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THE NEVILLES AND THE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT IN NORTH-
EASTERN ENGLAND, 1377-1413

Mark Edward Arvanigian

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to uncover the nature of landed society in the North-East, and the creation of a new political matrix there from c.1377-1413. It will trace the development of a Lancastrian North-East, and the role played by the Neville family and other members of the region's elite in it. The Nevilles were instrumental in Henry IV's rise to power, and became the focal point of his subsequent efforts to stabilise the North. Much of their influence in later generations was the result of the political successes of Ralph Neville, first earl of Westmorland, and his rise to prominence in this period was the direct result of his Lancastrian associations. His career will therefore be closely considered.

However, other members of the North-east's political community also rose to prominence in this period. Most notable among these was Sir Ralph Eure, a Durham knight of considerable ability who became perhaps the most important political figure below comital rank in the region. In overseeing the running of the palatinate of Durham, and holding the office of sheriff and numerous other commissions in the counties of Yorkshire and Northumberland, Eure ensured great continuity and competence in the northern administration, and eased the transition from Ricardian to Lancastrian regimes in this most unstable of regions.

The thesis will therefore investigate the careers of many members of the north-eastern gentry, and place them within the local and national political framework. This was a diverse and dynamic group, with a range of interests and abilities; this is reflected in their office holding and financial choices. By studying especially the most important of these figures, and by using the excellent records of the palatinate of Durham - one of the finest sets of surviving medieval provincial records in the country - the thesis will thereby illustrate the nature of secular political society in Durham and the North-East, in the context of the national political scene.

Acknowledgements

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For their assistance, both financial and otherwise, I wish to thank the History Department of the University of Durham, without whose support - and that of the British Council and the Royal Historical Society - this work certainly would not have been possible. For tolerating what must seem the endless training of a no-longer young student, I wish to acknowledge my parents; for this same toleration, and for her loving and unfailing support, I thank Kimberly.

THE NEVILLES AND THE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT IN NORTH-EASTERN ENGLAND, 1377-1413

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INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1399, Henry of Bolingbroke, eldest son of John of Gaunt and disenfranchised Lancastrian heir, landed with a small force at Ravenspur, on the North Yorkshire coast, ostensibly to reclaim his rightful inheritance and take his place at the head of the great family.¹ Although armed, and a sworn enemy of King Richard II, Bolingbroke met with little resistance, and two months later he was himself King of England. Few disagree about the degree to which circumstance played its hand in this affair: at the time of Henry's return, Richard was in Ireland, with the bulk of his supporters. Ironically, he was there engaged in what had been, by most accounts, a relatively successful campaign. In addition, the king had made a poor choice of protectors for his realm, leaving his uncle, Edmund Langley, duke of York, in command of the country. Whether Langley was treacherous or simply ineffectual matters little: in a short time he had made common cause with Henry, who, in Richard's absence, rode largely unmolested through the country.²

There is something of a unanimity of opinion regarding the means by which Henry undertook his campaign. Most treatments of this subject have in common a general agreement that the military might of the Percies made passable his road to the

¹For details of Bolingbroke's early career, see J.L. Kirby, *Henry IV of England* (1970), Chapter 1; O.B. Gregory, *Henry IV* (1977).

²Douglas Biggs, "'A Wrong Whom Conscience and Kindred Bid me to Right': A Reassessment of Edmund Langley, Duke of York, and the Usurpation of Henry IV", *Albion*, xxvi, 2 (1994), 253-72.



throne, and that they were also instrumental in his success as king,³ before declaring their own treasonous intentions in 1403.⁴ The broad outline of events, chronicled in so many historical writings that even their referencing is unnecessary, is not in dispute. Henry did come to power in this way; he did use the Percies, first to outfit him in his regalia, and then to secure his reign in its earliest years (particularly in the Scottish marches and North Wales); and they did turn on him four years after his coronation, in an attempt to secure his overthrow. However, this is clearly only a sketching of events, albeit one which has gone largely unchallenged in recent decades. Much research has focused on Bolingbroke's motives: C. Given-Wilson has argued that Richard II nursed a strong hatred throughout his life of not only Henry, but of the house of Lancaster generally, for its role in the deposition of Edward II, and in so doing, has argued for a new understanding of Richard's view of kingship, centred around a greatly-heightened sense of the royal prerogative.⁵ Nonetheless, the central motives behind Richard's treatment of Henry remain largely mysterious. J.M.W. Bean's influential article on Henry IV and the Percies,⁶ and the important article by J.A. Tuck on Richard II and the northern nobility, along with his *Richard II and the English Nobility*, have been central treatments of Richard's relationship with the aristocracy, and his eventual fall from, and Henry's rise to, the

³E.F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485* (Oxford, 1961), 9-10; J.M.W. Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', *History*, xlv (1959), 212-14; and it is certainly implied in C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397-1400* (Manchester, 1993), 35-40.

⁴P. McNiven, 'The Scottish Policy of the Percies and the Strategy of the Rebellion of 1403', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 62 (1979-80), 375-96.

⁵C. Given-Wilson, 'Richard II, Edward II, and the Lancastrian Inheritance', *EHR*, 109 (1994), 553-71.

⁶Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', 212-27.

throne - as well as the means used by Henry to gain it.⁷ However, the general outline of events proffered above, and that offered by Bean, Tuck and others, tends to overemphasise the role of the Percies, and has stunted investigation into the real political situation in the North-East in this period.⁸ This dissertation will rectify that oversight.

For example, virtually no attention has been paid to the role of the North-East's other magnates, and members of its gentry, in Henry's rise to power and in the critical period thereafter, when he struggled to establish order. The most glaring omission has been the lack of attention paid to the rise of the Neville family, from regionally significant north-eastern barons to pre-eminent national political figures, a transformation that largely took place in this period. By the end of Henry's reign, Ralph Neville, first the earl of Westmorland, was not only the most powerful magnate in the all the North, he may well have been the greatest baron of his day, inferior perhaps only to those of closest royal blood. By the time of his death, his great patrimony stretched from the city of York virtually to the Scottish borders, both east and west of the Pennines, and included significant portions of all the five, most-northerly ancient counties. In addition, he maintained significant holdings throughout the realm, and held sway in political affairs commensurate with his status as a nobleman of substantial and wide-ranging interests. At the height of his

⁷J.A. Tuck, *Richard II and the Border Magnates*, *NH*, iii (1968), 27-52; *Richard II and the English Nobility* (1973).

⁸Later treatment of the Percy family reflects this emphasis. See N. Weiss, "'A Power in the North'? The Percies in the Fifteenth Century', *Historical Journal*, 19 (1976), 501-9; and, surprisingly, A. Tuck, 'The Percies and the Northumberland Community in the Later Fourteenth Century', A. Goodman and A. Tuck, eds., *War and Border Societies in the Middle Ages* (1992), 178-95.

influence, he was one of the king's closest advisors and closest counsellors, entrusted not only with jurisdiction over most of the North of England, but seemingly also of the informal tutelage of the king's young son, John.⁹

Curiously, however, the rise of the Nevilles in the late-fourteenth and early fifteenth century has received almost no attention from modern scholars. R.L. Storey's work on this subject concerns itself principally with this family's activities following Westmorland's death, when the fate of the Nevilles lay principally in the hands of Ralph's son, Richard, earl of Salisbury, and their hegemony was for the most part already established.¹⁰ Westmorland's death did indeed presage a feud within the family over all that he had built, one that was not to be settled until some decades later. Acquisitive to the end of his life, Westmorland was talented, ambitious, and ruthlessly determined that all of his wealth should be concentrated in the hands of his second family - founded by him and Bolingbroke's half-sister, Joan Beaufort - at the utter expense of his first. From very early in his second marriage, coinciding roughly with the birth of his eldest son, Richard, in 1400, Ralph Neville initiated the process known as conveyance to use - described so thoroughly by J.M.W. Bean in his *Decline of English Feudalism* - to begin the future disinheritance

⁹ John of Lancaster was appointed to the North-East, in the form of his grant of the Wardship of the East March, following the demise of the Percies in 1403.

¹⁰ Some studies which deal with various aspects of the Neville family in later years include R.A. Griffiths, 'Local Rivalries and National Politics: The Percies, the Nevilles, and the Duke of Exeter, 1452-55', *Speculum*, 43 (1968), 589-632; A.J. Pollard, 'The Northern Retainers of Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury', *NH*, xi (1976), 52-69; and *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses* (Oxford, 1990); J.R. Lander, 'Marriage and Politics in the Fifteenth Century: The Nevilles and the Wydevilles', *BIHR*, 36 (1963), 119-52; and the last chapter of Charles Young, *The Making of the Neville Family, 1166-1400* (New York, 1996), which deals principally with Richard, earl of Warwick.

of his first family.¹¹ The battle over the assets left behind by his death, played out principally between 1425 and 1440, is also chronicled by E.F. Jacob in his *The Fifteenth Century*, as well as by R.L. Storey in his fascinating study of the Lancastrian period.¹² A.J. Pollard has written extensively on the Nevilles, of course, though he, too, has concentrated on their continued rise in later years, as in his *North-Eastern England during the Wars of the Roses*. In this thesis, I will chronicle all the known conveyances made by the first earl, in the expectation that doing so will shed light onto his character and motivations, further illuminating the true nature of the political situation in the North-East in his period of ascent there.

This is possible, and indeed necessary, largely because Ralph Neville has received so little attention from modern scholars. Only recently has a detailed study of the rise of the Nevilles appeared; yet its treatment of Ralph, earl of Westmorland is less than satisfactory.¹³ Its discussion of his career is, to say the least, brief, relative to his importance in the scheme of things political. What analysis does appear suffers from being shallow to the point of misleading. For example, his rise in the reign of Richard II is glossed over, as is his relationship with John of Gaunt, probably the most important of his life. His role in early Lancastrian governance is therefore misread by the author, who also deals overmuch with the family's various offshoots. Anyone with the surname of 'Neville', no matter how distant or dubious a

¹¹J.M.W. Bean, *The Decline of English Feudalism, 1215-1540* (Manchester, 1968), particularly Chapter 3.

¹²R.L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (1966), particularly Chapter 5.

¹³Young, *The Making of the Neville Family*, Chapter 4.

relation, is thought here to have been closely tied to the family's patriarch. In fact, there is very little evidence at all tying any of the various Nevilles around the country to the Nevilles of Raby and Middleham, either in the lifetime of Ralph Neville or that of his father, John. Where there is some reason to believe that members of the extended family might have maintained contacts with the Middleham branch, opportunities are missed, as with Sir Robert Neville of Hornby, Lancs.; he seems to have had certain administrative connections to the Durham and North Yorkshire branch of the family in Gaunt's retinue, and, more interestingly, he was with Bolingbroke's army in 1399, at the head of a sizeable retinue of his own. Unfortunately, this is not elucidated, and possible connections are left unexplored. Indeed, the author's central focus, and therefore much of the merit of this book, lies much earlier in the family's development, particularly in the thirteenth century. In this he is much more lucid, and his discussion of the family's early history within the context of twelfth and thirteenth century political culture especially, is much stronger.

In this misreading of Neville's role in the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV, however, Young is in good company. For example, in his article on the political crisis of 1401, Alan Rogers has misinterpreted the conflict between the commons and the king; if this was the major constitutional battle which both he and A.L. Brown envisaged, it was also a major political struggle between the Percies and the Beauforts/Nevilles.¹⁴ While parliament certainly took the opportunity to demand

¹⁴A. Rogers, 'The Political Crisis of 1401', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, xii (1968), 85-96; A.L. Brown, 'The Commons and the Council in the Reign of Henry IV', *EHR*, 79 (1964), 1-30.

conditions on Henry's spending of moneys gained from 'special' taxation, the more critical political issue of the day - one that cannot have been missed or misunderstood by all those involved - was the Percy attempt to reform the household, and thereby diminish the role of old Lancastrians in the formation of royal policy. In this episode, the Percies obviously thought of themselves as outsiders, yet more critically, they recognised the degree to which the Nevilles had become political insiders, and sought to act. The earl of Northumberland recognised the danger posed to him not only in national affairs, but also regionally in the North, by the encroachment of the Nevilles (which was anyway a long-standing process), and this must have been foremost in his mind when he bade the commons challenge the king in 1401. In a sense, the constitutional questions may have been somewhat tangential, even if they did have a far-reaching impact on governance; to contemporaries at the centre of power, the makeup of the household was clearly the crucial issue. Importantly, all the treatments mentioned above have misread the degree to which Westmorland was a Lancastrian insider in the closest sense, the obvious threat that his insider status now posed the Percies, and the degree to which this further pushed them to action between the coronation and 1403. The field, therefore, remains open to a discussion of the activities of the Nevilles in this period, especially where that discussion centres upon Ralph, Lord Neville of Raby. For it was he who bridged for Henry the gap between his two, distinct lives: one the usurper, heavily dependent upon the Percies, and the other, years later, a stable monarch ruling the country, and the North, without them.

For reasons much discussed by students of the fourteenth century, Richard II surrounded himself with a cadre of trusted advisors, and hoped to build their power

at the (relative) expense of the established nobility.¹⁵ In particular, he expended much energy in a quest to find a way of maintaining order in the North without constant reference to the Percies. Indeed, his rather frantic search for an alternative to that family in the region became one of the hallmarks of his early career. He first tried to install Gaunt there, creating an additional layer of command between himself and Henry Percy, but to no avail. Later, he sought the installation of certain of his court favourites as wardens of the marches, again at the exclusion of the Percies.¹⁶ In pursuit of this policy, the king tirelessly entreated the Scots to peace, a policy which at once quashed the old Percy dreams of ruling southern Scotland, and undercut their importance in keeping the peace in the English North.¹⁷ This program, though wildly unsuccessful, was to have one lasting effect: it galvanised the resolve of the Percies to see Richard undone. In 1399, they found their excuse in the house of Lancaster, and sought to champion the cause of Henry Bolingbroke, their proposed puppet, and using the military might built initially at Richard's expense, deposed the king.

Neither the sequence of events, nor the motives of those involved, are much in question. Instead, it is the emphasis placed upon the Percies as potential makers and breakers of kings, and the implicit devaluation of other players, with which I take issue. The over-emphasis of the hand played by the Percies in this matter - a

¹⁵See, for example, C.M. Barron, 'The Tyranny of Richard II', *BIHR*, xli (1968), 1-18; Given-Wilson, 'Richard II, Edward II' ; and Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*.

¹⁶This is adequately chronicled in Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', 28-53.

¹⁷McNiven, 'The Scottish Policy of the Percies', 528-30.

predilection that is perhaps fostered by their later importance - has led to the undervaluing of that played by the Nevilles, and especially Westmorland, in the rise of the house of Lancaster. The Nevilles were probably the most significant family politically of the early and mid-fifteenth century. Yet I will argue that their significance was also evident in the reign of Richard II, and continued to grow throughout the earliest years of the reign of the new King Henry IV. Ralph Neville was a Lancastrian nonpareil, whose father had been one of John of Gaunt's closest allies and most senior retainers. Gaunt probably retained John Lord Neville of Raby first for his influence in the household of the ageing Edward III; Neville later served Gaunt in the same manner, and would go on campaign with the duke several times. His son, Ralph, also wore the moniker of 'Lancastrian' proudly, and his attachment to that ducal household culminated in his marriage to one of Gaunt's daughters, Joan Beaufort. It was this connection to the house of Lancaster that led to the rise in the fortunes of the Nevilles, and which saw them eventually turn away from Richard, a king who had, by most standards, patronised them generously, and toward Bolingbroke in 1399. Westmorland was Henry's key ally. Henry understood well that with an ever-more powerful Neville in the North, the Percies could conceivably be done without. Thus, from the very beginning of his reign, Henry pursued policies friendly to their interests, and neglected those of their Northumbrian rivals, who duly revolted in 1403, and were so famously foiled on two occasions by Westmorland himself.

In addition, over-emphasis of the interests of the Percies has also obscured the roles of other significant political figures in the North-East, aligned neither with the Percies nor the Nevilles. This leads to one of the central themes of this treatment:

to what extent was it possible to be politically active in the North-East without being beholden to, or indeed, actually in the pay of, one or the other of these dominant families? The answer, as I will suggest below, is that it was possible to be very active, and indeed, useful and influential, apart from these two camps. This was true for many reasons, though certain of these loom large. The existence of one potential patron, in the figure of the bishop of Durham, who offered a number of paid political positions outside of the highly politicised retinues of the Nevilles and Percies. Such appointments were often invaluable in securing political influence in the North-East's palatinate of Durham, which divided Yorkshire from the borders and was a key to any order in the region. Indeed, the Nevilles had risen from just such a Durham base in the previous century, when they moved south into North Yorkshire, finally landing them in the centre of the political community by the fourteenth century. Thus, the palatinate, with its lands held not of the king but of the bishop, and with its own legal officials, courts, exchequer, and temporal status, became a major outlet for those who sought to stake out a political career independent of the Nevilles and Percies.¹⁸ It was an opportunity, taken by many, to exercise political influence that had at its source neither the crown nor one of the great noble factions in the North, and was thereby an opportunity to build some measure of influence of their own.

Durham also offered a growing, and still rather novel, financial opportunity for landowners: coal. In the face of declining north-eastern land values, some members of the gentry community began to exploit their lands in new ways. The

¹⁸See G.T. Lapsley, *The County Palatine of Durham* (Cambridge, 1924); C.M. Fraser, 'Prerogative and the Bishops of Durham, 1267-1376', *EHR*, 74 (1959), 467-76; and C.M. Fraser and K. Emsley, *The Courts of the County Palatine of Durham* (Newcastle, 1984).

commercialisation of local mining efforts by the bishop of Durham was already underway, and was in many ways aided by the burgesses of Newcastle, who recognised the potential trade value of the product. Coal thus became a major economic force in the region in the late-fourteenth century, probably for the first time. Members of the gentry community began mining commercially, and they forged new arrangements with their overlord, the bishop, with stakes high enough to precipitate a major dispute between the bishop and the town of Newcastle over shipping rights on the Tyne. Over the course of the period, continued demand for the product both locally and elsewhere - and declining Northumbrian land values - meant that commercial coal mining was becoming *relatively* more profitable to landowners in the North-East. This was true because the values of estates were not only mired in long-term decline, but were also suffering from the short-term uncertainties of border conflict.

One cannot absolutely connect the increasing commercialisation of coal in the North-East to furthering the political aspirations of its leading figures. However, it is clear that among those who went into commercial coal mining, particularly in Durham, were the region's political elite. Sir Ralph Eure, for example, who may well have suffered from severe income fluctuations on his Northumberland estates, more than made up for any losses by taking the farm of some of the bishop of Durham's most important coal mines, in the southern part of the palatinate, near his estates at Bishop Auckland. A direct correlation between coal as an alternative source of income, and any direct political connections can not, of course, be firmly established. However, it would be imprudent to ignore the burgeoning Neville and Eure mining operations as contributory to their political ascendance in the late-fourteenth century.

This dissertation will seek in part to understand the relationship between coal mining - especially in Durham, where the industry commercialised most quickly - and the potential political dimension for secular landowners and free tenants, keeping always in mind that its main participants carried with them complex political ambitions.

In many ways, the long-term decline in landed income forms the background of any political narrative of the region, and is also the background to the almost rabid interest in the development of the coal trade. The debilitating effects of landed depression were, if not deterministic of political events, certainly a looming motivational force. Landed incomes in Northumberland were particularly depressed, as a result of the incursions of the Scots.¹⁹ Evidence strongly suggests that Northumbrian landowners regularly found that their estates produced an income as much as two-thirds below their notional 'value'. In landed terms, some were completely impoverished. In such cases, the incidence of political activism was, not unexpectedly, very high. For example, Sir Thomas Grey of Heaton, Northumberland, the value of whose estates followed just this pattern, became a servant of the Nevilles. Though the Nevilles still maintained only a few interests in Northumberland, Grey found their patronage financially and politically necessary.

Similar motivations also prevailed with many other Northumbrian knights, many of whom turned to the crown or the bishop of Durham for support. They held positions in the palatinate's administration, and accepted a variety of royal appointments, including commissions of the peace, array, and *oyer et terminer* - the

¹⁹Summerson provides the corresponding tale of destruction in the West March: H. Summerson, 'Responses to War: Carlisle and the West March in the Later Fourteenth Century', in A. Tuck and A. Goodman, *War and Border Societies*, 155-77.

principal vehicle for the administration of royal justice in the shires in cases of particular importance. Obviously, in a region in which land holding had lost much of its profitability, such commissions - which, though not paid appointments, might still offer political influence as their reward - were of somewhat greater value to those able to secure them. Entire careers were fashioned out of undertaking a particular sort of commission or other, as with Sir Gerard Heron, a lawyer who was one of the crown's key negotiators with the Scots in the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV. The Lumleys of Lumley, Co. Durham, served the bishop of Durham almost exclusively, never being chosen by the crown for the sorts of commissions outlined above, but nonetheless finding their niche in palatine administration, serving as officers of the administration or sitting on one or another of the bishop's commissions. Still others found wider application for their talents, serving both the bishop and the crown in a variety of settings. Sir Thomas Grey was the bishop's steward, and served the crown in a number of capacities, as indeed did his son after him. Sir Ralph Eure was probably the greatest exponent of the 'useful man', serving variously as sheriff of Northumberland and North Yorkshire, and as steward for three bishops in Durham. Obviously certain offices, such as sheriff or palatine steward, were worth more to the landed community than unpaid commissions. However, both offered the opportunity to extend their own political influence - and, critically, to help maintain order - in the region; thus, even those positions that carried with them no fee offered a kind of reward, and served a purpose for the administration. The men who held ~~mess~~ *hires* posts represented the county elite, and they tied themselves not only to political affinities, but to their own abilities, as well. Through their service in royal, regional, and local administration, they became an important political force in their own right, one that

the crown could ill afford to do without, particularly in the years surrounding the betrayal of Henry IV by the Percies in 1403.

Much of what emerged in the North from the wreckage of the Percy rebellions was, of course, engineered by Henry himself. The Nevilles became the dominant family in the region, and left the king with his most trusted servant, Westmorland, in control of the country's most volatile region, the North-East. However, the ascendancy of Neville interests had already been underway for some time. Westmorland's earldom, as indeed with many other of his acquisitions, came to him ironically in the reign of Richard II, though his new-found fortune was largely the product of the patronage of John of Gaunt. Ralph Neville was, after all, son to one of Gaunt's principal retainers, and, after 1397, his son-in-law. As S. Walker has pointed out, much of Gaunt's retaining and patronage in his later years had an element of familial communitarianism about it: many of the men who had for so long served the duke began to show up on the payrolls of others in his family, principally, though not exclusively, his son, Henry.²⁰ I will argue that, while the earl of Westmorland did not officially share his services freely 'twixt father and son, his allegiances were nonetheless shared quite tangibly between them. Motivations for political action can be very elusive, no more so than in the case of Henry's supporters in 1399. What were the real motivations behind those who supported Henry of Bolingbroke so early, and so emphatically? Why was there a perceptible northern character to his following? Can grievances against Richard alone have accounted for the amount of support given to Henry, and can those grievances alone have been

²⁰S. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity, 1361-1399* (Oxford, 1990), 36-37.

responsible for the overthrow of an anointed king, in favour of an obvious usurper without his own strong claim to the throne?

Clearly, by discovering the character and circumstances of the northern magnates who were leading players in the Lancastrian usurpation - the Percies and especially the Nevilles - we can begin to come to some understanding of the success of Henry IV, both in usurping the crown and retaining it in the face of myriad difficulties. However, his successes can also be linked to that increasingly important group of independent landowners in the North-East who were so instrumental in both his isolation of the Percies before their revolts in 1403-8, and in solidifying his control over this region in their absence, especially in the period between the battle of Shrewsbury and the final defeat of the earl of Northumberland in 1408. This was the critical period in northern governance, and Henry came through it virtually unscathed, a tribute to his success in mobilising not only the Nevilles and their retainers, but also to his ability to gain the allegiance of certain independent members of the northern gentry operating outside the Percy and Neville spheres.

I have alluded to the close proximity of the Nevilles, the crown, and the bishopric of Durham above; let me now be somewhat more explicit. It is not satisfactory to conclude that a decision to serve in the administration of either the bishopric of Durham or the Neville family was anything other than service to the crown. It must be remembered that, even in times of indifference, the landed community retained in common basic values: a reverence of the established legal and cultural forms - especially concerning property laws - and the maintenance of order in the localities. In the North particularly, with the bishopric of Durham tantamount to a royal appointment, a framework for stability and royal influence

already existed; in this period, with the addition of a Neville presence largely underwritten by the house of Lancaster, the crown was doubly able to impose its will in the region. This developing power structure in the North provided the region's landowners and barons with alternatives to the two great comital retinues of the North-East, through the crown's various commissions, and the bishop's palatine administration; significantly, however, one is left to conclude that these differences were somewhat illusory, and that service in any form but to Percy was toward a stable, Lancastrian North. Henry IV was thus able to turn control of the region over to a group of trustworthy, talented men, including, but not necessarily restricted to, members of the retinue of his brother-in-law, the earl of Westmorland.

SOURCES

To understand the formation of a Lancastrian North-East, and the political makeup of the region, I have used a variety of source materials. First, of course, the records for royal government have proved extremely valuable. The enrolments of the king's chancery and records from Inquisitions *Post Mortem* have been particularly valuable in determining the commissions held, and lands owned by, various members of the landed aristocracy. Neither of these sources - particularly the inquisitions - is without flaws; however, for understanding the broad scope of many political careers, they remain together the best means of gaining insight. That cherished seventeenth-century repository of documents, Rymer's *Foedera*, has been extremely useful in

understanding diplomatic events, especially those pertaining to Scotland. To a lesser extent, this has also been true of the *Rotuli Scotiae*, a collection of documents relating to Scotland. The Parliament Rolls have been useful in gaining a broader view of national government, and especially of the relationship between the Commons and Henry IV. The records of the royal exchequer, held in the Public Record Office, were useful in understanding payments and receipts; the customs enrolments helped me to gain some limited knowledge of foreign trade and the flow of goods.

Perhaps the most unfortunate omission from this work has been that of any Neville household papers or accounts. This is unfortunate because it would have cleared up much that is still murky about northern political society. However, no Neville papers are extant from this critical period in their ascendancy. Indeed, none of the families discussed in this paper have left behind records for these crucial years. Given the small size of the landed community and the high degree of interaction among its members, just one set of family papers might have shed further light on a number of active political figures. The Percy family's own household accounts, studied by J.M.W. Bean, begin only after their re-instatement by Henry V, and are of little use here. However, other sources of evidence have been extremely helpful in elucidating the nature of the landed community.

Over the course of this study I have made use of the excellent collection known as the Muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Durham, particularly the surveys, accounts, and other records relating to the secular administration and political society of the region. First among these is the great *Magnum Repertorium*, a ledger of enrolled documents, kept together because they were of sufficient use to the

priory to warrant doing so. As such, they have everything to do with the monastic community, and occasionally they provide some glimpse into secular society. Letters from important figures both in and out of Durham are recorded here, as are certain surveys and grants. I have also used the DCD's *Locelli*, a diverse class of records that include letters to the prior, petitions, grants, mandates by the crown concerning the community, inventories, and even the prior's court rolls. As a class of records, these are most interesting for alerting the reader to the variety of business engaged in by the monastic community, and the great volume of contact which the prior had with the rest of the community. I have also used a number of other priory sources - manuscript and published - which have been useful in gaining a more balanced picture of north-eastern society.

By far the most critical records used in this study of the North-East, however, have been those of the bishopric of Durham. The Church Commission's Bishopric records, and Dean and Chapter Muniments, are very likely the finest side-by-side regional collections of medieval records in existence, and even when, as in this case, the researcher is working in a period of relatively poor coverage by the records, he is nonetheless awed by their volume, diversity, and quality. The recent parting of these two excellent sets of medieval records is indeed lamentable, though at least both still remain in Durham, under the aegis of the Durham University Library, if no longer held side-by-side in the fine facility at #5, The College. Part of the great collection has since been moved to the Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections, Palace Green. The rest of the manuscripts reside in the Public Record Office, Kew, and are the manuscripts identified here by the prefix PRO DURH. These are quite substantial in number, and have been of great value. The Durham

records at Kew form the backbone of any study of the palatinate's landed society in the later middle ages, as they include half of the accounts of the sheriff and escheator, all the chancery and Halmote records, and manorial court rolls.

The most important of these Durham records in the P.R.O. are, however, the two great volumes that comprise the Inquisitions *Post Mortem* for the palatinate in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The two sets of manuscript skins are arranged in large bound codices. These are the records calendared by the deputy Keeper in his *Thirty-Third Report*, and they form the single most important source for the study of landed society in Durham, both because of their comprehensiveness and, more importantly, their excellent extent. The original document is, to some degree, misrepresented by the published calendar. The calendar is arranged by bishop, alphabetically according to date of inquest. Beyond this, and its elucidation of heir, it is little more than a list of the names of various properties. The editor of the calendar included only the names of properties and a word or two of description for each entry, i.e. 'Cockfield, manor of', or 'Langley, forest called'. The original document is far more detailed. It gives not only the property names (one of the virtues of the calendar is that it follows the order of the original, making it possible to track estates), but also their type, i.e. arable, pasture, *pratum*, woodland; extent, principally either in acres, bovates, or carucates; any rent or feudal dues attached to the property; and their value, after the payment of such rents or dues.

Obviously, this resource forms the basis for any study of landed society, and allows for the virtual mapping of the feudal landscape in Durham. It is not the intention of this paper to argue the relative merits of the Durham IPM's: their extents may suffer from some of the same foibles as those of national government (though its

local nature and smaller scale may have meant more accuracy, particularly after the professionalisation of the administration by Bishop Langley), and their detail should, of course, be used with a certain caution. However, the extent provided by the Durham IPM's gives us some idea as to the size and nature of individual holdings, as well as to their relative value. Perhaps what is more important, however, is that the Durham IPM's are used here because they are an important part of a larger resource: the records of the bishopric. These records, when combined with those of the Dean and Chapter, Durham, and those of national government, are the most comprehensive means of reconstructing political society in the North-East, in a period completely devoid of private, household records. The IPM's one are part of that picture: when used in conjunction with the accounts of the escheator, the researcher can trace the movements of properties down through the generations. It is somewhat mysterious that so little use has been made of this great resource; yet I have been able to find very few references even to its existence, let alone published research making use of it. This study draws chiefly on the first codex of the two, which covers the period spanning the episcopates of bishops Bury, Hatfield, Fordham, Skirlaw and Langley; the latter part of this period coincides with the one covered in this thesis. Certain facts about the two volumes require explanation. First, the second volume is far more legible than the first, though the first is far from unreadable. Second, the professionalisation that I will argue was brought into the palatinate's administration had, by the time of Bishop Neville, reaped rewards in terms of record keeping. That the mid and late-fifteenth century bishopric records are more legible and expressive than their earlier counterparts is virtually axiomatic, but it is nonetheless true. This applies also to the Inquisitions. Yet the quality and comprehensiveness of the earlier

MS. should not be underplayed. It has been one of the most valuable resources in unravelling the mysteries of landed society in a region so dominated in its scholarship by studies of the ecclesiastical landowners and great affinities, in a politically tumultuous time.

The rest of the Church Commission Bishopric records reside in Durham. The most important of these are the accounts of the receivers of Durham, those of the sheriff and escheator that are not in the P.R.O., and those of the coroners. The receiver was the official at the head of the exchequer, and within his remit fell the collection of income from various officials, among them the escheator and coroner. The escheator, who in Durham was also the sheriff, was charged with taking lands back into the bishop's hand by exercising his various feudal rights. The coroners were the officials charged with the collection of farms and feudal dues in the palatinate's four wards. These officials dealt with the free holders, and therefore, the landed community. As such, their accounts have been extremely useful in gaining an understanding of the landed economy and office holding, another of the gentry's occupations. Critical among these were the receiver's accounts, as they outlined the fees paid to the bishop's ministers, in an administration organised along the lines of national government. In addition, the chancery enrolments have been useful in tracking appointments, and the disputes of the local great and good. Together, these records paint a remarkably coherent picture of landed society in the North-East in this critical period of upheaval in regional and national political society.

I.

The Nevilles, the Percies, and the Lancastrian Revolution of 1399

Over the past several years, much has been said about the role of the northern nobility in the deposition of Richard II, and in determining the policies and fortunes of his Lancastrian successor.¹ Most of this attention has been focused on the Percy family; it has traced their rise in the Ricardian court, their support of Henry Bolingbroke, and their eventual rebellions in 1403 and 1405.² However, the pronounced 'Percy-centric' view which has emerged in the study of late-fourteenth century northern and national politics hinders a more balanced understanding of regional and national affairs. It might be asked whether the Percy rebellions, and their role in the outbreak of civil war fifty years later, have led us to project that later importance back upon earlier events, and in so doing, to marginalise somewhat the emergence of the other great noble family of the North, the Nevilles of Raby.

This is not to suggest that the Percies were in any way unimportant in the late-Ricardian and early Lancastrian periods. In many ways, their aspirations shaped the policies of those who sought to govern the realm in those years. However, this was also true, to some extent, of their great rivals in the North, the Nevilles. Nonetheless, that family has

¹See, for example, C.M. Barron, 'The Deposition of Richard II', in J. Taylor and W. Childs, eds., *Politics and Crisis in Fourteenth Century England* (Gloucester, 1990); and 'The Tyranny of Richard II', *BIHR*, xli (1968), 1-18; Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', *History*, xlv (1959), 212-227; P.J. Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire, 1272-1403*, Chetham Society, 3rd series, xxxiv (1987); R.L. Storey, 'Wardens of the Marches of England toward Scotland, 1377-1489', *EHR*, 72 (1957), 593-615; and the following works by J.A. Tuck: *Richard II and the English Nobility* (1974); 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', *NH*, iii (1968), 27-52; and 'The Emergence of a Northern Nobility, 1250-1400', *NH*, xxii (1986), 1-17.

²See especially J.A. Tuck, *Crown and Nobility, 1272-1461* (Oxford, 1985).

been assigned by most historians a part subordinate to that of their Northumbrian cousins in both regional and national importance. This surely is unjust: a recent study of Richard II's uncle, Edmund Langley, duke of York, has already called into question the importance of Percy military might in the overthrow of Richard II, and an examination of the rise of the Nevilles in the later fourteenth century confirms their own place at the heart of the Lancastrian party from an early date.³ This particular view - that the Nevilles owe their rise in status to their service to John of Gaunt - is not a new one. In his survey of fifteenth-century England, E.F. Jacob addressed the subject explicitly, and with some conviction, for the first time in 1961 (repeating, to some degree, views long held, though never published, by C.D. Ross) and since then, scholars have more or less taken this as read. R.L. Storey's essay 'The North of England' in Chrimes, etc., *Fifteenth Century England*, is largely silent on Westmorland's rise to prominence under Richard II, though it has many interesting things to say about the earl's role in the first Lancastrian government. In addition, R.L. Storey's influential work, *The End of the House of Lancaster*, is far more concerned with later events, though it is still the finest exposition (along with A.J. Pollard's recent work *North-Eastern England during the Wars of the Roses*) of the rise of the Nevilles under Richard, earl of Salisbury.⁴ J.A. Tuck has dealt with the Nevilles under Richard II somewhat more extensively, though inevitably in a broader context, and from the point of view of the crown.⁵ Therefore, while later members of this famous family - especially Richard, earl of

³Biggs, "'A Wrong Whom Conscience and Kindred Bid me to Right': A Reassessment of Edmund Langley, Duke of York, and the Usurpation of Henry IV", *Albion*, xxvi, 2 (1994), 253-272.

⁴R.L. Storey 'The North of England', in S.B. Chrimes, C.D. Ross, and R.A. Griffiths, eds., *Fifteenth Century England, 1399-1509: Studies in Politics and Society*, 2nd edition (Manchester, 1997), 129-44.

⁵Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', 37-45.

Salisbury, and his son, Richard, earl of Warwick (the 'Kingmaker') - have certainly received a great deal of attention from modern historians, their illustrious forebear has not.⁶

From a relatively early date, Ralph Neville was very much in the business of expanding his presence in the North - a presence centred around his North Yorkshire and Durham estates - through participation in the land market, marriage, and the securing of royal grants and favour. Having already been married to Margaret Stafford, daughter of the earl of Stafford (a match which had produced nine children by the time of her death in 1370),⁷ Ralph married for a second time in 1397, to Joan Beaufort, youngest daughter of John of Gaunt by his third wife, Catherine Swinford, and herself heir to a number of Lancastrian estates.⁸ This union secured Ralph's relationship with the duke of Lancaster, one which had begun with his father's long career of service to him. For too long, historians have taken this very important relationship between the Nevilles and John of Gaunt for granted. Many have acknowledged its existence, yet very few have sought to piece together its particular character. In many ways, J.A. Tuck's work on this subject has been the most tantalising of all, in that it deals with the issues surrounding the northern nobility in the reign of Richard II, yet in the end comes to conclusions which are wholly unsatisfying, and which are to some extent incongruous with the tenor of his discussion. Most important among these conclusions are his summary of findings in his important article 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', in which he correctly contrasts the excellent relationship between the

⁶In addition to those works cited in the previous chapter, see A. Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses* (1981); R.A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI* (1981); Storey, *End of the House of Lancaster*; and, perhaps most recently, K. Dockray, 'The Origins of the Wars of the Roses', in A.J. Pollard, ed., *The Wars of the Roses* (1995), 65-88, which places the positions of the principals involved in the later conflicts in a useful historiographical framework.

⁷W. Dugdale, *The Baronage of England*, i (1675-76), 296-97.

⁸*CPR, 1396-1399*, 548.

Nevilles and Gaunt with the poisonous one which existed between the duke of Lancaster and the earl of Northumberland. Yet when the moment comes to explain the apparent incongruity of the two families joint support of Bolingbroke in 1399, the author settles for a common, joint motive for both families.⁹ This conclusion has gone largely unchallenged since its initial publication nearly 30 years ago, and since then, many historians have simply repeated the unity of motive ascribed to the Percies and Nevilles in this most critical act. It is, I think, time to lay out the case, and judge afresh these conclusions: what lay behind Ralph Neville's rise to prominence in the late fourteenth century, and his exalted status under Henry IV?

For answers, we must begin the investigation in the last years of the reign of Edward III: the roots of the relationship between Neville and Lancaster predate the majority of Ralph Neville. His father, John, Lord Neville of Raby, was a Lancastrian of the first order.¹⁰ He first joined Gaunt's retinue in 1366, and was subsequently retained for life in 1370.¹¹ He later became one of only six of the duke's retainers to name fellow Lancastrians as executors of his will.¹² A man with a history of the greatest political influence, John Neville served as steward of the household under Edward III, and sat on the king's privy council from 1371-6. After his expulsion from court by the 'Good Parliament' in 1376, his

⁹Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', 52.

¹⁰He was retained at the cost of 100 marks per year: see *John of Gaunt's Register*, E.C. Lodge and R. Somerville, eds., 2 vols., Camden Society, 3rd series, 56 & 57 (1937), 7. For a full list of Gaunt's retainers, see Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, Appendix I, 262-84.

¹¹C. Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity: Service, Politics and Finance in England 1360-1413* (1986), 148.

¹²This from a total of 58 surviving Lancastrian wills. Interestingly, one of the other five, William Balderston, named as executor of his will Thomas Langley, a former colleague in the duke's service, one of John of Gaunt's and later Henry IV's clerks, and bishop of Durham from 1406-37. See Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 111.

cause was championed by Gaunt, though as C. Given-Wilson has noted, the duke was unable to secure his return to court.¹³ However, a close relationship already existed between Neville and the duke of Lancaster in the early 1370's, belying the notion proffered by some that Gaunt's political influence at court might have been marginalised during his persistent absences from 1371-6.¹⁴ In fact, his cultivation of a strong relationship with John Neville ensured his continuing influence there. Their arrangement was, however, to prove mutually beneficial far beyond the short-term needs of these particular circumstances.

In 1381, John Neville provided men for service in the duke's retinue, and was rewarded well for it.¹⁵ Later in that same year, after the confiscation of the English lands of the duke of Brittany, he was granted many of the constituent lands of the honour of Richmond in North Yorkshire, partially as repayment for a substantial debt owed for his service in France. In 1383, the lordships of Boston and Richmond were taken back into hand by the crown,¹⁶ yet the duke of Lancaster arranged for the formal repayment of the crown's outstanding debt to Neville - some £7,000 - from the Exchequer directly, at £1,000 per year.¹⁷ In addition, Lord Neville continued to draw an annuity of one hundred marks for life from the honour, exclusive of the formal debt repayment.¹⁸ It is difficult to imagine that the repayment of a debt incurred by Edward III - along with an additional annuity from

¹³Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 73, 158-59.

¹⁴Neville went on foreign campaign with him, and was well paid. Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 68, 69n.

¹⁵T. Rymer, *Foedera Conventiones, Litterae, et Cuiuscunque Generis Acta Publica*, 20 vols., (1704-35), iv, 128.

¹⁶M. Jones, *Ducal Brittany, 1364-1399* (Oxford, 1970), 191.

¹⁷*CPR, 1381-1385*, 273.

¹⁸Jones, *Ducal Brittany*, 184.

crown lands - would have been possible without the strong advocacy of the duke of Lancaster, given the collective memory of Parliament, and the vehemence of the charges brought against Neville and his friend, Lord Latimer. In any event, by the time of his expulsion from the household in 1376, John Neville's primary loyalty lay not with the crown *per se*, but with the government's dominant figure, John of Gaunt.¹⁹

There is also reason to suppose that the young Ralph Neville had a close working relationship with his father. In 1379, Gaunt assumed responsibility for the defence of the Scottish border, and by 1381 had adopted a policy of promoting the interests of John Neville in the North. J.A. Tuck has outlined this process, but does not elaborate further on Ralph's participation in his father's affairs.²⁰ In fact, the evidence suggests that he played an active role. After serving on his first known military expedition - to France (where he was knighted) with Gaunt's brother, Thomas, earl of Buckingham, the future duke of Gloucester²¹ - Ralph turned his attention to the family's interests in the North of England. He assisted his father in the transaction of the last stages of David Bruce's ransom from Scotland in 1383-4 - when Gaunt was closely associated with the maintenance of the borders²² - and in 1386 was named to the conservatorship of the truce with Scotland while serving, with Thomas, Lord Clifford of Skipton, as governor of Carlisle and Warden of the

¹⁹Details of his rather turbulent period in the royal household can be found in Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 133, 148-53; and, with his colleague, Latimer, virtually throughout W.M. Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III* (New Haven, 1990).

²⁰Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', 39-42.

²¹Jean Froissart, *Oeuvres*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, 25 vols. (1867-77), vii, 320-22.

²²Dugdale, *Baronage*, i, 297.

West March.²³ This he likely did under the watchful eye of his father, who was at the time serving in a similar capacity in the East March, at Berwick.²⁴ This strategy - father and son employed simultaneously on the border - was one which we find repeated many times in the Neville family history.²⁵

As both father and son were based in the North in the last years of John Neville's life, Ralph probably also became familiar with the management of the family's vast estates at that time.²⁶ He showed evidence of an early aptitude for the particulars of estate management when, on one occasion, shortly after his father's death, he negotiated the improvement of the roads in his lordship of Brancepeth by John and Walter Lewyn, of County Durham, in place of their repayment of a loan which he had only recently written off as a loss.²⁷ This sort of ability in the management of his estates must certainly have come from the tutelage of John Neville. Indeed, duties along the border and estate management in North Yorkshire and Durham may have been taxing logistically, even for the two men working in tandem. Perhaps the most telling aspect of their relationship, however, is the fact that in 1388, Ralph acted as chief executor of his father's will, presiding with a group of Lancastrian loyalists in

²³Fuller examination of the West March in this period can be found in H. Summerson, *Medieval Carlisle: the City and the Borders from the Late Eleventh to the Mid-Sixteenth Century*, Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, extra series, no. 25, 2 vols. (1993). For specifics of the town's status in the late-fourteenth century, see H. Summerson, 'Responses to War: Carlisle and the West March in the Later Fourteenth Century', in A. Goodman and A. Tuck, eds., *War and Border Societies in the Middle Ages* (1992), 155-77.

²⁴Dugdale, *Baronage*, i, 296-98; *Foedera*, vii, 526.

²⁵Ralph held just this sort of joint appointment with his eldest son, John Neville, and later with his son Richard, the future earl of Salisbury.

²⁶Including those of Gilbert Umfraville, late earl of Angus - which he gained in 1391 and kept until 1409 - along with his own Durham and North Yorkshire lands: *CPR, 1408-1413*, 156.

²⁷*Thirty-Third Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* (London, 1887), 74.

that capacity.²⁸ While most of the details of their relationship remain hidden from the modern historian, there is certainly ample evidence to suggest that the son was introduced favourably into John of Gaunt's service by his father as a young man, a relationship which Ralph continued to cultivate and nurture throughout his life. Indeed, John Neville's Lancastrianism, however fervent, paled in comparison to that of his son.

After 1388, Ralph is known to have taken up his late father's title and lands,²⁹ wherefore he resumed his Wardship of the West March with Scotland.³⁰ In August of 1390, Richard II made the first of a series of commissions to Ralph Neville, in the form of the royal forest of Inglewood - previously held by John Cogwheel - which reverted into the king's hands at his death.³¹ Later in the year, Richard committed to him for the term of nine years various Cumberland lands, in exchange for £15 per year.³² He also bolstered Neville's influence in his own back garden: in June of 1391, the crown committed to him all of the considerable lands of Sir Thomas Umfraville during the minority of his heir,³³ including his Durham, Yorkshire and Northumbrian estates.³⁴ The terms of these commissions varied; while Neville was free to negotiate a mutually agreeable payment with the royal treasury for Inglewood Forest, the terms of remuneration for his Wardship of the Umfraville estates were

²⁸*Wills and Inventories Illustrative of the History of the Northern Counties of England*, 2, Surtees Society, ii (1835), 42.

²⁹*Thirty-Third Report of the Deputy Keeper*, 73.

³⁰*Wills and Inventories*, 1, Surtees Society, 1 (1835), 42.

³¹*CFR, 1383-1391*, 333.

³²*CFR, 1383-1391*, 345.

³³*CFR, 1383-1391*, 357.

³⁴*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, ed. J. Raine, Surtees Society, 32 (1856), 123 and *passim*; PRO DURH 3/2, fo. 157.

quite explicit: £466 13s. 4d.; to wit, 100 marks in ready money and £200 per annum, half at Michaelmas, the other half at Easter.³⁵ Though he had livery of the Umfraville estates for just two years, Neville's long-standing interests in the region assured his ability to maximise any profits. It also established a useful precedent for future arrangements: on the death of Thomas Umfraville, jr., Ralph Neville again gained Wardship of these estates, which he held until 1412. In 1396, the king granted him custody of the estates of Elizabeth, widow of Robert, Lord Willoughby, in Eskdale in North Yorkshire, which she had inherited on the death of her father William, Lord Latimer. These comprised the manors of Danby, Liverton, Sinnington, and Thornton; in exchange, Neville paid an annual sum of £100 to the treasury. These lands were, in fact, worth somewhat more than this, and the grant had much to do with the close relationship between the Nevilles and their neighbours, William, Lord Latimer, and the Willoughbys.³⁶ By 1397, Ralph Neville had become not only Gaunt's costliest retainer (collecting in one year alone some 500 marks), but his son-in-law, as well.³⁷ He remained the most prominent member of the Lancastrian retinue until the duke's death in 1397, though like many in Gaunt's retinue, he also maintained other relationships. As outlined above, for some years prior to his becoming lord of Raby, he had been regularly employed by the king in the maintenance of order in the North, often in the company of his father.³⁸

³⁵*CFR*, 1383-1391, 357.

³⁶*CFR*, 1391-1399, 196-97.

³⁷*CFR*, 1391-1399, 276; *CPR*, 1396-1399, 548.

³⁸Dugdale, *Baronage*, i, 297.

In 1397, perhaps as a reward for his role in suppressing the Lords Appellant,³⁹ Neville was granted the earldom of Westmorland, along with the Cumberland lordships of Penrith and Sowerby, which had been, since 1378, part of the honour of Richmond.⁴⁰ The new earl was also made constable of England, a position which he had once held as head of a commission in the early 1390's, in place of the treasonous duke of Gloucester.⁴¹ Neville was further granted one lifetime annuity of £130, and a second one of £120, to be exacted from the customs duties at the port of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Opinions vary as to the motivation behind these grants; whatever the case, they provide compelling evidence that Westmorland was in Richard's favour in these latter years of the fourteenth century, and taken in sum, they show that his ascent in national affairs well-anticipated the Lancastrian Revolution.⁴²

Nonetheless, the newly-promoted earl of Westmorland became an early supporter of Henry Bolingbroke in 1399.⁴³ It is uncertain whether Westmorland considered Henry a real contender for the throne, or simply a dispossessed heir trying to regain possession of his

³⁹He was certainly involved in the prosecution of the earl of Arundel at Parliament in that year, in which, at John of Gaunt's behest, he was the one to actually remove Arundel's robe and hood of office: *Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi*, ed. G.B. Stow (1977), 141-44.

⁴⁰This has, until recently, been the thinking on this, though it is unclear whether the evidence fully supports such a view. Further examination of the sequence of events, however, indicates another possible, and indeed more compelling, motivation for Richard's increased patronage of Neville, especially in the North.

⁴¹Rot[uli] Parl[iamentorum], ed. J. Strachey, 6 vols. (1767-77), iii, 355; *Chronicon Adae de Usk*, A.D. 1377-1421, ed. E.M. Thompson (1904), 13.

⁴²R.A. Lomas thinks that the rise of the Nevilles was a compliment to Richard's other methods for marginalising the Percies: R.A. Lomas, *Northeast England in the Middle Ages* (Edinburgh, 1992), 87. The *Dictionary of National Biography* calls their ascent a reward for his service to the crown against the Lords Appellant. *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. L. Stephen and S. Lee, 24 vols. (1921-27).

⁴³*Chronicon Adae de Usk*, 24-25.

ancestral lands. He may have thought of himself as simply championing Lancaster's hereditary rights. Prior to 1399, there is no reason to believe that Neville recognised any contradiction in his support for both Henry and Richard; after all, many Lancastrian retainers - including the Percies in their management of the borders - paid loyal service to the crown during this period.⁴⁴ Hastings, Roos, and Willoughby all took annuities from the crown while being on other payrolls, often even each other's.⁴⁵ All regarded royal service as distinct from their choice of private service, a distinction which King Richard never seemed to accept. Nonetheless, once Henry had broken with Richard, Neville must have recognised that his support for the rightful duke of Lancaster would surely lead him into conflict with the crown. Westmorland consciously chose to disassociate himself from the royal party, and aligned himself with Lancaster against it. While he and his Lancastrian cohorts may have seen no contradiction in their dual loyalties before and during the exile of Bolingbroke, this became invalid with Henry's return to England.

This in turn begs the question of motive. If one accepts that Westmorland recognised the antagonism with Richard that his position would cause, a strong motivation for its adoption must have been required. It may have been that Neville became annoyed by acts of the Council in 1397-8, when, on a number of occasions, it saw fit to encroach upon his prerogative as keeper of the royal forests north of the Trent, though without explicitly criticising his performance.⁴⁶ The records tell us only of the Council's pardoning him of any wrongdoing, and of its mandate that he make full account of his finances at year's end. Tuck has argued that a dispute between Ralph Neville and Lord Clifford regarding the

⁴⁴McNiven, 'The Scottish Policy of the Percies', esp. 499-502.

⁴⁵Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 109.

⁴⁶CCR, 1396-1399, 35, 96, 244.

collection of cornage from free tenants in Westmorland, resolved to Clifford's satisfaction, led Westmorland to break with the king.⁴⁷ But this incident lacked sufficient *gravitas* to warrant an open break with the crown, especially a crown which had rewarded him so generously with lands and offices; promoted him; allowed him the dubious conveyance of both his Yorkshire and Essex estates to trustees;⁴⁸ given him two cash annuities; and granted him estates in Cumberland formerly belonging to, respectively, Lord Dacre, the Cliffords, and the duke of Brittany.⁴⁹ In addition, the king made him keeper of the truce in the East March with Scotland in 1398, a job made easier with the exchange of lands between Neville and John Montague, earl of Salisbury, in February, 1397. In this, Ralph Neville took possession of Wark Castle (on the River Tweed in Northumberland, a few miles up river from the strategically important Berwick),⁵⁰ and in February, 1399, gained seisin of the manor of Stiford in Northumberland, which his father had obtained through a deal with its owner, Sir Ralph Hastings.⁵¹

⁴⁷Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, 202.

⁴⁸In 1398: *CPR, 1396-1399*, 285, 340.

⁴⁹Appleby was a traditional holding of the Clifford family: *CPR, 1396-1399*, 384. Penrith and Sowerby were given to the duke of Brittany by Richard in exchange for Brest castle: *CPR, 1396-1399*, 141. The Dacre estates were estimated to have an annual value of over £300 in 1436; while a precise valuation can not be made for the late fourteenth century, there is no reason to believe that a significant change took place between then and the mid-1430's; clearly, these were sizeable estates in the North of the country, irrespective of their precise value. See H.L. Gray, 'Incomes from Land in England in 1436', *EHR*, xxxix (1934), 607-39.

⁵⁰*CPR, 1396-1399*, 73. He later enfeoffed Thomas Grey of Heaton to hold Wark castle and its lands in his stead, in exchange for some of Grey's own holdings, perhaps in Tynedale, where the Grey family was closely associated with the Mowbray lords.

⁵¹*CCR, 1396-1399*, 347, 357. For the Hastings estate, see *CFR, 1391-1399*, 298. Interestingly, Stiford is one of the few manors which Ralph Neville specifically earmarked to be passed down, at his own death, to his grandson and rightful heir, Ralph, second earl of Westmorland, whom he spent so much time and energy disinheriting. The precise reason for his having chosen this property as the second earl's virtual consolation prize is unclear, though the unusual manner in which he obtained it may provide some clue.

All of this inspires two general conclusions. First, while Richard II generally patronised a close group of courtiers after 1397, the earl of Westmorland - by no means a member of this group - was a notable exception. Ralph Neville never held an office in the royal household, nor did he spend much time at court. He did not become a household knight until 1395, and there is reason to suppose that this occurred only as a result of Richard's own insecurity over the growth of Gaunt's retinue. This was later borne out after Gaunt's death, when the king went so far as to force Neville to swear an oath of fealty to him before confirming his 500-marks annuity from the house of Lancaster. Neville's promotion to comital status in 1397 is also inexplicable, except through the agency of Gaunt. Building upon the initial assumption that Ralph Neville was neither a confidant nor ignored by the king comes a second conclusion: the earl of Westmorland would not have risked serious confrontation with a king from whom he had only recently received so much over any of the proposed incidents of conflict described above by Tuck and others. These were simply too trivial.

Alternatively, as the Nevilles had been clients of the Percies not so many years before, one might wonder if perhaps they followed Northumberland, and not Henry, in 1399. However, this is most unlikely, given that Ralph Neville had long since surpassed the status of those of his predecessors who had acted as Percy retainers, and he now rivalled, rather than followed, the Percies in the North.⁵² His rank was now equal to that of Northumberland, and his income, ever-increasing, was occasionally bolstered by his inclusion in the governance of the Scottish Marches, where he vied with the Percies directly. His estates in the North - around the lordships of Middleham and Sheriff Hutton in North Yorkshire, and Raby and Brancepeth in Durham - provided a base for expansion in both of

⁵²See J.A. Tuck, 'War and Society in the Medieval North', *NH*, xxi (1985), 33-52.

these areas, which he achieved through royal favour, active participation in the land market, and diversification into other financial enterprises.⁵³ Just as the earl of Northumberland - once Gaunt's client - was now rival to the house of Lancaster, so was Neville now rival to Percy.

Ralph Neville's motives for following Henry in 1399 are not found in his relationship with the Percies, nor in his dealings with Richard, but in his own close association with the Lancastrian party. His father's long service to John of Gaunt, and his introduction of his son into this service, probably made support for the duke's own son and heir in 1399 a relatively easy step. King Richard, it seems, had always understood the potential for this. His mandate that Westmorland swear his allegiance after 1397 shows that he also understood something more elusive: that Neville's ties to Lancaster might even transcend Gaunt's own death. Indeed, there is compelling evidence that Gaunt had sought to secure this: in 1399, Richard ordered the quickened probate of the late duke of Lancaster's will, in the form of letters Close and Patent to the keepers of the Lancastrian castles of Pontefract and Pickering, facilitating the payment to Westmorland and his wife, Joan, of a substantial inheritance.⁵⁴ In fact, this was more than just an inheritance: from disparate resources in the North,⁵⁵ Gaunt had pieced together an inheritance totalling 500 marks annually, surely meant to replace the 500-mark annuity which Neville had collected from Gaunt after 1397.⁵⁶ The terms of this annuity after the duke's death probably did not remain as they had been during

⁵³He was, for example, active in the coal trade in Durham and Northumberland.

⁵⁴The actual sum was an annuity of £206 13s. 4d., taken from the issues of the two honours: *CCR, 1396-1399*, 463.

⁵⁵His lordships and tenements in Easingwold and Hoby, with three wapentakes there, yielding £100 p.a.; the manor of Lydell, yielding 40 marks; and payments from the keepers of Pontefract and Pickering totalling £206 13s. 4d.

⁵⁶*CPR, 1396-1399*, 548.

his life, especially in light of the fact that, in the last few years of his life, Gaunt had actively sought to expand his affinity, and subsequently transfer his own retainers to the households of his extended family, including the Beauforts, and especially that of Henry, earl of Derby.⁵⁷ It is extremely likely that Westmorland's early and emphatic support for Bolingbroke was the outward manifestation of this.

The familial relationship between Henry of Lancaster and Joan Beaufort must also have played a significant role in the choices Westmorland made in 1399 - an incentive which cannot be said to apply to Henry Percy, who could boast of no such paternal or fraternal ties to either Gaunt or Bolingbroke.⁵⁸ Perhaps on this basis alone, Lancaster's success would naturally have led to Westmorland's further elevation in status. His marriage to Joan Beaufort should certainly be regarded as a very compelling tie of fealty to the house of Lancaster, but the pains taken by Gaunt to bind the Nevilles to his own family are powerful testimony to the value he placed on Ralph Neville's service, beyond any ties of kinship. The extent to which his rise depended upon his Lancastrian connections, and the extent to which it might be effected by Bolingbroke's exile, are open questions. Perhaps Ralph Neville foresaw a more difficult political climate without the support of his great patron. Conversely, it may be that Richard's lack of respect for aristocratic property rights was the factor which allowed Henry to gather the necessary support to overthrow him; it is certainly possible that Westmorland, and indeed the Percies, saw a dangerous precedent in Richard's arbitrary behaviour toward Lancaster.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, it is critically important to distinguish

⁵⁷Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 36-37.

⁵⁸An indication of their relative status and the affection which Henry may have borne the earl can be found in the rolls, where Neville is always referred to by Henry as his "brother."

⁵⁹For a fuller discussion of this, see Barron, 'Tyranny of Richard II', 1-18.

between the motivations of Neville and Percy over this issue, for their circumstances dictate marked differences.

The political influence of Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland, was based principally on two factors. The first of these was the influence at court of his younger brother, Sir Thomas Percy, a leading member of the king's household. Without access to any of the considerable family estates, Thomas concentrated instead on gaining access to the king's ear. He was made under-chamberlain of the household in 1390, a post which he held until 1393, when he became steward of the household for the balance of Richard's reign.⁶⁰ Thomas Percy's influence at court served him and his family well: he was an active advocate for the Percy cause in the North. He lobbied the king over control of the honour of Richmond when its ownership seemed very much an open question.⁶¹ Perhaps the best example of his influence was his own promotion to the earldom of Worcester in 1397, one of a slate of promotions which also saw Ralph Neville raised to comital status. These two were the only promotions made that year which did not go to former Appellants, Bolingbroke notwithstanding, yet the motives behind the two promotions could not have been more distinct.⁶² S. Walker has argued convincingly that it was his influence with the king which led Thomas Percy to acquire an annuity from the duke of Lancaster in 1387.⁶³ Surely, this was also the critical factor in securing his earldom - an otherwise dubious elevation which, like Michael de la Pole before him, he could not hope to support with his own lands. Instead, as with de la Pole, the crown made numerous grants in support of his

⁶⁰Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, Appendix V, 283.

⁶¹*Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, ed. N.H. Nicolas, i (1834), 46.

⁶²I owe this information to Dr. Given-Wilson, whom I wish to thank for reading this chapter in draft, and for his help in improving it.

⁶³Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 107.

promotion. Contrast this with the promotion of Neville, a major landowner in, or at least near, the eponymous region of his title, who required only the grant of Penrith to justify his status. If Neville's elevation was legitimate, Worcester's was doubtful. Thomas Percy could, therefore, wield some considerable influence with the king, and was a powerful ally of the earl of Northumberland in the last decade of Richard's reign.

It was, however, the second factor which was undoubtedly most important in determining Northumberland's political influence: his ability to maintain order in the North, and defend the region against the Scots. Because of the fluidity of Anglo-Scottish relations, Percy influence ebbed and flowed with the tides of border hostilities. Prior to the late 1390's, the Percies were invariably granted Wardship of the marches, usually out of necessity. In 1379, John of Gaunt was made royal lieutenant in the marches, with the authority over all other officials there.⁶⁴ Northumberland regarded this as an intrusion into his traditional sphere of influence, and this marked the beginning of a state of antagonism between the two which eventually led to Gaunt being shut out of Bamburgh Castle by Northumberland during the Peasants' Revolt.⁶⁵ John Neville was at the time serving the crown in France, but this did not stop Gaunt from introducing Ralph Neville to border service in November, 1381. In that year, he presided over a duel with Henry Percy, son of the earl of Northumberland, between an Englishman and a Scotsman at Carlisle, the administrative centre of the West March.⁶⁶ That same December, after extricating himself

⁶⁴For this, and much of the other background to what follows, see Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', 27-52; and *Richard II and the English Nobility*, esp. 200-24; Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, esp. 171-267; and Bean, *Estates of the Percy Family*, *passim*.

⁶⁵Details regarding the political classes and their response to the Peasants' revolt can be found in W.M. Ormrod, 'The Peasants' revolt and the Government of England', *Journal of British Studies*, 29: 1 (1990), 1-30; and R.B. Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381* (1970). for a full discussion of Gaunt's influence and reputation, and especially his political aims in a larger context, see A. Goodman, *John of Gaunt: The Exercise of Princely Power in Fourteenth Century Europe* (1992).

⁶⁶*Foedera*, iv, 134.

from his duties in Guienne, John Neville was appointed by Gaunt as Northumberland's replacement as Warden of the East March.⁶⁷ However, having realised that governing the marches without the Percies - while just possible in times of relative peace - was quite impossible in periods of open hostility, the duke of Lancaster brought the earl of Northumberland back in March of the following year. He was initially made warden of a new 'Middle March', though he later gained joint Wardship of both East and Middle Marches united, a post which he shared with John Neville and another veteran of high royal service, Walter Skirlaw, bishop of Durham.⁶⁸ The complex series of arrangements aptly illustrates the reluctance of both Richard and Gaunt to allow the earl of Northumberland total control of the English defences on the Scottish border. It was the necessity of doing so which was to become the overarching reality of northern politics in the later middle ages.

In due course, therefore, Gaunt and Richard acquiesced in this matter, and for the balance of the period to 1396, the Percies and Nevilles shared the governance of the northern marches, and held the captaincies of the border cities of Berwick and Carlisle, with only occasional contributions from other, less important northern families; even then they generally acted as subordinates of one or other of the two great magnates.⁶⁹ Richard's attempts in this period at granting custody of the marches to his courtiers - as in 1389, when

⁶⁷Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', 41.

⁶⁸*Rot[uli] Scot[iae]*, 2 vols., Record Commission (1814-19), ii, 40-43. Skirlaw's rapid rise through the diocesan ranks began in earnest in 1386, when he was consecrated bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, only to gain a transfer to the wealthier diocese of Bath and Wells later that same year. In 1388, he was transferred to Durham, and took up the temporalities there in September of that year. He died holding that office in 1406. See *Handbook of British Chronology*, E.B. Fryde, D.E. Greenway, S. Porter, and I. Roy, eds., 3rd edition (London, 1986), 228, 242, 253.

⁶⁹The Cliffords played such a role in the early 1380's, as did Thomas Grey of Heaton after his enfeoffment by Westmorland of Wark castle in 1397. The earl of Northumberland also used local landlords to enforce the truce in the early 1390's: *Rot. Scot.*, ii, 105, 107, 109.

Thomas Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, replaced Neville as Warden of the East March - where he held virtually no land - were relatively rare. Such experiments, always undertaken in peacetime, were invariably abandoned once hostilities resumed, and the king never managed completely to exclude the marcher lords from undertaking important commissions.⁷⁰

Throughout the 1380's and early 1390's, prominent members of the north-eastern gentry, like Sir Thomas Grey of Heaton, Sir Robert Ogle of Ogle, Sir William Mitford, and especially Sir Gerard Heron, were named to various border commissions; these dealt with such things as treating for redress of various infractions of the peace, commissions of array, and issues of a more formally diplomatic nature, such as treating for peace with the Edinburgh government.⁷¹ However, many of these border knights had strong connections to the Percies and Nevilles, further reinforcing their influence in the region.⁷²

For the moment, then, Richard was forced to abandon his policy of excluding the Percies in the North: in 1390, at the behest of the king, Mowbray exchanged his Wardship of the east march for Northumberland's captaincy of Calais.⁷³ John Neville was warden of the marches for much of the 1380's, and, after replacing Mowbray, the senior Henry Percy was made sheriff of Northumberland and remained captain of both Berwick and Newcastle.⁷⁴ The Percies again controlled the north-eastern border, while the crown simultaneously undertook a foreign policy designed to isolate the Scots from their French allies. In the early 1390's, Richard sought to negotiate a separate peace with Scotland, by

⁷⁰Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', 44-45; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, 96.

⁷¹See, for example, *Foedera*, vii, 650.

⁷²The Greys, for instance, were associated first with the Percies, and then, after 1397, with the Nevilles.

⁷³Storey, 'Wardens of the Marches', 602; *Rot. Scot.* ii, 107-10.

⁷⁴*CFR, 1391-1393*, 76 and in Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', 42.

whatever means possible. Such was the volatility of the relationship that, in 1394, during a period of heavy negotiation between the two governments, the king commissioned Skirlaw, his most experienced diplomat, to go to Edinburgh and propose a marriage between the English and Scottish royal families.⁷⁵ However, in spite of these efforts at extreme measures, the Scottish border remained unstable throughout the early 1390's, a state of affairs requiring the services of men not unlike those named conservators of the peace in July, 1392.⁷⁶

By the end of 1396, however, tensions between the English and Scottish governments had again eased. Richard had achieved his goal of a separate peace with France, and had wed Charles VI's daughter, Isabel, to seal it. This also led to an easing of tensions along the northern border. On 16 March, 1398, an indenture of peace was arranged between the English and Scottish governments, as part of a larger agreement with the French.⁷⁷ Henry Percy was duly replaced in the west march by John, Lord Beaumont, one of Richard's courtiers; his successor in this capacity was John Holland, a man even more closely associated with the court, and whose brother had married the king's sister.⁷⁸ As noted above, an elderly John of Gaunt had already been installed as lieutenant of the marches, and by 1398, the last to the king's quest to dilute the power of local interests in the North - in favour of royal courtiers - had been removed. Richard's installation of first Holland, and later Edward of York, as Wardens of the West March, showed scant regard for

⁷⁵*Foedera*, vii, 787.

⁷⁶These included the earl of Northumberland, Ralph, Lord Neville, the bishops of Durham and Carlisle, lords Greystoke and Dacre, and the captains of Berwick, Carlisle, and Roxburgh: *Foedera*, vii, 724.

⁷⁷*Foedera*, viii, 35.

⁷⁸Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', 48-49; *Rot. Scot.*, ii, 135.

their lack of standing and influence in the region.⁷⁹ The coming of a formal truce between the two countries thereby strengthened the king's commitment to introduce courtiers to the governance of the North. Until more research has been undertaken comparing levels of unrest in the borders in times of formal peace and war, the merits of this strategy must remain uncertain. However, the king's approach was flawed inasmuch as it misread the local political climate. Richard's resumption of his 'outsider' policy left the Percies faced with the prospect of being effectively shut out of border governance over the long term. Indeed, by early 1399, the king apparently felt that his future border arrangements were secure enough without the Percies to allow the considerable Lucy lands in Lincolnshire and Suffolk - held by Henry Percy in right of his widow, Maud - to pass to her heirs and not to him. The prospect of a future rife with such a relationship with the crown must have been unacceptable to the Percies, who were unaccustomed to being anything but indispensable to the crown. Percy dissatisfaction with the crown, chiefly over their role on the Scottish border, provided their motivation for seeing Richard replaced in 1399.

However, royal patronage of Ralph Neville - in the form of grants of annuities, lands, and office - increased, rather than decreased, in scope and pace after 1397. This is best interpreted as a product of Westmorland's relationship with John of Gaunt. S. Walker has argued that, in the last few years of his life, Gaunt had begun to consider more readily his family's prospects after his own death. To this end, between 1395 and 1399, he all but tripled the amount of money spent annually on retainers, from £424 14s. 4d., to £1,231 13s. 9d. - of which 500 marks went to Ralph Neville alone.⁸⁰ Much of the increase can be attributed to new retainers, men not taking annuities both from Gaunt and the Exchequer, as

⁷⁹For details of this, see Tuck, 'Richard II and the Border Magnates', 50; and *Rot. Scot.*, ii, 142-49.

⁸⁰This is chronicled by Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 177-78.

many of their predecessors had. Gaunt had also begun sharing the services of his retainers with Bolingbroke and the Beauforts.⁸¹ In addition to their annuities from the duke, many of Gaunt's knights and esquires secured additional sums from other family members - most often from Bolingbroke,⁸² though frequently from John, Henry or Thomas Beaufort. Unfortunately, the lack of Neville household papers has led to a paucity of evidence, which prevents a similar assessment of the retinue of Gaunt's daughter, Joan, and her new husband. However, it seems incongruous that Gaunt would invest so much money and political capital on Ralph Neville's behalf, only to exclude him from this new policy of extending the services of his retinue to his family, a form of patronage which was, after all, far more easily arranged than royal grants. Indeed, Gaunt's policy of promoting the Beauforts included the promotion of Ralph Neville, who had married into that family. This increase in resources and effort spent by Gaunt on his retainers in the late 1390's largely accounts for the acceleration of Neville's ascent in that period, and helps to explain Richard's motivation for depriving the Percies of the northern lands which they coveted, when gaining them would likely have made them even more effective in their defence of the border, and therefore of more use to the government.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the honour of Richmond. The title 'earl of Richmond' was then held by John de Montfort, duke of Brittany, though his tenure became somewhat ineffectual: he had become unable to collect the sums due him from the farm of the honour.⁸³ As a result of a treaty with King Richard in 1391, Brittany regained the

⁸¹ Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 36-37.

⁸² Along with this dual service went the proviso that these men should remain in Derby's service after the duke's death, indicating that Gaunt's intent was indeed to reform an affinity around Henry; *CPR*, 1396-1399, 499.

⁸³ *Proceedings and Ordinances*, i, 47.

honour, in exchange for the Breton castle of Brest. However, the duke remained unable to enjoy the extent of his English lands for most of the 1390's.⁸⁴ Only in 1398, when he was firmly reconciled with his earldom, did the duke regain any control over the lands comprising the honour. From 1381-8, that control rested with the English crown, and with the farmers of the honour's constituent lands, including the Percies and Nevilles.⁸⁵ The most valuable of these was the lordship of Richmond itself, control of which seems to have been among the most contentious of all. It is first thought to have been leased as a whole in 1388, for a period of twelve years, to the Lumleys of Durham, a notable northern family. The agreement was terminated by the crown when it ostensibly returned the lands to the duke of Brittany in 1391. However, later in that same year, the lordship was again put to farm by the crown, to Henry FitzHugh, for £433 6s. 8d., which is, as M. Jones points out, a sum equal to its value in 1383/4. FitzHugh probably maintained control of these estates until 1395, when Ralph Neville became their farmer, under the same terms and conditions.⁸⁶

Nonetheless, ownership of the honour remained illusory. By the early 1390's, the king had secured Richmondshire, and the loyalty of the duke of Brittany, for an annuity of 600 crowns; in 1398, he made Brittany one of his knights.⁸⁷ As the Percies and Nevilles had both been at various times major tenants of the earl of Richmond, and as both strongly desired title to this strategically unique holding, both lobbied for its ownership, though

⁸⁴Jones, *Ducal Brittany*, 193; *CPR, 1396-1399*, 13.

⁸⁵Jones, *Ducal Brittany*, 189-95. For a general overview of the honour and lordship of Richmond, see *The Victoria History of the County of York: North Riding*, ed. W. Page, i (1914), and ii (1923); and A.J. Pollard, 'The Richmondshire Community of Gentry', in C.D. Ross (ed.), *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1979).

⁸⁶Jones, *Ducal Brittany*, 193.

⁸⁷Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, (Appendix V) 286.

initially unsuccessfully. There had always been keen royal interest in the satisfactory settlement of this matter: Richard II's privy council discussed it at length throughout the early 1390's, and Queen Anne's own involvement adequately speaks to the king's level of interest in its resolution.⁸⁸ In many ways, the Percies were the obvious choice to succeed to the title and lands of Richmond, especially those which fell nearest the Scottish border, in Cumberland and Westmorland. Instead, the crown held the honour in hand, and granted the lordships of Penrith and Sowerby - a portion of the Richmond honour valued at £62 per year in 1397 - to Ralph Neville, even though they were held at farm by the Percies at the time.⁸⁹ He also granted Neville some of the honour's estates in Norfolk and Essex, including the manor of Rising. The acquisition of Penrith gave Neville a foothold in the North-West, at the expense of the earl of Northumberland,⁹⁰ even though Thomas Percy had lobbied the king on his behalf over Richmond, where he had at stake his own £100 annuity.⁹¹ Richard II's reluctance to grant title to the honour of Richmond to the Percies, and his grant of certain of its constituent estates to the Nevilles, clearly constitutes the promotion of Neville interests by the crown over those of the Percies. Thus, Henry's resettling of the honour of Richmond on Westmorland for life in 1399 was in some ways anticipated by Richard's own grants, much of which came through the advocacy of Gaunt.

Indeed, at a time when other prominent northern families were being excluded from border service, Westmorland's own role seemed to be expanding. His acquisition of Wark Castle - a property on the River Tweed, in Percy Northumberland - from the earl of Salisbury

⁸⁸*Proceedings and Ordinances*, i, *passim*.

⁸⁹*CPR, 1396-1399*, 39.

⁹⁰*CCR, 1396-1399*, 413; *CPR, 1396-1399*, 39, 267.

⁹¹*Proceedings and Ordinances*, i, 46.

in 1397 may also have been engineered by Gaunt. Precious little patronage was available to the crown in the northern border region, and Richard had always favoured his own courtiers in its distribution. With Montague willing to part with a castle and lands of such strategic value on the border, Richard must have desired it for a member of his own household, to use as a foothold there. Nonetheless, it was purchased by Westmorland, and put to good use when he became keeper of the truce in the east march in 1398.⁹² This, too, must have been at Gaunt's behest, and for much the same reason. While the duke seems to have subscribed to the crown's policy of excluding the Percies,⁹³ he also promoted Westmorland's interests wherever possible - even as in 1398, in the face of an informal, yet nonetheless established, royal policy.⁹⁴ He may simply have viewed this as promoting the interests of his courtier (and later, of his kinsman); in practical terms, however, this was the beginning of what would become a very coherent Lancastrian northern policy under Henry IV.

Westmorland's support of Bolingbroke in 1399 should therefore be seen not as purely anti-Ricardian in character, as Northumberland's clearly was. Unlike those of the Percies, Neville's interests had been actively promoted to the last days of Richard's reign, and his wealth and status had steadily been raised. But this was in large measure a product of his relationship with Gaunt, rather than his own royal connections, which were minimal. Ralph Neville was one of the few men outside of Richard II's immediate circle to benefit consistently and significantly from the king's patronage. The typical pattern is much in evidence in the re-allocation of the estates of Richard Fitzalan, earl of Arundel. After 1397, the bulk of the considerable Arundel lands were granted to John Holland, duke of Exeter, the

⁹²*Rot. Scot.*, ii, 145.

⁹³Indeed, he may have formulated that aspect of it, as in 1381.

⁹⁴As in Westmorland's appointment as Warden of the East March in 1398, when there was no need to give it to a local figure.

king's brother-in-law.⁹⁵ Richard followed this strategy virtually throughout his reign. When he did break with it - as he clearly did often enough in Westmorland's favour - it is best explained by the influence of Gaunt. Unlike the king, however, Gaunt's own retaining situation changed markedly after 1395. Walker outlines this pattern, and concludes that although Gaunt's income, and therefore his scope for patronage, was in serious decline, his spending to maintain the support of his followers remained constant, and may even have increased in some instances.⁹⁶ The nature of that change - which roughly coincided with Richard's redoubled efforts on behalf of his courtiers, and with Neville's own marriage to Gaunt's daughter - would certainly explain his taking a more active role in securing Westmorland what royal patronage he could. Thus, Neville's support for Bolingbroke should be understood primarily in terms of his loyalty to the house of Lancaster, and not any disaffection with the crown.

Henry of Bolingbroke's support in 1399 immediately notable for its distinctly northern character. William, Lord Willoughby was paid £623 for his participation, a very significant sum indeed.⁹⁷ Son and heir of the widow of the late Lord Latimer, Willoughby is known to have had very close connections with the Nevilles of Raby. In addition, he had ample reason for great dissatisfaction with his treatment by Richard II. In September, 1382, William Ufford, earl of Suffolk, died suddenly without issue. In his will, Ufford named his nephew Robert, Lord Willoughby, as heir to those of his lands not held in tail male. However, the king's courtier, Michael de la Pole, was granted these lands instead, and in 1385, upon his elevation to the earldom of Suffolk, he was granted the remaining Ufford

⁹⁵*CPR, 1396-1399*, 266, 430. The few that remained were granted to Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham, and others.

⁹⁶Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 24.

⁹⁷Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397-1400* (Manchester, 1993), 252.

lands in Suffolk. Had these estates descended to the preferred heir, they would have come down to William as Lord Willoughby.⁹⁸ Ralph, Baron Greystoke also rode with Bolingbroke that summer, probably joining him with the other northern magnates at Doncaster.⁹⁹ A significant landowner in the North-East, he was, at times, retained both by the Percies and John of Gaunt, and served on border commissions with both.¹⁰⁰ Along with a number of other northern lords, Greystoke refused to lend money to Richard II to help finance his second Irish expedition in the Spring of 1399, which, as J.A. Tuck has suggested, may indicate a general dissatisfaction in the region over Richard's government.¹⁰¹

More straightforward, and more personal, were the motives of William, Lord Roos. An outstanding Lancastrian, his father, Thomas, Lord Roos of Helmsley, was one of Gaunt's first retainers from the earldom of Richmond - certainly as early as 1370, though perhaps earlier - and went abroad in the duke's service at least five times, for which he took an annuity of either £40 or £50.¹⁰² Throughout these years, Roos, with John, Lord Neville, even held the distinction of being one of Gaunt's bannerets.¹⁰³ Indeed, the two bannerets often shared retainers between them - as with Sir Ralph Hastings, who took a fee from both men - and they even took enfeoffments and annuities from one another.¹⁰⁴ The adherence of the progeny of Thomas, Lord Roos, to the heir of Lancaster is therefore somewhat

⁹⁸These lands were extensive. See *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, 1413-1418*, xx (1995), 441-51.

⁹⁹*Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi*, 151-52.

¹⁰⁰*Rot. Scot.*, ii, 62.

¹⁰¹PRO Patents for Loans, E 34 / 1B / 40 / 214, Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, 196.

¹⁰²*CPR, 1377-1381*, 246; *CCR, 1377-1381*, 17; Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 105, 280.

¹⁰³Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 51, 62, 90.

¹⁰⁴Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 109.

predictable. These men were the leading northern magnates in the country active on either side in 1399, and all supported Henry. Yet was there truly a North-South divide? Each of these lords could count among his reasons for supporting Bolingbroke a strong previous association either with the house of Lancaster, or with the Nevilles or Percies - or indeed any combination thereof. It is, therefore, the overarching importance of these families in the region which provides the illusion - or fact - of a North-South divide. To be a northern knight or baron in the later-fourteenth century was to be in some way associated with Neville, Percy or Gaunt.

The Reign of Henry IV

From 1399 onwards, the earl of Westmorland was to have a central role in the new king's administration. In that year, he was granted, by letters patent, lands formerly belonging to William LeScrope in the ward of Dowegate, London - a large property which included both commercial and residential buildings - surely meant for his own residence when in the capitol.¹⁰⁵ However, it is also clear that his primary function was not to be the new king's advisor in London, but rather his governor in the North. It might be that Henry envisioned him in a role similar to the one played by his own father under Richard II: *de facto* lieutenant in the border counties, governing the region with the weight of royal authority. Grants of office and land, and Neville's use of the Lancastrian strongholds of Pontefract, Pickering and Knaresborough, indicate that he - and not his northern rival, Henry Percy - was to be the king's man in the region. Nonetheless, the prominence of the Percies in number and strength - led by Thomas, earl of Worcester (the new king's steward of the household after 1401), and the earl of Northumberland, now Constable of England - has led

¹⁰⁵*CPR, 1399-1401*, 149.

many modern historians to assume quite wrongly that it was they who dominated both Henry's affinity and the flow of patronage in the early years of his reign.

In fact, the prominence of the Percies at court in these early days did not lead to any neglect of Westmorland's interests. Instead, the evidence suggests that, even as the Percies were being placated at court, Henry was in the business of augmenting Westmorland's power in the North. On 30 September, 1399 - the day after Richard's 'renunciation' of the throne - Westmorland was made Marshall of England for life.¹⁰⁶ Less than three weeks later, he was granted custody of the late lord Dacre's lands during the minority of his heir. These must have been much sought-after by Westmorland, given that they included the barony of Burgh-by-Sands, and the districts surrounding Kirkoswald and Naworth castles in north-eastern Cumbria.¹⁰⁷ The Dacre grant in particular was sure to have inspired Percy opposition, given that their own lordship of Cockermouth bordered Burgh to the west, and that their long-time rivals, the Nevilles - rather than their own clients, the Dacres - were now in control of much of the land directly to the east of their own Cumbrian estates.¹⁰⁸

The most important grant of all, however, was yet to come. The following day, Ralph Neville was granted the honour of Richmond for life, and was endowed with all of its constituent lands. This served to link, in a virtually unbroken chain, his estates in the North Riding of Yorkshire, Westmorland, Durham, and now Cumberland and Northumberland.¹⁰⁹ It has been estimated that the honour's lands were worth some £1,500 a year in revenue; this

¹⁰⁶*CPR, 1399-1401*, 9; this was confirmed that same December at Westminster (*CPR, 1399-1401*, 202).

¹⁰⁷Storey, *End of the House of Lancaster*, 106.

¹⁰⁸This included some part of the barony of Egremont, south of Cockermouth, which the Percies held with the first countess of Westmorland: Storey, *End of the House of Lancaster*, 108.

¹⁰⁹*CPR, 1399-1401*, 22, 24.

estimate may, however, be unduly conservative. That figure is based on sums received during the tenure of the duke of Brittany, who was, as Jones points out, something of an anomaly among English landowners, in the sense that his primary interests lay overseas. Such a large estate, in the hands of a foreign, absentee landlord cannot have been the most effective recipe for maximising what profits may have been possible in Richmondshire. However, by virtue of their local standing and their ability to provide close supervision of the honour's core properties, the Nevilles were in a position to do just that.

Other royal grants followed closely behind. Sometime before 21 November, Westmorland was granted rents from the manor, town, and lordship of Boston which were in addition to those integral to this Lincolnshire lordship.¹¹⁰ Henry also confirmed Richard's grant to him of a £120 annuity from the port of Newcastle, and, on 5 December, confirmed him in all of his father's lands, cleared of all accrued arrears, and likewise confirmed his other annuity of £130.¹¹¹ In July, 1401, the crown took in hand the manors of Rise and Eastburn, two estates formerly belonging to Lord Fauconberg in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The crown held Rise, and granted Eastburn to Westmorland, allegedly due him by virtue of a bargain between his father and Walter Fauconberg some years before.¹¹² He also acquired various commissions of property in the early years of Henry's reign, most notably those of Miles Stapleton in Yorkshire; the manor of Marton in Westmorland (formerly belonging to the earl of Huntingdon); and the manors of Burton-in-Lonsdale and Kirkby Malzeard, and the forest of Nidderdale in Yorkshire, all of which had been held by the duke of Norfolk.¹¹³

¹¹⁰*CPR, 1399-1401*, 102.

¹¹¹*CPR, 1399-1401*, 254, 400.

¹¹²*CFR, 1399-1405*, 112-13.

These grants served a variety of purposes. The Stapleton and Norfolk lands surely were not taken up purely for profit: the records indicate that the earl was to remit to the treasury the full extent of their annual income. While this was also the arrangement with the Huntingdon lands, they were to be stewarded by him indefinitely, and were potentially available in the future on a more permanent basis, the oversight of which will have yielded profits eventually. However, the common function of these commissions, irrespective of their potential profitability, was their provision of an opportunity for Westmorland to increase his influence in the North, both through an increased connection with the royal demesne, and by the exercise of lordship in the northern counties, areas in which he sought to establish his own hegemony. Ralph Neville's influence was further expanded in the far north in the summer of 1403, when he was granted custody of Roxburgh Castle for a term of ten years, an event which may have been the final straw leading to the first Percy rebellion.¹¹⁴ Roxburgh was in many ways symbolic of the aspirations of the Percies in southern Scotland. For them, it represented an important link in their chain of Northumbrian fortresses, as well as a potential launching pad for movements into the Scottish Lowlands. Royal grants of lands to the Nevilles, then, while certainly begun under Richard, came to their full fruition with the accession of Henry IV. From the very earliest stages of the new king's reign, the earl of Northumberland must have recognised a generous and consistent pattern of patronage between Henry and Ralph Neville, and have become wary about its potential to do him harm.

Taken in sum, the grants of the marshalcy, Roxburgh Castle, Wardship over so many important estates in the North, the confirmation of Westmorland's promotion and the

¹¹³*CFR*, 1399-1405, 29.

¹¹⁴*CPR*, 1401-1405, 233.

annuities granted in the reign of Richard II,¹¹⁵ and especially the honour of Richmond - with its considerable lands and strategic importance - represent a concerted attempt by Henry to establish Neville as the pre-eminent magnate in the North. The suggestion by Tuck and others, therefore, that Henry was reactive in his treatment of the Nevilles and Percies, simply does not follow.¹¹⁶ Neville's early support for Henry of Lancaster, and his eminent position among northern magnates, made him the ideal candidate for consolidating the new king's rule in the North. Particularly telling is the confidence shown by Henry in delegating authority there, given his own experience as a usurper. Or perhaps he simply recognised the North as the most likely source of serious threat to his rule - be it in the form of the Scots or of his own northern magnates - and that he could not rule there effectively without a powerful governor. This had been the role of John of Gaunt in the 1380's, one which Henry himself seems to have thought crucial for the maintenance of stability. Westmorland's traditionally strong local position in North Yorkshire and Durham - which, by 1405, had been greatly extended into Northumberland and the North-West - was arguably as strong as Lancaster's had ever been.¹¹⁷ His standing rivalry with the Percies, close familial association with the king, obvious military and administrative competence, and years of service to the house of Lancaster made him the ideal choice to play this role.

In light of the royal patronage bestowed upon Westmorland in the early years of Henry's reign, all at court must have been aware that the promotion of Neville interests in the North was being achieved largely at the expense of the Percies. However, as noted above,

¹¹⁵Only two of Richard's promotions were allowed to stand by the new king. The other was that granted to Thomas Percy, earl of Worcester.

¹¹⁶Tuck, *Crown and Nobility*, 224-25.

¹¹⁷Clearly Gaunt was an unusual figure, who outranked Neville in many ways, but his estates in the North never approached those even of the Neville patrimony alone.

they, too, were beneficiaries of significant royal patronage in the earliest years of Henry's reign. In October, 1399, Henry granted the earl of Northumberland all revenues from the Isle of Man, augmenting his presence in the North-West.¹¹⁸ In that same year, Hotspur gained the Talbot lands in Tynedale;¹¹⁹ he also obtained, by a mortgage of 500 marks, the estates in Northumberland of Sir Richard Arundel, who also sold him eleven manors in Glendale, Northumberland, sometime in 1399.¹²⁰ Perhaps these forays into the land market did not constitute direct royal patronage, but their undertaking must have been overseen and approved by the crown, the last word in dealings of such scale. Arundel was one of the king's household knights, and in any event the change of ownership of property in the borders would certainly have merited close attention.¹²¹ The cumulative effect of these deals was an enhancing of the ability of the Percies to defend the Scottish border, just as surely as did their appointment to the military governorship of the marches. Evidence from inquisitions *post mortem* in this period shows that the estates of many Northumbrian landowners had lost most of their value, as a result of the troubles along the border.¹²² It is likely that the Percies maximised any residual value held by these estates, and the inability of other lords to collect these rents may have been the reason for their sale in the first place. However, to Henry - and to the Percies - their greatest value was probably strategic.

¹¹⁸CPR, 1399-1401, 27.

¹¹⁹CPR, 1399-1401, 94.

¹²⁰Bean, *Estates of the Percy Family*, 10. These were the manors of Byker, Ellingham, Newstead and Newham. While there is no way of ascertaining their exact value in this period, given the vagaries of Northumbrian valuations and the forays of the Scots, we do know that three of these four - the manors of Ellingham, Newham and Newstead - were together worth £37 6s. 8d. in 1471. See Bean, *Estates of the Percy Family*, 10, 45.

¹²¹Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, Appendix VI, 287-90.

¹²²PRO DURH 3/2, *passim*; *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, 1399-1405*, 130, 138-39, 209-10.

Stability in the North was one of the new king's most pressing short-term problems, and promoting the Percies in Northumberland, if not overmuch, was part of his solution. Henry was resolved to use the Percies to govern the marches with Scotland, and allow them as much landed strength there as was necessary to do so.¹²³

A further element of the settlement with the Percies came in the form of grants of high office. The earl of Northumberland was made constable of England shortly following Henry's accession to the throne. Hotspur, as part of a large batch of peacekeeping appointments, was made sheriff of Northumberland on 30 September, 1399,¹²⁴ while Thomas Percy, earl of Worcester, became the king's steward in 1401, following a parliamentary of the royal household.¹²⁵ These appointments are interesting in light of the pattern of such appointments in Henry's reign. As a rule, Henry IV reserved such appointments for close friends or former Lancastrian servants. Irrespective of their formal standing, these men were counted as the king's own knights from the very first days of his reign.¹²⁶ Thomas Erpingham, a Lancastrian who had joined Henry in his exile in France, became the first chamberlain of the household, a position which he held until 1404; thereafter, he became the king's steward.¹²⁷ His predecessor in that position was also a well-known Lancastrian esquire, Thomas Rempston. Thomas Tutbury, archdeacon of Wells and Henry's first keeper of the wardrobe, had previously been treasurer of John of Gaunt's household. Further, Henry had initially re-appointed as keeper of the privy seal Richard

¹²³Tuck, *Crown and Nobility*, 224-25.

¹²⁴*CFR*, 1399-1405, 1.

¹²⁵Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 287.

¹²⁶Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 70-75.

¹²⁷For all of the following dates of appointments, see Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, Appendix VI, 287-290; and *Handbook of British Chronology*, 72-92.

Clifford, brother of lord Clifford, who had supported him in his usurpation; in 1401, he gave that position to Thomas Langley, archdeacon of York, who served John of Gaunt before becoming Henry's own private secretary.¹²⁸ In addition, although he appointed, under parliamentary duress, the archdeacon of Lincoln, John Scarle, as chancellor, Henry replaced him in 1403 with Henry Beaufort, the brother of his councillor Thomas Beaufort (and of Neville's wife, Joan) who, after 1404, became the immensely wealthy bishop of Winchester. This trend favouring old Lancastrians is also recognisable in royal appointments to the localities. Among his initial appointments in the shires, Henry's own younger son, John, was made sheriff of Westmorland, and John Hutton - a life-long servant of the king's father and of the earl of Westmorland - became sheriff of Lancaster.¹²⁹ Westmorland's fealty to the house of Lancaster before 1399 led rather logically to his own high appointment in the new king's administration. The grant of the marshalcy, then, should also be viewed as an 'in-house' Lancastrian appointment, given that Neville could boast, as fervently as any, of close connections to the king's family and retinue prior to 1399. Conversely, the appointment of Worcester was a concession to parliament and the Percies; most of the highest offices, especially in the household, were reserved for Lancastrian insiders.

In addition to the grants of office made to his household knights and the earl of Westmorland, the king was busily promoting his clerks and kinsmen, such as Henry Beaufort and Thomas Langley, to higher positions in the church and government. He had already tried and failed on two occasions to gain Langley an episcopal see - London and York - before the Pope finally agreed to appoint him to the bishopric of Durham in 1406.¹³⁰

¹²⁸R.L. Storey, *Thomas Langley and the Bishopric of Durham, 1406-1437* (1961), 3-5.

¹²⁹*CFR, 1399-1405*, 1-3; John Hutton was later used by Westmorland as a trustee for his estates as the latter went through the legal process of disinheriting his grandson and heir.

Strained relations with the papacy, and the Holy Father's recognition that Langley was, in every sense, Henry's man, account for the difficulties.¹³¹ In 1404, the king's half-brother, Henry Beaufort, was translated from the diocese of Lincoln to Winchester, the wealthiest in England.¹³² A.L. Brown has called this process part of the legitimising of Henry's government. Because there were so few magnates of any stature upon whom Henry could count to execute the offices of state, he was in many ways forced to be patient, until such time as a new higher baronage could be created which was both loyal to him, and trustworthy in holding high office. Part of this process was clearly Henry's translation to the great bishoprics of the realm men who boasted solid Lancastrian credentials. In Beaufort's case, this was the tie of kinship; for Langley, it was a history of service to the king's family. Although Henry did not elevate many of his elder servants to the ranks of the secular baronage, as his predecessor had (and as his successors would), he was nonetheless engaged in a slow process of consolidation. This, then, marks a critical period of transition for the king, the biding of time and currying of favour with those outside of his household faction, while simultaneously building up the Nevilles in the North, and moving other supporters into key positions, both in his government and in the church (or in the case of Langley and Beaufort, both). The Percies were therefore increasingly isolated, generally operating outside of an established group of influential Lancastrians which, always advantaged by its old ties to the ducal household, was now gaining in stature and influence around the new king.

¹³⁰For Langley's pre-Durham career, see Storey, *Thomas Langley*, esp. 2-22; the king even granted a special charter on 5 May, 1406, confirming Langley in the temporalities. See *Calendar of the Charter Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office*, v, 431-32.

¹³¹Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 3-8.

¹³²*Handbook of British Chronology*, 256.

While Henry had always maintained the principle of promoting the Nevilles in deed as well, their promotion took a turn for the better in 1402, and the alienation of the Percies became more acute. In that year, Thomas, earl of Worcester, was ousted as steward, simultaneously losing his seat on the council. A. Rogers has laid out the events of the political crisis of 1401, and its final resolution in 1402, though his explanation of events is somewhat puzzling. He argues that the ousting of Richard II's officers of state, re-instated in 1401 by the parliament (with the heavy backing of the Percies), was the product of a coalition engineered by the king, which included his own supporters, the Beauforts, and the Nevilles. However, as I have argued above, there were no ranks to close; the Nevilles were, from the beginning, insiders. The political crisis of 1401 was not a parliamentary purge of the royal household as much as it was a reaction by the Percies to their waning influence in royal government. Therefore, I largely accept R.L. Storey's interpretation of this event, with the caveat that it be placed in a broader context. He has argued that Worcester was the personification of Percy influence at court, gaining regional power and patronage for his cousins from the king.¹³³ The loss of his voice on the council meant their loss of guaranteed regional hegemony. Yet this episode must remain firmly secured against a backdrop of strife between the king and that family. Henry's grant of Roxburgh and Wark castles to Westmorland, and his persistent non-payment of the Percies for their military governorship of North Wales and the east march with Scotland, must also be considered.¹³⁴ Perhaps it was at that point when the king, who was now greatly in financial debt to the Percies for their expenses in the borders, finally found it sufficiently advantageous to break with them openly. The cynical observer might ask whether Henry had merely used the

¹³³Storey, 'North of England', 135-37.

¹³⁴*proceedings and Ordinances*, 150, 152, 154.

Percies for a few years to police the borders, running up a very large debt indeed, all the while biding his time until he had placed enough close supporters in key governmental positions, thereby only delaying the inevitable incendiary response from the Percies. The king's state of mind on this subject is very difficult to fathom, yet under the circumstances, given his actions in the first years of his reign, it is difficult to imagine that he was genuinely trying to forge any sort of long-term relationship with the Percies.

Historians of this period have noted that the earl of Westmorland was often present at the royal court before 1403. In his discussion of the reign of Henry IV, Brown also asserts that Neville did this to safeguard his own interests, given that the three senior three members of the Percy family were, one or another, regularly in attendance.¹³⁵ This explanation is convincing. Evidence from the palatinate of Durham reveal that the earl was not in evidence there much before the elevation of Thomas Langley to the bishopric in May, 1406, but is very much involved in local matters thereafter.¹³⁶ Interestingly, the Percies' interests in the palatinate of Durham, admittedly few - though occasionally lucrative - even in the 1380's, disappeared altogether by the turn of the century. Durham seems to represent - like Richmondshire, southern Cumberland, Westmorland, and even parts of Northumberland - another instance of tangential Percy interests being pushed aside in favour of those of the Nevilles. Further, Brown notes the rise of the earl's brother, Thomas Neville, Lord Furnival, who took possession of Berwick, Alnwick and Warkworth after Shrewsbury; Furnival was regularly at court until his death in 1407, and was named to the council in 1404, the year in which he also became Henry's treasurer.¹³⁷ Thus able to rely on his brother to speak for the

¹³⁵Brown, 'Reign of Henry IV', 12-16.

¹³⁶Evidence for this can be found, for example, in the chancery court records for the palatinate in the relevant period, held in the Public Record Office, and listed as PRO DURH 3/34 and 3/35.

¹³⁷Brown, 'Reign of Henry IV', 13-15.

family at court, Ralph Neville once again turned his attention to the North, albeit in a much enriched state. As outlined above, his gains now meant that he was truly the rival of any family in the region in wealth and standing.

The Percies, by contrast, were never regarded by Henry as regular members of the Lancastrian retinue, and could not therefore be treated as such. In addition to the evidence from Richard's reign, discussed above, there is a wealth of support for this idea from the usurpation itself. For example, for their part in Henry's victorious march through England in 1399, Northumberland and Hotspur were together paid a sum of £2,000, far and away the greatest sum allocated to any of the Lancastrian supporters. By contrast, the earl of Westmorland was paid just £146 for his role.¹³⁸ There is no way of evaluating the actual size of the retinues brought to the field at Doncaster, but we can safely assume that both those brought by the Nevilles and by the Percies were considerable. Also, the chronicles make plain that, while the combined force of Hotspur and Northumberland was almost certainly larger,¹³⁹ Westmorland's army was also very sizeable indeed, and was thought by these same chroniclers to have been crucial to Henry's victory.¹⁴⁰ Westmorland's traditional lands in the North, and the frequency with which he and his father had formed armies in defence of the border, make it quite likely that he would have been able to raise a significant force there, particularly at that moment, given the recent increase in the Westmorland's cash resources. The participation of Sir Robert Neville of Hornby and one of Westmorland's

¹³⁸This information is provided in Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, Appendix B, 252-53; it can also be found in PRO DL 42/15, fos. 70-71.

¹³⁹*Kirkstall Abbey Chronicles*, ed. J. Taylor (Thoresby Society, 1952), 122.

¹⁴⁰In most of the contemporary chronicles, Westmorland's name follows only Northumberland's in the listings of Henry of Derby's supporters, following his landing at Ravenspur. While such evidence is inferential at best, there seems to be no other way to gauge the relative importance placed upon Neville's participation by these authors.

long-standing Yorkshire retainers, Richard Gascoigne - with retinues of their own - are further testimony to this.¹⁴¹

In such an event, we can only conclude that Henry's relationship with Ralph Neville assuaged the need to entice him monetarily into service. By contrast, the cash sums paid over to Northumberland and Hotspur should properly be viewed as part maintenance for their army, part bribe for their participation. Neville was thought of by Henry as a trusted servant, who could be depended upon to answer the call in these circumstances, by virtue of his family links, his history of service, and his rise in status, which I have argued was closely associated with the house of Lancaster. The Percies, on the other hand, were rightly perceived by Henry from the first as something of a necessary evil, volatile outsiders - perhaps even rivals - who expected immediate compensation, both in terms of the cash paid to them in 1399 and the vast patronage directly thereafter. The sums paid to the Percies by the king following his victory in 1399 were far greater than those paid to any of his other supporters. Their alarming willingness to break with royal authority when their own narrow interests were threatened, and when the opportunity suited them, cannot have gone unnoticed.¹⁴² Instead, his predecessor's - and perhaps his own - experiences, led Henry to seek a different solution: building a cohesive governance of the North without dependence upon the Percies.

¹⁴¹Sir Robert Neville of Hornby was paid wages of £20 by the receiver of Pontefract for his service to Henry in 1399, while Gascoigne received £13 from the receiver of Knaresborough for his: Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, Appendix B, 253.

¹⁴²It is worth remembering that the initial patronage of the two families differed in scale. As Professor Tuck has pointed out, Henry rewarded the Percies with the wardships of both marches with Scotland, and also much of the Welsh Marches, along with the power for policing them. The earl of Westmorland gained only Richmond, though, as would become apparent later, this was worth more than all of the grants made to the Percies in the first year of Henry's reign.

The Percy rebellion of 1403, then, can be seen either as a product of Henry's northern policy, or as its ultimate justification; it was probably something of both. The Percies had a recent history of insurrection, and, given their aspirations, might have rebelled anyway. Their interpretation of their own self-interest, coupled with an apparent willingness to exercise their considerable military strength against the crown, surely meant that they would always have been an uncertain partner in government. The agitation of Westmorland's constant advancement can only have aggravated this tendency. For his part, Henry seems to have viewed their rebellion as justification for his promotion of Neville interests, which he continued and even accelerated thereafter. It is reasonable to conclude that the crown's patronage of Westmorland prior to the battle of Shrewsbury increased Percy anxieties about their position in the North, in spite of their formidable presence at court.

As noted above, many of the central facets of the argument which I have made here have long been acknowledged by modern historians. Yet it seems that the case for an early and fervent Lancastrianism on the part of the Nevilles, as opposed to Percy opportunism, has never yet been comprehensively made, drawing upon evidence from both 'sides' of the "Lancastrian Revolution". J.M.W. Bean correctly notes that the Percies were the second-largest private landholders in Yorkshire, behind only the house of Lancaster.¹⁴³ After 1399, when Henry took Lancastrian lands into the royal demesne, the Percies should have become the dominant baronial family in Yorkshire and the North-East. Instead, it was the Nevilles who became increasingly active there, their standing further augmented by their acquisition of the honour of Richmond. In addition, they were also challenging Percy hegemony in the North-West, their own holdings beginning to compare with the great Lucy lordship of Cockermouth, then held by the earl of Northumberland. Henry's patronage of the Percies,

¹⁴³Bean, *Estates of the Percy Family*, *passim*.

II.

Ralph Neville and the Creation of a Lancastrian North-East, 1403-1413

The 'Lancastrian Revolution' did not, then, spell the end of the rise of Ralph Neville in the North. On the contrary, as I have shown above, it meant the beginning of a new matrix around which the region would be governed. From the beginning of the reign of Henry IV, the Percies had found that their use to the new king - which was surely great - did not lead to the central role in governance for which they had clearly hoped. In fact, if we are to believe the preponderance of circumstantial evidence, the opposite was true. Henry governed initially through a close group of Lancastrians, and rather than include the Percies in this, he undertook to isolate them, and limit their political influence, particularly in the far north, which had of course been the wellspring of their power. Having seen the necessity of including them in times of hostility along the border, and the political influence which was implicit in this simple military reality, the king deliberately carried on the campaign begun by his predecessor. However, Henry had one important advantage in this over Richard II: his brother-in-law, the earl of Westmorland, was a viable rival to the Percies, and was loyal to the king. In addition, Henry's financial strains - or perhaps his political plotting - meant that there was little scope for the remuneration of the Percies in their endeavours in the hinterlands, Scotland and North Wales. On reflection, the Percies seem to have first come openly into conflict with the king with the taking of Conwy Castle in Wales in 1401 by Sir Henry Percy the younger. Thereafter, several letters were written by him to the king and council asking for money to pay his armies'

wages, even threatening on several occasions to resign his commission as warden of the marches unless payment for his garrisons in North Wales and Berwick were forthcoming.¹ These pleas by the Percies - coinciding roughly with parliament's attempts to reform Henry's household - eventually turned to thinly veiled threats, and finally to outright rebellion in the summer of 1403.

A number of issues must have loomed large in the decision of the Percies to rebel; of these, two stand out above all others. The first, as I have alluded to above, was their gradual understanding of their status as outsiders *visa vis* the crown. This sense of being on the margins of what was evolving into the inner circle of the political community was only exacerbated by such things as the crown's unwillingness to allow the Percies leave to dispose of the prisoners of Humbleton Hill, particularly in light of the fact that they had been granted the lands of the Scottish Earl Douglas. Without the crown's assent to a truly expansionist policy toward Scotland, these lands were, in real terms, worth little. In addition, a meaningful buffer zone further north would return much value to their estates in Cumberland and Northumberland.² Many Northumbrian estates, as shown below, had seen their values greatly decayed for a generation and more - as presumably had those on the Scottish side of the border - and fresh English victories might have brought fresh hope to the Percies for a restoration of the value of their English estates. However, the earl of Northumberland and his family were singularly unsuccessful in persuading the crown to re-focus energy in this direction, and King Henry continued to pursue a policy of negotiation for the purpose of gaining peace in

¹ See, for example, *Proceedings and Ordinances*, i, 147-51; ii, 57.

² *Foedera*, viii, 319.

the first years of his reign, adding insult to injury by using other members of the Northumbrian land-owning community to do so.

The second factor which seems to have been critical in the decision by the Percies to take up arms against Henry was the issue of payment. As letters to Henry's council show, by 1403, Northumberland believed the crown owed him over £20,000 for the payment of the armies mustered in the service of the king in North Wales and the Scottish marches. At the same time, it is clear that they also believed that their rivals - perhaps even the Nevilles - had spread a rumour that the king had already paid them some £60,000 since his coronation, perpetrated against them for the purpose of turning the opinion of the baronage against them, and thus isolating them within the political community. It must have become abundantly clear to the earl of Northumberland, his brother, and his son that, while they remained undeniably important to Henry for the maintenance of order in the realm (just as they had been to Richard II), they were nonetheless unsuccessful in forcing their agenda upon him, and unable to secure payment for services which they had rendered to him. Instead, they seem to have been somewhat low on the financially-distressed Henry's list of remuneration priorities.³

Evidence of the Percies' place amongst the crown's advisors can be found in the actions of Ralph Neville, upon hearing of the Percy rebellion in 1403. Westmorland quickly apprised the king of the military situation in the North - a role which the crown had to some degree created for him - and gave Henry pointed, frank, and urgent advice as to what steps he thought prudent in combating the rebels. It is only when a glimpse of this sort of counsel is glimpsed, presented to the king in the

³ *Proceedings and Ordinances*, i, 207 & 203-4.

person of Sir William Heron (one of the key English diplomats to the Scottish court, who also seems to have been in the pay of the earl of Westmorland), that one sees the stark contrast with the Percies, who had only recently been largely responsible for the ultimate success of the Lancastrians in 1399.⁴ Unable to pay their expenses in the service of a largely ungrateful king, unsuccessful in convincing him to prosecute a war which might have reaped them great reward, and excluded from an increasingly powerful inner group - led conspicuously by their main rival, Neville - it seems that by 1403, they too felt the eventuality of their decline, and took up arms to prevent it.

In stark contrast to the foundering of the Percies in this period was the continuing rise of the earl of Westmorland, whose career prospects enlivened still further in the months leading up to the battle of Shrewsbury. This trend continued in the years immediately following Hotspur's rebellion, as the crown sought to reconstruct order in the North-East without the Percies. Although Henry had insulted them on a number of occasions by introducing Ralph Neville into Northumbrian management (such as his supervision of the expenditure of a rather large sum of money on the building of a bridge across the River Tweed, supposedly overseen by Hotspur in his capacity as constable of Berwick),⁵ the crown's most overt move in this direction had been the grant of the custody of Roxburgh Castle to the earl of Westmorland in 1403. This was overtly hostile to the designs of the Percies in southern Scotland, and must have been seen as such by contemporaries.⁶ It probably also represented the last straw for the Percies. In July, 1403, Westmorland, Ralph

⁴*Proceedings and Ordinances*, i, 209.

⁵*CPR, 1399-1401*, 536.

⁶*Rot. Scot.*, ii, 161.

Eure, Henry FitzHugh, his old servant William Gascoigne, the lawyer, and others, were commissioned by the crown to raise arms against the earl of Northumberland in the North-East. The success of this endeavour was, in the end, the primary reason for the failure of the Percies to link their two armies together at Shrewsbury, and may be the decisive reason for the survival of Henry's rule beyond that summer.⁷ The ability of the Nevilles to rally favour for the crown in the North almost certainly prevented the three Percies, four years after taking up arms with Henry, from repeating their success. The division of the two forces was, of course, permanent, and spelled not only the deaths of Hotspur and Worcester, but also the effective end of Northumberland's political career, though he would continue to make trouble and act as a nuisance for some years after.

Westmorland spent much of the year following the defeat of Hotspur at Shrewsbury policing the North, maintaining the king's rule in areas where Percy sympathies might have been expected to run high. Henry seems to have left the North quickly, having defeated Hotspur and aided Westmorland and his men in chasing the earl of Northumberland back to the border, leaving explicit instructions for his men. Minutes of the Privy Council make it clear that he ordered Ralph Neville and his brother, Thomas - Lord Furnival - to secure the surrender of the Percy fortresses in Northumberland.⁸ Nonetheless, though he had publicly reconciled with Westmorland and Henry, Northumberland remained a problem for the government in the North, evidenced by the many unsuccessful attempts at dislodging him from his military bases in the North-East.⁹ As part and parcel of that effort, Westmorland was

⁷*CPR, 1401-5*, 294; *Foedera*, viii, 319.

⁸*Proceedings and Ordinances*, i, 213-14.

named 'defender against the king's enemies' in Westmorland and Cumberland in September, 1403. In October of that year, the scope of his commission widened, as he and two of his closest retainers, the lawyers John Conyers and William Gascoigne, were named commissioners of *oyer et terminer* for Yorkshire, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland; they were to hear the charges of treason brought against those who had risen with the Percies.¹⁰ In June, 1404, Westmorland was again named at the head of such a commission, though this time it seems to have been for the purpose of dealing with matters in South Yorkshire, indicated by the inclusion of Thomas Erpingham, John Curson, and Richard, Lord Grey, as well as Gascoigne and the earl himself.¹¹ The nature and makeup of this commission are an insight into Henry's rule during this period. Erpingham, as A.L. Brown has noted, was primarily a soldier, in spite of his other honours, while Grey of Codnor was at this time a rising star in Lancastrian circles, and would soon be named chamberlain of the household. Curson was also a soldier, a Derbyshire knight who was involved in all of the negotiations between the king and the earl of Northumberland at this time. Gascoigne was a Yorkshire esquire of some ability who was probably attached to Ralph Neville from the 1390's, but who was enough of a military knight in his own right that he brought his own retinue when joined Bolingbroke in 1399.¹² Along with the earl of Westmorland, these were the men to whom Henry turned in times of crisis. In spite of the best efforts of the commons and the Percies, Henry's closest, most trusted group of supporters remained undeniably 'old Lancastrian'.

⁹*Rot. Parl.*, iii, 525.

¹⁰*CPR, 1401-1405*, 287, 361.

¹¹*CPR, 1401-1405*

¹²Brown, 'Reign of Henry IV', 16-17; Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 287.

The uncertainty over the status of the earl of Northumberland and the far north dragged on into 1404. On 10 September of the previous year, the king had named his son, John, Constable of England. He had already been made warden of the east march at the age of fourteen, a task which, like the constabulary, he cannot possibly have undertaken in the usual way. But the question of John of Lancaster's ability to perform any of the duties given to him in the North was answered two weeks after his appointment to the constabulary, when Henry sent an embassy, led by Sir Ralph Eure and Sir Henry FitzHugh, to treat for peace with the Scots.¹³ Scottish hostilities were the key obstacle to weakening the Percies in the North-East; Richard II had tried and failed to weaken their hold on the region by gaining a lasting peace on several occasions, with only limited success. Henry understood that only with a negotiated settlement and capable replacements in the region could the project be completed. Securing a peace with the Scots, and building up certain close associates in the North over the subsequent years, would be a recurrent theme in Henry's northern policy. He thus used grants of offices to build up Sir Ralph Eure in the North-East, working in concert with the bishop of Durham, and continued to expand the influence of the earl of Westmorland wherever possible. Henry's Scottish policy may not have been expressly for the purpose of weakening the Percies, but it certainly had that effect.

In early March, Westmorland was commissioned to treat for peace with the Scots. In late April, 1405, two months after the enrolment of these land transactions by the king, Ralph Neville led a commission to reconcile the crown with the followers of the Percies in the North. In this, with Eure, Gascoigne and others, and in a concerted effort with all of the

¹³*Foedera*, viii, 332.

king's officers in the North - including the bishops of Durham and York, the king's uncle Edmund Langley, duke of York, and the sheriffs of York and Northumberland - Neville sought once and for all to undercut the support for the earl of Northumberland in Yorkshire. There was apparently little point in attempting this in Northumberland, just as there is now little point in denying that Percy still maintained a solid base of support there, even after the battle of Shrewsbury.¹⁴ The events of 1405, and especially those surrounding the open rebellion of Archbishop Scrope and Northumberland in that year - not least the seminal role of the earl of Westmorland in its suppression - have long been known to historians.¹⁵ Therefore, I will resist a retelling of those events here, save to say that in June of that year, Henry ordered Westmorland and the young prince, John of Lancaster, in their roles as wardens of the marches, to take possession of Northumberland's castles and holdings in the borders. A week later, the king summoned his supporters in the North to meet him at Newcastle, as he had heard that Percy was at Berwick.¹⁶ By the time the king reached the North, the rebellion had been quelled by Westmorland, who had once again succeeded in dividing the rebel forces after narrowly avoiding capture himself. Northumberland failed to join his forces with those of the other conspirators, cut off by the royalist forces led by Ralph Neville. This effectively ended the rebellion.

Following the failure of Archbishop Scrope's rebellion, Westmorland once more found himself in the employ of the crown: in September, 1405, he was granted leave to treat for peace with the Scots.¹⁷ This was to become one of the enduring

¹⁴*Foedera*, viii, 394, 399.

¹⁵For details, see Dugdale, *Baronage*, 274-75; Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 59-64.

¹⁶*Foedera*, viii, 400.

¹⁷*Foedera*, viii, 418.

themes of his career in the years after 1405, and was one of the key aspects of northern peacekeeping, without which a vacuum might have formed following the downfall of the Percies.¹⁸ In an attempt to reformulate his policy toward Scotland after 1405, the king was free of the constraints which the Percies had placed upon him; he was no longer obliged to take account of their self-serving hawkishness, and could instead concentrate on a diplomacy which might help to secure his rule in other ways. Henry's policy objectives may initially have paralleled those of the Percies; if they did, they changed quickly. To some extent, this was a natural adjustment, given that the stated objectives of the co-conspirators of 1399 changed after their assumption of different roles - each with different objectives and interests - in the new government. If the designs of the Percies remained constant in the decade straddling 1399, Henry's interests shifted markedly. As such, the assessment of P. McNiven - that much of the trouble of Henry's early reign can be traced to Percy ambition north of the border - may yet be the most economical.¹⁹

Henry's chief instruments for achieving true order in the North and peace along the Scottish border were his two most trusted hands in the region: the earl of Westmorland and Sir Ralph Eure. Their ability to engage the Scots in negotiation was critical to the survival of the English North-East in the years following the eclipse of the Percies. Commensurate with these new realities, Westmorland found himself much employed in the North in these years. He was not named to Henry's new council in late 1406, though his brother, Lord Furnival, became the king's treasurer and a regular member of that council.²⁰ The need for Ralph Neville to be

¹⁸Dugdale, *Baronage*, 275-76.

¹⁹McNiven, "The Scottish Policy of the Percies", 529-30.

in London at court - competing for influence in the North, by attempting to gain grants of land and office - had ended with the fall of the Percies. As Brown has noted, they were his only real rival for supremacy there, and thus his only real rival.²¹

Henry had largely achieved his goal, if in an unsatisfactorily dangerous way, of ending the Percy threat in the North. In its place went a nominally more diffuse system of control, spread between the Nevilles, the youthful duke of Bedford, Thomas Langley (who was by now bishop of Durham), and the man who served all of them so well, Sir Ralph Eure. Evidence for this can be found in the commissions of 1407: in late August, Bedford and Westmorland were empowered by the king to assess the situation in the four most northerly counties, and array the king's subjects as necessary to put down any further threat posed by Northumberland and his supporters. In addition, they were named to a commission of *oyer et terminer*, with William Gascoigne, who had become Henry's chief justice, Ralph Eure, Richard Redman and Thomas Rokeby (whose family had long been in the service of the English crown in Yorkshire) in those four counties.²² Thus, they were empowered not only with the king's sword, but also became the official arbiters of his justice.²³ This group was still assembled when, in April, 1408, the crown commissioned them, with Robert Conyers and others, to treat with the remaining Percy supporters in Northumberland that they make peace with the king, and to seek their return to the

²⁰ *Proceedings and Ordinances*, i, 295.

²¹ Brown, 'Reign of Henry IV', 8.

²² *CPR, 1405-8*, 432.

²³ *CPR, 1405-1408*, 359.

political community.²⁴ Thus, in the space of a very few years, the crown had entirely re-arranged the power structure of the North; put another way, the withdrawal of the Percies from that power structure had led to its re-organisation, this time around the stout figure of Ralph, Lord Neville.

If Henry needed justification for his northern policy, certainly the crises of 1405-8, along with that of 1403, and the role played by Westmorland in their resolution, provided him with it. Ralph Neville's growing authority in national affairs and his traditional power in the North were used to their greatest effect in helping Henry to put down the Percy rebellions - all of which originated in the North. It is indeed ironic that the favour bestowed upon Neville, in the form of the earldom of Westmorland and the numerous other grants and instances of patronage described above, by Richard II, should have proved so useful to his usurper in maintaining his own control of the country in times of great crisis. In the space of about ten years - from 1397-1407 - Westmorland's Lancastrianism; his ability to secure benefaction from the duke of Lancaster, his greatest patron; his support for his wife's kinsman, Henry, in his usurpation; and the rebellion by the Percies and their northern retainers - which remained largely unresolved until 1408 - left him unchallenged in his supremacy in the North. His direct influence extended from the city of York to the Scottish border, where he was effectively the warden of both marches. A rare combination of strong, long-standing local influence and the power inherent in being not only a close advisor to the king, but also his brother-in-law, made Neville both formidable, and trusted by the king.

²⁴ *CPR, 1405-1408*, 405.

Indeed, Ralph Neville's marriage to Joan Beaufort, along with being a great political asset to him, was also (like his first) an extremely fruitful one, producing fourteen children. The first of these was an eldest son, Richard, born in 1400. It was he who would become earl of Salisbury in 1429, through his marriage to Alice Montague (daughter and heir to the Montague earl of Salisbury), and who would secure the North-West march for the Nevilles on an almost hereditary basis.²⁵ It seems ironic, considering the family's early and fervent Lancastrianism, that it was to be the earl's youngest daughter, Cecily, who would later marry Richard, duke of York, and mother the Yorkist dynasty. In any event, it was clear to the first earl of Westmorland that this - the cadet branch of the Neville family - was to be the one with the most powerful associations, and which, combined with the traditional influence of the Nevilles in the North, and the inclination of the Percies toward rebellion, made this second family a strong favourite of the crown. Westmorland himself seems always to have understood the value of kinship in his own political good fortune, and sought almost from the time of his own second marriage to bring the family's wealth exclusively into the hands of his Beaufort children alone. This further suggests that distinctions drawn between the Beauforts, the Nevilles, and the crown in Henry's early reign are, to some extent, an illusion. As I have shown above, members of Henry's household mingled freely with the Beaufort and Neville families in these years to provide stable governance; and as I will argue below, many men close to Henry were retained by the earl of Westmorland, and his own retainers, like Gascoigne, were well treated by the king. Some of this was, of course, based upon service. However, there was also a strong component of familial relationships in this

²⁵The details of these events are outlined in Storey, *End of the House of Lancaster*, Chapter 5.

political establishment, and there is no greater evidence of this than the Herculean efforts of the earl of Westmorland on behalf of his second wife's Beaufort children.

THE NEVILLE TRUST

The means by which Ralph Neville would achieve this concentration of the family's wealth are, by now, reasonably well known. It involved extensive conveyance of the family lands to retainers, and the re-issuing of that land back into his own, for his use and that of his heirs by his wife Joan. This conveyance to use is elucidated fully in J.M.W. Bean's *Decline of English Feudalism*, and its mechanics and legal status need not be examined here.²⁶ It is enough to say that, by the end of the fourteenth century, such conveyances were common. By the end of Richard II's reign, Westmorland had already begun making such conveyances of properties, a project that would consume so much of his energy over the next several years. In other words, he had begun the disinheriting of the elder branch of his family. Westmorland had tied himself very closely to the Lancastrian party, and the proximity of his second wife, Joan, to the crown itself seems to have convinced him that the future of his family lay in gathering all of its wealth in the hands of his Beaufort offspring.

While speculating on the motives of a single individual is undoubtedly a dangerous business, nonetheless, it does seem that the earl's decision to redirect the bulk of the Neville patrimony to his second family must have been based on the rewards that had accompanied his second marriage. The great majority of

²⁶Bean, *Decline of English Feudalism*.

Westmorland's good fortune, described in some detail above, had come as a result of his associations with the house of Lancaster. For example, his promotions to the earldoms of Westmorland and Richmond were almost certainly the result of his connection to Gaunt, then Henry, and his annuities from Lancaster the direct consequence of it. This prompted him, though a series of these conveyances, to disinherit his rightful heir, a grandson called Ralph, who was the son of John Neville, Westmorland's eldest son by his first wife, and who died in 1420. John Neville was a loyal son to his father, and was named to various commissions with him, culminating in his being named Warden of the West March. However, his premature death, while not making Westmorland's decision to disinherit for him (this had been made long before), certainly made the process much easier, in that it eliminated the chief figure of opposition. Ralph, his grandson, was still a young boy at the time, and could hope to mount very little opposition. These conveyances began quite soon after his marriage to Joan, though they predate the birth of Richard Neville, their eldest, in 1400. This clearly indicates a commitment to pass all the family's wealth to the Beaufort line irrespective of the personality, or indeed, the existence, of its recipient.

The process of disinheriting his elder offspring seems really to have begun on 5 February, 1398, when Westmorland gained licence of the king to enfeoff Richard Clitherow, John Darrell, and John Witton of his manor of Clavering, in Essex. After the three men had been granted seisin of the manor, it was in turn granted back to Westmorland *and Joan Beaufort*, for *their* use and that of *their* heirs.²⁷ The explicit inclusion of Joan Beaufort in the grant certainly unmasks the intent of the process. In May of that year, the earl of Westmorland continued the disinheriting of his first

²⁷Both are named in the document: *CPR, 1396-1399*, 285.

wife's children when he enfeoffed John Alwent, clerk, Alan Menville, John Thorpe, and John Darrell, again, of the lordship of the manor and castle of Sheriff Hutton, with its constituent lands of East Lilling, West Lilling, and Cornburgh. After attaining seisin of these lands, the trustees granted back the lands in tail male to the earl and, again, his wife Joan.²⁸ These estates were then granted back to Westmorland and his wife, for their use and that of their heirs. His retainers seem to have been local figures of minor standing in and around Neville areas of influence, and, while direct evidence here remains elusive, it is reasonably certain that all of these men were retainers of the earl, employed by him in the execution of this rather dubious and complicated series of trusts. Two years later, in the spring of 1400, Henry confirmed Richard II's 1397 grants of the Cumberland lordships of Penrith and Sowerby (the former lands of the duke of Brittany that were meant to support his promotion to the earldom of Westmorland), as well as his £120 annuity from the port of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.²⁹ Again, the confirmation of these grants was earmarked for the use of the earl and his wife Joan, and the heirs male of *their* bodies. Interestingly, the original grant of the lands by Richard uses this language, again hinting strongly at the early intent of its beneficiaries.³⁰

In August, 1400, the earl made plain his intentions regarding all of his lands throughout the country when he enfeoffed certain unnamed persons of his manor of Stinton, in Northumberland,³¹ certain lands, rents and services held not of the king in Yorkshire,³²

²⁸CPR, 1396-1399, 340.

²⁹CPR, 1399-1401, 331.

³⁰CPR, 1396-1399, 267.

³¹Valued at £40 per year.

and other unspecified lands, to the value of 300 marks per annum, for the use of his grandson Ralph, with the remainder going to pay his debts and marry off his as-yet-unmarried daughters.³³ It seems that this was to be the consolation prize for Westmorland's rightful heir: a £200 annuity. In 1404, Westmorland again conveyed his lordship of Sheriff Hutton, this time to an old retainer, John Morton, and Thomas Green. The conveyance is explicitly described: the castle and manor of Sheriff Hutton, with 52 dwellings, 64 bovates of land (at the standard fifteen acres each), twelve acres of meadow, ten of woodland, and 200 acres of pasture in the three constituent townships listed with the manor above, with licence to resettle them on Ralph and his wife, Joan, and *their* heirs.³⁴ In that same year, the earl began to sell some of his lands in Coverdale and Wensleydale, to the abbots of Coverham and Jerveaux, respectively; these were granted in mortmain, but were almost certainly exchanged for other lands, granted to the earl and his wife at the above conditions.³⁵

RALPH NEVILLE AND DURHAM

Nowhere is Westmorland's obsession for disinheriting the elder branch of his family, and his strategy for carrying it through, more apparent than in County Durham, his family's ancestral home. In attempting to trace the consolidation and manipulation of the Neville lands in Durham, the records that are most revealing are those which deal with the constituent manors comprising the lordship of Brancepeth,

³²Also valued at £40 per year.

³³*CPR, 1399-1401*, 332.

³⁴*CPR, 1401-1405*, 470.

³⁵*CPR, 1401-1405*, 472, 495, 501.

and those which deal with the lands held by the earl as a free tenant of the bishop of Durham, including properties around, but not included in, the Brancepeth lordship. Evidently here, too, Westmorland had already long since begun the process of disinheriting the elder branch of his family by the time of the Percy rebellions. Therefore, some discussion of Neville land holding in Durham from around that date is certainly appropriate. This will include those lands held within the lordships of Brancepeth and Raby, as well as those held outside these ancient enfeoffments, held as a free tenant of the bishop of Durham. It will also attempt, briefly, to determine the fate of these lands after Ralph Neville's own death in 1425, and to determine where control of them came to rest.

On of the most valuable estates in the palatinate of Durham was the Neville lordship of Brancepeth. While it is not possible to precisely tabulate the value of the entire lordship, which in itself comprised a number of manors, it may be possible to reconstruct an approximate sum through evidence relating to those constituents. Because this lordship was held freely by the Neville family as part of a twelfth-century grant, and because Neville household administrative records do not survive, the Brancepeth estates can only be examined by studying the bishop of Durham's administrative records, through which some picture of their extent, value and manipulation can be gained. Because of Durham's palatine status, the bishop's rights within the liberty replaced normal royal prerogative, and meant that his own officers were charged with the administration of local lands. The sheriff of Durham was the local official responsible for the administration of these lands, and seven of his accounts survive for the period 1409-32. While not great, this number is sufficient to facilitate some examination of the earl's handling of the constituent manors of the Brancepeth lordship.

Clearly the earl of Westmorland had been, by 1406 and probably earlier, conveying various of his manors to retainers through enfeoffments to use. While it is true that these manors represent relatively small portions of the great Neville lordships in Durham, there is no evidence that other such enfeoffments of constituent lands was taking place simultaneously. In 1409, the sheriff and escheator of Durham seized the proceeds of the farm of the manors of Newton and Binchester, constituent manors of the Brancepeth lordship, and Cockfield, a constituent of the lordship of Raby. However, in the same account, the sheriff was ordered by Bishop Langley to forgive these debts, for that year and those previous, in the case of Binchester and Cockfield, two years; in the case of Newton, three-and-a-half. In 1412-13, the manors of Cockfield and Binchester again were listed as escheats, the earl having conveyed them by deed without previously obtaining the bishop's licence.³⁶ Also in that year, the account reveals respites of £62 for sums owed as escheat for Binchester, for that year and the previous four, and £133 6s. 8d. for Cockfield, also for that year and the previous four.³⁷ These accounts show that Westmorland had begun the conveyance of his Durham estates at least as early as 1405, and almost certainly earlier, though evidence for this is circumstantial. The process of conveyance and administrative give-and-take continued apace. These manors were again seized by the escheators in 1415-16,³⁸ and again in 1419-20, when they were returned to the earl by his trustee, Robert Binchester.³⁹ In 1411, the bishop had

³⁶CC 189602.

³⁷CC 189602.

³⁸CC 189600.

³⁹CC 189601.

enrolled in chancery the conveyance of his manors of Scolacliff and Newbiggin, in Teesdale, to Robert Binchester, a tenant and retainer who was now deceased. The entry further instructs the sheriff not to seize the properties by escheat, and excuses the transfer of the bishop's territory, licensing Robert Binchester's widow to hold these estates in dower.⁴⁰

As expected, further examination of the sheriff's accounts for the period shows evidence of large-scale debt relief by Bishop Langley, for the earl's delinquent sums owed to the escheator. The account for 1415-16 provides respite in the amount of £113 to the earl for Cockfield, for that year and the preceding three, as well as granting respite for Binchester in the sum of £24 16s. 0d., for that year and the one previous. Further, the bishop pardoned Westmorland for his conveyances, and issued him a new licence, enabling him to hold the manors of Cockfield and Binchester, and the advowson of the church of Cockfield, indefinitely.⁴¹ Because these properties were still under the control of Joan Beaufort at the time of her death in 1440, it is probable that this new licence explicitly allowed Ralph Neville to resettle the manors on himself and his wife, and enabled him to bypass his legal heir.⁴² It is significant that although these manors were constituents of the Brancepeth lordship, neither of them came into the hands of the second earl upon proving his majority in 1433.⁴³ The bishop's policy of respiting the earl's debt as-incurred indicates that these escheats were probably meant to act only as a public record of the trust, perhaps in an

⁴⁰PRO DURH 3/34.

⁴¹*Thirty-Third Report of the Deputy Keeper*, 129.

⁴²PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 306.

⁴³PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 230.

attempt to legitimate the process. Westmorland was also cleared of a seemingly annual debt following the escheat of the manor of Newton. In 1412-13, the earl was granted a £60 respite, covering seven-and-a-half years. This means that Westmorland was already in the process of disinheriting the elder branch of his family by 1405. In the surviving accounts for most years in the early fifteenth century, such entries occur for at least three Neville properties within the lordship of Brancepeth. Their regularity and their mechanical respite on the dorse of each account indicate that they were probably never meant to be substantive conveyances at all, but were merely titular transfers. As trustees, such men as John Hutton, William Tunstall, and Robert Hilton were never meant to take *de facto* control of the manors in question. Their role was to take over their legal possession, allowing the earl to circumvent his heir by giving up ownership, if only for a time.

A second conclusion that can be drawn from these records is that such unlicensed transfers and conveyances of land were not particularly unusual. The records suggest that many of the palatinate's most important free holders made similar conveyances, most notably William and Robert Claxton, who appear several times as conveyors of manorial properties, and Sir Ralph Eure. The account of 1412-13 tells of the alienation by the wealthy Newcastle merchant, Roger Thornton, of the manor of Redhugh, valued at twenty marks, without the bishop's licence.⁴⁴ In 1415-16, the sheriff through escheat seized the manor of Brideside, near Gateshead, which Sir Hugh Redhugh, an important member of that south Tyneside community, had attempted to convey to his associate, John Dolfamby, without the bishop's licence. In that same year, the sheriff by escheat claimed a large house and three bovates of land

⁴⁴CC 189602.

which Roger Thornton had attempted to convey to his wife before his own death, which had again allegedly been done without the bishop's approval.⁴⁵

Thirdly, while clearly the collection of fines fell within the duties of the sheriff, there is no indication that he was meant to be any sort of rent collector. His activities, while varied, seem to have been confined to administration, enforcement, and collection of fees due the bishop from his free tenants, as a result of some breach of their tenurial obligations. The sheriff's role did not, therefore, involve the collection of rents from those engaged in the farming of properties escheated by the bishop, given that the penalty for failing to gain licence from the bishop for the conveyance of lands and thereby creating a new sub-infeudation level that had not sworn fealty to the bishop, was having the custody of that land fall back into the lord's hands. Because all of these estates were clearly sub-infeudated, the fine in real terms amounted to one year's rent on the manor, which would be remanded to the lord bishop, rather than to their holder. The rents from those lands were paid in the usual manner, and the sheriff would then collect the sum from the holder, if one existed, or would collect from the farmer in the absence of a living freeholder. The sheriff's task was, therefore, the collection of the annual cash value or rents on the property as penalty either for infringing upon the bishop's feudal prerogative, or in the case of a death without an heir of sufficient age.

In spite of this fairly straightforward legal framework, there is abundant evidence to suggest that the Nevilles never remanded any of these yearly revenues to the bishop's administrators. This is curious, given that the records painstakingly list their debt in the "escheat" section, only to have it forgiven, often in great amounts, in

⁴⁵CC 189600.

the respite section at the end of the account. In the earliest surviving accounts, Westmorland is repeatedly excused from payment of these sums, even though his transgressions are repeatedly chronicled. For the manor of Newton alone, there is, in the account for 1412/13, a single respite totalling £60, for that year and the previous six-and-a-half, at £8 per annum. Similarly in 1412/13, Westmorland was respited for his outstanding fines on the manor of Cockfield, to the sum of £133 6s. 8d., or £26 13s. 4d. per year, for that year and the previous four.⁴⁶ Later accounts also show that the bishop regularly excused Neville rents for Brancepeth lordship after periods of delinquency. The nature of these entries is quite clear: they excuse, in sweeping terms, the sums nominally owed by the earl to the bishop.

The respited amounts tell a rather interesting story: £60, or 90 marks - the sum given for Newton - was the important number, and the retrospective period of abatement, seven-and-a-half years, were probably only an afterthought. It represented the necessary period for full respite at Newton's annual value. In the case of the manor of Newton, the respited sum in 1412/13 is £60; the entry clearly indicates that this sum represented seven-and-a-half years worth. Similarly, the annual valuation of Cockfield at 40 marks meant that, cancelled over the said five years, a sum of £133 6s. 8d. was respited on the manor, representing that year and the previous four, each at £26. 13s. 4d. It seems here that the official was told to give 200 marks of debt credit to the earl, and write off the number of years covered by such a sum; that he duly did. This series of escheats and respites is an interesting one. It seems, given that each of these manors was meant to fall into the hands of the lord bishop, that he was to collect the year's rents, and therefore these sums

⁴⁶CC 189602.

represented the value of the Neville manors in Brancepeth. Beyond that, it would be difficult to comment on the extent to which these valuations represented the actual cash revenues of the manors. Just as the Nevilles paid £10 per year to the prior for the lordship of Raby, so they might have leased out their constituent properties for nominal sums centuries before, with those sums becoming effectively crystallised.

The accounts also indicate that the earl of Westmorland was, on occasion, respited in exchange for unspecified service to the bishop. However, while he almost certainly did provide Bishop Langley particularly with invaluable local service, this is probably only rhetorical. The systematic, repetitive nature of these respites, most of which carried with them no explanation at all, bears this out. This bears the important question: why, when tenurial laws had been broken, could the bishop's officials not make this point stick, and collect these sums from the earl? One possible explanation is that this represents a general rebellion by the earl against his feudal overlord, and that, as a result, Westmorland simply refused to hand over the money. However, this seems unlikely, given that Langley was able to collect from him significant freehold sums held by him outside the lordship of Brancepeth. However, because those properties were part of neither the Raby nor the Brancepeth lordships, and because they were added later to augment these great traditional lordships, they were therefore held as freeholds or farms of the priory and bishop. These were not the sort of great manorial properties I have studied above, in that they often represented small, disparate holdings, often in urban areas. In the case of Winlaton, for example, they held the manor of the lordship of Brancepeth, but the township existed as an administratively separate entity, of which they were the farmer. Their farmed holdings, spread thinly around the palatinate were very extensive indeed, and varied greatly in size and value. The township of Winlaton, for example, was an important adjunct to their manor of Winlaton, which itself housed important coal mines; thus, its £10 annual rent. Their

freeholds, however, seem to have become somewhat static, as often happened with free rents, and the Nevilles paid rather small annual sums that remained static over time. For Raby Castle and the attached village of Staindrop, for example, the earl of Westmorland paid just £10 per year to the priory. Known collectively as 'Staindropshire', this manor was the centrepiece of his holdings in the palatinate, and his primary residence in the North-East. Nonetheless, the majority of Neville lands north of the Tees were held of the bishop of Durham as his free tenant. Among these were some of the most valuable free holdings and free farms in Durham, as well as the lordship of Brancepeth.

All of these lands, less those farmed by the earl and those held in dower by his widow, should have been handed down to the earl's grandson by his first marriage, and indeed, his first will made this so. A second will of 1424, however, superseded it, making the junior branch of the family his primary beneficiaries, at the utter expense of his legal heir. Thomas Langley, Bishop of Durham and a Lancastrian of long standing, quickly granted probate on the earl's second will, and by 1426 most of the Neville lands in Durham and North Yorkshire had come under the control of Joan Beaufort and the earl of Salisbury. With the continued support of Langley, the dowager countess maintained control of the bulk of the earl's estates for the remainder of her lifetime, including the lordship of Raby and much of the lordship of Brancepeth in Durham. Her inquisition *post mortem* indicates that it was she, and not the second earl of Westmorland, who maintained control of the Durham estates.⁴⁷

However, the means by which the Nevilles were able to construct this diversion much of the family's wealth were founded much earlier. To understand the

⁴⁷PRO DURH 3/13, fos. 306-307d.; *Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres.*, Surtees Society, 9 (1839), cclviii-cclx.

eventual victory of the Beauforts in this family squabble requires and understanding of the importance of the earl of Westmorland in the North-East, discussed above, and the degree to which Durham became a solidly Lancastrian stronghold throughout this period of strife, in the reign of Henry IV. The palatinate of Durham was, after all, very much at the centre of the early efforts of Henry IV to create a stable and loyal regime in the North. At the heart of these efforts was Ralph Neville, one of Henry's closest associates. The influence of the Nevilles in the region was long-standing, and the earl of Westmorland was perfectly situated to guarantee the loyalty of his home county to the house of Lancaster. As noted above, his father had been not only a key retainer of John of Gaunt, but also the leading member of the bishop of Durham's council. Ralph Neville tied his family and Gaunt's still closer together in subsequent years, and was a principal supporter of Henry Bolingbroke in 1399. As noted elsewhere, the men of Durham were conspicuously absent from the king's army in that year, and although many of them seem not to have actively supported Henry, neither did they actively support the king. Much of this may, of course, have been due to the influence of the Percies, who are traditionally thought to have made possible Henry's usurpation. However, as the Percies held no land, and had little appreciable influence, in the palatinate of Durham, and their presence even in the neighbouring territories of North Yorkshire was quite limited. It is far more likely that it was the influence of the earl of Westmorland, those families that are known to have been in his employ (such as the Claxtons and Gascoignes), and the region's chief official, Sir Ralph Eure, which kept the normally-loyalist palatinate from being actively Ricardian in 1399. Even Bishop Skirlaw remained somewhat aloof from the struggle, and for the remainder of his tenure in Durham showed no sign of having been particularly loyal to the fallen administration, in sharp contrast to the other great

prelate of the North, Archbishop Scrope of York. Thus, in the earliest years of the fifteenth century, Ralph Neville was the most potent instrument of Lancastrian power in Durham. This was possible largely because of the extensive lands that he held there, and the degree with which he administered them seemingly with little regard for palatine authority. The Nevilles are little in evidence in the chancery court records of Bishop Skirlaw, yet Westmorland was by far the most important secular lord in the palatinate of Durham.

The Nevilles were just that: the most important secular landowners between the rivers Tyne and Tees. As noted above, their lands fell into three basic administrative categories: those held as a free tenant of the bishop (such as the lordship of Brancepeth), those held freely of the prior (such as the lordship of Raby), and those which they leased, often in and around those which they held in their own demesne, and therefore complimentary. It is telling that ownership and control of any one of these conglomerations was enough to overshadow all other secular landowners in the region, in terms of wealth. Together, they formed the basis for the family's expansion in later years. While it is certainly true that, following the death of Joan Beaufort in 1440, Richard earl of Salisbury, head of the cadet branch of the Neville family, exchanged the family's Durham lands for all claims by the elder branch to rest of the patrimony - thereby dividing the great Neville patrimony - it was the Durham lands that, in a sense, cleared the way for the expansion of power of the Beaufort side of the family, and particularly Salisbury. The Durham lands were sacrificed to maintain the integrity of a significant rump of properties - including, of course, the great lordship of Middleham and the lordship of Sheriff Hutton - passed down from the first earl of Westmorland to Salisbury; even then, the Durham lands

remained with the Beauforts for at least 18 years after Westmorland's death.⁴⁸ Thus, the cadet branch, just as Westmorland had schemed, retained the use and profits of the Neville lands in Durham long after his own death, and when they finally gave them up, used them to retain the remainder of his lands in perpetuity.⁴⁹

One of the most important of these holdings was the lands that made up the lordship of Raby. Many of these estates were held neither of the bishop nor of the prior, but of the earl of Warwick - in his capacity as lord of Barnard Castle - and of other secular landlords. These lands, long held by the Nevilles, and those strictly included in the Raby estate, comprised what I shall henceforth refer to as the lordship of Raby. The core lands, held by the Nevilles as free tenants of the prior of Durham, had been in their demesne for so long that the priory, and, indeed, the bishop's surveyors, had lost track of their extent. It seems that the Nevilles had, for some years, managed these lands without reference to the priory; consequently, much of the detail of that extent is lost to the modern historian. The Nevilles had been the lords of 'Rabyshire', or 'Staindropshire', since before 1340, and they paid the nominal sum of £4 in feudal dues to the prior for it, along with the customary paying of homage and suit of his court three times annually.⁵⁰ It may have been the case that the prior's bursar, under whose aegis these estates were managed, knew exactly which lands, rights and properties these catch-all appellations described; if he did, he left no trace of their extent for posterity. Nonetheless, the lordship can be roughly

⁴⁸The manor of Sheriff Hutton was itself quite large. It comprised a castle, 52 further dwellings, 64 bovates of arable land (each containing fifteen acres), twelve acres of meadow, a ten-acre wood, and 200 acres of pasture in the three surrounding villages.

⁴⁹For further details of this episode, see Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 319-23.

⁵⁰*Durham Bursars Rentals*, ed. A.J. Piper and R.A. Lomas, Surtees Society, 198 (1989), 65, 122.

reconstructed using the evidence from inquisitions *post mortem* and certain Durham administrative records. The core estates of the lands described as 'Rabyshire' or 'Staindropshire' included the castle and manor of Raby itself, with the nearby township of Staindrop, along with the advowson of the church there, in which the earl himself was later buried.⁵¹ One can also add to this a number of lands located throughout south-west Durham, including those in smaller villages nearby, namely Newsham, Eldon, Shotton, Ingleton, and Snotterton, as well as half-interests in the villages of Cleatlam, Hilton and Wackerfield. All lay near and around Raby and Staindrop, and, although their extent is uncertain, a map tells one that it was, indeed, considerable. The total value of all of these lands together is given in the records, without further extent, as £100. They formed the core of the lordship, and the referral to them as 'Rabyshire' is both telling and unusual: it may have been both geographically referential and illustrative of certain legal distinctions. The priory showed little evidence of administering these lands, though doing so certainly fell within the priors' prerogative, in that they formed part of his portion of the original patrimony of St. Cuthbert. In reality, it is quite likely that the monks had long since lost any control over the use of these estates, and referred to it in this way to separate them from other lands in south-west Durham over which it maintained some authority.

However, the lordship of Raby was much larger than this. To these core lands must be added the manor of Cockfield, with the advowson of the church there, which had a total annual value of £20, and Langley Forest, valued annually at £16.⁵² There were certainly

⁵¹The expansion of the parish church of Staindrop into a collegiate church of some wealth and stature is one of the legacies of the first earl of Westmorland most commented upon by nineteenth-century historians of County Durham.

other significant Neville holdings in south-west Durham. Foremost among these was the manor of Elwick, held of Roger Clifford, the lord of Hart. The estate was comprised of forty houses, each worth 5s., each with an attached fifteen-acre plot of arable, worth 13s. 4d. Also on the estate, likely associated with the manor itself, were sixty acres of *pratum*, or grazing land that was also used for making hay, worth a total of £10, and 100 acres of pasture land, valued at 46s. 8d. The total value of the estate was £48 19s. 8d., which made it one of the single most valuable properties in Durham.⁵³ In addition, the manor and village of Dalton, which lay virtually next door to Elwick, and which is described in the records as having been closely connected with it, was also held by the earl, though its value is uncertain. The lordship also contained one forty-acre farm in Bolam, valued at 20s. and held of the earl of Warwick; two houses and forty acres in Hurworth, held of the bishop of Durham in chief and valued at 26s. 8d.;⁵⁴ a twenty-acre farm with a dwelling in High Conniscliffe, held of Baron Greystoke and worth 3s. annually; a 100-acre farm in Ullerbusk, worth 40s.; the manor of Alwent, annual value: five marks. These lands had all been resettled on the earl and his wife, Joan, in a process of conveyance to use, whereby the landowner might convey the land to a retainer, who then resettles it, under explicit terms, on its prior owner. Thus, our only window into the extent of these manors and estates is that supplied by the records taken of Westmorland's redistribution of his own lands within his family.

Much of the interest and importance of the Neville lands in Durham is political; the estates formed a strategic centre from which the family branched out first into the rest of the North. In the late-fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, they were the core of their power base, by which they maintained a strong Lancastrian presence throughout North Yorkshire

⁵²PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 231.

⁵³PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 263.

⁵⁴PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 228d.

and the North-East. I have argued above that the Nevilles were the most important Lancastrian connection in the North in the turbulent early years of Henry's reign. At the heart of their power were these estates; although valuing these estates is extremely problematic, their value in cash terms was certainly greater than - and perhaps significantly - £1,000 per annum. Yet perhaps even more important for the foothold it gave them in a palatinate of Durham that, although it had remained quiet during the tumultuous summer of 1399, was nonetheless fiercely conservative. Walter Skirlaw had been an appointment of King Richard, and one of his most prominent diplomats. Westmorland used his traditional standing in the Durham political community to help ensure the transition to a Lancastrian regime. This task was largely completed by the elevation of Thomas Langley to Durham in 1406; thereafter, Lancastrian domination of the North-East could be completed more smoothly in the wake of the Percy revolts.

III.

The Neville Affinity

I have argued that, after 1403, the primary responsibility for much of the maintenance of order in the four most northerly counties rested with the earl of Westmorland. However, while the nature of late-medieval lordship was fundamentally personal, the king and the Nevilles managed the North-East after the Percy revolts through a network of long-established gentry families. Many of these men, especially those in Northumberland and Durham, were surprisingly free of Percy affiliations. Here, I will offer a better understanding of the way in which political influence was gained and wielded in the North-East in the reign of Henry IV. This must necessarily include an examination of the gentry and aristocracy both in and out of the Neville and Percy spheres of influence. Whether, and to what extent, these characters were able to maintain their own autonomy in this, the region perhaps most fully overshadowed by a few great lords, will go far toward a genuine understanding of not only the region's political makeup, but also the role of its greatest figures in stabilising of the rule of the house of Lancaster - which, as we have seen, had much to do with the earl of Westmorland.¹ This study of the region's elite will include an examination of their estates; political influence, family connections, and influence in the circles of national power. It will contextualise regional political life within a broader framework, and, where this is linked with

¹The wielding of great power by a few great magnates in the North in the later fourteenth century, and the conflicts which resulted, is discussed in J.G. Bellamy, 'The Northern Rebellions in the Later Years of Richard II', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 47 (1965), 254-74.

daily financial realities, a truly rounded picture of political and economic life amongst the landlords of the North-East can emerge.

It would not seem immediately obvious that retaining in the North should be much different from other parts of the country. After all, the principles involved were the same: a lord with particular interests in the region sought to bring into his retinue men who were of sufficient local standing to act for him in pursuance of those interests, providing him with a needed skill or service. In return, the lord was expected to provide something which historians have termed 'good lordship', which is, in its most basic expression, a form of advocacy, based in turn upon some form of patronage, in exchange for which came service. This, in any event, is the classic construct: service of one kind rendered in exchange for that of another, each providing the other with a unique product, thought by both to be acceptably equal in value, ideally yielding a true symbiosis. In the later middle ages, the product provided by most lords seems to have been a sum of money, while at the same time the range of services provided by retainers was if anything diversifying. The Durham records certainly speak to the variety of services that might be provided, and likewise illustrate the sorts of patronage that might have been provided by the lord. J.M.W. Bean and R. Horrox have both sought to untangle the idea of 'good lordship', and C. Carpenter has demonstrated aptly the variety of services provided by retainers within a single retinue.² In addition, S. Walker, in his study of the Lancastrian affinity, has shown the flexibility of these associations, and the various uses to which the services of members of a retinue might be put. At the same time, A. Goodman has provided

²Bean, *Decline of English Feudalism*; and *From Lord to Patron: Lordship in Late-Medieval England* (Manchester, 1989); R. Horrox, 'Local and National Politics in Fifteenth-Century England', *Journal of Medieval History*, v. 18, no. 4 (1992), 391-403; C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of the Warwickshire Landed Gentry, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992).

many other details that augment our understanding of Gaunt's extensive interests, and the role that his retinue might have played in them.³ Clearly, this greatest of the country's private retinues was built around the notion of 'flexibility' in retaining. In his excellent work on the royal household, C. Given-Wilson certainly leaves no doubt that this sort of flexibility prevailed in the royal retinue, as well.⁴

Many of the characteristics described in these studies can also be identified in the North-East in the later middle ages. The Durham records illustrate not only the payment of cash to retainers, but also the use of land and office as forms of patronage - as one would expect - and advocacy by a number of lords on behalf of their own retainers in their pursuit of church offices and prebendaries.⁵ Such forceful and persistent lobbying on the parts of certain lords certainly implies that, while such associations were surely loose, at the core of any affinity were men who adhered strongly to the cause of their patron, and he, in turn, used his influence fully on their behalf. These men might, over time, become intimately associated with the affairs of their lord, and their fortunes quite closely tied to them. As I have argued in the previous chapter, Ralph Neville was just such a core member of the retinue of the house of Lancaster, and his loyalty and service were largely responsible for the success of Henry's reign. Therefore, it seems sensible that to understand the nature - and effectiveness - of the Neville retinue in the North, its core members must first be identified.

³Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 32-53 and Appendix 1; Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, 165-71.

⁴Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, *passim*.

⁵See DCD Loc. 25 for a collection of various letters to the prior, most of which are solicitations of this sort.

While much retaining seems to have had in common certain features, it was also something that could easily be tailored to meet the needs of the lord and the individual retainers, depending upon such variables as geography, economic and political status, military need, and so forth. Nonetheless, the potential for variety here should not be underestimated. Significant differences seem to have existed between the large retinue employed by John of Gaunt, and those of the Nevilles and Percies, in the later fourteenth century. For example, many of the most important members of the retinues the earls of Westmorland and Northumberland held land as free tenants and farmers on their great northern estates, more often, perhaps than did Gaunt's retainers. Among northern retinues, it is, I think, prudent to view Lancaster's as unusual in scope and composition. It was unusually large, and, while many of the retainers undoubtedly came from the duke's great lordships, a large percentage of them had no tenorial connection to Gaunt whatsoever.⁶ In addition, S. Walker notes that because of his unusual status within the English political establishment, the duke spent far more money on his retainers - measured as part of his income - than any other nobleman of the later middle ages; he therefore would naturally have taken men from throughout the realm.⁷ By contrast, the Percy and Neville retinues were composed more comprehensively of tenants, notably from core estates in their home counties. This was almost certainly the result of the unique circumstances of their employment. Because it was the responsibility of these great northern magnates to maintain order in the Scottish borders, and as the English and the Scots were most often either in a state of declared open war, or in the midst of some extremely

⁶Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 37.

⁷Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 20-22.

tenuous peace, the Percies and Nevilles tended to maintain armed retinues, many members of which were recruited from the affected areas in the far north.

Indeed, the maintenance of the border loomed large in all matters political. R.L. Storey has pointed out that the wages paid by the crown to the wardens of the marches toward Scotland, positions most-often held by the Nevilles and Percies, went into the maintenance of order in the region - a feat accomplished not least through the raising of semi-private armies.⁸ The salaries for maintaining the peace there were, in the context of depressed northern land values, enormous, and introduced a major influx of wealth into the region. In turn, the effectiveness of these efforts at northern peacekeeping depended largely upon the support garnered in the localities by the men charged with keeping that peace. Much of that support came from the local community, particularly the gentry; this resulted, as Richard II found in the 1380's, from the involvement of local landowners in the process. This group was typically headed by the magnate seen by locals as the legitimate keeper of the peace. In the later fourteenth and early fifteenth century, for example, many in the North-East considered the Percies the "natural" managers of the Scottish borders. Surely the failure of Richard II in his efforts to govern there without them is ample testimony to this. Nonetheless, the experience of the Nevilles in managing the borders after the final defeat of the earl of Northumberland shows that others with sufficient local pedigree and national political backing could also have success, though it is certainly true that difficulties in the borders eventually led Henry V to reinstate the Percies in 1416. Critically, however, these Percies were much diminished in power from the first earl of Northumberland and his son, Hotspur, and

⁸Storey, 'Wardens of the Marches', 595-615.

posed little threat to the established hegemony of Westmorland and his family in the North.

Marcher realities could sometimes dictate the nature of local power. The unusual requirements of border maintenance, particularly in periods of intermittent skirmishing, were issues that greatly informed the political realities of the North-East. H. Summerson has described the effects on Carlisle of incessant border warfare in the later fourteenth century; this paints a picture of repeated disruption to daily life, followed by uneasy recovery.⁹ This sort of pattern implies political structures of an unusual nature, informed by the uncertainty and vulnerability of border life. In his recent study, R.A. Lomas has shown the specific effects of border warfare on south Tweedside, and the degree to which it dominated political and economic life.¹⁰ The unpredictable nature of Scottish raids, the remoteness of the region, and the fragility of any proposed peace, meant the need for an element of permanence on the part of those maintaining order, a factor borne out by the relative successes of the Percies. The unusual concentration of power in the region in their hands - and later into those of the Nevilles - naturally led to the coalescence of local peacekeeping efforts under their banners. In these conditions, the local standing of these great magnates only enhanced their influence and prestige regionally and nationally.

As noted above, there have been some important studies of the retaining of great nobles in the later middle ages; much of the recent work has focused upon the great retainers

⁹H. Summerson, 'Responses to War: Carlisle and the West March in the later fourteenth century', A. Tuck and A. Goodman, eds., *War and Border Societies in the Middle Ages* (1992), 155-77.

¹⁰R.A. Lomas, 'The Impact of Border Warfare: the Scots and South Tweedside, c.1290-c.1520', *Scottish Historical Review*, 75: 200 (1996), 143-67.

of the crown, and that of John of Gaunt. Walker's study of the Lancastrian affinity has offered a greater understanding of the Lancastrian party before 1399. However, much less is known about the composition and nature of the retinues of the Nevilles and Percies, the North's politically dominant families. This has as much to do with the availability of sources as the will to undertake such a study. The estate and household records for the Percy family shed a limited amount of light on their position in the region - though even Bean has found evidence for their retaining wanting - and are of little use for the period before 1416. Although A.J. Pollard and R.L. Storey have had much to say about the retaining and political career of Richard Neville, earl of Salisbury, and his role in the Wars of the Roses, a lack of household papers has curtailed investigation into the family's earlier political life. Apart from the work done by Bean in his *From Lord to Patron*, little has been said about the retinue of Ralph Neville, first earl of Westmorland. However, through his retinue, Westmorland was able to establish control over much of the North in the reign of Henry IV.

Following the demise of the Percies after Shrewsbury, Westmorland's own retainers were being systematically built up in the North. In August, 1405, Robert Burley, described as the earl's 'yeoman', gained control of the Ripon lands of John FitzRandolph, who had risen in support of the Percies.¹¹ Likewise, John Norton (Morton), who wore the Neville livery and was a key figure in the earl's land transfers in later years, was granted the office of warrener of Ripon, which he claimed to have purchased previously - a claim initially denied by Archbishop Scrope.¹² Roger Burton, another Neville Yorkshire retainer, was granted a number of Percy lands in West Walton, valued at around ten marks, which had been held of

¹¹*CPR, 1405-1408*, 35.

¹²*CPR, 1405-1408*, 19.

the earl of Northumberland by his own retainer, Nicholas Tempest.¹³ In June, 1407, Westmorland gained licence from the king to grant his manor of Eastburn in Yorkshire, along with over 300 acres of arable land in Bugthorpe, to Sir Henry Vavasour - formerly in the Percy retinue - as means of retaining him for service.¹⁴ Vavasour was also an important figure in Northumberland, and his support there undoubtedly smoothed the transition to Neville governance in the region. All of these are examples of the redistribution by the crown of former Percy assets, its re-deployment into those hands that were calculated to derive maximum benefit from it, and, in turn, pay maximum dividends to the crown. Consistent with this philosophy, in August, 1405, Robert Umfraville, who had become a client of the Nevilles, was granted the castle and manor of Langley, Northumberland, signalling the further encroachment of the Nevilles into Northumberland. In that same year, however, the earl of Westmorland was himself granted for the term of his life the greatest prize of all: the whole of the Lucy honour of Cockermouth.¹⁵ This had been the single most important acquisition of the Percies in the final decades of the fourteenth century (see above), and it was now placed in the hands of that family's greatest rival. Through this grant, Westmorland became the greatest landowner in the North-West, and made the wardship of the west march his own personal fiefdom, a position that would later be strengthened by his eldest son, Salisbury.¹⁶

In many ways, Henry's swift redistribution of Percy lands was inspired. It gave the northern landowners - especially those of political and military significance - a great impetus

¹³*CPR, 1405-1408*, 42.

¹⁴*CPR, 1405-1408*, 333.

¹⁵*CPR, 1405-1408*, 50, 69.

¹⁶Storey, *End of the House of Lancaster*, Chapter 5.

to deliver conclusively the earl of Northumberland into the hands of the king. Any acquisition of Percy lands, especially in Northumberland or Cumberland, was probably for the moment worth little, so long as two factors remained unchanged: war between England and Scotland, and the freedom of Henry Percy. Thus, in February, 1406, Robert Umfraville duly led a peace delegation to Scotland, seeking a comprehensive truce. In March, 1407, Umfraville, Sir Ralph Eure, and Sir John Mitford were commissioned to treat for peace with the Scots - indeed, not only the Scottish king, but with any Scottish noble acting under its crown's authority.¹⁷ Interestingly, while it is likely that *Mitford and Umfraville were* sympathetic to the Percies and their grievances with Henry, they nonetheless remained loyal - indeed, valuable assets - to the crown, and aided the king greatly in keeping the peace in the North. Henry thereby honoured his commitments, and not only made peace with those who took sides with his enemies, but also gave many of them important roles in his government. John Mitford had also become the lieutenant to the constable of Bordeaux by 1409, further confirming Henry's willingness to put various Northumbrian figures to work in his diplomatic corps.¹⁸ This can either be viewed as evidence of his own weakness, or as the enlightened and sensible construction of diplomatic policy; the latter seems most likely, though it is certainly true that the king needed all available experience to overcome the demise of the Percies in the North-East. Whatever the case, in April of the following year, Westmorland and Bedford, in their capacities as wardens of the marches, were also commissioned to treat for a truce with the Scots. Interestingly, it was in that same month that the Neville and his men spent time in Northumberland rooting out the last of the Percy adherents, a task that occupied much of his time and energy in the years following Scrope's

¹⁷*Foedera*, viii, 479.

¹⁸*Foedera*, viii, 597.

rebellion, especially in the border region, where the earl of Northumberland enjoyed his most stalwart support.¹⁹

Yet military efficiency in the face of the myriad challenges of the Percies did not completely determine the formation of the Neville retinue, especially before 1403. Instead, Westmorland's needs were diverse enough to accommodate significant variety, even within a single retinue. The Neville affinity included not only men retained by the enfeoffment of land, noted above, but also men retained using strict cash payments: the first known instance of this was Ralph Neville's enfeoffment in 1399 of John Norbury, a knight of considerable military ability and reputation, and a close confidant of the king. He had been in exile with Henry, and had landed with him at Ravenspur on his return from France, and had thereafter become one of Henry's most trusted councillors, and a member of his inner circle. In return for his services in war and peace, Westmorland agreed to pay Norbury an annuity of £60.²⁰ Shortly thereafter, in February, 1400, Neville retained three other figures closely associated with the royal household: John Pirian and Nicholas Aldrewich - both esquires of the royal chamber - and Anthony Ricz, the queen's secretary.²¹ Each was retained for life, and received cash annuities of £100, 110 marks, and £50, respectively. As Bean has outlined, their pay in wartime was to be

¹⁹*Foedera*, viii, 520.

²⁰Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 192.

²¹Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 202; M. Jones and S. Walker, eds., *Private Indentures for Life Service in Times of Peace and War*, Camden Society Fifth Series 3 (1994), 125-27.

commensurate with their status, in exchange for which they handed over to the earl one-third of any spoils.²²

These enfeoffments mark a clear move by the earl of Westmorland to integrate influential members of the royal household into his own. As noted above, the first years of the new king's reign marked his first serious adventure in the politics of the court, and as such the usefulness of such retainers was obvious: to have in his employ men who could act as persuasive advocates in court circles was useful. Such were the earl's priorities in the earliest years of Henry's reign. Westmorland was protecting his interests at court against the combined efforts of Thomas Percy, earl of Worcester; Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland; and his son, Hotspur. The reason for the retaining of Ricz and Aldrewich is fairly obvious: there is good reason to suppose that they were retained accompanying the settlement of the earldom of Richmond in the late-1390's. These men held the earldom in 1398, along with Joan, widow of Ralph Basset - sister of the duke of Brittany - of the gift of the crown.²³ Ralph Neville's patronage of them from this early stage in Henry's reign was, therefore, an attempt to consolidate his own position as the new earl of Richmond, one that, given the myriad claims on it, must have stirred up some controversy, and caused a measure of alienation in some quarters. Neville was a powerful figure in the region, but the other suitors for the earldom, such as the duke of Brittany and the Percies, were also not without influence there, and both had strong and long-standing presence in the royal court; the Percies were, of course,

²²Bean, *Decline of English Feudalism*; CCR, 1399-1402, 104-5, 115-16; PRO 'C' 54/245, m. 16d, 17d, 23d, following op. cit., above.

²³*Victoria History of the County of York: North Riding*, i (1914), 9.



entrenched in Henry's administration, and as former farmers of the earldom of Richmond, might have expected Henry to settle it permanently upon them, instead.

But, to some extent, it was Ralph Neville's rise in status that also helped determine his own retaining strategy under the new king. This was evident in his need to redefine his relationships with members of the gentry, many of whom had likely seen themselves as his social and political equals up to that point. Clearly, however, because their relative status had altered, the earl certainly must have needed to redefine important relationships within his own region of influence, as he had within the political community generally. The clearest and most important example of this was in the redefinition of the Percy-Neville relationship. As a result of the relationship begun by John Neville and cultivated further by his son and heir, by the start of the fifteenth century, the Nevilles had become the rough equals of their Percy cousins - whom they would eventually eclipse during the lifetime of the first earl of Westmorland - and were faced with the challenge of asserting this new-found prominence in their relationships with influential officials and with other northern landowners. Certainly, one of the key elements of the Neville affinity was that it attracted important men of the North to it. In common with other great magnates, Westmorland relied heavily upon retainers for his own influence: their effectiveness was instrumental in his own, their usefulness to him mirrored his own to the crown. Given that much of his value to Henry's government was his ability to act in the North, the chance to attract prominent members of the northern gentry was an important part of Neville's retaining strategy. Such figures could be useful in many circumstances, and could be called on to exercise influence in a variety of situations.

One of those situations was Westmorland's ambition to expand his interests, away from his traditional spheres of influence in Durham and North Yorkshire. In the 1380's John, Lord Neville of Raby, had been regularly in attendance at the bishop's council, a service for which he was handsomely paid.²⁴ By the beginning of the fifteenth century, however, these payments had stopped, as had the regular attendance of the head of the Neville family at the bishop's council.²⁵ Ralph Neville's absence from Durham was of course a product of his regular attendance at the king's council. However, it indicated his own wish to expand in other parts of the North. These ambitions were fed by the crown, which abetted him at every turn by granting him lands and offices in Northumberland, South Yorkshire, and especially the North-West. Thus, between 1399 and 1403, Westmorland was regularly in attendance at the king's council, and seemingly very little in the North at all.²⁶ However, even after the Percy revolts, when the earl had successfully transferred his London duties to his brother Thomas, Lord Furnival, there is no evidence suggesting that, for example, he ever again attended the bishop's Durham council on anything more than an irregular basis.

This, it seems, can be plausibly interpreted in two ways. One interpretation might be that there had begun a decline in Neville interests in the palatinate, and therefore, a lessening of their interest in its governance. As I have argued above,

²⁴In 1385, Bishop Fordham paid John Neville 50 marks, '*retenti de consilio Domini Episcopi*'. *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 267.

²⁵This is based upon the fact that no moneys were paid to the Nevilles for expenses incurred while in attendance at the bishop's council, nor indeed for any other reason. See, for example, CC 189809. Of course, it is possible that Westmorland attended these gatherings while absorbing the costs incurred himself, though I find this unlikely.

²⁶Brown, 'Reign of Henry IV', 12-14.

however, this was far from the case; Neville interests in the North-East were very much in ascendance throughout this period, and their estates and political interests in the palatinate of Durham were a significant part of the basis for that ascendance.

What is more likely is that, by the turn of the fifteenth century, the Nevilles were so firmly entrenched in the governance of Durham that they felt no need to personally preside over its proceedings, especially with the prospect of new lands and influence to be gained with the elevation of Westmorland's great patron, Lancaster, to the throne. Far from disengaging from Durham, the earl of Westmorland, while clearly attending to matters elsewhere, was now more secure than ever in this, his traditional sphere of influence, by virtue of his rise to national prominence and the ascent of Henry of Lancaster. There is also reason to suspect that the Neville patrimony in Durham was, by this time, somewhat beyond the scope of the local administration. It seems that these estates were viewed as jurisdictionally distinct from those of the prior or the bishop; only on the rarest of occasions did matters pertaining to them find their way into the Durham courts. Westmorland's courts at Brancepeth and Raby seem to have represented the last word in jurisdictional appeal for his Durham tenants, even though none were held of the king in chief.²⁷ Westmorland held the lordship of Brancepeth, with its associated lands, as a free tenant of the bishop, within his palatine regality, and held Raby as a free tenant of the prior of Durham, as part of his estate. Both lordships were part of the original patrimony of St. Cuthbert, which now largely comprised the palatinate of Durham. The inability of the bishop's administrators even to hazard a guess as to the notional value of the lordship of Raby

²⁷While I can find no conclusive proof for this, the fact that the Nevilles held manor courts at these locations, had administrators to operate them, and that the Raby and Brancepeth lordships virtually never turn up in the priory or bishopric court records indicates that this was, in fact, the case.

at the deaths of both John and Ralph Neville indicates the degree to which control over these estates in south Durham had been ceded to the Nevilles by the prior.²⁸ Westmorland, therefore, with some justification, viewed his own position in Durham as extremely secure; he administered his estates there with virtual autonomy, and by 1399, with his elevation to the earldom of Richmond, these were geographically linked with his other interests in North Yorkshire.²⁹

Indeed, the earl might well have felt secure in his position in the palatinate; even before the appointment of Langley to Durham (a move that would cement the palatinate as a Lancastrian stronghold), appointments to high office within the palatinate had begun to favour his interests. Many Neville associates were appointed to notable Durham commissions, and some held important offices there. S. Walker has outlined the patronage of the North Yorkshire gentry by bishops Skirlaw and Langley.³⁰ Of all Durham families, the Claxtons had the strongest associations with the Nevilles in the fifteenth century.³¹ Thomas Claxton had been John Neville's receiver-general for many years, and he seems to have remained in this position following the death of his lord in 1389.³² Through acquisition and inheritance, they built a base of power in Durham in the latter years of the fourteenth century.³³

²⁸Ralph and John Neville's Inquisitions post mortem can both be found in PRO DURH 3/13, fos. 110, 228d.-232d.

²⁹Middleham and Sheriff Hutton, particularly.

³⁰S. Walker, 'Yorkshire Justices of the Peace, 1389-1413', *EHR*, 108 (1993), 281-311.

³¹See Pollard's comments about the numerous Neville connections in the North-East later in the fifteenth century in his *North-Eastern England*, *passim*.

³²*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 269.

³³The Durham branch of the Claxtons is discussed in greater detail below, p. 110.

Frequently, Durham commissions in the 1390's included various members of the Claxton family, and their rise to prominence is discussed in more detail in the following chapters. For the purposes of this discussion, it is enough simply to conclude that Thomas Claxton acted as Westmorland's legate in Durham during these years.

Therefore, the disappearance of the Nevilles from the bishop's payroll was prompted not by waning interests in the region, but by the earl of Westmorland's rapidly expanding interests elsewhere - interests first promoted by Richard II, and then of course by Henry IV - and an increased responsibility for the governance of the whole of the North. Having developed a powerful sphere of influence among the region's gentry, Ralph Neville was, when the time came to do so, able to turn his attention to matters outside of the North-East, particularly to those in Cumberland and the North-West, leaving the palatinate of Durham in capable and familiar hands. His Durham estates, as noted above, fell into an unusual administrative category, belonging neither to the bishop nor the prior, and were seemingly ministered to without reference to them. His influence in the region was assured by the knowledge that many of the most important offices were held by his tenants and close associates, the most powerful among them being Sir Ralph Eure, who, though not a retainer, was a neighbour and associate on many important royal commissions, and was also a distinguished administrator.

Much the same pattern emerges with the Conyers family, important members of the North-East's gentry community. John Conyers of Hornby was an important associate of the earl of Westmorland in Henry IV's reign. S. Walker has identified him as an apprentice-at-law at Westminster. He often served on commissions of the peace with the earl, and indeed was a fixture on the North Riding bench from 1397-

1407.³⁴ In addition, he was clearly an important figure in Westmorland's household.³⁵ In the aftermath of Shrewsbury, he was one of the chosen few named by the crown in its mopping up operation in the northern counties, and was clearly a trusted member of Westmorland's inner circle.³⁶ He was also a relative, perhaps a younger brother, of Robert Conyers of Sockburn, Durham, an important landowner in the palatinate, who held lands to the value of around 75 marks. At his death, however, John Conyers held lands to the value of just ten marks in Durham, and seems not to have been a landowner of any significance elsewhere.³⁷ In the pattern so often noted among second sons, however, John Conyers took an interest in administration; I have already noted his associations with the earl of Westmorland in royal service, above. He was also named to a number of commissions of array in the North Riding, and, around 1396, he also became the steward of the bishop of Durham's liberty of Northallerton, in North Yorkshire.³⁸ From his family's base at Sockburn, in south Durham, then, John Conyers moved into administration in North Yorkshire, and served the bishop of Durham, the Nevilles, and the crown with distinction, and was a trusted member of the Neville coterie. Yet among those with demonstrable, close associations with the Nevilles, two figures played key roles in their expansion of influence in the North: Sir Thomas Claxton and Sir Thomas Grey of Heaton.

³⁴Walker, 'Yorkshire Justices', 293.

³⁵*CPR, 1401-1405*, 521.

³⁶*CPR, 1401-1405*, 361.

³⁷PRO DURH 3/13, fos. 124-125d.; 168-168d.

³⁸*CPR, 1401-1405*, 284; PRO DURH 3/33.

Sir Thomas Claxton

The Claxtons, with Sir Thomas Grey of Heaton, were among the most important members of the Neville affinity in the North. Active members of the Durham gentry community, the Claxtons maintained significant landed interests of their own in the North-East. As with most gentry families, the basis for much - though not all - of their influence was land. The Claxton holdings centred on their home manors of Haswell and Claxton, in south Durham. Indeed, the Claxtons were very much a Durham family. Therefore, the history of the family in the Ricardian and early Lancastrian period is closely tied to the movement of its Durham lands. Sir William Claxton of Claxton died around 1380, with an heir, William, who was at the time three years old. To avoid the loss of influence that would inevitably accompany a long minority, William Claxton had conveyed many of the lands to William Lambard, his brother-in-law, and John Claxton, his brother, to translate these estates back to Sir William's widow, Isabel, thereby keeping them at least in the hands of an adult after his own death. In this way, John Claxton and William Lambard came into the manor of Fishburn, valued at four marks per year; the manor of Claxton itself, valued at twelve marks per year; and the manor of Hulam, all with the stipulation that these lands be returned to Isabel for her use and that of William's heirs.³⁹ John Claxton died around 1392, with the stipulation that his lands should revert to his sister-in-law and her heirs, just as described above.⁴⁰ Thus, Isabel controlled the bulk of the Claxton patrimony, and remained one of the wealthiest persons in the

³⁹PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 100d.

⁴⁰PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 115.

North-East, until the end of her life in 1421. However, that the family rested its landed wealth in her hands for thirty years and more almost certainly hindered its development as a political force in the region. Although William Claxton, junior, surely exercised some degree of control over the use of the family's resources, he was also forced to compete with the interests of other siblings, and indeed potentially even those of the Latons, Isabel's first family (she had been married to William Laton before William Claxton, whom she married after being widowed), for its use. Indeed, Isabel's daughter from her first marriage, Elizabeth, seems to have held the manors of Claxton and Bruntoft following John Claxton's death, further diluting the family's ability to concentrate its influence.⁴¹ This is not to say that dowagers were politically ineffectual; they clearly were not, indicated not least by the great Joan Beaufort, the first earl of Westmorland's widow, whom herself became the repository of Neville wealth and won for her cadet branch of that family control of most of the great Neville patrimony. However, it is there that any comparison begins to break down; Joan had as her champion the great Richard Neville, earl of Salisbury, and a number of other adult male children - most of who had also married into great estates of their own (see Latimer, Fauconberg, Furnival). Isabel lacked the sort of power that Joan could bring to bear through her sons, and although the value of the lands that she controlled at her death was well over £100 per year, she nevertheless failed to exercise politically the influence implied by the size of her dower.

However, like many other members of the north-eastern land-owning community, the Claxtons found other ways to influence events, and remained active members of the political community in this period. In the late-fourteenth century, the

⁴¹PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 201d-202.

family was led by Thomas Claxton (d. 1402), who, though not in line for the Haswell and Claxton patrimony, nonetheless inherited and acquired significant estates in Durham. He held 180 acres in Old Park, valued at 40s.; pasturage in Penrith Field, valued at 13s. 4d.; the manor of Kinchley (78s. 4d.); four tofts and 80 acres in Greencroft (20s.); the manor of Westhall (24s.); 100 acres in (West) Burdon (five marks); meadow land in Whickham (12s.); 40 acres in Heworth (15s. 4d.); six tofts and 120 acres in Castle Eden (seven marks); a sixty-acre farm and a 100-acre farm in the village of Hurworth (30s. plus); and a 100-acre farm in the village of West Morton.⁴² He also held a number of urban properties in Durham City itself, appropriate given his political activities and importance in the palatine administration. He held two burgages in the prior's borough of Elvet, next to Durham on the peninsula, valued at two marks; a tenement in Owengate, near Palace Green itself (13s. 4d.); an 80-acre farm in Old Durham (£4); four burgages in Durham (40s.); a rent from a Durham burgage of Robert Fulthorp (15s.); and eight houses in South Bailey and one in North Bailey (40s.). The striking number of Durham properties made Claxton one of the chief landowners in Durham City.

Most importantly, however, Thomas Claxton was an active political figure, and a leading servant of the Nevilles. In 1385, the bishop of Durham's receiver described him as John Neville's receiver-general, a post in which he served until his own death.⁴³ This high office within the Neville retinue indicates the sort of route taken by so many second sons: service and attachment to one of the region's great figures. Because of the paucity of evidence, the activities of John Neville within his

⁴²PRO DURH 3/13, fos. 139-140.

⁴³*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 267-69.

own household and retinue are not known; however, through other records, the development of his political career at least is understood (see above). It is not unreasonable to assume that, as Neville's chief financial officer, Claxton oversaw his estates in the North, probably from Raby, given that he also remained active in Durham politics. In 1388, he was granted custody of the lands of Sir John Darcy, which included the manor of Herverton and a number of burgages in the bishop's boroughs of Durham and Sunderland.⁴⁴ In 1389, Claxton's uncle, John, was named to a commission of array for the bishop's ward of Easington, along with the new Durham sheriff, Sir William Bowes.⁴⁵ Indeed, John Claxton was also involved when his nephew was granted the Darcy lands, which he seems to have lorded over in rather high-handed fashion, abusing the young Darcy heir, and marrying him off without the bishop's licence. In 1394, along with the earl of Westmorland, Gilbert Elvet (a prominent member of the Durham gentry), and Robert Coverham, Thomas Claxton was granted the manor of Allenscheles by Margaret, widow of Thomas Hunt, with other unnamed lands in the palatinate.⁴⁶ The earl of Westmorland, at the time in the midst of an acquisitive period in the land market, bought these lands and granted them to Claxton and others of his retinue. This he did often, and with some success in the early years of Henry's reign, as he sought to build his influence in the North, always with the tacit approval of the king. Shortly before his own death in 1402, Thomas Claxton also came into possession of the

⁴⁴PRO DURH 3/32.

⁴⁵PRO DURH 3/32.

⁴⁶*Catalogue of Ancient Deeds*, i, 218.

lands of the late John Hedworth, including estates in Southwick and Boldon, due to the minority of his heir.⁴⁷

As with the previous generation in his family, Thomas Claxton died leaving a very young heir; before this, such a possibility might have initiated the employment of various land conveyances, designed to keep the holdings in the hands of the family's adult members, rather than those of a guardian. However, the death of Thomas Claxton in 1402 really signalled the end of Claxton influence in political affairs for the remainder of Henry IV's reign, as his son was at the time of his death just five years old, and his inheritance and custody were informally placed into the hands of the earl of Westmorland for safe keeping. Led by William Claxton, however, the family returned to prominence in the North-East during the reign of Henry V, though always as members of the Neville affinity, and never with any real authority of their own.

Sir Thomas Grey of Heaton

Certain others came into the Neville sphere of influence later, when it had become apparent that the family was fast becoming the dominant political force in the North. The senior Sir Thomas Grey of Heaton, Northumberland, was an important figure in the North-East. His life has been the subject of an extensive biographical treatment by the authors of the *History of Parliament*. Having married Catherine, daughter of Lord Mowbray of Axholme, Grey succeeded to the lands of his own father in 1369. His connection to the Mowbray family apparently remained strong, and in 1392 he was styled the 'late lieutenant' of Thomas Mowbray, earl of

⁴⁷PRO DURH 3/33; PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 130.

Nottingham. This relationship was the one exploited when Mowbray became warden of the East March in 1389.⁴⁸ There is little evidence that Thomas Grey was much involved with political affairs in Durham at all before the episcopacy of Walter Skirlaw, which began in 1388. Thereafter, however, he was at the very centre of the palatinate's administration, and remained there until his own death in 1400. This change was almost certainly the result of his association with Skirlaw and their joint involvement in ambassadorial work in Scotland (often with Sir Gerard Heron), on behalf of the English king.

In spite of this relationship with a powerful southern family, the Mowbrays, and a close relationship with Bishop Skirlaw (for whom he was employed as steward of Durham sometime before 1392),⁴⁹ *Thomas Grey nonetheless remained a strictly Northumbrian knight throughout his career.* He served on a number of royal commissions in Northumberland, and acted as an occasional ambassador to Edinburgh. In 1388, in virtually his first act as bishop of Durham, Skirlaw confirmed Thomas Grey as his steward in the palatinate, and named him chief justice of assize.⁵⁰ The following year, Skirlaw also made him a justice of assize with Sir Gerard Heron for the bishop's liberty of Norhamshire and Islandshire - known collectively as North Durham - and, with William Fulthorp, Robert Umfraville and others, Grey was commissioned to survey the condition of fishing in the River Wear, and punish anyone impinging upon the bishop's franchise in that regard.⁵¹ He also

⁴⁸*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 224.

⁴⁹CC 244251, 244255.

⁵⁰*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 222; PRO DURH 3/33; CC 244251.

⁵¹PRO DURH 3/33.

served on an important commission to determine the extent of the town of Newcastle's right to mine and sell sea coal, and the extent to which this right encroached upon the prerogative of the crown or the bishop of Durham. He also served the electors of his home county on two occasions: the *History of Parliament* tells us that he served as an M.P. for Northumberland in the Parliaments of 1397 and 1399.⁵²

In addition, Thomas Grey served as steward in Durham when the whole of the palatinate's political community became embroiled in the ongoing dispute between, on the one hand, Ralph and Marmaduke Lumley, and on the other, the Clifford lords of Hart. The dispute seems to have arisen out of Ralph Lumley's refusal to pay the customary duties on goods brought through the port of Hartlepool, as was required by law. The men of Hartlepool, no doubt with the support of their local lords, the Cliffords - who also received a customary fee on each ship mooring in the bay, and one from each stall and shop in the market, and who therefore had a significant stake in the overall economic activity of the town - duly confiscated and destroyed his ship, and confiscated all the goods on board. Lumley in turn brought a suit with the bishop, who appointed a commission - quite a prestigious one, given its composition - to sort out the trouble.⁵³ Unfortunately, the efforts of that committee were apparently in vain: Maud Clifford's inquisition *post mortem*, taken in 1403, explicitly notes that the lords of Hart and Hartlepool were still failing to collect their feudal dues from the townsmen, because the Lumleys were preventing by force of arms any tolls from being collected within the town, trading there without regard for

⁵²*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 224.

⁵³PRO DURH 3/33.

them.⁵⁴ Thus, in spite of the death of Ralph, Lord Lumley, the flouting of the Cliffords' traditional prerogative became institutionalised; this is not terribly surprising, given that Hart was the only remaining enclave in Durham that remained outside the bishop's jurisdiction. As the Cliffords were, for the most part, a Yorkshire and Westmorland family, and were almost apolitical in Durham, and at the time involved in a dispute with the Nevilles over feudal rights in the North-West, it is unlikely that the bishop made great pains to end the dispute in their favour.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, this episode marked the most serious political challenge of the late-fourteenth century for the bishop's administrators, and Thomas Grey was the official primarily charged with its resolution.

However, it seems to have become clear to all that Grey's talents would be best used elsewhere. The daily maintenance of order in the Scottish marches, while important in political terms for the magnate holding the position of warden - generally a member of the northern baronage and, as often as not, one of comital status - was left very much in the hands of the local gentry. Their ability to enforce order had always been recognised by the crown, and by the bishop of Durham - who chose very carefully the holder of custody of his fortress and lands in Norham, in North Durham, just as the crown chose carefully when assigning commanders to lead the English garrisons at Berwick and Newcastle. Norham had once been the province of Sir John Heron, the constable of Norham under Bishop Hatfield. It was then passed on to his son, and when Bishop Fordham made the change in 1387/8

⁵⁴*Cal. IPM, 1399-1405, 257.*

⁵⁵For the distribution of their estates, see *Cal. IPM, 1399-1405, 257-60*. The Cliffords seem to have largely abstained from palatine administration in the late-fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and clearly viewed their manor of Hart as distinct from it.

(with the advancing age of Sir John), he named Gerard Heron steward and receiver of Norhamshire and Islandshire, and constable of Norham Castle.⁵⁶ Around 1395, this responsibility was passed on to Thomas Grey by Bishop Skirlaw, who continued to use Heron and Grey in North Durham - nearer their own estates - when it became clear that they would be needed there.⁵⁷ Given the assignments that continued to be handed down to Grey and Heron - as well as to Sir John Mitford of Mitford - by the crown in the 1390's, Skirlaw had decided that his best chance of protecting the remaining value in his North Durham estates was to follow the lead of the crown, by involving in their maintenance the men responsible for much of the rest of the peacekeeping in the far north. That these were also the men responsible for most of the ambassadorial work to the Scottish crown, with which Skirlaw himself had had some involvement, may have proved the final connection leading to their inclusion in his Durham administration.⁵⁸ Skirlaw's grant of the custody of Norham Castle to Grey was one that may have posed a certain risk to his own regime, given that Grey could only become more involved in North Durham if he was somewhat less involved in the affairs of the palatinate. Grey's move in 1396 to Norham also roughly corresponds with his being granted custody of the castle of Wark-on-Tweed by the earl of Westmorland. In his study of the Percies and the community of Northumberland in the later fourteenth century, A. Tuck has concluded that Grey's commissions and grants in Richard's reign were probably the result of his standing at

⁵⁶PRO DURH 3/32.

⁵⁷*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 222. Grey held virtually no land in the palatinate itself, after all, but was one of the bishop's major free tenants in Norhamshire.

⁵⁸*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 222.

court.⁵⁹ This seems odd. As a close adherent of Thomas Mowbray, one of the king's enemies, Grey was surely not a political insider. His advantage was his skill in matters of border maintenance, and, as such, his value must have outweighed at least some of the crown's distrust of him. For their part, Skirlaw and Neville both recognised that Grey was their best hope of safeguarding their interests in North Durham and Northumberland. They, in turn, should be properly credited with his rise. Perhaps because he held few lands south of his estates in Heaton, and perhaps because his patrons asked him to do so, Grey made the conscious decision to return to Northumberland full-time. Whatever, it does seem that this decision was either informed by, or coincided with, the goals of the Nevilles and Bishop Skirlaw there - goals which both thought best achieved in the person of Sir Thomas Grey.

However, in spite of his distinguished career of service to the crown and in the bishopric, the specific nature Grey's own political attachment is slightly more elusive. For instance, there is some doubt whether he rode with Bolingbroke from Doncaster, in an army that contained many of his neighbours and a number of other key northern figures. The chronicles do not mention him, and the pay lists also fail to name him. Given that Henry's army was strikingly northern in character - consisting as it did of the Percies, Nevilles, Baron Greystoke, and lords Roos and Willoughby and a number of other knights and esquires from their respective localities - this is puzzling.⁶⁰ The chronicles name him as a witness to many of the

⁵⁹A. Tuck, 'The Percies and the Community of Northumberland in the Later Fourteenth Century', in A. Goodman and A. Tuck, *War and Border Societies in the Middle Ages* (1992), 190.

⁶⁰*Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi*, 152-53. Interestingly, although the *Historia* explicitly names Greystoke as a member of Bolingbroke's army, his name is conspicuously absent from the pay lists. Certainly, he was of sufficient status to merit his own entry there, and it is probable that he did participate; nonetheless, it is a curious omission.

events that occurred after the usurpation, leading to the conclusion that he had been complicit in them, and he may have ridden under the Neville banner from Doncaster.⁶¹ He had, after all, been retained by the earl in 1398, and was, therefore, newly tied to the Neville cause, which was, in turn, closely tied to Lancaster in 1399.

The sensible conclusion here is that, in perhaps a roundabout way, Grey was a prominent Lancastrian from at least 1398. He may, of course, have had an active anti-Ricardian predilection, particularly late in life; the *History of Parliament* explores in some detail - and Tuck alludes to this also - his relationship with Thomas Mowbray, and Mowbray's treatment at the hands of Richard II.⁶² Because of his close connections with that family, consummated by his own marriage to Thomas Mowbray's sister, Grey almost certainly harboured some resentment over his lord and patron's treatment at the king's hands. For his part, Richard II continued to name him to important commissions after 1397; this indicates that he at least felt that sufficient distance existed between Grey and Mowbray to warrant further trust. In 1396, Grey was named to a commission of key members of the Northumbrian gentry - including Gerard Heron, John Mitford and Robert Umfraville - to survey the king's franchise in the town and fortress of Newcastle, and ensure that all the crown's rights in the region were being respected and preserved. The following year, he was named justice of the peace for Northumberland, serving in that capacity with many of these men.⁶³ In September, 1398, the crown confirmed his custody of Wark Castle, on the River Tweed near Berwick, granted to him by the earl of Westmorland, in exchange

⁶¹ Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 163, 164-65, 169.

⁶² *Hist. Parl.*, iii, 223-24; Tuck, 'The Percies', 190.

⁶³ CPR, 1396-1399, 52, 98; *Hist. Parl.*, iii, 222. He was confirmed as a justice of the peace later in 1397: CPR, 1396-9, 237.

for which Grey was retained for life.⁶⁴ The *History of Parliament* tells us that this is also near the date of his own son, Thomas', marriage to the earl of Westmorland's daughter, Alice, cementing the relationship, and this may explain his decision to join the ranks of the Lancastrians after 1399, although he had suffered little of the ill fortune of his brother-in-law, Mowbray.⁶⁵ Grey seems to have feared that his ongoing relationship with the Mowbrays as incompatible with significant political advancement under Richard II, and that his connection with the Mowbray family would taint him politically. Given Richard's reaction, he seems to have successfully distanced himself adequately from them.

Apart from the wishes of his patrons Skirlaw and Neville, another consideration that prompted Grey to return to Northumberland was the location and condition of his family's lands. His estates were principally in north Northumberland, and often of little value financially due to the incursions of the Scots; he therefore had a great stake in the successful maintenance of order in the marches. Short of that, his only avenue for extending his political interests lay in office holding, involvement in which would also be accompanied by a much-needed fee. Paid commissions and fees were a much-needed supplement to Grey's flagging landed income. Either way, his hopes for prosperity were closely linked to a need to maintain good political relationships. Royal service and the maintenance of the border therefore became doubly important to him. There is some doubt as to the value of the Grey estates at the time Sir Thomas' death in 1400. Persistent border troubles, and the destruction of English property by the Scots, led to dramatic

⁶⁴CPR, 1396-1399, 410.

⁶⁵*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 224.

declines in certain Northumbrian landed incomes in this period, and the Grey estates were not at all immune.⁶⁶ Indeed, even Sir Thomas' burgages and lands around the castle and in the bishop's borough of Norham had decayed significantly. One of the principal holdings of the bishops of Durham, Norham Castle was also thought to be a key strategic border fortress. Nonetheless, while the maintenance of this stronghold was almost certainly a priority to both the local elite and the palatinate's administration, there was frequent destruction of property by the Scots. Grey's burgages in Norham were themselves valued at just 10d. each, instead of the usual 3s. 4d., which was the common value of burgages there. In all, his Norham lands had fallen in value within recorded memory from £13 to just £7. It might have been that these urban properties and their associated lands were directly affected by Scottish raids. However, their declining value may also have been the result of certain indirect economic consequences of border troubles. Continued destruction by the Scots in the region almost certainly led to a certain amount of *migration to more* secure areas. Those who saw themselves as subjects of the bishop may even have considered a move southward to the palatinate itself, while others moved to more secure parts of Northumberland. The burgages in Norham, with their adjoining lands and close access to market, may nonetheless have been of marginal value. Indeed, in the case of the Grey estates in Norham, the lands adjoining these burgages had themselves been decayed, from £10 per annum to just four. By the time of his death in 1400, Thomas Grey held estates of the bishop of Durham valued at something just under £20, all north of the Tyne (though he was also a free tenant and farmer of a

⁶⁶See for example *CPR, 1399-1401*, 287.

small amount of land belonging to the bishop in the palatinate itself, i.e. in the township of Whickham, on south Tyneside).

The scale of Scottish destruction, and the degree of economic disruption, was great. Grey's core lands in and around Heaton were profoundly affected by these incursions. The manor of Heaton itself, which normally provided an income of some £20 per annum, was worth nothing at the time of his death in 1400. The associated manors of Allerdean, Felkington and Ancroft, usually worth together about £70 per year, were also worth nothing, due to the destruction of recent Scottish raids. Likewise, the manor of Ross - usually worth 20 pounds - had decayed greatly in these years, and was worth just £4 per annum by this date. His two-thirds share in the manor of Kiley fell in value to just 40s., and his fourth of the manor of Upsedlington lay in waste, again because of Scottish raids. The manor of Cheswick, usually worth 40s., was now worth just 13s. 4d., and six farms with a total of over 250 acres of land in the township of Duddoe also lay in waste, for the same reason. The income from his three fisheries in the River Tweed at Orde, Horncliff and Poole, normally £10, had fallen to just four marks. While it may have been that these notional values had an element of the fanciful about them, and that they did not represent the real worth of these lands even in peacetime, there is no reason to believe that they did not at least approximate their notional value, as the source for these figures is an inquisition *post mortem*, which is, after all, an instrument of escheat, in which there would have been little reason to exaggerate such value. The fall in land values was every bit as drastic as the experience of Sir Thomas Grey here implies.⁶⁷

⁶⁷PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 137d.

Grey also held significant lands in Northumberland of the Percies, the crown, Sir Richard Arundel, and others, which were valued at just over £26, of which some £5 10s. 0d. came from certain urban properties in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.⁶⁸ The value of these urban properties remained far more stable than that of any of his estates in Northumberland, not only because they were both removed and sheltered from the regular wrath of Scottish raids, but also because they were consistently leased to regular, resident tenants.⁶⁹ For them, Grey contributed just 2s. in rent as his share of the fee farm of Newcastle.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, his other estates in Northumberland did not fare nearly as well. The manor of Wark, 26 acres near Bamburgh, three villages near Middleton, the site of the manor (*situs manerii*) of Doddington, and the manor of Ewart all lay in waste due to the destruction of the Scots. The manors of Howick and Hawk Hill, however, in the barony of Alnwick, retained their cumulative value of 30 marks, and a house and lands in Alnwick itself retained a value of 8s. Yet the manors of Earle, Reaveley, Hebron, and Coldmartin all lay in waste, again the result of their destruction by the Scots. The Grey estates reveal that, unsurprisingly, those properties closest to great seats of English control retained their value best. Thus, the estates which Sir Thomas Grey himself probably viewed as closest to the centre of his traditional base of power - around Heaton - could not now be counted upon to generate a significant income. Conversely, those Grey estates retaining some of their value were those within the Percy barony of

⁶⁸*Cal. IPM, 1399-1405*, 139.

⁶⁹The value of urban properties, especially those in busy ports, is also far more dependent upon factors originating outside of the regional agricultural situation. Thus, the destruction of crops, and therefore, much of the local economy, will have effected the burghers of Newcastle differently, because of their reliance upon foreign and coastal trade for much of their livelihood.

⁷⁰PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 137d.

Alnwick, others around the royal fortress of Bamburgh, and those nearest the bishop's fortress at Norham. Thus it was that the manors of Howick and Hawk Hill, in the in the barony of Alnwick, continued to be valued at some 30 marks in 1400.

While the castles and surrounding lands of Norham and Bamburgh were certainly very near the Scottish border, it is probable that small-scale raids avoided these English strongholds, and left some lands there viable. Thus the 26 acres held by Thomas Grey near Bamburgh Castle - which provided ploughshares for the castle itself - were still valued at 10s. at the time of his death, probably owing partly to the consistent demand by the castle itself for produce. Grey's lands in and around Norham bear out this general conclusion. The maintenance of some value at Ross - where along with a rent of 20s., sums were remanded for castle guard at Norham - is testimony of this.⁷¹ However, this pattern of devaluation should not be taken to indicate that such established links, perhaps even those based upon geographic proximity, were any guarantee of one's lands remaining viable. In fact, the vast majority of such 'safe' properties, as with the majority of all such properties in Northumberland in this period, were reduced to little more than waste. The manors of Doddington and Ewart, for example, both of which paid rent and castle guard to the Percies as part of the barony of Alnwick, were worthless around 1400, as were the lands held there of the duchy of Lancaster's barony of Stamford and those held of Sir Richard Arundel.⁷² However, the general conclusion that those lands closely best able to maintain their value were those associated with seats of English power remains generally true.

⁷¹PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 137d-138.

⁷²PRO Inquisitions Post Mortem, C 137/24, no. 50.

Whatever the reasons for Grey's partisanship in 1399, it was certainly well rewarded by the new king. Henry made him a king's knight in 1399, confirming his lifetime annuity of 100 marks by way of retainer.⁷³ In late October, he granted him the lands of his late neighbour, Sir Henry Heaton, during the minority of his six-year-old son.⁷⁴ These estates were also near the Percy stronghold of Alnwick, and retained much of their value throughout this turbulent period. They included the manor of Briardean, half of the vill of Hartley, the manor of Chillingham, eight burgages in Bamburgh, an estate called Tritlington, and various other smaller holdings. Briardean and Hartley had a value of £20, as did the manor of Chillingham, while Tritlington alone was valued at four marks. Together, these lands had an annual value of nearly £60.⁷⁵ Thus, by the time of his death in 1400, Grey was receiving at least £200 in annuities by the gift of the crown, a sum that, as we have seen, far exceeded the value of his own lands. Under these circumstances, it is difficult not to conclude that Thomas Grey had become more interested in the opportunities provided by serving the bishop of Durham and the crown, than in his own estates. After all, most of his influence and income were derived from service, rather than landed wealth.

Thus it was when, in the autumn of 1400, the elder Sir Thomas Grey of Heaton died, and was succeeded in his estates by his eldest son, Thomas.⁷⁶ The economic situation in Northumberland, which I have argued above had already

⁷³*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 224.

⁷⁴*CPR, 1399-1401*, 33.

⁷⁵*Cal. IPM, 1399-1405*, 2-3.

⁷⁶*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 225.

reached something of a depressed state, must certainly have been cause for some concern for local landowners. From the early months of the reign of Henry IV, the Percies were at odds with the new king over moneys owed them for the maintenance of the border. Letters written to and from the king's council in the early years of the fifteenth century certainly indicate that, while the amount owed was very much in dispute, the fact of this debt was not.⁷⁷ The crown had, it seems, been systematically failing to remit payment to the earl of Northumberland and his son, Hotspur - who had by now taken on the bulk of these responsibilities - for their service both in the Welsh and Scottish borderlands. If, as I have argued, this occurred against a backdrop of declining landed revenues, this income from the crown was a necessary injection into the local economy.⁷⁸ Its loss was a loss not only to those who received wages directly, but also to the region as a whole. These payments were, after all, used in a variety of ways by the wardens of the marches, all of which facilitated the diffusion of that money in some way down through the local economy. It has not yet received detailed treatment - nor will this essay seek to provide it - but there must be some good cause for suspecting that, in these early years, there existed something of a shortage of circulating currency in Northumberland. Without the regular infusion of large sums into the county's economy by central government, and with the land market surely in or near crisis, the early years of Lancastrian governance must have found Northumberland in some measure of economic uncertainty.

⁷⁷*Proceedings and Ordinances*, i, 150, 152.

⁷⁸Further evidence of this can be found in the records of the bishop of Durham's estates in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire, as well as in those estates of other prominent Northumberland landowners, including the Percies of Alnwick, the Ogles, the Hiltons, and the Fulthorps. *Cal. IPM, 1399-1405, 1405-1413, and 1413-1418*: vols. xviii-xx.

The Grey estates are sufficient testimony to this uncertainty: while the surviving records leave an imperfect picture, it would nonetheless be very surprising if the nominal value of the Grey of Heaton estates did not amount to £120, and may have been as high as £150. Yet, as noted above, their actual annual value in the early fifteenth century was closer to £50. This alarming amount of waste and decay - which was felt by many of the region's prominent landowners - may ultimately have been responsible for prompting such men as the young Thomas Grey to redefine their own relationships with other local landowners, as Grey's father may have done by becoming a retainer of the earl of Westmorland in 1398. It seems that some degree of dissatisfaction had set in with the local gentry over the Percies' inability to ensure sufficient order in the region. Bean has argued that the Nevilles and Greys had been at odds for some years, and that with the death of Sir Thomas Grey and the succession of his son, Westmorland now sought to seal this rift by grant of land. While the conclusion of the *History of Parliament* - that Grey and Neville cemented their relationship by 1398 and perhaps earlier - is probably closer to the correct interpretation, the relationship between the two families did continue to blossom thereafter. In 1404, Ralph Neville bought the constabulary of Bamburgh for the younger Sir Thomas Grey of Heaton.⁷⁹ Soon after, he granted him custody of his castle of Wark-on-Tweed - also in Northumberland - as he had done for his father in 1398, following its purchase from the Montague earl of Salisbury; the widow of the senior Sir Thomas retained much of the property around Wark.⁸⁰

⁷⁹PRO E 326/3515; *Catalogue of Ancient Deeds*, ii, 412.

⁸⁰*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 225.

The most likely reason for these grants, apart from a desire on both parts to assume a relationship akin to that maintained by Westmorland and the elder Grey before his death, can be found in the redefinition of the relationship between the heads of the two families - now quite clearly a client-patron one - and the further push by the Nevilles into the far northern counties. This had, of course, begun long before, and would continue throughout Ralph Neville's lifetime; it would later be cemented by his son, Richard, when he gained a veritable choke hold on the North-West march.⁸¹ However, much progress was made toward that end in this period. It is probable that the ancestors of the earl of Westmorland and the second Sir Thomas Grey competed for patronage and status, both jostling for position, both struggling to expand their own power bases within the larger reality of a Percy-dominated far north. However, by 1401, the situation had clearly changed, to the great advantage of the Nevilles. Their elevation in status in the last years of Richard II - as household favourites of the new king's father - and their familial connection to the powerful Beaufort group, meant that their ascendancy in the region was imminent. The Greys' declining landed income - due largely to their estates' location in north Northumberland - and the inability of the Percies to both collect money owed them by the crown and keep men of local standing within their sphere, highlights adequately the opportunities presented to the Nevilles for adding new clients in the North-East. These were men whose ancestors even one generation earlier had been their own competitors for patronage and influence. In spite of Henry's treatment of the Percies in the earliest years of his reign, the elder Sir Thomas Grey remained loyal to the king, as did a number of other members of the Northumbrian gentry.

⁸¹For the consolidation of the north-western march with Scotland by Richard Neville, earl of Salisbury, see Storey, *End of the House of Lancaster*, Chapter 5.

The rise of the Neville posed a challenge for the North-East's political community. Just years before, the celestial bodies in the region had been the Percies, and the crown had had relatively little influence in the region. Now, by the end of the fourteenth century, new relationships were being formed and cemented. The king himself was a former northern lord of great standing, with a retinue composed largely of men from the region, a fact so clearly borne out by his success and the composition of his following in 1399. As king, Henry sought to establish his kinsman, Westmorland, a local magnate of great standing, as hegemonic in the North. In so doing, he hoped to avoid the problems met by Richard II in the maintenance of order in the region, and with the exercise of the royal prerogative there. Instead, until a Lancastrian governing class could be established, the Nevilles would act as the king's legate in the North, in anticipation of the time when the Percies could be done without in the military governance of the country.

This new nexus of power required certain adjustments in the way relationships were maintained. The Nevilles built up a retinue rich in old Lancastrian stalwarts, such as Erpingham, and maintained trusted allegiances with the Claxtons (key administrators) and Gascoignes (soldiers and legal advisors) in Durham and Yorkshire, and trusted councillors such as the clerk, William Tunstall, and certain local administrators like William Hutton of south Durham, and John Thorpe, who held lands of the earl in south-west Durham. However, Westmorland also advanced his interests in new territories through expansion of his retinue. He retained two key servants of John, duke of Brittany, in Richmond, and cultivated Richard Ottway in the old Lucy lordship of Cockermouth. At the same time, Neville also expanded his interests into Northumberland, through his relationships with two key Northumbrian

figures, Thomas Grey, who was his retainer, and William Heron, Lord Say, who acted as Westmorland's eyes and ears in the king's council, and eventually, his household.⁸² All of these relationships were undoubtedly sought by both patron and retainer, as Henry desperately sought to empower his few trusted magnate supporters, and they in turn, sought to solidify and extend their influence. In the case of the North, only after the failure of Scrope's rebellion, and the translation of Langley to Durham, did the situation there truly stabilise.

⁸²It was Heron who spoke for Westmorland in the critical period at the beginning of the Percy rebellions, relaying his wishes and advice to the king while the earl was in the North. Heron became steward of the household in 1402, when the king replaced all of those foisted upon him by the parliament of 1401, undoubtedly due in part to his relationship with Westmorland, though certainly he must also have developed some rapport with the king himself. Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 287.

IV.

The North-East's Political Community

One of the chief functions of this dissertation has been to try and better-understand the political culture of the North, and its relationship to the government of the realm. Thus far, this has taken the form of a discussion of the rise of a Lancastrian faction in the region; because in the North this came largely in the form of the rise of the earl of Westmorland, discussion to this point has revolved around him and his retinue. However, it would be quite inaccurate to suppose that, even in the North-East - a region dominated by great ecclesiastical landowners and the Percies and Nevilles - the balance of the landed community gravitated to one great baronial family or another. As M. Hicks has recently pointed out, even in areas where land holding was less concentrated - and not dominated politically to the degree that the North-East was - many figures of significant landed wealth remained non-aligned. There were simply not enough great landed fortunes to attract every viable, useful member of the county gentry. This was certainly true of the North-East, if perhaps to a somewhat lesser extent.¹

I therefore wish to turn to a discussion of those members of the north-eastern land-owning community - where one can be seen to have been distinct - as a political class. Specifically, this treatment will focus on landowners in the palatinate of Durham and North Durham, the bishop's Northumberland and Islandshire liberty near the Scottish border. Why these regions specifically? Two aspects of this selection

¹M. Hicks, *Bastard Feudalism* (1995), 10-17.

process require further explanation. Firstly, the selection of members of the Durham gentry is based solely on the quality of evidence for their land holding and political activities. The administration of the bishop's liberty was in many ways modelled on that of royal government, and has therefore left behind detailed accounts. Because Durham was the province of both the bishop and Durham Cathedral Priory, still further information can be gleaned about the activities of the men of Durham. Many of those profiled were active in Durham and elsewhere, and it is the profiles of these families particularly which benefit from the additional resources of the bishopric and priory. Thus, it is principally for this reason - the availability of two good sources of evidence from separate Durham administrations, which greatly augment the records of national government - that I have selected for study north-eastern families active in Durham.

Secondly, a number - though certainly not all - of the gentry figures highlighted in this study have already been the subjects of extensive biographical treatment in the *History of Parliament*. This is an excellent series of biographies of members of Parliament returned from 1386-1421. Covering roughly the same period dealt with in this paper, the History of Parliament is, in many ways, the logical companion text to what follows here. Many biographical gaps can easily be filled by referring to particular biographies in it, and, because of the extensive nature of certain of these biographies (which I will reference extensively where appropriate), detailed discussions of some careers - such as that of Sir Ralph Eure - will be largely unnecessary in this paper. In such cases, this treatment will focus either on those aspects of their careers treated in an abbreviated, or perhaps slightly different, way by the History of Parliament biographies - such as aspects of their north-eastern political affiliations - or on details of land holding: these are the areas in which this paper

might hope to offer new details and insights. In addition, where appropriate, this paper will offer certain views that may be at odds with those offered by the authors of the *History of Parliament*. It will do so with great circumspection, and with deference to the large number of sources used to compile those biographies: this study, because of its concentration on north-eastern land holding, concerns itself with a somewhat smaller source base. Therefore, the picture it offers, while valuable in its own right, must be seen in the context of the 'full lives' of these members of the gentry. In this way, this study and the biographical material in the *History of Parliament* are very much complimentary.

The men I will spotlight are somewhat diverse: some were active in high politics, many were not. A number held lands in their own right, others as tenants of the Nevilles, and still others were free tenants of one or other of the great ecclesiastical landlords, the bishop of Durham and Durham Cathedral Priory. All, however, had some interests in the affairs of Durham. Among those secular landlords who were active in public affairs, important differences existed in their roles. However, more basic distinctions certainly underlie much of the potential diversity inherent in this group. The most obvious of these underlying differences was the discrepancies in their wealth. The political agendas of members of the county gentry were very closely related to their estate. Many will have perceived their interests as defined by local politics; others, perhaps those of greater means, were more ambitious, and defined their spheres of interest more broadly. But who were these characters? Who comprised the Durham baronage and its greater gentry? How shall we define them? A.J. Pollard, in his study of the North-East in the fifteenth century, has defined the gentry as those owning land convertible to an

income of some £40 per year. He further delineates an upper stratum within this group, the greater gentry; their income should approach or exceed £100 per year.

This study cannot hope to examine every member of the north-eastern gentry, nor shall it seek to draw any sharp delineation between the gentry and greater gentry, nor indeed between greater gentry and baronage. M. Hicks has noted that such distinctions are largely illusory, and even where they can be shown to exist, they are meaningless.² For the purposes of this study, political classes and *traditional status* are largely meaningless, in the sense that the Durham landed community was relatively small, and the distinctions between greater gentry and baronial figures are at best obscure. Indeed, I shall argue that many of the most significant figures in the palatinate technically fell within the confines of the gentry, and not the baronage, yet availed themselves of political and social advantage to a far greater degree than did many of their more honourable neighbours. Although this was surely a common occurrence, the phenomenon was heightened in the North-East, where land values, and therefore landed incomes, tended to be somewhat less than those in the South; in the North, office holding, and the rewards that accompanied it, were greater in relative terms.³ In addition, the administrative offices typically held by members of the gentry carried with them more authority. Their power was greater in Durham particularly, where the king's writ did not run, and in Northumberland, where it carried much less force than elsewhere - the result of centuries of border warfare. Because all landholders in the palatinate were tenants either of the bishop or prior, and were therefore subject to their courts and paid them feudal dues and rents, their

²Hicks, *Bastard Feudalism*, Chapter 1.

³*Cal. IPM, 1399-1405*; PRO DURH 3/13.

high-ranking officials - typically members of greater gentry families - were politically important in Durham and the North-East as a whole. The Lumley family, for example, in spite of its membership in the peerage and being an old Durham family, were never as politically important (nor probably as wealthy, after 1400) as the Eures or Claxtons. Although Sir Ralph Eure's landed income was not as great as that of Lord Lumley, his annuities, and fees from his various administrative offices, ensured that his total wealth and political influence were greater than Lumley's.

It is also clear that monetary classifications are largely arbitrary, and that the threshold for the upper gentry could as easily be set at £80 or £120 as £100, with much the same result and with the same degree of intellectual honesty. In any case, many important members of the Durham gentry failed to meet this criterion. There are several reasons for this, the most important since land in Northumbria was worth somewhat less than that further south. This means that some local landowners could claim membership in the governing class without appearing on the surface to have been qualified to do so. Some of these incomes will, therefore, appear positively minuscule to historians of the South in this period. However, because the palatinate of Durham maintained a special administrative status, and provided certain unusual opportunities for the gentry, certain men of rather lower standing, with smallish incomes, were able to maximise their potential attributes in service to the bishop. Many of these were the same sorts of figures one might expect to see in county service elsewhere: younger sons from good local families, minor local barons - all were to be found in Durham administration in this period, in spite of their smaller incomes.

In this period, certain members of the gentry had also begun to explore seriously the possibilities of financial diversification. Participation in town markets;

increased leasing as farmers of their lords' demesne lands; the possibility of exploiting fishing, logging and mineral rights on their estates, and on those which they came to lease; and the lure of paid political and administrative appointments, could all be very lucrative - in many cases more fruitful than traditional pastoral and arable exploitation. Because, for a variety of reasons, the value of some of their lands had by this time declined, many members of the gentry had been spurred on to non-traditional financial practices. Again, many of these reasons were perhaps peculiar to the North-East. The cash value of much of the land in Northumberland, as noted above, was also severely depressed, often to the point of worthlessness, as a result of the destruction done there by incessant Scottish border raids.⁴ This was certainly true of the bishop's liberty in North Durham - Norhamshire and Islandshire - near the border, but this instability was also in evidence on other of the bishop's estates. In addition, the long-term decline in land values may have had an even more pronounced effect on the landlord economy of the North-East, where land was probably worth somewhat less to start with than in the South.⁵ These factors together may have accelerated the development of certain other lucrative endeavours, including the increasingly important coal industry. It also seems that, just as the severe decline in Northumbrian land values may have spurred the growth of non-traditional land uses, so, too, did it increase the interest in other forms of wealth creation, such as office holding, royal service, or close alignment with one of the highly politicised great families in the North.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Story, *Thomas Langley*, 67-73; R.A. Lomas, 'Durham Cathedral Priory as a Landowner and a Landlord, 1290-1540', (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Durham, 1973), Appendices; A.J. Pollard, 'The North-Eastern Economy and the Agrarian Crisis of 1438-40', *NH*, xxv (1989), 88-105.

Many of the families examined here also held land outside the palatinate of Durham. Men like Sir Ralph Eure of Witton-le-Wear had their holdings spread over three counties, and his case especially illustrates the danger posed by studying strictly Durham holdings in presenting a picture of a family's wealth and influence. The distribution of holdings had important repercussions for the translation of landed wealth into political influence: estates too thinly spread over the landscape could mean difficulty in establishing a base of influence in any one of them. In such a case, the nominal cash value of a landowner's estates might be misleading as a potential expression of political potency (though this was surely not the case with Ralph Eure). Alternatively, where estates in Durham were held by a significant political figure, this might not have the effect of producing any significant corresponding local influence. Should a landowner be personally removed from the region, or his core estates be located in the South (as in the case of Michael de la Pole, earl of Suffolk), the personal attention, and perhaps the vested interest, might well be missing. Thus, this essay will try to consider not only the landlord economy of the palatinate, but also the holdings of its most important members; in turn, it will assess the role, if any, of these outside interests on the holders standing within the North-East's political makeup.

I agree with others who have written on the North-East in their rejection of the Tees as a Durham/Yorkshire boundary; I likewise accept that the Tyne/Derwent boundary may not have truly delineated a separate Northumberland. However, I also hope to show that there were important ways in which life within these boundaries, encompassing as they did the bishop's regality, was somewhat distinct - for gentry life and occupation - from life without. Durham was of particular importance to the north-eastern gentry because it provided opportunities for service outside the region's

great comital retinues and the royal administration, which so often drew its officers from the ranks of baronial followings. The crown knew well that stability in the North was impossible without the assent and participation of the great magnates. The bishopric, on the other hand, provided another distinct layer of administration - with all the diversity of royal government - in which members of the region's landed community could find employment for their talents. Thus, many of the region's gentry who found employment with the great retinues or the crown also served the bishop. Still others, who had no connection to the Percies nor the Nevilles, nor ever served on any royal commission, nonetheless forged long and distinguished careers in palatine administration.

For example, Sir Gerard Heron of Twizell, Northumberland, operated somewhat outside the spheres of both Neville and Percy influence, and was a distinguished royal agent in the North.⁶ An important landowner in County Durham, he and his brother, William Heron (who became Lord Say through marriage), were important ambassadors to the Scottish court and elsewhere before and after the fall of the Percies. As eldest son and heir to his wife's estates (located mainly in Sussex and elsewhere in the southern counties), William Heron spent most of his time away from the North. He was a knight of the chamber under Henry IV, and eventually became steward of the royal household in 1402.⁷ Although he held all the family lands in Northumberland, William Heron was nonetheless much less involved than his brother in north-eastern politics. He held in his demesne the manor of Eshott, 160 acres in Clifton and Coldwell, and 114 acres in Duddoe; together, these had an

⁶*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 353-56.

⁷Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 287; Rogers, 'The Political Crisis of 1401', 85-96.

annual value of twenty marks. In addition, he held the manor of Hartside, 50 acres in Glanton, 100 acres in Whittingham and 56 acres in Thornton, all of which had an annual value of seven marks.⁸ As primarily a southern landowner, Lord Say falls largely outside the scope of this essay. However, the family's interests in the North do fall within its remit, and they remained in capable hands throughout this period.

Gerard Heron of Twizell - William's brother - held lands almost exclusively in the palatinate of Durham, which presumably comprised his share of the family's lands. They included the manor of Applingdon, half of the manor and village of Little Ussworth, and 80 acres in Hutton, and further lands in Northert, the total value of which was around £20.⁹ As the family's second son, Gerard Heron seems to have been ambitious enough to build a political career of his own. Building upon the influence accrued by his family in Northumberland and Durham, he was to make himself indispensable to successive kings, and to successive bishops of Durham. In his capacity as Lord Say, William Heron spent most of his time administering his lands and political career elsewhere, while his brother was able to exert the full weight of the family's influence in the North-East. The *History of Parliament* elucidates Gerard Heron's career in some detail; the following should serve to summarise and extend that excellent account. The authors of the *History of Parliament* tell us that Heron served in several Parliaments in the 1380's and 1390's.¹⁰ In 1385, he became Bishop Fordham's constable, steward, and receiver for life in his North Durham liberties of Norhamshire and Islandshire, for which Heron

⁸*Cal. IPM, 1399-1405*, 367.

⁹PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 144.

¹⁰*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 354.

was extremely well paid.¹¹ He also served on his first royal commission in 1386, surveying the fishing of the rivers Tyne and Tweed, to preserve stocks.¹²

Heron's first ambassadorial duties were undertaken in 1389, when he sought redress for injuries done to Englishmen by Scots breaking the truce¹³ In the following year he was sent to receive assurances from the Scottish government that it would honour the truce agreed to between France and England; he would serve as an important ambassador to Scotland for the next thirteen years.¹⁴ In 1392 he was named commissioner of both array, and *oyer et terminer*, for Northumberland, and charged with stopping the widespread avoidance of tariff duties by wool smugglers; he is described in the records as the 'chamberlain of Berwick-upon-Tweed'; in 1397, he was entrusted by the crown with the collection of the customs there.¹⁵ The following year, he investigated the death of Robert Oliver, many times mayor of Newcastle, on the crown's behalf; and that summer surveyed the workings of the fee farm of Bamburgh, again as the crown's agent. Later in that year, perhaps sensing that Heron - like his colleague John Mitford - had become a useful functionary, the king retained Heron for life, and granted him a lifetime annuity of 40 marks for his ambassadorial efforts.¹⁶ In 1396, he was commissioned by the king to investigate the illegal mining and smuggling of sea coal from the Newcastle area, and in 1397,

¹¹In one year alone, the bishop made payments to him totalling £23 6s. 8d. *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 269.

¹²PRO DURH 3/32.

¹³*Foedera*, vii, 650.

¹⁴*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 354; *Foedera*, vii, 675.

¹⁵*CPR, 1391-1396*, 83, 94, 233; *Hist. Parl.*, iii, 355.

¹⁶*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 355; *CPR, 1391-1396*, 290, 353.

he undertook, with others, a survey of the Northumbrian estates of the Lords Appellant, for the purpose of escheat.¹⁷ Heron continued to serve on the bench for the balance of Richard's reign, and was summoned to Parliament as an M.P. for Northumberland throughout the 1390's, and continued to act as ambassador, often with his Parliamentary colleague John Mitford.¹⁸

Although John Heron joined the duke of York's army in 1399, his brother, Gerard, probably did not, though it may have been that he fought under the standard of the earl of Northumberland, and his name is therefore hidden from view: details of Northumberland's army in 1399 are hard to come by.¹⁹ However, there is little evidence of a strong association between Heron and the earl; as Heron was certainly of sufficient status to warrant explicit mention of his involvement, it seems unlikely that he participated. This would, after all, have meant abandoning a promising diplomatic career in the service of a friendly king to support a family - the Percies - with which he had had surprisingly little to do.²⁰ More likely is that Heron, in common with many northern knights, remained passive throughout the campaign of 1399.²¹ Having remained largely unpoliticised during the reign of Richard II, and seemingly free from the encumbrances of aligning himself with one of the great affinities of the North, he had built a career on serving the crown. Perhaps, unlike

¹⁷*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 355; *CPR, 1396-1399*, 52, 308.

¹⁸*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 354-55; *CPR, 1396-1399*, 237.

¹⁹Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 250-51.

²⁰*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 355.

²¹See my the discussion of Sir Ralph Eure of Witton-le-Wear below, pp. 162-83

for the Percies and the Nevilles, for Heron the identity of the man who wore that crown mattered little.

In May, 1400, Heron undertook a commission to inform the Scottish king of Henry's agreement to a peace with France, and in August was back in Edinburgh on a similar engagement on behalf of the crown.²² In fact, he undertook many such assignments throughout 1400. In 1403, he was entrusted by the crown with a commission to administer an oath to members of the Northumbrian gentry that they would, under no circumstances, aid or abet the earl of Northumberland.²³ In that year, there is visible a rare glimpse of fealty among the region's greater gentry, when it is revealed that Thomas Grey the elder had granted custody of the castle and manor of Wark-on-Tweed to Heron and his own son, also Thomas Grey of Heaton, to retain its use for his own family in perpetuity.²⁴ Following the battle of Shrewsbury, great figures amongst the Northumbrian gentry who did not fight with Hotspur were commissioned to survey his lands in that county, including Heron, Robert Umfraville and William Mitford; these were, not coincidentally, the three men used most often by the crown in negotiations with the Scots.²⁵ The three were also named commissioners of array scarcely two weeks later.²⁶ Sir Gerard Heron died in early 1404, ending a distinguished career as royal diplomat to the Scottish court, and as

²²*Foedera*, viii, 144; viii, 157.

²³*Foedera*, viii, 321; *CPR*, 1401-1405, 296.

²⁴*CPR*, 1401-1405, 182.

²⁵*CPR*, 1401-1405, 284.

²⁶*CPR*, 1401-1405, 292.

keeper of the peace in Northumberland.²⁷ He also remains a primary reminder that the Northumbrian gentry had within its community men of ability and relative independence, who were able to survive outside the great retinues - especially that of the Percies - and prosper in the service of the crown. Although the Herons certainly did not remain completely unpoliticised throughout the turbulent early years of Henry's reign (William Heron, Lord Say, was a household knight of some standing, and carried messages of the Percy Revolt to Henry's council in the name of the earl of Westmorland in 1403, which can be seen either as royal or Neville service), they remained largely so, and prospered as royal servants throughout. In this regard, the tenor of Heron's biography in the *History of Parliament*, captures the flavour of his life: an able administrator with good diplomatic skills, often used by the crown, yet never truly associated closely with any great nobleman.

Another example of a prominent, largely independent, gentry family from this region in the late-fourteenth century is the Fulthorps of Durham. Their chief members included Sir William Fulthorp, his brother Roger, and Sir William's son, Alan. Long-time residents and free tenants in Durham - and close associates of the Eures - the Fulthorps were also at various stages tenants of the Nevilles and, of course, the bishop of Durham. Yet from the first, their clear aim was to serve in the palatine administration of the bishopric. In 1381, William Fulthorp was named the *bishop's chief forester*, and gained custody of the substantial parks of Auckland and Evenwood.²⁸ He was consistently described, throughout Bishop Skirlaw's lengthy tenure in Durham, as either the palatinate's chief forester, or as keeper of the forest of

²⁷*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 355-56.

²⁸PRO DURH 3/32.

Weardale.²⁹ Sir William was the lord of Fulthorp, the greater part of a conglomeration of lands which - with ten houses and 180 acres of land in the vill of Grendon, fifteen-acre farms in Foxden and Thurstanton (worth 2s. and 14s., respectively), and a larger, 60-acre farm in Frosterly (worth 30s.) - had a corporate value of £13 10s. 8d. per year.³⁰ In addition, Fulthorp held, by right of his wife Isabel's dowry as the widow of William Menville, a third part of the manors of Horden and Pesspool, certain lands in Bossfield, and a third part of the manor of Haswell, the total value of which was some £11 5s. 0d.³¹ He also held just over 50 acres of arable land of the bishop in Whickham, on south Tyneside,³² and certain other lands in the palatinate. These included four 'husband lands' in Morleston, and another three in Throston, as free tenants of Sir Roger Clifford, lord of the manor of Hart, an outpost on the south Durham coast which was not technically included in the bishop's palatine regality.³³ He also held the manor of Kaber, in Westmorland, of the same Roger Clifford, valued at £4 per annum, for which he paid a rent of 17s. 8d.³⁴ Thus, irrespective of his position as the bishop's forester - an official who might find himself responsible for as much as £400 in income in a year - Fulthorp might expect his estates to yield an annual sum of around £32-£35. His salary as the bishop's forester is not known, but, given the fact that he was responsible for those

²⁹PRO DURH 3/33.

³⁰PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 161.

³¹PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 135d. He held the latter as a tenant of the earl of Westmorland.

³²*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 93.

³³*Cal. IPM, 1399-1405*, 257.

³⁴*Cal. IPM, 1399-1405*, 259.

sorts of sums, a profit on the office of £15-£20 annually would in no way be out of line with expectations.

William's brother, Roger, was the bishop's chief justice, and was paid an accompanying fee of £10 a year.³⁵ He held in his own demesne lands in Norton, which were valued only at about £2 per annum, but was nonetheless granted custody of the Sayer lands in south Durham, amounting to over 100 acres in and around Foxden and Preston-on-Tees, and worth about £5 per annum. As John Sayer, the son and heir to these lands, was at the time an infant, this amounted to a life-time grant.³⁶ In 1383, with his brother William and Sir Ralph Eure, Roger Fulthorp was appointed to a commission to enquire into the overflowing of the River Skerne. Later that year, these three men were named justices of *oyer et terminer* in a case involving the bishop granting the important right of way-leave, so that others might transport coal from a south Durham coal mine using the bishop's roads. In 1387, Roger Fulthorp was again named as justiciar, on a commission to determine whether certain persons had encroached on the bishop's fishing rights in his rivers.³⁷ He was also very active in the land market, probably the result of having so few lands in his own demesne. In 1381, he bought two tenements (totalling three bovates of land) in Middridge; a further 150 acres (three farms) - plus a plot of waste land (presumably used for grazing) - in Norton; another hundred acres in Herdwick (one house, six

³⁵PRO DURH 20/14/8. This seemed to be something of a habit: in 1427/8, when Robert Stangeways was the bishop's master forester, his brother, James, was his chief justice.

³⁶PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 133d.; PRO DURH 3/33.

³⁷PRO DURH 3/32.

tofts, and six bovates of land, annual value: six marks),³⁸ lands in Sedgefield of uncertain extent (both in south Durham), and a tenement in Hartlepool.³⁹

All of these purchases reflect little more than the desire to convert part of a cash income into property. A trained lawyer, Roger Fulthorp had successfully carved out a career serving in the bishop's courts, and had already reached its highest level sometime before 1383. However, his profession did not completely isolate him from the realities of political life: as all the courts in Durham, and particularly the chancery court, were overseen by the steward, it is quite unlikely that his elevation to the chief justiciarship could have gone ahead without the support of Sir Ralph Eure. Thus, the intermingling of the interests of these prominent members of the Durham political community was mirrored by their personal interaction. The Claxtons, for instance, would not only become prominent Neville retainers in North Yorkshire, but members of their Durham branch would also eventually marry one of Sir Ralph Eure's daughters.⁴⁰ Isabel Fulthorp, Sir William's wife and eventual widow, had also previously been married to Sir William Menville, whose daughter and heir, also named Isabel, was the wife of William Claxton.⁴¹ Both the Fulthorps and the Claxtons were, among other things, tenants of the Nevilles, and the Eures, Fulthorps, while many members of the Claxton family held high office in Durham in the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, while the Fulthorps certainly had connections with other members of the Durham elite, this did not them into a

³⁸DCD *Magnum Repertorium*, 3.3 Pont., 7.

³⁹*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 20, 172, 175, 179, 186, 197.

⁴⁰Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 112.

⁴¹PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 131d.

position of constraint. The palatinate's political community was too small for any of these figures to achieve any noticeable degree of success without some reference to other members of the local establishment. Nonetheless, given the intimacy implied by such close political quarters, the Fulthorps retained more than a modicum of independence.

Sir Robert Ogle of Ogle, his elder son, Robert, and his son younger son, Sir John Bertram - who took his grandmother's name on his inheritance of her estates in Bothal - are likewise exemplar of the possibility of existing reasonably independently of the Percies in the county of Northumberland, in spite of that family's vast estates and its control of royal prerogative in the region. In 1401, Ogle attended the king's council at Westminster, and was knighted sometime thereafter. As he did not take possession of his father's lands until 1409, Robert Ogle seems to have been motivated to take on other responsibilities, presumably with an eye toward augmenting his own influence. As with Thomas Grey and Gerard Heron, he became involved with the administration of the bishop of Durham's liberty in North Durham, and in 1403, he became the bishop's justice, steward, receiver, and sheriff in Northumberland, as well as the constable of Norham Castle, services for which he was well paid.⁴² He attended Thomas Langley's enthronement in 1405, and, three years later, was named justice of the peace for Northumberland and Islandshire with two other prominent members of the Northumbrian gentry, Robert Manners and Samson Harding. Details of the career of Sir Robert Ogle have been provided by the authors of the *History of Parliament*, so further elucidation here is unnecessary.⁴³

⁴²CC 189809.

⁴³*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 860-62.

Another figure of importance whose career has been well detailed in the *History of Parliament* is Sir John Bertram, younger son of Sir Robert Ogle. Many times a member of Parliament for Northumberland, Bertram fell out early on with the other members of his father's family, and in 1410, with his inheritance of Bothal Castle and its constituents in doubt after some years of confusion over the right to its succession - and after the crown had created still more problems by dividing it up - Robert Ogle, the younger, attacked and besieged his younger brother Bertram in Bothal Castle.⁴⁴ Bertram lodged an appeal with parliament for redress of grievances against his brother, and was successful in retaining title to Bothal after swift action by the king's council.⁴⁵ Thereafter, his career in the service of the crown was long and distinguished. The authors of the *History of Parliament* assert that, from the time of the settling of the question of his inheritance, Bertram became very active in local government.⁴⁶ In that year, he was first named sheriff of Northumberland, a post that he would hold intermittently over the next 30 years.⁴⁷ In 1415, he was named co-warden of Roxburgh Castle (with the earl of Westmorland), and played an important role in the maintenance of the borders. In 1418, as the earl of Westmorland faded into retirement, Bertram became sole custodian of Roxburgh, and remained so well into the 1430's. He was a J.P. for Northumberland many times, constable of Newcastle Castle, and served Bishop Langley as J.P. for Durham into the late 1430's.⁴⁸ As with so many other members of the gentry, John Bertram's

⁴⁴*CPR, 1405-1408*, 144.

⁴⁵*Hist. Parl.*, ii, 211.

⁴⁶*Hist. Parl.*, ii, 212.

⁴⁷*Hist. Parl.*, ii, 212-13.

⁴⁸*Hist. Parl.*, ii, 212-13; PRO DURH 3/37.

career was built around service. By the time his career began, it was already true that, because the crown, the Nevilles, and the bishop of Durham were so closely associated with each other, service to one was *de facto* service to the establishment generally.

Another example of a prominent, relatively independent family in the North-East was the Mitfords of Mitford, Northumberland. Their deeds are again chronicled by the authors of the *History of Parliament*.⁴⁹ Sir John Mitford was not the lord of the 'barony' of Mitford - that title was usually held by a member of the Percy family. Instead, the Mitfords relied on their manor of Molesdon, and another manor house with lands in Mitford, for their landed wealth. The manor of Molesdon was probably worth only 100s.; while the lands in Mitford, including the large house there, with eighteen further dwellings, 200 acres of arable land, and fifteen acres of meadow, were worth 40s. He also held the manor of Espley Hall, said to be lying in waste, and eight burgages in Morpeth, together worth 40s. In addition, he owned a large house and various lands in Bebside and Cowpen, also worth 40s., and a burgage in Corbridge, with various other lands in the region, which were lying in waste due to the incursions of the Scots.⁵⁰ Together, in spite of the great size of his holdings, the value of his lands in Northumberland nonetheless amounted to just under £12.⁵¹

However, this relatively small sum of landed wealth was overcome through service. In John Mitford, the *History of Parliament* paints a remarkable picture of administrative success. In 1381, Mitford served the king in France as lieutenant to

⁴⁹*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 744-49.

⁵⁰*Cal. IPM, 1405-1413*, 193-94.

⁵¹*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 745.

the constable of Bordeaux, a service likely done as a member of John of Gaunt's retinue, for which both the Nevilles and Percies were obliged to provide men.⁵² For the remainder of the 1380's, however, Mitford served on a large number of commissions in the North of England. He was a J.P. in Northumberland throughout the 1380's, and served on a variety of other commissions during that time.⁵³ In 1385, he is referred to as the escheator of Cumberland, and in 1386 as the steward of the duke of York's liberty of Tynedale - a potentially favourable appointment because there, of course, the king's writ did not run. In 1392, he was named to a commission of array for Northumberland, which was asked the damage done to Bamburgh Castle; in this, he acted with, among others, Gerard Heron and Robert Ogle. In the following year, he was called upon, again with Heron, and *Sir Thomas Grey, to settle a dispute* in Bamburgh involving one of the wells on the fee farm there. In 1392, Mitford, Heron, and Samson Harding were called upon to check the illegal import and export of cloth and wool from Northumberland.⁵⁴ All of these commissions seem to have borne fruit when, in 1393, having been much in the service of the crown in the North, Mitford was granted an annuity of £20 by Richard II.⁵⁵ In February of that same year, he was again named to the commission of the peace, and of *oyer et terminer*; this was repeated in 1394.⁵⁶ Mitford also became involved in the partition of the lands of Sir Alan Heaton, who had no male heir, and whose three daughters had each

⁵²*Foedera*, vii, 320.

⁵³*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 745.

⁵⁴*CPR, 1391-1396*, 232-33, 353.

⁵⁵*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 745; *CPR, 1391-1396*, 226.

⁵⁶*CPR, 1391-1396*, 437.

married prominent local knights; he was named to a commission charged with surveying and adjudicating the split in 1394.⁵⁷ In July, 1397, he was again made a J.P. for the county, and in 1399, accepted his first commission with his son, William, when the two served as justices in a murder investigation in Newcastle, led by Hotspur and the earl of Northumberland.⁵⁸

The authors of John Mitford's biography in the *History of Parliament* point out that, in addition to these local appointments in the service of the crown, Mitford was also a firm member of the Percy retinue, and find it likely that his sitting in thirteen Parliaments may have been directly connected to his service to the Percies; indeed, his early commissions in Northumberland and Cumberland show that he did have strong ties of service to both Henry Percy and his son.⁵⁹ Had this had been the end of the story, one might conclude that Mitford had had a useful, if unremarkable, career serving his patron in the localities. However, along with his duties in Northumberland and Cumberland, John Mitford had also forged a long and distinguished diplomatic career, coinciding with a particularly ebullient period in Anglo-Scottish relations.

The *History of Parliament* tells us that he went along on some 30 diplomatic missions to negotiate for peace with the Scots.⁶⁰ In June, 1390, he and Gerard Heron were sent to Edinburgh to receive assurances of peace from the Scottish

⁵⁷*CPR, 1391-1396*, 488.

⁵⁸*CPR, 1396-1399*, 237, 584.

⁵⁹*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 745.

⁶⁰*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 745.

king.⁶¹ In December, he helped escort a Scottish embassy through the North of England, and in early 1392, he again treated with the Scottish government, this time for redress of damages caused by Scots in the breaking of the truce.⁶² August, 1394 marked the beginning of the diplomatic career of John's son, William Mitford, when he served in his father's stead on a commission similar to that undertaken by the elder Mitford in 1390, in which the crown again sought assurances that the Scots would adhere to the truce agreed to between England and France.⁶³ In May, 1395, again with Ogle and Heron, John Mitford was again sent north, this time to secure the good will of certain Scottish earls perceived by Richard to be hostile to the truce.

The History of Parliament correctly points out that Mitford, like his friend and ally Sir Gerard Heron, remained aloof from the political machinations of the last years of the fourteenth century, and found no trouble with the idea of throwing in his lot with the new King Henry IV after 1399; Mitford's usefulness was likewise recognised by the crown. He continued to act in his capacity as ambassador to not only the Scottish court,⁶⁴ but to other nobles and towns there, as well, pursuing Henry's policy of an early peace.⁶⁵ In 1401, he was one of Henry's tax collectors in the ports of Berwick and Newcastle, escheator for the county of Northumberland, and had been a J.P. since 1399.⁶⁶ The authors of the *History of Parliament* remind

⁶¹*Foedera*, vii, 675.

⁶²*Foedera*, vii, 710.

⁶³*Foedera*, vii, 785.

⁶⁴*Foedera*, viii, 150.

⁶⁵*CPR, 1399-1401*, 351, 353; *Foedera*, viii, 185.

⁶⁶*CPR, 1399-1401*, 467, 521, 562.

us that, in spite of his early attachment to the Percies, Mitford was active in helping Henry IV to suppress their rebellion, and, in 1402, was named to a commission to enquire into the holdings of Hotspur in Northumberland following his death in 1403.⁶⁷ As if to underscore his own independence, Mitford shortly thereafter took an oath of fealty to the crown, which specifically outlawed service to the earl of Northumberland, and then undertook to administer that oath to Northumbrian gentry community.⁶⁸ Thus, when the lines of battle were drawn, the *Mitfords asserted their* independence from the Percies (William Mitford also remained loyal to Henry IV), and did the king's bidding in this most difficult and remote region of England. In November, 1403, in the wake of the Percy revolts, and with the earl of Northumberland still very much a threat and at large in the North, both *Mitfords*, father and son, were again entrusted with sensitive posts in the North: they were named J.P.'s for Northumberland.⁶⁹ The *History of Parliament* notes that, on the day of his death, John Mitford - now close to 70 years of age - was reimbursed one last time for expenses incurred on a recent embassy to the Scots.

By contrast, William Bowes of Streatlam is an excellent example of a great Durham figure without any significant political ambitions. Sir William Bowes succeeded his father, Robert, to become the lord of Streatlam, in south Durham. His estates comprised what can reasonably be termed the lordship of Streatlam, and other, extensive lands throughout the palatinate. The manor of Streatlam, valued alone at £40 per year, was held of the earl of Warwick as of the lordship of Barnard

⁶⁷*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 747.

⁶⁸*Foedera*, viii, 322; *CPR, 1401-1405*, 294.

⁶⁹*CPR, 1401-1405*, 518.

Castle. Along with it, Bowes held the manor and vill of Lutrington, including six further houses, 100 acres of arable, ten acres of pasture, and 100 acres of moor land, valued together at ten marks. He held a manor house and 200 acres of arable and pasture in the township of Newton, valued at ten marks. In addition, he held 60 acres at Finchale, a forty-acre and a twenty-five acre farm, and thirteen other holdings, each under twenty acres in extent, all in the vill of Newton. He held the manor of Willington in south Durham - one of the main estates of the lordship of Brancepeth - for a rent of 100s., and the vill of Hilton, both of the earl of Westmorland, which had annual values of ten marks and £20, respectively. Of the bishop, he held Farnley Wood (about ten acres) and 60 acres at Wellingthorn in West Auckland; for the latter - which had a value of 10s. - he paid a rent of 30s. to the bishop.⁷⁰ In sum, his lands in Durham had a value of something of the order of £83.

Sir William Bowes did not hold the castle and manor of Bowes, which was in later years owned by the head of the Yorkshire branch of his family; it was, at this time, held first by the duke of Brittany, then by the earl of Westmorland, and was part of the honour of Richmond. Thus, for all of his considerable wealth, William Bowes was strictly a Durham man, and as such, was primarily interested in the politics and affairs of the palatinate. He never took an ambassadorial assignment from the crown, and only rarely did he hold commissions outside Durham. His wealth and standing in Durham, however, made him an important figure locally. Bowes was, for example, a standing member of the bishop of Durham's council, for which he was paid between £10 and 20 marks per year.⁷¹ In 1382, he was made a

⁷⁰PRO DURH 3/13, fos. 131d.-132, 267d.

⁷¹PRO DURH 20/114 8; *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 267.

J.P. for Durham, and in 1386, he took a commission of array for Easington ward in east Durham from Bishop Fordham, the same year he vouched for Gerard Heron when the latter was to be made constable and steward of Norham. In 1387, he was named sheriff and escheator of Durham.⁷² In 1389, he was again named commissioner of array for Easington, and was also made J.P. for Bishop Skirlaw's wapentake of Sadberge.⁷³ Apart from these not inconsequential diversions, William Bowes, in spite of a landed income that probably exceeded £100 per year, seems to have been largely without *political ambition*. *There is no evidence that he was ever* in the service of the Nevilles, as his neighbours, the Claxtons, were; equally, he remained outside the Percy retinue. Only his modest service to the bishops of Durham tells of any political ambition at all. However, his choice was not mirrored by all of his peers.

By now, the story of Ralph, Lord Lumley, is reasonably well known; an ill-timed sense of misadventure would ensure his legacy. The lord of Lumley, Sir Ralph was a landowner of considerable stature in Yorkshire, Durham, and Northumberland. In Yorkshire, he held the castle and manor of Kilton, the manor of Kirkleatham and Coatham, and certain services and fees in the region, all with a value of £26. He also held owned a house, seventeen tofts and thirteen bovates of land in Great Moorsholme (valued at £4);⁷⁴ 27 acres in Little Moorsholme (30s.); eight houses and sixteen bovates in Kilton Thorpe, Brotton, Skinningrove, and Liverton (50s.); the

⁷²PRO DURH 3/32.

⁷³PRO DURH 3/33.

⁷⁴Here, as elsewhere, we understand the term 'bovate' to refer to fifteen acres of land, unless otherwise specified. Understanding the existence of varying regional conventions, it is nonetheless clear that this formula was the norm in the North-East.

manors of Thweng and Octon (£20); the manor of Hempholme in Holderness (40 marks); and the manor of Glaphow (13s. 4d.). In addition, he held lands in a number of townships, including Thweng and Kirkleatham, totalling seven-and-a-half knights' fees.⁷⁵ In all, his Yorkshire lands certainly exceeded £85, and may well have had a value more than £100.

Lumley also held considerable lands in Northumberland. These were located in the vicinities of the castles of Bamburgh and Warkworth, in north Northumberland, and included the following: the manor of West Chevington, held of the king for knight's service, and 13s. 4d. annually for castle guard at Bamburgh (value: four marks); lands in East Chevington - held of the manor of Hadstone - and lands in Mowick, held by knight's service of the barony of Warkworth, with a rent of 13s. 4d. (value: eight marks); and certain other lands, which the records designate as worthless.⁷⁶ In the palatinate of Durham itself, Lumley held the manor and castle of Little Lumley, Butterby, Morton and Hesildon as a free tenant of the bishop of Durham; together, these lands were valued at £20. He held the major manor of Stranton of Sir Roger Clifford, lord of Hart, which was worth some £40 a year, and many other lands in east Durham and in the city itself. These lands, and certain fees, dues, and tolls associated with them were said to be worth £10 per annum.⁷⁷ In all, Sir Ralph Lumley's landed wealth probably approached £170 per year, and may have been as high as £200. Vagaries in the record make even a gross estimate difficult, and in any event, the value of engaging in one is not at all clear. Because of the

⁷⁵*Cal. IPM, 1399-1405*, 324-25. The value of Lumley's lands in these townships is not known, because their extent is not given in the records.

⁷⁶*Cal. IPM, 1399-1405*, 325-26.

⁷⁷*Cal. IPM, 1399-1405*, 326.

volatility of land values, which I have discussed in detail elsewhere, and given the inevitable yearly fluctuations in income suffered in the period by northern landowners - and Lumley's extensive interests in Northumberland, the most volatile region of all - even a relatively accurate valuation of his properties in a given year can be only that: an approximation of income in a given year. Nonetheless, this survey of the Lumley estates does provide a basis for placing him in a regional context: he was a relatively low-ranking northern baron, with a landed income exceeding most of the wealthiest among the North-East's gentry, yet one that was still quite inferior to the unusually concentrated wealth of the region's great magnates.

Because of his involvement in the Epiphany Rising in January-February, 1400, more is known about Ralph Lumley's political career than is perhaps warranted by his standing and abilities. In late October, 1392, Richard II granted him leave to build a castle at Great Lumley, near Chester-le-Sreet in the palatinate of Durham, and to crenellate it. In 1394, Lumley was named justice of the peace for North Yorkshire,⁷⁸ a position that he retained for the balance of Richard's reign.⁷⁹ Given his later efforts on Richard II's behalf, it is perhaps surprising that Richard never retained the lord of Lumley in his own reign. Ralph Lumley never became a household knight, nor a king's knight, and there is no evidence outside his participation in 1400 that he was especially close to the king.

It is however clear that Ralph, Lord Lumley, had much to do with Durham. In 1384-5, Bishop Fordham pressed workmen into service to fortify the region's

⁷⁸*CPR, 1391-1396*, 198, 439, 588.

⁷⁹*CPR, 1396-1399*, 96, 236.

castles against a potential Scottish threat, including those of the Lumleys.⁸⁰ In 1387, Lumley made a grant of land in Durham to John Kendal, a clerk, and Thomas Whitworth, a monk of Durham Priory, and in 1389, Bishop Skirlaw placed him at the head of a commission of array for his ward of Chester, Durham's most northerly and most populous.⁸¹ He was, of course, at the heart of the complaint by Lady Clifford of Hart - wife of the late Roger Clifford - and the townsmen of Hartlepool, who accused Ralph Lumley and his brother, Marmaduke, of violating their seigniorial rights over the port, town and markets there, and, it seems, of acting in a generally brutish and threatening manner.⁸²

Of course, one of the reasons for Sir Ralph Lumley's casual attitude toward the law in the palatinate may have been the appointment of Marmaduke to the office of sheriff in 1391. As in the case of the Heron family, this was a clear case of a second son in a prominent family carving out a career in local service, to compensate for a lack of personal wealth through inheritance. A fee of £10 per annum accompanied the office of sheriff of Durham, and given that the landed wealth of Marmaduke Lumley was only about twelve marks per year, his ambition was not without its reward.⁸³ Unlike Gerard Heron, however, Marmaduke Lumley confined his service to the bishop, and there is no evidence that he ever undertook a royal commission outside Durham. This was probably because his own brother was much less influential in royal circles than was Gerard Heron's brother William, Lord Say.

⁸⁰PRO DURH, 3/32.

⁸¹PRO DURH 3/32, 3/33.

⁸²PRO DURH 3/33.

⁸³PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 170; PRO DURH 20/2; DCD 1.5 Pont., 16.

Ralph Lumley was certainly not able to direct royal patronage to other members of his own family as William Heron had done; perhaps Marmaduke Lumley lacked Gerard Heron's knowledge of border matters, or his talent for diplomacy and peacekeeping.⁸⁴ The latter may well have been the case: it was under Marmaduke Lumley's watch in Durham that his family's feud with the Clifford's and the town of Hartlepool escalated into an all-consuming legal battle. Indeed, in her complaint to the bishop and the crown, Lady Clifford specifically names and implicates Marmaduke Lumley in the attacks, claiming that far from rectifying the problem and attempting to restore order, he actually took part in the attacks on the townsmen there, and aided his brother and his retainers in destroying the town's marketplace. If this is in some way indicative of his competence, one cannot help but be less than shocked at Richard's failure to call Lumley on to higher service.

These comparisons could hardly be more stark. Both the Herons and the Lumleys controlled the wealth of minor baronial families, and both families included second sons who attempted to build careers in governmental service to augment their own, comparatively small, landed incomes. Yet William Lord Say became an important knight in Richard II's reign, and an even more important figure in the household of Henry IV. His brother, Gerard, served Richard II well, and for twenty years was his most important ambassador to Scotland. In 1393, he was retained by the crown for life (something that neither of the Lumleys ever achieved, though on the evidence of later events, must certainly have coveted), and was one of the key political figures in Northumberland before and after the usurpation of Henry

⁸⁴For details of these, please see *Hist Parl.*, iii, 354-56.

Bolingbroke.⁸⁵ The Lumleys, who boasted similar - and perhaps even greater - wealth, and who were equally well situated in the North to prove useful to the crown, nonetheless did not, to anything approaching the extent of their neighbours, the Herons. Lest the Lumleys suffer overmuch by such comparisons, it should be pointed out that their case was the more usual, and any comparison between these two families only highlights the exceptional ambition and talents - diplomatic, administrative, and political - of the Herons. There was, however, one man among them who shone brightest, and who certainly is the benchmark by which all independent and talented men of the North in this period should be judged.

Sir Ralph Eure of Witton-le-Wear

Ralph Eure was the most important member of the North-East's gentry community. Of all the biographies in the *History of Parliament* volumes, his is perhaps the most complete, and therefore in many ways the most illuminating. It is certainly proper that he be considered in any study of the North-East's political community, yet how much can usefully be added to the *History of Parliament* biography is an open question; that biographical material deals very tangibly with Sir Ralph's political activities and administrative career, and this paper will be obliged to comment on these. In addition, because the *History of Parliament* account of his life is rather short on details of both his land-owning and administrative activities, this treatment of his career will add new details where possible. Further, the authors of the *History of Parliament* strongly imply that Eure's position in the North was

⁸⁵*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 355.

primarily due to his fortuitous marriage alliances.⁸⁶ This seems odd, given that Eure is recognised as one of the great administrators of his day. While those marriages certainly opened ^{he} the door to new opportunities, it nonetheless seems more likely that Eure's position, was much more the product of political savvy and talent.

Nonetheless, Eure's *History of Parliament* biography certainly provides a broad narrative of his life, reconstructed through the records. In addition, many details of his professional life are also made available to us there, though without much of the detail one might expect. This essay, then, will concern itself with providing details of Eure's professional and administrative life, while focusing especially on those areas of particular interest to it: land holding, and Eure's place in the developing Lancastrian power structure in the North-East.⁸⁷

Born around 1350, he was the eldest son of Sir John Eure, steward of the king's household, and grandson of John, Lord Clifford, on his mother's side. He married three times; details of these marriages are the strength of his *History of Parliament* biography, and therefore require little from this essay in the way ^{of} addition. Though there is some confusion as to the precise date, Eure's father-in-law by his first wife, Isabel, Sir Aymer Athol, died sometime in 1403; in that year, Sir Ralph came into his wife's portion of the Athol inheritance, lands that were all located within the barony of Mitford. Eure's second marriage was to Katherine Aton, daughter and heiress of Sir William Aton of Malton, North Yorkshire, where the Eures were already prominent. Through her he came into a portion of the Aton inheritance. From Thomas Mowbray, he gained the manor and castle of Malton,

⁸⁶*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 42.

⁸⁷Eure's biography can be found in *Hist. Parl.*, iii, 38-43.

Langton, Sawdon, and others, including eleven carucates - virtually the whole of the township - in Brompton (the rector of the parish church there held the remaining parcel).⁸⁸ The Mowbray lands alone, twelve and one-half knights' fees in total, were valued at 100 marks in 1399.⁸⁹ From his own father, Eure inherited estates in the wapentake of Langbaugh, including diverse lands spread throughout several townships there. Eure also came to hold certain of the Mowbray estates in Ryedale - including further lands in Malton, Colton, and Skelton - as well as others that he inherited there by right of his second wife.

The record of Eure's succession to all of these lands is vague. His eldest son and heir, William, certainly held half of the Mowbray lands for himself, and shared the rest with the Conyers and Brounflete heirs. Sir Ralph, like his son, also held lands in the vill of Muscoates, and two carucates and seven bovates of land in the villages of Wombleton and Swinton, near Malton (all in Ryedale), which were inherited from Sir William Aton. The value of these lands cannot be easily determined, though there is little question that Sir Ralph was, with the Prior of Malton, one of the most important landowners both in Malton and in Ryedale - and for that matter in North Yorkshire - holding lands there with a cash value well more than £100.

Rather different circumstances prevailed in Northumberland. The Eure estates there were probably worth something around £20 per annum. Like other Northumbrian landowners, such as the Greys, Herons and Lumleys, Eure suffered financially from the constant instability at work along the border. His manors of

⁸⁸See *Hist. Parl.*, iii, 40, for details of these estates.

⁸⁹*Cal. IPM, 1399-1405*, 88.

Berwick Hill, Dinnington, Little Carlton, and Pickdon were spared some of the decay, because they were located so near the main English fortresses in the North-East. As the records for Durham demonstrate, lands close by the bishop's fortress at Norham typically escaped the worst of the destruction meted out by the Scots. Lands such as those held by Thomas Grey fared much worse, located as they were in north Northumberland, and remote even from these North Durham outposts. Nonetheless, in spite of their relatively advantageous position in the borders, there can be little doubt that the stated value of the Eure estates in Northumberland bore little resemblance to their real cash worth in the late-fourteenth century.⁹⁰

Eure's Durham holdings - the bulk of his family's patrimony - fell into two categories: lands held of the bishop and prior as a free tenant, and lands leased from one or the other of them as a farmer. Much the most important of his Durham estates were the castle and manor of Witton-le-Wear, in the Wear Valley, and the adjoining township of Hamsterly and an enclosure known as Brandon Field; this estate alone was worth £20 per year. Also valuable was the nearby manor of Bermeton Hall and the vill of Bermeton, a more recent acquisition that was also worth £20. For it, and an additional 60 acres of lands and tenements of various sorts in and around Witton-le-Wear, Eure paid £9 4s. 8d. into the Durham exchequer.⁹¹ These estates combined to account for roughly half of Eure's landed wealth in the palatinate.

However, Eure also held other Durham properties, spread around the palatinate; some were clearly part of a Witton 'lordship', others were further afield. Around Witton was the manor of Rushyford, with an annual value of 26s. 8d., and

⁹⁰The face value of Sir Ralph's estates in North Yorkshire and Northumberland is generally confirmed in *Hist. Parl.*, iii, 39-40.

⁹¹PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 214.

about 110 acres with a pond at Escombe - halfway between Witton-le-Wear and Bishop Auckland - worth at least another 26s. 8d., and probably more. Also among these was the manor of (South) Bedburn, including the great house known as Bedburn Hall (which comprised 30 acres of arable, *pratum* and woodland, valued at 6s.); the farm there called West Shipley (a house and ten acres of land, *pratum*, and wood, valued at 20s.); and an enclosure called Grymeclose, valued at 6s. 8d., as well as other lands in (North) Bedburn, worth a further 6s.⁹² Eure held 140 acres at 'Little Eden', worth 10s., and six houses, six cottages, and 360 acres of arable at Winston. He also held 30 acres of William Bowes in Bitforth, worth 8s. To the near north, he held fourteen acres at Satley, worth 6s., and three farms, each of twelve acres, at Hunwick, near Bishop Auckland. Further south, Eure owned a large farm in Evenwood, worth 20s., and another in Cockerton, worth 3s.; he held two dwellings and 50 acres of arable and *pratum* in Redworth, a few miles south of Bishop Auckland and just to the west of Newton Aycliffe. Just south of Newton Aycliffe, Eure held lands in the vill of Brafferton. In addition, there were lands further up Weardale to consider. In Wolsingham, the largest township in the upper valley, Sir Ralph held in his demesne the villages of Newland and Fawnlees, and the land between them known as Ladley Park, together worth ten marks. He also held lands between Harperleyburn and the bishop's park at Stanhope, on both sides of the river.

The remainder of Eure's holdings fell into one of two categories: urban properties, and those rural properties spread around the palatinate, sometimes in small groups. The closest town of any size to Eure's seat at Witton was, of course, Bishop Auckland, where he was the largest landowner, with no fewer than 30

⁹²PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 214.

burgages, worth on their face 26s. 8d, and where he also held two large dwellings. Though these could certainly be let out, they may have been for his own personal use; their value, with accompanying gardens, was 13s. 4d. The extent of his lands in the borough of Auckland itself comes as no surprise, given the extent of his interests in the Wear valley. However, Eure was also a significant landlord in the palatinate's other two most important urban communities, Darlington and Durham City; in Durham City alone, he held fourteen burgages worth over 6s. per year. In addition, near those strictly urban properties, he held the valuable manor and vill of Langley, worth £9 per annum, of the enfeoffment of *Richard, Lord Scrope of Masham*. He also held the manor of Kibblesworth, enjoyed the rent of 12s. 3d. from a 30-acre farm in Walridge, and owned a farm in the vill of Ushaw, worth 2s. Eure also held significant lands in and around Darlington: in the borough itself, he owned eleven burgages, with a total value of 26s. 8d.; three further acres in nearby Hell Kettles; and six or so acres with a house in Blackwell, just outside the borough proper. This latter property was of some distinction, worth 20s. per year; it is safe to assume that it was the townhouse used by Sir Ralph himself.⁹³

Eure compiled estates through inheritance, marriage, and the land market that formed the basis for his power and influence in the North-East. These estates were very much worthy of one of the region's barons. Critically, Eure thrice married women who were, at least in part, heiresses to their fathers' fortunes. These matches allowed him to maximise his influence in regions where he already had landed interests, and therefore some standing. Far from his power being in any way diluted by virtue of his wide array of interests, it was enhanced. His North Yorkshire,

⁹³PRO DURH 3 13, fos 214-15

Durham and Northumberland estates were in close enough proximity to each other to allow significant oversight and personal attention. Eure spent most of his time in the North-East, and personally saw to the administration of his estates there. Whereas his father had been very much involved in matters of state within the royal household, Sir Ralph's own predilection ran more to regional matters. He therefore, as the History of Parliament reminds us, came into increasingly close contact with the leading lights of the region.⁹⁴

Sir Ralph's relationship with the Percy family before 1403 is uncertain. He faithfully served Bishop Skirlaw in Durham - an important ambassadorial figure to both Henry and King Richard before him - and was also a faithful servant of both Richard II and the house of Lancaster, following the accession of Henry IV: he was certainly involved in the consolidation of the North by the new regime after 1399. Sir Ralph's role in quelling the Percy revolt of 1403, and that of Archbishop Scrope in 1405, point to his status as a leading law enforcement figure in the North, as does his role in the maintenance of the border during the tenure of the king's young son, the youthful John, duke of Bedford.⁹⁵ Bedford was fourteen years old when his father sent him north in the summer of 1403, to provide him with a military and political education.⁹⁶ The earl of Westmorland was the primary figure in that education. Carlton Williams points out that, in Westmorland, Bedford will have enjoyed the hospitality of the greatest magnate of the North, now also his uncle and kinsman through Ralph Neville's marriage to Joan Beaufort. The crown's investiture

⁹⁴*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 39-42.

⁹⁵*Hist Parl.*, iii, 41.

⁹⁶E. Carlton Williams, *My Lord of Bedford* (1963), 11.

of the North-East March to Bedford points also to other realities in earliest Lancastrian England. Like the investment of the Welsh marches in the hands of the Prince of Wales, and the appointment of his young second son, Thomas, in Ireland, the creation of Bedford as warden of the West March in 1403 (followed in 1405 by his appointment as constable of England) was a startling indication of just how few were Henry's trusted baronial allies.

Sir Ralph Eure, however, showed himself to be one among those key figures loyal to the new king. He was formally recognised as assistant to the constable of England (Bedford) in 1411.⁹⁷ In addition, the earl of Westmorland and Sir Ralph Eure formed some kind of alliance in these years.⁹⁸ Westmorland was in residence at Witton Castle in the summer of 1405 when the earl of Northumberland rose against the government; indeed, the real end of Archbishop Scrope's rebellion seems to have been Henry Percy's failure to capture Westmorland at Witton early on.⁹⁹ At the time of Scrope's rebellion, it seems that Eure was nurturing his association with Ralph Neville. The very fact that Northumberland was unwilling even to engage Westmorland and the crown in open battle in Yorkshire, the region from which he himself derived his greatest power, only underscores the growing strength of the Lancastrian establishment in the region after Shrewsbury. Sir Ralph Eure, we may safely say, was an important player in that establishment.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷*CPR, 1408-1413*, 291.

⁹⁸*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 42.

⁹⁹*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 42.

¹⁰⁰For his rise in status in the North-West, and his marriage to Maud Greystoke in 1400, see *Hist. Parl.*, iii, 41.

Through all of this, however, it is important to resist thinking of northern politics in this period strictly in terms of Neville and Percy. Ralph Eure was probably never a Percy retainer, nor is he known to have been in the employ of the earl of Westmorland. We must conclude that we simply do not know whether Eure was retained by Westmorland. We can be sure, as the evidence suggests, that Eure was certainly connected to the Neville family through the keeping of the Scottish border, Sir Ralph's sizeable role in the Palatinate of Durham's administration, and his reputed involvement in the defeat of the subsequent revolts against Henry IV's rule.

The career of Ralph Eure was therefore characterised by loyalty and service, both to Richard II and Henry IV. The authors of the *History of Parliament* have correctly concluded that - in common with so many members of the north-eastern gentry - Sir Ralph was both well treated by the old administration, and quick to come to terms with the new one.¹⁰¹ Although the authors of the *History of Parliament* offer the possibility that Sir Ralph gave material aid to Bolingbroke, he instead seems to have resisted any involvement in Henry's procession through England in the summer of 1399.¹⁰² There is insufficient evidence to suggest that he was a member of the party gathered at Doncaster after Henry's return, and given the nature of this evidence (principally a listing of knights - many of lesser standing than Eure - the *size of their party, and the sum of their payment*), it is unlikely that he inadvertently went unmentioned.¹⁰³ Because this evidence relates directly to cash reward, it is

¹⁰¹*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 41.

¹⁰²*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 41.

¹⁰³*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 40-42.

likely to have been accurately compiled by contemporaries.¹⁰⁴ The chronicles suggest his absence, albeit by omission; in so doing, they confirm the evidence from the pay lists. Yet many of his neighbours - including the lords Greystoke (his soon-to-be in-laws), Roos, and Neville - played leading roles in the success of Henry's *coup*. Indeed, Eure was a tenant of the Percies, and a neighbour of the Nevilles of Raby in both North Yorkshire and Durham. Yet on this occasion as others, Sir Ralph displayed a degree of independence from the region's great affinities. Of course, his outward neutrality may have been an emulation of that of his old employer, Bishop Skirlaw, or just the product of his own cautious nature. Durham, and Eures influence in it, offered other opportunities. Yet the bishopric remained a conservative place, even by the standards of the time. This may have locked its high officials - the bishop and his steward foremost among them - into a position of nominal royal support during the Lancastrian revolution. Skirlaw had long been in the king's employ as ambassador and councillor, as had his steward. In addition, because the crown held little land north of the Trent, the bishop of Durham was important in maintaining order and loyalty to the king in the North.¹⁰⁵ The Scottish wars only served to re-emphasise these realities.¹⁰⁶ Whatever the case, he was sufficiently astute to lend his full support to the new monarch after his coronation: once Henry had been crowned, Eure served him well in a tempestuous region.

¹⁰⁴ Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, 250-53.

¹⁰⁵ Fraser, *Prerogative and the Bishops*, 467-76.

¹⁰⁶ An excellent study of border peacekeeping and the legal forms in use there is C.J. Neville, 'Keeping the Peace in the Northern Marches in the Later Middle Ages', *EHR*, 109 (1994), 1-25; the role of the Church of Durham in these matters can be found in B. Dobson, 'The Church of Durham and the Scottish Borders, 1378-1388', in Goodman and Tuck, eds., *War and Border Societies in the Middle Ages* (1992), 124-54.

The specifics of the episcopal commissions on which Sir Ralph served during the 1380's are especially enlightening. As the specifics of many of these appointments are omitted from his *History of Parliament* biography, their examination here may be useful in providing fresh insights. In 1383, he was appointed to enquire into the overflowing of the River Skerne - which had done some considerable damage to farmland - with Sir Roger Fulthorp, who seems to have been something of a mentor to him in Durham matters.¹⁰⁷ In 1386, he was ordered by Bishop Fordham to audit the accounts of a commission set up to raise money for the rebuilding of the bridge over the River Wear at Shincliffe. In that same year, he was again ordered to audit accounts, this time of the collectors of assize - those who collected the bishop's taxes on goods bought and sold - in the market in Durham City, and report his findings to the bishop's auditors. In 1383, again with Sir Roger Fulthorp, Eure was named justice of *oyer et terminer* touching a complaint by Walter Hawyk, in which the latter alleged that the bishop's men were obstructing the roads, thereby hindering him from selling the coal from his mine at Morley, in the bishop's barony of Evenwood.¹⁰⁸ This is interesting for two reasons. First, it was probably Ralph Eure's first real look at the coal mining operations in Evenwood, which he would later farm. Secondly, as the pits at Morley would later be incorporated into the lordship of Brancepeth by Ralph, Lord Neville, and as the rest of the coal mining in the barony would be done by the Eure family, there is some reason to suppose that the mining at Evenwood was becoming more prosperous. Ralph Eure leased those Evenwood mines for over £100 per year from the bishop for the rest of his life, and

¹⁰⁷*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 38; PRO DURH 3/32.

¹⁰⁸PRO DURH 3/32.

his son, Robert, assumed the leases thereafter.¹⁰⁹ Thus, at least two of the North-East's leading landowners were increasing their participation in coal mining, both on their own demesnes, and by farming others from the bishop and prior.

As the bishop of Durham had rather unusual authority within the palatinate, so did his steward. As the bishop himself was regularly absent (bishops Fordham, Skirlaw, and Langley all resided in London) the steward essentially ran the bishopric. He sat at the head of the bishop's council - a body largely responsible for the daily running of the palatinate - and presided over his chancery court, which dealt with most of the most important of the administration's business. It turned on the steward to carry through the bishop's decrees, which were often the echoes of royal writs which did not run in the palatinate. Beyond his function as steward, however, Eure also sat at the head of the bishop's auditors, which gave him direct control over the palatinate's finances. This meant that he was ultimately responsible for the collection of rents, farms, and revenues generally, and gave him *de facto* control of the palatine exchequer.

During his reign as bishop, Thomas Langley began to professionalise the administration, creating the position of receiver-general sometime between 1415-18. The receiver-general was Langley's attempt to install a single financial officer at the head of his administration, to oversee the collectors, coroners, estate managers, and escheators. This must have had a drastic effect on the influence of the steward in financial matters; indeed, the imposition of a receiver-general was probably meant in part to do just that. Evidence of his encroachment is manifold: in some cases payments of large sums were made directly to the receiver-general, without first

¹⁰⁹For details of the palatinate's coal mining operations in this period, see below, pp. 217-44.

being channelled through the exchequer, still under the steward's supervision. In this way, Langley sought to circumvent the palatinate's administrative machine, by using his own household. This weakened the steward's influence in many matters that were no longer subject to his audit.

Nonetheless, during Eure's tenure as steward, that office remained the most important in the palatinate; it continued to have auditory control over all revenues that came into the exchequer (over £2,000 per year in most cases), and general control over how those funds were meted out.¹¹⁰ The steward appointed most palatinate officials, and had oversight of the bishop's courts and council. His own court remained the highest in the area, and, with the bishop's chief justice as an ally, he could look forward to dominating official proceedings in the palatinate. The steward also sat on commissions of the peace and of array, and tended to sit on many *ad hoc* committees dealing with problems of law enforcement, most notably those which sought to enquire after the maintenance of the bishop's forests against the incursions of poachers, and the one created in the early years of the fifteenth century to deal more pointedly with the problem of poaching in the Neville forests at Brancepeth.

In fact, the steward continued to tend most of the palatinate's important work. In 1408, when the unusual case of the prebends of Auckland failing to maintain their estates and carry out their charge of services arose, the bishop entrusted the matter and the estates to Eure.¹¹¹ The similar cases of the sequestration again of the dean of Auckland in 1414 (because of the dean's further refusal to reside there, for at least

¹¹⁰See, for example, PRO DURH 20/14/8; *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 260-75; CC 189909, 189782.

¹¹¹*Register of Bishop Langley*, i, 60.

the second time),¹¹² and that of the vicar of Gainsford in 1415, support this conclusion, as does his witnessing of the creation as a notary of one of the bishop's favoured clerks, the tenant and household servant of the earl of Westmorland, Richard Brancepeth.¹¹³ Far from being eclipsed in Langley's episcopacy, Eure enhanced his influence in Durham.

Eure was also regularly named a justice of the peace for the palatinate, as well as to many commissions of array. He served on a number of special *ad hoc* commissions, and was personally involved with the oversight of the bishop's other officers: the constable of Durham Castle, for example, and the coroners of Durham's four wards, were clearly subordinate to him, as was the sheriff. This highlights one of the unusual features of the palatinate's administration; the sheriff - the highest-ranking official in other counties - reported to the steward in Durham. Perhaps it is more appropriate to view the steward of Durham as something akin to a powerful sheriff elsewhere. This was never truer than when Ralph Eure held that position. Because of his unique influence and experience, he exercised extensive influence in the palatinate. Further, due to Durham's unusual political status, there was no expectation of turnover in the office, as there might have been, say, amongst sheriffs elsewhere: Eure remained steward throughout his adult life, serving three bishops in this capacity.¹¹⁴

In 1384, he and others were commissioned by the crown to discern the state of the castles of Newcastle, Berwick-upon-Tweed, and Roxburgh, following the

¹¹²*Register of Bishop Langley*, v, 75.

¹¹³*Register of Bishop Langley*, ii, 56; i, 175.

¹¹⁴These were bishop's Fordham (1381-8), Skirlaw (1388-1405), and Langley (1406-37).

Scottish incursions into Northumberland in the early 1380's.¹¹⁵ In 1389, he was again commissioned by the crown to enquire after the money allocated for the repair of Newcastle Castle, to ensure that the allocated sums had indeed led to the repair of that important fortress, a key English outpost in the North.¹¹⁶ In 1391-2, Eure became much involved in the case of John Lockton, a Yorkshire justice of the king's bench, who may have forfeited considerable lands to the crown.¹¹⁷ Similarly, in March of 1393, he was commissioned, with the prominent Northumbrian knights Gerard Heron and John Mitford, to investigate the death of the wealthy and prominent Newcastle burgess, and long-time mayor, Robert Oliver, who was alleged to have committed suicide, thereby forfeiting all his lands to the crown. In September, 1393, he accepted a place on a commission to survey the extent of the honour of Cockermouth, recently claimed by the earl of Northumberland in right of his wife, Maud Lucy.¹¹⁸ In 1395, again with John Mitford, he was called on by the king to investigate the illegal digging and transportation of coal without licence - by means of constructing a dike and channelling water to the field - on crown lands at Fenham, just outside Newcastle. In 1396, he was commissioned, with William Hundgate and William Lambard, to survey the state of the castles and other buildings in the honour of Richmond, lately held by the queen.¹¹⁹ In virtually all of these cases, Eure was called upon to judge either the circumstance, extent, or ownership of

¹¹⁵*CPR, 1381-1385*, 424-25.

¹¹⁶*CPR, 1388-1392*, 212, 276.

¹¹⁷*CPR, 1391-1396*, 82, 168.

¹¹⁸*CPR, 1391-1396*, 239, 358.

¹¹⁹*CPR, 1391-1396*, 654, 726.

land. By 1394, Eure had come to an agreement with Thomas Mowbray giving Eure full ownership of his important home manor and castle of Malton, with the township of Brompton, and his fortunes were clearly on the rise.

Indeed, this series of commissions in the far north soon led to higher employment. By 1391, Eure was sheriff of Yorkshire and keeper of the castle of York. In 1397, he was - with Sir Gerard Heron, Sir Peter Tilliol, the king's sergeant-at-arms John Mosdale, and others - given the politically sensitive task of surveying the estates of the distrained Lords Appellant and the deposed Archbishop of Canterbury in Yorkshire, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland, for the purpose of escheat by the crown.¹²⁰ In that same year, Eure was also named J.P. for Northumberland and North Yorkshire, and was finally made sheriff of Northumberland, though clearly he had already for some time been performing many of the functions of that office for the crown.¹²¹ Thus, by 1397, Eure had become one of the great political figures in the North-East; he had shown himself to be unusually adept at a wide range of occupations, and was employed widely by the crown. His appointments to the shrievalties of Yorkshire and Northumberland, and his stewardship of Durham, show him to have been an able administrator.

The far North was a rather wild place in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, even by contemporary standards.¹²² Specifics of Eure's military career are vague; he certainly played a role in maintaining most of the major royal fortresses in the border region at some point in his career. However, he is not reputed by any

¹²⁰*CPR, 1391-1396*, 82, 308.

¹²¹*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 41.

¹²²Lomas, *Northeast England, passim*; Storey, 'North of England', 129-44.

chronicler or other source to have been instrumental as a leader in any of the campaigns against the Scots in the later fourteenth century, indicating that perhaps he specialised in regional law enforcement, and not leading armies into battle.¹²³

Clearly Eure was also well thought of as a financial and legal administrator. The surveying of estates, and his seat at the head of the bishop of Durham's auditors, speaks volumes about this competence. Eure must also have amassed some understanding of the law, if only that sufficient to determine tenurial rights. His representation of the crown in the petition of Michael de la Pole in 1391 shows his versatility, as does his involvement with the Lucy inheritance, and with the forfeited lands of the Lords Appellant.¹²⁴ Though not a lawyer, he undertook commissions of a largely legal nature; though seemingly not a soldier, he was the crown's senior law-enforcement official in the North. He was obviously very much at home with matters pertaining to land and finance. Indeed, if any one thing stands out, it is Eure's political versatility. He was in all things adept, quite comfortable in many areas of endeavour. It was this flexibility that made him indispensable to Richard II in resolving important matters in the North.

It is interesting that, while neither the bishop of Durham nor Eure took an active part in Henry's victory, no opposition to Lancaster was raised around Durham. Sir Ralph Lumley was involved in the Epiphany Rising of 1400, but did not take up arms, nor join the duke of York's army, in 1399. Michael de la Pole was part of the force raised to fight Bolingbroke in 1399, and also held considerable lands in Durham. However, the then-earl of Suffolk was not a Durham man (most of his

¹²³Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 135-63; Tuck, 'The Emergence of a Northern Nobility', 14-17.

¹²⁴For his enquiry into the de la Pole matter, see J.S. Roskell, *The Impeachment of Michael de la Pole Earl of Suffolk in 1386* (Manchester, 1984).

estates were located well outside of the North) and was anyway a creature of the court. His partisanship in this affair, indeed, his political career, never had much to do with Durham or the North. De la Pole was a Ricardian because he was close to the king, and a household servant. The distinct absence of Durham notables from York's army in 1399 may, of course, have been the result of the influence of those other northern lords who sided with Henry, noted above. On the other hand, the importance of Durham to the crown was largely based on its ability to shed other regional influences and defend royal interests under just such circumstances. Yet in 1399, in spite of Richard's seemingly amiable relationship with the palatinate's senior officials (and indeed with its greatest secular landowner, the earl of Westmorland), the men of Durham were not among his supporters.

Therefore, it seems that Eure, the consummate servant, served some purpose, after all, to the Lancastrians in the ascent of Henry IV. However, it also seems that the formidable administrative skills and political prowess that he had shown, and the significant political capital that he had built up over the years, most notably with the king, also made him indispensable to the bishop.¹²⁵ R.L. Storey has correctly argued that, when Thomas Langley was elevated to Durham in 1406, he probably had in mind wholesale reform of the administration; his appointments show a preference for old Lancastrian colleagues and servants.¹²⁶ Yet even Langley, who promoted few but his own courtiers to positions of importance in his administration, and who was himself the consummate Lancastrian insider, was unable to forego the services of Sir Ralph Eure. By 1406, Eure was not only steward of Durham, with

¹²⁵Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 102.

¹²⁶ Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 103-10.

responsibilities for the oversight of all of its officials (including the sheriff), but was also the bishop's chief auditor. As such, he had made himself virtually indispensable to the bishop, and had increased his own political position in the process.

Paradoxically, it seems that the most striking feature, and perhaps the keenest strength, of the career of this most-trusted servant was his ability to operate largely independently of great aristocratic forces, even though those forces unquestionably dominated the political scene in the North-East. Eure maintained his independence *through* service. Perhaps this is the key to his career. Although he undoubtedly depended upon patronage for his political advancement, there is little question that Eure was nonetheless a man of significant abilities, abilities that he deftly exploited in his service to the crown and bishop of Durham.

After the coronation of Henry IV, however, he was persuaded (probably by his neighbour Ralph Neville), to apply his considerable talents to serving the new administration. Henry, understanding well the danger posed by instability in the North, needed him. The new king also recognised early on that he could not rely on the Percies to deliver the region, and sought to promote the Nevilles, just as he sought to bring Ralph Eure into the fold. In 1399, the new king confirmed Eure as the 'king's knight', and granted him an annuity of £50.¹²⁷ In that year, he gained the extraordinary assurance from the crown that he would not be forced to undertake any commissions, or serve in any offices, against his will.¹²⁸ Nonetheless, he continued in his capacities as sheriff of Yorkshire and Northumberland, and was named to two commissions of array - for the counties of Northumberland, Durham and North

¹²⁷*Hist. Parl.*, iii, 41.

¹²⁸*CPR, 1399-1401*, 143, 146.

Yorkshire - in 1399 and 1401.¹²⁹ While Eure did not lend active military support to Henry in his bid for the throne, he certainly became a strong supporter of the new king following his coronation.

There is ample evidence to suggest that it was Eure's position in the bishopric which made possible much of his independence. The unusual, semi-autonomous status of the palatinate - and Eure's eminent position in it - meant that Eure was the protector of the bishop of Durham's franchise. This proved timely for the Lancastrian party, given that, by the end of the fourteenth century, the Nevilles were somewhat less in evidence in the bishopric than they had been a generation earlier. Ralph Eure was the key to these changes. His steady hand and presence in Durham, and his assistance in managing the whole of the North-East march, were central to the success of the Lancastrian party's effective governance of the Percy-less North-East, and to the simultaneous expansion of Neville influence there. After Henry's usurpation in 1399, Ralph Neville turned his immediate attention to expanding his interests elsewhere, and Ralph Eure became the local Lancastrian stalwart in Durham.

While in one sense the rise of the Nevilles was potentially an inhibition to the ambitions of Sir Ralph Eure, in another it freed his hand in Durham. By 1397, the Nevilles were so closely associated with the Beauforts and the house of Lancaster that, irrespective of Henry's becoming king in 1399, it was they who were the rising political force in the North. Henry's usurpation elevated them conclusively above the status of county magnates, and into the first tier of the English baronage. This seems to have had something of a clarifying effect on the region's land holding classes; no

¹²⁹*CPR, 1399-1401*, appendix.

longer would it be a question of competition with the Nevilles. It was now either a question of co-existing with and serving them. Sir Ralph Eure was in an interesting position; he was among the most useful of all members of the northern gentry, and was experienced in virtually all facets of county administration. Whether Storey's assumption - that he had made himself indispensable to Langley - also applied to his relationship with Westmorland, and that he was stewarding the palatinate as much for the Nevilles as the bishop, cannot satisfactorily be answered. However, circumstances nonetheless provided both with the opportunity to expand their sphere of influence in a mutually beneficial way, the fortunes of each growing without encroaching particularly upon the ambitions of the other. A more mutually acceptable relationship between potential antagonists can scarcely be imagined.

In any event, Sir Ralph's career continued to advance and flourish after the deposition of Richard II. By the time of Bishop Langley's tenure in Durham, Eure's lands in the palatinate (and those in North Yorkshire, for that matter) far outweighed those in Northumberland in value. In fact, Eure's Northumberland lands, mostly around Berwick, were more useful as a presence in the region than they were profitable. These estates gave him influence in the region, and served to legitimise his many offices and commissions there. As such, they had a different sort of value. As for profitable land-owning in the strictest sense, Ralph Eure's Durham lands were far more profitable than those in Northumberland, and he became increasingly active in the palatinate's land market.

Thus, Eure was, from an early date, the most important member of the Durham gentry community. He served as steward to bishops Fordham, Skirlaw and Langley, right until his death in 1424, which meant that he was very much at the head of the local administration. R.L. Storey has rightly noted that while Bishop Langley

might have preferred to replace Eure as steward when he became bishop of Durham in 1406, his local standing, competence, and administrative experience could not be ignored; Eure was therefore re-appointed to this important office, where he remained until his death. Throughout this period, only the earl of Westmorland among secular landlords matched Eure's influence in Durham. Eure's hand can be seen in virtually every aspect of palatine government, even though he was simultaneously employed in the North-East by the crown, and his time was very much in demand.

Nonetheless, Eure was constant and loyal in Durham, chosen by the bishop to serve not for his 'Lancastrianism', but for his ability and local standing. It is telling that upon Eure's death in 1422, Bishop Langley replaced him as steward not with his own son, Sir William Eure, who expected the appointment, nor with any other member of the Durham baronage or gentry, but with one of his own household - his chamberlain, Thomas Holden - who had no discernible connection whatever to the North-East.¹³⁰

Henry IV's policy of isolating the Percies, outlined above, must have found comfort in all of these members of the north-eastern gentry, eager to move out from under the dominion of the Percies in the region. It is not coincidental most of those families active in regional political affairs had significant financial interests not only in Northumberland, but also in the palatinate of Durham.¹³¹ This allowed them the freedom to carve out for themselves niches separate from those of the Percies - who held virtually no land in the palatinate - and thereby assert their independence from them more fully. Thomas Grey's Durham stewardship for bishops Fordham and

¹³⁰PRO DURH 3/38.

¹³¹*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 83.

Skirlaw, and Robert Ogle's stewardship of Norham for Skirlaw and Langley, further demonstrate the opportunities in Durham for Northumbrian knights.

However attractive political independence was for these men, their efforts should be viewed firmly in the context of growing Neville influence in the North; the 'independent' member of the gentry who was engaged in the service of the crown, and the loyal member of the Neville affinity, were both, after 1399, serving one master. The elder Thomas Grey's defection to Neville in 1398 - and the accord struck between Westmorland and Thomas Grey the younger - should properly be seen as choosing the right hand over the left: serving the Nevilles in this period amounted to making one's self the instrument of royal policy in the North. The Neville affinity and that of the bishop of Durham were part of a concerted effort in the earliest years of the reign of Henry IV to undermine the Percies in the region - a policy already begun in the reign of Richard II. This included the distribution of significant patronage to independent-minded families such as the Herons, the Mitfords, and the Ogles - who all served Henry in important ways - as well as northern members of the Neville affinity, who, because of the absolute loyalty of the earl of Westmorland, were in fact instruments of the crown. The growth of Neville power in the region was, in a sense, Henry's vehicle to a new stability there, based not upon the might of the Percies, but on that of the loyal Nevilles, as well as other, more emancipated members of the region's elite. The falling incomes of so many Northumbrian landowners, and the potential importance to them of maintaining sources of income away from the land, was his opportunity to implement it. In this way, the gentry of the region could be offered what at first glance seemed the opportunity to serve a number of different masters. Yet because of the close relationships between the

king, bishop of Durham (particularly after 1406) and the Nevilles, these differences were largely an illusion.

Just as the Greys demonstrate the undeniable attractions of the great affinities in the North-East, these other families - Heron, Fulthorp, Ogle, Mitford, Bowes and Lumley - illustrate the variety of potential alternatives to becoming so aligned. Gerard Heron and John Mitford found their fortunes in royal, and particularly diplomatic, service, and provided the crown with welcome continuity amidst the constant uncertainty in its relations with the Scottish court, incessant instability in the borders, and the upheaval of the Percy revolts. They remained unswerving in their support of the crown before and after 1403, and did its work in this most remote of all English counties. The Fulthorps found their niche in service to the bishop of Durham, and rose to a position at or very near the top of the palatinate's gentry community, holding many high legal and administrative offices there. The Ogles, too, served the bishop of Durham, though strictly in his liberty of Northumbria, near the Scottish border, while simultaneously acting on various Northumbrian commissions, as well as on the occasional diplomatic mission to the Edinburgh court. Even Sir Ralph Lumley's unfortunate demise illustrates in its own way his independence: he did not wait for the alienation of the Percies to take action against the new king; instead, he attempted to carve out his own political destiny, revolting against a king to whom the Percies and Nevilles were both still very loyal. Indeed, all, in one way or another, made conscious choices not to align themselves strongly with either Percy or Neville; nonetheless, all used the various opportunities presented by circumstance and ambition to prosper.

V.

The Bishop of Durham's Administration

As I have shown above, many members of the landed community in the North-East managed to serve the establishment through service either to the Nevilles or the crown. The most important method of doing so was public service, or the holding of some high office in the king's administration. For those who tied themselves to one of the great retinues, such service could be used to further their patron's agenda in public policy, while simultaneously raising one's own value to one's master. Men like Thomas Claxton ensured their own favour with the Nevilles, for example, by holding local offices and taking royal commissions. Others, such as Ralph Eure and William Mitford, although not strictly tied to the Neville affinity, served the establishment equally well, by holding offices in royal and episcopal government. Therefore, for younger sons of landed families particularly - who tended to be somewhat land poor - service provided the opportunity for increasing one's status, as well as influence, within the political establishment.

At the outset, certain aspects of episcopal administration need clarification. First, many of the highest positions in the bishopric were held by members of the clergy. These might be local men, but were more often members of the episcopal household, who undertook high office in the palatinate as a means of improving their fortune with their master, the bishop. In the case of Bishop Langley, who appointed rather more clerks to Durham's administration than his predecessors, these men were usually from the Midlands, his 'own men'.¹ Secondly, the positions that I will

¹Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 78.

describe here were not in under the aegis of the Cathedral priory; their offices and administrative needs were filled most often by the monks themselves, and their relationship with the secular community has been so well documented that it need not be recounted here.² It is also true that numerous positions in the bishopric were rather insignificant politically and poor by way of payment - too poor, in fact, to attract members of the gentry. As a result, these jobs were typically undertaken by men of rather lower social standing, or, in rare cases, by outsiders to the palatinate. Nonetheless, the bishopric still provided numerous opportunities for service for members of the North-East's gentry community; certain offices suited them by their very nature, while others seem simply to have been granted to one of their number by tradition.

The specific offices and appointments held by these members of the landed community are sketched out above, though now some further discussion of their specific nature is warranted. The holding of royal commissions was, of course, at the heart of this sort of service. Being named a J.P., justice of assize, commissioner of array, or other county administrator was quite simply part of county life for members of the gentry. Although typically unpaid, these were important positions, and were accompanied by a certain amount of power and influence, depending upon the specific task. Also of importance to the north-eastern gentry was the opportunity for serving the bishop of Durham, in his palatine administration. This had the advantage of (often paid) service, supplementing a dwindling landed income; moreover, it

²For descriptions of the secular aspects of Durham Priory's administration, and for studies of the priory generally, see Dobson, *Durham Priory*; and M. Bonney, *Lordship and Community: Durham and its Overlords, 1250-1540* (Cambridge, 1990). For life within the priory, see Anne Boyd, *Monks of Durham: Life in a Fifteenth Century Monastery* (1975).

provided the opportunity to extend the scope of one's influence in the region.

Further, because the king's writ did not run in Durham, and because the palatinate offered more extensive administrative opportunities, it had perhaps an even greater attraction. In short, palatine service offered many of the advantages of royal service outside Durham, yet because its administration roughly mirrored that of royal government, it also proffered the chance for holding offices that did not exist in other county settings, such as those in the bishop's exchequer; they therefore remained outside the reach of other members of the landed community based outside the palatinate.³ An examination of office holding in the palatinate is thus an excellent window into the lives of those who participated in it, and is further justified by the quality of the Durham records. These are quite unique in northern England both in their number and their survival rate, and will therefore provide the backbone for this investigation.

What value did the landed community place on gaining these administrative offices? Obviously, they were prized far more by those able to derive maximum benefit from the added influence and attached salary. The former included Durham men with an eye toward political power; the latter, perhaps members of the gentry community in Northumberland who sought to maintain an independence from the Percies. This point was, of course, emphasised in areas of economic depredation, such as the northern reaches of Northumbria, which suffered more than most, economically, from the Scottish troubles. Sir Robert Ogle, his estates having decreased in value rather dramatically, most certainly prized his position as constable

³The basis for this was, of course, the bishop's regality. See Jean Scammell, 'The Origins and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham', *EHR*, 81 (1966), 449-73; and C.M. Fraser, 'Prerogative and the Bishops of Durham, 1267-1376' *EHR*, 74 (1959), 467-76.

and receiver of the bishop's liberty of Norham, in Northumberland, and its accompanying wage, more than he otherwise might have. In a single year in the 1380's, Sir Gerard Heron took over £120 in salary and expenses from the bishop's auditors in his capacity as constable of Norham.⁴

Obviously, these sorts of sums, along with the authority that accompanied the position, were instrumental in buying their holders at least some political independence. Given that these men were also typically employed by the crown, and served on various commissions in the county, their authority in region can only have been enhanced. Sir Thomas Grey's appointment to the constabulary of both Wark and Bamburgh castles, and his service to the bishop of Durham as steward, were worth as much to him as the whole of his estates in the first years of the fifteenth century. Indeed, when Grey finally took his leave of the palatinate, he secured the constabulary of Norham, the strategic importance of which becomes obvious when considered in combination with his other north-Northumberland holdings. These examples are most appropriate to those members of the gentry with estates along the border. However, in an era of generally declining land values, this sort of premium may have been placed upon office holding in the North-East generally.

This applies also to those who clearly headed the palatinate's decision-making apparatus. The most important place to begin to understand which of the palatinate's officers - and others unencumbered by office - were truly at the centre of power in the palatinate's political community is perhaps the bishop's council. It was the main consultative body used by the administration in governing the bishopric. The composition of the council in 1383 and 1385 is telling indeed. In 1383, it consisted

⁴*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 270.

of John, Lord Neville of Raby; Sir Ralph Eure, the steward; Sir William Bowes, the sheriff; Sir William Lambard; John Conyers; Gilbert Elvet; and William Blakeston at least, and probably William Elmeden, the chancellor and constable of Durham, and Roger Fulthorp, the chief justice, as well. This was the bishop's temporal council (he maintained a clerical one, also) and it therefore probably included few, if any, clerks. If one served on it, he is not named. Nonetheless, as clerical participation was probably conventional if only to provide the council with a scribe, there was probably one present. Logical among the palatinate's clerks would have been John Killinghall, the clerk of assize.⁵

The council of 1385 was largely unchanged from two years previous. John Neville was again retained by the bishop for 50 marks and sat at his council, and certain other cash payments were also made to him, some in repayment of debt, others for expenses.⁶ The other men retained to sit at the council were all Durham men of some standing. Sir William Lambard, a North Yorkshire knight, was the exception, and is one of the only examples of non-Durham laymen at the bishop's council (although evidence from Langley's tenure is scarce, it is likely that he named certain of his Lancastrian clerks to his council). The others remained as above: John Conyers, William Bowes, William Blakeston, and a new figure, Walter Hawyk, a free tenant who held the manor of Eden, and who had already been named to a commission of array in Durham in 1382.⁷ The temporal council was not, then, a particularly large body, and within it, some changeover did occur - even, as here,

⁵PRO DURH 20/114/8

⁶*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 267-69.

⁷PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 161; PRO DURH 3/32.

within a relatively short time. In addition, although some of those chosen to sit in council were only retained for very small sums (Gilbert Elvet was retained for just 40s. in 1383),⁸ others managed to gain quite significant annuities from it. William Bowes and William Wessington were paid twenty marks each in 1383, and Walter Hawyk 100s. in 1385. Wessington was the head of the family that would later produce John Wessington, Prior of Durham in the early fifteenth century, and Bowes was himself a very wealthy and prominent man. Hawyk, however, was not at all as distinguished as many of his colleagues on these councils, and this income represented a great portion of his income. Indeed, there is some evidence from *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, that some of his lands had already lost much of their value by 1381. The value of Hawyk's lands on Easington Moor, for example, had declined sharply in these years, and therefore, as the appointment to the council was roughly equal to that of half his lands, it must have been a rare plum indeed.⁹

Besides those chosen to be among the bishop's councillors, the local land-owning classes also had the opportunity to serve in specific administrative offices within the palatinate. Earlier discussions of the careers of Sir Ralph Eure and Sir Thomas Grey have adequately outlined the duties of the palatinate's steward; it remains only to re-emphasise that the steward was the key figure in the administration in this period, and that, for his troubles, he was paid a fee of £40. However, other officials also held some sway there. First among these was the sheriff of Durham. A member of one of the region's leading families tended to hold this office. William Elmeden, a Durham land owner of some note, was the sheriff in

⁸PRO DURH 20/114/8.

⁹*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 127.

1375.¹⁰ A significant member of the landed community, his estates were spread widely throughout the palatinate. Yet those estates were worth only a little over £22 at his death in 1400.¹¹ His fee as sheriff was perhaps half that, though it is extremely difficult to come by evidence of the sheriff's own fee in the records. Whatever the case, by 1385, Elmeden had moved on to become constable and receiver of Durham, and was paid £33 6s. 8d.;¹² by the early fifteenth century, the fee had risen to £40.¹³ The move from the office of sheriff to that of constable and receiver was very much a promotion, because the former was not, as in other counties, the chief official in the region. The Durham sheriff was still the principal law enforcement official in the region. However, because in Durham the office was combined with that of escheator, it had an element of the tax collector about it. As such, he was accountable to both the steward and the receiver: the former held administrative sway, while the latter maintained oversight of the financial aspect of that position, and, as the bishop's temporal chancellor, the legal aspects, as well. As receiver, Elmeden was still largely responsible to the steward, but the onus of daily oversight disappeared: as chancellor, constable and receiver, the three great secular institutions on Palace Green - the chancery, exchequer, and Durham Castle - all came under his aegis. Nonetheless, both of these offices were probably of relatively high priority to him, both because they were accompanied by generous fees - indeed, nearly twice the value of his estates - but also because they provided the opportunity

¹⁰DCD, 1.5 Pont., 16.

¹¹PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 147.

¹²*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 267.

¹³CC 189809.

for service and the acquisition of influence within the county community, especially following his promotion to the constabulary. This influence was, for example, manifest on the occasion of the appointment of his son, Thomas, as the bishop's gaoler and porter of Durham Castle, and in the paying of a lump sum of £50 to him in 1383, as well as other significant sums in 1385, from his own account.¹⁴

With the accession of Bishop Skirlaw in 1388 came a new constable and palatine chancellor, Thomas Weston, a clerk.¹⁵ Sometime before 1393, Weston stepped down from his position, and was replaced by Robert Wyclif, another of Skirlaw's clerks.¹⁶ This seems to have been an acknowledgement that the nature of this office had permanently changed: Wyclif was replaced in the constabulary, chancellorship and receivership by another clerk, William Chancellor, by 1413, and that hybridised position remained in clerical hands throughout the fifteenth century.¹⁷ The emphasis of the office had been altered, with the focus now very clearly on financial and legal administration. Future holders of the office would be known first not as 'constable', but as 'receiver' or 'chancellor'. The shift was one on which Bishop Langley capitalised when it became fully apparent that the military aspects of many of the local positions could be ignored. This allowed for the appointment of many more clerks to the palatinate's administration than had

¹⁴PRO DURH 20/114/8.

¹⁵DCD 1.6 Pont., 7.

¹⁶PRO DURH 3/33.

¹⁷CC 189809.

previously been possible, and meant that it was easier to appoint outsiders to these offices.¹⁸

R.L. Storey has argued that the receiver of Durham, who was the official charged with heading the exchequer, had anyway never been the chief financial officer in the palatinate; instead, that distinction was borne by the receiver-general, for whom no accounts survive until the mid-fifteenth century. Instead, the exchequer officials dealt with the minutiae of revenues, working in conjunction with the steward and the bishop's auditors. The receiver-general is first mentioned in the records in 1416, when John Newton, formerly treasurer of the bishop's household, held the position.¹⁹ Storey notes that the office of receiver-general was an innovation of Bishop Langley, and we know through the mention of his office in other accounts that the position was still relatively novel by this time. However, there had long been a financial official superior to the receiver, and who had always had the final word concerning the bishop's revenues. This was the treasurer of the household. The treasurer, as the name implies, was a permanent member of the bishop's household, and the final repository for all the income paid into the bishop's exchequer at Durham. Although few accounts survive from the late-fourteenth century, one account for 1375 does name John Henley as the household treasurer.²⁰ Henley was not a Durham man, and there is no evidence to indicate whether he held any other offices in the palatinate, before or after. In 1385, after taking in over

¹⁸The parallels with national government continue: palatine administration echoed the growth of bureaucratic royal government around this same period. See G.L. Harriss, 'Political Society and the Growth of Government in Late Medieval England', *Past and Present*, 138 (1993), 28-57.

¹⁹Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 74; CC 189809.

²⁰DCD 1.5 Pont., 16.

£3,405 in revenue, the receiver of Durham, William Elmeden, was left with just over £967 after expenses, a sum that was then passed on to the treasurer of the household.²¹

Because of the paucity of surviving evidence from the fourteenth century, it is more appropriate to draw what conclusions are possible from the early fifteenth century. Bishop Langley was certainly responsible for the creation of the receiver-generalship sometime around 1416, though he did not formally recognise the appointment in chancery until 1422, when Richard Buckley was granted the post by letters patent.²² The bishop's former treasurer, John Newton, had for some years held the office of receiver-general.²³ It seems likely that the position that he inherited was an extension of this earlier role as household treasurer, and that the ultimate administration of the bishop's finances had long been managed from there, and not the exchequer. The Durham receiver's accounts tell a story of expenses being met first by the receiver, before large sums were handed on to the receiver-general, precisely the scenario one would expect if the household held sway over the exchequer.²⁴

Yet in the 1420's, the final step was taken in the addition of this further layer of bureaucracy, and these management functions were handed over to the receiver-general, after the official recognition of that office. Four accounts survive for the period 1415-28, and in them, we can see that the receiver-general was gradually

²¹*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 275.

²²Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 74.

²³CC 189782, 189809.

²⁴CC 189782.

allocated an increasing amount of revenue, which took the form of direct payments from the exchequer by the receiver, and the re-allocation of the yield from feudal dues and farms, which were increasingly paid to the receiver-general rather than the constable and receiver of Durham. In 1424, the receiver of Durham, William Chancellor, paid the receiver-general, Richard Buckley, £1,119 15s. 6d., which '*per indenturam ipsius receptoris super compotum liberavit*'. The account also reveals that, after the myriad expenses dealt with by the receiver, £962 19s. 0d. was left as profit from the farms and other sources of revenue.²⁵ This money was then also transferred to the receiver-general, sometime after the close of his account around Michaelmas. In 1418, for example, the proceeds from the farm of the coal mines at Whickham and Gateshead were sent directly to John Newton, the receiver-general, and not to John Chancellor, the receiver, chancellor and constable of Durham.²⁶

The account of 1416 also indicates that this represented the continuation of an earlier arrangement.²⁷ Interestingly, the revenue from the farm of the group of coal mines at Railey, Caldhirst, Hertkeld, Heatherclough, and Evenwood - all in the bishop's barony of Evenwood in south Durham - which had long been collectively at farm to the bishop's steward, Ralph Eure, continued to be paid to the receiver of Durham. In 1424, the income from the farm of the Gateshead and Whickham mines was again paid to the receiver of Durham, though this time as part of the reckoning at the exchequer of the bishop's master forester, Robert Strangeways. It is interesting that, in 1427, there is no mention of an indenture with Buckley. However, there was

²⁵CC 189810.

²⁶CC 189782.

²⁷CC 189809.

an indenture made between Thomas Holden, steward of Durham, and John Radcliffe, the treasurer of the household. By its terms, Holden paid Radcliffe £1,212 15s. 3d., a sum not dissimilar to that paid out in the account of 1424.²⁸ The office of receiver-general was held by only two men during Langley's episcopate: John Newton, his former treasurer, from 1416-21,²⁹ and Richard Buckley from 1422-1437.³⁰ Such longevity was not unusual: Henry Gillowe held that position from at least 1464-78, and perhaps longer.³¹ The most likely reason for this formalisation, and the added bureaucratic layer of financial administration, is efficiency; falling income, and the newly realised ability to use trained, loyal household clerks in the financial administration, probably gave Langley the incentive he required to initiate this new, ubiquitous financial administrator.³²

Other aspects of the bishop's financial administration also became somewhat more elaborate over time. In 1383, William Blakeden was named auditor for the palatinate. He was a free tenant of the bishop, and held over 200 acres in the palatinate in this way, worth some 66s. 8d. a year. His appointment as auditor carried with it a fee of 100s., and there is no evidence that any other auditors were named in that year.³³ The same was true in 1385, when Blakeden was again

²⁸CC 190184.

²⁹CC 189809.

³⁰Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 74.

³¹A dearth of records for the years immediately previous to and following make it difficult to know whether Gillowe was given the position earlier than 1464, or kept it later than 1479.

³²Storey chronicles the steps made by receiver-general in his slow march to becoming the most important figure in the administration over the course of Langley's reign. Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 74-80.

³³PRO DURH 20/114/8.

mentioned in this capacity, and again granted 100s. by the bishop.³⁴ However, by 1408, there is not a single auditor, but a committee. What is more important, however, Bishop Langley seems to have altered the nature of those serving in this capacity. In 1408, Ralph Eure is named as an auditor, presumably in his capacity as steward of the palatinate. However, all the other auditors named that year were clerics. John Burgess was the dean of the collegiate church of Auckland; John Newton a clerk from Langley's own household; William Chancellor, would become his chancellor; and William Maplethorpe, another clerk of the household, filled out the commission.³⁵ In 1420, when the auditors were again appointed to a fresh term, all were re-named save two. Sir Ralph Eure, presumably due to infirmity caused by old age, was not named; and John Burgess had died some years earlier. Replacing them were two clerks, Richard Buckley, soon to become the palatinate's receiver-general, and Robert Friend, another clerk, making the committee of auditors entirely clerical.³⁶

This change in the composition of the bishopric's auditors is a striking example of a larger phenomenon: Bishop Langley's 'clericalising' of the palatine administration. In this case, as with the introduction of the office of receiver-general, the cause may genuinely have been financial. R.L. Storey sketches the decline in episcopal income in his study of Langley's tenure in Durham, and those shortfalls in income may well have prompted this sort of reform.³⁷ The reform may also have

³⁴PRO DURH 3/32; *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 272.

³⁵PRO DURH 3/34.

³⁶Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 83-84.

³⁷Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 67-73.

had political motivations: the bishop of Durham was, in this case, a close advisor to Henry IV and Henry V, and one of his only allies in the far north. Perhaps Bishop Langley wished to install as many old servants from the Duchy as possible - it is certain that Buckley and Newton particularly owed everything to him - and that the financial arena suited their talents well. If so, reliance upon the old duchy servants was a technique that he learned from the eventual success of Henry IV in securing the Lancastrian dynasty. In any case, from the point of view of the region's landed gentry, yet another avenue for service, advancement, modest enrichment, and the building of influence had been shut down, in favour of installed bureaucrats.

There were other offices within the bishop's household, though without household accounts, I can find little evidence of their function, or to the household's composition. The existence of a household treasurer, chamberlain, and steward point again to the mirroring of royal form by the bishop.³⁸ The great responsibilities of the household treasurer - and the fact that a man described only as Hugh the Chamberlain was paid an annuity of ten marks in 1383 - indicate very high levels of responsibility. The importance of the office is further highlighted by its occupant in later years: Thomas Holden held the office of chamberlain while simultaneously acting as the steward of Durham.³⁹ However, members of the bishop's household, whatever their relative place in government, were not generally native to the North-East, let alone members of its landed aristocracy. Their influence within that community is therefore difficult to judge. In any event, it is perhaps more helpful to regard them as one does the bishop: powerful, but ultimately absent, and invariably

³⁸CC 190184; PRO DURH 20/114/8.

³⁹CC 190184.

aloof from the daily workings of his palatine community. As such, what sway they did hold came as a result of their personal ties to the bishop himself, rather than any independent influence.

In spite of the reforms introduced by Bishop Langley, there were nonetheless plenty of opportunities for service for the landed elite. In some cases, the mere nature of the occupation dictated the sort of person who might hold it. The bishop's forester, as the title implies, managed all the woodland within the episcopal demesne, including the four forests in Weardale and that which became known as Langley Forest. Other forested land came under his control at Whickham, just south of the Tyne, part of which became a game park. His primary employment came in enforcing the prohibition on poaching, the breaking of which was a common practice nonetheless. As such, the capture and punishment of offenders largely monopolised his time. Nonetheless, the forester at times also carried within his remit the oversight of the receipts from the bishop's coal mines, the sums from which were not inconsiderable.⁴⁰ Indeed, in certain years, the forester's rendering of account looked anything but; in 1383, his receipts came from a variety of sources, only little having to do with his core responsibilities. It is likely that the coal mining on Tyneside, for example, came under his remit because it was located in a forested, or recently deforested, area. Such were, it seems, the vagaries of this undertaking. Holders of the office tended to be men of some stature in the community. Bishop Fordham named William Fulthorp his master forester, a position in which he remained until Fordham's own demise in 1388. In 1392, John Walsh was named forester of

⁴⁰See below, pp. 219-23.

Weardale, in which he replaced Alan Batemanson.⁴¹ Because in this instance the Weardale forests seem to have required special attention, their custody went to men of somewhat lower social standing; neither of these men ever rose above the status of free tenant, and neither ever held high office again. In 1403, John Raket became Bishop Skirlaw's forester, though the terms may well have remained the same: Raket was only of slightly greater standing, and had a relatively quite small landed wealth.⁴² However, clearly by 1416, the situation had changed. Robert Strangeways, a member of an established south Durham and North Yorkshire family had become Bishop Langley's master forester. Strangeways was not only closely associated with the Neville of Raby and Middleham, but his brother was also the palatinate's second justice, and later its chief justice. In addition, the position entailed the handling of not-inconsiderable sums of money: in 1418, after all expenses and fees had been paid out, the forester paid over £105 into the Durham exchequer.⁴³ By this time, control of the coal receipts had been turned over to a manager, and receipts were sent directly to the receiver-general; this left the forester again able to return his jurisdiction of all the palatinate's forests.

Another chance for participation in administration was the office of coroner. There were four coroners serving at any one time, one for each of the bishop's administrative wards. The office of coroner was held most often by local gentry of minor standing. Bishop Fordham, throughout his tenure in Durham, persistently named coroners of peculiarly low social standing: Gilbert Elgin of Birtley became

⁴¹PRO DURH 3/32.

⁴²PRO DURH 3/33.

⁴³CC 189782.

one for Chester Ward in 1382, though he was a freeholder of little distinction. In the same year, John Billy became coroner for Darlington Ward, even though he, too, could boast of few holdings in the region.⁴⁴ Bishop Skirlaw typically chose men of somewhat higher standing. In 1395, John Morton, a Neville retainer, was named coroner for Darlington Ward, and in 1388, John Middleton of Middleton, another Neville tenant, became coroner for Darlington, and Robert Skelton for Easington Ward.⁴⁵ In 1401, Robert Jackson became coroner for Easington Ward. The common thread running through these appointments was that their holders' incomes from land were relatively quite small. Typically, they had two, or perhaps three, free holdings in the palatinate, with a landed income of less than £5-10 a year. It is difficult to imagine that their appointment to the bishopric administration did not take pride of place amongst their various engagements.

Bishop Langley began as his predecessors had left off in 1410, with a series of appointments. In that year, Robert Belasis was appointed coroner for Darlington Ward, and was replaced in 1420 by William Alwent; both were freeholders of long standing in south Durham.⁴⁶ Belasis was fairly well propertied: at his death, he held perhaps 250-300 acres of arable, valued at £6 10s. 0d.⁴⁷ Alwent had fewer lands than his predecessor, and somewhat less income, in that he was a case of a second son taking on administrative duties. John Morton's re-appearance as the coroner for Stockton Ward in 1413, and again in 1417-21, indicates an upturn in the

⁴⁴PRO DURH 3/32.

⁴⁵PRO DURH 3/32.

⁴⁶PRO DURH 3/34, 3/35.

⁴⁷PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 165d.

social standing of these officers.⁴⁸ Morton had become a member of the earl of Westmorland's household, and a trustee of certain of his estates. This was as political an appointment for Bishop Langley as any he had yet made, given his close ties to the Nevilles and the crown. As a footnote, it is perhaps unsurprising that Langley's successor, Robert Neville, brother of Richard, earl of Salisbury, and Westmorland's own son, continued to make the appointment of coroners a political, rather than financial, issue: 'Dalton', 'Sayer', 'Aslakby', and especially 'Claxton', were all names included in the list of coroners appointed after 1438. All these figures bear surnames that became closely associated with the Nevilles. It seems that by the mid-fifteenth century, other administrative departments had also been reformed, so that pressure on administrative positions in the palatinate intensified. This led to men of higher status becoming coroners. William and Ralph Claxton both held the office in the 1460's.⁴⁹ The Claxton name was already one of standing in the palatinate: Thomas Claxton (see above) was one of the leading figures in the Neville household, while William Claxton was one of the most prominent knights in the palatinate in the early fifteenth century, and was sheriff during Langley's pontificate; his son, John, was a significant land holder there in the 1430's and 40's.⁵⁰

The coroners usually held their position for a number of years, leaving them personally responsible for the repeated delinquency of any free tenants. Robert Preston was coroner for Easington Ward for seventeen, and perhaps 22, years,⁵¹

⁴⁸CC 188879, 188880.

⁴⁹CC 188788, 188789, 189697.

⁵⁰CC 188717, 188651.

⁵¹CC 188725, 188726, 188727.

while the officer for Stockton Ward remained a member of the Sayer family for over twenty years.⁵² Robert Preston, a local landholder of some note, served as coroner virtually throughout Robert Neville's episcopate, from 1443-61 at least.⁵³ Interestingly, his father, Henry Preston, was both receiver-general and constable during this period, as well.⁵⁴ This rather long term in office probably gave the coroners greater leverage over some of the more powerful free tenants than they might otherwise have had in collecting rents, just as the receiver-general's long tenure probably gave him greater influence over matters of administrative and financial importance.⁵⁵ In all, then, by the mid-fifteenth century, the coroner had become a man of high standing in the county.

Yet it is also true that their standing throughout the remainder of this period - c.1380-c.1420 - still failed to approach that of the bishop's greatest free tenants, such as various members of the Percy and Neville families. Indeed, they may have served as their functionaries, as in the case of the Claxtons, who served the Nevilles for decades. Yet Lord Neville is named as the freeholder and farmer of several estates in the four wards, most of which rented for between 8s. and £1 2s. 0s., estates on which men like Claxton were obliged to collect. The earl of Northumberland is also identified as a tenant of the bishop when, according to *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, he paid £26 13s. 4d. rent for the coal mine at Whickham.⁵⁶ More prevalent, however,

⁵²CC 188883-188894, 188897, 188895.

⁵³CC 188725, 188726, 188727.

⁵⁴CC 189814, 189815, 189816.

⁵⁵Bishop Langley, for example, had only three receivers-general during his tenure at Durham. See Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 74.

⁵⁶*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 93.

were the problems faced by those coroners who did not have the Claxtons' resources on which to draw. To collect some of his largest rents, sums for which he would be held personally liable, he would often have had to confront some of the greatest magnates in the North. This task was made doubly daunting in the throes of a financial crisis, such as the one that seems to have arisen in the late 1430's. In this, following crop failures at least partially related to the onset of epidemic disease, the coroners were unable to collect free rents and farms of various sizes.⁵⁷ On that occasion, the bishop clearly understood that the political implications of extracting these rents were unpalatable, and he chose to forgive them instead. Perhaps, then, something other than job scarcity was at work in the employment of greater figures in the offices of coroner. It may well have been true that the rise in status was undertaken to ensure better rent collection, as the status of free tenants grew with the consolidation of holdings. To collect rents from great men, the Bishop Langley may have found it necessary to employ members of their class. It is certain that Bishop Neville also took to this idea with a certain relish.

However, it is that length of tenure that also made the coroner somewhat vulnerable, in that the bishop could hold him accountable for a far greater number of delinquencies, compounded over a number of years until finally becoming sizeable enough to warrant action. The coroner of Chester Ward must often have found this to be true of the numerous small parcels held there by the Nevilles alone. While their holdings were of various sizes and values, the coroner could, in a cash crisis, find even the smaller ones difficult to collect. If indeed the Nevilles suffered the effects of the plague of the late 1430's throughout their northern estates, they would not

⁵⁷M.E. Arvanigian, 'Free Rents in the Palatinate of Durham, and the Crisis of the Late 1430's', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, xxiv (1996), 105-7.

likely have remitted payment for even their smallest holdings in Durham, choosing instead to marshal their resources elsewhere, as cushion against the resulting shortfall in income, and shortage of cash.⁵⁸ Left delinquent, their Durham rents alone could compound quickly in the account of arrears, especially if charged to a single coroner over a number of years. The primary example of this sort of potential for amassing arrears is the village of Winlaton, a traditional free holding of the Nevilles since at least 1380. For this property, taken out for terms of four years, the Nevilles were to remit a sum of £20 per annum. For administrative and collection purposes, Winlaton was accounted for in the 'Whickham' account, and therefore listed as but a single entry in that section. It is apparent from the receiver-generals' records that, after 1438, the Nevilles cannot have paid that rent on the property, as the sums of remittance on the estate of Whickham did not exceed £16 until after 1470. It may have been that this was another consideration in the upgrading of the office, if, because arrears had increasingly become a problem, higher-status men were needed to man these posts so that arrears might eventually be collected, either by them from delinquent tenants, or by the auditors from a coroner who had raised all or part of the arrears of his own accord.

The figures given in the coroners' accounts indicate expected, rather than collected, sums. Their comparison, where possible, with sums reported in the receiver's accounts shows that the two figures regularly failed to agree, and often differed wildly.⁵⁹ While it is true that occasionally significant concessions were

⁵⁸Palatinate records support this claim. See CC 189811, 188717 for evidence of unpaid rents.

⁵⁹See receiver-general's account for 1459/60, CC 189815; for evidence from coroners' accounts, see CC 188788, 188727, 188883. For comparison with another episcopal estate, see C. Dyer, 'A Redistribution of Incomes in fifteenth-century England', in R.H. Hilton, ed., *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History* (Cambridge, 1976), 195-200.

made by the auditors to help redress the often-massive discrepancy between real and ideal collections, rarely were they very large, and never were they a serious attempt to realise the difference between the two figures. As a result of their fixed nature, the coroners' accounts are not particularly useful as good indicators of his relative success or failure in collecting free rents.⁶⁰ Free rents were not viewed as variable or negotiable, nor sensitive to market forces. Instead, they were fixed, fossilised in the face of changing economic conditions, and bound by the force of tenurial and manorial tradition. However, in spite of this, there was obviously some room for the coroner to manoeuvre, to try and gain some measure of relief in his attempts to collect the expected sum.

For example, in the coroner's account for Chester Ward for 1460, a discrepancy of £26 15s. 11d. between the expected figure for Whickham, and the actual payment to the receiver-general. Indeed, on its face, this discrepancy measures over £38, but concessions and respites accounting for about £12 reported by the coroner for use of the mill cut the gap to about £26.⁶¹ Clearly on this occasion, it was decided by the auditors that no fee should be paid for the use of the mill by the village's inhabitants. In 1438/9, the Chester Ward's coroner again failed to hand over to the receiver-general all moneys said to be owed.⁶² Unfortunately, there is little hope of tracing the arrears of coroners, or indeed of escheators, in a yearly fashion, as all accounts of arrears of these officials were kept as a running, cumulative total. What traces of evidence there are on this point, however, indicate that these officials

⁶⁰Ostensibly, in that the sum of collection may actually exceed that remitted, given the penchant for corruption generally in estate administration, and the various safeguards thought necessary against it.

⁶¹CC 188653. See also receiver-general's main accounts, CC 189816.

⁶²CC 189811.

did not attempt to clear their own arrears very vigorously. For example, William Claxton became sheriff under Langley in 1416, and by 1419 had gone deeply enough into arrears to warrant action by the bishop.⁶³ His story of evasion and manoeuvring for respite, or at least partial forgiveness of his debt by the bishop, is representative of the sort of tactic often employed by estate officers who found themselves deep in debt, and unable to collect the requisite amount from free tenants. In the coroner's case, such problems were compounded by the fact that he would also be held responsible for all arrears compiled by his predecessors during the current episcopate. The records for 1466/7 indicate that a new coroner, Roland Thirlfeld, was appointed for Darlington Ward with standing arrears of £765 1s. 0d. already being held against him.⁶⁴ The passing of responsibility for arrears from one coroner to the next thereby provided a mechanism for the collection of the arrears of the office, in the person of the new coroner. Therefore, while these offices provided many different sorts of opportunities for their holders, they also implied some financial and legal risk.

Other offices in the palatinate's administration were rather safer, if somewhat less lucrative or important. The keeper of the bishop's parks, for example, was another position that, by its very nature, was also manned by free tenants rather than clerks. The bishop's parkers were responsible for the keeping of his game, and the enforcement of the prohibition of hunting in the lord's parks without his licence. The records strongly indicate that these offices were, virtually without exception, held by very minor free tenants of the bishop. John Betenson had custody of the park of

⁶³Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 84.

⁶⁴CC 188790, cited in P.N. Grainger, 'The Estates of the Bishops of Durham, 1450-70' (unpublished. M.A. thesis, Durham Univ., 1975), 21.

Evenwood in 1382, while William Fetherstanhalgh and Robert Emerson were the parkers in Weardale in 1385.⁶⁵ Robert Skeppier was the custodian of Franklin Wood (so-called), which seems by this date to have been little more than a game park, and gave way to William Stubbes in 1386. At some stage, Stubbes became the parker at Birtley, as well, because in 1403, he granted the position to William Melot. This may have simply been a case of hand picking his successor, or it may have been that Stubbes had become something like the 'master game keeper', and as such could appoint his own lieutenants. In 1388, Robert Stertell became the parker at Whickham, and John Buckley was appointed to the custody of Birtley Park, near Bishop Auckland. There was a second park on south Tyneside, as well; Hugh Hall was named keeper of the bishop's park at Gateshead in 1403. The bishop also maintained two game parks at least on his manors in Northumberland. In 1385, John Middleton of Belsay was the keeper of Chabington Wood, a game park in Bedlingtonshire, while William Atkinson was his parker at Fenwick in 1396. All of these men were local to their charge, though Middleton seems to have been somewhat wealthier than most of his colleagues.⁶⁶

The legal arena also offered employment, at a very high level, to the landed classes. The chief legal figure in the palatinate was the chief justice. He was the first among equals in all legal commissions, and was typically first-named among J.P.'s. The office, which almost certainly required some training in the law, was typically held by a member of a significant gentry family. In 1383 and 1385, Roger Fulthorp, younger brother of William, was the bishop's chief justice. In 1416, Richard Norton,

⁶⁵PRO DURH 3/32.

⁶⁶PRO DURH 3/32, 3/33; *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 272.

a free tenant whose uncle had in his demesne perhaps £20-25 in property, but who seems to have had little of his own, was in the post.⁶⁷ From 1424 to the end of Langley's tenure, James Strangeways, brother of the bishop's master forester, was in the job. Given that the bishop was generally absent from his jurisdiction, this employment was of critical importance, and carried with it a salary of £10, plus various expenses.⁶⁸ These were likely incurred as a result of representing the bishop's legal interests in various palatine courts, and investigating as a member of various commissions, again lending at least some legal standing to them.

In much this same mould was the palatinate's second justice, who often worked with the chief justice in these matters, but who occasionally also served in his own right. Logically, the post could also be a stepping stone to the chief justiciarship, as in the case of James Strangeways, who was second justice in 1416 and 1418.⁶⁹ John Preston was second justice in 1383-85, and Nicholas Covington in 1424-27, though whether either of them was eventually promoted is uncertain, due to certain imperfections in the records.⁷⁰ It is difficult to gauge the impact that these legal officials might have had on the commissions on which they served. Nonetheless, their pride of place among the bishop's other retainers and councillors in the payment lists of the 1380's indicates that they were clearly valued, and well remunerated. This value may have been dampened to some degree by Langley's creation of the office of attorney-general, sometime before 1424, an official clearly

⁶⁷PRO DURH 3/13, fo. 134d.

⁶⁸PRO DURH 3/32-3/34; DURH 20/114/8; CC 190184, 189810; *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 267.

⁶⁹CC 189809, 189782.

⁷⁰PRO DURH 20/114/8; CC 189810, 190184.

thought of as Langley's legal legate. In 1424, one of his clerks, John Aslakby, held the post, and by 1438, another, John Danby, had taken his place.⁷¹ That this evidence suggests its occupation by a clerk throughout Langley's tenure may also indicate a loss of standing for the chief and second justices. Just as in the financial sector, so too was the role of the gentry here diminished by Langley's reforms.

However, the opportunities for the gentry to serve on certain commissions, which carried with them a military or law-enforcement element, were as plentiful as ever. The most prestigious, and probably the most important, of these was the commission of the peace. Justices of the peace were charged with the enforcement of both the bishop's, and in effect, the king's, law, and the commission therefore was inherently not only a legal one, but it also carried a semi-military component. In 1382, the bishop's chief justice, Roger Fulthorp, was named a J.P., as was the sheriff, William Bowes. However, the palatinate's greatest soldier, John Neville was also named, presumably to add the weight of his standing to any proceedings. These were combined with men from diverse parts of the North-East, including John Heron from Northumberland, John of Hartlepool, Hugh Westwick from south-east Durham, and John Elvet from Durham City itself.⁷² In 1384, a smaller number of men were involved, including Ralph Eure, the steward; Robert Laton, his associate; Thomas Bland; John Tours; and John Teesdale, a Neville tenant and associate.⁷³ The next recorded commission of the peace came in 1409. This read like a veritable who's who among the palatinate's landed community. At the head of the commission were

⁷¹CC 189810, 190184, 189811.

⁷²PRO DURH 3/32.

⁷³PRO DURH 3/32.

the earl of Westmorland and Eure, the most important political figures in the North-East. They were joined by William Fulthorp, the master forester; Richard Norton, the chief justice; John Conyers, steward of Allertonshire and brother of the former sheriff; Robert Wyclif, the former chancellor; the gaoler Thomas Elmeden; and the current constable and receiver, William Chancellor.⁷⁴ By 1421, however, the J.P.'s named were far less prestigious: John Manners, Samson Harding, John Bertram, and William Mitford.⁷⁵ That all of these men were from Northumberland leads me to believe that their primary responsibility was to the bishop's liberty in Norham and his Bedlingtonshire estates, though this is not indicated in the records. In 1427, a similar commission was named which was very similar to that announced in 1409, headed this time by Richard Neville. It included Robert Umfraville; William, son of Ralph Eure; William Bowes, shortly to become sheriff; Thomas Surtees, member of a prominent Durham family; the steward, Thomas Holden; the receiver-general, Richard Buckley; William Chancellor; James and Robert Strangeways, the chief justice and master forester, respectively; John Morton, Robert Jackson, and William Wilberforce, and John Aslakby.⁷⁶

Another important commission occupied by members of the gentry was that of assize. This, too, was an important commission, charged with the adjudication of money matters within the bishop's jurisdiction. R.L. Storey, in his discussion of the courts of Durham, convincingly argues that the justices were less than busy most of the time, and that their sessions - three or perhaps five per year - might take only one

⁷⁴PRO DURH 3/34.

⁷⁵PRO DURH 3/38.

⁷⁶PRO DURH 3/38.

day each.⁷⁷ This meant that the commission could easily include men otherwise engaged in the bishop's business, although, in 1383, it did not. In that year, the group included the steward, Eure; Roger Fulthorp, the forester; John Preston, the second justice; and Hugh Westwick, who was not a land holder of any note, yet who served on so many legal commissions that he must have had some training in the law. This pattern continued in the fifteenth century. In 1406, Eure, Wyclif and Norton were named to the assize court, along with John Conyers, steward of Allertonshire.⁷⁸ In 1419, the former three were joined on the commission by James Strangeways, the second justice, and two others.⁷⁹ Thus, the commission always included the chief justice, and generally the second, as well as the steward.

Another secular commission in the bishopric open to the Durham gentry - and indeed, the one with which they were most involved - were the commissions of array for the four wards. Like most Durham appointments, these were held for the term of the bishop's pleasure, and because the men of the palatinate were only rarely called upon to take up arms, seem therefore to have been recognition of the great and good in the four wards. This is not to say that they were without value; they were not. When the Percies revolted for a second time in 1405, for example, under the auspices of Scrope's rebellion, and the earl of Westmorland was called upon again to raise men, as he had in 1403, the Durham commissions of array must have been very helpful in doing so quickly. Evidence for their makeup is reasonably comprehensive for the 1380's. In 1382, the sheriff, William Bowes, was named for Darlington,

⁷⁷Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 64.

⁷⁸PRO DURH 3/34.

⁷⁹PRO DURH 3/35, 3/38.

Sadberge and Easington, though not for Stockton - perhaps an indication that he had no interests there. Ralph Eure, Thomas Claxton, John Middleton of Middleton, and John Teesdale were also named for Darlington, though interestingly, the records indicate that the lords of Neville never sat on a Durham commission of array.⁸⁰ This almost certainly indicates that such an appointment was beneath their station even in the 1380's; in practice, the commission for Darlington was a Neville group, as all of its members save Eure were probably retainers. The commission for Easington included William Elmeden, the constable, and the Durham City esquires, Gilbert Elvet, and Thomas Menville.⁸¹ By 1385, when the commissions were again announced, their size had been cut virtually in half, each of them containing just three men, and with many significant Durham men, such as Elvet, Bowes, and again Conyers, noticeably absent.

The commission named in 1388 for Chester Ward, however, was a large one of eight men, this time including Ralph and Marmaduke Lumley (soon to be named sheriff), Bowes, the sheriff; William Wessington, esquire; and others. In 1406, in the midst of the Percy revolts and in the wake of Scrope's Rebellion, a commission of six able and experienced knights was named for Easington Ward, headed by William Claxton (later sheriff); Thomas Elmeden, the gaoler; Thomas Fulthorp; William Blakeston, a long-time retainer of the bishop; and Robert Jackson, the coroner.⁸² The makeup of the commissions of array from 1406 onward displays a certain clarity of purpose when compared with those that came before. The threat posed by the

⁸⁰PRO DURH 3/32.

⁸¹PRO DURH 3/32.

⁸²PRO DURH 3/34, 3/35.

Percies to the king's government seems to have sharpened the selection process, and the commissions named in 1408 indicate this. In that year, all the wards' commissioners of array were announced, and the commissions were somewhat smaller than some previously had been, but they also included many more honourable names. Hilton, Tempest, Surtees and Conyers, for example, all made their first appearance in that year; these families were all the knightly class, and their military experience, resources, and local influence would all have been of much use in cases of further threat.⁸³ Although the size of the commissions again increased thereafter, they always included the steady presence lent by these established, knightly families. The commissions of array, it seems, were no longer places for esquires of limited ability or experience, at the exclusion of those who could provide these qualities.

Two general conclusions emerge from this survey of the palatinate's office holders and their responsibilities in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. First, it is clear that these offices could represent significant opportunities for those who held them. their involvement in the bishop's administration probably gave them certain financial rewards, though the auditors, led throughout by the assiduous Ralph Eure, would certainly not allow them much leniency in the clearing of their accounts. secondly, the offices of coroner especially seems to have been reserved for men of land holding status: members of the local gentry typically held these positions, which were one rung beneath that of sheriff, and two or so beneath that of steward, an office reserved for the most important member of the local gentry. The thinking

⁸³PRO DURH 3/34.

behind assigning gentry to these offices was that the job inherently required a certain amount of local influence from its holder. The duties involved, such as the collection of farms and feudal dues, make the reasons for this abundantly clear.

From the point of view of the gentry, attaining a position as one of the palatinate's four coroners meant further opportunities to enhance their standing within the political establishment of the North-East, without joining one of the region's highly politicised retinues. In particular, these offices gave lesser members of the gentry, perhaps a second son or another land-poor member of a prominent family, the chance to build wealth and influence. Their service provided the bishop with men of sufficient status to carry out an office that, by its very nature, could be politically difficult; in return, it provided them with the opportunity not only to serve in the local administration - a virtual political imperative to those of a certain status - but also an avenue by which they could build influence and even a certain amount of wealth. In an era of declining landed values - certainly the case in the North-East in this period - such opportunities increasingly represented significant opportunities. The political dimension of this service is manifest in the tripartite relationship between the crown, the Nevilles and the bishop - particularly Bishop Langley. Because the Nevilles and the bishop represented a royalist, Lancastrian matrix in the North-East, service to any of them was, in effect, service to the establishment as a whole.

VI.

Landed Society and the North-East Coal Industry

I have argued that the political decisions made by members of the land-owning community were informed by their relative prosperity as landowners. Those unable to count on the independence that a stable income from their lands were therefore faced with very different circumstances from others financially able to strike their own course. Clearly, some attached themselves to great lords for positive political gain. Nonetheless, the choices faced by men like Thomas Grey were stark, given such great declines in some of their wealth. It is clear from the discussion of office holding above that such circumstances were far from the norm. Many landowners were able to maintain financial security - indeed, prosperity - and carve out for themselves rather remarkable political careers outside the great retinues. Those who were most effective in doing so relied less on traditional land uses for their incomes, and more on alternative sources of revenue. Office holding was certainly the most important of these. Another activity engaged in by many in the gentry was the coal industry. In the fourteenth century, gentry participation in the coal trade was still rather limited, as the industry was only just opening up as a recognisable, potentially profitable, commercial venture. Nonetheless, for the Durham gentry especially, it provided not only the chance to mine coal within their own demesnes, but also to take the farm of other sights located on the bishop's lands. In addition, members of the landed community might also have been involved in managing the mines for the bishop.

The North-East was England's most important source of coal in the later middle ages, and the highest concentration of mining activity, then as later, was in the palatinate of Durham. In her study of the coal trade to 1421, C. Fraser has examined the industry's early development in the North-East, with special reference to the efforts of Durham Cathedral Priory in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Two other studies have also contributed greatly to our still-limited understanding of this subject: J. Hatcher's survey of the British coal industry - which is chiefly concerned with the early modern period - devotes some energy to the middle ages; and J.B. Blake has studied its development in the thirteenth, and especially the fourteenth, centuries.¹ However, as all of these treatments concentrate chiefly on Durham Priory (a preference that exists in much of the scholarship of medieval Durham), something of a void remains in our understanding the subject. The principal objectives of this treatment, then, are to try and understand the role of the bishop of Durham and his free tenants in the development of mining in this period, and to try and envisage the opportunities created by the trade for the landed community.

Mining in the palatinate of Durham itself was developed initially in areas of already-considerable economic life: a number of pits were sunk near the townships located along the south bank of the Tyne, while others sprang up nearer the centre of the monastic community, such as those lying next to the prior's country house at Bearpark, just to the north-west of Durham City. Still other sites were to be found in south Durham, either to the west of Bishop Auckland - site of the bishop's palatial local residence on the River Wear - or within the barony of Evenwood. By far the

¹ John Hatcher, *The History of the British Coal Industry* (Oxford, 1993); J.B. Blake, 'The Medieval Coal Trade of North East England: Some Fourteenth-Century Evidence', *NH*, ii (1967), 1-26.

most important were those located in the bishop's 'barony' of Evenwood - in south Durham - and near the borough of Gateshead and the township of Whickham, on south Tyneside. Their early development foretells of later importance: these would comprise the heart of Durham mining in later centuries, part of the so-called Great Northern Coal Field.² The mining on the priory estates was done on a much smaller scale, and anyway excluded the gentry from participation, in that leasing did not enter the picture until somewhat later. It is, therefore, the bishop's mines that I propose to study in particular detail here. Nonetheless, because the priory mines yield detailed surviving accounts, we are thus afforded the opportunity for a comparison of monastic and bishopric mining operations. Most importantly, the evidence from these ecclesiastical landowners should produce enough evidence together to make some conclusions regarding the role of lay landlords involved in coal mining. This includes the Percies, the Nevilles, and the Eures, as well as a number of other prominent families discussed in earlier chapters. Due to the relative scarcity of evidence, and especially of private papers and accounts for the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, their contributions have been largely ignored. I will rectify that oversight here.

Initially, some discussion of the development of the industry is warranted. By the mid-1350's, the bishop of Durham had established a predilection for farming out his mining rights to tenants, rather than mining and selling the product himself.³ In 1356, Bishop Hatfield granted a twelve-year lease of five mines at Whickham to Sir Thomas Grey of Heaton, a prominent Northumbrian knight, and John Pulhore, the

²See Hatcher, *British Coal Industry*.

³These had been established in 1303, along with many other rights pertaining to the patrimony of St. Cuthbert, by Bishop Bek. For a full discussion, see Fraser, *Anthony Bek*.

rector of Whickham, for the sum of £333 6s. 8d. per year.⁴ The conditions of the lease were quite explicit: total output from the five mines should not exceed one keel⁵ - or 20 chalders - per day.⁶ The price of coal in the mid-fourteenth century was 1s. 5d. or 1s. 6d. per chalders, meaning that one day's mining would have yielded, at the maximum output allowed by the terms of the lease, about 28-30 shillings per day at the pit head. Assuming the mines could be worked an average of four to five days per week (though less during the weeks leading up to Christmas and Easter), this operation might have produced anything from £350 to perhaps £400 a year, assuming the product could be readily sold and the cost of transport passed along to the buyer, which seems nearly always to have been the case.

These figures are, of course, somewhat simplistic; for example, they make no allowance for the costs associated with production. However, this is not sufficient justification for assuming them to be fanciful: production costs, which were likely to have been confined to a single hodman working at the pit face and one or two other men employed to take the coal away, were probably recouped somewhat by the habitual over-stuffing of keels - which the records suggest was a regular occurrence.⁷ They may also have been offset by the over-mining of the shaft - more than the

⁴CC 244071.

⁵A keel was a boat used specifically for the transport of coal down river from the mines to the trading port - in this case, Newcastle - which was, by statute, allowed to hold no more than 20 chalders of coal. As this size limitation is known to have been habitually broken - see Blake, 4 (note) - it seems prudent to adjust estimates slightly upward when attempting to gauge actual output.

⁶Fraser asserts that 154 chalders were roughly equivalent to 115 tons in 1298, though this value was obviously declining throughout this period, because by the early fifteenth century, a chalders is known to have been equal to a ton. Unfortunately, the precise nature of this decline in value remains difficult. See C.M. Fraser, 'The North-East Coal Trade until 1421', *TASDN*, 11 (1962), 211; and *The Customs Accounts of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1454-1500*, ed. J.F. Wade, Surtees Society, 202 (1995), Appendix.

⁷Blake, 'Medieval Coal Trade', 4 (note).

agreed amount - and the subsequent profits earned from it. On the other hand, there is very little hope of estimating the losses in production incurred by the flooding of the mine shafts, which was clearly a persistent problem. Evidence from Durham Priory's mine at West Rainton in the fifteenth century indicates that on many occasions, mining was pared back to just three days a week - most often the result of inclement weather - and that the monks bore the expense of maintaining water pumps to drain the mine shafts, as well as aqueducts to carry away the water.⁸ Work in the mines was also slowed, as a matter of course, not only by the approach of Christmas and Easter, but by that of other major feasts, such as Michaelmas, as well.⁹

Such problems of weather were, of course, endemic to medieval mining. Unfortunately, because it is unknown whether free tenants were allowed to compensate for such losses - as those who mined within their own demesnes, like the Nevilles, almost certainly did - no accurate formula for measuring output, or determining exactly the profitability of the venture, is possible. However, it is reasonable to assume that the overstuffing of keels and the illicit sale of coal were used to compensate for losses caused by flooding and any other consequences of poor weather. The great surplus capacity of the bishop's mines on south Tyneside must surely have been employed in the event of a breakdown, simply by shifting to another mine shaft. It is therefore sensible to regard the terms of leases, such as the one outlined above, as realistic, given that such leases were often taken up not for one or two years, but a dozen or more. It is equally sensible to regard the negotiation

⁸DCD, Bursar's Book 'F', fo. 20r.

⁹In the light of production figures gleaned from the account of weekly renderings of the Priory, known as "DCD, Bursar's Book 'F'", in which it is noted that production slowed in the week prior to certain other feasts, as well, it is not unreasonable to assume that this phenomenon was also present among lay tenants as miners. See, for example, DCD, Bursar's Book 'F', fos. 21r-22r, 33r-34r, and 25r-27r.

of such leases, as with any other medieval lease, as representative of a relatively attractive economic opportunity for both tenant and lord. In the case of Hatfield's farming of the Whickham mines, the bishop was provided rather a large annual income over the term of the lease, perhaps approximating his estimation of the potential income from holding them in hand, while also providing his tenants with a realistic chance to turn a profit, which they might 'maximise' through their own ingenuity. This episode provides us with our first tangible evidence of free tenants in Durham taking a lease out on one of the bishop's coal mines. However, given the thoughtful relationship between its terms and the potential profitability of the site, it seems quite likely that such arrangements had already been established practice for some years on the bishop's estates. Coal is known to have been shipped from Newcastle to both Dover and Calais from at least 1351. Because these shipments were on the order of the 720 chalders shipped to Calais in 1352, they probably originated in the bishop's mines - and therefore, his free tenants' - which were larger and more productive than the prior's.¹⁰

Other evidence confirms Bishop Hatfield's penchant for leasing. In 1364, he granted a lease of the coal mines at Gateshead for 24 years - at £5 per year - to John Plummer, a Newcastle burgess, and Walter Hesilden, a burgess of Gateshead. As part of the indenture, the bishop conceded the important grant of way-leave - the right of passage over his lands - so that his tenants might transport their coal to local markets or to the Tyne, thereby raising the value of their lease.¹¹ He also gave them

¹⁰For the output of the prior's mines in the fourteenth century, see Lomas, *Northeast England*, 198-204.

¹¹J. Masschaele, 'Transport Costs in Medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, 46: 2 (1993), 266-79.

access to timber from his park in Gateshead, under the supervision of his forester, to timber and frame their mine shafts.¹² In turn, the tenants agreed to mine just a single shaft at a time, and no other mining was to take place in Gateshead or the immediate area during the term of their lease. This operation was to be conducted 'as at Whickham', indicating that the 'cynk mines' there were being farmed out before those at Gateshead, following their separation in the accounts in the late 1350's. It also implies that, although they do not survive, the indentures setting out the conditions of the farm of the Whickham mines followed a similar pattern of reciprocal restrictiveness.

The nature of these indentures, then, is relatively clear: they resulted from a negotiation between the bishop and his tenants, and contained constraints on both parties. On the one hand, the bishop restricted his new tenant's ability to exploit a diminishing resource; on the other, the lessee gained a commitment from the lord not to conduct or otherwise allow further mining in the region - an act that would have lowered the price of the coal being mined. Nonetheless, both of these provisions also worked to the advantage of the lord: the restriction of mining to a single shaft preserved the future profitability of the site, while the bishop's commitment not allow other production virtually ensured that his tenants would be able to meet their obligations to him, and that, because he was preserving a price level through the restriction of supply, a higher rent on the site could be levied. The argument that these sorts of conditions may have been an early form of mineral resource conservation is not without some merit, though clearly economic advantage was their primary goal.

¹²Fraser, 'North-East Coal Trade', 216.

In the context of declining landed revenues in the North-East in the later middle ages, one might have predicted a rather more vigorous approach to mineral exploitation on the part of the bishop of Durham.¹³ However, the conditions of the Tyneside leases explicitly excluded any other mining in the region, precluding the possibility that the bishop had simply carried on mining the remaining pits himself. By the mid-1360's, much of the mining on south Tyneside had been effectively closed down, though it is very likely that a thriving market for coal in the south of England still existed.¹⁴ In 1364, the king ordered Henry Strother, the sheriff of Northumberland, to buy 676 chalders of coal from John, Lord Neville, from his mines at Winlaton, near Whickham - in the lordship of Brancepeth - for 1s. 5d. per chalder. This was to be used in the burning of lime in Edward III's building project at Windsor Castle. The cost of freightage, 3s. 6d. a chalder, was more than double that of the coal, bringing the final delivered price in London - including that lost overboard to a storm during the journey back¹⁵ - to about 5s. 11d. per chalder, and making its total cost some £165.¹⁶ The exact productive capacity of these Winlaton mines is unknown. However, the manor contained at least two large coal mines, Morley and Fulleypit, and the Nevilles leased the township of Winlaton from the bishop of Durham for the rather large sum of £20 per year throughout the later middle ages.¹⁷ Winlaton was clearly the centre of their mining operations.

¹³Pollard, 'The North-Eastern Economy', 88-105; Arvanigian, 'Free Rents', 99-101.

¹⁴See below, p. 228.

¹⁵Fraser, 'North-East coal Trade', 219.

¹⁶PRO, Exchequer Accounts, E 101/579/18.

¹⁷*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 93;

Considering both his influence and that of his friend, William, Lord Latimer, at court during this period, it is unsurprising that John Neville's mines were heavily patronised by the crown.¹⁸ Given that Edward's construction project at Windsor was ongoing, requiring a steady supply of coal, the Neville mines in the North-East probably supplied the project on other occasions, also.¹⁹ In addition, the bishop of Durham's own mines could easily have provided more than enough coal to meet this initial order, operating even at the restricted, 1350 levels. Apart from these rather unusual, high-volume orders, mining on the bishopric estates was conducted in only a few shafts on a strictly limited basis, while allowing others to remain dormant. Thus, the development of the mining industry in the second half of the fourteenth century seems to have been influenced to some degree by the prevailing political climate at court.

One further factor that determined the potential profitability of Tyneside mining from the lessee's perspective was the opposition to commercial shipping originating on the south bank of the Tyne by the burghers of Newcastle. The breach between the bishop and the townsmen, already open by the early fourteenth century, widened in the 1350's and 60's. The terms of the agreement made in 1364 between Bishop Hatfield and Hesilden and Plummer, were confirmed by royal letters patent in 1367, when the men petitioned the king for intervention on their behalf against the burgesses of the town, who they claimed were constantly harassing them. The king affirmed that the lessees - along with Roger Fulthorp and John Birtley, both

¹⁸Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 148; Tuck, *Crown and Nobility*, 164.

¹⁹Edward's building at Windsor alone cost the crown some £40,000 between 1357 and 1365 alone. See R. Allen Brown, H.M. Colvin, and A.J. Taylor, *The History of the King's Works*, ii, 872-80. For the building programs at Windsor, Eltham and Sheen in the latter part of Edward III's reign, see Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 30-33.

prominent free tenants and future officers in Durham - had leave to extract such coal as they could and ship it anywhere in Britain or to Calais.²⁰ This resort to royal intervention, then, confirmed that, while the bishop of Durham certainly controlled the mining of coal on his estates, the value of that coal to potential miners was greatly diminished without the leave and opportunity to ship and sell it. This dispute remained largely unresolved until 1383, when the bishop brought suit against the town, complaining yet again that shipping from the south bank was being impeded. The burgesses argued that they alone should control shipping rights on all of the river, from Tynemouth all the way upstream, virtually to its headwaters. The bishop disputed this, claiming his right both to ship on the Tyne and earn money from the coal trade, based on the prerogative of his predecessors. The king, in both this suit and the subsequent countersuit by the town, sided with the bishop. He ruled that the bishop controlled the southern third of the river, the town the northern third, and that the two parties had joint control of the middle third.²¹

For the burgesses, the suit always looked lost. Bishop Fordham had been the keeper of the privy seal from 1377-1381, and, embattled as he was by threats of impeachment by successive Parliaments, he was still a trusted minister of the crown. Having only recently declared his majority, Richard II was, in 1383, keen to promote the interests of his supporters. To add insult to injury, in 1383, Fordham also made a gift to the king of 300 keels of coal - about 6,000 chalders - worth at least £425.²² The question here is not whether the bishop of Durham sought to bribe the king;

²⁰Fraser, 'North-East Coal Trade', 216.

²¹*CCR, 1381-1385*, 349-50; *CChR, 1341-1417*, 290.

²²*CFR, 1383-1391*, 4, 30; *CCR, 1381-1385*, 355. See also Blake, 'Medieval Coal Trade', 23-24; and G.T. Lapsley, *The County Palatine of Durham* (Cambridge, Mass., 1924), 284-85.

rather, it is whether he did so to retain a part of his palatine franchise - shipping rights on the Tyne - or to reinforce his position in royal government. Fordham must surely have been greatly concerned about his status in Richard's government. Just two years before, in the wake of the Peasants' Revolt, he had been forced to resign the privy seal, and must in 1383 have been wondering whether he would ever again serve in high office. However, the importance of the Tyne to the income of the bishops of Durham - be it in the operation of his fisheries, or in the shipping of wool, grain, fish, and increasingly, coal - was very great indeed, especially in the context of a declining landed income.²³ Fordham probably sought not only to gain the good graces of the young king, but also to ensure his capacity to make such gifts in the future, by protecting his palatine rights and, by extension, his income.

For Bishop Fordham, such provision ultimately proved insufficient. Though the palatine prerogative regarding Tyne shipping had indeed been preserved, there was no stopping the bishop's own political demise. In 1386, he became treasurer, but he held the post for less than a year before he was unceremoniously dismissed from the exchequer by the 'Wonderful Parliament'. The Lords Appellant had held him largely responsible for the crown's ailing financial position, and for the reckless shifting of funds away from the exchequer into the royal household itself, a body that had been growing rapidly both in size and cost. Fordham, as treasurer, was impeached and removed from the exchequer in 1386, and was two years later translated from Durham to Ely, a move seen very much as a demotion. Over the short term, however, his bribing of the king seems to have been to good effect, and

²³Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 69-70.

had preserved for his successors an important prerogative: that of shipping on the Tyne.

Political drama of another sort seems also to have affected the mining of Durham coal. Waning English influence over trade policy in Flanders, following the marriage of the Flemish heiress to Philip of Burgundy, brother of the king of France - instead of the English candidate, Edward III's younger son, Edmund Langley, future duke of York - may have led to the withdrawal of Flemish traders from the Newcastle coal trade.²⁴ It certainly led to the slow but steady erosion of English commercial interests in Flanders, especially when these proved contrary to those of France, as they so often did in the last years of Richard II's minority.²⁵ In addition, because the coal shipped from Newcastle often went to English, rather than overseas, destinations, it may have been that domestic demand ameliorated somewhat these falling exports. Edward III's building programs alone were of sufficient magnitude to create more than a token demand - as indeed were a number of the other great construction projects around the realm, including those undertaken by the northern nobility, and others at Rochester and elsewhere in Kent in the late fourteenth century.²⁶

While always having to negotiate leases with the bishops and priors of Durham to dig in their fields - most notably those on south Tyneside - Newcastle's burgesses had always maintained a virtual suzerainty on exports, even, it seems, in

²⁴This is outlined in Blake, 'Medieval Coal Trade'.

²⁵Tuck, *Crown and Nobility*, 159-60.

²⁶See below, pp. 228-29.

the wake of their disastrous suit against the bishop in the 1380's.²⁷ It was they who most often acted as middlemen, brokering deals that regularly involved large amounts of coal and money. In 1377, William Acton, a prominent burgess of Newcastle, sold 1,600 chalders of sea coal to three London merchants, an amount equal to nearly a fourth of that year's total exports. In addition, it seems that virtually all the details of the operation had been left to him, with the Londoners leaving the brokering and the shipping to his discretion, though significantly, within rather narrow parameters.²⁸ The following year, John Denom, William Hutton, and Elias Bulkham - prominent free tenants and lease holders in the palatinate - were given licence to buy 3,000 chalders in Northumberland, load it in Newcastle, and ship it to any port in England.²⁹ Hutton was closely linked to the Nevilles, and he may have been acting for them, and with their resources, in undertaking this enormous project. Even with a lawsuit pending against the bishop, Durham men nonetheless found nothing prohibitive about shipping their coal out of Newcastle. In spite of the town's defeat at the hands of Fordham over Tyneside shipping, Newcastle remained the country's principal exporter of coal. While it was certainly exported from such ports as Boston, Hull, Scarborough, King's Lynn and Southampton, most of it probably originated at Newcastle, and came to be traded secondarily through these other

²⁷The degree to which the increased shipping of coal from south Tyneside impacted Newcastle's export trade is uncertain; it is also unclear whether the bishop's shipping rights exempted him from export duties.

²⁸The limit was £320 for freight costs, or 4s. per chalder. *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London 1364-1381*, ed. A.H. Thomas (Cambridge, 1929), 245-46.

²⁹Blake, 'Medieval Coal Trade', 12.

ports.³⁰ The withdrawal of Flemish traders had been borne well by the burgesses, their exports had begun to recover marginally, and they retained their position as the key point of exit for the region's coal.

Fraser has argued that the townsmen of Newcastle reacted in desperation to the collapse of the wool trade as the town's population fell after the Black Death. The town had also incurred heavy financial costs throughout the fourteenth century, because of its proximity to the Scottish border - while simultaneously bearing an excise burden which similar to that of southern towns.³¹ Nonetheless, by the end of the fourteenth century, the burgesses of Newcastle had embarked upon a seemingly irresistible march to become the focus of the coal industry, in spite of their conflicts with the bishop of Durham. Fraser has also argued that the prospects for the long-term success of the Newcastle coal trade lay ultimately in the demand created by large domestic building programs, both in the north and the south of the country. The fortification of castles in the south, like Bodiam and Rochester in Kent, and Herstmonceaux in Sussex, the constant fuel needs for the re-fortification of Dover, Calais, and the Cinque Ports against French attack, and the crown's building projects at Windsor and elsewhere, are examples of just this sort of thing, resulting in a steady demand for north-eastern coal.

However, other projects closer to home also provided a sizeable local demand, more cheaply and easily satisfied by local miners. These included the Percy construction at Warkworth, and John of Gaunt's conversion of Dunstanburgh in the early 1380's - undertaken during the period in which the duke was promoting his own

³⁰Precise details of this practice cannot be determined, as little evidence for domestic coastal trade survives from this period.

³¹Fraser, 'North-East Coal Trade', 219-20

interests and those of John Neville on the Scottish borders. The Percies sought to satisfy their own need for fuel in the 1370's and 80's by leasing from the bishop of Durham the manor and coal mines of Fugerhouse. The earl of Northumberland was a free tenant of the bishop, and held the manor of Fugerhouse - composed of about 100 acres of land - for a 10s. rent; he also leased a coal mine there, for £26 13s. 4d.³² The Nevilles of Raby were also active builders, with construction at Brancepeth and Raby Castles both under way.³³ The demand for coal generated by these projects is unknown; domestic coal shipments elicited no customs duties, and therefore, left no trace in the records. However, such transactions as the 1377 sale of 1,600 chalders by William Acton to three London merchants suggests that this demand in the domestic coal market may have been considerable. It is also not known whether the enthusiasm of the great nobility for such building projects as these extended downward through the social strata to the gentry, though this seems likely. A few Durham families were granted leave to fortify their residences in the late-fourteenth century; in 1389, the Lumleys were granted permission to fortify Lumley Castle, near Chester-le-Street.³⁴ These projects alone were sufficient to provide at least some local demand for coal: it is unlikely that any other fuel was burned for industrial use in the coal-rich North-East. This sort of evidence for local demand is, of course, anecdotal; yet it may partially explain the increase in local participation in Newcastle shipping in the early 1390's.³⁵ A response to increasing domestic demand, which

³²*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 93.

³³M.J.B. Hislop, 'The Castle of Ralph, Fourth Baron Neville at Raby', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 5th series, xx (1992), 91-97.

³⁴PRO DURH 3/33.

³⁵See Blake, 'Medieval Coal Trade, 11-12; and PRO, Customs Accounts, E 122/106/5.

was cheaper to satisfy, and which could be easily filled by local shipping, may have provided the town's burgesses with the extra incentive they needed to begin using their own vessels.

In Durham, further opportunities for participation in mining showed up regularly. In 1383, the Evenwood mines were leased to William Blakeston, John Lodge, and Alexander Collier for six years.³⁶ The arrangements are somewhat transparent: Blakeston was a retainer and member of the bishop's council, and many times a justice in the palatine courts. His was certainly to be the leading role. John Lodge had been involved in other mining leases, and, with Collier, was probably the actual manager of the operation. In 1385, the bishop's receiver-general reported that he had collected a sum of £22 from these three, plus John Merley - a free tenant of south Durham - for the farm of the same mines.³⁷ Evenwood was to prove exceptional in this regard, as the bishop had temporarily abandoned his policy of leasing his Tyneside mines, opting instead to hold them in hand.³⁸ Having won the right to export coal directly from Gateshead in 1383, the already-considerable attraction of these sites on the south bank of the Tyne had increased still further. On the face of it, the reasons are apparent. In 1383, Nicholas Coke, custodian of the mines at Gateshead, handed over to the bishop's master forester more than £93 in profit.³⁹ No mention is made of the Whickham mines in that account, and that of 1385 omits any mention at all the Tyneside mines. In 1416, there was no income at

³⁶PRO DURH 20/114/8.

³⁷*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, Appendix iii, 266.

³⁸*Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, Appendix iii, 266.

³⁹PRO DURH 20/114/8.

all that year from the farm of the coal mines at Whickham, nor any from the leasing of the mines at Gateshead.⁴⁰ However, in 1418, the receipts from the approvers, or managers, of the Gateshead and Whickham mines were sent directly to the receiver-general, for whom accounts in these years do not survive. This was probably already the practice by 1416, and may have been done irregularly even in the 1380's: it is difficult to imagine there being no income at all from these mines, as is implied in 1385.

By 1409, the bishop had installed a governor for his mines at Whickham, who was, in that year, paid £133 7s. 10d. for building costs.⁴¹ This may have been partially intended to fund the sinking of a new mine, referred to in later accounts as the 'big pit'.⁴² The bishop's mines were generally being held in hand; no mention is made in the records of any new or ongoing leases. Indeed, it may have been that the bishop's investments into his mining endeavours, like that of 1409, were part of an attempt to attract new tenants. The evidence from previous decades certainly supports the assumption that leasing was a priority: by the end of the fourteenth century, the priory had long practised a policy of leasing, and the bishop seems to have wanted to revive the practice. By 1416, there was success: Bishop Langley had leased out his mines of Railey, Caldhurst, Hertkeld, Hetherlong, and Evenwood in south Durham to Ralph Eure, his steward, for £112 13s. 4d. per year. This agreement was reached on a long-term basis sometime after 1409.⁴³ Eure was a significant

⁴⁰CC 189809.

⁴¹CC 188714.

⁴²CC 189820.

⁴³CC 189809.

landholder in south Durham and North Yorkshire, and the most important political figure in the region, save those resident at Raby and Middleham. Interestingly, in 1408, Langley repaid Eure a loan of £133 6s. 8d., the same sum paid to the governor of the Whickham mines for maintenance and repairs.⁴⁴ It is quite possible that Langley borrowed that money for that purpose, and that this 'loan' became the basis for Eure's lease of the south Durham mines. Based on the healthy sums paid for them in the past, there is little doubt that these mines produced a significant income for their tenant, and the rent indicates an opening up of mining, and increased output, from these mines. Through leasing, then, Langley settled for a significant annual income, without the expense and effort involved in direct exploitation, and simultaneously brought the gentry back into Durham coal mining.

There is reason to believe that the leasing of the mines was in some way connected to the exercise of episcopal patronage. As noted above, the leasing of the south-Durham mines to Eure may have been part of Langley's repayment of an early loan. Certainly, that family had long been an important free tenant of the bishop in the palatinate: apart from Witton and lands around Bishop Auckland, Eure held the manors of Bitforth and Matwell - with 80 additional acres - and the villages of Hopland, Bradley, and Escombe, as well as significant portions of the villages of North and South Bedburn and Wolsingham.⁴⁵ Combined with their south Durham manors, and their North Yorkshire interests, these holdings provided them with a

⁴⁴CC 188714.

⁴⁵See the coroners' accounts for Darlington ward, i.e. CC 190212. Unfortunately, these do not survive for the years prior to 1443. See also Bishop Langley's Survey of 1418 in PRO S.C. 12/20/9, fos. 147-64.

significant presence in and around the town of Darlington.⁴⁶ Ralph Eure had been the steward of Durham for some years under Langley's predecessor, Walter Skirlaw, and he remained thus until his death in 1422. Storey is quite right to say that, whatever he may have thought of Eure personally, Langley could not afford to ignore his influence in Durham.⁴⁷

The Nevilles of Raby are another example of prominent free tenants undertaking the mining of coal in the later middle ages. Their early mining interests lay in the township of Winlaton, on the south bank of the Tyne near Whickham, which they held of the bishop, along with its mineral rights, for £20 a year.⁴⁸ Because this manor, like many others in north Durham, was a constituent manor of the Neville lordship of Brancepeth, their leasing of that township probably made sense geographically. Whether, however, any thought was originally given to the potential income from mining in the area is uncertain. This may have been an early example of the bishop granting a virtually hereditary tenure of a large coal site to a prominent local family, though it is not explicitly so. Mining was certainly well-established there by 1364, when the sheriff of Northumberland was instructed by the king to purchase 600 tons of coal for the clerk of the royal works, for use in lime burning in the construction taking place at Windsor Castle.⁴⁹ However, whether the grant of the tenure to the Nevilles anticipated any coal mining in the region is questionable. It is instructive, however, that this single fourteenth-century purchase,

⁴⁶PRO DURH 3/13, fos. 214-17; Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 103.

⁴⁷Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 102.

⁴⁸CC 189809, 189782, 189810.

⁴⁹Hatcher, *History of the British Coal Industry*, 26.

which cost the crown £47 17s. 8d.,⁵⁰ was close to the sums collected for rent on the largest Tyneside mines in some years; this may be one indication of the relative size of this early mine.⁵¹ The Nevilles, then, like Percies and the Eures, became active in north-eastern mining at a relatively early stage in the industry's development.

These long-term arrangements notwithstanding, terms of tenure varied significantly. Bishop Langley, generally sceptical of such things as grants and annuities for life,⁵² probably favoured, with notable exceptions,⁵³ shorter terms in the farming of his mines, such as the one granted to the free holder John Forester and his associates for mining privileges at Whickham in 1434/5.⁵⁴ While it is not possible to determine the exact terms of this lease, as it is not extant, it does not even seem to have run to as many as ten years. The farming of Whickham yielded £26 13s. 4d. that year, yet by 1438/9, that same sum was being collected by the bishop from a new group of lessees, namely William Talbot and his associates.⁵⁵ In south Durham, Eure held the Evenwood mines until his death in 1422. Thereafter, however, their leasing was undertaken on a more intermittent basis. In 1434/5, the south Durham mines produced no net income for the bishop, though this was the result of his assent to the holder's re-investment of the year's revenue for shaft

⁵⁰Fraser, 'North-East Coal Trade', 219.

⁵¹CC 189872, 189811.

⁵²Storey, *Thomas Langley*, *passim*.

⁵³As with the lease of the south Durham mines to Sir Ralph Eure.

⁵⁴CC 188686.

⁵⁵CC 189811.

repairs.⁵⁶ Four years later, the lessee of those mines, Thomas Duke, also withheld payment on his lease, due to repairs, as well as to certain 'extraordinary' circumstances that had arisen.⁵⁷ This period coincides with a severe economic crisis in the North-East, the result of a particularly severe outbreak of epidemic disease.⁵⁸ Whether these 'extraordinary' circumstances were related to, or to simple structural problems with the difficult process of mining itself -such as flooding - is unspecified. The outbreak certainly had an effect upon other economic activity in the region, and in the event of such significant social dislocation, Duke probably found his ability to mine and sell his product severely restricted. Along with labour shortages, he may also have faced a dampening of demand within the local coal market, which such high mortality may very well have produced. Because these south Durham mines probably sent much of their coal to North Yorkshire, and because that area was also hit hard by this economic crisis,⁵⁹ *some hardship among the miners is likely*. Commensurably, there was no income at all from the farming of the mines at Gateshead in 1438/9. While this may have been the result of the bishop holding the mines in hand, it should be noted that in the accounts for the years previous and those following, the Gateshead mines were leased, and they produced above-average rates of return in both cases;⁶⁰ the bishop, who preferred to lease this mine, held it in hand because he was unable to do so.

⁵⁶CC 188686.

⁵⁷CC 189811.

⁵⁸Arvanigian, 'Free Rents', 99.

⁵⁹P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Mortality and Economic Change in the Diocese of York, 1390-1514', *NH*, xxiv (1988), 49.

⁶⁰Receiver-general's accounts, 1434/5 (CC 188686), and 1453/4 (CC 189812).

This slump in mining activity in the late-1430's and early 1440's is especially striking considering the relative boom of the preceding decade. The late-1420's and early 1430's represented the high point in late-medieval coal mining in Durham, reaching a level that would not again be approached until the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Receipts on the bishop's estates reached £252 in 1427/8, an increase of nearly 20 per cent over those of 1424/5.⁶¹ In 1434, revenues fell back down to their 1424 level,⁶² but still represented a relative high water mark, when compared with those from these mines in the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries. Other evidence from around the palatinate tends to support the view that the late-20's and early-30's witnessed something of a coal mining boom. Durham Priory, though not involved in mining on the quite the same scale as the bishop, nevertheless maintained, from 1409-1419, a mean income of about £36 from Rainton, site of its most important mining operation.⁶³ In 1427, however, income from that site went to an all-time high of £59 13s. 7d. in 1427. Although the monks ultimately found this level of production to be unsustainable, income from that mine remained relatively high for the balance of the 1420's.⁶⁴

These trends in coal-mining revenues mirror trends in income as a whole: total receipts from the estates of the bishops and priors of Durham both reached their fifteenth-century apex in the 1420's. The bishop's income from his palatinate estates

⁶¹CC 190184, 189810.

⁶²The actual income was lower than that, but only because the bishop chose to reinvest that year's revenues from the farm of the south Durham mines for their improvement: CC 18686.

⁶³DCD, BAR, 1409-19.

⁶⁴*Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham*, ed. C. Fowler, iii, Surtees Society, 103 (1901), 708.

in late-1420's and early-1430's showed signs of abating the decline in income that had begun a century before,⁶⁵ and the income of the priory's bursar actually reached a twenty-year high in 1433, at over £1,555, about £100 higher than in most years from 1400-1450, and over £330 higher than it would be in 1438, the year of greatest economic disruption. The years 1427-1435 clearly represented a very strong period of economic activity in county Durham, and coal mining seems either to have contributed to, or been a product of, this development. It seems that the general condition of the local economy in the 1420's and 1430's bore a direct relation to the conditions under which coal was mined and sold, and therefore, to the conditions under which the mines could be leased.

In spite of the coal-mining successes of the bishop of Durham, the Nevilles, and other members of the palatinate's landed community, Lomas reminds us that the other great Durham landowner, the cathedral priory - which held most of the townships between Gateshead and the North Sea coast - did not begin to operate mines there until 1376, when a single pit was sunk at Nether Heworth. However, as noted above, the monks had established their own mining closer to home: after some years of purchasing coal from others, they began to mine of their own accord in the 1350's at West Rainton, and in the following decade at Ferryhill. Because the cathedral community often required as much as 200 chalders annually for its own use, and because of the relatively high cost of transporting coal, a premium was almost certainly placed on the relatively proximity of these sites to Durham City

⁶⁵Receiver's and receiver-general's accounts, PRO DURH, 20/114/8; CC 188686.

itself.⁶⁶ The consequences of this, however, may have proved costly over the longer term.

The relatively late start by the monastery in developing its sites left it some distance behind the Nevilles and bishop of Durham in realising the commercial potential of its coal mines. The pit at West Rainton, which seems to have been sunk around 1341, was its principal site in the later middle ages. After having been leased throughout the 1340's, it was taken back into hand in 1350, where it remained for twenty years; thereafter, it was put to farm, where it remained for the remainder of the century. The pattern of income from that mine indicates a slowing of demand. Having fetched up to £12 per year at farm in the 1340's,⁶⁷ and in the 1350's filled all the priory's coal needs - usually 100-250 chalders a year - and still provided it with an income of £15-25 from the sale of the remainder, the accounts of the bursar indicate that West Rainton was generally leased for around £5-10 per year from 1370-1395.⁶⁸ This is even more apparent when it is understood that the figures for the late fourteenth century include not only West Rainton, as they had in the 1350's, but also Ferryhill, site of a new pit sunk by the monks in the 1360's, and leased throughout the rest of the century.⁶⁹

Because the monastery used much of what it mined in the maintenance of its own community, the endeavour's commercial value had probably always been

⁶⁶Lomas, *Northeast England*, 199.

⁶⁷DCD, BAR, 1340-9.

⁶⁸Lomas, 'Durham Cathedral Priory as a Landowner', 135. This figure was to increase greatly in the fifteenth century, when the mines were once again taken back into hand. See DCD, BAR, 1410-40; and DCD, Bursar's Book 'F', fos. 20r, 28v-29v, and 30r-32v.

⁶⁹It remained at farm in 1396/7, for example, to John Atcock, for an unspecified amount. See *Durham Cathedral Priory Rentals*, 114.

somewhat secondary. Indeed, certain factors worked against their exploitation. For example, the monastery's chief mining sites were hampered by geography. R.B. Dobson has quite correctly pointed out that these mines suffered from a lack of access to commercial shipping points.⁷⁰ Aldingrange lay a few miles to the north-east of Durham City, some distance from the river Wear, and miles more from the Tyne with its access to the important trading centre of Newcastle. Rainton, downstream and to the north-east of Durham City, and Ferryhill, to the south-east of Durham City and further up Weardale, were also significant distances from Newcastle -or indeed Gateshead and Whickham - potential points of exit for coal shipments overseas, to the south of England, or to Scotland.⁷¹ While the coal may have exited the palatinate through the Wear, it certainly lacked the advantage of Tyneside mining for proximity to Newcastle shipping. These factors must certainly have hindered the monastery's ability to sell its product at anything like a competitive price, given the comparatively high cost of transport and the existence of other fuels competing with coal for use in the local market.⁷² However, as noted above, the proximity of these mines to the monastery's principal centre of activity, Durham City and its environs, left them well situated for its provision. Aldingrange, a coal site

⁷⁰Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 278.

⁷¹C. Platt, *Medieval Southampton: The Port and Trading Community, A.D. 1000-1600* (1973), 159.

⁷²For a discussion of the cost of coal and its transport in the middle ages, see Fraser, 'North-East Coal Trade', and G.V. Scammell, 'English Merchant Shipping at the End of the Middle Ages: Some East Coast Evidence', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 13 (1961), 327-41. On the cost and desirability of using coal, as against other available fuels, see Hatcher, 22-30; and A.D. Dyer, 'Wood and Coal: A Change of Fuels', *History Today*, 26 (1976).

developed in the early fifteenth century, lay very near the prior's country seat west of Durham City in Bearpark, and was well situated to provide it with coal.⁷³

In the last quarter of the fourteenth century, then, the priory, in marked contrast to the bishop, remained content to farm out its mining activities, though much of the product of that endeavour seems either to have been purchased or retained to support the monastic community. Thus, although the monks were less likely than the bishop to be subject to the fluctuations created by a contraction of long-distance markets - because of the differences in the locations of their mines and their general priorities regarding the endeavour - clearly they, and not the bishop or the Nevilles, certainly felt some contraction in the coal market in the late fourteenth century. Indeed, the end of the fourteenth century found them unable to realise a profit sufficient to justify holding the mines in hand - perhaps partly as a result of the prohibitive costs of transport - and led to their putting them to farm for relatively small sums. Original differences in mining strategy had their roots in the inherent differences between their owners; it is quite likely that the monks of Durham had always as their first priority provision for their community, including their cells and manors. By contrast, the bishop of Durham, and certainly the Nevilles and the burgesses of Newcastle, seem to have been more interested in developing the commercial potential of their sites from a relatively early date. This high level of interest in the commercial potential of sites coincided, as shown here, with a period of heightened demand in many quarters. Greatest advantage was taken by those of the landed and merchant classes who, at an early stage, recognised the commercial potential of coal mining, and moved to exploit it.

⁷³An agreement in 1399 between the prior and two tenants ensured such a provision. See Blake, 'Medieval Coal Trade', 22.

The prior of Durham settled on a rather different approach by the mid-fifteenth century. The particular combination of advantages offered by the priory's mines, such as their proximity to Durham City, proved sufficient for it to consistently find tenants for its largest mine, at Rainton, before 1435; it usually produced £20-30 of income in most years.⁷⁴ Clearly, however, the relatively long distances of the priory's mines from busy ports must have effected the convenience and commercial viability of selling and exporting their product. It is unsurprising, then, given some of the important inherent differences between the priory's mines and those of the bishop, that their interests in this area were somewhat different, by the middle of the fifteenth century. By the end of the 1450's, Durham priory's bursar, who administered the bulk of the prior's estates, had seen his income drop to £1,276 9s. 6d., down from an average of about £1,462 per year in the decade 1428-1438.⁷⁵ Income from coal, having maintained a relatively high level of about £40 per year in the early 1440's, fell to £32 5s. 3&1/2d. in 1451/2. In fact, there is reason to suspect that the bursar's coal revenue had fallen to roughly that level as early as 1444.⁷⁶ After this date, coal mining disappears from the bursar's accounts altogether, and after the early 1450's, there are no further extant accounts of the priory's governor of the mines. While Lomas does not take this to be a sign of the endeavour's ill health or inactivity,⁷⁷ it does seem that, by that date, the monks had recognised that the location of their pits, their maintenance, and the cost of transporting their product to

⁷⁴*Extracts from the Account Rolls*, 709-11.

⁷⁵DCD, BAR, 1428-38.

⁷⁶*Extracts from the Account Rolls*, 712-13.

⁷⁷Lomas, *Northeast England*, 200-1.

a suitable export point made large-scale commercial exploitation of coal impractical. This is borne out by the fact that the prior did not farm out the mining of coal on his estates for anything approaching the sums realised by the bishop from that activity. It is unreasonable to expect that any potential lessees of the priory's mines would have been better-able to overcome the same difficulties in working the mines for a profit than had the monks.

Certain conclusions can be drawn from the coal mining industry in the period of most concern to this dissertation, 1380-1413. First, a competent group of entrepreneurial members of the landed community emerged in the late-fourteenth century. Men like Sir Ralph Eure, John and Ralph Neville, William Blakeston and Roger Fulthorp, who became involved in coal early in this period, helped this and subsequent bishops of Durham develop the commercial potential of mining in the palatinate. The comparison with the priory adequately demonstrates the alternative, non-commercial approach. Fordham's final victory over the Newcastle burgesses over shipping rights certainly helped to open up south Tyneside mining, and the redoubling of investment by Bishop Langley early in his tenure attracted the gentry back to the industry, following an intermittent period of the lord holding his mines in hand, and managing them directly. In political terms, coal also provided the bishops of Durham with yet another source of patronage. Roger Fulthorp, the chief justice, gained his mines on good terms; while Ralph Eure was induced into lending money to the bishop before gaining his mines in Evenwood. The stature of the Nevilles of Raby - particularly after 1399, but certainly also before - guaranteed their coal-mining endeavours, even within the bishop's own important mining centres on south Tyneside. It seems that there were few areas of human endeavour in the North-East that had no political dimension, particularly in this most contentious era of shifting

power structures and allegiances: after 1399, coal mining was yet another instance of the Lancastrian establishment patronising its own followers, while simultaneously aiding in the industry's commercial development.

Conclusions

The North-East's landed community was a dynamic and a diverse one, and was closely connected to the events of high politics in this period of national upheaval. This proximity explains, to some degree, the temporal orientation of this research. Any work which tries to understand the makeup of the North-East's landed community, and the workings of its landlord economy, would probably be more easily undertaken in the later fifteenth century, because the survival rate of the Durham records is much higher for that period than the one dealt with here. However, two factors make this period attractive for study. The first, and most pragmatic, is that the North-East's aristocracy and gentry generally, and the Neville family particularly, have already been discussed in some detail for the years surrounding the Wars of the Roses. The early work of R.L. Storey, concentrating on the borders and the Nevilles in the North after 1425, has been followed up by a number of others, who have researched the 'origins' of the mid-fifteenth century upheavals.¹ Chief among these has been the work of C.D. Ross, who has written about these issues in a number of contexts, including major biographies of Edward IV and Richard III, and studies of the Wars of the Roses themselves; and lately, A.J. Pollard, who has written not only on the conflict, but on the North-East specifically in this period. The second reason for choosing this period, alluded to above, was the existence of rather obvious relationships between those whom I knew to be important in the region, and those at the centre of national affairs. In some cases, these groups were not distinct: the earl of Westmorland was himself a man of the North-East, yet

¹Storey, *End of the House of Lancaster*.

he was a critical figure in Richard's, then Henry's, government. The fertility of the national political scene for investigation, and the clear of connections between national politics and this region, made this a natural target for an examination of local society within the context of larger political forces.

The gentry and aristocracy of the North-East in this period were not, however, tied particularly closely to the region's great magnates. This is somewhat surprising, and seems to contradict the spirit of the work done by J.M.W. Bean and J.A. Tuck, which has so heavily emphasised the Percies especially in affairs of state and regional politics, especially prior to 1399. Indeed, as I have shown, orthodox thinking has been that the Percies, through their special standing as the only family capable of ruling the far north, not only dictated foreign policy, but also to a significant degree drove domestic affairs. This subsequently remained the case, it has been supposed, in the first years of Henry's reign, but their ambitions seemed to overreach their actual capabilities, and they failed in their second attempt at king-making in 1403. I have argued a very different case: that the Percy revolts were a reaction to the creation, from the very first years of Henry's reign, of a new political order, which had as its key component a new order in the North, centred around the earl of Westmorland and a capable north-eastern gentry, led by Sir Ralph Eure, who were fiercely loyal to Henry, and not the Percies.

Most critical among the North-East's political elite in the period 1380-1413 was Ralph Neville, first earl of Westmorland. I have argued strenuously that his connection to the house of Lancaster, and subsequent role in government during their reign, has been drastically underestimated. In the early years of Henry IV's reign, precious few magnates could be counted as true royal supporters. Especially following the revolt of 1400, many honourable families were headed by minors;

others were not hostile, not had they supported Henry in his bid for the throne. Many, of course, became trustworthy in later years, but Henry's council and early officers of state reveal the degree to which he was unable to rely on men of high status in his government. Among men of comital rank, only Northumberland and Westmorland could be counted initially as loyal; Worcester's status in Richard's household obviously had an affect on Henry's view of him from the very start. Yet from the first days of Henry's reign, a northern policy which centred around the Nevilles was in evidence. As the period 1400-1403 also indicates, this policy did not include the Percies; indeed, they were clearly seen not as the solution to, but the source of northern instability. From the lessons of his predecessor, Henry seems always to have understood the need for a loyal, stable north, one for which he did not rely on the Percies. This had proven to be a source of real unrest for King Richard, and Henry therefore sought to reform the North, even as he began to rebuild the highest social strata with Lancastrians.

Much of what I have said here requires a fresh understanding of national political events. For example, Henry's first parliament, in 1401, has been viewed by scholars as the instigator of a constitutional crisis, and much has been made of the legal and constitutional implications of this confrontation. A. Rogers has suggested that it was essentially a struggle between Henry IV and the commons which had been brought about by the king's ruling style in the first 18 months of his reign.² Over that period, Henry ruled the country largely through the household, which he had quite naturally populated overwhelmingly with men who had served either he, his father, or both, before his own rise to the throne. Along with the costs associated with the

²A. Rogers, 'The Political Crisis of 1401', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, xii (1968), 85-86, 89-90.

usurpation itself, this resulted in a personal financial crisis for the king. Henry's eventual need to go to parliament for money precipitated its own assertion of the constitutional principle that the commons should place conditions upon the spending of any moneys granted to the crown. The notion that a king should live by his own means was a strong one, and, as in the reign of Richard II, the commons in 1401 took the opportunity to attempt to exercise sway by reforming the household, in an attempt to place within it certain men of its own choosing. Both Rogers and Chrimes have argued that historians have misread this episode, and that it was indicative of a major constitutional struggle between the two branches of government.

However, closer scrutiny reveals many interesting, and in many ways telling, details about this episode. What emerges is that, while a struggle between the commons and crown over principles of governance must certainly have taken place, at its heart this was a struggle for power and influence between the Beaufort/Neville faction and that of the Percies. The Percies had, by this time, become disillusioned with the direction of English policy, especially with regard to their own aspirations in Scotland, and were fearful of the growing influence of the earl of Westmorland with Henry and in the North. Letters from the Percies to the king and council reveal a growing discontent with the direction of policy; this included not only payment for their troops in the far north, but those in North Wales, as well.³ They also harboured a belief that, in their absence, their rivals had begun a campaign of propaganda designed to discredit them; only in 1403 does Northumberland respond to a rumour that the crown had already paid them £60,000, which seems for some time to have

³*Proceedings and Ordinances*, i, 151-54.

been widely circulated.⁴ There is every reason to suppose that such allegations were being made in 1400-1, given the regularity and desperation of Hotspur's letters to council, which began shortly after the Conwy Castle incident. The allegations and anti-Percy feeling around Henry may have been designed to counter the argument that old Lancastrians had overmuch influence with the crown, by showing Henry's indebtedness to the Percies, and thus diverting attention from what can only be described as his Lancastrian household.

The spectre of an ever-growing Neville threat to the thus-far unique influence of the Percies in the North was apparent from the first days of the new king's reign. The key Neville acquisition was the honour of Richmond in 1399, which had actively been sought by the Percies. Thomas Percy, earl of Worcester, had lobbied for its inclusion in the grants made to the Percies in the heady days following Henry's accession to the throne, but without avail. Instead, Westmorland was made earl of Richmond for life, a grant which cemented his hegemony in Durham and North Yorkshire. From there, the Nevilles expanded their influence from their now-fortified northern strongholds of Durham and North Yorkshire into territories traditionally associated with Percy rule, namely Cumbria and Northumberland. Henry's grant to the earl of Westmorland of the marshalcy, and his acquisition of Wark, Bamburgh, and various estates in Northumberland, including estates in Norhamshire and Bedlingtonshire (lands controlled by the bishop of Durham), must have caused a certain amount of consternation in Percy quarters, even very early in Henry's reign.

⁴*Proceedings and Ordinances*, i, 204.

Although his discussion of the events of 1401-2 is broadly accurate, Rogers' assessment of the baronial relationships which he describes - the most important of which being the tripartite one between the Nevilles, Percies, and Henry - is not. By acknowledging the close relationship between the Nevilles and Henry, via the past service of John and Ralph Neville to the king's father, and Westmorland's close association with the Beaufort clan, a re-interpretation of the motives of the Percies follows logically. Their antipathy toward the royal household was based largely upon the implicit understanding that their great rival in the North, Westmorland, was a *de facto* part of that household, even as he remained aloof from its proceedings. In a sense, the Percies understood better than anyone that the continued rise of the Nevilles at their expense, was becoming something of an inevitability under the present administration. If they thought they could reverse the advance of the Nevilles by supporting Bolingbroke in 1399 and raising their position in government, their disillusionment was very rapid. As I have shown above, Ralph Neville was a key member of the Lancastrian circle. His support was everywhere assumed by the king, and he was relentlessly rewarded throughout this period of supposed baronial conflict with the king. Thus, having taken note of the success of the Neville encroachments into Percy areas of influence, and their close relationship with the house of Lancaster, the Percies may have begun to feel threatened by this king.

Dr. Given-Wilson's thorough study of the household and its place in royal government rightly identifies two officers as critical in the household: the chamberlain of the household - or under-chamberlain - and the steward of the

household.⁵ The position of under-chamberlain was probably the most sensitive, for two reasons. First, the under-chamberlain was the knight of the household who effectively controlled both written and personal access to the king.⁶ More than that, however, the controversial history of the position of under-chamberlain - held famously by the Despensers in the reign of Edward II, and then by the ill-fated Simon Burley, and later by the much-maligned Scropes under Richard II - meant that it attracted considerable attention from political onlookers. Much of the substance of the criticism aimed at those who served in this capacity was ironically that they wielded too much influence with the king; yet the nature of this office in the later middle ages, as outlined by Given-Wilson, is one which virtually requires its holder to be a close friend of the king, and that he take responsibility for access to his person.⁷ The conditions of such service naturally made the appointment of a personal friend of the king natural, where politically possible, and virtually ensured the allegations from at least some quarters of that official having too much influence with the king. Following in the tradition of his ill-fated predecessors, Henry named as his under-chamberlain his closest friend and ally, Sir Thomas Erpingham, who had been his companion in England and abroad, and a servant of the duchy for most of his adult life. In 1401, even the Percies and the commons could have held little hope of his removal from the household.

However, parliament was successful in replacing the king's other most senior household servant, the steward. The steward of the household, as his title suggests,

⁵Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 71.

⁶Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 72.

⁷Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 71-73.

was responsible for its efficient running, and with oversight of the activities of all of its other officers, save those of the under-chamberlain. Thus, the replacement of Sir Thomas Rempston with Thomas Percy, earl of Worcester, as steward of the household, was probably the most critical to emerge from the political crisis of 1401.⁸ Rempston was one of Henry's closest associates, and was a member of his household as earl of Derby, and was a long-serving Lancastrian. His name, along with those of Erpingham and Richard, Lord Grey of Codnor, became most closely associated with Henry throughout his career as monarch.⁹ Worcester, on the other hand, was the younger brother of the earl of Northumberland, whom even Rogers concedes was the baronial muscle behind these commons petitions.¹⁰ His title and fortune were the product not only of his high birth, but perhaps more importantly of his long service to Richard II's household. He was retained by the king around 1378, and became a knight of Richard's chamber in 1390. In that same year he became the king's under-chamberlain, a position he held until 1393, when he became steward of the household; he remained in that capacity to the end of Richard's reign.¹¹ Indeed, other changes in the high offices of state in that year tell a similar story. The appointment of Edmund Stafford, bishop of Exeter, as chancellor, was also a return to Ricardian government; he had been chancellor from 1396-9, after serving as keeper of the privy seal for some eight years prior. The appointment of Thomas

⁸R.L. Storey, 'English Officers of State', *BIHR*, xxxi (1958), 83-84. The others are outlined in Rogers, 'Political Crisis', 87-88.

⁹Grey was Henry's under-chamberlain from 1404-13. Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, Appendix VI, 287.

¹⁰Rogers, 'Political Crisis', 95.

¹¹Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, Appendix V, 283.

More and Thomas Brounflete to the offices of treasurer and controller of the household, respectively, also indicated parliament's, and perhaps the Percies', preference of old Ricardians over new Lancastrians: all of the new appointments were in office at the time of Henry's usurpation.¹² The surrender of the stewardship of the royal household in particular to the Percies in 1401, and the further re-appointment of other members of Richard II's government, marked a significant setback in Henry's efforts to cement his own will in the affairs of state. A.L. Brown has taken issue with the interpretation of Rogers regarding Worcester's appointment to the stewardship. He does not view it as the victory of any faction over any other. However, this is the result of a fundamentally flawed framing of this conflict by Rogers. Worcester's appointment was not primarily a victory for a 'magnate faction,' nor for the parliamentary faction which sought to rid the household of its Lancastrian dominance, though I have no doubt that both of these motivations were genuinely felt by some. It was also not, at its core, a genuine attempt by Henry to provide the realm with better governance, as Brown has posited.¹³ At its heart, this episode was a momentary victory for the Percies, using the parliament as a stalking horse, over the combined efforts of the Lancastrian political elite to minimise their influence.

Rogers argues that, given the pattern of recruitment and appointments within the household, by the end of 1402, the king, queen, Beauforts and Nevilles had closed ranks to protect the royal prerogative from the incursions of the commons, and re-populated the critical offices of state with long-serving friends and allies of the king. He also admits that the real baronial power behind the commons challenge of

¹²Rogers, 'Political Crisis', 86.

¹³Brown, 'Reign of Henry IV', 10.

the king, and the reformation of the household in 1401, was the Percies. It is they who prospered most from these changes, and they who found themselves at greatest pains at its (unsatisfactory) conclusion in 1402. However, what has been missed here is the subtlety of the relationships between the major baronial players. There will have been little need to unite the Beauforts and Nevilles in addressing this issue: this had long since been established through the connection between Ralph Neville and John of Gaunt, and cemented by his marriage to Joan Beaufort. Westmorland was bound to the house of Lancaster by his long career of service to it, as well as that of his father; both were trusted members of the retinue of John of Gaunt, and Westmorland joined Henry at Doncaster in 1399. In addition, the growing antipathy between the Percies and the Nevilles led to even clearer distinctions between those who were 'in', and those who were not. This 'constitutional crisis' was instead a struggle between the Lancastrian old guard and the forces aligned with the earl of Northumberland over control of the soul of the English government. It seems that the Percies had sought to use parliament to curb the influence of old Lancastrians, and Neville, himself an old Lancastrian, again aligned himself with the king. This crisis was in fact the first sign of Percy discord with Henry, and, perhaps more than anything, reflects their own political expectations in 1399.

This conflict aptly illustrates the developing political order following Henry's accession to the crown, and also demonstrates the central role of the North-East in it. The landed community in the region responded positively to this new political order, not only because it was spearheaded by the Nevilles, but perhaps also because of their own financial shortfalls. Bean has demonstrated that the Percy estates in Northumberland declined in value as the fifteenth century wore on, and there is substantial evidence from the studies of other notable landowners in the North-East

that this trend was widely felt, and that it dated from the fourteenth century.¹⁴ In addition, certain other evidence - from, for example, the Grey estates - reveals that not only were some lands declining in value over the long term, they were also, subject to the affects of Scottish border raids, and less-frequently, open warfare. There is, therefore, rather strong evidence that the region's gentry became politicised in this period. Often, this took the form of identifying one's self closely with one of the great baronial houses, typically the Percies or the Nevilles, but in the North-East, there was also the option of royal service. Sir Thomas Grey was just such a man: by the late 1390's, he seems to have identified the Nevilles as a family fast on the rise, and consciously chose to join with them, rather than his Percy neighbours. The policy openly advocated by the earl of Northumberland - northern expansion - was not in the interests of men like the Greys, whose lands were of little value in an unstable border region - but who did not have the royal salaries and overarching ambition of the Percies as compensation - and whose potential gains from the success of expansion into southern Scotland was limited anyway by the rapacity of the Percies. In such circumstances, it is unsurprising that Grey aligned himself with a great family, and equally unsurprising that he did so with the Nevilles rather than the Percies.

Perhaps the case of Sir Richard Heron indicates most clearly reasons for the potential unwillingness of some Northumbrian knights to cling to the Percy retinue. Sir Richard Heron of Ford, Northumberland, was one of the most prominent landowners in the region in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. In 1387, he petitioned parliament for redress for the injuries done to him by the Scots, and for the

¹⁴Bean, *Estates of the Percy Family*; Lomas, 'Durham Priory as a Landowner', Appendix; Storey, *Thomas Langley*, esp. 69-71.

£600 in damages done to his lands. He complained that, having made a retaliatory raid over the border, the earl of Northumberland compelled him to make restitution to those injured, and promised him compensation for his own losses. However, far from gaining restitution, he was imprisoned at Newcastle Castle, and during his imprisonment, his own house at Ford had been attacked and plundered by a local rival, Robert Ogle. There is no evidence that Heron ever gained redress from the authorities - the Percies - for his troubles, not any reason to believe that a satisfactory conclusion was reached. This case highlights not only the potential lawlessness afoot in the region - which was, after all, part of the explanation for Percy influence there - but also the disaffection which the Percies sometimes engendered, in their heavy-handed treatment of local interests.

The Percies were not, of course, completely without success in binding Northumbrian knights to them. Middleton,¹⁵ Lilburn,¹⁶ Swinburn,¹⁷ Monboucher,¹⁸ Felton¹⁹ - all were landowners of some standing in Northumberland, and were associated with the Percies in this period. As the wardens of the marches, and with their vast wartime resources to spread as patronage amongst the Northumbrian gentry, this was inevitable. In some years - indeed, over some

¹⁵Sir John Middleton of Belsay was pardoned by Henry for rising in rebellion with the earl of Northumberland. *CPR, 1405-1408*, 76-77.

¹⁶The earl of Northumberland acted as godfather to one of his sons, Thomas.

¹⁷Sir William Swinburn (who had also been a servant of John of Gaunt) served variously as Hotspur's seneschal and receiver at Denbigh, and later in Wales as his constable of Beaumaris castle.

¹⁸After having borrowed and defaulted on a number of loans, his debts were finally secured around 1382 by the Percies.

¹⁹Sir John Felton of Edlingham, Northumberland, and Durham, fought under the banner of the Percies at the battle of Otterburn.

decades - the wartime salaries of the Percies and Nevilles, in their capacities as wardens of the marches, must have represented one of the region's primary sources of income. Henry IV certainly made a point of paying the salaries of his wardens following the demise of the Percies.²⁰ It seems that the money drawn north from the crown by these families provided a sort of early jobs program, employing those in the defence of the region who might, in more peaceful circumstances, have been employed in other sectors of the economy, principally, though not exclusively, on the land. The £40 salary drawn by Sir William Elmeden, for example, in his capacity as constable of Bamburgh castle, was surely of greater value to him than his estates in Northumberland and Durham (his home county). In addition, while this was indeed a period of rapid expansion of the coal industry - with Newcastle quickly coming to the fore - traditional exploitation of agricultural lands still dominated the economy.²¹ Thus, in a region of depressed land values, only the wages of a soldier, or those paid by the crown for the holding of a royal office in the region, could suitably substitute.²² As primary arbiters of the region's defence, the Percies naturally drew men to their standard. Given their remuneration by the Henry for the force which they were able to bring to bear in 1399, and the difficulty in extricating the earl of Northumberland from the region following the events at Shrewsbury in 1403, these associations seem to have been quite strong, and served them very well.

²⁰*CPR 1401-1405*, 372, and esp. 408.

²¹For the growth of the coal industry, and the trade that accompanied it, see above.

²²Examples of deeply depressed land values in Northumberland, and indeed in Cumberland, can be found scattered throughout the *Cal IPM, 1399-1405* and *Cal IPM 1405-1413*. Most make plain the reason: Scottish raids.

The most important member of the North-East's political elite outside of the Neville family was Sir Ralph Eure of Witton. He served in every conceivable high office in the North, and was instrumental in finally suppressing the Percies in the North. Eure was relied upon by not only the crown for his services in Yorkshire and Northumberland, but by the bishop of Durham, as well, for his long service as palatine steward. Eure was also a landowner of some note in North Yorkshire, Northumberland, and especially Durham, and as such, was that unusual combination of significant wealth, *formidable talent, and great political acumen*. *In spite of the* fact that he did not actively support the Lancastrians in 1399, he seems to have made sure that Durham remained quietly neutral. *As a servant to the new king, he was* indispensable, and played an especially active role in the decisive quelling of Scrope's Rebellion in 1405.²³ His talents were put to good use by the crown and the bishop throughout his career, and at one stage seemed to be serving as sheriff of North Yorkshire and Northumberland simultaneously, while also remaining steward of Durham. He was obviously one of the crown's key figures in its establishing a new political order in the North-East.

The genesis of this new political order was, of course, the house of Lancaster itself. In his recent study, Simon Walker has shown that most of John of Gaunt's retinue campaigned with him abroad at some stage, and that many did so on more than one occasion, as in the case of John Neville.²⁴ This is understandable, given that Gaunt was an English prince of the royal blood, with a number of important claims on the Continent - particularly in southern France and Castille. At one point,

²³See above.

²⁴Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, Appendix I, 262-84.

he was even forwarded as the potential leader of an expedition to the Holy Land - to the extent that a concrete crusading proposal was considered and supported by the Papacy - to be led by he and the duke of Burgundy. His retaining reflects this singularity of purpose: most retainers were paid in cash. However, these sums seem to have emanated from his substantial English estates: fees were distributed from his receiverships of Leicester, Knaresborough, Pontefract, and Dunstanburgh. Thus, much of the cost of maintaining Gaunt's retinue was borne conventionally, and did not come from outside sources, such as grants of the customs duties from one or another of England's ports, or one of Gaunt's many salaries, which he collected at the exchequer.

It is true, however, that the core defining feature of Bastard Feudalism was the simple existence of these standing bodies of retainers. The very fact that the relationship between lord and vassal was no longer strictly tenurial, and that land itself - perhaps as early as the first half of the fourteenth century - had ceased to be the medium of exchange for services rendered, in exchange for baronial patronage, is critical. Richard II surrounded himself with a vast section of the gentry eager to advance their interests. Some of the more influential of these were hostile to the war in France, then largely being prosecuted by the King's uncle, the duke of Gloucester. In fact, it was with Gloucester and the earls of Warwick and Arundel - the Appellants - that those who sought the war's continuation found their greatest allies. However, with Bolingbroke came a change in the political climate. Henry stocked his household with professional soldiers, many of whom fought with his father. These knights found themselves well-done by the war with France, which had helped a number of them rise socially and financially. Many were able to convert the annual sums paid for the holding of offices - and the spoils of war - into land, and thus, into

annual incomes. Sir John Fastolf famously turned a successful military career - largely underwritten by the crown - into one of land-owning prosperity at home, converting his wartime successes into estates in England.

In some rather intriguing cases, generally involving members of the aristocracy, noble birth and proficiency in battle could be a formidable mix: capable soldiers of sufficiently high birth could thereby hold high military and administrative offices in regions of conflict for relatively high salaries. John, Lord Neville, served variously as treasurer of the household, captain of Calais, and warden of the west march with Scotland. He was able to do so based on the peculiar circumstances of his career: he is thought to have had great military prowess, which he combined with his family's vast influence in the North and a close relationship with the crown and others at court. These attributes led not only to his rise to prominence in the royal household, but also to his ascent in the Lancastrian court as a retainer of John of Gaunt. He became one of a handful of core Lancastrian supporters of his generation to wield influence not only as a prominent retainer, but as a magnate in their own right. His relationship with Gaunt often proved as functionally important as that with the crown, as in the case of the payment of a royal debt of £1,000 owed him by the treasury for his service in France, one almost certainly engineered by Gaunt. However, it is also certain that Neville's appointment to the offices of Warden of the Marches and Keeper of the Truce with Scotland was dependent upon his landed wealth and influence in the North. As lord of Middleham and Sheriff Hutton in Yorkshire, and Raby and Brancepeth in Durham, his authority in these regions was surely great, and his appointment to the marches a logical one, based on this ability to raise and maintain local support for his position. Nonetheless, his cultivation of the Lancastrian connection did him little harm: his potential ability to call on Gaunt's

resources and good lordship probably gained him greater favour with a crown which was, after all, without significant estates north of the Trent.

A more famous example of such advantage being taken of military proficiency is that of Sir Henry Percy - known as Hotspur - son of the first earl of Northumberland. The ablest soldier of his day, he successfully maintained the king's peace in Northumberland, as well as the Welsh Marches. It had been Richard II's great hope that, in attaining peace with France, the Percies could be excluded from royal authority on the Scottish border. However, so entrenched were the Percies in the region that no other magnate, save perhaps the lords of Middleham, could guarantee order there. The cost of maintaining the northern border could run in excess of £20,000 per year in times of open warfare, money which Richard found it necessary to pay the Percies and Nevilles. Ironically, because the wardship of the marches were essentially paid to maintain a standing army, Hotspur, Northumberland and Westmorland all used the money paid them by Richard to aid the usurper Bolingbroke in 1399. Thus, the effective retaining of certain members of the aristocracy - as well as the gentry - can be said to have had varying attributes, depending upon the needs, resources, and abilities of the individual retainer. For the Percies and Nevilles, who already had sufficient local support and military prowess to maintain the borders, only the recognition of the crown, and appointment of them to royal offices, remained to be settled. For the Percies, a peculiar blend of geographical realities and military competency was irresistible. For the Nevilles, the good lordship of the duke of Lancaster proved indispensable to their rise to border pre-eminence.

'Good lordship', at its core, was the use of influence by a lord on his vassal's behalf. This is not, however, so concrete a principle as might first be imagined. No

specific act of service by a vassal would elicit a reaction from his lord. The relationship did, however, have a vague, but certain, market value attached to it. If a vassal failed to receive what seemed to him to be a reasonable amount of patronage from his lord, he could re-align himself with another. John Hutton, who seems at one time to have been within the Percy affinity, was among the earl of Westmorland's closest Durham retainers in the early fifteenth century, presumably having become unsatisfied with his master's performance on his behalf. The case in the fifteenth century of the Northumbrian knight Robert Ogle, who seems to have danced among the retinues of the Nevilles and Percies, while holding high office for the bishop of Durham and sitting on various royal commissions, aptly illustrates the fluidity of these retaining schemes. It was this very fact which so confuses the issues involved in the events of 1399: many of the key figures in Henry Bolingbroke's success, including York and Westmorland, had only recently been key figures in royal service, heavily patronised by the crown. In all probability, Westmorland's loyalty to the king also contained an element of principled loyalty.

Given the general burdens of good lordship, the increase in the number of standing retainers carried by various barons of comital rank in the later middle ages, and the general trend in this period of depressed land values - especially in the North-East - it is unsurprising that certain of the region's magnates became rapacious in the pursuit of land in the fifteenth century. The region's most important monastic landowner, Durham Cathedral Priory, acquired some estates, particularly in Northumberland, as a means of offsetting declining tithe revenues. Moreover, once new lands had been acquired, landlords were increasingly inclined to farm them out to tenants, often freeholders or members of local gentry. By the mid-fifteenth century, the bishop of Durham's demesne was being farmed out to a smaller number

of free tenants than it had been in the 1380's. A similar trend seems to have been at work on the Percy estates. Members of the gentry, often as a result of cash payments from this lord or that, found themselves increasingly able to acquire land, either buying it themselves or, as in this case, taking out leases. In either case, lands could either be sublet or held to hand, depending upon the holder's perceived ability to turn a profit larger than any potential rents available to him. Leasing became the preferred choice of great landowners in the late-medieval North, who had become increasingly interested in the acquisition of the cash necessary for paying retainers and amassing influence.

Thus, in spite of the new commercial ventures and office holding of the region's political elites, land remained the most reliable foundation on which to base strong political action. The estates of the duchy of Lancaster provided Henry Bolingbroke with much of the influence and support necessary for his usurpation, while the vast estates of the bishop of Durham and Ralph Neville, earl of Westmorland - bolstered by the immense grants made to him especially by Henry IV - were largely responsible for the securing of the Lancastrian regime in the volatile North. Much important support for Bolingbroke's campaign in the summer of 1399 came from his father's retainers; Westmorland, for example, Gaunt's single most expensive retainer at 500 marks per year, was early to Henry's side with an army in that year. Because the duke paid his retainers with income derived from his estates, he was able to secure them even in death: his will awarded lands to Neville yielding an identical sum to the one he received in the duke's own lifetime. In this way, Gaunt virtually handed down key members of his retinue, like Ralph Neville, to his son - much as he did his estates. Westmorland, in turn, was not only grantor of annuities, but landlord, to a number of his followers. The same was true of the

Percies, and most of the officers of the bishopric of Durham, even after Langley's reforms, were also the bishop's tenants. In this way, tenure remained a key component of the political structure of the North-East in this period. However, it is also apparent that other ties perhaps mattered more at the highest levels of political society. The relationships formed in the lifetime of John of Gaunt led directly to the largely-northern composition of Bolingbroke's army, the lack of northern support given to Richard II in that struggle, and to the formation of a Lancastrian matrix in the North thereafter - which eventually led to the creation of a Lancastrian North under Henry IV which did not require the active governing role of the Percies.

APPENDIX I

The following is a list of secular ministers found in the records of the palatinate of Durham, c.1380-1430. They are divided by occupation. The first column shows the year of their mention in the records, the second their name, and the third their fee, where it has been indicated. All citations occur in the Durham records, located either in the Church Commission collection (Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections), the Public Record Office, or the Dean and Chapter Muniments, Durham (these appear in parentheses). I have also made use of the *Thirty-Third Report of the Deputy Keeper* in compiling these lists.

Steward*

1385 Ralph Eure
1388 Thomas Grey
1391 Ralph Eure
1422 Thomas Holden
1427 Thomas Holden

*Fee of £40.

Sheriff & Escheator

1375 William Elmeden (DCD 1.5 Pont., 16)
1379 William Bowes (DCD 1.11 Pont., 11)
1386 William Bowes
1390 Marmaduke Lumley

- 1391 Thomas Boynton
- 1400 Robert Conyers
- 1401 Robert Conyers
- 1406 Percival Lindeley
- 1416 William Claxton
- 1417 William Claxton (DCD 1.10 Pont., 10)
- 1420 Robert Eure
- 1424 Robert Eure
- 1434 Robert Eure
- 1436 William Bowes
- 1438 Robert Ogle

Constable & Receiver

- 1383 William Elmeden (50 marks)
- 1385 William Elmeden (50 marks)
- 1391 Thomas Weston (DCD 1.6 Pont., 7) [also constable/receiver?]
- 1393 Robert Wyclif
- 1413 William Chancellor
- 1416 William Chancellor (£40)
- 1418 William Chancellor (£40)
- 1424 William Chancellor (£40)
- 1427 William Chancellor (£40)
- 1434 William Chancellor (£40)

Chancellor

- 1391 Thomas Weston (DCD 1.6 Pont., 7) [also constable/receiver?]
 1440 Robert Beaumont

Receiver-General

- 1416 John Newton
 1418 John Newton
 1424 Richard Buckley
 1427 Richard Buckley
 1440 Robert Beaumont

Treasurer of the Household

- 1375 John Henley (DCD 1.5 Pont., 16)
 1385 John Burgess
 1424 John Radcliffe
 1427 John Radcliffe

Parkers

- 1382 John Betenson (Evenwood)
 1385 William Fetherstanhalgh, Robert Emerson (Stanhope)
 1385 Robert Skepper (Franklin)
 John Middleton (Chabington)
 1386 William Stubbes (Franklin)
 1388 Robert Stertell (Whickham)

- 1390 John Buckley (Birtley, near. Auckland)
 1396 William Atkinson (Fenwick)
 1403 Hugh Hall (Gateshead)
 1403 William Melot (Birtley) [granted to him by Wm. Stubbes]

Commissioners of Array

- 1382 William Bowes, William Fulthorp, Thomas Bland, Alan Lambard,
 John Headlam, John Ferroure, Henry Pillock (Sadberge).
 --William Bowes, William Elmeden, Gilbert Elvet, Walter Hawyk,
 John Clayton, Thomas Menville, Robert Hesilrigg (Easington).
 --Ralph Eure, William Bowes, Thomas Claxton, Richard Chamberlain,
 William Morley, Thomas Fetherstanhalgh, John Teesdale, John Middleton
 (Darlington).
 --William Fulthorp, Gilbert Elvet, William Blakeston, Thomas Elmeden,
 Gilbert Hutton (Stockton).
 1385 Robert Laton, William Blakeston, Thomas Hartlepool (Stockton).
 --Ralph Eure, Thomas Claxton, William Blakeden, John Billy
 (Darlington).
 --William Elmeden, Alan Billingham, John Lewyn (Durham City).
 1386 Thomas Bland, Alan Lambard, John Headlam (Sadberge).
 1388 Ralph Lumley, Marmaduke Lumley, William Bowes, William
 Wessington, Thomas Motherby, William Lambton, Gilbert Eglin, William
 Chester (Chester).
 1406 William Claxton, William Blakeston, Thomas Brownflete, Thomas
 Elmeden, Thomas Fulthorp, Robert Jackson (Easington).

1408 Ralph Eure, Thomas Surtees, Robert Conyers, John Killinghall, John Hutton (Darlington).

--William Fulthorp, Marmaduke Lumley, William Blakeston, William Claxton, John Morton (Stockton).

--William Hilton, William Tempest, Robert Umfraville, William Chester, William Billingham (Chester).

--John Lumley, William Lambton, Thomas Elmeden, Robert Jackson (Easington).

1414 Ralph Eure, Robert Conyers, Robert Strangeways, John Hutton, William Fetherstanhalgh, Thomas Emerson, William Eltoft, John Gentill, John Monkton, Robert Belasis (Darlington).

--William Hilton, William Tempest, William Bowes, William Lambton, William Lumley, John Carnaby, John Birtley, John Guildford, John Botterell, Richard Cowherd (Chester).

--Thomas Surtees, Robert Conyers, Henry Tailboys, Robert Brountoft, John Killinghall, John Vescy, John Monkton, John Dawney, Thomas Merley, Adam Corres (Sadberge).

1417 Robert Carlisle, William Huddleston, Robert Jackson, William Lambton (Easington).

--William Claxton, Thomas Lambert, Thomas Langton, John Morton, Thomas Coke (Stockton).

--William Fulthorp, Thomas Surtees, Henry Tailboys, John Vescy, John Goldsmith (mayor of Hartlepool), Thomas Merley (Sadberge).

Coroners

<u>Year</u>	<u>Darlington</u>	<u>Chester</u>	<u>Easington</u>	<u>Stockton</u>
1382	John Billy	Gilbert Eglin		
1388	John Middleton		Robert Skelton	
1390	Richard Fetherstanhalgh			
1395	John Morton			
1401			Robert Jackson	
1409	Robert Belasis	John Birtley		
<u>Year</u>	<u>Darlington</u>	<u>Chester</u>	<u>Easington</u>	<u>Stockton</u>
1413				John Morton
1417				John Morton
1419	William Alwent			
1420				John Morton
1421				John Morton
1434		Robert Dalton		
1439	William Claxton		Robert Preston	John Sayer
1447		Thomas Aslakby		

Steward of the Household

1440 John Janettes

Clerk of the Household

1385 William Clay

Chamberlain

1383 Hugh the Chamberlain (10 marks)

1418 Thomas Holden

1427 Thomas Holden

Master Forester

1392 John Walsh (four forests of Weardale/replaced Adam Batemanson)

1403 John Blaket

1416 Robert Strangeways

1418 Robert Strangeways

1424 Robert Strangeways

1427 Robert Strangeways

1434 Robert Strangeways

1438 Thomas Lumley

Constables and Receivers of Norham

1385 Gerard Heron

1388 Gerard Heron

1394 Thomas Hexham

1395 Thomas Grey

1401 William Carnaby

- 1402 Robert Ogle, jr.
- 1406 William Caton (receiver)
- 1412 John Durham
- 1416 John Durham
- 1418 John Durham
- 1424 John Durham
- 1427 John Durham
- 1434 John Durham

Attorney General

- 1424 John Aslakby (40s.)
- 1427 John Aslakby (40s.)
- 1438 Robert Danby

Chief Justice

- 1383 Roger Fulthorp (£10)
- 1385 Roger Fulthorp
- 1416 Richard Norton (100s.)
- 1418 Richard Norton (£10)
- 1424 James Strangeways (£10)
- 1427 James Strangeways (£10)

Second Justice

- 1383 John Preston (10 marks)
- 1385 John Preston

- 1416 James Strangeways (10 marks)
- 1418 James Strangeways (10 marks)
- 1424 Nicholas Covington (10 marks)
- 1427 Nicholas Covington (10 marks)

Justices of the Peace

- 1382 John, Lord Neville, Roger Fulthorp, John Heron, Hugh Westwick, John Preston, William Bowes, John Helden, John Elvet, John Hartlepool.
- 1384 Ralph Eure, Robert Laton, Thomas Bland, John Tours, John Teesdale.
- 1409 Ralph, Lord Neville, Ralph Eure, William Fulthorp, Richard Norton, John Conyers, Robert Wyclif, William Lambard, William Chancellor, Thomas Elmeden, John Dalton, sr.
- 1421 John Manners, Samson Harding, John Bertram, William Mitford.
- 1427 Richard Neville, Robert Umfraville, William Eure, William Bowes, Thomas Surtees, Thomas Holden, Richard Buckley, William Chancellor, James Strangeways, Robert Strangeways, William Wilberforce, John Trollope, John Morton, John Aslakby, Robert Jackson.

Justices of Assize

- 1383 Ralph Eure, Roger Fulthorp, Hugh Westwick, John Preston.
- 1401 Richard Norton, Ralph Eure, William Gaston.
- 1406 Ralph Eure, Richard Norton, Robert Wyclif, John Conyers.
- 1419 Ralph Eure, Robert Wyclif, James Strangeways, John Beckwith, Richard Norton.

- 1427 Thomas Holden, James Strangeways, John Beckwith, William Eure,
William Chancellor, Nicholas Conningston.
- 1431 James Strangeways, Christopher Boynton, John Wodrington, John Bertram,
John Middleton, William Chancellor, William Strother, John Cartrington,
Robert Whelpington.

Justices

- 1382 John Preston, Roger Fulthorp, John Heron, Hugh Westwick
(*oyer et terminer*).
- 1383 Ralph Eure, Robert Laton, Roger Fulthorp, William Fulthorp
(*oyer et terminer*).
- 1385 John Preston (exchequer).
- 1387 Roger Fulthorp, Ralph Eure, William Elmeden, John Preston
(*oyer et terminer*).
- 1389 Thomas Grey, Thomas Umfraville, Walter Swinhowe, William Calthorn
(assize/Norhamshire).
- 1390 Thomas Grey, Ralph Eure, William Bowes, Robert Wyclif, William
Gaston, Hugh Westwick, John Preston, John Conyers
(*oyer et terminer*).
- 1416 Peter Greenwell.

Clerks of the court

- 1383 John Killinghall (clerk of assize: 100s.)
William Jarum (clerk of the chancery)
- 1385 John Killinghall (clerk of assize: 100s.)

- 1388 William Jarum (clerk of the chancery: 40s.)
- 1416 Peter Greenwell
 John Beckwith (clerk of assize: £4)
 William Thornburgh (clerk/J.P.: 40s)
 Richard Bedford (clerk of the chancery: 40s.)
- 1418 John Beckwith (clerk of assize: £4)
 William Thornburgh (clerk/J.P.: 40s)
 William Raket (clerk of the chancery: 40s.)
- 1424 John Beckwith (clerk of assize: £4)
 William Thornburgh (clerk/J.P.: 40s)
 William Raket (clerk of the chancery: 40s.)
- 1427 John Beckwith (clerk of assize: £4)
 William Thornburgh (clerk/J.P.: 40s)
 William Raket (clerk of the chancery: 40s.)

Auditors

- 1383 William Blakeden (100s.).
- 1385 William Blakeden.
- 1408 Ralph Eure, John Burgess (dean of Auckland), John Newton, William Chancellor, William Maplethorpe.
- 1420 Richard Buckley, John Newton, William Chancellor, John Maplethorpe, Robert Friend.

Gaoler

- 1383 Thomas Elmeden

1416 John Heppell (100s.)

1418 John Heppell (100s.)

Bailiffs/Approvers/Porters

1383 John Dike (porter of manor Allerton)

1385 John Middleton (Bedlington)

1393 Peter Hay (Howdenshire)

Peter Hay (steward/Allertonshire)

1394 John Conyers (replaced Peter Hay as steward of Allertonshire)

1402 John Buckley (porter of manor of Auckland)

1407 Richard Whitby (Sadberge)

1413 William Wright (manor of Middleham)

Richard Finley (manor of Evenwood)

Robert Whitby (manor of Darlington)

1405 John Botterell (manor of Gateshead)

1416 John Botterell (borough of Gateshead)

John Buckley (manor of Auckland: 40s.)

1418 John Buckley (manor of Auckland: 40s.)

1427 John Hunter (manor of Auckland: 40s.)

Thomas Burgh (manor of Darlington)

1428 William Wright (manor of Middleham)

Thomas Burgh (manor of Darlington)

1434 John Grigsby (borough of Auckland)

Thomas Witton (borough of Darlington)

1440 Thomas Maldson (borough of Durham)

Stockman

- 1416 Peter Greenwell
 1418 Peter Greenwell
 1424 Peter Greenwell (*multonem*)
 Thomas Harper (*vaccarum*)

Clerk of the Works

- 1407 Thomas Roos
 1413 Richard Burton
 1418 Richard Burton
 1421 Thomas Thornburgh
 1427 Thomas Roos

Custodians of the Coal Mines

- 1383 Nicholas Coke (Gateshead)
 1384 Thomas Hansard (surveyor)
 1416 John Botterell (Gateshead)
 1418 John Botterell (Gateshead)

Members of the Bishop's Council (retained, w/out portfolio)

- | | | |
|------|--------------------|----------|
| 1383 | John, Lord Neville | 50 marks |
| | Gilbert Elvet | 40s. |
| | William Wessington | 20 marks |
| | William Bowes | 20 marks |
| | William Blakeston | 100s. |

	William Lambard	£4
	John Conyers	40s.
1385	John, Lord Neville	50 marks
	William Lambard	£4
	John Conyers	40s.
	William Bowes	£10
	William Blakeston	100s.
	Walter Hawyk	100s.
1416	William Lambert	40s.

APPENDIX II

M.E. Arvanigian,

Free Rents in the Palatinate of Durham, and the Crisis of the Late 1430's

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Recent research has shown that the North of England suffered from a severe economic contraction in the late 1430's, which seems to have been related in some way to high mortality.¹ While probably not exclusively northern, nor indeed, English, in scope, this crisis was described as such by contemporary chroniclers.² Nevertheless, it was probably in some way connected to similar episodes in the South-west and in East Anglia, which, like the North-east, were left with evidence of poor harvests and high mortality over the same period.³ An examination of the bishop of Durham's estates within the bishopric reveals that a drastic reduction in customary free and farm revenues took place around the same time. The bishop's collector for Easington Ward, in his account of 1437/8, explained that, because of the pestilence of the previous year, he had been unable to collect certain customary rents from his bond tenants.⁴ Further evidence is provided by the records of Durham Priory. Lomas describes this period as the low point of economic activity on the prior's Durham estates, which were often juxtaposed to those of the bishop, and similarly distributed about the palatinate.⁵ Evidence from the accounts of the bursar - who, among the prior's obedientiaries, was the largest custodian of his estates - indicates that revenues on his estates dropped from £1,556 14s. 4d. to £1,222 5s. 3d. between 1434/5 and 1438/9, and the majority of that between 1437/8 and 1438/9.⁶ The evidence from the near south confirms that this was wide-spread. Goldberg, in

his study of the history of epidemic disease and its relationship to mortality in Yorkshire, emphasises this event's long-term economic significance, along with its particularly severe nature.⁷ While Pollard's study focuses largely on the Fitzhugh estates in North Yorkshire, he also points out some cursory evidence of its presence farther north, in County Durham.

Such evidence, from Durham and North Yorkshire, establishes more firmly the existence of a rather severe economic crisis in the late 1430's. While disease remains this recession's most likely source, Pollard has argued that harvest failure must also be considered as a possible cause of *malaise*; indeed, it may have been that these factors worked in combination.⁸ Serious outbreaks of disease, with high mortality, might deplete not only the market for goods, but also the pool of available labour, creating supply-side problems. In Durham, at least, epidemic disease seems to have been the primary cause of the region's heightened mortality, followed, in turn, by economic contraction. A sizeable and abrupt reduction in revenues from the bishop of Durham's estates, manifested in the surviving receiver-general's accounts for the palatinate between 1434/5 and 1438/9, is the best evidence of this. Their detailed examination may lead to conclusions regarding the scope and severity of this crisis.⁹

The first two decades of the fifteenth century were a period of relative financial stability on the bishopric estates, and some prospect of recovery was even hinted at. The bishop's income from the palatinate's four administrative wards stood at about £2,300 in 1416/7; two years later, it was almost identical, at £2,309.¹⁰ Thereafter, though, revenues resumed their previous pattern of slow decline, which had originally begun in the mid-fourteenth century. The next surviving receiver-general's account of the bishopric estates, from 1424/5, shows that income from the

wards had dropped to £2,091, an average decrease of some £30 per year.¹¹ This could perhaps be explained as a mere acceleration of the overall trend, which saw the continual depression of land values and, therefore, rents. Alternatively, a drop in revenues of this sort might be ascribed to official corruption, laxity in accounting, or particularly poor luck in collecting rents. Any of these factors, alone or in combination, might have been responsible for a short-term decline of the sort which befell the bishop of Durham's palatinate estates almost annually between 1416 and 1435. In any event, the receiver-general's accounts show that the decline had slowed to just £10 per annum in the period 1424/5-1427/8,¹² and that, by 1434/5, it had come to an almost complete halt.¹³

It was against this backdrop, however, that the bishop's landed revenue from his bishopric estates fell by 23 per cent from 1435/6-1438/9, from £2,034 to £1,579.¹⁴ This rather drastic fall in revenue remains wholly outside the general pattern of decline in late medieval land values, which was far more gradual, and was probably, therefore, an aberrance, the result of exceptional circumstances.¹⁵ An unfortunate gap in the surviving records obscures whether rates of income had stabilised by the early 1440's. This had certainly taken place by 1453/4, however: central receiver's accounts for that year record revenues from palatinate lands as nearly identical to those of 1438/9.¹⁶ There was little annual variation thereafter, as the receiver-general's account for 1458/9 reports an income of £1,578 from the four wards almost identical to what it had been in 1453/4.¹⁷ Apart from the next major crisis (in 1459/60, when receipts dropped by about £120),¹⁸ revenues had clearly stabilised by the late 1440's, with even the occasional small-scale recovery of previously-lost income.¹⁹ However, it is clear that the effects of the crisis of the late 1430's were felt well into the 1470's: the accounts of the bishop's receiver-general,

Henry Gillowe, indicate that many of the rents first lost to this crisis were, in 1473/4, still going uncollected.²⁰ This recession had a lasting financial significance, still felt 35 years after its initial appearance.

What, then, of this watershed period 1435/6-1438/9? Clearly, somewhere in these years lay the genesis of an economic crisis, which was in large measure attributable to the palatinate's largest two wards, Darlington and Chester. These accounted for almost 80 per cent of the total decline in all rents during those years. The income from Darlington Ward fell by some 26 per cent, from £667 in 1434/5, to £494 in 1438/9; that of Chester Ward dropped by over 31 per cent, from £622 to £432. By contrast, the revenues from Stockton Ward decreased by only 15 per cent, and those of Easington Ward just 12 per cent, over the same span.²¹ Two sorts of rents were chiefly effected: the farms of agricultural lands and facilities, such as manors and mills, and rents from customary free holdings. Bond rents remained virtually constant, while other assets, like the assizes of ale, unleased demesne land, and lead and coal mines, accounted for smaller, more unstable, sources of income. The revenues from Chester Ward, for example, generally included some income from the farm of the bishop's coal mines on south Tyneside. The records adequately reflect the volatility of such income. In 1418/9, the receiver-general recorded an income from the farming of the Whickham mine as £26 8s. 10d.,²² and the entry in the next surviving account, 1424/5, is the same.²³ However, by 1427/8, these mines had been put to farm for the annual sum of £112 13s. 4d.²⁴ Thus, while coal mining was clearly becoming an increasingly important source of income in the fifteenth century, rarely did it represent a significant proportion of total landed income.²⁵

In terms of agricultural rents, it was Chester Ward that experienced the greatest decline between 1435/6 and 1438/9. The receiver-general in 1438/9

recorded an income from that ward some 31 per cent lower than that of 1435/6, almost totally attributable to a decrease in rents from just seven properties, totalling £173. These included the townships of Chester-le-Street, North Biddick, Gateshead, Whitburn and Cleadon (given as a single entry), Bedlington, and, most markedly, Whickham and Framwellgate. Income from these latter two properties dropped by over 70 per cent between 1435/6 and 1438/9. Taken in sum, these seven estates accounted for well over 90 per cent of the drop in income in Chester Ward during this period. In Easington Ward, which experienced an 11 per cent drop in revenues, 61 per cent of those losses can be attributed to two properties: Houghton-le-Spring, and the free rents of the *civitas Dunelmensis* in the borough of Durham. Thus, while the economic impact of this outbreak on urban areas like Durham City was probably quite pronounced, the countryside did not escape unscathed. Darlington Ward, with the highest concentration of arable farmland in the palatinate, suffered a considerable decline in revenues. However, this was spread much more thinly over the ward's properties. The biggest losses came from the estates of Middridge, Stanhope, North Auckland, and Wolsingham, yet none of these, save Middridge, registered losses much over £10. In Stockton Ward, Durham's smallest, no estate registered a drop in income of more than £5 in this period, and total losses from the ward came only to about £38, a comparatively small sum.²⁶

The other side of this coin was that, interestingly, the revenues from several large estates in each ward registered little change. Blackwell (worth £23 per annum in 1434/5) in Darlington Ward; Boldon (£75) in Chester Ward; Easington (£73), Ryhope (£49) and Wearmouth (£46) in Easington Ward; and Norton (£66) and Sedgefield (£60), in Stockton Ward, all conform to this general description. Many of these estates enjoyed this sort of stability against a backdrop of general economic

decline. For example, there was almost no change in the level of income from Blackwell or Bondgate, in Darlington, from 1434/5-1438/9; this was in marked contrast to the 26 per cent overall drop in revenues from Darlington Ward as a whole. The same can be said of Boldon, where levels of income registered little change throughout this period.²⁷ Clearly, this crisis did not effect all of the bishop's estates with the same severity. Indeed, the relative stability of some underscores the drastic decline in income suffered from others. It may well have been the case that prospective tenants now found themselves in a position to choose between available properties, and opted for those which showed the greatest potential for prosperity. In Darlington Ward, in the south-western part of the county, this meant the preference of lands like Blackwell and Bondgate, quite near Darlington itself, over their estates further upland to the west. Darlington was established by the bishop in 1183, and was not only situated in the fertile lowlands of the River Tees, but also housed one of the palatinate's largest markets. Such circumstances, brought about in the widest sense after the Black Death, were occasionally accelerated by smaller demographic events such as this, by increasing the supply of available land while simultaneously driving down the demand for its products. Other factors also helped to determine the fortunes of these townships. The relative geographical isolation of certain upland or coastal properties,²⁸ for example, probably produced more extreme results: if an outbreak of disease struck one of these townships, its isolation and insular character might exacerbate its effects; these same characteristics, of course, might also have made a first occurrence of disease less likely in the first place. The nature of an area's land use may also have played some role in determining the severity of the ensuing recession. The economic effects of high mortality may have been less-

marked in pastoral areas²⁹ than in areas with high concentrations of arable farming, which required a greater supply of labour.

The figures shown in (Table 1)³⁰ indicate not only a drastic drop in the revenues for the four wards, but also a startling difference in the movements of certain kinds of rents. It is a characteristic of this financial crisis that customary rents from free tenants, and leaseholds, were affected more profoundly than any other type of holding. The figures from the palatinate clearly indicate the great degree with which freeholders and lease holders failed to remit payment during the crisis years.³¹ Bond rents, gathered by the bishop's collectors, remained in 1438/9 much as they had been in 1434/5, showing evidence of some decline in Chester and Darlington wards, but actually improving slightly in Stockton and Easington. Freehold revenues, on the other hand, collected by the coroners, dropped significantly over this period, as did remissions from farmers, an occupation which was, on the bishopric estates, confined chiefly to free tenants. Therefore, the best opportunity for understanding this crisis falls within the context of these rents, for they account for most of the decline in income in these years.

Table 1. Sums Paid by Collectors and Coroners of the Bishopric to the Receiver -

General

<u>Ward</u>	<u>1434/5</u>		<u>1438/9</u>	
	<u>Collector</u>	<u>Coroner</u>	<u>Collector</u>	<u>Coroner</u>
Darlington	£404 2s. 8d.	£198 9s. 1d.	£354 10s. 11d.	£116 7s. 3d.

Chester	£360 6s. 7d.	£283 14s. 4d.	£287 19s. 10d.	£144 3s. 8d.
Easington	£356 17s. 8d.	£109 9s. 0d.	£365 10s. 5d.	£68 3s. 7d.
Stockton	£181 2s. 0d.	£68 9s. 3d.	£202 6s. 9d.	£18 9s. 12d.

Source: Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections, CC
189811, 188686.

The falling income from free and leased holdings indicates that, as large free tenants began to have difficulty in farming their acreage and, presumably, in collecting their own rents, they in turn withheld rents from the bishop. In Durham, it seems, the relationship between hard times and the truculence of tenants, which Dyer has identified in the West Midlands from the 1430's, applied to free tenants and not others.³² It is certain, for instance, that one of the palatinate's large free farmers, Robert Horsely, failed to remit his £33 payment for the farm of the borough of Gateshead, which included the bishop's fishery on the Tyne and three mills; as the crisis left him unable to sell his crops at an adequate price to cover his costs, or indeed to collect any rents from his own sub-tenants, he seems to have been unable to cover his costs.³³ The case of Houghton-le-Spring is a similar one: the estate had a few large holdings, including the whole of the ville of South Biddick, a moor, and the farm of the mill, yet in 1438/9, none of these yielded much, if any, payment, seemingly due to the inability of the tenants to meet their own cash needs.

It is perhaps not insignificant that Darlington Ward contained the highest concentration of arable land in the county; this may have made that land more valuable, precluding the likelihood of its acquisition in large parcels. Those few, relatively-large holdings which did exist, however, show a disproportionate drop in

revenues from customary free and leased properties. For example, free rents in North Auckland, Wolsingham and Stanhope fell substantially, without a corresponding decline in bond rents.³⁴ Indeed, bond rents in these townships remained relatively steady throughout the mid-fifteenth century. Thus, Darlington Ward, notwithstanding its fertile lowland estates nearest the borough itself, also saw its free and lease hold rents decline, in the same manner as those elsewhere in the palatinate.

It is in Chester Ward, however, that the drop in revenues from the coroner's side of the accounts was most pronounced. In Gateshead, the total revenue from free and leased rents dropped from £46 to £21 between 1434/5 and 1438/9.³⁵ This was the result of non-payment by the bishop's greatest tenant there, the aforementioned Robert Horsely, whom the coroner for Chester Ward, Robert Dalton, in that year recorded as owing a sum of £33 6s. 8d. for the farm of the borough and mill.³⁶ Other townships were similarly effected: in Chester-le-Street itself, revenues fell from £6 19s. 4d. to £2 2s. 0d., and in North Biddick, the figure dropped from £18 6s. 4d. to £9 9s. 4d.³⁷ The most profound example of declining free rents in the ward was, however, the township of Whickham. The receiver-general's account shows that income from free rents there dropped by more than £29 between 1435/6 and 1438/9, from £37 12s. 7d. to £8 0s. 4d. In addition, its performance between 1438/9 and 1475 gives some indication of the severity of the crisis of the 1430's, and of its lingering effects on the financial condition of the later fifteenth century (Table 2):

Table 2. <u>Sums from Whickham paid to the Receiver-General of the Palatinate of Durham, 1416/7 - 1479/1.</u>
--

	<u>Collector</u>	<u>Coroner</u>
1416/7	£40 9s. 2d.	£41 8s. 3d.
1418/9	£48 3s. 11d.	£41 18s. 11d.
1424/5	£39 15s. 4d.	£41 8s. 11d.
1427/8	£40 14s. 2d.	£41 12s. 7d.
1434/5	£41 8s. 8d.	£37 12s. 7d.
1438/9	£38 2s. 4d.	£8 0s. 4d.
1453/4	£41 8s. 3d.	£16 13s. 8d.
1458/9	£38 9s. 4d.	£4 19s. 4d.
1459/60	£36 10s. 5d.	£1 13s. 4d.
1460/1	£35 15s. 6d.	£1 6s. 8d.
1464/5	£29 19s. 7d.	£7 8s. 4d.
1465/6	£40 6s. 4d.	£3 5s. 1d.
1466/7	£40 3s. 10d.	£6 0s. 0d.
1467/8	£39 2s. 8d.	£8 15s. 0d.
1468/9	£36 2s. 2d.	£4 2s. 2d.
1469/70	£31 18s. 0d.	£7 3s. 2d.
1470/1	£35 14s. 1d.	£4 5s. 6d.

Source: Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections, CC

189809, 189782, 189810, 190184, 188686, 189811, 189812, 189814,
189815, 189818, 189819, 189820, 189821, 189822, 189823, 189824.

Located just south of the Tyne, Whickham was one of the largest estates in Chester Ward. It was more valuable than most of the ward's properties, chiefly by virtue of

its numerous, valuable customary free and leased holdings, and of its five coal mines, which made it one of the great north-eastern coal sites. As indicated in (Table 2) above, before 1438/9, the property was worth some £80-90 per year to the bishop in agricultural rents alone, split about evenly between on the one hand, unfree, and on the other hand, free and leased, rents. Added to that, there was also an annual income of between £9 and £112 from the leasing of the coal mine, though this most often struck at the lower end of that scale. However, as noted above, income from the coroner fell dramatically after 1439, and remained within the £4-8 range until after 1470, an experience largely representative of the rest of the palatinate.³⁸ The example of Whickham, then, certainly provides further evidence of this crisis' severe and enduring character. The case of Whickham is also significant, however, because the level of income from its bond rents changed relatively little, even when examined across this half-century span. During the crisis years 1435/6-1438/9, when the bishop's income from customary free and leased holdings in Whickham dropped by over 88 per cent, income from bond rents there dropped by only seven.

There is also evidence from the records of the bishopric estates that the crisis also affected Northumberland. The bishop of Durham's estates in Bedlingtonshire, for example, which were administered by his coroner for Chester Ward, and therefore counted as part of the bishopric, suffered a similar decline to that of the rest of the ward. Free, and especially leasehold, rents there fell from £31 11s. 7d. to £2 11s. 8d in the period 1435/6-1438/9.³⁹ Whickham and Bedlington, then, are especially representative of the crisis' effects around Tyneside; both were largely comprised of a few large holdings - customary free rents and farms, and both registered large drops in income from those very lands, while simultaneously showing little movement in bond rents. It is not this paper's intention to provide

anything like a sufficient discussion of the recession in Northumberland; this, like North Yorkshire, deserves study of its own. However, if, as the evidence suggests, conditions were broadly similar, one might conclude that land tenancy unattractive, or untenable, in the far north of England, as it most surely between Tyne and Tees.

What, then, of the men charged with the management of free rents? The most important of these was the palatinate's chief financial officer, the receiver-general. His was the task of managing and recording the collection of all sums owed to the bishop from the farming of various parts of his estates; it is his records which most accurately indicate the bishop's annual income from his bishopric estates, and are those oft-cited in the discussion above. Meanwhile, separate sets of accounts were kept by the bishop's coroners, one for each ward. These amounted to yearly rentals: small annual variations aside, they changed little from year to year. It was the coroner's responsibility to collect customary rents, and often leased holdings, from the bishop's free tenants; these collections were then remanded to the receiver-general. The office of coroner was most often held by a member of the local gentry of some standing. William and Ralph Claxton, members of just such a family, both held this office in the 1460's.⁴⁰ William Claxton was one of the most prominent knights in the palatinate in the early fifteenth century, and also served as sheriff of Durham in Langley's pontificate. His son, John, was himself a significant land holder in the 1430's and 40's.⁴¹ Robert Preston, a local landholder of some note, was a coroner virtually throughout Robert Neville's episcopate, from 1443-61 at least.⁴² Interestingly, Preston's father, Henry, was receiver-general and constable during this period as well.⁴³ These, then, were men of relatively high standing in the county. They were probably of an administrative bent, and were perhaps better suited to such an office than to others in, for example, the bishop's chancery court or exchequer.

The coroners usually held their position for a number of years, leaving them singularly responsible for the management of their rents. Robert Preston was coroner for Easington Ward for 17, and perhaps 22, years,⁴⁴ while the office in Stockton Ward remained with a member of the Sayer family for more than twenty.⁴⁵ This sort of long term of office may potentially have provided the coroners with some influence over the collection of rents, just as the receiver-generals' long tenure probably gave them greater influence over matters of administrative and financial importance.

However, the frequency with which the coroners found themselves deeply in arrears indicates that whatever their potential influence with the county's free tenants, it was rarely realised in the fifteenth century.⁴⁶ While it is true that the coroners were men of some standing locally, such was often far inferior to those of the bishop's greatest free tenants, who numbered among them the earls of Northumberland and various members of the Neville family. Indeed, these officers may even have served those great barons as retainers, as in the case of the Claxtons, who were well known to have been in the employ of both the earl of Westmorland and of his son, the earl of Salisbury. Indeed, it was the Nevilles in particular who maintained such a significant presence in Durham, partly as free tenants of the bishop: aside from their great lordships of Raby and Brancepeth, the Nevilles had also been free tenants of the bishop, with additional holdings of customary and short-term natures alike, since at least 1381.⁴⁷ In that year, John, lord Neville, is known to have held several properties of the bishop in the four wards, most of which yielded between 8s. and £1 2s. 0s. for the bishop. The earl of Northumberland was also a tenant of the bishop in 1382, when he paid £26 13s. 4d. for the manor of Fugerhouse and a coal mine near Whickham.⁴⁸ This strong land-holding presence in County

Durham was, if anything, improved upon in the fifteenth century, as the national prominence of the two families grew. The implications of this for the coroner, however, were ominous. To collect many of his largest rents, for which he was being held personally responsible by the auditors, he would have had to confront some of the greatest magnates in the North. This process was further complicated by the consolidation of freehold lands into the hands of fewer tenants, a process begun in the fourteenth century which continued throughout this period.⁴⁹ This task must have become even more delicate during periods of financial hardship, when such tenants were even less inclined to pay. The bishop's coroners, then, faced with a difficult task under the best of circumstances, surely found themselves doubly handicapped by the drastic circumstances of the late 1430's.

As noted above, however, the coroners do seem to have enjoyed some degree of independence in the day-to-day running of their collections, even as they were held closely accountable for their success or failure. Indeed, these need not be mutually exclusive: close accountability for gaining results meant that, apart from the negotiations with the bishop's auditors, the coroners were left to conduct their collections of free rents, as well as those from leased demesne lands, as they saw fit. Given that the coroners were held to such strict accountability, however, it is probable that the nature of the office retained a strong element of personal initiative and responsibility. Free rents, as indicated above, had come to represent a significant portion of the bishop's income, and their realisation became increasingly critical in the fifteenth century. In addition, the bishops of Durham maintained a reputation for efficiency in the administration of their palatinate, just as they guarded their palatine rights with great energy. Bishop Bek's defence of these rights a century before, and Langley's own suit in the king's court late in his career, amply demonstrate this.

Indeed, Thomas Langley's close management of his bishopric estates seems to have been quite competent indeed, even though he, like his predecessors, lived in London. His building of the Galilee Chapel in Durham Cathedral, seemingly without borrowing money, and his loans to the crown were, of course, best evidence of this, but certain administrative reforms, like the creation of the office of receiver-general, and smaller, more politically sensitive decisions, such as his handling of the long-term lease of the Evenwood coal mines to the Eures - raising their rent after they had failed to renew the lease promptly - are examples of clear financial competence.⁵⁰

Under such conditions, then, the coroners, keenly aware of their personally responsibility for their charge, would only have closed accounts after making several attempts to collect from truculent free tenants, and only after negotiating respites and decays - *decasus* in the accounts - with the bishop's auditors. Such negotiations must surely have included the concession of many decayed rents which were allowed temporarily - that is, reductions which did not alter the permanent value of a property, which nominally had no effect upon the property's future rents. In periods of great economic stress, a holding, if considered to be of declining value by actual or prospective tenants, in the face of falling prices and agricultural depression, might not continue to be held at its customary sum, especially when its tenancy changed hands. Indeed, there is evidence that large freehold properties in the palatinate were let out by the bishop during this period at levels far below their customary sums.⁵¹

In any event, any degree of freedom enjoyed by the coroner certainly fell well within the confines of close official scrutiny, by the bishop, his auditors - led initially by the formidable Sir Ralph Eure, Langley's steward - and the palatinate's receiver-general. The latter, as the bishop's chief financial officer, was particularly important in this regard. This post was held by just two individuals during Langley's

episcopate: John Newton, from 1416/7-1421/2;⁵² and Richard Buckley, from 1422/3-1437/8.⁵³ Examples from later administrations indicate that such long terms of office were not at all unusual: for example, Henry Gillowe was receiver-general from at least 1464/5-1478/9, and perhaps longer.⁵⁴ These men, by virtue of their high social standing in the county, and their relatively long official tenure, *could* support a coroner's claim of being unable to collect free rents owed to them. The long, often parallel, careers of these two officers must have increased the likelihood of an even-greater personal dimension to the management of freehold revenues.

However, lengthy terms of service also made the coroner more vulnerable. The bishop, through his auditors, could hold him personally accountable for many years' delinquencies, until they became sizeable enough to warrant action. The coroner of Chester Ward may have found the numerous small freeholds of the Nevilles particularly troubling for just this reason. While Neville holdings there varied in size and value, the coroner may have found that, in the event of a cash crisis, even the smallest of these was uncollectable. As significant landlords in their own right, the Nevilles, might make no payments at all for even their smallest holdings in Durham, choosing instead to marshal their resources elsewhere, as a cushion against their own losses.⁵⁵ Left unpaid, their Durham rents could compound quickly in the account of arrears, and, if charged to a single coroner over a number of years, could present him with a hazard. Precisely this seems to have occurred with the ville of Winlaton, a customary free holding of the Nevilles since at least 1380, and probably before.⁵⁶ The Nevilles paid a sum of £20 per annum for this estate, which, for administrative purposes, was accounted for under the 'Whickham' entry in the accounts, and was listed as but a single entry in that section.⁵⁷ It is apparent from the receiver-general's records that, after 1438, the Nevilles cannot have paid the rent

for Winlaton, as the sums of remittance for the whole of Whickham did not again exceed £16 until after 1470.⁵⁸ It is clear from such episodes that the bishop's greater free tenants were afforded some degree of flexibility, both in terms of the length of time they could hold land without payment, and the length of time the coroner could wait to collect their rents. The lack of income from such tenants in Whickham alone for several decades is adequate testimony to this.⁵⁹ However, this flexibility was ultimately bound by the supervision of the coroner by the bishop's other administrators, ever mindful of the financial importance of free rents.

It might initially be thought that the non-payment of Neville rents to the bishop resulted from their own dynastic problems, rather than from an economic crisis.⁶⁰ By 1438, Robert Neville, younger son of the first earl of Westmorland, had assumed the temporalities and become bishop of Durham, and, had the second earl of Westmorland come to control the Neville holdings in Durham by this date, one might naturally assume that he would refuse payment to his half brother and enemy, the bishop. As the first earl had tried to disinherit his grandson and rightful heir in favour of his second family, the younger Ralph might have been expected to refuse payment. However, there is good reason to believe that the rents that went unpaid on the bishopric estates, such as those from Winlaton and Bedlington, were still controlled at the time of this crisis by Joan Beaufort, the first earl's widow, and her son Richard, earl of Salisbury, and not the second earl.⁶¹ In such an instance, one cannot adequately explain this revenue loss as a symptom of the Neville family squabble. Further, the argument that the whole of this free rent crisis is explicable in the context of this squabble is belied by the non-payment of large free rents by landholders with no discernible connection to the Nevilles at all, including Robert Horsely and his large farm in Gateshead. In addition, the accounts indicate that some

of the bishop's estates hit hardest by the crisis either contained no Neville property,⁶² or experienced a drop in income which far exceeded the value of their holdings, or those of their retainers, in a given area.⁶³ Thus, while the feud between the elder and cadet branches of the Neville family certainly dominated northern politics for some decades after 1425, it was neither a symptom nor a cause of this financial crisis.

The economic crisis of the late-1430's can, then, be traced directly to the bishop's free tenants: it was this income which was lost to him during this period, either through customary holdings or farms, and this income which was never to be recovered. Many of the tenants that failed to pay their rents in Durham were members of prominent families; they can generally be described as being of the armigerous class or above. These included the Claxtons, the Nevilles, and the Percies, all of whom were, as noted above, significant landholders in their own right. More than that, they were men upon whom the bishop relied for the holding of local office and the keeping of the peace. This may have led, in times of real economic stress, to some arrangements being made between him and them, perhaps excusing them from their tenorial obligations. Such sacrifice, if indeed there was one, on the part of the bishop, must have been made with at least one eye toward preserving the financial viability of the local gentry, and thus maintaining both the region's political stability as well as their political support. This was especially crucial in 1439, when the new bishop, Robert Neville, acting in concert with his mother, Joan, and elder brother, Richard, sought to marshal support in the North for the relatively weak Lancastrian monarch, and for the ongoing struggle against the elder branch of their own family, over control of the Neville patrimony.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, there is a marked scarcity of surviving estate material relating to north-eastern free tenants as landlords. It is only through the surviving records of

the bishopric and Durham Priory that we know anything at all of lay land holding in the North-east. Because the bishop of Durham was one of the country's greatest and most efficient landowners in the first half of the fifteenth century,⁶⁵ and because he seems to have felt the need to make concessions to his free tenants regarding their rents, it seems likely that the high mortality of the late-1430's produced ripples throughout the local land market, and that many of the bishop's free tenants experienced cash crises of their own. While some of these were certainly significant landholders in the region, as in the case of the Nevilles and their management of the great Durham lordships of Brancepeth and Raby, details remain largely mysterious. This aside, it does seem from the surviving evidence that, while the initial cause of this crisis lay in heightened mortality itself, the impetus for the wide-spread abatement of free rents must also have had something of a political dimension. Because the crown had few interests of its own in the North-east, it had always left the bishop of Durham to act as its agent of stability in that region. Because free tenants were the most important political figures in the palatinate, and therefore the most important agents of local stability, the respite of freehold rents in times of crisis, such as the late 1430's, was obviously viewed as a necessary concession to the maintenance of that stability.

¹ A.J. Pollard, 'The North-Eastern Economy and the Agrarian Crisis of 1438-40', *Northern History*, XXV (1989), 88-105; P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Mortality and Economic Change in the Diocese of York, 1390-1514', *Northern History*, XXIV (1988), 49.

² *Gregory's Chronicle* for 1438, in J.M.W. Bean, 'Plague, Population and Economic Decline in England in the Later Middle Ages', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, XV (1963), 429.

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- ³ See D.L. Farmer, 'Grain Yields on the Winchester Manors', *Ec.HR*, 2nd series, XXX, (1977).
- ⁴ Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections, C(hurch) C(ommission Bishopric) 188687.
- ⁵ R.A. Lomas, 'Durham Cathedral Priory as a Landowner and a Landlord, 1290-1540' (unpub. Ph.D thesis, Durham Univ., 1973).
- ⁶ Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections, Dean and Chapter Muniments, Bursars Account Rolls.
- ⁷ Goldberg, 'Mortality and Economic Change', 49. While Goldberg suggests that famine was the most likely cause of hardship, he nonetheless concedes the severity of that hardship.
- ⁸ Pollard, 'North-Eastern Economy', *NH*, XXV, 88-9.
- ⁹ Important studies of fifteenth-century estate management include J.M.W. Bean, *The Estates of the Percy Family, 1416-1437* (Oxford, 1958); R.R. Davies, 'Baronial Accounts, Incomes and Arrears in the Later Middle Ages' *Ec.HR*, 2nd series, XXI (1968), 211-29; F.R.H. Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury: An Essay on Medieval Society* (London, 1966); Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540* (Cambridge, 1980); B.F. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1977); J. Hatcher, *Rural Economy and Society in the Duchy of Cornwall, 1300-1500* (Cambridge, 1970); C. Rawcliffe, *The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham, 1394-1521* (Cambridge, 1978); Pollard, 'Estate Management in the Later Middle Ages: The Talbots of Whitechurch, 1383-1525', *Ec.HR*, 2nd series, XXV (1972), 553-66; J.T. Rosenthal, 'The Estates and Finances of Richard, Duke of York, 1411-1460', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, II (1965), 115-204.
- ¹⁰ CC 189809, 189782.
- ¹¹ CC 189810.

12 CC 190184.

13 CC 188686.

14 CC 189811.

15 Pollard, 'North-Eastern Economy', *NH*, XXV, 88-9.

16 CC 189812.

17 CC 189814.

18 CC 189815.

19 CC 189816.

20 CC 189828.

21 CC 189811, 188686.

22 CC 189782.

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25 For the early coal trade in the North-east, see J.B. Blake, 'The Medieval coal trade in the North-east of England: some fourteenth-century evidence', *Northern History*, 2 (1967); Constance M. Fraser, 'The North-east coal trade until 1421', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, 11 (1962); and John Hatcher, *History of the British Coal Industry*, i (Oxford, 1993), pp. 20-30.

26 CC 188686, 189811.

27 CC 188686, 189811.

28 Ryhope, for example.

29 See Wearmouth.

30 Figures account for revenues from rents and farms of agricultural lands only, including mills. Omitted are charges for assizes of ale and the farm of coal and lead mines. CC 188686, 18911.

31 CC 188656, 189811.

32 C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society: The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 180-3, 188, 275-6.

33 The receiver-general's account for that year make this clear, when combined with coroner's account evidence. See CC 188717, 189818. It is also interesting that the previous holder of that property paid 40 pounds per annum for it.

34 CC 188686, 189811.

35 CC 188686.

36 CC 188717.

37 CC 189811.

38 The only exception was that recorded in the receiver-general's main account for 1453/4 (CC 189812).

39 CC 188686, 189811.

40 CC 188788, 188789, 189697.

41 CC 188717, 188651.

42 CC 188725, 188726, 188727.

43 CC 189814, 189815, 189816.

44 CC 188725, 188726, 188727.

45 CC 188883-188894, 188897, 188895.

46 Bishop Langley, for example, had only three receivers-general during his episcopate. See Storey, *Thomas Langley*, p. 74.

47 *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, ed. W. Greenwell, Surtees Soc., XXXII (Durham, 1857, reprinted 1967), *passim*.

48 *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, p. 93.

49 This trend is in evidence from the first decades of the fifteenth century in the palatinate.

50 Langley served as, among other things, chancellor of England on two occasions. Eure's challenge to Langley's palatine franchise is explored fully by Storey, *Thomas Langley*, pp. 116-34. Langley created the office of receiver-general early in his pontificate, and he was to loan money to both of the first two Lancastrian kings. For Bek's defence of the franchise, see C.M. Fraser, *A History of Anthony Bek* (Oxford, 1957).

51 CC 188717, 190212, 188725.

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- 52 CC 189809.
- 53 Storey, *Thomas Langley*, p. 74.
- 54 A dearth of records for the years immediately previous to and following make it difficult to know whether Gillowe was given the position earlier than 1464, or kept it later than 1479.
- 55 Palatinate records support this claim. See CC 189811, 188717 for evidence of unpaid rents.
- 56 *Bishop Hatfield's Survey*, 93.
- 57 See coroners' accounts for Chester Ward.
- 58 See above (Table 1).
- 59 See especially the Neville holding of Winlaton.
- 60 For the phenomenon of 'politically sensitive rents and dues', see C.Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 172-3.
- 61 Public Record Office, *Forty-Fifth Report of the Deputy Keeper* (Reg. vol. II, fo. 230), appendix I, pp. 279-280. See also C.D. Ross and T.B. Pugh, 'The English Baronage and the Income Tax of 1436', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XXVI (1953), 1-28.
- 62 See Houghton-le-Spring and Chester-le-Street.
- 63 See Whickham and Framwellgate.
- 64 Surprisingly, no comprehensive investigation into this important struggle exists. For the best short account, see R.L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (1966), pp. 112-15.
- 65 The estates of the Bishop of Winchester seem to have been more valuable, if not geographically more extensive. See Storey, *Thomas Langley*, p. 73.

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* All manuscripts and published sources listed here have been consulted by the author, although not all are cited in the main body of the thesis. Published, edited secondary works containing many contributions have been listed here only once. Where such works are cited in the main body of the thesis, however, a full citation of individual contributions is of course given.

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189814	1458/9
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188651	1447/8
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188652	1457/8
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Darlington Ward

190212	1443/4
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188788	1459/60
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Easington Ward

188725	1443/4
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188726	1445/6
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188727	1459/60
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188879	1413/4
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188881	1420/1
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