

## VI

# Northumberland Divided: Anatomy of a Sixteenth-Century Bloodfeud

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the greatest matters now depending in the countrey undetermined is first the tittle of the lands that were sir william herons of forde which dependethe in claime and controversye betwene george heron of chipchase esquier, clamynge to be heyre male, and so inheritable to the sayde lands, and thomas carre yonger sonne to jhon carre of warke and his wief cousen and heire generale to sir william heron disceased

IN *circa* 1551 this was the stated opinion of Sir Robert Bowes, then constable of the barony of Alnwick for the crown. He had been commissioned to report on the state of the Eastern Borders by Sir William Cecil, then secretary to the young King Edward VI.<sup>1</sup> The newly-established bloodfeud between the Herons and the Carrs was to become a matter of grave concern to the government because Bowes warned them that

in this controversie many of the gentlemen of Northumberland be affected and favourable aither to the one side or the other wherefore it were a good dede for quyetness of the countrey that that clame and traverse were brought to agrement and quyetnes otherwise there is like much trouble to ensue thereof

In a sensitive frontier zone internecine warfare was not uncommon, but a bloodfeud that divided the entire gentry establishment of Northumberland had serious implications for Border defence. The gentry were expected to band together for the mutual defence of their lands, so a feud of this intensity could reveal damaging weaknesses in the English defence structure to their Scottish and French enemies.

Bloodfeuds were relatively uncommon events in the Eastern Borders, when compared to their intensity in the Western Borders, and they were short term.<sup>2</sup> The Heron and Carr feud was therefore exceptional for it persisted through five decades from 1549 to 1583. The situation was similar in the Eastern Scottish

Borders where there were few bloodfeuds apart from the long-running conflagration between the lairds of Ker and Scott that lasted from 1526 to 1598.<sup>3</sup> The violence of the Border area has been somewhat exaggerated because of bloodfeuds of this intensity. Bloodfeuds occurred in other regions of sixteenth-century England and Scotland, but they were frequently blamed as a "Border mischief".<sup>4</sup>

There were many feuds in the Borders that were not as serious as a bloodfeud. These could merely be boundary difficulties between neighbours or disputes concerning property. The alliances between the lairds and gentlemen in these lesser feuds were rarely consistent probably as a result of their minor importance in local society. However, in the Heron and Carr and the Ker against Scott bloodfeuds their respective allies were constant in their support throughout successive generations.<sup>5</sup> This was probably caused by sinister political undertones in these feuds. In Scotland a social and economic division between the Eastern and Western Borders, as well as competition for dominance in local politics, was lurking behind the feud. In England there was a pronounced division between those gentlemen who still supported the Percy earls of Northumberland and the newly-ascendant gentry who opposed the Percies return to power in the north during the fifteen-fifties.<sup>6</sup> By the time the Heron and Carr feud died down in the fifteen-eighties, there was definitely a new power structure in the county of Northumberland. It is therefore

important to witness this change by looking in detail at the Heron against Carr bloodfeud.

The central contention in the Heron against Carr feud was the right to inherit the lucrative castle of Ford with its extensive estates. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Ford belonged to Sir William Heron. He made an agreement with his kinsmen, the Herons of Chipchase, that they would inherit his estates if he died without heirs.<sup>7</sup> This did not, however, constitute a deed of entail to his heirs male. Sir William specified an heir of either gender and this point would prove to be a critical issue in the later feud. In 1524 Sir William's only son William arranged to marry Margaret Forster of Adderstone. The wedding took place but William actually predeceased his father leaving only a daughter, Elizabeth.<sup>8</sup> When Sir William died in June 1535 it was Elizabeth who was declared his lawful heir at the statutory Inquisition Post Mortem that was always held following the death of a tenant-in-chief of the crown.<sup>9</sup> This decision proved to be the antecedent of the bloodfeud. The Herons of Chipchase felt that they "ought to have the inheritance" and asked the sixth earl of Northumberland to intercede on their behalf with Thomas Cromwell, chief minister to Henry VIII.<sup>10</sup> Nothing came of this request as Cromwell accepted the decision of the Inquisition Post Mortem. Elizabeth was only three years old at the time, so she became the subject of wardship. This involved selling to the highest bidder the rights to Elizabeth's estates and marriage for the duration of her minority. It could be a very cruel system, yet Elizabeth was fortunate that the Lord Chancellor, Sir Thomas Audley, purchased her wardship and resold it to Richard Johnson.<sup>11</sup> Neither gentlemen forced her into marriage before 1546 when the expiration of her wardship was due because she had reached the age of fourteen. It is unclear if Elizabeth remained at Ford for the duration of her wardship. The only eventful happening during this time was the holding of the castle by the rebellious Sir Ingram Percy in 1536, as part of the rebellion known as the Pilgrimage of Grace.<sup>12</sup>

The Herons had not attempted to buy Eli-

zabeth's wardship, probably because it was beyond their means. Nevertheless they would have been anxious for her to marry a Heron. Her mother had remarried John Heron of Thornton and as a propertied woman Elizabeth would have been expected to show deference to the wishes of her male relations when it came to deciding a marriage.<sup>13</sup> It was a very awkward situation as a marriage to one branch of the Herons would have created friction within the kindred. For example, both the Herons of Chipchase and the Herons of Meldon counter-claimed the Ford estate when Elizabeth married the partner of her choice in *circa* 1550. Her husband was Thomas Carr, a younger son of the Carrs of Hetton, who was far from being the choice of her Heron kinsmen.<sup>14</sup>

There can be little doubt that Elizabeth went against the conventions of sixteenth-century landed society by marrying for reasons of love rather than property, but she was legally free to marry whom she liked.<sup>15</sup> Thomas Carr had bravely defended her inheritance at Ford against besieging Franco-Scottish forces in 1549.<sup>16</sup> The lady was evidently impressed by Thomas and married him soon after. Thomas had been involved in the Anglo-Scottish fighting of the fifteen-forties probably as a commander of the garrison at nearby Etal Castle.<sup>17</sup> He had begun fighting the Scots in 1544 under his father John Carr, the captain of Wark Castle, and was distinguished enough to become a justice of the peace in 1547.<sup>18</sup> The Carrs of Hetton were probably a Yorkshire-based family who moved north to the barony of Alnwick in the fifteenth century at the behest of the earls of Northumberland.<sup>19</sup> Thomas's mother Margaret was a Collingwood of Eslington, which endeared him to a widespread and powerful kin group in Northumberland. The Collingwoods' support was particularly noticeable after his marriage to Elizabeth encountered overwhelming gentry opposition,<sup>20</sup> but he could also rely on the other gentry branches of the Carrs at Boulmer, Crookham, Lesbury, Newlands and Woodhall.<sup>21</sup>

As a younger son of the gentry who was denied full inheritance by the laws of pri-

mogeniture, Thomas would perhaps have been looking for an auspicious marriage to help his prospects. If this was the case he was very fortunate indeed. The Ford estates were prosperous by Border standards and by marrying Elizabeth he attempted to consolidate his arrival into the upper ranks of local gentry society. Thomas's overnight ascendancy was not, however, met with wide admiration and would in fact generate much hatred. It is very difficult to find any recognition of the fact that he had become the owner of Ford by virtue of marriage. In 1551 Sir Robert Bowes tactfully called him "larde of forde", perhaps in reference to the Scottish term laird which denoted a landed man.<sup>22</sup> Other local gentlemen were sometimes referred to as lairds as well, but this is not surprising in a Border area where commentators had knowledge of both Scots and English terminology.<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth had not been given much acknowledgement either, as a 1542 survey of the frontier had merely mentioned Ford as "the inherytance of Sir William Herons heyres".<sup>24</sup> This description would no doubt have pleased the Heron claimants! The kinsmen of Thomas Carr naturally took a different viewpoint. His father's will of 1551 clearly cites "Thomas Carre of Ford" and his uncle, Robert Collingwood of Eslington, named "Thomas Carr of Furd" as one of his executors in 1556. The only independent source of recognition is from a bailiff of the duchy of Lancaster who noted Thomas heir to William Heron in 1558, but the bailiff may himself have been a Carr ally.<sup>25</sup>

The birth of William Carr in 1551 caused the Herons' ill-feeling towards the Carrs to become widely known. It was potentially dangerous to have a divided gentry so near to the frontier and this is why Bowes mentioned the feud in his report of 1551. At this stage there were no violent incidents in the dispute. If this had just been a feud over property the Herons would surely have acted to reclaim what they thought to be theirs in 1551. Instead life actually carried on as normal, or as normally as it could in a frontier zone. Thomas seems to have taken over his father's office of captain of Wark and he relinquished this post in 1554 to

become marshal of the Berwick garrison.<sup>26</sup> An office in the Border administration would probably have given Thomas some protection against the Herons, though Giles Heron, a younger son of the Chipchase branch, was treasurer of Berwick at this time and this may have led to some friction within the garrison. The death of Elizabeth Carr in January 1555, possibly as a result of childbirth, was therefore a blow to Thomas.<sup>27</sup>

Elizabeth's death opened anew the question of who legally possessed Ford. The Herons lost no time in putting their claim and caused such concern that the Inquisition Post Mortem of Sir William Heron had to be ordered again, even though the young William Carr had been named heir to his mother.<sup>28</sup> The Carrs still had possession of the castle and this helped keep out the Herons for a little while, but Thomas obviously needed more support than this. He therefore turned to his Collingwood kinsmen for help, but they were also allied to Thomas and Henry Percy, brothers of the deceased sixth earl of Northumberland, and this gave the worried Thomas another source of help. The Collingwoods had remained loyal to the Percies, unlike many other local gentlemen who had defected from the Percies in favour of direct crown patronage. The Percies were gradually being restored to their lands and titles by Queen Mary, so the disloyal gentry were greatly concerned. They took careful note that it was Thomas who was responsible for reinstating the Percies to Prudhoe Castle in December 1555.<sup>29</sup>

When a full restoration of the Percies seemed inevitable the Herons joined the ranks of the gentry who opposed their return. They were perhaps still disgruntled at the sixth earl's failure to secure Ford for them in 1535. News that Thomas Percy was travelling north, in March 1557, to reclaim his ancestral rights forced the Herons and their gentry followers to act.<sup>30</sup> Thomas Carr, as a Percy supporter and the usurper of Ford, was to be the target of their wrath. On the night of 27 March 1557 a group of twenty men invaded Ford Castle on behalf of George Heron of Chipchase. They expelled all of Thomas's servants and kinsfolk,

though Thomas was not at home that night. Ford was, unfortunately, in a poor defensive condition in 1557 so the raid was relatively easy. These nocturnal activities were, however, only a prelude to further violence. The next day a fracas arose near the castle between Thomas's brother Robert, some of his Collingwood kinsmen and others who had been expelled from the castle on one side, against Ralph Gray of Chillingham and various Heron sympathizers who were trying to reinforce the castle. In the tumult Giles Heron was seriously hurt and his father-in-law Robert Barrow, the mayor of Berwick, was killed.<sup>31</sup> The Herons immediately demanded compensation from the Carrs for the injuries they had received. They alleged that they had been peacefully cantering by at the time of the attack. However the Carrs' primary concern was how to repossess Ford by legal means. As with any dispute there are two very different accounts of the feud in surviving correspondence.

George Heron of Chipchase accused William Collingwood of Kimmerstone and John Collingwood of Etal of the murder of Barrow.<sup>32</sup> It is unclear if these gentlemen were guilty as they do not seem to have been charged and lived on until 1603 and 1596 respectively.<sup>33</sup> Any prosecution could have further exacerbated the feud. The high sheriff of Northumberland, Sir Robert Ellerker, reported that Ralph Gray and his men were actually in "forceable and warlike arraye of armor and weapons" at the time of the attack.<sup>34</sup> Ellerker was ostensibly a successful newcomer amongst the country gentry who had accepted crown patronage and purchased Hulne Priory in 1540. This background should have made him favour the Heron (anti-Percy) faction, yet his report would seem to be favouring the Carr (pro-Percy) version of events. Perhaps he was being *politique* as there is evidence that he later received pensions from the Percies.<sup>35</sup> Ellerker's more immediate concern was to prevent the feuding parties from meeting at the Northumberland quarter sessions which were due to be held at Morpeth. After taking advice he wisely suspended the sessions and promised an enquiry instead.<sup>36</sup>

The feud had disrupted the county's justice but, as Bowes had predicted in 1551, it now threatened to allow the Scots into England through weakened Border defences. It was therefore not surprising that the privy council took such an interest in the bloodfeud. Ellerker and some of the justices of the peace plaintively reported that<sup>37</sup>

we have god knoweth lytle nedd of any cyvill or domestique division or defection amongst ourselves. . . . wee think this hundreth yeres for passed never happed there so perilous a sede of malaefull dissention and hatredd to be sowen in this contrie the most parte of gentri thereof being as it were devided into two parts.

There was no longer any middle ground. The Northumbrian gentry were either for the Herons or the Carrs. All the local officials could do was to try and bind the leaders of either side to keep the peace, but there were difficulties here as well. Ellerker the sheriff was seemingly inclined towards the Percies, whilst the warden of the East and Middle Marches, Lord Wharton, was a kinsman of the Herons through marriage with the Forsters.<sup>38</sup>

As impartiality in the locality was impossible, the privy council asked the earl of Westmorland and the bishop of Durham to help the investigation. They were instructed to put the party that had held Ford for the preceding three years back into possession of it.<sup>39</sup> Thomas Carr and George Heron also travelled to London to appear in person before the privy council in May 1557 and this seemed to quieten the feud.<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Carr's Inquisition Post Mortem was re-ordered and an agreement was reached between Carr and Heron, whereby the manor of Simonburn was ceded to Heron "onely for quietness sake".<sup>41</sup> This would not be enough to appease the Herons in the long term, but it settled matters for 1557 and nothing more was heard of the feud until 1558. Thomas probably returned to Ford though he would have been too busy concentrating on Border matters to settle there permanently. He was a Border commissioner and was praised by Sir Henry Percy in December 1557, for his bravery whilst fighting the Scots.<sup>42</sup>

The seventh earl of Northumberland valued Thomas as highly as his brother Sir Henry Percy, but the new earl also chose to champion Carr's claim to Ford to avenge his enemies within the county. The earl's return to the north had been less than spectacular owing to the damaging twenty-year interregnum in Percy rule. Support from Carr and his Collingwood kinsmen would thus have been much appreciated.<sup>43</sup> At such a critical time in Anglo-Scottish relations the earl could not leave the Border. On 16 January 1558 the earl instructed Thomas Carr to go to London on his behalf to beg for more money and soldiers to fight the Scots. Provision was also made to transfer Thomas's office of marshal to Lord Eure for the duration of his absence.<sup>44</sup> Thomas's mission was therefore well publicized in advance and it gave the more villainous members of the Heron kindred the opportunity they had been waiting for.

There were some isolated stretches on the Great North Road to the south of Berwick and attacks on travellers were not unknown. Details of what really happened to Thomas Carr will never be known, but as he travelled southwards on 25 January he was callously murdered.<sup>45</sup> Queen Mary and her privy council were shocked by the incident, for even in a frontier region where violent deaths did happen the murder of a loyal gentleman was repugnant. On 31 January the earl of Northumberland was ordered "by all wayes and meanes he possibly can to boulte out who murdered Thomas Carre".<sup>46</sup> The queen was so moved by the tragedy that had befallen young William Carr that she sanctioned the immediate grant of his wardship to his uncle, John Carr of Hetton. This was a most unusual step as wardships were always handled by the Court of Wards, invariably for a profit.<sup>47</sup>

The earl lost no time in searching for the murderers of his valued ally. He was, at first, praised by the privy council for his swift reaction, but he would later be censured by the same body for being over-zealous.<sup>48</sup> The earl naturally suspected George Heron of Chipchase, but he now had a golden opportunity to strike back at his enemies via the murder

investigations.<sup>49</sup> Without any substantial evidence he publicly declared that Heron and Richard Lisle of Bedlington were the murderers.<sup>50</sup> Their goods were then seized by the earl of Westmorland, who was helping the inquiry. However, as only convicted felons' goods could be confiscated, the privy council ordered the earl to return them.<sup>51</sup> Now that an unbiased opinion could not be guaranteed from anyone living in the north, the privy council despatched the bishop of Ely and Sir William Cordell, the master of the rolls, to investigate the murder and enforce a pacification in the bloodfeud.<sup>52</sup> A temporary peace had been agreed by August 1558, but the privy council remained suitably skeptical about it by re-ordering Elizabeth Carr's Inquisition Post Mortem three more times.<sup>53</sup>

The need for a more permanent solution to the feud was evident in a report of December 1558 that noted Border defences still being disrupted by the feud.<sup>54</sup>

In order that countreymen who are bound to assist the warden in all frays may do the more readily it is necessary that there be a settlement of the title in dispute between the Herons and the Carres who have drawn the Fosters and others into their quarrel to the great hindrance of service. . . .

The factions were as strong as ever, though the violence of the feud abated. George Heron of Chipchase may not have killed Carr, but his henchmen undoubtedly did on his orders. It took until 1561 to discover the real culprits, but even then the Council of the North were reluctant to prosecute them for the murder lest it inflame the passions of the feud once more.<sup>55</sup> Roger Heron, Gregory Ogle and his servant Wilson were therefore only tried for crimes that took place after the 1558 murder.

The Herons did not really deserve this immunity as they were less than model citizens. They were involved in various feuds including one against the Ellerkers and Lisles that was a splinter of the Carr dispute. Ralph Lisle had been killed by the Herons possibly because he was the brother-in-law of Robert Carr of Swarland, who was in turn the brother of Thomas

Carr. The Lisles retaliated by murdering Richard Heron whilst he was praying in Felton Church.<sup>56</sup> Neither party was renowned for respecting the sanctity of a church. It was these same protagonists who caused a disruption at Rothbury in 1563 during a sermon given by the famous preacher of the north, Bernard Gilpin. Gilpin would not tolerate feuding parties drawing their swords during his service, so he bravely came down from the pulpit and enacted a pacification whilst they all remained in the church. The two sides in the feud normally tried to avoid going to the same church services, but Gilpin's reputation had caused them both to reappear on that day. A furious Gilpin "Spent the rest of the allotted time which remained in disgracing that barbarous and bloody custome of theirs. . . ."<sup>57</sup>

George Heron of Chipchase did, nevertheless, reform his character after being granted a pardon in 1559. He went on to give good service on the Border as keeper of Tynedale and Redesdale, for which he was knighted. He undoubtedly benefited from becoming the brother-in-law of the all powerful Sir John Forster, who was warden of the English Middle March for thirty-five years. Heron had married Sir John's sister Margaret after she had been widowed for the second time. Margaret was of course the mother of the deceased Elizabeth Carr and thus the grandmother of William Carr of Ford.<sup>58</sup> Heron never laid claim to Ford again during his lifetime, possibly as a result of his marriage to Margaret. He was killed at a disastrous Border meeting in 1575, known as the Redeswire Fray.<sup>59</sup> There were other reasons for Heron's decision not to push his claim to Ford. He had come to an understanding in 1559 with John Carr of Hetton, the guardian of William Carr. This involved the future marriage of William to a Heron. Marriages were often used to appease Border bloodfeuds, but neither the Herons, nor the Carrs were particularly happy about this arrangement. It was enough, however, to allow John and Robert Carr to be pardoned for their involvement in the 1557 fracas.<sup>60</sup> The departure of the earl of Northumberland from the Borders in 1559 and the defeat of the Northern

Rebellion in 1569–70 also took some heat out of the feud as these two events came to symbolize the triumph of the Forster faction over the Percies.<sup>61</sup> The feud could possibly have ended with George's generation, if his son and heir John Heron had not been harbouring revenge.

William Carr was finally declared heir to his mother in 1560 at the age of nine, though there were no Herons present at the Inquisition Post Mortem that decided this.<sup>62</sup> Even without Simonburn the Ford estates were still widespread as they included various parcels of land as well as the manors of Beanley, Ford and Twizel. They probably returned over £1100 a year.<sup>63</sup> William, as a male heir, had to remain in wardship until he was twenty-one, whereupon he was licenced to enter his lands after paying Queen Elizabeth a large entry fee.<sup>64</sup> It was noticeable that the Herons did not claim or invade Ford during William's minority. John Carr of Hetton would have been a compassionate guardian to his nephew, but he was also concerned to keep William in the Catholic faith. Many gentry families in Northumberland refused to accept the Protestant church settlement of 1559 and therefore became recusants by refusing to go to services in the reformed church.<sup>65</sup> William's intended Heron brides died or married elsewhere, so his uncle arranged his marriage to the Catholic Ursula Brandling, daughter of Henry Brandling of Newcastle and his wife Ursula Buckton in 1571. There was already a close kinship connection between the families as Ursula's mother had been married three times, firstly to John Collingwood of Eslington, secondly to John Carr of Hetton (William's grandfather) and lastly to Henry Brandling.<sup>66</sup>

The Carrs adherence to Catholicism went beyond non-attendance at their local parish church. Both Robert Carr of Swarland and his brother William Carr, who were uncles of William Carr of Ford, joined the Northern Rebellion of 1569–70. As loyal Percy followers they probably would have joined the rising as its leaders were the earls of Northumberland and Westmorland, but the earls' call to restore Catholicism was perhaps a greater incentive.<sup>67</sup> Few tenants from the earl of Northumberland's

barony of Alnwick joined the rising, which again reflected the success of the anti-Percy faction in the area. The Carrs involvement was exceptionally loyal as they both went into exile with the rebel earls. William was a household servant to the countess of Northumberland, but he had a serious disagreement with her at Brussels in January 1572 and went to stay with the Catholic exiles at Louvain instead. William agreed to return to England as an undercover agent for Catholicism, though it is unclear if he was an ordained priest or just a messenger. He sailed to Scotland in the summer of 1572 and tried to enter England at Berwick disguised as a Scot. By choosing to go through Berwick William was either setting himself up for martyrdom, or was just *naive*. As a native Borderer he could have quite easily slipped across the frontier unnoticed, but he went straight to Berwick where the governor, Lord Hunsdon, was on the lookout for Catholic agents. Hunsdon's subsequent report is interesting and reflects his strongly Protestant views.<sup>68</sup>

I found him to be an Englishman and examined him. He denied having any letters whereupon I had him searched and found a number sewn up in his hose besides beads, agnus Deis, friars girdles for women in labour. . . . He had a great cloak bag in Tweedmouth wherein I found a great sort of English books with English litanies as far from God's words as ours is to it with a number of hypocritical and abominable idolatrous pictures.

Hunsdon probably tortured William as well, for he wanted to "put him to the rack a little" and debated whether to hang him in Berwick or send him to the Newcastle assizes.<sup>69</sup> Robert Carr of Swarland was more fortunate than his brother. He was pardoned for his involvement in the rebellion in 1575, though he was later outlawed for smuggling seminary priests across the Border.<sup>70</sup>

Ford Castle was noted as being a receiving centre for Jesuit priests, so Robert may well have used this as a base with his nephew William's consent.<sup>71</sup> The Carrs recusancy was a problem for the authorities, but they remained unconcerned about their religious adherence. A far more important concern for William was

the resurgence of the Herons' interest in Ford. The sixteen-year truce came to an end after the death of Sir George Heron in 1575. Sir George had died seized of various lands including the manor of Simonburn that Thomas Carr had granted him in 1557, but there was no mention of Ford.<sup>72</sup> His forty-year-old son and heir John Heron of Chipchase had held back his vengeance against the Carrs whilst his father lived, but he now renewed the controversy on 11 October 1576, when he solemnly conveyed the castle and manor of Ford to his son Cuthbert.<sup>73</sup> John, of course, had no authority whatsoever to make this indenture, but it was designed for maximum provocation of the Carrs and probably of his stepmother Margaret as well. John followed this by invading Ford on 18 February 1577 to give possession to Cuthbert.

William Carr, fearing that the Herons were seeking the final overthrow of his family, was forced to go to the Court of Chancery in London to reclaim his lands from this new generation of Heron aggressors. The details of the case are the most important surviving record of the feud as they recount details of previous stages in the feud.<sup>74</sup> William knew that a local jury would back the Herons as the anti-Percy faction was still very strong in the county. Chancery offered a hope of impartial justice, but it was to be a long court case. The Herons resorted to every delaying tactic they could muster and the death of the Lord Chancellor in February 1579 did not help matters. Both sides alleged that the other had broken the agreements of 1557 and 1559. There was some truth in this as the Herons had murdered a kinsman of the Carrs.<sup>75</sup> William had also failed to marry a Heron, yet this had suspiciously not been an issue until the Chancery case as Sir George Heron had apparently sworn that a Heron "should never marrie a Carre so longe as he lyved". However this issue was peripheral to the main legal argument.

The central point of the case was whether the Herons had been made heirs male to Sir William Heron of Ford by a deed of entail dated 1522. The Herons produced such a docu-

ment, but it "was then thought very suspicious and very insufficient to convey any title to the said John Heron defendant". The conniving Herons then insisted that another branch of their family had the correct deed and this caused another lengthy delay in the proceedings. The case was to be heard again at Easter 1581 and sensing defeat John Heron asked his step-uncle Sir John Forster to intervene. Forster thus requested another delay as he supposedly needed John in the Borders, but Lord Hunsdon as warden of the East March confirmed that Heron's presence was not required. Hunsdon could be said to be an honest observer in this case as he was both anti-Percy and anti-Catholic without being party to the Forster faction in Northumberland. The verdict was finally announced on 16 June 1581, though John Heron declined to attend and sent Robert Roddam of Roddam in his place.

The Lord Chancellor decreed that Elizabeth Carr had always been the lawful heir to the Ford estate. The entail deed provided by the Herons was nothing but a forgery. In fact the forger employed by the Herons had made some obvious mistakes. As for the seal "the back thereof was newe waxe and the forepart thereof to be an olde seale of some other evidence" and one of the "feofees was deade before the date of the saide deede by the space of fyftene years". The Herons had been branded as cheats, but they were allowed to keep the manor of Simonburn. They were also ordered never to claim Ford again and just to add to their disgrace they were ordered to pay William £40 costs.<sup>76</sup>

If William was elated by this vindication of his rights to Ford, then his euphoria was to be short-lived. The case had stirred up the divisions within the county again. A report of 1579 hinted that the gentry would rather fight amongst themselves than against any Border raiders as the feud had<sup>77</sup>

raised severall factions and sett on so against an other as neyther are in service in field against there enemyes nor at home in fraye or followinge for mutual defence, one will willinglie joyne with an other but rather thene covertlie wyshe and seeke to overthrowe thother

William had still to overcome the fact that in Northumberland the Herons' "kyndred allyances and friendshippe in the saide countyes were great".<sup>78</sup> In fact when William took his Chancery decree to the sheriff of Northumberland to be enacted he met with supreme obstruction. The sheriff was none other than John Heron of Chipchase! He therefore had to go back to the Court of Chancery, who asked the county coroners to intercede and report back to them. The coroners, Robert Roddam and Ralph Whitfield, were naturally allied to John Heron so they did nothing to help William. In desperation William finally took his case to the Court of Star Chamber in 1583, where he accused Heron of bribing the coroners. Roddam and Whitfield were indignant and denied the charges.<sup>79</sup> Justice was evidently far from being fair and equitable in sixteenth-century Northumberland, especially if you were an enemy of the Forster faction.

It is not clear to whom the tenants of Ford were paying their rent at this time. William claimed that he was being utterly impoverished by all the Herons' contempt of Chancery, but he was probably more scared of their lingering strength in the county. He could no longer turn to his Carr of Hetton relations as they had lost their lands through mortgages in the fifteen-seventies.<sup>80</sup> William did, however, find that Lord Hunsdon was sympathetic to his plight and was willing to overlook their religious differences.<sup>81</sup> His uncle Robert even offered to spy for Sir Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth's secretary of state and chief intelligence gatherer. Robert was effectively betraying all his recusant contacts to Walsingham and this could have alienated the Carrs from their Collingwood kinsmen who were mostly recusants. Furthermore Ralph Carr, William's brother, was a respected gentleman pensioner of the Berwick garrison and this may have influenced Hunsdon's decision to help him.<sup>82</sup>

William had cultivated Hunsdon's support in good time to protect his family from yet more misfortune. In early January 1589 William died from an illness that may have been precipitated by the stress of the court case. He was aged thirty-seven and knowing that he was about to



die he hurriedly leased his lands at Crookham to his brother Ralph in return for three marriage portions of £200 to be given to his daughters Elizabeth, Jane and Eleanor. On the very same day he put his heir Thomas, aged eleven, and his younger son William into the safe custody of Lord Hunsdon for the duration of their minority along with all rights to their lands and marriage. Despite his urgency, William did not forget to protect his grandmother's jointure. Margaret Heron had lived to a great age and had now witnessed the demise of her daughter, son-in-law and grandson.<sup>83</sup>

William's children were therefore brought up as Protestants in Berwick. He had chosen to sacrifice their allegiance to Catholicism in order to protect them from the Herons. His daughters married Protestants though young William later reverted back to Catholicism.<sup>84</sup> William Carr senior had only ever managed to become a commissioner for local inquisitions,<sup>85</sup> but his sons Thomas and William would become well-established members of the gentry elite. This recognition had been denied to both William and his father Thomas. In 1629 Thomas Carr of Ford became sheriff and along with his brother William he was a gentleman of the bedchamber to King James VI and I.<sup>86</sup> The second Thomas Carr of Ford was untroubled in his possession of the estate. After the many years of disruption life seems to have carried on without violence at Ford, which reverted to having its market every Thursday and a fair twice a year.<sup>87</sup>

The Carrs had survived revenge, rebellion and recusancy in the sixteenth-century. Their long-running bloodfeud with the Herons had highlighted more than a property dispute. It had come to symbolize the countywide division between the old order of Percy adherents and the new order of independent gentry supported by direct crown patronage. Thomas Carr and Elizabeth Heron could not have anticipated that their marriage would lead to such a long-lasting division within the county. The gentry's diverging allegiance would probably have surfaced in the tense middle decades of the sixteenth century with or without their marriage,

but they became convenient scapegoats for the gentry's wrath. The ensuing bloodfeud was also blamed for another fault in the Borders that would have occurred quite independently from it. This was the decline in the traditional gentry network for defending the Borders against the Scots, giving the obligatory fray to raiders and chasing stolen goods. There must also have been some jealousy of Thomas Carr's ascendancy amongst less successful Northumbrian gentlemen, though this sentiment was never publicly voiced. Finally, it is perhaps significant that the triumph of the anti-Percy or Forster faction after the abortive rising in 1569 failed to abate the gentry's wrath against the Carrs. The feud therefore ended as it had begun with many gentlemen united against any recognition of the Carrs' claim to Ford.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>P(ublic) R(ecord) O(ffice) State Paper Office: State Papers Domestic Addenda SP15/4/30 f. 93v, hereafter PRO SP15/4/30. The original spelling has been left unchanged as it may hint at Bowes' north country accent.

<sup>2</sup>M. M. Meikle, "Lairds and Gentlemen: a study of the landed families of the Eastern Anglo-Scottish Borders, circa 1540–1603" (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1989) pp. 386–7, 675–9; hereafter: Meikle, thesis.

<sup>3</sup>Meikle, thesis, pp. 375–80, 688.

<sup>4</sup>*C(alendar of) S(tate) P(apers relating to) S(cotland)*, xii, no. 441. K. M. Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland 1573–1625* (Edinburgh 1986). L. Stone, "Interpersonal Violence in English Society, 1300–1900", *Past and Present*, 101 (1983), pp. 22–33.

<sup>5</sup>Meikle, thesis, pp. 688–722.

<sup>6</sup>The earls of Northumberland were non-resident in Northumberland for much of the sixteenth century. Their title was in abeyance from 1537 to 1557 and they lived further south from 1559 onwards. G. R. Batho, "The Percies and Alnwick Castle 1557–1632", *Archaeologia Aeliana*, fourth series, 35 (1957), 48–63 (pp. 48–52). M. E. James, "Estate Accounts of the earls of Northumberland 1562–1637", *Surtees Society*, 163 (1948), xiv–xxiii. Meikle, thesis, pp. 135–42.

<sup>7</sup>PRO Chancery Decree Rolls C78/54 no. 4, hereafter PRO C78/54/4.

<sup>8</sup>B(ritish) L(ibrary) Lansdowne MSS 326 f. 44.

<sup>9</sup> PRO Chancery: Inquisitions Post Mortem Series II C142/58/116, hereafter PRO Chancery Inq.P.M.

<sup>10</sup> *L(etters and) P(apers of) Hen(ry) VIII*, ix, no. 641; xii (I), no. 1090.

<sup>11</sup> *LP Hen VIII*, ix no. 1082; xii (I), p. 513.

<sup>12</sup> *LP Hen VIII*, xii (I), no. 1090. M. H. and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace 1536–7* (Cambridge 1915).

<sup>13</sup> L. A. Pollock, “‘Teach her to live under obedience’: the making of women in the upper ranks of early modern England”, *Continuity and Change*, 4 (1989), pp. 231–58.

<sup>14</sup> PRO SP15/4/30 f. 93v.

<sup>15</sup> J. Hurstfield, *The Queen’s Wards* (London 1958), p. 137.

<sup>16</sup> G. Ridpath, *The Border History of England and Scotland* (Edinburgh 1979), p. 390.

<sup>17</sup> R. E. and C. E. Carr, *The History of the Family of Carr*, ii (London 1894), p. 88. This is not a very reliable source!

<sup>18</sup> A son of John Carr is credited with the raid on Greenlaw for 17 July 1544. *C(alendar of) P(atent) R(olls)*, 1547–8, p. 87. *LP Hen VIII*, xix (II), no. 625.

<sup>19</sup> Other Northumbrian gentry families had similar origins, such as the Ellerkers of Hulne, Lawsons of Rock, Proctors of Shawdon and Salkelds of Hulne Park. (Duke of Northumberland) Syon MSS AII/8 f. 49v. Meikle, thesis, pp. 596–7, 610, 618, 622.

<sup>20</sup> The Collingwoods of gentry rank were to be found at Abberwick, Barton, Bewick, Branton, Broome Park, East Ditchburn, Eslington (the head of the kindred), Etal, Farnham, Great Ryle, Ingram, Kimmerston, Little Ryle, Shipley, Thornton, Thrunton and Titlington. Meikle, thesis, pp. 590–6.

<sup>21</sup> Meikle, thesis, pp. 588–9.

<sup>22</sup> PRO SP15/4/30 f. 75r.

<sup>23</sup> Other examples being Strother of Kirknewton, Selby of Pawston, Morton of Murton and Clennell of Clennell etc. *C(alendar of) B(order) P(apers)*, ii, no. 77. *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, vi, p. 408. *Surtees Society*, 112 (1906), p. 161.

<sup>24</sup> BL Cotton MSS, Caligula, B VIII f. 73.

<sup>25</sup> D(urham) P(robate) R(egistry of) W(ills) 1551–7. PRO Duchy of Lancaster: Ministers’ Accounts DL29/360/5956. *Surtees Society*, 2 (1835), p. 148.

<sup>26</sup> *A(cts of the) P(riory) C(ouncil)*, v, pp. 21, 200.

<sup>27</sup> PRO Court of Wards and Liveries: Inquisitions Post Mortem WARD7/8/42.

<sup>28</sup> *CPR*, 1555–7, p. 372.

<sup>29</sup> *APC*, v, p. 200.

<sup>30</sup> The earl of Northumberland was officially ennobled on 1 May 1557. G. E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage* (London 1936), ix, p. 728.

<sup>31</sup> L(ambeth) P(alace) MSS 696 ff. 83–4.

<sup>32</sup> LP MSS 696, f. 95.

<sup>33</sup> Meikle, thesis, pp. 593–4.

<sup>34</sup> LP MSS 3195 ff. 6, 8–9.

<sup>35</sup> PRO Special Collections: Ministers’ Accounts SC6/HenVIII/7364. *CPR*, 1550–3, p. 186. *Surtees Society*, 163, p. 45.

<sup>36</sup> LP MSS 3195 ff. 5, 12.

<sup>37</sup> LP MSS 3195 ff. 8–9.

<sup>38</sup> LP MSS 3195 f. 6. Lord Wharton’s sister had married Thomas Forster of Adderstone, whose sister had married George Heron of Chipchase. E. Bates, *Northumberland County History*, i, p. 228.

<sup>39</sup> *APC*, vi, pp. 72–3.

<sup>40</sup> *APC*, vi, pp. 86–7.

<sup>41</sup> PRO Chancery Inq.P.M. C142/131/159; Court of Star Chamber: Elizabeth I STAC5 C16/4, hereafter STAC5 C16/4.

<sup>42</sup> *APC*, vi, p. 261. *CPR*, 1557–8, p. 250. *C(alendar of) S(tate) P(apers) D(omestic) Add(enda)*, 1547–65, p. 464.

<sup>43</sup> For further discussion of the power of the Forster faction in sixteenth-century Northumberland see Meikle, “A Godly Rogue: the career of Sir John Forster, an Elizabethan Border warden”, *Northern History*, 28 (1992), forthcoming.

<sup>44</sup> *APC*, vi, p. 243. *CSPDAdd*, 1547–65, p. 467.

<sup>45</sup> PRO Chancery Inq.P.M. C142/131/159.

<sup>46</sup> *APC*, vi, pp. 254–5.

<sup>47</sup> Hurstfield, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>48</sup> *APC*, vi, pp. 264–5, 284.

<sup>49</sup> James, op. cit., xviii–xix.

<sup>50</sup> *APC*, vi, pp. 277–8, 284.

<sup>51</sup> *APC*, vi, pp. 297–8.

<sup>52</sup> *APC*, vi, p. 331. *CSPDAdd*, 1547–65, p. 476.

<sup>53</sup> *APC*, vi, p. 360. *CPR*, 1557–8, p. 365; 1558–9, p. 270.

<sup>54</sup> *C(alendar of) S(tate) P(apers) For(eign)*, 1558–9, no. 168.

<sup>55</sup> *CSPFor*, 1561–2, no. 368.

<sup>56</sup> PRO C78/54/4. *CPR*, 1566–9, pp. 261–2. *Historical Manuscripts Commission*, Rutland, i, p. 86.

<sup>57</sup> G. Carleton, *The Life of Bernard Gilpin, a man most holy and renowned among the Northerne English* (London 1629), pp. 27–8. D. Marcombe, “Bernard Gilpin: Anatomy of an Elizabethan Legend”, *Northern History*, 16 (1980), pp. 20–39.

<sup>58</sup> See note 38 above. *CPR*, 1558–60, p. 245.

<sup>59</sup> *CSPFor*, 1575–7, nos. 220, 222.

<sup>60</sup> *CPR*, 1558–60, p. 245. *C(alendar of) S(tate) P(apers) Dom(estic)*, 1547–80, p. 132.

<sup>61</sup> *CSPFor*, 1559–60, nos 187, 274.

<sup>62</sup> PRO Chancery Inq.P.M. C142/131/159. There were some Collingwoods on the jury.

<sup>63</sup> PRO Court of Wards and Liveries: Miscellaneous WARD9/438 f. 54.

<sup>64</sup> PRO C78/54/4. *CPR*, 1572–5, p. 414.

<sup>65</sup> Meikle, thesis, pp. 320–42.

<sup>66</sup> E. Walsh and A. Forster, “The recusancy of the Brandlings”, *Recusant History*, 10 (1969–70), 35–64 (pp. 39–40).

<sup>67</sup> *CSPScot*, iii, no. 84.

<sup>68</sup> *CSPDAdd*, 1566–79, pp. 383–4, 416.

<sup>69</sup> *CSPDAdd*, 1566–79, p. 416. *CSPFor*, 1572–4, no. 472.

<sup>70</sup> *CBP*, i, no. 458. *CPR*, 1572–5, p. 504.

<sup>71</sup> *CBP*, i, nos. 458, 540.

<sup>72</sup> PRO Chancery Inq.P.M. C142/174/55.

<sup>73</sup> BL Lansdowne MSS 326 f. 44.

<sup>74</sup> PRO C78/54/4.

<sup>75</sup> See note 56 above.

<sup>76</sup> PRO C78/54/4.

<sup>77</sup> PRO State Paper Office: State Papers Borders SP59/20/80.

<sup>78</sup> PRO STAC5 C16/4.

<sup>79</sup> PRO STAC5 C16/4.

<sup>80</sup> The long peace of Elizabeth’s reign had led to a dramatic drop in the Carrs’ income as there was less chance of Border booty. Hetton was mortgaged in

1574 and again in 1578 to Robert Carr of Sleaford, Lincolnshire, a distant relation. John Carr therefore followed the family tradition of serving in military campaigns and went to fight overseas. He died whilst serving under Sir Francis Drake at Lisbon in 1589. As he died overseas there was a great debate about the authenticity of his will. PRO Court of Common Pleas: Feet of Fines CP25/2/192 MICH 16 & 17 Eliz. DPRW 1589 (I). Durham Diocesan Registry V, Consistory Court Deposition Books, 5, ff. 35v, 37r–38r.

<sup>81</sup> *CBP*, i, no. 541. *CSPDAdd*, 1580–1625, p. 231.

<sup>82</sup> *CBP*, i, nos. 540, 545. Meikle, thesis, pp. 657–62.

<sup>83</sup> PRO Chancery Inq.P.M. C142/227/195.

<sup>84</sup> C. Talbot, ed., “Miscellanae”, *Catholic Record Society*, 53 (1960), p. 152.

<sup>85</sup> PRO Patent Rolls C66/1308 m 6d. *CPR*, 1572–5, P. 438.

<sup>86</sup> *CSPDom*, 1619–23, pp. 354, 432, 565, 568. C. H. Hunter Blair, “The Sheriffs of Northumberland, 1603–1943”, *Archaeologia Aeliana*, fourth series, 21 (1943), 1–92 (p. 7)

<sup>87</sup> Northumberland Record Office MSS 1216/A1/1.

