Ordnance Survey Map.

<sup>238</sup> *Chronicles of London*, p. 178.

<sup>239</sup> This whole incident is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, p. 65.

<sup>240</sup> *Annales*, p. 417.



Brézé laid siege to Norham Castle, a siege that lasted eighteen days. It was relieved by Warwick and Montagu 'using local forces' (presumably those from Middleham or from those under the order of the Warden of the East march), a lacklustre performance by the Scots which was much criticised by English Lancastrians and Yorkists.<sup>241</sup> The Scottish Lancastrian alliance ended soon afterwards.<sup>242</sup>

The performance of the Scots may have been lacklustre but the strength and morale of the Yorkist garrison at Norham was good. Attacked by an international force from the north and cut off from the south,<sup>243</sup> the Yorkist force under Ogle and Manners held firm and lessened the panic which pervaded the Yorkists much further south.<sup>244</sup> However, like the Yorkists of Norham, the Lancastrians of the three castles also held firm, but the failure of the Norham campaign ended help from Scotland and France. In October Margaret of Anjou, the Prince of Wales and Pierre de Brézé sailed for Flanders,<sup>245</sup> Henry VI was transferred to Bamburgh Castle, the border was sealed and the Lancastrians were alone. Norham under the courageous leadership of Ogle and Manners had achieved a very great deal.

In the aftermath of the Battle of Towton, there is a brief report from the Paston Correspondence<sup>246</sup> which tells of Sir Robert Ogle and 'Conyrs' (Sir John Conyers?) besieging 'Coroumbr', a castle in Yorkshire where Henry VI was resting. According to Bates, supported by Weir,<sup>247</sup> Henry, Margaret, and the young prince were then besieged by Sir Robert Ogle and Sir John Conyers at

a place in York schire (that) is called Coroumbr, suche a name or muche lyke' by which the castle of Carham or Wark would seem to be meant ... He [Henry] might, we are told, at one time have stolen away at a little postern behind the castle. Several esquires of the earl of Northumberland gathered together five or six thousand Lancastrians to raise the siege, and no fewer than three thousand north-countrymen are said to have fallen in the consequent 'byger.'<sup>248</sup>

This must be pure fantasy. In the aftermath of Towton there was no possibility of 5,000 Lancastrian troops being mustered in Northumberland and no report of 3,000 deaths, numbers almost identical with those fighting and dying for Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth. Such a force might have been possible if, as Breeze suggests, the place was Knaresborough.<sup>249</sup> Mowat suspects that both suggestions are doubtful and that 'Coroumbr' was nothing more than an unidentified fortified manor.<sup>250</sup>

Though Wilcox denies both locations,<sup>251</sup> the suggestion of Carham has merit while that of Knaresborough has none. Henry VI and his party were in York during the battle and, headed for the

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<sup>241</sup> Scofield, p. 293 – 294.

<sup>242</sup> Gregory, pp. 220 – 221; *Annales*, p. 781.

<sup>243</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>244</sup> J. Raine, *The Priory of Hexham, its Chroniclers, Endowments, and Annals*, vol. 1, Surtees Society (1864), pp. 107 – 108.

<sup>245</sup> Gregory, pp. 219 – 220.

<sup>246</sup> *The Paston Letters*, vol. 3, pp. 368 – 369.

<sup>247</sup> Weir, p. 287; Sadler, *War in the North*, p. 19.

<sup>248</sup> Bates, 'Border Holds', pp. 429 – 430; Goodman, p. 56.

<sup>249</sup> A. Breeze, 'A Paston Letter of 1461 and "Coroumbr", Yorkshire', *Northern History* 38 (2001), pp. 316 – 317.

<sup>250</sup> Mowat, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 164.

<sup>251</sup> R. Wilcox, 'Siege of Coroumbr?', *Northern History* 40 (2003), p. 272.

border, would not have deviated towards Knaresborough which was to the west of their line of retreat but directly on the path from Towton to the border. Further, there is no evidence of expenditure to Knaresborough Castle as would have been surely likely following a siege.<sup>252</sup> However, had the Lancastrian royal party made for Roxburgh rather than Berwick and crossed the Tweed at Wark, the event could possibly have taken place. Carham is very close to Norham, where Ogle was constable and where he might well have come after Towton, and it is not far from Wooler Castle, a castle belonging to Sir John Conyers, who had also fought at Towton. I concur with Wilcox that the story of Coloumbr is probably a rumour and has little basis in fact but if there is truth in the story, it gives further credence to the concept of a Yorkist 'bloc' centred on Norham and further suggests that Sir John Conyers was part of it.

Following the disaster of Lindisfarne, the Earl of Warwick arrived in Northumberland with a very large force and the three castles were besieged. Many of the Yorkist troops were from the south but Lord Ogle is numbered among the besiegers of Bamburgh,<sup>253</sup> Lord Greystoke of those besieging Alnwick,<sup>254</sup> and Sir Ralph Grey of those besieging Dunstanburgh.<sup>255</sup> Members of the Northumbrian aristocracy (and perhaps their affinities) were playing their part in the reduction of the Lancastrian garrisons. However, there may be evidence of lesser gentry being involved as well. According to Bateson, Edward IV granted to one Richard Craster the office of bailiff of Bamburgh in 1461. Bateson goes on to say that, according to the unsupported evidence of Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, 'Ralph (Robert?), Lord Ogle assisted by Edmund Craucestre and Richard Craucestre, bailiffs on Bamburgh, took Dunstanburgh in 1461'.<sup>256</sup> Further, report is made of Edmund and Richard Craster of Craster receiving a grant of the confiscated estate of John Beaumont at North Carlton. The grant was made by Edward IV on 26<sup>th</sup> of November 1465 'in grateful recognition of the services which Edmund and Richard Craster rendered to him.'<sup>257</sup> It seems reasonable to believe that Edmund and Richard, who lived less than two miles from Dunstanburgh, were Yorkists and profited by their actions. It is an unusual example of a report of the activities of the lesser gentry.

### **Significant Lancastrians who came from outside Northumberland**

As stated in Chapter 1, Henry VI's indispensable contribution to Lancastrian efforts in Northumberland was that he was there; without him there could have been no struggle. Once that is said, he seems to have contributed little else. His full role will be full assessed in Chapter 4. There was a very significant contribution from Pierre de Brézé and a lesser one from the Earl of Angus, both also discussed in Chapter 4. However, the most significant contribution of all was that made by Margaret of Anjou, a brief analysis of which follows.

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>253</sup> Scofield, p. 264; *Annales*, p. 417.

<sup>254</sup> *Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, p. 77.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>256</sup> E. Bateson, *A History of Northumberland*, vol. 2 (Newcastle and London, 1895), p. 173.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

In *Henry VI, part III*, at the end of Act 1,<sup>258</sup> there is a sharp exchange between the Duke of York, who has just been captured at the Battle of Wakefield, and Margaret of Anjou. Some of the pithier parts of the dialogue are these:

Queen Margaret: Alas, poor York! But that I hate thee deadly,  
I should lament thy miserable state  
I pr'y thee grieve, to make me merry, York

York cannot speak, unless he wears a crown –  
A crown for York! – and Lords, bow low to him. –  
Hold you his hands, while I do set it on,  
(Putting a paper crown on his head)

York She-wolf of France and worse than the wolves of France  
Whose tongue more poisons than an adder's tooth!  
How ill-beseeming is it in thy sex  
To triumph like an Amazonian trull  
Upon their woes who Fortune captivates!

Queen Margaret: And here's to right our gentle hearted king.  
(Stabbing him)  
Off with his head and set it on York gates:  
So York may overlook the town of York.

Historically, such a confrontation could not have taken place, because Margaret was in Scotland at the time,<sup>259</sup> and York had in fact been killed in the battle.<sup>260</sup> However his head was actually set upon York's gates,<sup>261</sup> and there is also reason to believe the story of the paper crown historical though Margaret had no part in either event.<sup>262</sup> The relevant point is that Shakespeare has defined Margaret of Anjou as a vicious and spiteful woman and this picture reverberates for all who study her. An alternative vision of her was originally provided Diana Dunn, who concentrates on Margaret's life before the Wars of the Roses,<sup>263</sup> and more recently by Maurer's fuller assessment of her character in her *Margaret of Anjou* and by Helen Castor in her *She Wolves*,<sup>264</sup> the title of which ironically recognises the danger of typecasting.

Margaret's character was undoubtedly shaped by the historical environment in which she lived. In about 1440, the Hundred Years War had entered a period of stagnation. Both France and England were seeking a way out of the conflict and a possible way of peace was by a marriage of Henry VI (who desperately needed an heir) to a French princess (in a way echoing the marriage of Katherine

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<sup>258</sup> William Shakespeare, 'King Henry VI – Part III', *The Illustrated Stratford Shakespeare* (London, 1983), p. 529.

<sup>259</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 191.

<sup>260</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 30.

<sup>261</sup> Gregory, p. 210.

<sup>262</sup> *Annales*, p. 775.

<sup>263</sup> D. Dunn, 'Margaret of Anjou, Queen Consort of Henry VI: a Reassessment of her Role, 1445-53' in *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. R. E. Archer (Stroud, 1995), pp. 107 – 144.

<sup>264</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*; H. Castor, *She Wolves*.

of Valois to Henry V).<sup>265</sup> Margaret was a minor 'royal', a cousin of the King of France, who was suggested by the French court as a suitable bride for Henry and accepted as such by the English court.<sup>266</sup> Her marriage to Henry followed in 1445, when Margaret was fifteen years old, and was initially well received in England. Henry then bungled the peace treaty accompanying the marriage, disastrously for the English. War broke out again and Margaret did not become pregnant, and so initially failed in her primary duty, which was to provide an heir.<sup>267</sup> Worse, her only friend in the English court was William, Duke of Suffolk, who, widely blamed for the catastrophic failures in France and the economic failures in England, was lynched on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1450.<sup>268</sup> Though the early 1450s finally saw the birth of a son (Edward of Lancaster), it also saw a period of mental collapse on the part of her husband.<sup>269</sup> Distrusting the Duke of York who she rightly believed was trying to sideline her, and probably wrongly suspected of trying to disinherit her son, she sought a political role for herself and, when she failed to achieve it, found an ally in the Duke of Somerset who was a keen opponent of York.<sup>270</sup> Margaret, it might be said, was the founder of the 'Lancastrian' movement; that body of English people who wished to deny the Duke of York and his followers the right to the protectorate.

The key moment for Margaret came with the Battle of Northampton. Henry was captured and taken to London by the Earls of Warwick and March where he tamely submitted to signing the Accord which disinherited his son. Margaret responded differently; she escaped and found her way to Scotland where she began negotiations for support for the Lancastrians with the Scottish court. After the Battle of Wakefield, she became, effectively, the commander of the huge army which marched south to the Second Battle of St. Albans and led it back to York and the disaster of Towton. Escaping with her husband and their son to Scotland she continued her diplomacy with the Scots and opened channels with the French. Whether wise to do so or not (the Scots and French were perceived by many Englishmen as being 'the enemy'), the Lancastrians in Northumberland would not have survived three months without her activities. Margaret's post Towton activities are reviewed in Chapter 4.

The primary role of a queen was to produce a male heir and her role model was to be that of the Virgin Mary, submissive and weak.<sup>271</sup> As a consort she was to support her husband, while at the same time being generous to the poor and petitioning her husband on behalf of the unfortunate.<sup>272</sup> That being said, there had been queens who took a more active and militant path and these include Eleanor of Aquitaine and Philippa of France. The crucial point is that criticisms of a reigning king were regarded as dangerous, seen as threatening the whole institution of monarchy, so blame was conventionally heaped on the king's advisors, a practice that underlay the lynching of the Duke of Suffolk, and Margaret was thus a convenient person to be demonised. Since the real criticism of

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<sup>265</sup> Goodman, *A History of England*, p. 253.

<sup>266</sup> Weir, pp. 106 – 108

<sup>267</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 42.

<sup>268</sup> Gillingham, pp. 63 – 64.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74 – 75.

<sup>270</sup> Weir, pp. 193 – 194.

<sup>271</sup> D. Dunn, 'The Queen at War: The Role of Margaret of Anjou in the Wars of the Roses' in *War and Society in Medieval and Early Modern Britain*, ed. D. Dunn (Liverpool, 2000), p. 143.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

Henry was that he was inept, decisive leadership was required of someone and modern writers do not blame Margaret for filling the role. Yorkist and Tudor spin doctors had no such nicety.<sup>273</sup>

It is quite clear that though Margaret showed great skill in forging foreign alliances, her inability to forge successful ones was a good reason why the war in Northumberland lasted so long. Each time one of her projects collapsed she laboriously created another, but she never provided a force capable of having a good chance of defeating her opponents. Classically, her ability to persuade Angus to rescue Alnwick did save the garrison there but did not lead to a decisive battle. Had Angus come two months earlier the Scottish/French/Lancastrian army might have won a great victory. This possibility is examined in Chapter 3.

Lord Roos or Ros of Helmsley was a keen and key supporter of Margaret and Henry. He remained with Henry in York (presumably as part of his bodyguard) during the Battle of Towton and rode with him to the border. He was executed after Hexham.<sup>274</sup> Thomas Grey, younger brother of the Earl of Kent, in spite of being ‘a man of no special distinction,’ was made Baron of Richemount Grey and fought on the Lancastrian side at Towton.<sup>275</sup> Sir Richard Tunstall, who was Henry’s Carver and fought for him at First St. Albans for the King, was pardoned by the Yorkist administration but remained loyal to Henry and fought for him at Wakefield, Second St. Albans and Towton. Sir Edmund Hampden entered the service of Margaret of Anjou and accompanied her to Scotland and Sir Robert Whittingham stood by his sovereign and went to Scotland with Sir Richard, while Sir Edmund Mountford, who had been an M.P. and Sherriff of Warwickshire, became a member of Margaret of Anjou’s household in 1460 and also went to Scotland.<sup>276</sup>

### **Independent Nobles and Knights**

Hicks points out that these independent nobles and knights were individuals without an affinity.<sup>277</sup> They may have had some funds of their own, brought with them in their baggage and they may have received some contributions from friends, but since they were all attainted, they could receive nothing from their lands. This was true of the most significant of those who accompanied Margaret to Scotland, Henry Beaufort.

The Beauforts were the descendents of the extra marital relationship between John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford,<sup>278</sup> but were declared legitimate by the Pope, an action publicly accepted by Richard II when he conferred the title of Earl of Somerset on John of Gaunt’s and Katherine Swynford’s eldest son.<sup>279</sup> When Henry IV became king, he confirmed his half brothers and sisters in their legitimacy and made the Earl of Somerset a Duke, but he added the words ‘*excepta dignitate regali*’ which barred the Beauforts from inheriting the crown of England,<sup>280</sup> though if Henry VI and his son had died at the hands of the Yorkists, the existing Duke of Somerset would surely have been a serious contender for the crown. This was Henry Beaufort, born in 1436, wounded and captured at

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid., p. 156; Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 211.

<sup>274</sup> Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage*, vol. 11, p. 221.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 777 – 778.

<sup>276</sup> Hampton, *Memorials*, p. 248.

<sup>277</sup> Hicks, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 171.

<sup>278</sup> A. Weir, *Katherine Swynford* (London, 2007), pp. 69 – 70.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., pp. 233 – 234.

<sup>280</sup> Weir, p. 50.

the First Battle of St. Albans, where his father (the second duke) was killed. After Ludford Bridge, he was (as the third Duke of Somerset) appointed Captain of Calais but was outmanoeuvred by Warwick and so missed the Battle of Northampton. He was able to join the Lancastrian army for the battles of Wakefield, Second St. Albans and Towton, in all of which he seems to have been in command. Somehow he emerged safely from the rout of Towton and joined the royal party in their flight to the border. His further activities are examined in Chapter 4.

### **Significant Yorkists who came from outside Northumberland**

The key Yorkist presence in Northumberland was represented by two brothers from the junior branch of the family of Neville, Richard, Earl of Warwick (the Kingmaker) and John, Lord Montagu. Both fought long and hard in Northumberland during the three years and three months of the Northumberland war and together they were victorious; without the former, Towton would probably never have been fought and without the latter, Hedgley Moor and Hexham might have had different outcomes. A third crucial figure seems not to have entered Northumberland during the war, but his input significantly affected its existence. As the spiritual leader of Northumberland and Durham, and one who held the bishopric of Durham, otherwise known as the palatinate (which included Northumberland), Bishop Lawrence Booth prevented the Lancastrian presence spreading south of the Tyne and gave legitimacy to the Yorkist presence in the crucial castle of Norham. A fourth figure, considered below was Isabelle, Countess of Essex.

The Nevilles of Middleham were the younger branch of the Neville family but far richer and more powerful than the older branch, the Nevilles of Raby. Middleham Castle stood as the key member of one of the five castles of Northumberland, giving to the Nevilles a really important power base.<sup>281</sup> As has been shown, there was rivalry in Yorkshire between the Nevilles and the Percies and this spilled over into Northumberland, royal policy being to prevent over aggrandisement of the latter. Whereas the Percies had considerable holdings in Northumberland, the Nevilles did not. But they did have considerable forces in Northumberland and these were to prove crucial in the struggle.

Richard Neville was born in 1428 and his brother John in 1431, direct descendents of Edward I and also of 'the fair maid of Kent', who was the widow of Edward of Woodstock, the Black Prince.<sup>282</sup> Richard's marriage to Anne Beauchamp, daughter of the Earl of Warwick, led him to become Earl of Warwick in his turn and to be connected to many of the nobility of England and one of the most powerful and richest peers in England. The political machinations of the day led to the Nevilles of Middleham siding with the Yorkists in the Wars of the Roses and Warwick was to become the principal protagonist in the Yorkist cause.<sup>283</sup> His most significant role in the early part of the Wars of the Roses was in the period after the rout of Ludford Bridge, where his command of the sea and control of Calais enabled him to invade England in 1461 and defeat the Lancastrians at Northampton, capturing Henry VI and establishing a Yorkist government. Defeated at the Second Battle of St. Albans, Warwick saved the Yorkists from disaster by joining with the new Duke of York and helping him to secure London and to win the decisive Battle of Towton. In his early thirties and with such military experience behind him, he clearly saw his role as tutor to the nineteen year old Edward IV.

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<sup>281</sup> Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 18; Pollard, *North-Eastern England*, p. 95.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8 – 9.

<sup>283</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 17.

John, Lord Montagu (his brother) had a less satisfactory career. He was captured at Blore Heath in 1459 and, released after Northampton, was captured again at Second St. Albans and hence missed the decisive Battle of Towton. The Neville brothers, as will be seen in Chapter 4, were the key Yorkist figures in Northumberland in the 1460s.

The Bishop of Durham was of course far more than a spiritual prelate, having the temporal rule of the palatinate, which included the liberties of Northamptonshire and Northumberland.<sup>284</sup> This temporality exceeded all others in England apart from that belonging to the king himself; the Bishop of Durham could enact his own laws and, by combining the spiritual with the secular arm, could exert more immediate sanction against a subject than the Crown itself. R. Storey cites the case of a woman who was seized and imprisoned 10 days after excommunication, the Bishop acting as Ordinary for the excommunication and Prince for the seizure.<sup>285</sup> Storey points out that nowhere else in England could such a speedy operation of law take place. The Bishop's authority of Northamptonshire included the castle of Northampton, a bastion of defence against the Scots, the constable of which he appointed. In the struggle for which king was to rule Northumberland, the political alignment of the Bishop of Durham was vital. Indeed, Edward IV may have echoed Abraham Lincoln's sentiment in another context, 'I would like to have God on my side, but I must have the Bishop of Durham.'<sup>286</sup> The Bishop in question was Laurence Booth.

Born in 1420, Laurence Booth's rise in both church and state was rapid, partly because he was the brother of William Booth, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield from 1447 and Archbishop of York from 1452. In 1451 Laurence Booth became chancellor to Queen Margaret, in 1456 Keeper of the Privy Seal and the following year (at the age of 37) Bishop of Durham. In this post he succeeded the widely unpopular Robert Neville whose appointment had led to such unrest that administration of the palatinate was taken from him and placed at the disposal of the Yorkist Earl of Salisbury. There can be little doubt that when Bishop Neville died in 1457, Henry and Margaret wanted the palatinate to be held by a safe pair of hands and selected Margaret's Chancellor as the appropriate person. They had miscalculated, for Booth was to prove a trimmer; early in his reign he sought to keep the good will of the Earl of Salisbury whose servants he kept in office and whose handsome annuities he continued to pay.<sup>287</sup>

Booth did not hesitate, however, to benefit from the Lancastrian victory at Ludford Bridge even though doing so alienated the Earl of Salisbury. The Coventry Parliament of 1459 forfeited the Earl of Warwick's possession of Barnard Castle and conferred the property on the Bishop of Durham.<sup>288</sup> The benefit of Ludford Bridge was short lived however; the Yorkist pre-eminence after Northampton cost Booth his post as Keeper of the Privy Seal. On the eve of Towton he still held Barnard Castle though he knew that a Yorkist victory would probably cost him his see. Both Edward and Henry must have

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<sup>284</sup> Gillingham, p. 100.

<sup>285</sup> R. Storey, *Thomas Langley and the Bishopric of Durham, 1396 – 1437* (London, 1961), p. 57.

<sup>286</sup> W. E. Gienapp, *Abraham Lincoln and Civil War America*, (Oxford, 2002), p. 89. What Lincoln actually said was 'I would like to have God on my side but I must have Kentucky!'

<sup>287</sup> A. J. Pollard, 'Booth, Lawrence (c. 1420 – 1480)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), online edition Jan. 2008, p. 1.

<sup>288</sup> R. Surtees, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatinate of Durham*, vol. 3 (Wakefield, 1972), p. lix.

been watching him to see which way he would jump. Three days after Towton he submitted to Edward and prevented the Lancastrians enlarging their sphere of interest in 1461.<sup>289</sup>

Isabelle Bouchier, Countess to the 1st Earl of Essex, had been granted the Liberty of Tynedale by Edward, 2nd Duke of York, a possession confirmed by Edward IV in 1473.<sup>290</sup> She was thus a potential asset to the Yorkist cause and represents one more denial to the claim that Northumberland was a Lancastrian county. This being said, there seems no evidence that she used her position to aid the Yorkists in their struggle.

The main surprise in this chapter is the number of Yorkists to be found in Northumberland, a county normally accounted as being Lancastrian to the core. Northumberland was, like the rest of England, a community divided. This chapter has examined the landed society of Northumberland in considerable depth and it can be unequivocally stated as has already been emphasised that *Northumberland was not a Lancastrian county*.<sup>291</sup> Against the presence and the power of the Percies must be set that of the Nevilles of Middleham and their satellite, Lord Ogle. Though families such as the Eures and the Herons may have been Lancastrian at heart, the loss of their senior figure at Towton and subsequent attainders meant they kept very quiet during the struggle in Northumberland.

There is a further significant point. Over half the families revealed in Table 1 were shown to be probably neutral, and military activity during the time of the war was limited to a very small part of the county (see Map A). The main players were also nearly all from outside the county. Only Ralph Percy, William Tailboys and Robert Ogle were Northumbrians. The key to Lancastrian strength lay in the triangular area of land subtended by Dunstanburgh, Bamburgh and Alnwick; the Percy heartland.

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<sup>289</sup> Scofield, pp. 174 – 175.

<sup>290</sup> L. Clarke, 'Bouchier, Henry, first earl of Essex (c. 1408 – 1483)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), online edition Jan. 2008, p. 1; L. Clark, 'The Benefits and Burdens of Office: Henry Bourghier (1408 – 83), Viscount Bourghier and Earl of Essex, and the Treasurership of the Exchequer', in *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, ed. M. A. Hicks (Gloucester, 1990).

<sup>291</sup> See p. 39.



## Chapter 3: Scotland and France.

As was shown in the Introduction to this dissertation, there was no possibility of Margaret of Anjou recruiting a Lancastrian army in Northumberland that could oppose a potential Yorkist force of many times its number. Her hope was pinned on a widespread disaffection of the gentry of England from the House of York and a rebellion by these people, either in their home area or a migration of such people toward Northumberland. This, she knew, would take time, and before they arrived, the

Lancastrian presence would be swamped by Yorkist forces. Margaret therefore negotiated with the Scots and the French for money and troops to keep the Northumberland safe. How successful she was is the subject of this chapter, which looks at the number of troops she secured, the success of these troops, and the effect they had in maintaining a Lancastrian potential in Northumberland.

As already stated, the attempted Lancastrian occupation was never intended to be a permanent entity. It was to be a rallying point for Lancastrians throughout England and by recruiting a new and irresistible armed force, was intended to lead to the restoration of Henry VI to the throne. Virtually penniless, Margaret of Anjou had no choice but to try to gain Scottish support by trading fortification and territory for safe lodging, money and troops. In doing so she ran a serious risk; either the Scots would take the territory and give nothing in exchange, or they would seize the opportunity to greatly extend their territory into England, occupying large parts of it in Henry's name and then remaining to make it part of Scotland when the crisis was over. Fortunately for her, perhaps, Scotland tended towards the former option.

### ***Scottish Involvement***

As was shown in Chapter 2, after the Battle of Northampton, Henry, taken to London by his captors, remained little more than a puppet king, while Margaret of Anjou fled to Scotland where she found a complex political situation. James II, who had been trying to play off Lancastrian interests against Yorkist ones for his own benefit,<sup>292</sup> seized the opportunity provided by the Yorkist victory at Northampton to attack Roxburgh and was killed by the bursting of one of his own cannons.<sup>293</sup> His son, James III, was a child and, according to Dunlop, the government of Scotland devolved largely upon Bishop Kennedy of St. Andrews, a prelate who was a keen opponent of rapprochement with England,<sup>294</sup> one who 'took his stand by Henry VI, the anointed King of England, against his rebels, who were in league with the rebels of the King of Scots and challenged his sovereignty'.<sup>295</sup> Macdougall disputes this claim, arguing that Kennedy had far less power than Mary of Gueldres (the Scottish Queen Mother), who was the real power in Scotland.<sup>296</sup> At all events, Bishop Kennedy was out of Scotland during the winter of 1460 – 61 so Margaret of Anjou had perforce to engage in discussion with Mary of Gueldres. It must be stressed that at this stage Margaret was undoubted Queen of England, so the discussion between the two women was between two crowned heads of state. According to Dunlop, 'Burgundian Chroniclers and French sources assert that Margaret promised to cede Berwick as the price of armed support against the Duke of York', though Waurin

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<sup>292</sup> Dunlop, *James Kennedy*, p. 163.

<sup>293</sup> *Auchinleck Chronicle: Ane Schort Memoriale of the Scottis Corniklis* (Auckinleck: 1809), p. 58.

<sup>294</sup> Neville, *Violence*, p. 154.

<sup>295</sup> Dunlop, *James Kennedy*, p. 208.

<sup>296</sup> N. Macdougall, *James III* (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 53.

suggests that the agreement only came after Towton.<sup>297</sup> This reliance on French sources is inevitable; the only contemporary Scottish source is the 'Auchinleck Chronicle', which was written in Scotland at an unknown date and is preserved only in the Asloan Manuscript of the early sixteenth century.<sup>298</sup> It offers little substantive material.

The discussion between the queens was abruptly terminated by the startling news that at Christmastide 1460 a battle had been fought at Wakefield in which the Duke of York had been killed and his troops routed and that a very large muster of Lancastrian troops was assembling in Yorkshire. Margaret left Scotland to join this army and was to be at its head in the major Lancastrian victory of the Second Battle of St. Albans. Her success was short lived, the Battle of Towton followed, and Margaret, now accompanied by Henry VI, again sought refuge in Scotland. The wheel of fortune had turned, for though Henry and his queen were royally housed by the Scots at Linlithgow Palace,<sup>299</sup> Margaret was now no longer regarded by many Scots as Queen of England. The former Earl of March and Duke of York was now declaring himself to be King Edward IV and Henry VI and his wife were little more than refugees.

The subject of Berwick was now raised again but in a very different atmosphere and with very much greater significance. Mary of Gueldres was by no means certain that she wanted to risk a war with England by supporting what looked like becoming the losing side. Throughout the rest of her life (she died in 1464), her attitude was one of *real politique*, balancing the chances of a possible Lancastrian resurgence against the likelihood of the success of the Yorkist state.<sup>300</sup> Indeed, Mowat suggests that Mary of Gueldres favoured the Yorkists, but was forced to accept Margaret and Henry because she feared the power of Bishop Kennedy.<sup>301</sup> To accept the offer of Berwick, a prize of the greatest importance to the Scots, carried a collateral problem, for to accept it meant that Mary was recognising the right of Henry and Margaret to give it. Henry could only cede Berwick by exercising his royal prerogative and if Mary accepted it, she was acknowledging Henry as King of England. From Henry's and Margaret's point of view this was a great enhancement of the gift.

So Mary was persuaded to give armed support to Margaret of Anjou, the more so since the latter offered Carlisle as well, if the Scots could capture it.<sup>302</sup> Berwick was therefore surrendered to the Scots and preparations were made for the invasion of Cumberland. However it must be noted that at the same time, a Scottish embassy, headed by Lord Hamilton, was sent to negotiate with the Yorkists.<sup>303</sup> It should also be noted that this was a time of quiet in the constant border bickering between families either side of the border.<sup>304</sup>

Both Macdougall and Dunlop make the important point that Scotland was extremely reluctant to move against the 'auld alliance'; Scottish policy was largely dictated by the French king, whoever this might be. So when Louis XI became king and was pursuing his pro-Yorkist policy, it was obviously in

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<sup>297</sup> Waurin, vol. 3, p. 302.

<sup>298</sup> Christine McGladdery, "Auchinleck Chronicle", in Graeme Dunphy, *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 124 – 5.

<sup>299</sup> Wolffe, *Henry VI*, p. 332.

<sup>300</sup> Macdougall, *James III*, p. 57.

<sup>301</sup> Mowat, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 165.

<sup>302</sup> Dunlop, *James Kennedy*, p. 221.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>304</sup> Neville, *Violence*, pp. 152 – 154.

Scotland's interest to seek accommodation with Edward IV. It was not until Margaret of Anjou persuaded Louis XI to support the Lancastrians that Mary of Gueldres changed her allegiance.

Even clearer is it that the Lancastrian goal posts were starting to shift. Initially Henry and Margaret had sought refuge in Scotland and their status had been that of the refugee. The handing over of Berwick (long claimed by the Scots as Scottish territory) in exchange for money, an opportunity to recruit mercenaries and a secure base was one thing; the willingness to invite Scottish troops under Scottish command to invade England and capture Carlisle (ever an English city) was entirely different. Lancastrian policy was clearly driven by desperation, Scottish policy by a reluctant opportunism.

If ever there had ever been a good opportunity for Scotland to invade England, it had been in 1459. Henry VI was fighting to preserve his throne and a good portion of the country was fighting to deprive him of it. A Scottish army could have invaded Northumberland or Cumberland without difficulty and found few to oppose them. Alternatively, the Scottish leaders could have made common cause with either Lancaster or York and by supporting them, guaranteed their victory and gained an alliance of value. Scottish response was timid in the extreme; James II contented himself with trying to capture a single castle, and when he was killed, his successor's regent showed even less enthusiasm. Scotland was clearly seeking a time of peace and the need to honour the deal struck for the possession of Berwick was observed rather in the spirit than in the deed as the Scottish performance at Carlisle illustrates.

In May 1461, Margaret, Edward of Lancaster, and a number of English nobles joined with a Scottish force to capture Carlisle. Starting from Edinburgh, there were two routes their army might have taken. It might have marched south to Alnwick by what is now the A1 and then (following the line of Hadrian's Wall) eastward to Carlisle. Alternatively it could have followed the line of the A7, crossing the Esk near Gretna and approaching Carlisle from the north. The latter is shorter, safer from Yorkist attack and the faster, and there is every reason to believe that Margaret followed this route. Therefore it is virtually certain that this Scottish force did not enter Northumberland in 1461. Dispersed by Lord Montagu, Edward being in the south of England attending to his coronation, the Scots who had been besieging Carlisle returned to their homeland, taking the Lancastrians with them.<sup>305</sup> They were not to cross the border again for nearly two years. Their unenthusiastic performance was to force Margaret of Anjou to involve a more potent and unpredictable ally.

## **French Involvement**

The attack on Carlisle and the raid into Durham by Henry VI to encourage insurrection were both failures,<sup>306</sup> the English south of the Tyne refusing to rise in support of King Henry.<sup>307</sup> Margaret decided that the only thing to do was to seek troops and money from France. In July 1461 the Duke of Somerset, Lord Hungerford and Sir Robert Whittingham went to France to negotiate with the French King, Charles VII.<sup>308</sup> Charles had already given support to the Lancastrians by sending a force under Pierre de Brézé (a renowned French general) to attack the Channel Islands; an action seen by

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<sup>305</sup> Scofield, p. 180.

<sup>306</sup> See page 16.

<sup>307</sup> Scofield, p. 138.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

many in Europe as a possible precursor to an attack on southern England.<sup>309</sup> Margaret, Charles' niece, had hopes of further support but luck deserted her. On 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1461, Charles died and was succeeded by his son, Louis XI.

Louis XI was an extremely complex and devious individual, but a king who never lost the opportunity to promote French interests. Walter Scott gives an excellent word portrait of him in his novel, *Quentin Durward*.<sup>310</sup> As dauphin, Louis' support had been for the House of York and his banner had flown over the Yorkist army at Towton.<sup>311</sup> So Margaret's envoys (the Duke of Somerset, Lord Hungerford and Sir Robert Whittingham) were interned as having no appropriate papers for a visit to France; their passports were not accepted because they had been issued for the court of Charles VII.<sup>312</sup> Although eventually all three escaped and returned to Northumberland, they had obtained no French help and so Margaret decided to go to France herself. Accompanied by her son, she left Kirkcudbright in April 1462 with her husband's formal commission to treat with Louis.<sup>313</sup> She landed in Brittany and was encouraged by a present of 12,000 crowns from its duke.<sup>314</sup> Then a prolonged chase ensued between the elusive Louis and the determined Margaret.

When she finally caught up with Louis at Chinon, Margaret agreed to give him, in exchange for 40,000 francs, the keys of Calais within a year of its recapture by Henry.<sup>315</sup> What this meant in practice was that Louis would have to provide the troops to capture Calais but that their legitimacy to do so would be guaranteed by Henry VI. This agreement formed the keystone of the Treaty of Tours, whereby Louis recognised Henry as the true king of England and guaranteed that de Brézé could raise an army to accompany Margaret back to Scotland.<sup>316</sup> This promising beginning was nullified by Philip of Burgundy, who refused to allow the French troops (aiming for Calais) to cross his land.<sup>317</sup> Louis' ardour to support Margaret's enterprise immediately cooled. When the French force set sail for Scotland, its number was much smaller than she had hoped and Louis was no longer directly funding or supporting the expedition.

The size of this force is crucial to this dissertation. This was no reluctant army of Scots slipping across the border and returning when the going got rough; this was a disciplined body of French mercenaries 'invading' English soil. If this force was large enough to be the main Lancastrian force and if it received Scottish support, then gone must be the claim that Henry ruled independently. Indeed there would be a decided possibility that Northumberland might turn out to be a French state with Margaret of Anjou as queen, supported by her consort Henry (VI). If, on the other hand, the force was small, then it would be seen as propping up the Lancastrians forces in Northumberland, providing them with reserves and probably unable to make a serious difference. Time and effort must be spent in finding out how large the force was to be.

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<sup>309</sup> *Calendar of State Papers of Milan*, vol. 1, pp. 93 – 98; Scofield, p. 179.

<sup>310</sup> W. Scott, *Quentin Durward* (Edinburgh, 1871).

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>312</sup> Mowat in his *The Wars of the Roses*, pp. 166 – 169, suggests that this rejection was the result of Yorkist diplomacy.

<sup>313</sup> Goodman, p. 59.

<sup>314</sup> Bates, 'Border Holds', p. 431.

<sup>315</sup> Waurin, vol. 5, pp. 176 – 177.

<sup>316</sup> Chastellain, vol. 4, pp. 227 – 228; Scofield, p. 255.

<sup>317</sup> Gillingham, p. 141.

## The Invasion according to the Primary and Secondary Sources

Gregory's Chronicle offers this limited statement: 'Thys yere Quene Margarete com owt of Frauns with lij schyppys, with Freynysche men and sum Engelysche men in the schyppys'.<sup>318</sup> 'A Short English Chronicle' declares that: 'this yere Quene Margaret toke Bamburgh, Anwyke and Donsynburgh with the nombre of vi M<sup>1</sup> of Frensshemen...'<sup>319</sup> These two statements, added together, suggest an invasion force of 6,000 French troops in a convoy of 52 ships. This is logistically possible; Rodgers reports that 40 ships of 500 tons with 4,000 men were sent by Castile to aid France.<sup>320</sup> Whether Margaret could have mustered such an armada is another matter; some Yorkist sources were perhaps keen to suggest a major French invasion which would stress the paucity of English support for the House of Lancaster, the danger of a French invasion and the great victory of the Yorkists in defeating it. French sources, together with some English ones, indicate a very different number of troops.

John Stow, in the *Annales*, joins with Waurin and Calmette in suggesting a figure of 2,000 French soldiers.<sup>321</sup> This number receives affirmation from a few modern authors, including Goodman, Sadler and Weir.<sup>322</sup> Alternatively de Chastellain and Basin suggest that there were 800 troops and Hall and Grafton posit 500;<sup>323</sup> Grafton saying that Margaret 'obteyned a crue of five hundred Frenchmen, which was but a small number for her purpose, and yet a greater number then her husband or she were able to entertheyne in wages, of their awn Coffers', and de Chastellain telling of a discussion he had with de Brézé who claimed he had had to pay personally for the entire enterprise which cost him 50,000 crowns.<sup>324</sup> The figure of 800 is supported by Gillingham, Rose, Hicks, Mowat, Scofield and Wolfe.<sup>325</sup> When it comes to the number of ships, writers, basing their figures on the limited information provided by the chronicles, offer a bewildering variation of the number of ships. All that these chronicles offer is that Margaret started with a fleet of 52 ships (see above) but – 'forty-two ships carried Margaret's little army across the sea' (Scofield)<sup>326</sup> – while Weir suggests that there were only a dozen ships,<sup>327</sup> Mowat that there were three<sup>328</sup> and Hicks that there were forty.<sup>329</sup>

However many ships and men Margaret and de Brézé might have had, their force left Honfleur in October 1462 and sailed for Berwick.<sup>330</sup> On arrival, the Lancastrian ships seem to have dropped anchor and Henry VI and a few supporters came out to join them in a small boat. The news they

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<sup>318</sup> Gregory, p. 213.

<sup>319</sup> *Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, p. 79.

<sup>320</sup> Rodgers, *The Safeguard of the Sea*, p. 144.

<sup>321</sup> *Annales* p. 780: Waurin, vol. 5, p. 431; J. Calmette, *Louis XI, Jean II, et la révolution Catalane* (Toulouse, 1902), pp. 25 – 28.

<sup>322</sup> Goodman, p. 59; Sadler, *Towton*, p. 151; Weir, p. 311.

<sup>323</sup> Hall's Chronicle – otherwise Hall, E., *The Union of the Two Noble Families of Lancaster and York* (London, 1809), p. 258; Grafton, p. 2.

<sup>324</sup> Chastellain, vol. 4, pp. 230 – 231; Thomas Basin, *Histoire de Louis XI*, ed. and trans. C. Samarin, vol. 2 (Paris, 1963 – 72), pp. 49 – 50.

<sup>325</sup> Gillingham, p. 142; Rose, *Kings of the North*, p. 525; Hicks, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 178; Scofield, p. 261, Wolfe, *Henry VI*, p. 334.

<sup>326</sup> Scofield, p. 261.

<sup>327</sup> Weir, p. 311.

<sup>328</sup> Mowat, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 169.

<sup>329</sup> Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 241.

<sup>330</sup> Goodman, p. 60.

brought was good; Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh had declared for Lancaster so, rather than land their troops at Berwick and make them march to Bamburgh, Margaret and de Brézé must have sailed to Warenmouth<sup>331</sup> (the port of Bamburgh).<sup>332</sup> The troops and supplies were landed and while some soldiers joined the garrisons of Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh, the majority, led by de Brézé, marched off to receive the surrender of Alnwick Castle, which speedily fell to them. The three castles are then described as ‘victualled and stuffed with Englishmen, Frenchmen and Scotsmen: by which castles they had the most part of all Northumberland’.<sup>333</sup>

Edward IV’s response was immediate. A large force of troops, followed by an artillery train, set out for Northumberland led by the king himself while Warwick, presumably using troops from the Neville stronghold of Middleham, advanced on the castles. Margaret took fright and left Bamburgh by sea on 17<sup>th</sup> November.<sup>334</sup> A storm arose and Margaret’s ‘schyppe was downyd with moche of hyr stuffe and iii grete schipps moo. And iiii c and vi Fraynche men were take in the chyrche of Hooly Ylond’.<sup>335</sup> However, the Chronicle of London Vitellius A 16 states: ‘And in a kervyle, wheryn was the substauce of her goodes, she [Margaret] fled; and as she sailed ther came upon her suche a tempest that she was fayne to leve the kervyll and take a ffysshers bote, and so went a lond to Berwyk; and the said kervyll and goodes were drowned.’ And, the Chronicle goes on, about 400 Frenchmen were driven ashore, fired their ships and took refuge in the church at Holy Island where they were forced to surrender to 200 troops under the command of ‘one Maners, a Squyer (probably Robert Manners) and the Bastard of Ogill (presumably a natural relative of Lord Ogle)’.<sup>336</sup> Margaret’s expedition had become a disaster.

How many troops actually were there? Which of the primary sources are accurate if, indeed, any of them are? Is there any way to find out? It is here that logistics become essential, for it is possible to assess how many troops *could* have come by sea and how many ships would have been needed to transport them. The research into this matter is essential, and must begin with an understanding of the limitations and terminology of marine transport.

## The Sea Coast of Northumberland

The coast of Northumberland is a long one, stretching northwards from Newcastle for nearly one hundred miles to Berwick on Tweed. It is an inhospitable and exposed coast, facing East by North and is dangerous for shipping if the wind is in the east. Even today, the modern sailing vessel with an auxiliary engine is advised to avoid this area except in settled conditions,<sup>337</sup> and every harbour between Hartlepool and Eyemouth will be closed by their harbour masters if there is a strong east wind blowing.<sup>338</sup> Conversely these harbours are very difficult to enter in a strong south westerly

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<sup>331</sup> Warenmouth is not mentioned specifically but it is the only existing port between Berwick and Newcastle (60 miles away). The possibilities of ‘beaching’ or of ‘anchoring off’ are discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>332</sup> Gillingham, p. 142; Rose, *Kings of the North*, p. 526; *Annales*, p. 416.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261; Warkworth, p. 2; Gregory says that de Brézé left the Castle of Alnwick full of Frenchmen, p. 218.

<sup>334</sup> Goodman, p. 60; Scofield, p. 262.

<sup>335</sup> Gregory, p. 218.

<sup>336</sup> *Chronicles of London* p. 178.

<sup>337</sup> Reed’s Nautical Almanac 2013 (London, 2013), pp. 216, 574.

<sup>338</sup> In 2003, with a Force Seven easterly wind blowing, the writer, at the helm of a 22 metre ketch, was swept into Newcastle on the crest of a wave at least 10 metres high. Only the strength of a 70 horse power engine

wind.<sup>339</sup> Sea trading was therefore difficult on this coast and in the fifteenth century there were only three trading ports in Northumberland; Newcastle, Berwick and Warenmouth. The former two are well known, but Warenmouth is now hardly heard of; it was at one time the flourishing port of Bamburgh on the south bank of the estuary of the small river Waren and in its day capable of accommodating vessels of considerable tonnage.<sup>340</sup> Its great significance was that, when Berwick was in Scottish hands, it was England's most northerly port. After the fall of Bamburgh in 1464 it declined in importance and by 1575 had vanished altogether.<sup>341</sup>

Fishing was done mainly by cobles; small vessels which can be launched from a beach as well as from a harbour and manoeuvred by oars as well as by sail and can be hauled above the high later mark to safety in bad weather (it was in a coble that the famous Grace Darling rowed with her father from the Inner Farne to rescue people from the wrecked steamer, *Forfarshire*, in 1838).<sup>342</sup> No chronicle or piece of modern research seems to have taken into account the extraordinary difficulty of mounting a French invasion of Northumberland. The issues involving a landing by a French force in Northumberland in the fifteenth century are set out below.

### **Sailing Transport**<sup>343</sup>

Ships are expensive; they often take years to build and employ a myriad of craftsmen to do so; riggers, caulkers, shipwrights et al. In the fifteenth century very few people could afford to own a vessel for their personal use; most (clients) would charter vessels and these would belong either to the master of the vessel or to a shore based owner (operator) with a charter fleet at his disposal. Ships represented the lion's share of their owners' capital assets and in those days there were no insurance policies available, so if a ship foundered, the owner suffered a crippling loss. It follows that to charter a vessel was expensive and the conditions of the charter were set out very clearly in advance. The terms used in chartering must be fully understood before this dissertation can proceed.

1. *Attendance*. The client designates the port of departure and has to guarantee to the operator that the vessel(s) will *attend* there at the appointed time or pay a fee.
2. *Embarkation*. Personnel, supplies, material, goods etc. are loaded aboard (*embarked*).
3. *Voyage*. This is the time between 'setting sail', when loading is complete, the cry 'all visitors ashore' is heard, when warps are cast off or the anchor weighed and 'completion of the

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stopped the ketch being piled up on the Black Midden rocks, the doom of many ships. The harbour was closed 20 minutes later.

<sup>339</sup> Tugs were needed to tow nine large sailing vessels with auxiliary engines at the end of a 1980s Tall Ships Race into Newcastle.

<sup>340</sup> Bateson, *A History of Northumberland*, vol. 1, p. 193; see Map C, p 70.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196. It is now called Newtown.

<sup>342</sup> See C. Bell, *Grace Darling: The Heroine of the Farne Islands* (London, 2003).

<sup>343</sup> The paragraphs comprising the section 'Sailing Transport' are a distillation of the works of C. M. Cipolla, *Guns and Sails* (London, 1965); G. Hutchinson, *Medieval Ships and Shipping; Archaeology of Medieval Britain* (London 1997); I. Friel, *The Good Ship* (London, 1995); N. A. M. Rodgers, *The Safeguard of the Sea* (London, 2004); and A. McGowan, *Tiller and Whipstaff: The Development of the Sailing Ship, 1400-1700* (London, 1981).

passage', when the vessel is tied up in harbour or the anchor is dropped and the Mate shouts 'passengers may disembark'. This period is known as the *voyage*.

4. *Disembarkation*. Unloading (the reverse of 2).
5. *The back haul*. The time taken for a vessel to return to its port of origin.
6. *Down time*. The time when the vessel is idle for a number of reasons; possibly it is stormbound, waiting in port for a cargo, undergoing repairs or arrested by a harbour master.

To illustrate with a fictional example; a modern day motor vessel 'Vixen' based at Poole is chartered to take 30 clay miners from Falmouth to Dover. *Attendance* is the time spent sailing from Poole to Falmouth (two days), *embarkation* is the time to load everyone and any goods to be transported (half a day), the *voyage* is the time sailing from Falmouth to Dover (3 days), *disembarkation* when everyone and all goods are put ashore at Dover (half a day), *down time* when a rest day is granted for the crew (one day) and *back haul* when the Vixen sails from Dover back to Poole (one day); eight days in all. The operator must make a profit on the eight days his vessel is in use and can do this either by charging a very large daily rate for the three days' *voyage* (*sea charter*) or by charging a lower rate for the full eight days (*package charter*).<sup>344</sup>

Unnecessary *down time* and *back haul* are the curses of chartering. To arrive at a port, there to find the cargo is not ready, to be gale bound, to be refused admission to a port or wharf, are all things which cause tension between operator and client. In the days of sail they were a nightmare. A voyage from Falmouth to Dover might take four days in an eighteenth century coasting vessel if there was a steady westerly wind. If there was a slight easterly wind, it might take three weeks; if there was an easterly gale it might take a lot longer. *Back haul* is also a cause of loss; if the 'Vixen' was unable to secure a charter for the voyage from Dover to Poole, she would make a loss because she was sailing without a charter, while if she waited for a charter, her operator would suffer a loss due to *down time*.

In the summer of 1462, Margaret and de Brézé were contemplating a voyage of over 500 nautical miles (see Map B), which involved threading the Straits of Dover (with both Dover and Calais [20 miles apart] in Yorkist hands) and sailing up the Yorkist-held east coast of England (passing the harbours of London, Yarmouth, Hull and Newcastle, all of which might hold Yorkist warships) before reaching Northumberland.<sup>345</sup> There would be no opportunity for entering harbour for repairs, obtaining supplies or sheltering from bad weather. The *voyage* for sailing ships (allowing an average speed as 2 knots, 50 miles a day)<sup>346</sup> would be expected to last at least eleven days and the ships would have to carry water and provisions for soldiers and crew *for well over that period*; a master of a sailing vessel with an uncertain voyage would insist on at least a 50% safety margin. A *sea charter* would therefore probably be assessed at seventeen days; a *package charter* might be six weeks.

Louis' change of mind seriously affected the expedition. A king had the right to arrest such trading vessels as he might need for a military expedition and require their owners and masters to obey his

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<sup>344</sup> The terms used in this section are those used on the East Coast of England (Thames Estuary) and vary dramatically elsewhere.

<sup>345</sup> See Map B, p. 69.

<sup>346</sup> Friel, *The Good Ship*, p. 85.



instructions, paying a (small) figure of compensation for their loss of earnings while the ships were in his employ. Therefore the king was not only the charterer but, unlike other people, he set the charter rates.<sup>347</sup> So, when Louis XI ceased supporting and funding the expedition to Northumberland, Margaret of Anjou or de Brézé who would have had to charter the fleet and they would have to do so at commercial rates, a complex and expensive exercise.

This complexity needs explaining. Margaret could either assemble the troops at a convenient port (she decided on Honfleur in Normandy) and pay for their lodging while they awaited transport or she could assemble the ships to be ready for the troops when they arrived and pay an *attendance* fee. Then she had to decide the destination of the fleet; a difficult matter, for Margaret could not know what the political situation would be when she reached Northumberland. When she was to set sail, her latest intelligence could not have been less than fourteen days old and the voyage might last three weeks. Here the loss of the direct support of Louis became nearly disastrous. A king could order a charter vessel to enter a war zone; a private citizen could not. To charter vessels to land troops on a hostile shore would be prohibitively expensive. Her destination must have been the one port she knew to be close to the scene of future combat and in friendly hands, Berwick upon Tweed. This undoubtedly was her objective, though she may have persuaded her charter captains to approach Newcastle upon Tyne on the way to see whether a fleet flying the flag of Lancaster would persuade the garrison there to defect (see Appendix 2).

Margaret's ships would certainly not have gone to Wrentham until Margaret knew for certain that Bamburgh was in Lancastrian hands. The reason for this may be seen by referring to Maps C to E. Wrentham was a tidal port and might be approached either through the Inner Farne passage (a dangerous thing to do unless in settled weather) or from the north in which case Berwick is as near to Honfleur as Wrentham. Margaret's most likely course of action therefore would have been to contract for a *sea charter* (Honfleur to Berwick) assuming that she would disembark at the latter port, leaving the vessels to seek another cargo for the *back haul* in Berwick, Eyemouth or even Leith.

So Margaret and de Brézé must have chartered a fleet to transport their troops from Honfleur to Berwick. The size of the fleet would obviously depend on the number of troops to be carried and on the length of the voyage. To transport troops from (say) Dover to Calais, a voyage lasting a maximum of ten hours would require limited space and no need of supplies (soldiers can carry a full mess tin and a water bottle to prevent hunger and thirst) but to travel for two to three weeks is a very different matter. Sleeping accommodation must be provided together with supplies of food and fuel to cook it and facilities for washing. Also, exercise opportunities are essential, if the troops are to be fit for action when they land. An idea of what this means in practice may be seen from one of the United Kingdom's tall ships. The Sail Training Vessel, *Queen Galadriel*,<sup>348</sup> is a large wooden sailing ketch (launched in 1937) of 23 metres long and 7 metres breadth, having 130 tons burthen. The ship's hold offers 110 square metres of deck space, and for a comparatively short voyage (Dover to Calais) it could accommodate 100 soldiers, each carrying their fighting equipment, their water bottle and an adequate supply of food (one square metre would be just adequate). For a voyage of 550 nautical miles the current master of Queen Galadriel and four former masters all agree that she

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<sup>347</sup> Rodger, *Safeguard*, pp. 128 – 129.

<sup>348</sup> *Queen Galadriel (ex Else)* is referred to in the foreword. I have spent much time discussing the logistics of transporting soldiers by sea in sailing ships with people familiar with the East Coast.

could carry a maximum of *thirty five* soldiers or *one third of the number for a short voyage*. Further, David Patient, a Master Shipwright at Maldon in Essex and one who has spent forty years working on large wooden vessels, estimates that 100 troops is a reasonable number for a short voyage but that forty would be a more reasonable number for a voyage of five hundred miles. Therefore, for a long voyage, 2.5 tons per person was the absolute minimum. To transport an army of 800 meant a fleet with a combined tonnage of 2000 tons; an army of 2000 a fleet of 5000 tons. What this actually means can be seen by looking at HMS Victory at Portsmouth; she has 2150 tons burthen and her crew complement was 850.<sup>349</sup>

Such sailing giants were unknown in the medieval world. The standard transport sailing vessel in northern waters during the fourteenth century was the *cog*, a heavy, single masted, square sailed vessel which was slow and could not easily sail to windward. The *cog* was therefore severely limited by wind direction; a contrary wind resulted either in the craft running off to leeward or to its anchoring for days or even weeks. The fifteenth century saw two dramatic changes. First, the more robust carvel construction (whereby a frame is constructed and planks laid edge to edge) replaced the lighter clinker built vessels, such as *cogs* (in a clinker built vessel the planks are overlaid one on another) and this process enabled larger vessels to be constructed. Secondly, experiments with sails led to these larger vessels having a much more efficient sail configuration; the single masted rig of the *cog* was replaced by the two masted *carrack* and then by the three masted vessel (originally called a *caravel* or *carvel* but later called a *great ship* or in the following century a *galleon*), which could sail to windward. The robust structure of the *carrack* or *carvel* enabled them to carry a greater load than the *cog*.

Oar power was not entirely given up however; the fifteenth century saw the development of the *balinger*, a vessel that could be used for transport and for war, driven either by sail or by oars. ‘The balinger’, writes Kemp, ‘is a small sea-going sailing vessel, without a forecastle and carrying either a square sail or a sail extended by a sprit on a single mast, used in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries mainly for coastal trade, but sometimes as transports carrying about 40 troops.’<sup>350</sup> Often carracks or great ships were used in conjunction with balingers.

The only reference to the type of Margaret’s ships is to *one carvel* and to ‘three *great ships* more’ that left Bamburgh to return to Berwick, getting wrecked on the way.<sup>351</sup> If this account is to be taken seriously, it indicates that at least part of de Brézé’s fleet was made up of the new three masted vessels just coming onto the charter market and highly suitable for the voyage from France to Berwick. Such ships might be expected to carry 100 for a longer voyage,<sup>352</sup> so these four might be expected to carry up to 400 troops for the voyage from Honfleur to Berwick.

Such vessels were the cream of the charter market and Margaret was ‘strapped for cash’. She would surely have used mainly older vessels (*cogs* and *carracks*, perhaps supported by *balingers*) as these would be much cheaper though they would be smaller, carrying 20 to 30 soldiers each.<sup>353</sup> Thus a

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<sup>349</sup> B. Lavery, *Ships of the Line*, vol. 1 (London, 1983), p. 175.

<sup>350</sup> *Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea*, ed. P. Kemp (Oxford, 1976), p. 55.

<sup>351</sup> See above.

<sup>352</sup> Rodgers, *Safeguard*, p. 144.

<sup>353</sup> Friel, *The Good Ship*, p. 202 gives the tonnage range for the 61 English ships available for charter in 1451. Only six were over 300 tons; 24 were under 100 tons.

fleet of 48 small ships with the four larger ones would, technically, have been able to carry 2,000 troops, an armada which would certainly excite the Yorkist authorities at Dover. 'There are Spanish ships at sea, I have counted 53,' wrote Tennyson of the action off the Azores in 1591, immortalised in his ballad *The Revenge*, the number 53 signifying a very large fleet.<sup>354</sup> A fleet of 52 ships would unquestionably have been intercepted; it would have had to pass within twelve miles of Dover and the watching eyes of the Yorkist fleet. 16 small ships (and four larger ones) with 800 troops might be expected to slip past the watching Yorkist unremarked. 800 troops (in 16 ships) were, I am convinced, the maximum force that could have accompanied Margaret to Scotland. The reports of the *Annales*, Waurin and Calmette,<sup>355</sup> and the affirmation of Goodman, Sadler and Weir, must surely be wrong.<sup>356</sup>

Before proceeding to analyse the effect of the above logistical exercise, an important question is raised by Gregory's account; why were there three or four great ships still at Warenmouth *three weeks* after they arrived? The masters of valuable great vessels would never have agreed to *down time* for so long a period and so de Brézé must have paid them to remain. It is hard to see why he would have done so, unless the earlier reference to Ogle and Manners, discussed on page 45, holds the key to a threat unremarked by all previous writers. It must be remembered that Lord Ogle was Warden of Norham Castle and Robert Manners held the Castle of Etal close by. Their affinities were only seven miles from the road connecting Berwick and Bamburgh and strong enough to make it dangerous for a small Lancastrian force to march the fourteen miles between Berwick to Bamburgh (an easy day's march). I can think of no reason for maintaining ships in Warenmouth at considerable cost other than a French fear of being trapped between Yorkists advancing from the south and the Norham force from the north. The Manners/Ogle force reported as 200 soldiers was probably much larger; reported as so small a force to emphasise the superiority of Yorkist Northumbrian soldiers over the French.

The original project that Margaret and Louis had envisaged was a full invasion of several thousand French troops to put heart into the Lancastrians of the north and establish a Scottish/French front with Lancastrian legitimacy. Whether the arrival of so large a French force on English soil would have done other than unite England to crush it is a moot point. However, when Philip of Burgundy refused to allow French troops on Burgundian soil, Louis withdrew his support for the project. He did allow de Brézé to recruit a mercenary force and transport it to Northumberland in ships for which de Brézé had to pay. What was intended as an invasion force had become a small but significant reinforcement to the Lancastrians in Northumberland.

Margaret (as already shown) anchored off Berwick, collected her husband and sailed for Warenmouth.<sup>357</sup> The 'great ships' unquestionably entered the port but many of the smaller vessels would have been able to *beach* or *anchor off* to unload and depart immediately.<sup>358</sup> Presumably

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<sup>354</sup> A. Tennyson, *The Revenge, a Ballad of the Fleet* (London, 1886), p. 5.

<sup>355</sup> *Annales*, p. 780; Waurin, vol. 5, p. 431; Calmette, *Louis XI, Jean II, et la révolution Catalane*, pp. 25 – 28.

<sup>356</sup> Goodman, p. 59; Sadler, *Towton*, p. 151; Weir, p. 311.

<sup>357</sup> Dunlop, *Life and Times*, p. 231.

<sup>358</sup> When a vessel *beaches* it goes aground at high water, waits until the tide goes out, unloads its passengers and cargo and floats off on the next tide (this system was used with amazingly successful results on Omaha Beach in June 1944 – see A. Beevor, *D – Day: the Battle for Normandy* [London, 2009], pp. 163 – 167.) The tidal range in Northumberland is between 3 metres and 5 metres so for a vessel to unload by beaching

worried by the troops of the Norham bloc, de Brézé retained his bigger ships and it is extremely likely that when Warwick came north, Ogle and Manners assembled their troops and moved towards Wrentham. The ships (now in bad weather or with an easterly wind) naturally attempted to leave before they were trapped and those troops, not remaining in the garrisoned castles, left in them but foundered on Holy Island where these troops were either killed or captured. Margaret and de Brézé escaped in a fishing boat but all the former's possessions (including her jewels) were lost, a very serious matter.

The importance of the exhaustive analysis above is to insist that the French force was probably very small and was unable to make a serious difference to the balance of power in Northumberland. Too small to challenge the local Yorkist forces by marching quickly through their territory, the French force would not be adequate to oppose the Nevilles of Middleham under the Earl of Warwick, let alone the huge force of Yorkist troops marching up from London, and would have fled by sea, not risking attack by a five hour march back to Berwick. The small French force was almost certainly halved by the wrecking off Holy Island. Those who remained made little impact on war.

The French presence had indeed been sufficient to cause the defection of the garrisons of the three castles and unquestionably some French troops became part of the garrisons. On the other hand, the French reinforcements did not prevent the fall of these castles; though they played a part in the rescue of the garrison of Alnwick and in the siege of Norham (see below). When the latter siege was lifted, the remainder of the French force sailed from Bamburgh for Burgundy with de Brézé and Margaret in 'four ballingers'.<sup>359</sup> As a balinger was supposed to carry not more than 40 men *or* supplies and, as they were carrying Margaret's party, it seems there can have been no more than 130 left.<sup>360</sup> When it is considered that Warwick advanced to relieve the castles of Northumberland with a reported 10,000, that Montagu is credited with 6,000 at Hexham, the French intervention must be described as puny. Their great advantage was the presence among them of the wonderful de Brézé, regarded as one of the best commanders of the age.

With Margaret's departure, the three garrisons at Dunstanburgh, Bamburgh and Alnwick were threatened by the Earl of Warwick while a vast army of Yorkists, led by Edward himself, approached from the south. The sieges of Dunstanburgh and Bamburgh were concluded on Christmas Day but the defenders of Alnwick held on. Suggestion is made that the garrison of Alnwick had a high proportion of Frenchmen in it.<sup>361</sup> This may have been the cause of Margaret of Anjou's preposterous offer of seven sherriffdoms to King James in a Lancastrian England and equally preposterous for an English Dukedom to be offered to the Earl of Angus if he joined with de Brézé and what was left of his Frenchmen to invade England and go to the aid of Alnwick,<sup>362</sup> with a force that, according to the Grafton Chronicle, numbered 13,000 men.<sup>363</sup> Alnwick was relieved on January 5<sup>th</sup> 1463 but a major

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implies one with a draft of no more than 3.5 metres. This suggests a small vessel such as a cog. If a vessel *anchors off* it discharges its passengers or goods in small boats. It is obvious that both beaching and anchoring off requires settled weather.

<sup>359</sup> Thornley, *England under the Yorkists*, p. 8.

<sup>360</sup> Friel, *The Good Ship*, pp. 113 – 114; Weir, p. 317 says, without supporting references, that there were a total of 200 people in the ballingers.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 266 – 267: Macdougall, *James III*, p. 60.

<sup>363</sup> *Grafton*, p. 4, but see Chapter 5, p. 72 of this dissertation.

action between the forces of Warwick and those of de Brézé and Angus was avoided by the latter, and the Scots and French returned to Scotland. A skeleton garrison was left in Alnwick and this surrendered on the following day.

In July 1463 a force of Scots, with a few French and Lancastrians, led by the King of Scotland, Mary of Gueldres, Margaret of Anjou and Pierre de Brézé, made an attempt to capture Norham Castle, which was commanded by Lord Ogle, whose troops had captured the French on Holy Island. Warwick, rushing up again from the south, 'with only the men of the marches to help him',<sup>364</sup> dispersed the besiegers. In other words, he used his position as Warden of the Marches to use the Marcher troops at his disposal; troops who had been specifically recruited to keep the Scots out of England. After this debacle, which was followed by a dramatic escape by Margaret and her son from a group of robbers,<sup>365</sup> she and de Brézé withdrew from Scotland.

In addition to these invasions, there are references to Scottish troops in garrisons; Warkworth, for example, telling that in November 1462 Margaret 'hade kepte certeyne castelles in Northumberland, as Awnwyk, Bambrught, Dunstonebrught, and als Werworthe, whiche they hade vytaled and stuffed bothe with Englichemenne, Frenschmenne and Scottesmenne'.<sup>366</sup> Who these English and French are is clear - Lancastrian diehards and French mercenaries - but who the Scots were is unstated. Assumptions must be made, but if there was no formal arrangement, as with de Brézé and the Earl of Angus, recruiting Scottish mercenaries and volunteers must have been difficult. However, there would undoubtedly have been idealists ready to join the Lancastrian cause, possibly inspired by the young and attractive Margaret of Anjou, in the same way that Black Jake was inspired after the siege of Norham.<sup>367</sup> There would certainly have been mercenaries for hire in Scotland as there were elsewhere in Europe (though Margaret of Anjou had no money to pay them). There must have been soldiers of fortune; soldiers and ex-soldiers who were and still are prepared to go to any trouble spot in the world at the prospect of action. How many there were is impossible to determine without analysis of the Lancastrian accounts in the National Archives.<sup>368</sup>

Scottish support has been described as lacklustre and it played virtually no part in war in the north, save one. Though the sieges of Carlisle and Norham achieved nothing, and the relief of Alnwick delayed the surrender of that castle by a few days at most, Scotland provided the Lancastrians with an unassailable base. The court of Henry VI could survive; he could rest his few adherents in peace and prepare for his next raid without too many time constraints. Scotland was a constant thorn in the Yorkist side. This was apparent to Edward and Warwick and, when Ralph Percy changed his coat for the last time and the Northumberland castles yet again flew the flag of Lancaster, Edward did not spend time and energy trying to recapture them but tried instead to conclude a peace with Scotland. This led to the campaign of 1464 and the Battle of Hedgley Moor in which, for the first time, English Lancastrians stood alone; their foreign troops had departed

The three incursions by the Scots into England are the sum total of their active military activities on behalf of the Lancastrians and reveal a lack of commitment on behalf of the Scots. In spite of having

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<sup>364</sup> Scofield, p. 300.

<sup>365</sup> See Appendix 1, pp. 90 – 92.

<sup>366</sup> Warkworth, p. 24.

<sup>367</sup> See Appendix 1, pp. 90 – 92.

<sup>368</sup> See Appendix 3, p. 95.

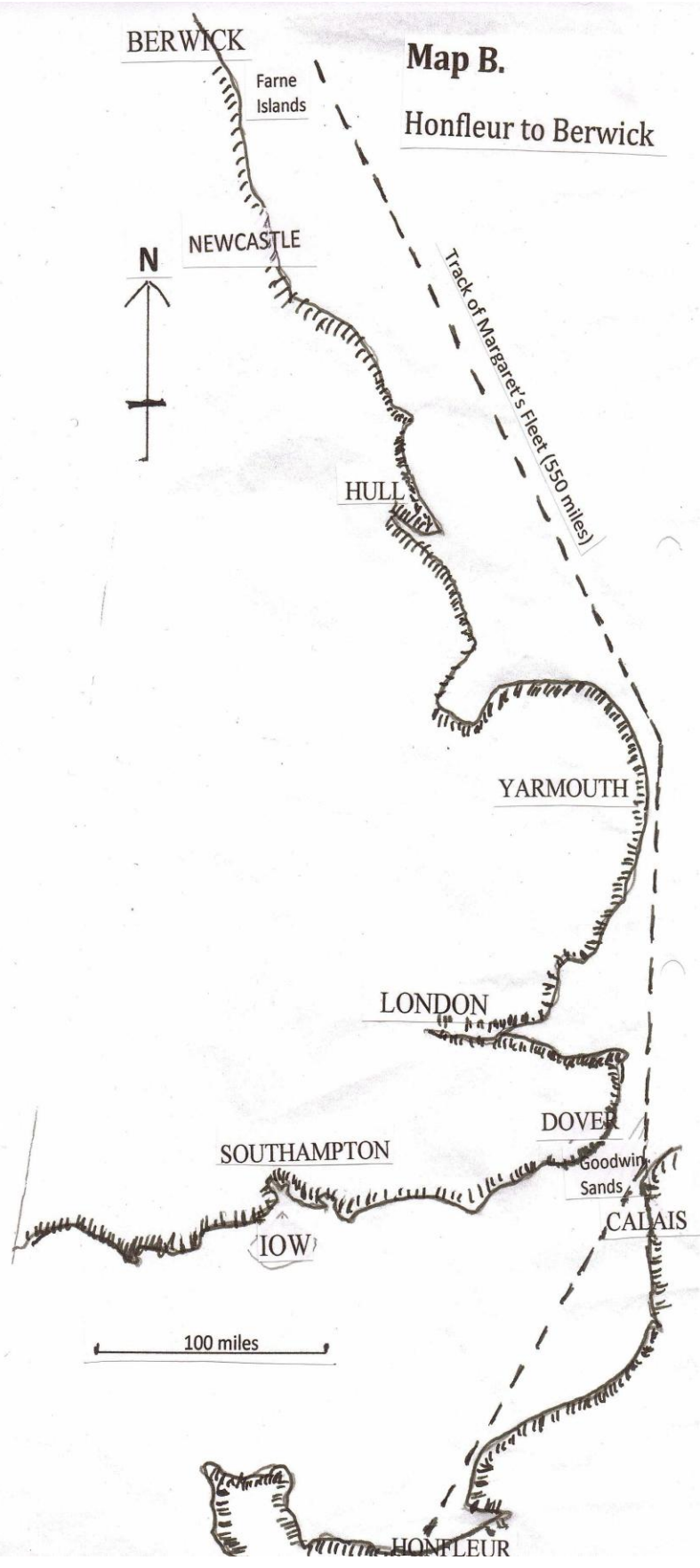
the Lancastrian English Queen and Prince of Wales in their company to give them legitimacy, they not only failed to capture Carlisle but allowed themselves to be chased away by a local force of Yorkists under Lord Montagu. With Edward and Warwick busy elsewhere, Montagu's force cannot have been a very large one and the Scots did not enter Northumberland at all. In the siege of Norham the Scots penetrated less than two or three miles into England and were then brushed aside by the Marcher Lords. Only in the relief of Alnwick was there penetration in depth and it was extremely limited, consisting of a quick dash to Alnwick, a brief standoff against Warwick's forces and (to de Brézé's disgust) an equally rapid retreat to Scottish soil.

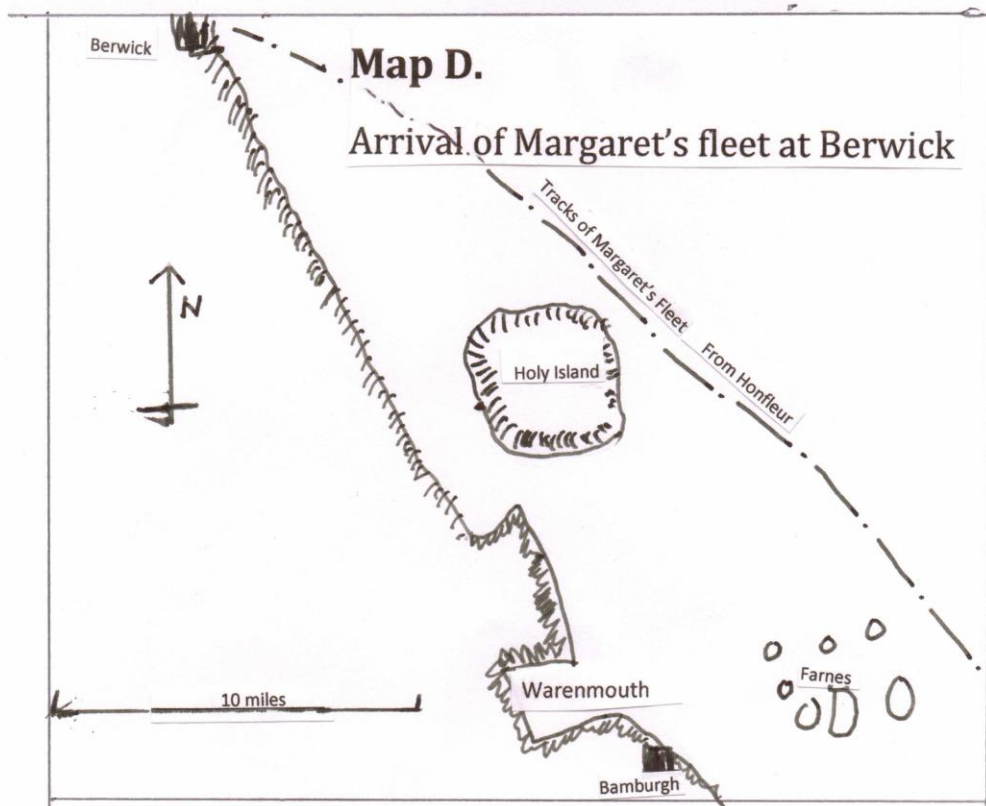
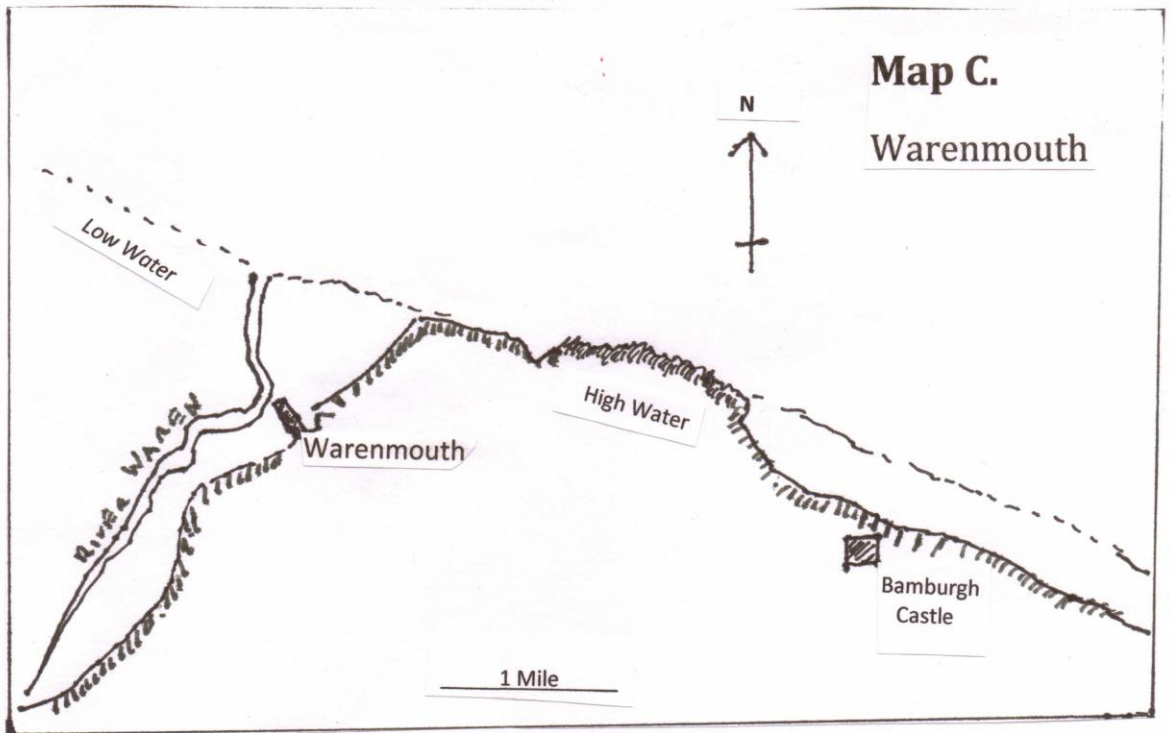
One is left with the unshakeable conclusion that the Scots did not have their hearts in the war. Obligated to honour their part of the bargain which gave them Berwick, they made three forays into English territory and each time left without attempt at serious engagement. Clearly the attempts on Norham and Carlisle had been small affairs, and the fact the Scots could be so easily dispersed by local Yorkist forces without a serious battle suggests that their forces had been fairly few. Angus led a much larger force to Alnwick, this much is clear. The lurking forces of Ogle and Manners left them alone and Warwick did not immediately attack the Scots, suggesting that his quite sizeable army was not sufficiently strong to guarantee an immediate victory. French and Burgundian Chroniclers are strong in their condemnation of the Earl of Angus, perhaps unjustly. He was dying and lived only three months more.<sup>369</sup> However it cannot be said that the French, who were unquestionably more committed, achieved any success. Welcomed at Warenmouth onto English soil, they marched to Alnwick (which fell at once) and then back to Bamburgh where they fled on the advance of the Earl of Warwick and those not in garrisons mostly surrendered.

The vacillating reaction of the Scottish and French governments had the effect of prolonging the war. Had the Earl of Angus invaded when the French arrived, a very different battle might have been fought in the south of Northumberland, particularly had the French come in greater numbers. The small size of the French force and the late and all too brief intervention of the Scots enabled the Lancastrians to continue, but prevented them from forcing a decisive victory.

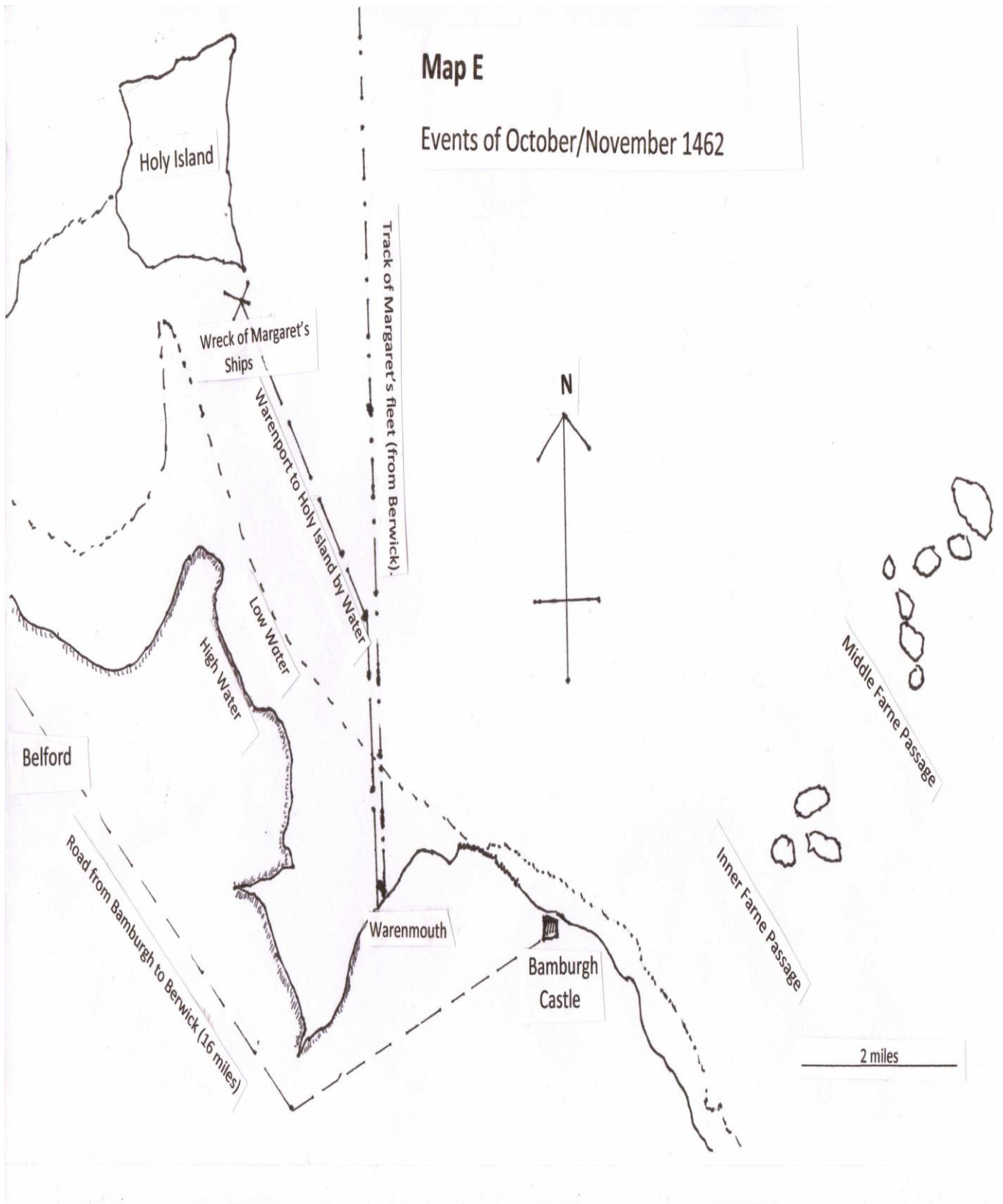
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<sup>369</sup> A. R. Borthwick, 'Douglas, George, fourth earl of Angus (c.1417–1463)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition, Jan. 2008, p. 1.









## Chapter 4: Why did it take so long to eliminate Lancastrian forces in Northumberland?

It has been established that the Lancastrian challenge in the north existed from March 1461 to July 1464 (three years and four months) and that military action essentially took place in an area covered by some of the present day county of Northumberland. It has also been established that Northumberland was not a Lancastrian county, and that there were certainly as many members of the Northumbrian gentry who favoured York rather than Lancaster if not more. Further, the Lancastrian forces could not have been large; indeed it is quite possible that only on the occasion that the Earl of Angus and Pierre de Brézé relieved Alnwick in 1463 were the Lancastrians to have a military force of over 1,000 men. Since it has been made apparent that in November 1462 Edward was able to bring a force of around 30,000 men to recapture the castles of Bamburgh, Dunstanburgh and Alnwick from his opponents, it was not his inability to conquer the county that restrained him from ending the Lancastrian military presence in Northumberland.<sup>370</sup>

Edward IV was a man of decision. Immediately after his victory at Mortimer Cross, he rushed to London to prevent the capital falling into Margaret's hands. He then turned north, pursued her to York and won the decisive Battle of Towton. Not long afterwards, when he was the matrimonial prize of all Europe, he made the personal decision to marry a Lancastrian widow some years his senior to the fury of the Earl of Warwick. To suggest that he dithered over Northumberland is to suggest something entirely against character. It is my conviction that he and his councillors were beset by the real concern of a Lancastrian/French/Scottish alliance that could possibly sweep him and his regime away or, at the very least, move the Anglo-Scottish border south to the Tyne. In order to investigate this claim, it is necessary to look again at the nature of the support that Henry received in Northumberland.

Although not as large in numbers as many historians have believed, it was the Lancastrians living in Northumberland who provided the core of Henry's support in county. As shown in the previous chapter, the numbers of French troops was small while Scottish intervention was occasional and brief. However, Northumberland was not unusual in having dissidents; all other counties in England during the Wars of the Roses had people who had similar views. Northumberland was unique in that for three years the Lancastrians of Northumberland provided the core support for Henry's rule, because Henry VI *was either actually present in the county or living just over its border in Scotland*. He was at Bamburgh in the autumn of 1462 and again for the first four months of 1464; indeed, according to Cadwallader Bates, he held court there and received the envoys of Charles the Bold and Louis XI.<sup>371</sup> Henry rode through the county with Lord Roos in 1461 on his way to confront the forces of the Bishop of Durham, and again in 1464 he rode from Bamburgh to Hexham. Many would have seen him; many more would have heard that he was there. His supporters could easily claim that he was truly a reigning king in Northumberland during those three years.

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<sup>370</sup> Paston Letters, vol. 4, p. 59.

<sup>371</sup> Bates, *History of Northumberland*, p. 200.

Edward IV was, by contrast, an absentee. He never during his whole reign went north of Newcastle. He left the raising of the siege of Carlisle in 1461 to Lord Montagu and, though he was on his way to Northumberland in November 1462, he contracted measles,<sup>372</sup> and got no further than Durham. 'A man well worthy to be king' he may well have been,<sup>373</sup> but in Northumberland he was invisible and the task of destroying the Lancastrian rule in the county was left to the Neville brothers, the Earl of Warwick and Lord Montagu. Where these two had adequate forces in the county, this rule ceased to have a reality but when they turned their back, it became all too evident. However, it must be clearly stated that there were two significant areas of Northumberland, the enclaves of Norham and of Newcastle upon Tyne, which remained Yorkist throughout the struggle in Northumberland (see Map A).

So Henry was there in the county, while Edward was not. But being there, what did Henry do? The answer is nothing. It seems clear that he exercised neither tactical command nor diplomatic acumen, for when the Lancastrians invaded Durham in 1461, Henry did not achieve anything and his force was turned back by his wife's former chaplain, Laurence Booth.<sup>374</sup> When, in October 1462, Margaret arrived off Scotland with a small fleet and an army under Sir Pierre de Brézé, Henry sailed with them to Bamburgh where he seems to have taken up residence, but he played no part in the ensuing campaign and escaped to Scotland at the first sign of trouble.<sup>375</sup> When peace was agreed between the Yorkists and the Scots in 1464, Henry settled in Bamburgh,<sup>376</sup> but left the security of its walls to join Somerset in his campaign in Tynedale in 1464 and was at Bywell Castle when Montagu's army hastened from Newcastle to annihilate Somerset's troops at Hexham; a battle which effectively ended any attempt at Lancastrian control in the county.<sup>377</sup>

This raises an interesting point. At the Battle of Ludford Bridge, the sight of Henry's royal standard flying above his army had resulted in widespread defections to the Lancastrian ranks.<sup>378</sup> At Towton, it did not fly at all; Henry absented himself from the field of combat. This may have had an adverse effect on his troops, the more so since Edward's banner was all too obvious. Henry's banner did fly at Brancepeth (to no avail) but not at Hexham. It must be asked; would Henry's visible presence on the field of Hexham have altered the outcome? We shall never know, for Henry remained in Bywell until the battle was over and then 'went on the run' for nearly a year before being captured and imprisoned in the Tower. He never did anything wrong, but then he hardly did anything at all, *other than the crucial fact that he was there*. The vacuum created by his lassitude was filled, in the main, by four leading Lancastrians, Margaret of Anjou, Sir Ralph Percy, Sir Pierre de Brézé and the Duke of Somerset.

## Lancastrian Leaders

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<sup>372</sup> *Chronicles of London*, p. 178.

<sup>373</sup> Weir, pp. 292 – 293.

<sup>374</sup> Scofield, p. 186.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>376</sup> According to Scofield, p. 309, Bishop Kennedy found Henry VI so frightened by the situation in Scotland that he brought him to St. Andrews for safety and then sent him to Bamburgh. See also Sadler, *Towton*, p. 154.

<sup>377</sup> Worcestre, p. 782; Gregory, pp. 224 – 226.

<sup>378</sup> Weir, pp. 228 – 229.

Margaret of Anjou reacted in a positive and far sighted way to the catastrophe of Towton. Realising that there was no hope of raising an army in Northumberland which could hope to combat the forces available to the Yorkists in the rest of England, unless and until the scattered Lancastrians could regroup, and also realising that before this could happen they would be overwhelmed, she sought foreign alliances. Hers was the master plan which, by the ceding of Berwick, secured Scottish support and Scottish troops, first to attack Carlisle in 1461, then to relieve Alnwick in January 1463 and finally to attack Norham in the summer of that year. Hers was the initiative and persistence which secured a treaty with Louis XI and consequently a force of French to reinvigorate Lancastrian military effort in October 1462. Hers was the indomitable will which refused to accept defeat when both France and Scotland agreed truces with the Yorkist state and led her to Flanders to try to get support from the Burgundian court. Her judgement in some of this was perhaps faulty for English people wanted neither Scots nor Frenchmen on their soil; the Scottish support was lacklustre and the French support small; her luck was out when Charles VII died and when half her French troops were lost at sea but she, and she alone, made the recognition of Henry as a reigning king in Northumberland a possibility; without her it would never have lasted three months. Her role as grand strategist filled the void of war leader created by her vacuous spouse.

Margaret's personal courage was beyond dispute; her willingness to travel long distances by sea and her handling of Black Jake bear testimony to that but, because she was a woman, *she was not supposed to lead her troops into battle.*<sup>379</sup> This was a pity: for there is evidence that she was a capable soldier and it is possible that she actually held a command in the Lancastrian forces at the second battle of St. Albans, for, according to Prospero di Camulio's second or third hand account, she was in action in the middle of the city of St. Albans.<sup>380</sup> A. H. Burne, a noted commentator on war in England, describes her strategy in the approach to the Second Battle of St. Albans as 'unusual, brilliant, and phenomenally successful'.<sup>381</sup> It was to lead to the Lancastrian victory over the Earl of Warwick, whose successes (notably at the battles of First St. Albans and Northampton) had done so much to advance the Yorkist cause. It is interesting to speculate as to what would have happened had she personally led the Lancastrian army at the Battle of Towton or military efforts in Northumberland in person. Since Margaret was unable to do either of these, the role of commander of the Lancastrian forces in the north was left to three others: Sir Ralph Percy, Sir Pierre de Brézé and Henry, Duke of Somerset. Each made a specific contribution.

Sir Ralph Percy's great contribution to the Lancastrian northern effort lay in his amazing ability to change sides (to the ultimate benefit of the Lancastrians) and so was able to provide the latter with the castles which were so crucial to the existence of Lancastrian rule. It was to the defence of these which he devoted his energy for the rest of his life. He was not at Towton, being left by his brother, the third Earl of Northumberland, to guard the important Northumbrian castle of Dunstanburgh,<sup>382</sup> which he surrendered in September 1461, continuing as its governor for the Yorkists.<sup>383</sup> In October 1462, when Margaret's ships were off Scotland, Ralph Percy changed his allegiance and declared for

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<sup>379</sup> For an account of the 'Black Jake' episode, see Appendix 1, pp. 90 – 92.

<sup>380</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 196; *Calendar of State Papers of Milan*, p. 54.

<sup>381</sup> Burne, *Battlefields*, p. 241.

<sup>382</sup> Rose, *Kings of the North*, pp. 522 – 523.

<sup>383</sup> Sadler, *War in the North*, p. 21.

Lancaster, though few Northumbrians were to join him.<sup>384</sup> When, however, a vast force under the Earl of Warwick appeared in Northumberland, Sir Ralph surrendered on terms and was allowed to be the Yorkist governor not only of Dunstanburgh but of Bamburgh as well.<sup>385</sup> In the following spring he again had an apparent change of heart and March saw both castles returned to the Lancastrians under his stewardship.<sup>386</sup> Yorkist strategy (as was shown in Chapter 3) now concentrated on switching the allegiance of the Scots and while they were negotiating, the Northumbrian castles were left (comparatively) in peace until April 1464, when Sir Ralph left his fortifications and joined with the Duke of Somerset in an attempt to disrupt a Yorkist – Scottish meeting and met his death at Hedgley Moor. For the duration of the war, he had by hook and by crook held Dunstanburgh, mostly for the House of Lancaster. Holinshed rather unkindly tells of Ralph Percy saying as he died, ‘I have saved the bird in my bosom’, meaning that he had kept his promise and oath made to King Henry: ‘forgetting (belike) that he in King Henry’s most necessity abandoned him and submitted him to King Edward.’<sup>387</sup> I believe Ralph Percy was much cleverer and more honourable than Holinshed allows.

Sir Pierre de Brézé (1410 – 1465) was described by Warkworth as ‘Sere Peris, le Brasylle, knight, of Fraunce, and the best warrer of alle that tyme,’<sup>388</sup> and in the *Annales* he is referred to as ‘the great warrior of Normandy’.<sup>389</sup> He had been a chief military commander and minister for Charles VII and had helped negotiate the marriage of Margaret of Anjou to Henry VI.<sup>390</sup> Louis XI, on his accession to the French throne, imprisoned him (almost certainly because he had been a faithful servant of his father) but released him when Louis agreed to support Margaret’s attempt to at a rising in Northumberland with French troops.<sup>391</sup> He landed at Bamburgh in October 1462 with troops, whose number is discussed in Chapter 3.

De Brézé made the most of his very limited resources. He used some of his troops to reinforce the garrisons of Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh and then captured and garrisoned the castle of Alnwick, leaving it ‘stuffed full of Frenchmen’.<sup>392</sup> His doing this gave great encouragement to the Northumbrian Lancastrians. The arrival of Warwick with a huge army from the south, however, led to the flight of Henry, Margaret and de Brézé from Bamburgh and the loss of many of his French troops on Holy Island.<sup>393</sup> He used the few troops he had left to claim a leadership role along with Scottish generals in two enterprises: the confrontation with Warwick’s army during the relief of the garrison of Alnwick in January 1463 and the attempt on Norham in July of that year. Both failed because of the poor performance of the Scots and a disgusted de Brézé left with Margaret for France.

De Brézé was a professional soldier and he attempted to give to the Lancastrian military something of his professionalism. Had he been able to persuade the Earl of Angus to fight the dispirited troops

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<sup>384</sup> Gillingham, p. 142.

<sup>385</sup> Scofield, p. 265

<sup>386</sup> Fabyan, p. 653.

<sup>387</sup> R. Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, etc.* vol. 3 (London, 1807), p. 666.

<sup>388</sup> Warkworth, p. 2.

<sup>389</sup> *Annales*, p. 417.

<sup>390</sup> J. A. Wagner, *Encyclopedia of the Wars of the Roses* (California, 2001), p. 37.

<sup>391</sup> See p. 62.

<sup>392</sup> Gregory, p. 218; Warkworth, p. 2.

<sup>393</sup> See p. 66.

of the Earl of Warwick outside Alnwick, he might have won a great victory and chased the Yorkists from the county. Betrayed by Louis XI in the summer of 1462, whose shift in policy left him to personally pay for his own troops, and unsupported by the Scottish commanders at Alnwick and Norham, he was unable to achieve any considerable success.

Henry, Duke of Somerset, was a commander of the Lancastrian forces at Wakefield, Second St. Albans and Towton, after which he joined with Henry VI and his entourage when they made their run for the Scottish border. He did not participate in either of the raids on Carlisle and Brancepeth, Margaret of Anjou using him as her emissary to Charles VII which resulted in his imprisonment by Louis XI, so it was not until mid-1462 that he was available for military service. He helped Ralph Percy defend Bamburgh but, when it fell, he submitted himself to the King Edward's grace and was a Yorkist when de Brézé and Angus relieved the siege of Alnwick. His spell as a courtier to Edward lasted less than a year and the end of 1463 saw him back in Bamburgh as a Lancastrian. Thus, he exercised little or no authority during the time when the Lancastrians had the support of Scottish or French troops, but took command when Margaret was gone, when France and Scotland had sued for peace and when Henry VI was in Bamburgh. Cometh the hour, cometh the man; Somerset's performance in the spring of 1464 was to be brilliant. He encouraged the defection of a number of castles in the valley of the Tyne and raided far and wide. According to Bateson, Somerset even occupied Norham village for a short time, which Ross wrongly reports as being Norham Castle.<sup>394</sup> However, he knew that he must win a significant victory if the Lancastrians were to achieve their aim, and in April he found an opportunity to fight a field engagement which he thought might result in success. Lord Montagu was leading troops to collect the Scottish peace delegation from Norham and escort them to Newcastle and Somerset confronted them at Hedgley Moor. Defeated there, he seems to have realised that it was now or never and, taking King Henry with him, led his troops to Tynedale where, at the battle of Hexham, he lost both his army and his life.

A moderately successful commander of large armies, the Duke of Somerset did not cavil at commanding smaller ones. A great-great-grandson of Edward III, Somerset had, in a moment of weakness, defected to York and been honoured and feted as a Yorkist, but he threw this preferment away to follow his true prince. His honourable reputation has for some been besmirched by this decision and by the further suggestion that he had quit Edward's service and became a double traitor because of his mistreatment at Northampton.<sup>395</sup> Hicks exhaustively examines and dismisses these suggestions: he points out that the real Lancastrian loyalty lay to the dynasty and not to the individual.<sup>396</sup> Lancaster and not Henry VI was his cause and York and not Edward IV his enemy. Hicks can find no reason for Somerset's return to Lancastrian allegiance other than real loyalty to the cause; his oath of loyalty had been to the dynasty founded by John of Gaunt and Henry IV, his great grandfather and great uncle respectively. Such loyalty is not traded for temporal advantage.<sup>397</sup> Having rejoined the Lancastrian forces, he breathed a spirit of excitement into his troops in much the

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<sup>394</sup> Bateson, *A History of Northumberland*, vol. 1, pp. 44 – 46; Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 59. Norham village was a small community living on the banks of the river Tweed, half a mile from the formidable fortress of Norham Castle.

<sup>395</sup> Scofield, p. 293.

<sup>396</sup> M. Hicks, 'Edward IV, the Duke of Somerset and Lancastrian Loyalty in the North', *Northern History* 20 (1984), p. 34.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

same way that General Nathan B. Forrest did into the American Confederacy during its dying days in 1865.<sup>398</sup> Like Forrest, Somerset formed flying columns which harassed and infuriated his much stronger opponent. Also like Forrest, Somerset knew he could not confront his opponents in pitch battle with any hope of success but, perversely, that, unless he did so, he must lose the war in the end.

So, of the five senior Lancastrian figures, Henry was present but did nothing, Margaret was engaged in foreign diplomacy for its defence and Percy, de Brézé and Somerset were defending Northumberland by military means, the first, by occupation of its castles, the second, for a short time, by the use of mercenary foreigners and the third, also for a short time, by organising guerrilla warfare. What is important about the activities of all of them is that, with the exception of the spring of 1461, *their strategy was local*. They were either trying to conquer (or reconquer) parts of Northumberland, or else hold on to those parts they already held. The agenda was being set by their Yorkist opponents, which was frequently passive. The most remarkable period was the year following April 1463, when although the Lancastrians had regained the castles of central Northumberland, the Yorkist made no serious attempt to recover them. It is time to review the Yorkist strategy.

## **Yorkist Leaders**

As already stated, Edward IV was never in Northumberland; the key Yorkist figures were the Earl of Warwick and his brother, Lord Montagu. Their base was in Middleham on the Durham/Yorkshire border and they visited Northumberland frequently. Montagu personally led the force which dispersed the besiegers of Carlisle in 1461 and Warwick, appointed Warden of both East and West March, commanded the forces 'mopping up' Lancastrian garrisons in the far north of England for the rest of 1461 which eliminated all Lancastrian centres. When in 1462, some centres (e.g. the castle of Alnwick) were recaptured; Montagu again came north while his brother sought accommodation with Mary of Gueldres. The arrival of Margaret of Anjou and Pierre de Brézé in October brought both brothers to Northumberland and Warwick, at Alnwick in January 1463, came close to losing a major battle. The lull of 1463 – 1464 saw the brothers absent from the county except for the lightning dash by Warwick to relieve Norham. Montagu's big moment came in 1464 when the decision to engage his forces at Hedgley Moor and Hexham gave him the opportunity to annihilate the last field force of the House of Lancaster (actions which led to him becoming Earl of Northumberland.) Lancastrian hopes really ended at Hexham but Sir Ralph Grey hung on in Bamburgh, forcing Warwick to use cannon to reduce it.

The crucial point to note is that the Neville brothers were only in Northumberland when *military* needs made their presence essential. With Warwick this is most understandable: he had the affairs of the rest of England to worry about, and he had the concerns of a possible French invasion of the south coast of England and the need to look to the defence of Calais. For Montagu it is less commendable: his 'fiefdom' seems increasingly to have been Northumberland and he was to be made Earl of Northumberland in 1464. It seems, nonetheless, that neither showed any interest in the civil administration of the county. The Nevilles were war lords, using the county and its inhabitants as 'extras' in a political and military battle to eliminate the Lancastrian military presence

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<sup>398</sup> B. S. Wills, *A Battle From The Start: The Life of Nathan Bedford Forrest* (London, 1992), pp. 37 – 84.

in the county. Northumberland was a pawn in a much larger game of chess and when it ended there was effectively peace in England until Warwick and Montagu fell out with Edward IV and the Wars of the Roses entered a new phase. During the war in Northumberland, the Nevilles theoretically had at their disposal the trappings of a military state which must be assessed.

Edward IV and the Yorkists took over the state which had produced the military machine that had supported Henry V and the Duke of Bedford in the post-Agincourt occupation of France. Recruitment of troops, the supply of weapons, the siege trains, the supply wagons, the engineers and the command structure were as sophisticated as any in Europe. When Margaret and de Brézé invaded Northumberland in October 1462, it was this military machine which dispatched a major Yorkist force northwards to drive them back. The siege train came north by water, and the main force marched north from London and the Midlands with all their wagons, supplies and ancillaries marching behind them.<sup>399</sup> This was amazingly expensive, the commandeering of ships, the recruiting of soldiers and draft animals, the cost of quartering and feeding them; all put an immense strain on the exchequer. In 1463, after Grey's treacherous surrender of Alnwick to Henry VI, parliament offered Edward IV a grant of aid worth £37,000 to combat the rebels of the north 'for the defence of the realm against "you and our mortal enemies."' <sup>400</sup> To defeat Henry VI was amazingly expensive. Ross says that, '[for Edward] to mount a major military operation in 1463 against the rebel castles was almost certainly far beyond his resources' and also that 'in the first twenty seven months of his reign, Edward had subsisted largely on loans.'<sup>401</sup> In other words, the war in Northumberland was quite possibly prolonged because Edward could not afford to pay for the troops to end it.

### **Lancastrian Military Forces**

The Lancastrians had neither such a machine nor could they afford one. While Edward was seeking loans from the merchants in London and fining citizens for misdemeanours to obtain funds, the Lancastrians royal family were dependent on charity. 114 of the Lancastrian nobility and gentry were attainted in 1461, removing a potential source of finance for Henry and Margaret.<sup>402</sup> 'Margaret and the Prince of Wales were still in Edinburgh, (Henry was at Kirkcudbright), and they were all reduced to such poverty that the wolf was kept from the door only by the charity of Scotland's rulers and by such help as Sir John Fortescue and a few other faithful friends, who were almost as destitute as they were, could give them'.<sup>403</sup> The gift of the Duke of Brittany and the loan of Louis XI in 1462 must have helped, but the loss of Margaret's goods off Holy Island almost certainly included what was left of this windfall. Margaret was indeed so destitute that she was reduced to borrowing a groat from a Scottish archer to make an offering on the feast day of St. Margaret, her patron saint.<sup>404</sup> De Brézé had to pay the French troops that he led in the invasion of 1462 out of his own pocket.<sup>405</sup> When Margaret left England for Flanders in 1463, she took with her de Brézé, 'to whom she was now indebted for the very bread she ate.'<sup>406</sup> With such poverty, Henry and Margaret could not afford anything like an army. Like Lord George Murray recruiting on the eve of Culloden, all they could do

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<sup>399</sup> Worcestre, p. 780; Scofield, p. 262.

<sup>400</sup> Parl. Rolls Ed IV, pp. 497 – 498; Scofield, p. 288.

<sup>401</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 55.

<sup>402</sup> Hicks, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 177.

<sup>403</sup> Scofield, p. 207; Waurin, vol. 5, pp. 169 – 170.

<sup>404</sup> Weir, p. 317.

<sup>405</sup> Chastellain, vol. 4, pp. 279 – 280.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 279 – 280.



was to appeal to the patriotism of their countrymen and promise, if the House of Lancaster was victorious, to pay in full.<sup>407</sup> Only the most patriotic or optimistic soldiers joined up under these circumstances.

So the Lancastrians were limited to two activities as they sought to retain their military hold on parts of Northumberland, which may be described as offensive and defensive. The latter was the speciality of Sir Ralph Percy. Holding a castle in those days, before artillery became efficient and petards and mortars were invented, required comparatively few troops. An inspection of Bamburgh Castle today is to realise that – unless it was battered by cannon – it was impregnable if defended by a few determined men. A small garrison had the advantage that it had fewer mouths to feed and hence took longer to ‘starve out’. The Northumbrian garrisons certainly involved considerably less than 1,000 troops.<sup>408</sup> Lancastrian offensive action lay in the rapid movement of light armed troops. The longest Lancastrian march undertaken during the war in the north was from the border to Brancepeth, sixty miles, three days’ march. At the most it might have involved a few hundred men, most of them marching through home territory. They had no need of any logistical support. They would provide their own weapons and carry them, they had no supply wagons or siege engines, and they would carry or wear what they needed and live off the land. *They were light flying columns* and their devastation was such that Sir George Lumley, who was Sheriff of Northumberland from November 1461 to November 1463, was exempt from paying all fines, issues, reliefs etc. because of rebel activity.<sup>409</sup>

Such columns could not be expected to lay siege to a town or castle and indeed there is no evidence that they ever did so; the castles they captured were by infiltration or by treachery.<sup>410</sup> In 1461/2 Sir William Tailboys captured the castle of Alnwick and Lord Dacre captured the castle of Naworth, both almost certainly by infiltration. In both 1462 and 1463, Sir Ralph Percy treacherously ‘changed his coat’ and turned the castles of Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh, held for York, to ones held for Lancaster, without an arrow being shot. It seems as though the capture of Alnwick in 1462 by de Brézé was also a bloodless occasion. Further, in 1463, Sir Ralph Grey retook Alnwick castle for Lancaster by changing his coat, arresting the governor and becoming governor himself in the name and service of Henry VI. Castles seem to have fallen to the Lancastrians like ripe plums. The reverse, incidentally, was not true. As already seen, it took months of siege for the Yorkists to recapture Alnwick and Naworth; vast supplies of siege equipment and over 10,000 men were sent north by Edward IV to recapture Bamburgh, Dunstanburgh and Alnwick in the closing months of 1462, an enterprise so costly that when Percy (again) and Grey changed sides in the following year, the Yorkists spent no energy on recapturing these castles but devoted their energy to diplomacy and so succeeded in ending Scottish support for Henry IV.

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<sup>407</sup> K. Thomasson and F. Buist, *Battles of the '45* (London, 1962), pp. 131 – 134.

<sup>408</sup> See Chapter 1 and Appendix 3, p. 95.

<sup>409</sup> Scofield, p. 204. Her source is ‘A Warrant under Signet’ (The National Archives, Ref. C81/1377) dated 4<sup>th</sup> June 1464. This is confirmed by Cal. Pat., p. 332.

<sup>410</sup> Infiltration suggests a mingling of the attacking forces with the defending forces and so gaining control of the castle under attack. Buchan’s description of the capture of Pontefract in 1648 (J. Buchan, *Oliver Cromwell* [London, 1941], p. 299) involves cavaliers ‘disguised as drovers’ infiltrating the castle. But see below.

The impression that the Lancastrians merely had to appear before a castle for it to surrender is perhaps over simplistic, as examination of a case 200 years later reveals. In 1648, during the Second Civil War, 'Captain John Morrice [a former Royalist] was involved in the subversion of a parliamentary stronghold from within'.<sup>411</sup> He insinuated himself into the good favour of the governor of Pontefract Castle and succeeded in executing a coup on June 3<sup>rd</sup><sup>412</sup> which resulted in the castle becoming a Royalist stronghold. As such it held out until March 1649,<sup>413</sup> besieged by (among others) Oliver Cromwell, and proved a major thorn in the side of Parliament. Pontefract did *not* fall into Royalist hands like a ripe plum; it fell as a result of a very cunning and carefully worked out coup. The same was probably partly true of Sir Ralph Grey's capture of Alnwick in 1463 and was perhaps true of Sir William Tailboys' capture of Alnwick in 1461. Sir Ralph Percy twice subverted a garrison entrusted to him. However, local sympathy was clearly with him, as it was with Morrice, Grey and Tailboys, a sympathy which must have made their coups possible.

This point must not be lost. Page 17 showed clearly that the Northumbrians would not rise in support of their Lancastrian sovereign. The above shows however that they were sympathetic to him. They might not don their armour and take up their weapons but they were, apparently, willing to assist those who did by silent support and by not informing the Yorkist authorities of what their Lancastrian friends were up to. Like the farming communities in the west of Ireland in the early days of the Free State, tacit support did not make ultimate defeat for the IRA less likely, it merely insured that it took a long time.

From what has been said so far, it seems clear that here was no Lancastrian military organisation in Northumberland. The commanders, Percy, de Brézé and Somerset may have cooperated with one another and with Scottish leaders, but there was no structure of command; knights seem to have gone where they thought they were needed. It is time to find out, if possible, how many troops the Lancastrians actually had.

It has been suggested so far in this dissertation that the number of Lancastrian troops in the north were very few, and it is reasonable to ask what evidence there is to sustain or refute this suggestion. First, while accepting that accuracy about the numbers of people who actually lived in Northumberland in 1460 is impossible, intelligent deduction will arrive at an estimate. The English poll tax returns of 1377 indicate 1.4 million tax payers in England, suggesting that the total population of the entire country was about three million. The repeated outbreaks of the plague obviously seriously diminished this figure and Goodman's estimate is that England had a population of a little over two million by 1450.<sup>414</sup> The same poll tax figures gave 16,800 tax payers in Northumberland, suggesting a population of perhaps 35,000 in 1377 and, by extrapolation, 25,000 in 1450.<sup>415</sup> Of these, it is estimated that between 3,500 and 5,000 lived in Newcastle upon Tyne.<sup>416</sup> Assuming the accuracy of Burne's formula that one seventh of a population is represented by men of

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<sup>411</sup> R. Ashton, *Counter-revolution: The Second Civil War and its Origins, 1646 – 8* (Yale, 1994), p. 405.

<sup>412</sup> B. Donagan, *War in England: 1642 – 1649* (Oxford, 2008) p. 316.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 396.

<sup>414</sup> Goodman, *History*, p. 21.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>416</sup> Pollard, *North-Eastern England*, p. 88; J. C. Russell, *British Medieval Population* (Albuquerque, 1948), p. 142.

fighting age,<sup>417</sup> this suggests that the maximum muster of potential troops, available to Yorkists and Lancastrians from the county of Northumberland *before* the Battle of Towton, must have been less than 3,000.

However Towton must surely have heavily reduced this number, for its casualties were massive. A.H. Burne, writing in 1950, considers the number participating were 76,000 (40,000 Lancastrians, 36,000 Yorkists).<sup>418</sup> Sadler, writing much more recently, assessed it as between 55,000 and 65,000,<sup>419</sup> a figure which may be compared with those at Flodden 1513 (68,000),<sup>420</sup> and Marston Moor 1644 (45,000),<sup>421</sup> the latter figure being more accurately compiled because the muster rolls *are* extant.<sup>422</sup> The Lancastrians fought at Towton in three 'battles' [divisions], each over ten thousand strong, and as their van was led by the Earl of Northumberland,<sup>423</sup> this must have included his affinity. As the force engaged in the battle from the very beginning and so having farthest to run when the rout developed, casualties in this force must have been particularly high. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that a substantial number of the Percy followers must have perished on Towton Moor.

At the Battle of Wakefield, supporters of Henry VI killed the father and brother of the future Edward IV, partly as a reprisal for the murder of the 2nd Earl of Northumberland at the First Battle of St. Albans. The Percies, like other Lancastrians nobles, gathered at York in the spring of 1461, can have had no doubt whatsoever of their fate if Edward won the forthcoming battle. Edward's progress north was monitored and the time of his arrival predictable. It is entirely reasonable to assume that the Percies would have brought up all the available troops of their affinity and this must have included their Northumbrians. This is supported by the facts shown in Table 2 (pages 37 and 38) which shows that eight members of the peerage or senior gentry of Northumberland died in the battle. It is impossible to more than estimate, but if there were about 3,000 troops in Northumberland in 1460, many of them would have been summoned to York in 1461 and killed, wounded or imprisoned at or after Towton. The number of Northumbrians available to fight for King Henry after Towton would surely have been seriously reduced. Since it has already been demonstrated in this dissertation that Newcastle was committed to the House of York, that a substantial number of Northumbrians were Yorkists and that many 'stayed at home', *there cannot have been more than 1,000 soldiers available to the Lancastrians in the summer of 1461.*

In estimating the numbers involved in military actions, Scofield did much research with Warrants under Signet and Warrants for Issue and has elucidated that in September 1461 the garrison at Tynemouth was reduced to twenty-four men under Sir George Lumley and at the same time the garrison of Newcastle had 120 men under his father, Lord Lumley.<sup>424</sup> In order to obtain a fuller picture, chronicles and foreign correspondence offer the main hope of information, but the facts they purport to provide vary so widely and are so sparse that they are of little use. The numbers they do supply are set out below.

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<sup>417</sup> Burne, *Battlefields*, p. 105.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>419</sup> Sadler, *Towton*, p. 78.

<sup>420</sup> D. J. Sadler and R. Serdiville, *The Battle of Flodden 1513* (Stroud, 2011), p. 228.

<sup>421</sup> P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War* (London, 1974), p. 193.

<sup>422</sup> See P. Young, *Marston Moor; the Campaign and the Battle* (Kineton, 1970), appendix, pp. 213 – 229.

<sup>423</sup> Sadler, *Towton*, p. 99.

<sup>424</sup> Scofield, p. 204.

*Annales*: 20,000 Yorkists are said to have been besieging 720 Lancastrians in the Castles of Alnwick, Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh in November 1462. Alnwick was relieved by 20,000 Scots in January 1462 (p. 417).

*Worcestre*: Margaret and de Brézé brought 2,000 troops with them to Scotland in 1462.<sup>425</sup> Montagu is said to have had 4,000 men at the Battle of Hexham, 1464 (p. 784).

*Hall's Chronicle*: Margaret is said to have had a crew of 500 on her invasion voyage (p. 258) but of this crew (apparently), 500 were killed and 400 taken prisoner (p. 259).

*Chronicles of London*: 400 Frenchmen are said to have been captured on Holy Island (pp. 177 – 178).

*The New Chronicles of England and France* (Fabyan): 400 Frenchmen are said to have been captured on Holy Island (p. 657).

*Grafton*: Margaret is said to have obtained a crew of 500, 'which was but a small number for her purpose but more than she and Henry could afford' (p. 2). Grafton inaccurately puts the relief of Alnwick *after* the Battle of Hexham but says that there were 13,000 Scots involved. (p. 4).

*Gregory*: This Chronicle says that 406 French were captured on Holy Island, (p. 213); that 24,000 Scots besieged Norham in 1463 (p. 217), that 80 spearmen tried to ambush Montagu on his way to Norham, and that Somerset and Percy had 5,000 men on Hedgley Moor (p. 230).

*John Hardyng*: He says that Margaret brought 4,000 French troops with her (p. 497).

*Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*: The Short English Chronicle says Margaret brought 6,000 French troops with her (p. 497).

*Warkworth*: Warkworth says that 20,000 Scots and French relieved Alnwick in January 1463 (p. 2) and that Montagu commanded 10,000 at Hexham (p. 4).

*Waurin*, Vol. 5: This French source says that Margaret and de Breze brought 2,000 French troops with them (p. 431).

From the above it may be posited that the most consistently recorded number of troops was that of the French troops captured on Holy Island in November 1462; Hall and the Chronicle of London say they numbered 400 and Gregory 406. The best documented event was the French 'invasion' of October 1462, which is referred to by eight chroniclers, but they, with complete inconsistency, give the number of French arriving as somewhere between 6,000 (Hall) and 500 (Grafton). There are four accounts of the numbers of Scottish troops relieving Alnwick; Gregory suggests 24,000, Warkworth and the *Annales* 20,000 and Grafton 13,000. Yorkist numbers for the Battle of Hexham are given as 10,000 (Warkworth) and 4,000 (Worcestre). Gregory gives the Lancastrians a force of 5,000 men at Hedgley Moor,<sup>426</sup> while the *Annales* suggests a force of over 20,000 Yorkists besieging 720 Lancastrians in the three Northumbrian castles.

However, what is crystal clear is that the figures are totally unreliable and tell us next to nothing about the number of Lancastrian forces in Northumberland. It has been argued in Chapter 3 that the figure of 400 Frenchmen captured on Holy Island may well be accurate *but only because it can be justified by logistical review*. The figure is quite likely. This argument cannot be said to hold true of the number of Scots at the Battle of Alnwick in January 1463. All that can be known is that the Scottish force was sufficiently large to challenge the wet, cold and dispirited Yorkist force besieging the castle at the time, the size of which force is unknown. The Yorkist force could easily have numbered less than 5,000, a force which could be challenged by 3,000 fresh troops from Scotland.

<sup>425</sup> *Letters and Papers illustrative of the wars of the English in France during the reign of Henry the Sixth, king of England*, ed. J. Stevenson, vol. 2 (London, 1864), p. 780.

<sup>426</sup> See Chapter 1.

On the other hand, the Yorkists may have numbered more than 10,000 (see above) and it is therefore possible that Grafton's figure of 13,000 Scots is plausible. Such speculation, while entertaining, has no place in a serious dissertation.

The two certain constraints on the number of Lancastrians participating in the northern war are the number of men of fighting age available and the amount of money available to the Lancastrian leaders. It was established above that though there may have been a potential 1,000 men available to the Lancastrians, it does not mean that their leaders could afford to pay them and since many of the former would have been poor farmers, they could not serve without pay. What was said by Grafton of the French invasion force of 1462 is surely true of enterprises in Northumberland; Margaret is said to have obtained a crew of 500, 'which was but a small number for her purpose but more than she and Henry could afford'.<sup>427</sup> So, for example, to posit 5,000 Lancastrians on Hedgley Moor must be wildly inaccurate. The maximum force of Northumbrians that the Lancastrians could possibly have put in the field at any one time cannot have exceeded 500. The size of the French force that arrived in 1462 has been assessed in Chapter 4; the number of Scots at Alnwick has been discussed earlier in this chapter.

What follows is all that I believe can actually be said about the war with a degree of accuracy.

- a. April 1461: Henry VI and his entourage complete their flight from Towton and enter Scotland where a deal is signed and Berwick surrendered to the Scots in exchange for troops and safe lodging. A Scottish force bolstered by a (very) few Lancastrians besiege Carlisle and are driven off by Lord Montagu. This in no way disturbs the life of the people of Northumberland.
- b. May 1461: A Lancastrian flying column is formed under Lord Roos and Henry himself and invades the palatinate of Durham. It fights no battle and retreats before a scratch force of parishioners assembled on the orders of the Bishop of Durham.
- c. June – October 1461. Yorkist forces conquer the whole of Northumberland, garrisoning Alnwick and accepting Ralph Percy as governor of Dunstanburgh. There is no report of military action; it seems as though the Lancastrian leadership retreated to the border.
- d. December 1461 – May 1462. Lord Dacre captures Naworth and Sir William Tailboys captures Alnwick, almost certainly by infiltration.
- e. July 1462: Naworth and Alnwick are recaptured after a time of siege, and there is no reported loss of life.
- f. October 1462. Bamburgh accepts Henry's authority; Ralph Percy also declares for Lancaster and makes Dunstanburgh a Lancastrian castle. Margaret of Anjou, Pierre de Brézé, with Henry VI, land at Bamburgh with a force in excess of 500 French troops. Pierre de Brézé quickly captures Alnwick and the central area of Northumberland comes under Lancastrian dominance.
- g. November 1462: A large Yorkist force led by the Earl of Warwick comes north. The disaster off Holy Island deprives the Lancastrians of about half their French troops and further enterprise by the Lancastrians is prevented. Such French troops as are left bolster the three

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<sup>427</sup> Cited above.

garrisons or are with de Brézé in Scotland. There is no possibility of a French/Lancastrian flying column.

- h. December 1462: Dunstanburgh and Bamburgh surrender to the Yorkists and the now Yorkist Sir Ralph Percy becomes their governor.
- i. January 1463: A large Scottish force (several thousand men) under the Earl of Angus and de Brézé relieve Alnwick and rescue the garrison (which has a proportion of French soldiers) but there is no battle between the Scottish force and that of the Earl of Warwick. Alnwick falls and again Lancastrian power enters obscurity.
- j. May 1463: Sir Ralph again changes sides, carrying Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh over to the authority of Henry VI. Sir Ralph Grey takes charge of a now Lancastrian Alnwick and for a year the three castles are left in comparative peace. The Yorkists recognise that they can never end Lancastrian military activity while the Scots support it and so concentrate on a diplomatic initiative.
- k. July 1463: A Scottish Lancastrian force led by Queen Margaret, Queen Mary of Gueldres and Pierre de Brézé besieges Norham Castle for 18 days before being dispersed by the Earl of Warwick. There is no record of the numbers involved. Margaret and de Brézé leave England.
- l. December 1463 – March 1464. The Duke of Somerset joins the garrisons and starts to ferment rebellion throughout Northumberland and as far south as Tynedale; peace treaties are prepared for signature by the Yorkists and the French and Scottish governments.
- m. April 1464: Battle of Hedgley Moor, where probably no more than 500 Lancastrians are involved; Sir Ralph Percy is slain and the small Lancastrian force disperses.
- n. May 1464: Battle of Hexham, where probably no more than 500 Lancastrians are involved. This is the final defeat of the Lancastrians; the Duke of Somerset, Lord Roos and Sir William Tailboys are executed, and Henry VI takes to flight.
- o. June 1464: Bamburgh, the last Lancastrian stronghold falls; Sir Ralph Grey is executed. The struggle for control of Northumberland is at an end.

It is perfectly clear from the above that both Lancastrians and Yorkists regarded control of England's most northern county as a political pawn in a mighty game of chess, the prize for the victor being the sovereignty of England. It is also apparent that the players in this game were neither Henry VI nor Edward IV; they left the action to Margaret of Anjou, Ralph Percy, Pierre de Brézé, Henry, Duke of Somerset, the Earl of Warwick and Lord Montagu. During this period there were two chances of a serious Lancastrian success, the arrival of the French in 1462 and the relief of Alnwick in January 1463, and it cannot be sufficiently stressed that the former opportunity was voided by a failure of the Lancastrian gentry to take up arms. The Lancastrians never assembled sufficient forces to guarantee a significant victory and when Edward did have an overwhelming number of troops including a large siege train, he did not use them to destroy the Lancastrians but preferred to allow a weak and only temporary cease fire.

# Conclusion

The struggle in Northumberland was dictated by circumstance. The unexpected annihilation of the Lancastrian army at Towton led to Henry and Margaret, with a few nobles and troops, riding headlong for the border and seeking safety in Scotland. Once there, this small group had to decide what they were to do next (the Scots required it), and it seems clear they had four options:

1. They could ask to establish a court in exile in Scotland.
2. They could seek to establish a court in exile in France, waiting for the Yorkist regime to fragment and to take advantage of its disintegration.
3. They could seek accommodation with the Yorkists, effectively accepting the situation and agreeing to live quietly in England in exchange for the lifting of attainder and the abandoning of Henry's claim to the throne.
4. They could fight on, by clinging to as much English soil as they could hold.

There was in reality only one choice and that was 4. The Scots would probably not have allowed the first option, for to do so meant that they would have to refuse to recognise the legitimacy of Edward IV and his regime. To go to France was effectively to abandon their followers and to rely heavily on French politics. There was no possibility that Henry and Margaret would abandon their sovereignty. Their only choice was to stay and fight on English soil, and to do this they required a base safe from capture. Northumberland was the soil and Scotland the base, if the Scots would allow the latter. If it is true that Kennedy was the power in Scotland and if it was true that he held rigidly to the Lancastrian sovereignty, the Scots might have not have required a *quid pro quo*, but this is unlikely. Berwick was not just the price of Scottish troops *but the price of a Scottish/Lancastrian alliance*. The surrender of Berwick, which had to be done quickly while the Warden of Berwick would still accept Henry's authority, followed inevitably from the decision to fight on.

But also inevitable was the response of the people of North Northumberland to this decision. Chapter 1 pointed out that the large number of pele towers and fortified homes in this area were established specifically to withstand Scottish raids. Further, they were not established to any pattern but on individual enterprise, each lord or squire making his own arrangements for the defence of his own property. Thus, though a warlike people, the north Northumbrians were equipped to fight one foe and that foe was the Scots. The raising of the siege of Norham in 1463 was an example of the reaction of the English of the far north. They could not be expected actively to support a sovereign who was in league with what they saw as the enemy. With such an attitude they would naturally want to offer support to Lord Ogle and Sir Robert Manners.

Henry and Margaret had to look for support elsewhere and found it a difficult search. Yorkist forces were active in Cumberland and before Edward IV had left York after Towton, senior Lancastrian figures such as the Earl of Wiltshire and Doctor John Morton (a future Archbishop of Canterbury) were captured at Cockermouth.<sup>428</sup> A subsequent attempt to capture Carlisle by a Lancastrian

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<sup>428</sup> Gregory, pp. 217 – 218; Scofield, p. 175.

Scottish force failed (see page 9). At the same time a Lancastrian force led by Henry VI in person failed to gain a foothold south of the Tyne. Newcastle held firmly to the Yorkist regime and some of the nobility in the area of Morpeth did the same. The Lancastrians never held more than part of Northumberland, mainly in the area of the three castles, Bamburgh, Dunstanburgh and Alnwick. There was never a potential for them to raise more than 1,000 troops.

If local troops were not available and if, as was clear from the attempt on Carlisle, the Scots did not have their hearts in military support from the Lancastrians, troops had to come from somewhere else. Attempts at insurrection elsewhere in England were taking place; in early 1462 a plot was unearthed in which the Earl of Oxford and four confederates had been complicit in an attempt to murder Edward IV and were executed.<sup>429</sup> There was a determined effort to continue to fly the Lancastrian flag at and around Harlech in Wales, but this led to no widespread disturbance.<sup>430</sup> Margaret made the only viable choice; troops from the continent must come and since Burgundy and France were at each other's throats and Burgundy was pro-Yorkist, the only hope was France. Lancastrian hopes depended on French troops. The story of how she obtained them is part of Chapter 3.

## Yorkist Fears

All of this seems clear now, but whether it seemed as clear to Edward IV and the Earl of Warwick in 1461 is a different matter. For better or worse Henry VI and his wife Margaret were living in Scotland during most of the time of the war in Northumberland and although they may not have been the most welcome of guests, they were formally recognised by the Scots as King and Queen of England. However these same Scots, as has been shown throughout this thesis, were not prepared seriously to exert themselves on behalf of the house of Lancaster; their efforts at Carlisle in 1461 and Alnwick and Norham in 1463 show that. The efforts of Mary of Gueldres to secure a truce with the Yorkists in 1462 (see page 16) indicate that there was a section of Scotland that was sympathetic to Yorkist pretensions.

It might so easily have been otherwise. Realising that Edward IV and his ministers were preoccupied with many issues and that England, post-Towton, was in an unsettled state, the Scots might have seized the opportunity for serious political gains. They might have mustered a large army as they had done in 1346 in the Neville's Cross campaign and were to do later in the Flodden campaign of 1513. In the name of King Henry VI of England, they might have crossed the bridge at Berwick, now in Scottish hands, debouched into Northumberland and, with Alnwick as their base, conquered the whole county. With actual or even tacit French support and with a rising of English Lancastrians in every county, they might easily have put Henry VI back on the throne, having secured a treaty with him that was much to the advantage of both Scotland and France. If Henry was prepared to offer an English dukedom to the Earl of Angus to rescue his troops in Alnwick, what might he not have offered to other Scottish magnates to help him regain England? Such a scenario is all too easy to imagine and must have kept Edward IV in a constant state of anxiety.

If this scenario can be accepted, the Yorkists' very muted reactions to the Lancastrian presence in Northumberland are easily explained. The occupation of Alnwick by Tailboys in 1461, using the tactic

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<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231 – 234; *Chronicles of London*, p. 177; Gregory, p. 218.

<sup>430</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Wars of the Roses*, p. 107.



of infiltration, seems to have been countered by the Yorkists using the counter tactic of investment (there is no record of cannon fire or storm). Warwick's incursion into Scotland at this time was described as a raid, not an invasion, which resulted in a truce. The arrival of the French in 1462 was, however, a different matter. Here was a possible advanced guard of a major French invasion and Edward saw that it must be crushed. The huge force sent north, numbered by John Paston as 20,000,<sup>431</sup> was accompanied by a large artillery train for, as Paston puts it, they have 'ordynans inowe, both for the sgys and for the feld': (i.e. siege and field guns in plenty). Yet despite this preponderance of artillery, the cannon were not used and the castles were starved into surrender, a point commented on by Ross and attributed by Hicks to Warwick's wish to preserve the castles for future use.<sup>432</sup> Perhaps the reluctance to use cannon was to prevent an escalation of the war.

If the scenario of a Yorkist reluctance to provoke the Scots into a serious war is correct, then another reason for the standoff between Warwick and the Earl of Angus at Alnwick in January 1463 is offered. Warwick, who clearly had a strong force with plenty of artillery, may have been reluctant to shed serious amounts of Scottish blood and not have engaged in battle for that reason. He may possibly have seriously outnumbered Angus's troops and hence Angus was all too anxious to avoid combat. Warwick's attitude would also explain Edward's somewhat desperate gamble of restoring Sir Ralph Percy to the command, not only of Dunstanburgh but of Bamburgh as well. If Sir Ralph had proved worthy of Edward's grace, the whole county would have been pacified at a stroke.

This theory of Yorkist reluctance to provoke the Scots is given greater credence by Yorkist reaction to the coups of Percy and Grey in the spring of 1463, when the three great castles of Northumberland became Lancastrian without a shot being fired. Having captured them after their great efforts three months earlier, the Yorkists did not respond by another military effort, but left them largely alone. When the Scots made a half-hearted attempt to capture Norham, Warwick broke up the siege using local forces. His restraint was rewarded. Henry was relocated from Scotland to Bamburgh, a truce with Scotland agreed in December 1463 and attempts by Somerset to disrupt a formal peace treaty failed with the disaster of Hedgely Moor. The Yorkists had now no need to fear Scottish invasion; when their siege train moved to Bamburgh in June 1464, they did not hesitate to use it.

The Northumberland enterprise occurred for three reasons. It occurred because Henry VI chose to make it his base after Towton; he had lost the Kingdom of England but hung on in Northumberland, a county where Edward IV did not come. It occurred because Northumberland was adjacent to Scotland, which Margaret of Anjou had secured as an ally and which meant that Henry could escape across the border into it and avoid capture. It occurred because Northumberland was a county remote from London, the capital of the Yorkist regime.

It survived for three years, primarily because of the diplomacy of Margaret of Anjou, which secured both French and Scottish troops to sustain its local levies as well as the services and leadership skills of Pierre de Brézé. It also survived because a number of nobles and knights refused to accept the verdict of battle at Towton and continued to be Lancastrians, accepting attainder, poverty and in many cases, death. It also survived due to the astuteness of Sir Ralph Percy, whose ability at

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<sup>431</sup> Paston Letters, vol. 4, p. 59.

<sup>432</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 51; Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 242.

changing sides was second to none. But perhaps it survived because there was a reluctance on the part of the Yorkists to use extreme measures to crush it for fear of upsetting the Scots.

It failed because Margaret did not succeed in getting full hearted support from either Scotland or France. The disaster off Holy Island limited the impact of the French forces, but had this not happened, there would never have been sufficient numbers to defeat the Yorkists. When France and Scotland sought peace with Yorkist England, the days of the Lancaster were numbered for Henry had no place of safety if Bamburgh fell. Somerset had no option but to try to encourage revolt on a wider scale, which led to his raiding parties and these led in turn to Hedgley Moor and Hexham and the end of Lancastrian hopes.

The establishment of a Lancastrian base in Northumberland, as was said at the beginning of this dissertation, was always meant to be a springboard from which the reconquest of England could be launched; a rallying point for those who wished to see the House of Lancaster regain the throne. Had more knights rallied there, had the gentry of Durham, of Yorkshire, of Cumberland and indeed of Lancashire risen, another Towton might have been fought with a different result. In the end, Lancastrian ambition failed because few people in the rest of England wanted it.

These 'few' have received a great deal of attention in this dissertation. These were diehard Lancastrians, people who preferred attainder, loss of home, goods and status to accepting the kingship of Edward of York, in spite of the latter's undoubted abilities and charm. Their intransigence is the more remarkable for Edward was remarkably generous to his opponents, as his treatment of the Duke of Somerset and Sir Ralph Percy has revealed. Had Lord Roos, Sir William Tailboys, or Sir Robert Whittingham, to take three examples, submitted to Edward's grace early in the struggle, they had every reason to believe that they would in due course be restored to their former wealth and dignity as indeed Lord Greystoke had been. To fight on showed true loyalty, loyalty to the one who they believed was the rightful and lawful king of England, Henry VI.

Military activity in Northumberland must be set in the context of the whole of the Wars of the Roses. The wars had begun over the question of who was to be the king's protector and had been decided, after the Battle of Northampton in 1460, in favour of Richard of York for whom the Accord had been drawn up, a decision arrived at after fifteen years of tension. But almost immediately the Accord was voided by the defeat and death of the Duke at the Battle of Wakefield and the acceptance of his son as King Edward IV by a parliament in London in February 1461. This set the scene for the Battle of Towton, a battle noted not only for its size (arguably the largest battle ever fought on English soil) but for its outcome, which resulted in a change of dynasty; the House of Lancaster was replaced by the House of York. Not since 1066 and Hastings had such an event occurred in England.

The aim of this dissertation was to study an area where the change was rejected and examine a region where the rejection produced something approaching an independent state which survived for over three years. The activity of Lancastrians in Northumberland was an attempt to deny the verdict of battle and insist that Henry VI continue as the lawful king of England in theory but as king of Northumberland in practice. The three year struggle in Northumberland involved the principles of justice and oaths, for all those who switched their support to Edward IV had sworn fealty to Henry more than once, and this included Edward himself. It also involved Scottish politics; a country which

did not seize an opportunity to make serious territorial gains at English expense. This neglected period of English history is rich in ideas.

Two unlooked-for results of this struggle had a serious effect on the future of the Lancastrian cause in later years. 1464 saw the elevation of Lord Montagu to the earldom of Northumberland for his services in Northumberland. In 1469 Edward IV, wishing to keep the favour of the Percy family, restored Henry Percy to his earldom and 'elevated' Montagu to a marquissate, a post higher in rank but much less lucrative.<sup>433</sup> The disgruntled marquis then sided with his brother, Warwick, in the readeption of Henry and the expulsion of Edward IV from England. He had become a Lancastrian and was to die at the Battle of Barnet, never seeing the readeption fail.

In 1485 this Henry Percy, now 4th Earl of Northumberland, was given command of Richard III's reserve at the Battle of Bosworth. His father and grandfather had been killed fighting for the house of Lancaster, and yet he was now a Yorkist. What was going on in his mind we cannot know but his refusal to commit his troops to battle at the moment when it looked as though Henry Tudor might win, contributed to, if it did not actually cause, the defeat of Richard and the victory of Henry VII.<sup>434</sup> By sunset on that fateful day, the reign of the House of York was ended and the Tudor dynasty had begun.

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<sup>433</sup> Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 281; Gillingham, p. 166.

<sup>434</sup> Rose, *Kings of the North*, pp. 578 – 579; M. K. Jones, *Bosworth 1485: Psychology of a Battle* (Stroud, 2002), pp. 121 – 132.

# Appendix 1: Margaret of Anjou and the Robbers.

During the time of the war in the north, according to the French correspondents, Waurin<sup>435</sup> and Chastellain,<sup>436</sup> a battle took place in Northumberland between Lancastrians and Yorkists in which the latter were victorious and the former dispersed. Among the Lancastrians were Margaret of Anjou and her 10 year old son, who became separated from the rest and were captured. While their captors, presumably Yorkist irregulars,<sup>437</sup> quarrelled over the spoils of victory, the royal pair escaped and, while making their way towards safety, were captured by a notorious local bandit. Margaret said to him (in the words of Waurin) 'Saulve le filz de ton roy',<sup>438</sup> words which so affected the robber that he took care of the child, leaving Margaret free to rejoin the Lancastrian body.

In civil wars the losers inspire romantic and remarkable tales of their leaders, raising them to the level of folk heroes. A widely circulated story of General Lee of the Confederate States of America tells of an exhausted soldier going to sleep on guard duty outside his commander's tent and waking to find himself on the general's bed while the general kept his watch.<sup>439</sup> Warburton reports that Prince Rupert disguised himself as a net seller and sold nets to Parliamentary troopers to discover their dispositions.<sup>440</sup> As a woman, Margaret could not be portrayed as engaged in such military acts of bravado but she could be portrayed as a resourceful heroine, particularly by her fellow countrymen who were now under the rule of the Yorkists. To throw herself on the mercy of a robber who immediately becomes a staunch ally emphasises her female virtues of courage, charm and resourcefulness. Such a folk tale would naturally be told by Lancastrians as a counter to the 'She wolf image' so obviously encouraged by Yorkist and later by Tudor writers.

Did such an incident ever take place? According to Bates, after the coups of Sir Ralph Percy at Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh and of Sir Ralph Grey at Alnwick in the spring of 1463, Margaret, Henry and de Brézé came to Bamburgh with 2,000 men.<sup>441</sup> This body was then used to 'cover' Norham when the siege took place later in the year. To rescue Norham, Montagu and Warwick had to bypass the triangle of castles (going through Rothbury) and encountered this force on 'a hillside in front of the Great Ryle in order to prevent their passing into the Breamish valley.'<sup>442</sup> The Scots panicked and Margaret was caught by a band of Yorkists who quarrelled over her jewels and were prepared to cut her throat. She begged one of her captors, an esquire, to get her and her son away, which he did but only to stumble into the hands of a notorious villain of those parts, Black Jake, whom Margaret addressed:

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<sup>435</sup> Waurin, vol. 5, pp. 434 – 435.

<sup>436</sup> Chastellain, vol. 4, pp. 299 – 306.

<sup>437</sup> Regular Yorkist troops would surely have realised the supreme value of their capture.

<sup>438</sup> 'Save the son of your king', Waurin, vol. 5, p. 435

<sup>439</sup> J. F. C. Fuller, *Grant and Lee* (Bloomington, 1982), p. 183.

<sup>440</sup> E. Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1849), pp. 136 – 139.

<sup>441</sup> Waurin, vol. 5, p. 160; Bates, 'The Border Holds of Northumberland', p. 437. There is no corroborative evidence that this event ever took place.

<sup>442</sup> Chastellain, vol. 5, p. 278. My examination of the ordnance survey reveals that Great Ryle is a farmhouse on the edge of the Cheviot Hills six miles north of Rothbury. If the Neville brothers were bent on avoiding the fortresses of central Northumberland and if Margaret had the strength to oppose them, this is a very likely place for the confrontation to have taken place.

Man, thou wast born under a lucky star. After all the wrong thou hast done, a chance is given thee of doing good that never shall be forgotten. Till today thou knewest not what pity meant. The Christian blood thou sheddest touched thy heart no more than it would a brute beast. It is to turn thee from thy old way of living, that I have fallen into thy clutches, I the wretched and unhappy queen of England... Save at least this youth, thy king's only son, true heir hereafter, so please God, of the kingdom of which thou art liege. By this deed of mercy all thy past cruelty shall be blotted out... I make thee this day both father and mother of my child and entrust to hand dyed with Christian blood... Save my son and keep him for me.<sup>443</sup>

This speech profoundly moved the terrible robber who escorted Margaret and her son to rejoin her troops at Bamburgh. In a footnote to the above, Bates writes: 'As the whole of this adventure was related by Margaret herself to the duchess of Bourbon at St. Pol on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1463 in the presence of the historian Chastellain, it rests for the most part on unimpeachable evidence.'<sup>444</sup>

The above story makes logistical sense but Bates, surprisingly, does not leave the matter there. He gives the site of the capture on the banks of Devil's Water, near Hexham,<sup>445</sup> and the cave in which she sheltered has been identified by Tomlinson on the bank of Dipton Burn!<sup>446</sup> Sadler casts serious doubt on the veracity of this siting, pointing out that there is no battle recorded in the area of Hexham in any annals until the Battle of Hexham in 1464, by which time Margaret and Edward of Lancaster were in Flanders.<sup>447</sup> A much more likely time and place for Margaret's escape, according to modern scholarship, is in the aftermath of the raising of the siege of Norham by the Earl of Warwick in the summer of 1463. So Sadler says that 'Warwick moved swiftly to raise the siege of Norham, scattering Queen Margaret and her borderers with a lightning descent [and] both the Queen and hapless King Henry were nearly taken.' Scofield tells the story in greater detail.<sup>448</sup> The identity of the robber, according to tradition, is Black Jack,<sup>449</sup> and he is numbered among those executed after the Battle of Hexham: 'The xv day of May folowynge thys good Lorde Mountegewe letto be smete of the heddys of thes men, the whyche that hyr namys here folowyn in wrytyng: [included] Blacke Jakys.'<sup>450</sup>

How is it that there is such confusion about the locality of such an exciting event? The answer is surely that *all the accounts of Margaret's dramatic escape are written by French authors*, those who had no possibility of knowing the ground or indeed anything of the county where events took place. Examination of the site (undertaken by the writer on 8th November 2014) reveals that the Queen's Cave is less than 2,000 metres from the battlefield of Hexham. Obviously, with no exact definition of the site of Margaret's escape, Victorians with a desire for melodrama had conflated the Battle of Hexham with that in which her dramatic activity took place. A similar example of impossible placing can be found in the ground of Irton Hall (near Ravenglass, Cumbria) where an elderly oak tree is displayed to every visitor (including the writer) as the tree up which the young Charles II hid when being hunted by Oliver Cromwell's troopers in 1651. That Charles never went within 150 miles of

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<sup>443</sup> Bates, 'Border Holds', pp. 440 – 442; Bates, *History of Northumberland*, p. 198.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 442.

<sup>445</sup> D. L. Sadler, *War in the North* (Bristol, 2000), p. 24.

<sup>446</sup> W. W. Tomlinson, *Comprehensive Guide to Northumberland* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1863), pp. 112 – 113.

<sup>447</sup> Sadler, *War in the North*, p. 24.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24; see also Scofield, p. 293; Weir, pp. 316 – 317.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>450</sup> Gregory, p. 218; Worcestre, p. 782.

Cumbria while 'on the run' discourages those who spread this rumour not one jot. Why spoil a good story, the proprietors of Irton Hall would argue, with prosaic facts?

To the writer, the story has the ring of truth, though the details are unobtainable. It seems more than possible that, during the rout in the aftermath of the siege of Norham, Margaret and her son got separated, and encountered a group of 'reivers' who escorted her and her son to the safety of Berwick.

## Appendix 2: The Attempts on Newcastle in 1463.

Only once did the Lancastrians even have a chance of capturing Newcastle and that was by stratagem. At the close of 1463, the Duke of Somerset (as a temporary Yorkist) had charge of two hundred men of the king's bodyguard and these were sent to reinforce the garrison of Newcastle. The Duke planned to defect to Lancaster and to use them for a coup and capture Newcastle. Edward got wind of the plot and the leaders of the revolt were arrested except for Somerset, who escaped. Lord Scrope of Bolton, a Yorkist who had fought at Towton, was given the governorship of the castle, which gave Newcastle its name.<sup>451</sup>

According to Ramsay, in the aftermath of Sir Ralph Grey's perfidy at Alnwick, an attempt was made on Newcastle.<sup>452</sup> Referring to a letter in the Paston Correspondence, Ramsay says: 'The men of Newcastle had repulsed a Lancastrian attack without help; also capturing some French vessels destined for the relief of Bamburgh.'<sup>453</sup> However, Ramsay's story may be due to a variant on the usual story of Margaret's voyage of 1462. According to the Grafton Chronicle; '[Margaret] thus being accompanied, with these boastynge Frenchemen, of whom Syr Piers Bracy, a Briteyne Knight was Capitaine, set up her sayles, and with a prosperous winde arryued in Scotland, where she and her company were welcomed by her husband and sonne. Then the Queen and her company thinkyng to doe some great enterprise, sayled towarde New Castell, and landed at Tinmouth.'<sup>454</sup> Welford varies from Grafton's story in making Margaret's first attempt at landing being at Tynemouth *before* going on to Bamburgh.<sup>455</sup>

I find Ramsay's story hard to believe for two reasons. First, I cannot think of anyone who would have sent the ships (the French government would not have done so and if there was some rich well wisher who was free and able to send ships, history is silent about him); and second, a land force of Lancastrians large enough to attack Newcastle must have been recruited in the Alnwick area north of the Yorkist castles around Morpeth. This force must then have advanced on Newcastle passing such strongholds as Bolam and this would have meant a serious military operation of which the writings of the time show no knowledge. That Margaret's fleet may have appeared off Tynemouth is another matter, as has been discussed in Chapter 4.

Bates' story is also worthy of comment, since he bases all he says on a free interpretation of Waurin (vol. 3) and de Chastellain (vol. 4). After Sir Ralph Percy and Sir Ralph Grey had seized the three great fortresses of central Northumberland, Margaret, Henry and de Breze came to Bamburgh (from Scotland) with 2,000 men. Montagu marched north followed on 4<sup>th</sup> June by Warwick. Montagu

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<sup>451</sup> Details of this attempted coup may be found in Gregory, pp. 216 – 224; Gillingham, pp. 150 – 151.

<sup>452</sup> Ramsay, *Lancaster and York*, vol. 2, p. 295.

<sup>453</sup> *Paston Letters*, vol. 2, p. 135; Weir, *Lancaster and York*, pp. 315 – 316.

<sup>454</sup> *Grafton*, p. 3.

<sup>455</sup> R. Welford, *History of Newcastle and Gateshead in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (London, 1884 – 87), p. 345.

arrived in time to defend Newcastle against Sir Ralph Grey.<sup>456</sup> 'The burgers of Newcastle also captured four French vessels, one of them, it being supposed was a large 'carvile' belonging to the Compte d'Eu.'<sup>457</sup>

This suggests that Margaret and Henry had a fleet on the Northumbrian coast, months after the debacle of Holy Island in November 1462 and further that the royal couple had 2000 men in Scotland ready to bring to Bamburgh. The assessment of the number of troops available to the Lancastrians (see chapter 4) and the availability of ships (see chapter 3) makes this impossible. It seems certain that the 'attempt to capture Newcastle' is a story woven from shreds of actual historical events which took place at other times and is not to be taken seriously.

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<sup>456</sup> C. J. Bates, 'Border Holds', p. 437.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 438.



## Appendix 3: Accounts for Dunstanburgh.

An intriguing question overhangs the war in the north: the maintenance and pay of the garrisons of Dunstanburgh and Bamburgh. It is remarkable that Sir Ralph Percy was governor of the former from before the Battle of Towton until he met his death at Hedgley Moor, over three years later. He was also governor of Bamburgh from the end of 1462 until Hedgley Moor. For 15 months he was in command of Dunstanburgh for the Yorkists and for three months a Yorkist governor of Bamburgh; for the rest of the time (around two thirds), he was a Lancastrian. The question is of course how his garrison troops were paid and how was the switch of payment affected when Sir Ralph's allegiance changed? Were the troops paid from local rents and leases from Percy lands? Were grants made from central government?

Chronicles and secondary literature provide no help in resolving this question but the answer may be found in the Ministers Accounts of both fortresses. Research into this matter is beyond the scope of this dissertation but an enquirer might find the answers for Dunstanburgh in the National Archives. The references for these are:

Northumberland and Cumberland: Lordship of Dunstanburgh and Others: Ministers' Accounts: 1459  
– 1461 DL29/354/5860

Northumberland and Cumberland: Lordship of Dunstanburgh and Others: Ministers' Accounts: 1460  
– 1462 DL29/354/5861

Northumberland and Cumberland: Lordship of Dunstanburgh and Others: Ministers' Accounts: 1461  
– 1463 DL29/355/5862

Northumberland and Cumberland: Lordship of Dunstanburgh and Others: Ministers' Accounts: 1462  
– 1464 DL29/355/5863

Northumberland and Cumberland: Lordship of Dunstanburgh and Others: Ministers' Accounts: 1463  
– 1465 DL29/355/5864

There are no comparable references for the Castle of Bamburgh.

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