Ollscoil na Gaillimhe
University of Galway

Provided by the author(s) and University of Galway in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite the published version when available.

Title	A border baron and the Tudor state: the rise and fall of Lord Dacre of the North
Author(s)	Ellis, Steven G.
Publication Date	1992
Publication Information	Ellis S.G. (1992) A border baron and the Tudor state: the rise and fall of Lord Dacre of the North. Historical Journal, 35: 253-77.
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/741

Downloaded 2024-04-19T08:44:20Z

Some rights reserved. For more information, please see the item record link above.

The Historical Journal, 35, 2 (1992), pp. 253–277
Printed in Great Britain

A BORDER BARON AND THE TUDOR STATE: THE RISE AND FALL OF LORD DACRE OF THE NORTH*

STEVEN G. ELLIS
University College, Galway

ABSTRACT. *Crown policy towards the nobles and the rule of the provinces under the early Tudors reflected the values and social structures of 'civil society' in lowland England. Using as a case-study the Dacres, a minor peerage family who were wardens of the Anglo-Scottish marches, this paper explores the strains and tensions which were created by the application of these norms to the 'peripheral' parts of the Tudor state. The paper outlines the political ambitions, resources, and estate-management policies of a border baron, and argues that Henry VIII's policies for the rule of the borders and his expectations of his officials there were unrealistic. It also suggests that the traditional approach of historians to the problems of Tudor politics and government reflects too much a view of events as seen from 'the centre' and needs to be balanced by a more sensitive treatment of the problems of the 'periphery'.*

The verdict of modern historians on the early-Tudor Lords Dacre of the North is that they were a minor and disreputable peerage family, advanced by the king to keep out the Percies, and quickly discarded when circumstances changed.[1] Thomas, 3rd Lord Dacre of the North (1485–1525) ruled the west marches of England towards Scotland for almost forty years until his death in 1525; and for the last fourteen years he was usually warden-general of all three marches. William, 4th Lord Dacre (1525–63) was initially excluded from even the wardenship of the west marches, but recovered this office owing to the failure as warden of the 1st earl of Cumberland. He retained the office for seven years until his well-known trial for treason in 1534. It was widely believed that he had been framed, and, most exceptionally, the lords triers ventured to agree. But Dacre was nonetheless dismissed from office, induced to confess misprision of treason – for which he paid a swingeing fine of £10,000 – and spent the rest of the reign in disgrace. Overall, therefore, the rise and fall

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Middle Atlantic Conference on British Studies, at Hunter College, New York, in March 1989. I am grateful to the participants for their comments, and also to Dr Anthony Goodman, Dr Richard Hoyle, and Dr Henry Summerson for their encouragement and specialist advice.

[1] Mervyn James, *Society, politics and culture: studies in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 78, 80–1, 94–113, 142–3; M. L. Bush, 'The problem of the far north: a study of the crisis of 1537 and its consequences', *Northern History*, VI (1971), 42–3; Helen Miller, *Henry VIII and the English nobility* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 187–92; S. M. Harrison, *The Pilgrimage of Grace in the Lake Counties, 1536–7* (London, 1981), pp. 26–38, J. A. Guy, *The Cardinal's Court: the impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber* (Hassocks, 1977), pp. 19, 122–3, 163; R. R. Reid, *The king's council in the north* (London, 1921), p. 93.

of the Dacres looks like a classic example of the traditional crown strategy of extending royal influence and control by promoting a lesser lord at the expense of a great magnate, and then in turn switching support to someone whose position depended still more on royal favour. And in many ways the Dacres do fit this pattern. Yet their position also offers some unusual and instructive insights into the foundations of noble power and the limitations of royal government in the Tudor territories.

The revival of crown government and the decline of baronial autonomy are well-documented features of the Yorkist and early Tudor period. They were closely bound up with other, equally familiar, developments. The disengagement from France and continental politics, the absence of foreign war, the restoration of dynastic stability, and the drive to re-establish what passed for law and order at home; all assisted the emergence of more peaceful forms of society in lowland England and of a rather different sort of politics. The regional connexions and armed retainers of the great magnates gradually gave way to gentry-dominated county communities which looked more to king and court for political advancement. In the far north of England, however, the proximity of the border with Scotland, and the major administrative problems which this posed, meant that the pressures for political and social change encountered elsewhere were counterbalanced by the disorders and political instability endemic in a border region. The root cause of the problem lay in the generally bad relations between England and Scotland: no Anglo-Scottish peace was signed between 1333 and 1502, only periodic truces and temporary abstinences from war.[2] This in turn encouraged the emergence of distinctive forms of border society geared to continual warfare – the independent border surnames who supplemented their living by reiving in the lowlands, extended kinship groupings, strong landlord-tenant ties, private raiding and robbery. These features made border society almost impervious in the short term to the normal Tudor methods of advancing royal authority. Necessarily, the defence of the border took priority over 'good governance' and 'indifferent justice', and forced the crown to rely on a combination of garrisons and the regional connexion of great magnates. Royal armies were too expensive except in an emergency, but London was suspicious of great concentrations of power in the hands of one man.[3] The Tudor solution was piecemeal and gradual. More intensive government, particularly the development of the king's council in the north, successfully brought about the desired socio-political changes in Yorkshire, Lancashire, and much of Westmorland and Durham,[4] but the true

[2] S. B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (London, 1972), pp. 90–1; John Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses* (London, 1981), pp. 29–31, 136–55; R. L. Storey, *The reign of Henry VII* (London, 1968), pp. 69–70, 87–8.

[3] For a comparative survey, see S. G. Ellis, *The Pale and the Far North: government and society in two early Tudor borderlands* (Galway, 1988).

[4] See especially, Reid, *King's council in the north*; Mervyn James, *Family, lineage and civil society: a study of society, politics, and mentality in the Durham region 1500–1640* (Oxford, 1974); R. B. Smith, *Land and politics in the England of Henry VIII: the West Riding of Yorkshire 1530–1546* (Oxford, 1970); C. M. L. Bouch and G. P. Jones, *The Lake Counties 1500–1830: a social and economic history* (Manchester, 1961), chs. 2–3.

border counties of Northumberland and Cumberland proved much more intractable. During Elizabeth's reign improved relations with Scotland facilitated Anglo-Scottish co-operation to stamp out the worst excesses of the borderers – while causing ministers some anxieties about the decline of border service and the weak state of the borders – but the problem only really disappeared with the Union of the Crowns in 1603.[5]

The ascendancy of the Dacres reflected a particular phase in the government's attempts to grapple with the problem of the north. In the later fourteenth century the Dacres had been one of perhaps half a dozen noble families who were regularly appointed to the commissions of wardenry; but from 1384 successive kings normally relied for wardens on the two comital families of Neville and Percy. Their eagerness to serve reflected the crown's willingness to pay the wardens inflated salaries which, together with the traditional military and administrative authority pertaining to the office, facilitated the development of strong regional connexions. Yet the Wars of the Roses spelled out the dangers inherent in this strategy for defending the north, and the Yorkists and Henry VII sought instead to reduce the risks by cutting the salaries of their wardens and also ensuring a wider diffusion of power.[6]

This much is quite familiar to historians. What are perhaps less well appreciated, however, are the serious constraints which the new strategy imposed on the defence and good government of the borders. Quite clearly, a greatly reduced salary, but with the traditional, very considerable military and administrative responsibilities of the warden, made the office a much less attractive proposition. At the same time, however, the gradual extension northwards (into Durham and Westmorland) of the kind of socio-political change which has been aptly described as the transformation from a lineage to civil society[7] meant that there were fewer people about who were both willing and capable of undertaking the wardenship on the terms offered. The problem was highlighted by the case of the 1st Clifford earl of Cumberland as warden of the west marches (1525–7). Despite Clifford's initial enthusiasm for the job, the fact remains that his new title of earl of Cumberland, even though he had almost no land in the county, followed by his appointment as warden, simply antagonised the Dacres. Coupled with his, by comital standards, meagre landed inheritance, and his ill-advised attempt to govern the marches from Skipton castle, this effectively ensured the failure of his wardenship. Yet fourteenth-century Cliffords had acted successfully on commissions of wardenry.[8] By the late 1520s, there were signs of an increasing royal awareness

[5] S. J. Watts, *From border to middle shire: Northumberland 1586–1625* (Leicester, 1975); Robert Newton, 'The decay of the borders: Tudor Northumberland in transition', in C. W. Chalklin and M. A. Havinden (ed.), *Rural change and urban growth 1500–1800: essays in English regional history in honour of W. G. Hoskins* (London, 1974), pp. 2–31.

[6] R. L. Storey, 'The wardens of the marches of England towards Scotland, 1377–1489', *English Historical Review*, LXXII (1957), 593–615. [7] James, *Family, lineage and civil society*, passim.

[8] James, *Society, politics and culture*, ch. 4; R. W. Hoyle, 'The first earl of Cumberland: a reputation re-assessed', *Northern History*, XXII (1986), 63–94; Storey, 'Wardens of the marches', 596–9, 609–11. For a similarly unsuccessful attempt to intrude the earl of Ormond as governor of Ireland in 1522–4 in place of the earl of Kildare, see S. G. Ellis, 'Tudor policy and the Kildare ascendancy in the lordship of Ireland, 1496–1534', *Irish Historical Studies*, XX (1976–7), 235–71.

of the disadvantages of early Tudor policy, and the 1530s witnessed something of a reaction. A very similar cycle of change can be discerned in the crown's attitude to the government of Ireland over the same period (1460–1534).[9]

The *reductio ad absurdum* of the old policy was Thomas Lord Dacre's tenure as warden-general of all three marches from 1511 to 1525. Under Henry VII the usual salaries of the wardens of the east, middle, and west marches (or of the lieutenants who acted there under the king) were a relatively modest £114 13*s.* 4*d.*, £114 13*s.* 4*d.*, and £153 6*s.* 8*d.* a year respectively, which was a far cry from the traditional rates of £2,500 for the east and middle marches, £1,250 for the west, and double in wartime.[10] In time of war Henry VII's officers did of course receive substantial military assistance,[11] where formerly they had maintained troops out of their own salaries, but the responsibilities of office now heavily outweighed the remuneration. Late in 1511, when the king of Scots was 'aboutward to have stolen the town of Berwick' and a resident warden was deemed necessary, Lord Darcy refused the wardenship of the east and middle marches 'but vpon inreasonable sommes of money by hym desyred'. Lord Dacre, lieutenant and then warden of the west marches since 1486, therefore agreed to serve as a stop-gap. In the middle marches, he served without salary, and his indenture specified that he should have the nomination of the two lieutenants, to be paid by the king. For the east marches he received the usual £114 13*s.* 4*d.*[12] In 1514, when a vacancy occurred and Dacre appointed his brother, Philip, as lieutenant, the king overruled him.[13] In 1515, however, when Dacre's indenture was renewed following peace with Scotland, he was able to exact slightly better terms. He asked for his brother, Sir Christopher, to be his deputy and sheriff of Northumberland, in place of the two lieutenants, and also for a force of sixty horsemen, costing £400 a year. In the event, Dacre's salary as warden of the east and middle marches was raised to £280 a year, and he was also to have the nomination of the sheriff of Northumberland.[14] Yet Dacre's nominations were carefully scrutinized and sometimes over-ruled, and the king recouped most of the additional

[9] See especially, S. G. Ellis, *Tudor Ireland: crown, community and the conflict of cultures, 1470–1603* (London, 1985), chs. 3–5.

[10] *Letters and papers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII*, ed. J. S. Brewer et al., 21 vols. and addenda (London, 1864–1932) (henceforth *LP*), II (i), no. 2736; Public Record Office (PRO), SP 1/12, fo. 49 (*LP* II (i) 1365); Storey, 'Wardens of the marches', pp. 604–6, 608. The salaries also included payments for deputies and warden serjeants.

[11] Agnes Conway, *Henry VII's relations with Scotland and Ireland 1485–1498* (Cambridge, 1932), pp. 36, 100, 112–13. From 1493 until 1499 the earl of Surrey received £1,000 per annum for the custody of the east marches, mainly in wartime: PRO, E 403/2558, fos. 37, 41v, 42v, 51, 58, 69, 75v, 85.

[12] British Library (BL), Caligula B. II, fos. 200–2v (*LP* I (2nd edn) 2913); PRO, E 403/2558, fos. 189, 189v, 216v, 217, 229, 253v, 264, 265, 272v, 273, 287; *LP* I (2nd edn) 857(19), 984, 1003 (15, 17, 23); Miller, *Henry VIII and the English nobility*, pp. 187–8.

[13] BL, Caligula B. II, fo. 202 (*LP* I (2nd edn) 2913); PRO, E 101/72, file 7/1166; *LP* I (2nd edn) 2840, 2863(4, 5).

[14] PRO, SP 1/11, fos. 4–6 (*LP* II (i) 596); E 403/2558, fos. 297, 306, 317, 331, 345, 355v, 362, 372, 379v; BL, Caligula B. II, fo. 262 (*LP* III 1225). The king may also have accepted Sir Christopher Dacre as deputy-warden: see PRO, SP 1/45, fos. 101–2 (*LP* IV (ii) 3629(2)).

expenditure by not paying for lieutenants and by charging 100 marks of Dacre's salary on the sheriffwick of Northumberland. Thus, although exaggerated, Dacre's claim in 1524 that he had never received a penny in wages as warden of the east and middle marches contained more than a grain of truth.[15] Moreover, by 1523 he was also defending the west marches at his own cost by deputy (his son), but with the promise of some future award; and when open war recommenced, his only assistance there was thirty gunners and spies paid for by the king.[16]

Despite the manifest weakness of what was quite clearly a stop-gap arrangement, Dacre continued to serve as warden-general, very reluctantly and with short breaks, until 1525. In response to an inquiry from Wolsey, Bishop Fox recalled that the last warden who had indented for the keeping of the marches at his own cost in time of war had been the old earl of Northumberland in 1486, for which he had received either 3,000 marks or £3,000, but also had had to keep Berwick. He added, however, that if Dacre left his son and brother on the west marches and himself resided on the east marches, 'for the great experyence, acquayntance, and landes which he hath in Northumbreland', he might possibly 'bere the burdeyn of all three marches in the tyme of werre', provided his fee covered the cost of the retinue he was required to maintain.[17] In a crisis Dacre received additional financial and military support, and was occasionally placed under the command of a lieutenant with an army royal. Yet the keynote of his administration, and its chief recommendation to the crown, was its cheapness. In other respects it exhibited serious shortcomings, although Dacre did eventually build up a tolerable but distinctly *ad hoc* system of border administration.

Dacre's rule depended very heavily on exploiting to good effect his position as a border magnate, with all that that term implies. By English standards, this position was exceptional, because Tudor England had only the one landed political frontier; but by British standards, or in the context of the Tudor state as a whole, it was not unusual. In Scotland and Ireland, Dacre's position was closely paralleled by such magnates as the Campbell earls of Argyle or the Fitzgerald earls of Kildare.[18] Dacre liked to portray himself as a poor and simple border baron, living on horseback patrolling the moors, and training the wild borderers to peace and civility. He readily acknowledged, as an essential tool of his trade, his acquaintance with the lowland Scots and their politics. Indeed in many respects the border region shared the same culture

[15] BL, Caligula B. II, fo. 262 (*LP* III 1225); *LP* IV (i) 279. Cf. *LP* II 1120, 2533, 2736, 3783, 4547, 4562.

[16] *LP* III (ii) 3106, 3626, IV (i) 220, 278, 1310.

[17] Henry Ellis (ed.), *Original letters illustrative of English history* (11 vols. in 3 series, London, 1824–6), 3rd ser., I, 321–3 (*LP* III 2859); Miller, *Henry VIII and the English nobility*, pp. 187–90.

[18] For Argyle, see Jane Dawson, 'The fifth earl of Argyle, Gaelic lordship and political power in sixteenth-century Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review*, LXVII (1988), 1–27; idem, 'Two kingdoms or three? Ireland in Anglo-Scottish relations in the middle of the sixteenth century', in R. A. Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England 1286–1815* (Edinburgh, 1987), pp. 120–31; Jenny Wormald, *Lords and men in Scotland: bonds of manrent 1442–1603* (Edinburgh, 1985), pp. 84–5, 108–14, 121–6. For Kildare, see S. G. Ellis, *Reform and revival: English government in Ireland, 1470–1534* (London, 1986), pp. 49–66; idem, *Tudor Ireland*, pp. 53–129.

and dialect, although the young James V could neither understand nor read southern English.[19] Yet French was another matter: Dacre could sometimes muddle through letters of thanks, but inconvenient demands from the duke of Albany found his French clerk absent. Verbal instructions and secret signs and tokens, rather than formal writs and commands, were the order of the day; but in his correspondence with London and Edinburgh Dacre carefully had copies made and kept.[20]

The basis of Dacre power and influence was of course the lord's landed patrimony. The nucleus of the Dacre estates, mainly in Cumberland, had been assembled by 1317, and subsequently the family managed to escape the worst accidents of inheritance and high politics. The Dacres acquired by marriage, and then lost, lands in the fourteenth-century English Pale in Scotland, notably Liddesdale and Hermitage castle which they still claimed under Henry VIII.[21] They also lost three majors in Lincolnshire and Lancashire in 1458, when the 6th baron Dacre died leaving a granddaughter as his heir-general, whose husband then became Lord Dacre of the South. A younger son, to whom most of the estates were entailed as heir-male, was created 1st Lord Dacre of the North in 1459 and backed the wrong king at Towton; but the attainder was reversed in 1473, and subsequently the Dacre patrimony was greatly expanded.[22] In particular, the 3rd lord seemingly gambled on a precontract of marriage to an ostensibly worthless Greystoke girl with distant prospects. This proved a golden investment. First, her father died unexpectedly in 1483, making her heir-general to her grandfather, Lord Greystoke, who conveniently died in 1487. At this point, Dacre decided to capitalise on his investment: he abducted her from the Clifford castle of Brougham and married her. Then he received another, equally unlikely, dividend when her uncle, Lord Greystoke's heir-male, died in 1501, followed by his only child, struck down by the sweating sickness in 1508.[23] Thus by 1508 Dacre had secured the whole Greystoke inheritance and had more than doubled his landed income. From a poor border baron, he had become a leading northern magnate.

On his death in 1525, Thomas Lord Dacre's landed inheritance was worth over £1,500 net per annum, making him the eighth most wealthy peer in the

[19] BL, Caligula B. II, fos. 200–2v (*LP* I (2nd edn) 2913); *LP* IV (i) 1372.

[20] See, for example, Ellis, *Original letters*, 1st ser., I, 132; *LP* II 788, 2253, III 1078, 2525iii–iv, IV 133, 139, 200, 219, 1223, 1429, 1517ii. BL, Add. MS 24,965 is Thomas Lord Dacre's letter book for June 1523 to August 1524.

[21] University of Durham, Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic, Howard of Naworth MS C/201/4A; Anthony Goodman, 'The Anglo-Scottish marches in the fifteenth century: a frontier society?', in Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England*, pp. 20–4. Dacre fortunes in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are traced in S. E. Cott, 'The wardenship of Thomas Lord Dacre, 1485–1525' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Manchester University, 1971), pp. 7–17.

[22] Vicary Gibbs *et al.* (ed.), *The Complete Peerage* by G.E.C. (13 vols., London, 1910–59), IV, 8–22; Charles Ross, *Edward IV* (London, 1974), pp. 30, 37–8, 47–8, 50, 66n, 69n.

[23] BL, Add. MS 24,965, fos. 200–1 (*LP* III 3649); *Complete Peerage*, VI, 197–201; R. S. Ferguson, *History of Cumberland* (London, 1890), pp. 160–6; C. M. L. Bouch, *Prelates and people of the Lake Counties: a history of the diocese of Carlisle 1133–1933* (Kendal, 1948), p. 171.

realm. Moreover, his annual salary of £433 6*s*. 8*d*. as warden-general was nominally higher than that of any other royal minister at the time except the chancellor. In practice, however, the office was probably not very profitable, although the farms of crown lands which traditionally went with the wardenship must have increased its attractiveness. In the 1530s the income of the 4th lord fluctuated around £2,000 a year.[24] Much of this money was spent on acquiring additional land and building castles, mainly in Cumberland.[25] When Dacre entertained the queen of Scots at Morpeth over Christmas 1515, a courtier informed the king that he had 'not sene myche a better trymmed howse of a barons house in my lyfe'.[26] And in 1534, when the royal commissioners arrived to seize Dacre's goods, they found plate and money worth altogether over £4,000, £2,668 of it in ready money. In fact Dacre susbsequently paid almost half of his fine of £10,000 within three months, and the rest by 1541.[27]

Yet it was the location of his estates, as much as their value, which explains Dacre's key position in the defence of the north. Over half the traditional Dacre patrimony lay in northern Cumberland; the rest chiefly in Westmorland. The barony of Greystoke swelled the value of his Cumberland estates to around £650 a year, over £100 more than the Percy possessions there which were in any case in the strategically less important west of Cumberland.[28] It has been argued that 'Even after the Dacres had secured the Greystoke inheritance, they could still not challenge effectively the weight of Percy influence and landed wealth in Cumberland'.[29] In fact, Thomas Lord Dacre's rule of Cumberland was largely unchallenged in Henry VIII's time. Bolstered by the authority of the wardenship and the farms of land which traditionally went with it, it was based on a concentration of landed wealth which by English (but not British or Tudor) standards was unusual. Moreover, outside Cumberland, the Greystoke inheritance gave Dacre for the first time a significant landed presence throughout the north. The barony of Morpeth and possessions in the Palatinate of Durham had in the later fourteenth

[24] Durham, H of N MS C/201/3; PRO, C 54/394, m. 7 (which omits the Dacre estates in the palatinate of Durham, worth *c*. £100 per annum). For example, in the year 1532–3 Dacre's total receipts amounted to £2,042 9*s*. 0¼*d*., of which the baronies of Burgh, Gilsland, and Greystoke contributed £196 11*s*. 5*d*., £175 18*s*. 10*d*., and £295 14*s*. 4⅝*d*. respectively. Lands in Westmorland yielded £207 11*s*. 4½*d*., Morpeth barony in Northumberland £168 5*s*. 0¾*d*., and lands in Yorkshire, Durham and Shropshire realized £275 0*s*. 5¼*d*., £104 4*s*. 4¾*d*., and £137 9*s*. 9*d*. respectively. Cf. Helen Miller, 'Subsidy assessments of the peerage in the sixteenth century', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XXVIII (1955), 15–34; idem, *Henry VIII and the English nobility*, ch. 6; J. C. K. Cornwall, *Wealth and society in early sixteenth century England* (London, 1988), pp. 143–4.

[25] See especially, Durham, H of N MS C/201/2 (which shows that in the fifty years to 1530 the Dacres acquired by purchase lands worth *c*. £120 a year); *LP* III 1262 (8), IV 1855; T. H. B. Graham, 'Extinct Cumberland castles (part III)', in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, new series, XI (1911), p. 242.

[26] PRO, SP 49/1, fos. 58–9 (*LP* II (i) 1350).

[27] PRO, SP 1/84, fos. 33–50 (*LP* VII 676), fos. 62–2v (*LP* VII 679ii); *LP* Add. I 933; Miller, *Henry VIII and the English nobility*, p. 56.

[28] Durham, H of N MS C/201/2, C/201/3; J. M. W. Bean, *The estates of the Percy family, 1416–1537* (Oxford, 1958), p. 46.

[29] James, *Society, politics and culture*, p. 142.

century sometimes prompted Lord Greystoke's inclusion in commissions of wardenry both for the east and west marches; and the family also had major holdings in Yorkshire and Shropshire.[30]

To a large extent the very concentration of his estates in the far north shaped the nature of Dacre's political ambitions. His estates in northern Cumberland lay open even to minor Scottish incursions, and needed a resident lord to defend them. The inquisitions *post mortem*, taken in the winter of 1485–6 after the death of the 2nd lord, returned that many of the lord's manors there were destroyed by the Scots, totally wasted by the Scottish war, or worth nothing in time of war. For example, the whole barony of Gilsland, returned as formerly worth £116 17*s*. $8\frac{2}{3}$*d*., and in the 1530s normally worth *c*. £165 per annum, was valued at a mere £17 12*s*. $4\frac{2}{3}$*d*. annually. And large tracts were waste because no-one would take them for fear of the Scots.[31] The Dacre estates around Morpeth and Coniscliffe were subject to raids by the reiving surnames of Tynedale and Redesdale; and of course Gilsland, together with Bewcastledale, constituted the western end of the highland zone inhabited by the border surnames. Thus, even if he were not warden, Dacre could not afford long periods of absence at court, because about half his landed income accrued from the border counties of Cumberland and Northumberland, as opposed to only 38% of the Percy patrimony (although Percy estates there were worth about £500 per annum more).[32] As warden-general, Dacre spent much of his time at the crown outpost of Harbottle in Coquetdale, or at Morpeth, from where all parts of the east and middle marches were readily accessible, while his brother or his son acted as his deputy at Carlisle.[33]

The nature of Dacre's landholdings, together with the financial constraints under which he was expected to operate, imposed on Dacre's rule of the borders a rather different character from the rule of a Percy or a Neville. In many ways it was a question of *manraed*, but this did not simply mean having large numbers of tenants and a big following of county gentry. Mervyn James has remarked with regard to the Dacre connexion that 'The dominant impression is one of weakness', with very few leading county families but many minor gentry and other even more dubious followers in his service.[34] In fact, the reason why Dacre's following in northern Cumberland included few gentry of substance was that there were few such in the region. It has been calculated that the earl of Northumberland was theoretically able to raise over 11,000 men from his own tenants for border service, but over 6,000 of these would have had to come from Yorkshire, and at considerable cost.[35] Yet Dacre

[30] Durham, H of N MS C/201/3; Storey, 'Wardens of the marches', pp. 609–11.

[31] PRO, E 150/112 (*Calendar of inquisitions post mortem ... Henry VII* (3 vols., London, 1898–1955), I, no. 157); Durham, H of N MS C/201/3.

[32] Calculated from Durham, H of N MS C/201/3; Bean, *Estates of the Percy family*, pp. 45–6, 139. See also Ellis, *Pale and the Far North*.

[33] *LP* III 1190iii, 1883, 1986, 2931, IV 220, 278, 726, 1310.

[34] James, *Society, politics and culture*, pp. 142–3.

[35] James, *Society, politics and culture*, pp. 60, 76.

could, as the earl of Surrey remarked, bring over 4,000 men on a raid into Scotland, reinforce the east march with 3,000 men at two days' notice, 'and may at all tymes with little charge have 4 or 5,000 men off his owne' to resist invasion, 'and so can noone other man doo'.[36] Of course any noble had large numbers of tenants, but few were prepared, like Dacre, so carefully to cultivate the loyalty and support of their tenants at the expense of revenue. Despite his pressing need for money to pay his heavy fine, Dacre ordered, when giving instructions to his estate officials for a survey of his lands in 1536, that any vacant tenement be let to 'a good archer,... and rather to him for lesse gryssome [= entry fine] then to ane oder being none archer'; that entry fines be limited to no more than three years' rent; and that no tenements be let to his freeholders, other men's tenants, priests or 'to any owtwarde personnes dwelling in ane oder towne'.[37] This policy permitted Dacre to raise an army for the defence of the west marches cheaply and speedily from among his own tenants, and he had the less need to cultivate a following of county gentry. Yet his social standing was unaffected by this, as appears from the double marriage of Dacre's son and heir to Shrewsbury's daughter, and his daughter to Shrewsbury's heir.[38]

Thus the concentration of Dacre's landholdings and his estate-management policies gave Dacre a secure power-base in the English borders. The effective exploitation of this base encouraged Dacre to develop relations not simply with the more disreputable elements in border society but also with Scottish lords and lairds. Cross-border connections were of course traditionally strong in the English marches, because the Anglo-Scottish border region had originally formed one society. Politically, however, these links had been broken by the fourteenth-century Scottish wars of independence, which consolidated a distinct border line and separate aristocracies looking to London and Edinburgh respectively.[39] Paradoxically, the increasing acceptance by the English crown of Scottish independence, the relaxation of military pressure, and the more economical system of border defence employed by the early Tudors led in turn to a partial rapprochement between the two border societies. Among the border lineages – the Armstrongs of Liddesdale and the Charltons of Tynedale, for instance – national allegiances had never counted for much anyway: the respective central governments might classify them as

[36] *State papers published under the authority of His Majesty's commission: Henry VIII* (*StP*) (11 vols., London, 1830–52), IV, 12, 29, 51, 54; Ellis, *Original letters*, 1st ser., I, 214–18; Miller, *Henry VIII and the English nobility*, pp. 147–9; Dawson, 'Two kingdoms or three?', p. 121.

[37] Durham, H of N MS C/201/5, fos. 4–4v. Cf. R. W. Hoyle, 'An ancient and laudable custom: the definition and development of tenant right in north-western England in the sixteenth century', *Past and Present*, CXVI (1987), 36–43; Harrison, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, pp. 47–56.

[38] G. W. Bernard, *The power of the early Tudor nobility: a study of the fourth and fifth earls of Shrewsbury* (Brighton, 1985), pp. 11, 51, 114, 153–5. Another of Dacre's daughters married Lord Scrope of Bolton: *LP* III 3210.

[39] See especially, J. A. Tuck, 'The emergence of a northern nobility, 1250–1400', *Northern History*, XXII (1986), 1–17; idem, 'Northumbrian society in the fourteenth century', *Northern History*, VI (1971), 22–39; Goodman, 'Anglo-Scottish marches in the fifteenth century', pp. 18–33.

English or Scots, depending on which side of a notional border line they resided, but this did not make them act any differently. At the battle of Flodden the English surnames waited until the two armies dismounted to fight and then plundered both sides indiscriminately and made off with the English horses and baggage.[40] Yet among the wealthier English borderers, the reduction in opportunities for prizes and plunder in Scotland, and the increased premium on local defence which followed the scaling down of the English military effort, encouraged a modest strengthening of cross-border ties in a bid to stabilize the frontier. There was no return to a cross-border aristocracy of course, nor did the two aristocracies intermarry – as happened in Ireland where a similar pattern of development occurred.[41] Yet successive English wardens or a border baron like Lord Dacre clearly had some influence, and even following, in Scottish politics, if only because sentiments of national interest and identity were less developed among Scottish lords and lairds. In his Scottish wars Henry VIII frequently enjoyed the support of a leading Scottish border family like the Homes or the Douglases.[42]

Dacre's particular influence in Scottish politics was widely recognized in English government circles. Lord Darcy doubted in 1512 'if any Inglisshman know more of the Scottes secrettes' than Dacre.[43] Just what Dacre could do emerged in the aftermath of Flodden. His main contact at this time was the lord chamberlain, Alexander Lord Home, although he also got much intelligence from the treasurer, the abbot of Kelso, and from the bishop of Glasgow. These and other lords were personally known to him; and through them, from his own spies, and from Queen Margaret, he could provide detailed reports of Scottish intentions, even down to who said what in debates in council.[44] Dacre relied on these contacts to dismiss suggestions of imminent invasion, or to countermand reinforcements even at a time when the captain of Berwick was hourly expecting a Scottish siege.[45] Yet the king's suspicions were soon excited by reports of his warden's secret communications and familiarity with the chamberlain in wartime. Dacre was obliged to make a detailed refutation of the charges to the council, claiming that he had no familiarity with either the chamberlain or any other Scot, that he had met him only once for ransoming of prisoners, that he would spare neither him nor his lands, and reminding them that at Flodden many of the Homes had been slain by Dacre's company. In a less guarded reply to Bishop Ruthal, however, Dacre asserted that he had no intelligence with any Scot but for the advancement of the king's causes, and asked his advice on how to conduct

[40] *LP* I (2nd edn) 2246, 2283.

[41] Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, ch.4.

[42] Dacre's cross-border ties in the years before Flodden are outlined in Dr Henry Summerson's forthcoming study of medieval Carlisle which the author kindly made available to me. See also below. pp. 263, 271, 273. Dacre's influence was perhaps facilitated by the Scottish crown's practice at this time of appointing as wardens borderers like Lord Home and Lord Maxwell whose income depended largely on estates which were vulnerable to English raids.

[43] BL, Caligula B. VII, fos. 226–7v (*LP* I (2nd edn) 1329). Cf. BL, Caligula B. VI, fo. 25 (*LP* III 1048).

[44] For example, *LP* I (2nd edn) 1342, 1504, 2381, 2390; Ellis, *Original letters*, 1st ser., I, 241–5.

[45] *LP* I (2nd edn) 1329, 2026, II 819, 850–1.

himself in future so as to avoid misconstruction.[46] As the duke of Albany's influence in Scotland rose, Dacre offered on different occasions to conduct Queen Margaret into England from ten miles south of Stirling or from one mile outside Edinburgh.[47] Letters reached him direct from the chamberlain, and verbal messages via the laird of Fernihurst.[48] Other intelligence was brought back by Dacre's own servants, such as Tom Scot (!), Tom Rutherford who arrived from Edinburgh disguised as a Scot, and William Hetherington whose wife, abducted and married in Scotland, was Scottish.[49]

In May 1515, Scotland was comprehended in the truce with France, and Dacre was ordered secretly to foment disorders in Scotland so as to drive out the duke and force the Scots to sue for peace.[50] Using his brother, Sir Christopher, Dacre quickly detached Lord Home, the earl of Angus, and the laird of Fernihurst.[51] Home was soon garrisoning castles against Albany, and Dacre secretly supported him with troops, and also gunpowder from Berwick. Since Home was technically still warden-general, Dacre proposed that he be encouraged to invade England with 300 men or more so as to make void the comprehension. For this purpose, Dacre's officers were reputedly scouring Carlisle for Scots to serve in a force of 300 horsemen which Sir Christopher was sent to offer.[52] The Scottish borderers of the west march were likewise stirred up in the knowledge that, if the Scottish warden were unable to make redress for the murder of three Englishmen which resulted, the comprehension would likewise be void.[53] When Albany countered by outlawing Home, Dacre suggested to Henry that Sir Christopher should be made an outlaw too, so that they could combine their powers to waste Scotland. The conspiracies culminated in a plot to capture Albany: Home seemingly offered Albany his conditional submission, and the English borderers were held ready to intercept him if the duke ventured too close in order to accept it.[54] And after Queen Margaret's escape to England, Dacre reported that he was giving rewards to 400 Scottish outlaws for burning in Scotland, and that he secretly harboured the master of Glencairn, for whose surrender Albany had written to the king.[55] Eighteen months later the Homes were still raiding the Merse from Cawmills just north of Berwick, and at his own cost Dacre supplied them with ordnance, and also assisted 'the Armstrongs, and other evil-disposed persons, their adherents'. The king also sent Dacre £100 for the entertainment of Scottish gentlemen discontented with Albany.[56] Yet, throughout, Albany was unable to obtain hard evidence of Dacre's complicity in the disorders. Taxed with failure to make redress and maintain good rule, the duke promised action and amendment, asked for assistance against fugitives, and wrote regularly of his good mind for peace. He even wrote directly to warn Henry that he was being

[46] *LP* I (2nd edn) 2381, 2390, 2443, 2913. [47] *LP* II 62, 66, 886ii, vi.
[48] *LP* I (2nd edn) 3181. [49] *LP* I (2nd edn) 3181, II 819xiv, IV 1151.
[50] *LP* II 596, 779, 850. For the political background, see R. G. Eaves, *Henry VIII's Scottish diplomacy 1513–1524: England's relations with the regency government of James V* (New York, 1971), ch. 2. [51] *LP* II 779, 783, 788, 845–6, 850, 1044.
[52] *LP* II 783, 788, 819iii, x, xiii, 834i, ii, 850, 1672ii.
[53] *LP* II 834ii–iii, 850, 855, 863, 898i, 1672ii. [54] *LP* II 834i–ii, 850, 885, 1044, 1098.
[55] *LP* II 2253, 2293, 2313. [56] *LP* III 3383, 3385 (quotation).

deceived by Dacre and the borderers, and threatened Dacre with this; but on the surface all was co-operation and peace.[57] Of course many of Dacre's activities were technically treason, and the king was free to disown them. It was a dangerous game because there was more than enough evidence in Dacre's despatches to incriminate him, but for the moment the king chose to turn a blind eye.

Dacre had already been lieutenant or warden of the middle marches for about four years (1502–6) under Henry VII, but he undertook the wardenship of the east marches in 1511 only with serious misgivings. He had, as he confessed, 'no strienth, ne help of men, freyndes ne tenauntes' there, and the gentry 'woll noder ryde ne goo, ne non o[f] them doo seruice for me, ne at my commaundment in the kinges name'.[58] Although the warden was a royal official, he could only exercise the post successfully through personal contacts and loyalties. In the aftermath of Flodden, the king commanded him to make three great raids from each of the three marches into Teviotdale and the Merse. Dacre reluctantly agreed to attempt the raid into Teviotdale, but observed that the dukes of Gloucester and Norfolk, and the old earl of Northumberland had thought such a raid a great enterprise. With regard to the Merse, however, for which an additional 1,000 marks had been allocated, he asked that Lord Darcy should undertake it as captain of Berwick and steward of Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh, alleging the risk if he were to strip the west marches for the purpose, that it would be unwise to trust himself to strangers, and that at Flodden the Northumberland men assigned to his company had fled at the first shot.[59] Neither coaxing by Bishop Ruthal and Cardinal Wolsey nor a letter of encouragement from Henry himself would change his mind. However, his experiences in making the warden rode into Teviotdale were hardly reassuring. Neither Lord Ogle nor the captain of Alnwick kept their appointment, and he was forced to set out with only 1,000 men under his two wardenry-lieutenants, and his brother Philip. In consequence he was almost intercepted by two Scottish forces, before effecting a pre-arranged junction with his brother Sir Christopher with Dacre tenants and retainers from the west marches who had come in via Liddesdale.[60] His reports of the raid were accompanied by complaints of the backwardness of the gentry, and a request that Lords Clifford and Northumberland order their tenants to attend the warden as usual.[61]

Not only was Dacre a stranger in the east march, but he further antagonized the gentry there by economizing on its defence. He advised the king that

[57] *LP* III 834, 855, 863, 868, 898, 1024, 1026, 1030, 1098, 1598, 1672, 2253, 2313, 2465, 2711, 3125, 3139; R. K. Hannay (ed.), *Acts of the Lords of Council in Public Affairs 1501–1554* (Edinburgh, 1932), pp. 57–8.

[58] BL, Caligula B. II, fo. 201 (*LP* I (2nd edn) 2913); Joseph Bain (ed.), *Calendar of documents relating to Scotland*, IV (1888) nos. 1683, 1744, 1746; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1494–1509, p. 379.

[59] *LP* I (2nd edn) 2382, 2386–7, 2390.

[60] *LP* I (2nd edn) 2387, 2390, 2394, 2423, 2443.

[61] Ellis, *Original letters*, 1st ser., I, 93–9; *LP* I (2nd edn) 2443; A. G. Dickens (ed.), *Clifford letters of the sixteenth century* (Surtees Soc., vol. CLXXII; Durham, 1962), pp. 96–9.

'wages given to the inhabitants there were in maner waisted and lost', because the borderers were obliged to do military service anyway. They in turn blamed Dacre because the king sent down no soldiers, and complained that the marches were being destroyed.[62] Lord Darcy reported that thirty towns next to Scotland 'be patished with the Scottish warden' for want of defence, although this was formerly considered treason; and claimed that it would ultimately cost the king more than the savings.[63] Yet, although the Great North Road running through was the chief route for armies in time of war, the east marches in fact comprised lowland settlements easily organized for defence and adequately protected from casual Scottish raiders by the garrison at Berwick-on-Tweed. Additional garrisons continued to be laid in wartime, but mainly 'inlandmen'. Early in 1522, for instance, when the king allowed the warden an additional 500 horsemen on the recommencement of war, Dacre was obliged to place them on the east marches which 'will follow no counsaill for the helping of them self'. Yet the garrison was mainly from Yorkshire, with the local gentry encouraged by fees and rewards to augment the garrison for raids into Scotland.[64] Dacre's influence there was also bolstered slightly through his tenure from 1521 of the constableship of Norham castle, an outpost of Wolsey's palatinate of Durham, and because his brother Philip acquired some land there by marriage,[65] but Dacre's control was never satisfactory.

The problems of government in the much larger middle marches were somewhat different. The Cheviots precluded the possibility of any major Scottish incursion by this march, but control of the independent reiving clans of Tynedale and Redesdale, and those just across the border in Liddesdale and Teviotdale, was a major headache. The geography of the region left Dacre at a disadvantage in this regard, because the passes ran north-west/south-east, giving the border surnames easy access into lowland Northumberland and Durham. The traditional Percy solution was to retain the leading gentry, both those of the highlands who maintained the thieves, and the lowland gentry who suffered at their hands. Dacre's Northumberland territorial base around Morpeth was inadequate for this purpose, but his estates in north-east Cumberland were actually closer to Tynedale and Redesdale than the major concentrations of Percy lands. And from 1515 Dacre was also given oversight of Wolsey's regality of Hexham in south Tynedale.[66] The Percy baronies of Alnwick, Warkworth and Prudhoe were in the lowlands, with only the barony of Langley nearby. Thus Dacre's estates enabled him to build up an alternative system of defence by attempting to control directly both the humbler squires who kept thieves and even the thieves themselves. The advantage of this system was of course its cheapness. Tynedale and Redesdale

[62] BL, Caligula B. II, fo. 201 (*LP* I (2nd edn) 2913); *LP* I (2nd edn) 2793.

[63] *LP* I (2nd edn) 2576 (quotation).

[64] BL, Caligula B. VI (II), fos. 542–3 (*LP* III 1986); Caligula B. I, fos. 9–10 (*LP* III 2068); *LP* III 2075.

[65] *LP* III 1169–70, 2031; PRO, SP 1/45, fo. 106 (*LP* IV 3629(4)).

[66] *LP* II 64, 158, 250, 396, 841, IV 726, 1057–8; James, *Society, politics and culture*, ch. 2.

could each raise around 500 men for military exploits, and during periods of war and 'troublous peace' Dacre unleashed them to harass the Scots.[67]

There were, however, considerable drawbacks to Dacre's patronage of the border thieves. Tynedale and Redesdale were severely overpopulated for their natural resources, so that the inhabitants were forced to supplement their income by reiving and robbery.[68] This in turn set further limits on the levels of public order attainable in the marches, despite Dacre's periodic encouragement of them to combine with the Armstrongs of Liddesdale and raid northwards. During the Anglo-Scottish war of 1522–4, for instance, the Scottish marches were so wasted by constant English raids that there were no worthwhile spoils to be had, and the border thieves perforce switched their attentions southwards.[69] In any case, some such raiding was unavoidable: Dacre did from time to time execute a few thieves in a purge, particularly when under pressure from London, but vigorous sustained action against them would have destroyed his following there.[70] Not surprisingly, therefore, there were very soon complaints from the gentry of Northumberland and Durham that Dacre failed to keep good order. These reached a climax in 1518 when the gentry had a thousand bills of complaint put in to the justices of assize, with 400 persons in attendance to justify the complaints and to exclaim against Dacre and his lieutenant, Sir Ralph Fenwick. Concurrently, mass indictments of the highlanders were organized at peace sessions in the bishopric.[71]

It is unclear how far the king and council were aware of the circumstances of Dacre rule, but this transparently organized campaign coincided with renewed suspicions by the king of the earl of Northumberland's conduct.[72] Accordingly, although Dacre was summoned to justify his proceedings, with Wolsey's support he escaped with a caution. A Dacre retainer, Christopher Threlkeld, was appointed sheriff of Northumberland, an office of enhanced importance for border administration, and counter-charges of maintenance were entertained against the organizers of the complaints.[73] In 1523–4, however, another campaign against Dacre succeeded. The Northumberland gentry eventually lodged a formal complaint with the duke of Norfolk against Dacre rule, citing particularly his failure to control the surnames of Tynedale, Redesdale, Bewcastledale, and Gilsland.[74]

Dacre was by 1524 increasingly anxious to be relieved of his unprofitable duties on the east and middle marches, alleging sickness and old age. Yet Norfolk and Wolsey were very reluctant to allow him to retire to the west marches, and he was ordered to stay at his post until he had repressed the

[67] Sir Robert Bowes's survey of the border, 1550, printed in John Hodgson, *A history of Northumberland* (3 pts. in 7 vols., Newcastle, 1810–25), III, ii, 208–9, 243; *LP* IV (ii) 4336 (2); James, *Society, politics and culture*, ch. 2. Ellis, *Pale and the Far North*, p. 7.

[68] Ellis, *Pale and the Far North*, p. 23, and the references there cited.

[69] *LP* III 3544–5, 3574, 3598; and see below. [70] Cf. *LP* IV 1482.

[71] PRO, SP 1/16, fos. 313–14v (*LP* II 4258). *LP* II 4452 seems to relate to 1524, where it is calendared again as *LP* IV (i) 682.

[72] *LP* III (i) 1; Guy, *Cardinal's court*, pp. 27, 31, 34, 119, 122, 163 n. 146.

[73] *LP* II 4547, 4562, 4676, IV 157. [74] *LP* IV (i) 133, 218, 220, 682, 687, 726, 893.

disorders which had allegedly arisen since Norfolk's departure.[75] Finally, in January 1525, after an Anglo-Scottish truce had been agreed, Dacre was summoned before Wolsey and the council in Star Chamber for investigation. He submitted, and 'confessed the bearinge of theaves and his remysnes & negligens in ponishem[t] of them, & also his famylyer and conversiunte beinge with them, knowinge them to have commytted felonye, & dyvers other his mysdoinges'. He was committed to the Fleet and forfeited his recognizances.[76] After a lengthy spell of detention, he was released in September and sent north to help negotiate an extension of the truce with the Scots. He compounded in 1,500 marks for his maladministration of justice, and was dismissed from all three wardenships, and also from the commissions of the peace.[77] In addition, he entered into a series of recognizances for his future behaviour, notably one in 5,000 marks to appear before the council on twenty days' warning and not to depart without licence, to make recompense within six years to any who might have suffered by his administration of justice, and also to assert himself to bring to justice all thieves, murderers, and outlaws within the bounds of his office with whom he had been conversant.[78] By the end of October he was dead from a fall from his horse.[79]

Dacre's removal from the wardenship was part of a more general clampdown by Cardinal Wolsey on disorders in outlying parts. His punishment in Star Chamber has been described as 'a major triumph for Wolsey's policy of [law] enforcement' which 'marked the end of the age of the medieval robber baron'.[80] In fact it altered very little. The violent disorders which began in the last year of Dacre rule continued throughout the virtual interregnum which followed, and also ensured the failure as deputy-wardens of the earls of Westmorland and Cumberland. They have been characterized by Mervyn James as a concerted attempt by the Percies to force Henry VIII to re-establish the traditional Percy ascendancy in the region by making the borders ungovernable. This view is substantially correct, but it is only half the story. Northumberland's proceedings did not precipitate a 'slow crumbling of good order which characterized [Dacre's] rule';[81] government, in fact, broke down quite quickly from late 1523, and with Dacre's connivance. The background was the Anglo-Scottish war of 1522–4, for which Dacre was superseded by the appointment of the earl of Shrewsbury as lieutenant-general and Lord Ros as warden of the east and middle marches. After the summer's campaigning, Shrewsbury and Ros went home and Dacre was left to hold the fort. Significantly, however, Dacre had recommended that Lord Percy be made warden instead.[82] In 1523 the same pattern of events recurred. This time

[75] *LP* IV (i) 133, 218, 220, 279.

[76] BL, Lansdowne MS 1, fo. 43; *LP* IV (i) 988, 1058, 1117; Guy, *Cardinal's court*, pp. 122–3, 163. n. 146. The articles of complaint by the inhabitants of Northumberland, together with Dacre's replies to each of them, are printed in Hodgson, *History of Northumberland*, II, ii, 31–40.

[77] *LP* IV 1637, 1665, 1700, 1725, 1727, 1762; Guy, *Cardinal's Court*.

[78] *PRO*, *C* 82/585 (*LP* IV (ii) 3022).

[79] *LP* IV 1727.

[80] Guy, *Cardinal's court*, p. 123.

[81] James, *Society, politics and culture*, p. 82.

[82] *LP* III 2645; Miller, *Henry VIII and the English nobility*, pp. 188–9.

Lord Percy was seriously considered for the wardenship, and the lieutenant-general, Norfolk, or earl of Surrey as he then was, initially recommended that if Percy were not then ready, Dacre should be appointed his deputy, so as to encourage the people to support him.[83] In the event, however, the campaigning lasted well into the autumn, no truce followed, and Surrey pleaded illness in order to get home for Christmas.[84] Accordingly, it was thought that a warden-general was necessary, and that 'there is no man so mete as the Lord Dacre is, aswell for his grete wisedome and experience, as for his power redy at hand to withstande excourses to be made by the Scottes'.[85] This decision was highly unwelcome to Dacre, since he had previously agreed to defend the west marches at his own cost, was troubled by gout and, for good measure, had also been appointed captain of Carlisle in response to the Scottish attempt on it the previous year. In the circumstances, however, he reluctantly agreed to serve until Easter;[86] but when Easter came, he was still not allowed to retire.

In effect, the question of governing the Anglo-Scottish borders developed into a battle of wills between the crown and the Percies and Dacres. By this time the 5th earl of Northumberland had effectively abandoned his pretensions to the wardenship and, with the support of Dacre and Surrey, was pushing the claims of his son. Accordingly, his previously obstructive attitude to Dacre as warden had given way by 1523 to moderately good relations and co-operation between them. Northumberland's brother, retainers and tenants were now attending Dacre on border rodes,[87] and there seems to have been a tacit understanding that Dacre would retire from the east and middle marches in favour of Lord Percy.[88] Indeed relations were so good that Northumberland was writing to 'my owne good lord and cousynne', asking Dacre for loans, and giving him 'faithful' thanks for his kindness to the earl's brother.[89] Then in 1525 Dacre was detained at court and subsequently dismissed in disgrace from all three wardenships. Yet Percy was still excluded from the east and middle marches by Westmorland's appointment, and in the west marches the young Lord Dacre was forced to watch an upstart earl of Cumberland consolidate Clifford influence at his expense. The result was that the king's insensitive handling of the wardenry appointments precipitated an unusual alliance between Percy and Dacre, in which the two families combined to make the marches ungovernable.

Already in late 1523, Surrey was expecting trouble from the border surnames. The garrisons had so wasted the Scottish marches that there was almost nothing left to raid, and fodder and corn were extremely scarce on the English side.[90] The men of Tynedale were required to swear and put in pledges

[83] *LP* III 3365, 3384. [84] *LP* III 3531. [85] *StP* IV 53–6.

[86] Castle Howard Archives, MS F1/5/5, fo. 29v (by kind permission of the Howard family); *LP* III 3544.

[87] BL, Caligula B. VI (II), fo. 325 (*LP* III 2955); Add. MS 24,965, fos. 150–1 (*LP* III 3097); *LP* III 3100, IV (i) 278. [88] *LP* III 2645, 3365, 3384, IV (i) 218.

[89] BL, Add. MS 24,965, fo. 10 (*LP* III 3078); *LP* III 3106, 3603.

[90] *LP* III 3544–5, 3570, 3574, 3615, Add. i 374; *StP* IV 54.

to assist the king's officers and to be of good bearing to all the king's subjects until February 1525, and Dacre was advised to administer strict justice to malefactors.[91] Not surprisingly, however, many of the borderers preferred reiving, at the risk of hanging, to going hungry. Dacre was blamed, rather unfairly, for the ensuing disorders,[92] but took vigorous action against those responsible, notably the Charltons and Ridleys, and won the king's approval.[93] In 1525, however, following Dacre's detention and disgrace, this restraining influence on the border gentry and surnames was replaced by underhand incitement of disorder. The activities of Percy retainers like Sir William Lisle of Felton, Sir William Heron of Ford, and Sir John Heron of Chipchase in stirring up the border thieves at this time are well known.[94] Yet concurrently Dacre followers were acting similarly, notably the Charltons and Ridleys. As early as March, the palatinate was reportedly much vexed by bands of up to 400 thieves from Tynedale, Bewcastledale and Gilsland, with banished men, both English and Scottish. In Northumberland 400 highlanders and Scottish thieves raided to within eight miles of Newcastle. And by May the rebels had been joined by the Armstrongs of Liddesdale and thieves from Ewesdale.[95] In Durham it was thought that the raids were incited 'upon a sinister policy' to make the king think that the country could not be quieted without the help of Lord Dacre. Allegedly, Sir Christopher Dacre could have taken the captains, Tom Charlton and William Ridley, if he had wished.[96] Tynedale was eventually subdued over the summer by a military campaign involving the laying of garrisons with a series of raids mounted by Durham levies. Even so, one or two captains still held out, and the Northumberland gentry remained unco-operative.[97] William Ridley was eventually killed in Scotland; and Hector Charlton refused to submit 'to tyme he see the seid Lord Dacre', adding that he 'did no thing sithen the departure of the Lord Dacre, his master, but that it was his pleasure and commandment', and that he would 'cause the Lord Dacre laugh when he comes home'.[98]

The king's response, however, was to appoint the duke of Richmond in mid-1525 as head of a revived council in the north and also as warden-general. The earls of Westmorland and Cumberland were appointed his deputy-wardens, but since they lacked military retinues, which were withdrawn following the truce with Scotland, they were quite unable to keep the borderers quiet: neither earl had much land or following there.[99] Finally, at the end of 1527, Henry VIII accepted the inevitable, and the old order was restored on the borders: the 6th earl of Northumberland was appointed warden of the east

[91] *LP* III 3545, 3576, 3579, 3598. See also James, *Family, lineage and civil society*, p. 54.

[92] *LP* IV (i) 133, 220, 279; Castle Howard Archives, MS F1/5/5, fo. 29v.

[93] *LP* IV (i) 328–9, 346, 405, 482, 530.

[94] James, *Society, politics and culture*, pp. 56–62, 78–82, 98–9; R. G. Eaves, *Henry VIII and James V's regency 1524–1528: a study in Anglo-Scottish diplomacy* (Lanham, 1987), ch. 7.

[95] *LP* IV (i) 1223, 1239, 1289, 1338, 1372.

[96] *LP* IV (i) 1223, 1239.

[97] *LP* IV (i) 1289, 1429, 1469, 1482, 1517.

[98] BL, Caligula B. I, fos. 46v–7 (*LP* IV (i) 1289); *LP* IV (i) 346, 405, 1223, 1289, 1429 (quotations), 1517, 2110.

[99] James, *Society, politics and culture*, pp. 80–2.

and middle marches, and William Lord Dacre was made warden of the west marches. There was, however, one significant difference. Despite the truce with Scotland, Northumberland's salary as warden was fixed at £1,000 per annum, which was far more than Dacre had received as warden-general, and recalled the inflated salaries of fifteenth-century wardens.[100] In addition, the earl was allowed an impressive following costing the king £486 a year: three officials were appointed of counsel with the warden; each march had a lieutenant and three deputies; and a large number of gentry were fee'd on the warden's recommendation – in Northumberland, Lord Ogle and five knights, thirteen esquires, and thirty-one gentlemen, plus nineteen gentlemen of Norhamshire, 69 in all.[101] Administratively, this arrangement prefigured the system of gentlemen-pensioners established by Henry VIII in 1537 after the Pilgrimage of Grace, when the king took the wardenships into his own hands and governed through deputies.[102] Yet, since Northumberland effectively nominated the fee'd gentry, the arrangement was really a thinly-disguised reversion to the traditional bastard-feudal methods of the fifteenth century. Despite the expense of the arrangement and its dangerous potential for aristocratic autonomy, the king seems to have accepted it, in the crisis which had now developed, as the most effective means of bringing the borderers to heel, and perhaps also because the 6th earl seemed so much more subservient than his father had been. Significantly, Dacre's appointment on the west marches involved only the restoration of the usual Tudor salary of £153 6*s.* 8*d.*, without any additional payments for fee'd retainers.[103]

The restoration of the traditional arrangements for border defence in 1527 prompts the question of how and why Lord Dacre fell from favour again in 1534? The political background to Dacre's arrest and trial was his comparative and temporary isolation from other northern peers and his identification, at least in the eyes of the king, with the conservative party at court. Dacre's relations with the Cliffords had been poor since Cumberland's failure as deputy-warden, but friction had also developed with Northumberland over their joint conduct of the Anglo-Scottish war of 1532–4. This isolation made Dacre vulnerable to the sort of charges levelled against him by the king's servant, Sir William Musgrave.[104] In addition, whereas Dacre's former patron at court, Wolsey, had been prepared to overlook some of Dacre's more

[100] PRO, SP 1/45, fos. 101–7 (*LP* IV (ii) 3629(2–4)). Cf. Storey, 'Wardens of the marches', pp. 606–9. Dr Miller (*Henry VIII and the English nobility*, pp. 188, 191) suggests that both Lord Darcy and the earl of Westmorland received £1,000 per annum as wardens of the east and middle marches, but this seems to be an extrapolation from Northumberland's fee. Certainly, Darcy's fee as lieutenant (1502–5) and as warden (1505–11) of the east marches had been the usual £114 6*s.* 8*d.*: PRO, SP 1/12, fo. 49 (*LP* II (i) 1365), E 101/72, file 7/1166; *LP* II (i) 2736; E 403/2558, fos. 116, 127v, 142, 164; E 405/183, fos. 79, 150.

[101] PRO, SP 1/45, fos. 101–7 (*LP* IV (ii) 3629); *LP* IV (ii) 3689, 5085, Add. i 618, 828.

[102] Bush, 'Problem of the far north', pp. 45–6.

[103] James, *Society, politics and culture*, pp. 56–62; PRO, E 101/72, file 7/1167. The evidence perhaps also supports Mr James's suggestion (ibid. pp. 81–2) that one reason why the 5th earl of Northumberland was not appointed warden, notably in 1523, was that his terms were thought too high.

[104] *LP* VI 199, 876, VII 281; James, *Society, Politics and Culture*, p. 100.

dubious activities, with the emergence of a reliable Percy earl to govern the east and middle marches, the king was much less dependent on Dacre's services. There is some slight evidence that Dacre was also suspected of disloyalty on the divorce issue: the royal commissioners who arrived at Naworth in May 1534 to seize Dacre's property and search his papers had come by way of Durham where they had treated Bishop Tunstall's property likewise. Both Tunstall and Dacre were then absent at parliament; in both cases the commissioners arrived secretly and were on the look-out for incriminating papers; and in both cases they found little and suspected that the lords had had prior warning and had destroyed the evidence.[105]

Yet the major reason for Dacre's arrest and trial was undoubtedly the suspicions harboured by the king about Dacre's conduct of the war and the nature of his dealings with the Scots. At first glance the charges in his indictment look so far-fetched as to provide a convincing explanation for Dacre's unprecedented acquittal at his trial: no English peer would have become involved in such practices. The grand jury presented that Lord Dacre and his uncle, Sir Christopher, had in the last war adhered to the Scots, the king's enemies, aiding and abetting them by holding secret meetings and making private treaties with Lord Maxwell, the lairds of Buccleuch and Hempsfield, and the Scots of Liddesdale, to the destruction of the king's true lieges in Bewcastledale and the east and middle marches. Allegedly, the aim had been to arrange mutual immunity from raids and invasions for the lands and tenants of each party, with the result that the east and middle marches under Northumberland and Bewcastledale, of which Sir William Musgrave was then captain, bore the brunt of the Scottish military effort.[106] Nevertheless, as we have seen, Dacre was, perhaps alone of the early Tudor peers, a magnate whose connections with the Scottish court and Scottish border society were such that he could conceivably have made such treasonable arrangements. In other words, in Dacre's case the charges were inherently plausible.

Moreover, the circumstances of the 1532–4 war also lend credence to this argument. Unlike Henry VIII's previous wars with Scotland, in which 'the auld alliance' between Scotland and France had raised the prospect of a full-scale Franco-Scottish invasion of the English north, the 1532–4 war was essentially a localized border war. The *casus belli* was possession of a particularly ungracious doghole on the west march, known as the Debateable Land, and the war was prolonged by the English capture of an even less hospitable peel, the Cawmills, half a mile north of Berwick, which Henry VIII then refused to surrender. The military effort on both sides was half-hearted, with the French offering to mediate; and a feature of the war was the reluctance of some Scottish borderers to participate, while the Douglas earl of Angus fought on the English side.[107] Yet such military effort as was mounted on the English side was unevenly distributed. Although the Debateable Land

[105] *LP* v 986–7 (misplaced in 1532), vii 646, 676, 679–80.
[106] Printed, *3rd Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* (London, 1842), app. ii, pp. 234–6.
[107] *LP* v 595, 1254, 1460, 1635.

lay north of Carlisle, Henry's first move was to increase, in early December 1532, the garrison on the east and middle marches from 1,000 to 2,500 men.[108] The west marches received very little additional support. In May 1532, with war looming, Dacre had reminded the king of the great decay of Carlisle castle, of which he had just been reappointed captain, and also of Bewcastle, and asked for the return of his cousin, Sir William Musgrave.[109] Henry sent £500 for repairs in September and reappointed Musgrave constable of Bewcastle; and in December he offered Dacre 300 men, either soldiers for garrisons or workmen to repair Carlisle.[110] Yet by February, Dacre had only received another £500, to be employed to the utmost annoyance of the king's enemies. And when Cromwell wrote to ask why no 'great actes, excurses, and annoysaunces' had been done in the west, as elsewhere, Dacre replied that he had still not received any reinforcements and that, since the Scottish west march had been mustered against him, he feared that, if he invaded, he would suffer more damage than he could do. He again requested troops and artillery, without which he could not raze towers, and warned Cromwell that unless reinforcements arrived, the marches were like to go to ruin.[111] In fact he got nothing more: by the time the war petered out in June, following an abstinence agreed with the Scots, military activities had cost the king £22,716 13*s*. 9½*d*., mainly for 2,500 garrison troops, but Dacre's share of this had been a mere £500.[112] And instead of thanks, he was reprimanded for his recent negligent defence of Bewcastledale and ordered to send troops to help defend the east marches after the discharge of the garrison.[113]

Thus Dacre was in effect forced to shift for himself during the war, and in these circumstances it is hardly surprising that he exploited his traditionally close links with Scottish border society for border defence. The charges against Dacre do in fact broadly correspond with what is known about his cross-border contacts immediately before the war. For instance, Dacre informed the king in May 1532 of a secret visit by Robert Charteris, laird of Hempsfield, to inquire on James V's behalf whether Dacre would join Lord Maxwell, the Scottish warden, in destroying the inhabitants of the Debateable Land and whether he would agree not to succour the inhabitants of Liddesdale if pursued by King James. Charteris returned in June with a letter from James V, to which Dacre replied; and he sent Henry both the original letter and a copy of his reply. The indictment alleged that Dacre had had secret meetings with Charteris in time of war; and subsequently Dacre confessed before the council that he had concealed a letter to him from Charteris which presumably had been discovered at Naworth by the royal commissioners.[114] Replying to Dacre in June 1532, the king had ordered him to rebuff Charteris'

[108] *LP* v 1630, 1655, Add. i 801, 831.

[109] *LP* v 1054; Durham, H of N MS C/201/3; James, *Society, politics and culture*, p. 100.

[110] *LP* v 1370(20), 1394, vi 107, 117.

[111] *LP* vi 117, 199, 299iv, 876.

[112] *LP* vi 553, 664, 876.

[113] *LP* vi 750, 876, 1152.

[114] *LP* v 1054, 1079, 1101, vii 1270; *3rd rep. D.K.P.R.*, app. ii, pp. 234–6; *StP* iv 608–9. Dacre had also cultivated good relations with the Scottish court before the war. In July 1530, for instance, he sent James V a horse worth £10: Durham, H of N MS C/201/2, m. 8d.

approach, without it appearing that he had had any specific answer from Henry, and instead to 'entertain' the men of Liddesdale with a view to their future service. Accordingly, Dacre gave Liddesdale a temporary 'special assurance', to be continued at the king's pleasure.[115] This arrangement held after the outbreak of war, and in February an army from Northumberland raiding Teviotdale issued a proclamation of assurance to the inhabitants of Liddesdale, on which some of them offered their services.[116] The indictment charged Dacre with making a private treaty of indemnity with the Scots of Liddesdale, covering all within his wardenry except Sir William Musgrave's followers, that he had prevented Musgrave from raiding the laird of Buccleuch's lands, had issued a proclamation on 12 April forbidding any raid into Scotland not previously authorized by him, and that by reason of the indemnity the Liddesdale men had on 1 July raided the king's lieges under Musgrave's command in Bewcastledale without any reprisal.[117] In fact, Dacre had on 2 July reported the raid on Bewcastledale as having been made on 27 June by the Scots of west Teviotdale, who could only have come in by Liddesdale. He alleged that his own tenants there had also been robbed, and in response to the king's subsequent charges of negligence, he replied that a reprisal raid had been made on west Teviotdale, although far off, and that in any case responsibility for keeping a look-out against that quarter rested in the first instance on the warden of the middle marches.[118] Finally, in 1535 the Scottish government likewise indicted the laird of Buccleuch for treasonable communications with Sir Christopher Dacre and other Englishmen in wartime: he too was acquitted.[119]

On the whole, therefore, what the evidence seems to suggest is that Dacre had exploited in wartime his normal influence and connections with Scottish borderers for the defence of his wardenry; and that because he lacked a paid garrison with which to take the offensive, he relied more on tacit understandings based on his previously good relations with particular Scots in a primarily defensive war. What was new in 1534 was that, exceptionally, Henry VIII chose to regard as treason, in line with Musgrave's complaints, the contacts with Scots which Dacre had normally maintained in wartime. Such contacts had always been technically treasonable, but hitherto the king had accepted them because they helped the English war effort and because Dacre's loyalty had been beyond question. In 1534, however, Henry VIII thought otherwise.

Yet, if Musgrave's charges were malicious, how was it that the matter was allowed to proceed so far? It has been suggested that behind the feud lay the development of a crown interest in the west marches, reflected in the appointment of Musgrave, a knight of the body, 'over Lord Dacre's head in 1531 as constable of Bewcastle, the isolated crown outpost on the western

[115] *StP* IV 608–11; *LP* V 1079, 1101, 1286.
[116] *LP* V 1460, VI 125.
[117] *3rd rep. D.K.P.R.*, app. ii, pp. 234–6.
[118] *StP* IV 647; *LP* VI 876.
[119] *LP* IX 64, 88; T. I. Rae, *The administration of the Scottish frontier, 1513–1603* (Edinburgh, 1966), pp. 170–2.

Border, an office which had been promised to Dacre'.[120] The position was, however, much more complicated than this, and was probably not caused by rivalry over Bewcastle. Sir John Musgrave and his son, Thomas, had been constables of Bewcastle for well over thirty years, having been granted the office in survivorship in 1493; and though William Lord Dacre was, exceptionally, given the office in December 1527 when he recovered the wardenship, this appointment does not seem to have taken effect.[121] Moreover, Sir John had also been a knight of the body, and his son was also the king's servant. They represented a junior branch of the family, not the senior line, of which Sir William's father, Sir Edward Musgrave of Edenhall, was then head. Both branches were Dacre followers, and until 1529–30 at least Sir William had been Lord William's household servant.[122]

Dacre's interest was twofold. His father had bought up lands in the district, so that the constable had the leading of his tenants. Second, as warden he had overall charge of the defence of the region, in which Bewcastle was a key outpost. Under Thomas Lord Dacre, these conflicting demands were reconciled by having all the inhabitants of Bewcastle under their captain do suit at Dacre's court of Askerton and giving Dacre the rule of the Bewcastlemen under the captain, so that the inhabitants could be kept in order.[123] Difficulties between captain and warden were perhaps inevitable in the circumstances; but despite the strains, Dacre's relations remained good, both with Sir Edward, who held land of Dacre in Westmorland, and with Thomas Musgrave, the former constable, who in 1530 was William Lord Dacre's household retainer and forester of Geltsdale in Gilsland.[124] In April 1528, Dacre had written to Wolsey that Bewcastle had been spoiled and was uninhabitable, but he offered an amicable agreement with Musgrave if the latter would surrender his patent. The warden's main interest at this time was in clearing the Armstrongs out of the Debateable Land, an operation which required the co-operation both of the Scottish warden and of a resident and active constable at Bewcastle.[125] And by 1530 the office was being exercised by Sir William Musgrave, with whom Thomas Musgrave was apparently joined.[126]

[120] James, *Society, politics and culture*, p. 100.

[121] PRO, SP 1/141, fos. 248–51 (*LP* XIII (ii), app. no. 36); *LP* I (2nd edn) 2684(86), II (i) 1084, IV (ii) 3747(6), 4134, 4531; *StP* IV 502; *Calender of patent rolls, 1485–94*, p. 429.

[122] PRO, SP 1/141, fos. 248–51 (*LP* XIII (ii), app. no. 36); STAC 2/18/269, fos. 1, 2; STAC 2/30/74; STAC 2/33/60; Durham, H of N. MSS C201/3, C/201/2, mm 1, 4, 11d; Castle Howard Archives, MS F1/5/5, fo. 29v; *Calendar of patent rolls, 1485–94*, p. 429; *Calender of close rolls, 1500–9*, nos. 582, 587; *A descriptive catalogue of ancient deeds in the Public Record Office*, III (London, 1900), pp. 497–8; *LP* I (2nd edn) 2684(86), II (i) 1084; James, *Society, politics and culture*, pp. 100, 110, 112.

[123] PRO, SP 1/36, fos. 238–45 (*LP* IV (i) 1855), SP 1/141, fos. 248–51 (*LP* XIII (ii), app. no. 36); STAC 2/18/269, fos. 1, 2; Durham, H of N MS C/201/2, m. 7.

[124] Durham, H of N MS C/201/2, mm 1, 4, 11d; James, *Society, politics and culture*, pp. 100, 110, 112.

[125] *StP* IV 488–95, 502; *LP* IV (ii) 3972, 4014, 4020, 4298. In 1524 the elder Lord Dacre had asked that Thomas Musgrave's fee as constable be increased to enable him to govern Bewcastledale properly: Castle Howard Archives, MS F1/5/5, fo. 29v.

[126] PRO, STAC 2/19/127. Sir William's father, Sir Edward Musgrave, and Thomas Musgrave were first cousins.

In principle, this was a sensible move because Sir William, now knight for the body, was better placed to control the Bewcastle Musgraves. Yet Sir William was apparently a difficult man. In 1528 Dacre had arrested Richard Graham for march treason in warning the Armstrongs of the warden's impending raid. Yet, to Dacre's great annoyance, Sir William, then undersheriff to his father, had permitted Graham to go at large in Carlisle castle, with the result that he had escaped.[127] After receiving charge of Bewcastle, Musgrave then disputed Dacre's right to particular lands there. The matter was considered by the council in Star Chamber in 1530, when Musgrave was ordered not to prevent Dacre's tenants from paying their rents.[128] Moreover, as constable, Sir William was reluctant to reside in Bewcastle. Although appointed constable in his own right in April 1531, he spent too much time at court, and his deputy, John Musgrave, failed to control his kinsmen who were at feud with the Armstrongs.[129] With war looming, Dacre insisted on Sir William's return, but the two subsequently quarrelled. The circumstances are unclear, but the evidence is suggestive. Both Dacre and Sir Edward were allied with the duke of Norfolk. Sir William, however, had connections with Thomas Cromwell, who no doubt encouraged an independent voice in the west marches. Musgrave probably used these connections to bring charges against Dacre despite his father's wishes; and he later refused Norfolk's offer to arrange a marriage between his son and Dacre's daughter as a means of healing the feud.[130] Overall, therefore, it looks as if the feud really began during the war, despite earlier difficulties between the two. Dacre would hardly have called for Musgrave's return if he had been 'a long-standing enemy of the family'.[131] Seemingly, in 1533–4 he was faced with an unexpected attack by someone he had considered an ally.

The Dacre ascendancy in the early Tudor north reflected a particular phase in crown policy towards the borders. Basically, the problems posed by the border were insoluble by the traditional methods of English government. The need for local defence and the endemic insecurity of the border region encouraged the development of more consolidated patterns of landholding than in lowland England, with strong landlord–tenant ties and local loyalties. And together with problems of geography and distance, these considerations also forced the crown to devolve more power onto local officers. Thus, viewed in a narrowly English context, such conditions were particularly favourable to the exercise of noble authority; although of course there were many parallels in other parts of the British Isles. When, after Dacre's disgrace, the king had to devise some other means of government, he found the alternatives both costly and frequently less effective. Eventually, in 1549, William Lord Dacre

[127] *StP* IV 488–95; *LP* IV (ii) 4134. [128] PRO, STAC 2/19/127.

[129] *LP* IV (ii), 4531, (iii) 6135(20), V 220(14), 477, XII (ii) 203.

[130] *LP* I (2nd edn) 2246ii, V 1370(120), 1375, 1394, VI 1313, VII 281, 380, 829, 1647; Castle Howard Archives, MS F1/5/5, fo. 29v. The circumstances of Dacre's fall thus seem remarkably similar to those surrounding the earl of Kildare's disgrace in 1534. Kildare was also allied with Norfolk, and his rivals likewise received Cromwell's backing. See S. G. Ellis, 'Thomas Cromwell and Ireland, 1532–40', in *Historical Journal*, XXIII (1980), pp. 497–519.

[131] Penry Williams, *The Tudor regime* (Oxford, 1979), p. 445.

was reappointed warden of the west march and served until 1563.[132] And whether the preferred response were a great magnate, a chain of garrisons, a regional council, or a combination of all three, each of the alternatives had associated disadvantages for royal government. A fourth possibility was to dismantle the border altogether by conquering the territory beyond, but the experience in Ireland with this strategy was distinctly unencouraging.[133] Protector Somerset tried to move the border northwards;[134] but the Union of the Crowns in 1603 which eventually solved the problem had nothing to do with strategies of government. It was a mere dynastic accident.

The Dacre phase of the crown's approach reflected the continuing early-Tudor appreciation of the dangers inherent in bolstering the resources and authority of a great noble. Instead, the king adopted a minimalist approach, reducing the warden's available resources to the point where they barely sufficed for the task in hand, and allowed him no opportunity for political interventions elsewhere. Moreover, Henry VIII seems to have assumed that individual nobles were dispensable and that the office could be exercised equally well by another, an assumption which also vitiated his policy for Ireland.[135] The king at times refused to acknowledge the simple fact that the effective exercise of these border offices was heavily dependent on a strong local following based on extensive landed possessions in the region. Dacre's chief recommendation was that he could provide tolerably effective government cheaply, and so save the king the cost of a garrison. The lowland gentry might grumble about Dacre's dubious followers and tolerance of border lawlessness, but 'good governance' and 'indifferent justice' cost money. Only in the 1530s, as memories of civil war faded and dangers of a different sort threatened, did Henry VIII decide that this was a price worth paying.

Finally, what can the rise and fall of a comparatively obscure English baronial family tell us about the wider problems of Tudor government? To judge by the traditional surveys of the Tudor period, the answer is very little. Apart from the interest aroused by Dacre's celebrated acquittal of treason in 1534 and the futile rising of Leonard Dacre in 1570, the family barely surfaces in the traditional Tudor surveys: Dacre rule of the backward north tells us nothing about the socio-political forces which were gradually transforming Tudor society further south. Yet the fact that a lord who held so sensitive an office for almost forty years and rose to be one of the wealthiest Tudor peers should be so neglected is surely cause for concern. It suggests that some of the wider perspectives on Tudor politics and government may need to be rethought – if traditional themes like the court, administrative change, and the development of parliament were so marginally relevant to the political realities of the border. Individually, the north, Wales, and English Ireland

[132] Bush, 'Problem of the far north', pp. 40–63; D. L. W. Tough, *The last years of a frontier: a history of the borders during the reign of Elizabeth* (Oxford, 1928), pp. 190–6.

[133] Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, chs. 5, 8–9.

[134] M. L. Bush, *The government policy of Protector Somerset* (London, 1975), ch. 2.

[135] Cf. Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, ch. 5.

may have been unimportant, but collectively these borderlands comprised over half the Tudor state. And Dacre's career illustrates quite vividly the strains and tensions which the expectations of 'civil society' in lowland England and the problems of governing the borderlands exerted on the crown's relations with these outlying communities. As the Tudors groped towards the consolidation of a nation-state and the political unification of the British Isles, these problems of the borders were in many ways a good deal more fundamental for Tudor government than the ephemeral alignments of faction at court.[136]

[136] I intend to explore these problems more thoroughly in a forthcoming comparative study of the borderlands under Henry VIII.