VII

Lordship, Castles and Locality: Thomas of Lancaster, Dunstanburgh Castle and the Lancastrian Affinity in Northumberland, 1296–1322[1]

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> As you come along the shore from Embleton a crescent of black cliffs rises a hundred feet straight out of the waves to form the northern rampart of the castle. You almost expect to be challenged by the basalt giants that are drawn up like so many warders round the base of the stately Lilburn Tower, and might reasonably conclude that the shattered turrets of the Great Gatehouse were sustained by power of enchantment, so much do their fantastic outlines, peering mysteriously over the green slope of the western escarpment, seem to set all known principles of gravitation at defiance.[2]

The somewhat purple prose of Cadwallader Bates, the Victorian historian of Northumberland's castles, stands as a testimonial to the dramatic visual impact of Dunstanburgh castle, a building which – some seven centuries later – still serves as an awesome statement in stone of the power of its builder, Thomas, earl of Lancaster. Construction started in May 1313,[3] on a site that was entirely devoid of settlement; Lancaster was thus free to build exactly the castle that best suited and expressed his interests. The building which his masons came up with was certainly magnificent enough to emphasise the earl's authority and wealth. Whilst it lacked the concentric defences of the Welsh castles built by Edward I, earl Thomas' uncle, Dunstanburgh's enormous state-of-the-art twin-towered gatehouse was every bit as impressive as those of Caernarfon or Harlech – and it was the only such gatehouse in North-East England, its round towers bucking the northern preference for square towers.[4] Furthermore, the artifice of Thomas' masons was enhanced by nature, for the site chosen for the castle is itself immensely impressive – as Bates so splendidly describes. Even now, Dunstanburgh still dominates the Northumbrian coast, being visible for miles; and the long coastal track from Craster on which visitors approached the castle (and still approach it today) would have served to emphasise this domination. It was certainly no less prominent than the equally spectacularly sited royal castle of Bamburgh, a few miles up the coast – and there can be no doubt that such a comparison was very much in its builder's mind.[5] However, whilst Dunstanburgh undoubtedly served as an impressive statement of Lancaster's lordship in Northumberland, the reality of this lordship was rather less than such an image might imply; for despite the massive investment necessary to build Dunstanburgh castle, Thomas of Lancaster made no attempt to turn his local lordship into a local hegemony.

The barony of Embleton (Lancaster's only Northumbrian estate) had originally been acquired by Simon de Montfort in 1255 from a family of impeccably Northumbrian descent, by means of an exchange of lands – an exchange in which, typically, de Montfort got much the better deal. His new acquisition complemented his existing interest in the county, stemming from a royal grant of the wardship of the new-born Gilbert de Umfraville in June 1245, which brought him the temporary control of the barony of Prudhoe (and Umfraville was not due to come of age until 1266). De Montfort had gone to some trouble to develop Embleton, purchasing various isolated tenements in the neighbourhood, and by acquiring the grant of a market and fair, as well as a licence to empark a wood at Shipley.[6] Following de Montfort's

demise at Evesham, and the consequent forfeiture of his lands, Embleton was granted to the king's younger son, Edmund, earl of Lancaster, in April 1269. Thomas, Edmund's son, thus inherited the barony on his father's death in 1296; but until the building of Dunstanburgh, the only interest he showed in his Northumbrian lands was in obtaining a grant of free warren on his demesne at Stamford, in February 1306.[7] Certainly, he appears to have made little effort to build up any power base amongst the Northumbrian gentry.

At one time or another, Lancaster did retain some very prominent Northumbrian magnates, including John de Clavering, lord of Warkworth (retained 'en pees et Guerre' at 100 marks a year, and who served on one occasion with twenty men-at-arms); and Robert de Umfraville, earl of Angus and lord of Prudhoe and the liberty of Redesdale (who received a similar fee for similar service).[8] Both of them had been associated with the 1312 campaign against Gaveston, but neither were close, nor long-term, adherents. Rather more closely associated with the earl were his Northumbrian retainers, Sir John de Eure, Sir John de Lilleburn and Sir Odinel de Heron. Eure was retained by the earl for life in December 1317, for a fee of forty marks *per annum*.[9] Lilleburn was in receipt of a rent of twenty marks, and served the earl in a variety of capacities; Heron received an annuity of ten pounds, and he appears at Pontefract in August 1320, in the company of several prominent Lancastrian retainers, as a witness to a deed of Sir Robert Holand granting lands in Durham to earl Thomas.[10] All three were pardoned as adherents of the earl in November 1318, under the terms of the 'Treaty of Leake'.[11]

However, both Eure and Lilleburn appear to have been retained only after they had already rebelled against the king. John de Eure was a knight of the royal household; but this did not prevent his North Yorkshire manor of Stokesley from being illegally seized by a valet of the royal household, the notorious *shavaldour* Jack le Irish.[12] It was no doubt this that led to Eure's involvement in the infamous robbery of the cardinals in September 1317, led by Gilbert de Middleton, another disaffected Northumbrian household knight. And it was only after this that Eure was retained by Lancaster, at Christmas.[13] But it should also be noted that Eure held lands in North Yorkshire as well as Northumberland, and had been a prominent figure in the royal administration there, having served as sheriff in 1310–11, tax assessor and escheator north of the Trent.[14] Whatever his attitude to Northumberland, Lancaster undoubtedly was interested in building up a regional hegemony in Yorkshire; he would thus have valued Eure more for his Yorkshire connections.

John de Lilleburn, on the other hand, held lands only in Northumberland. He had been pardoned in 1313 as one those who had fought in the campaign that led to the killing of Piers Gaveston, but had then been recruited into the king's household.[15] Again, he seems to have had his own reasons for rebelling against Edward; certainly, his attempt to murder Colle de Derby, a royal justice, in revenge for the execution of some alleged traitors at Berwick, suggests a degree of disaffection with the king's governance (in the event, Derby was saved by the intervention of John de Felton, the constable of Alnwick castle – and another household knight).[16] Another of those involved in this attack was the minor Northumbrian landowner John de Roddam, who also subsequently became an adherent of Lancaster;[17] but Roddam was a follower of Lilleburn's, and simply followed Lilleburn into Lancaster's camp. Odinel de Heron does not appear to have had any particular grudges against the king; however, as the son of a youngest son, with plenty of cousins[18] – and therefore few prospects of inheriting any wealth – his adherence to the earl may simply have been opportunistic, motivated by financial necessity rather than political disaffection. Amongst Lancaster's other Northumbrian adherents was Sir Roger Mauduit, who does not appear to have been a retainer of the earl, but who is recorded on the 'Boroughbridge Roll' as amongst those who fought there against the king.[19] Like Eure, Mauduit was a knight of the royal household and an

enthusiastic participant in Middleton's rebellion; and again like Eure, he had his own complaints against the king. Mauduit had captured three Scots, but had made the mistake of leaving them in custody at Mitford castle – where they were ransomed by the constable, without his permission, and without him receiving any share of the considerable proceeds. And the constable in question was none other than his fellow royal household knight – and soon-to-be fellow Lancastrian rebel – John de Lilleburn.[20]

None of these men had any tenurial link with the earl; most of them had their own grudges against the king, and their adherence to Lancaster was primarily a marriage of mutual political convenience, directed against Edward II, rather than being based on any local Lancastrian affinity. Indeed, Lancaster seems to have felt little need to provide local patronage for the Northumbrian gentry. He did employ William Galoun, a middling Northumbrian landowner, as his bailiff and receiver at Embleton, rewarding him with various grants of land in the barony; he also made use of the services of Edmund de Craster, one of his local tenants; and he employed Gilbert de Halton as a clerk (presumably, one of the Haltons of Halton, a Northumbrian family of some standing – albeit declining).[21] However, in March 1319, Galoun was replaced as keeper of Dunstanburgh castle by Robert de Binchester, a retainer whom Thomas had inherited from his father-in-law, the earl of Lincoln; and in the following year, Galoun's remaining offices were granted to the Yorkshire knight Bogo Bayouse.[22] Neither Binchester nor Bayouse seem to have had any previous Northumbrian connection whatsoever. Even those Northumbrians who were retained by Lancaster were not employed by him within the county. In September 1317, John de Lilleburn, for instance, was engaged in seizing the Yorkshire castle of Knaresborough, which was in the custody of the earl's bitter enemy, the royal favourite Roger Damory; and from Michaelmas 1319, Lilleburn was acting as constable of Holt castle ('Cast'leon'), in Denbighshire, which Lancaster had recently seized from earl Warenne.[23] William Galoun was elected to represent Northumberland at the parliament at Lincoln in January 1316, the parliament in which Lancaster's political ascendancy was confirmed by his appointment to the king's council; but this cannot be taken as a sign of the earl's political ascendancy within the county, for unlike his later successor John of Gaunt, Thomas does not seem to have troubled himself to influence the parliamentary representation of any county – let alone Northumberland.[24] At this time, the Commons' political influence was hardly sufficient for magnates to bother labouring the elections of shire knights.[25] Rather, the election of Galoun suggests that the political community of Northumberland had seen which way the wind was blowing, and so cannily chose to elect a representative who would have the ear of the dominant force in English politics.

In October 1316, Lancaster certainly did attempt to influence the election of the bishop of Durham, putting forward John Kynardesey, one of his household clerks, as a candidate, promising that if elected, Kynardesey would be as 'a shield for the bishopric against the Scots'; and this has been taken as evidence of his particular interest in the North East.[26] But Lancaster was far from being the only magnate who took an interest in this particular election; for instance, the earl of Hereford lobbied on behalf of his own clerk, John de Walwayn, and no historian has ventured to suggest that Hereford was looking to gain some influence in the north. Durham was a very rich and powerful see in its own right, and the peddling of influence to obtain such a see for a dependent clerk would have been a typical exercise of mutually beneficial good-lordship. And for that matter, Lancaster's own conspicuous failure to act as any sort of shield against the Scots suggests that the concern he expressed for the defence of the bishopric was – at best – disingenuous. But if Lancaster's interest in the see of Durham *was* motivated by territorial considerations, he is more likely to have had his eye on the extensive Yorkshire estates held by the bishopric – including Howden and Northallerton, which were well within Lancaster's Yorkshire sphere of influence.

In the event, Queen Isabella successfully exerted her influence to have her relative Louis de Beaumont provided; and on 1 September 1317, whilst travelling to Durham to be consecrated, Beaumont was abducted by Gilbert de Middleton, near Rushyford – a crime deemed especially heinous by contemporaries as Beaumont had been travelling in the company of two cardinals, whose goods were plundered by Middleton and his accomplices.[27] Again, Lancaster has been suspected of complicity in the affair – at least, by modern historians.[28] But there is no real evidence of this, and his efforts at mediation were probably just a ham-fisted attempt to make political capital out of the scandal, rather than stemming from any connection with Middleton.[29] Certainly, very few of his men appear to have been present at Rushyford, for in September 1318, sixty-two named individuals were given safe-conducts to go 'to the Court of Rome on account of acts perpetrated in the Marches of Scotland, whereby they feel their consciences wounded'. Their wounded consciences undoubtedly stemmed from direct involvement in the robbery of the cardinals, and they were clearly the survivors of the gang which ambushed Louis de Beaumont on 1 September. However, of these sixty-two men, only four were amongst the adherents of Thomas of Lancaster who were granted pardons in November 1318, under the terms of the 'Treaty of Leake'.[30] Although unencumbered by a wounded conscience, John de Eure undoubtedly was implicated in the plot; but his association with the earl was a consequence of the rebellion rather than a cause of it.[31] It would appear that Lancaster was not the instigator of this outrage; but in its aftermath, he was clearly willing to recruit some of those who had been involved, presumably on the basis that any enemy of the king was a potential friend – no matter how disreputable. Thus the make-up of Lancaster's Northumbrian affinity was determined not by local lordship, but rather by the exigencies of national politics.

The shallowness of Lancaster's lordship in Northumberland can be demonstrated by the minimal effects of its removal. Even before Lancaster's demise, opposing allegiances did little to disrupt normal social transactions within the county. In May 1320, John de Lilleburn acquired some land on Beanley moor from the straitened William de Beanley, brought to ruin by the attentions of the Scots. The deed was witnessed by (amongst others) John de Roddam, an adherent of Thomas of Lancaster – as was Lilleburn. However, the same deed was also witnessed by Gilbert de Burghdon and Roger de Horsley, both of whom had been appointed as keepers of the truce with the Scots in January, and would be appointed keepers of the peace in Northumberland in June, and who were therefore presumably considered loyal to the crown.[32] Nor did Lancaster's execution and forfeiture in March 1322 have very great repercussions in Northumberland. For some individuals, the consequences *were* rather serious, such as John de Eure, who was beheaded after Boroughbridge[33] – but it is surely significant that Eure, who remained loyal to Lancaster to the bitter end, also had lands in Yorkshire, where the earl's lordship was much more locally significant. Other Northumbrians were notably less keen to die with their lord. Gilbert de Halton, Lancaster's parson of Embleton, acknowledged a debt of £40 to Robert le Ewer, a yeoman of the royal household; as le Ewer played a prominent military role in the suppression of the Contrariants, the debt was clearly a ransom, in the aftermath of Boroughbridge – and so Halton survived to enjoy his living for the rest of Edward II's reign.[34]

Just before Boroughbridge, Edward ordered the arrest and imprisonment of William Galoun, John de Denum and John de Roddam.[35] Along with some of his kinsmen, Roddam seems to have remained a rebel, for a couple of years later, he was killed by John, son of the conspicuously loyal Thomas de Heton.[36] By contrast, the other two seem to have had no such difficulty making their peace. Denum was pardoned in September – and within three years, he was a yeoman of the king's household, rewarded, ironically enough, with the keeping of lands in Derbyshire forfeited by Henry Bradburn for rebellion against the king. Similarly, when Galoun died, at some time before July 1323, his estates remained unconfiscated, to be

inherited by his son.[37] Odinel Heron fought against the king at Boroughbridge; yet just three months later, he had been pardoned, at the request of no less than Hugh Despenser the younger.[38] Edmund de Craster, another erstwhile adherent of the earl, was serving the king in the Scottish marches by October 1322.[39] John de Lilleburn and Roger Mauduit were equally quick to regain royal favour. Lilleburn was certainly in the king's allegiance by the battle of Boroughbridge, and by September 1322, Edward had appointed both of them as joint-constables of Dunstanburgh.[40] Both went on to represent the county in parliament; and both were later appointed as sheriff. Nor was Northumberland affected by the lawlessness which afflicted many other areas, where Lancastrian lordship had had rather more local impact – typified by the activities of the notorious Cotorel gang, many of whom were former adherents of earl Thomas.[41]

Why, then, did Thomas of Lancaster choose to build a massive – and massively expensive – castle in a remote lordship in which he apparently had no interest? Recent scholarly work on castles has, quite rightly, tended to highlight the social and symbolic functions of these buildings, reacting to the gross over-emphasis on the functional military aspect of castle design, pursued by the armchair generals who have tended to dominate the field of castle studies.[42] Nevertheless, Dunstanburgh appears to be a case where the defensive aspect actually *was* paramount. As built by the earl, the castle consisted of just a massive gatehouse and a well defended curtain-wall to the south, and undefended curtains to the east and west – the natural strength of the site being such that it hardly needed anything more. It was this premium on defence, coupled with the topography of the site, which dictated the huge size of the castle. The site was effectively only vulnerable to attack from the south, being protected to the west by a steep incline,[43] and to the north and east by the sea. As the west curtain-wall obviously had to be built along the top of the incline, and the clough provides the only practical point to anchor the southern end of the defences, a short heavily-defended curtain-wall built straight across the gentle southern slope of the hill was the most economical way to defend the site, with the gatehouse positioned to protect the most vulnerable point at the south-west corner. The fact that this provided an enormous bailey was perhaps entirely incidental.[44] The main accommodation was in the gatehouse, and the towers on the southern curtain-wall. There appears to have been some sort of hall, as in August 1323, Roger Heron (who had replaced Lilleburn as constable in July) was ordered to spend five pounds 'in repairing an ancient hall in the castle or another house there, in order to place the king's victuals therein', but this was presumably built of wood, for it has left little or no surviving trace.[45] Certainly, Lancaster does not seem to have provided Dunstanburgh with the prestigious stone-built halls and lodgings normally associated with the castle of a great lord. Indeed, when the castle was taken into the king's hand, following Lancaster's execution and forfeiture in 1322, it was felt necessary to build a large tower – the Lilburn Tower – on the west curtain wall, to provide some much needed extra living space, and to act as a watch tower overlooking the northern approaches.[46] Had earl Thomas not met an early death, he might have gone on to provide Dunstanburgh which such facilities – but they were evidently not a priority, in marked contrast to his building works at his other castles.[47] And as Lancaster clearly took little interest in exerting his lordship within Northumberland, it follows that, for all its grandeur, Dunstanburgh castle was not constructed primarily as an expression of that lordship; indeed, there is no hard evidence that he ever actually stayed there, although he presumably used the place as a base during the English siege of Berwick in 1319. Here, a revealing comparison may be made with John of Gaunt, who acquired the castle (along with the barony of Embleton) through marriage, in 1362. Following his appointment as the king's lieutenant in the marches in February 1379, and his squabble with Henry Percy during the Great Revolt, Gaunt made a serious effort to use his lordship of Embleton to create an effective

Northumbrian affinity – as Thomas of Lancaster had signally failed to do.[48] As part of these efforts, Gaunt completely refashioned the main entrance to Dunstanburgh, closing up the gatehouse passage, and adding a far more elaborate series of gates and a barbican.[49] It has usually been supposed that these works were intended to improve the defensibility of the castle, because 'there was no second line of defence beyond the gatehouse';[50] however, when work started in 1380, the Scots had made no serious attempt to take any Northumbrian castle since 1327 (apart from Berwick) whilst Dunstanburgh itself seems never to have been attacked – so whilst the threat of Scottish attack may have been a consideration, it is unlikely that the massive defences were considered inadequate, for they had never been threatened.[51] Rather, the makeover of Dunstanburgh was primarily intended to furnish a more sophisticated and theatrical approach and entrance for the Gatehouse, which now functioned as a *donjon*, providing some of the architectural props of lordship which were increasingly *de rigueur* in late medieval castles.[52] Indeed, the provision of a barbican may have been dictated by nothing more than the fashion for elaborate barbicans in fourteenth-century Northumbrian castles, such as Tynemouth, Edlingham, and – especially – the Percy castles of Alnwick and Prudhoe.[53] In the event, Gaunt's efforts came to naught in the face of Percy's entrenched local dominance; but it is an interesting reflection on Thomas of Lancaster's castle that just seventy years later, Gaunt considered it inadequate as a stage on which to project his lordship.

Earl Thomas's castle was clearly intended primarily as a fortress; however – as has long been recognised – it is equally clear that it was not intended as a fortress to defend against the national enemy, the Scots.[54] As a means of protecting the barony of Embleton, Dunstanburgh was virtually useless. Perched on an isolated promontory, a mile-and-a-half from the nearest settlement, the castle defends nothing but itself – indeed, due to the lay of the land, the township of Embleton itself is not even visible from it. Some measure of its strategic worthlessness against Scottish incursions can be gauged from the fact that the Scots never seem to have bothered to attack it. After the battle of Bannockburn, Wark on Tweed, Harbottle and Mitford castles were all destroyed, while Norham was kept under intermittent siege for two years or so.[55] By contrast, the Scots did not even trouble themselves to prevent Dunstanburgh from being built, despite the fact that they undoubtedly had the opportunity, for Northumberland was already starting to feel the impact of Scottish raiding when building commenced. In fact, the earl's Northern estates seem to have received strangely little attention from the marauding Scots, even after Bannockburn had left the county virtually defenceless, leading to rumours that Lancaster was in collusion with the Scots – and the accounts of the bailiff of Embleton include payments for messengers going to Berwick, and taking secret messages to the earl, which suggest there may well have been some truth behind such rumours.[56] The earl was widely suspected of being in league with the Scots; for instance, the *Vita Edwardi* reports allegations that he had accepted £40,000 from Bruce to abandon the siege of Berwick in 1319, allegations which the *Vita*'s anonymous author seems to have been inclined to believe, for he added a sermon denouncing Lancaster's treachery and avarice.[57] Certainly, Lancaster is implicated by surviving documents which record his negotiations with James, Lord of Douglas and the earl of Moray at the end of 1321.[58]

Nevertheless, even after Lancaster's execution in 1322, when Dunstanburgh was taken into royal hands, the Scots still remained indifferent to it. In their invasion of 1327, when they made a serious attempt to besiege the castles of Norham, Alnwick and Warkworth, all of which protected river crossings, Dunstanburgh remained untroubled.[59] It was simply too isolated and strategically irrelevant to be worth the effort of attacking. And for that matter, whilst Embleton was a reasonably wealthy barony (valued in 1296 at just under £80 *per annum*, in time of peace),[60] in terms of Lancaster's overall wealth, this hardly warranted the enormous expense and effort involved in building such a huge castle.

In fact, the explanation for the building of Dunstanburgh surely lies in the immediate political circumstances of May 1313, when the work began. When Piers Gaveston had been judicially murdered by the Ordainers in the previous June, Edward II had held Lancaster personally responsible, and as the *Scalacronica* commented, henceforward, he regarded the earl with mortal hatred.[61] Despite negotiations, the political situation remained highly volatile for the next eighteen months, and England verged on the brink of renewed civil war. It was undoubtedly the fear of an attack from a vengeful king that prompted Lancaster to build a new castle – but why in Northumberland?

Unsurprisingly, the earl did not – at first – see fit to obtain a royal licence to crenellate his new castle, and he may have chosen Northumberland for its site on the grounds that the king could hardly have objected to the construction of any castle in the war-torn marches. Certainly, Lancaster appears to have had some doubt about the legality of his enterprise, for he did take the trouble to obtain a licence in August 1315, once he was in the political ascendant after Bannockburn.[62] However, whilst Lancaster was habitually determined to preserve his own rights in every last detail, he did not generally exhibit a concomitant concern for the rights of others; and a legal nicety such as the absence of any licence to crenellate is unlikely to have worried him overly much – particularly as such licences appear not to have been prescriptive in practice anyway.[63] Indeed, there were rather more directly political considerations which may have prompted the earl to build his new castle where he did.

It is a commonplace of military history that victorious generals plan for the next war on the basis of the last one – and the Ordainers' successful campaign against Gaveston in 1312 had got under way with an advance on Newcastle upon Tyne, where Edward and his favourite had been attempting to gather their strength.[64] Apart from Lancaster, the only magnates of national standing who held any lands in Northumberland were Aymer de Valence, the earl of Pembroke, who held half of the barony of Mitford; Robert de Umfraville, earl of Angus, and lord of Prudhoe and Redesdale; and Henry Percy, who held Alnwick.[65] In 1312, all of these had supported the Ordainers' campaign against Gaveston; but following Gaveston's execution, Valence had gone back over to the king, while Umfraville's support appears never to have been more than passive – or even lukewarm. Meanwhile, Edward held the royal castle of Newcastle, whilst the royal castle of Bamburgh remained in the hands of the royal favourite Isabella de Vesci, the sister of the future bishop Louis de Beaumont – who had enjoyed the unusual distinction (especially for a woman) of being singled out for personal condemnation in the Ordinances of 1311; and the lordship of Tynedale had been granted to another royal favourite Edmund de Mauley – also a target of the Ordainers' ire – in succession to Gaveston, immediately after the latter's death.[66] Lancaster may well have feared that the Ordainers' position in Northumberland was weakening. Dunstanburgh would have served as a secure base for any Ordainer campaigns in the county; and its huge bailey, provided with an inordinate number of garderobes in the seaward curtain-wall, could have accommodated large forces for this purpose.

But an equally pressing consideration would have been simple self-preservation, for Embleton was Lancaster's only estate on the North Sea coast. In May 1312, Edward II and Piers Gaveston had evaded the Ordainers' advance on Newcastle by fleeing to Tynemouth (with its fortified priory) where they escaped by sea; shortly after, however, Gaveston was trapped by his opponents in Scarborough castle, amongst whom was Thomas of Lancaster.[67] Unable to escape, and lacking provisions, he had been forced to surrender – with fatal consequences; for although Scarborough castle was itself on the coast, it was perched on a high cliff-top, with no immediate access to the sea. Just a year later, Lancaster built his own new castle with easy access to the sea; indeed, the castle was provided with its own port, and a boat was maintained at the castle.[68] The exact whereabouts and nature of this port has been a matter of academic debate over the last century, but for the purposes of getting away from the

castle in a hurry, the ravine below the Egyncleugh Tower would have been amply sufficient.[69] From Dunstanburgh, the earl could flee by ship either to Scotland or, if he fell out with his Scottish friends, to the Continent. Whilst the earl certainly had estates on the Irish sea coast, none of these offered the same security of a choice of escape routes. Dunstanburgh was built primarily as a bolt-hole, where Lancaster could hold out against his king; or from where he could make a safe getaway, if the odds did not look promising. This was certainly how it was perceived by contemporaries. When the earl was captured at Boroughbridge in 1322, it was generally believed that he and his allies had been making for the north, where they could join up with the Scots; as the Bridlington chronicler put it, 'the opinion of the common people was that they were trying to make a run for it, towards Scotland', whilst the author of the *Vita Edwardi* reported rumours that Robert Bruce had promised them aid.[70] A different version of events is contained in the 'Long Continuation' of the *Brut* chronicle. According to this account, Lancaster's allies wanted to retreat to Dunstanburgh, to 'abide þere til þe kyng hade forgeue ham his male-talent'; Lancaster demurred, arguing that 'if we gone toward þe north, men wil seyn þat we gon toward þe Scottes; and so we shul be holde traitoures'. However, he was over-ruled – at the point of a sword – by Roger Clifford, and they duly headed north.[71] Too much faith need not be placed in the veracity of this story, for its author was rabidly pro-Lancastrian.[72] Its significance lies in the fact that Lancaster's treachery was so widely credited that not even an author as biased as this could simply skate over it; instead, he felt obliged to attempt to justify his hero's conduct with this specious piece of special pleading. Nevertheless, in describing Dunstanburgh as a place where Lancaster's allies hoped to shelter, until they could reach an accommodation with the king, the author of the *Brut* unwittingly highlighted its main function.

Dunstanburgh castle may well have served as a powerful symbol of the lordship of Thomas of Lancaster in Northumberland; but it was an empty symbol.[73] The earl of Lancaster moved on a national stage, and he had no interest in creating effective lordship within Northumberland; he therefore treated his barony of Embleton solely as a resource to enhance his national power. And perhaps the moral of all this is that merely because a medieval magnate built an enormous castle on one of his estates, it doesn't necessarily follow that he had any great interest in the place itself.

NOTES

Abbreviations

CIPM	*Calendar of Inquests Post Mortem.*
CCR	*Calendar of Close Rolls.*
CDS	*Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland.*
CFR	*Calendar of Fine Rolls.*
CPR	*Calendar of Patent Rolls.*
EETS	Early English Text Society.
EHR	*English Historical Review.*
PRO	Public Record Office.
RS	Rolls Series.

[1] A version of this paper was given at the Leeds International Medieval Congress, July 2000, and I would to thank the audience for their perceptive criticisms, as well as Professors Michael Prestwich and Matthew Johnson for commenting on various drafts, and for providing several references.

[2] Cadwallader Bates, "The Border Holds of Northumberland", *AA*[2], 14 (1891), 167.

[3] PRO, DL 29/1/3, m. 2d (an account of the receiver of Embleton for 1313–14, extracted in C.H. Hartshorne, *Feudal and Military Antiquities of Northumberland and the Scottish Borders*, London (1858), cxxxv-cxxxvi).

[4] M. C. Prestwich, "English Castles in the Reign of Edward II", *Journal of Medieval History*, 8 (1982), 170. However, while the gatehouse towers were fashionably rounded, the towers on the adjoining south curtain-wall were square, after the northern trend.

[5] Indeed, Henry Summerson has made the interesting suggestion that the name 'Dunstan*burgh*' – derived from the neighbouring village of Dunstan, and which is not recorded before the building of the castle – was deliberately coined with reference to Bam*burgh* (*Dunstanburgh Castle*, London (1993), 5).

[6] *Feet of Fines, Northumberland and Durham*, Newcastle upon Tyne Record Series, 10 (1931),

no. 238; *NCH*, 2, 16–18; J. R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, Cambridge (1994), 54–5, 142–3. It has been suggested that de Montfort may himself have had an eye on the site of Dunstanburgh – which is, after all, an obvious place to build a castle (Bates, "Border Holds", 169; D. J. Cathcart King, *The Castle in England and Wales. An Interpretative History*, London (1988), 23).

[7] *NCH*, 2, 19; *Calendar of Charter Rolls 1300–26*, 66 (on the same occasion, he was also granted a weekly market at Wirksworth, Derbyshire).

[8] G. A. Holmes, *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth-Century England*, Cambridge (1957), 136, 141–2, printing records seized by the crown after Lancaster's execution in 1322 (for the circumstances, see R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster*, London (1953–70), 1, 29). Note that David de Strathbogie, earl of Atholl, who was retained by Lancaster (Holmes, *Estates of the Higher Nobility*, 141), inherited all his Northumbrian estates from Aymer de Valence in 1324, and therefore had no Northumbrian lands during Lancaster's lifetime (compare *CIPM*, 6, no. 759 with ibid., no. 518, 323).

[9] Eure's indenture with the earl survives as a seventeenth-century transcript, printed in "Private Indentures for Life Service in Peace and War 1278–1476", ed. Michael Jones & Simon Walker, *Camden Society*[5], 3 (1994), no. 27).

[10] Holmes, *Estates of the Higher Nobility*, 142; *Northumberland and Durham Deeds from the Dodsworth MSS. in Bodley's Library, Oxford*, Newcastle upon Tyne Record Series, 7 (1929), 287; and see below n. 23. Lilleburn's rent and Heron's annuity were drawn on the earl's Northumbrian manors of Shipley and Stamford respectively. These are both a few miles north of Alnwick.

[11] *CPR 1317–21*, 231, 234.

[12] *CIPM*, 5, no. 615 (411–12). Stokesley was seized by le Irish whilst he was constable of Barnard Castle, from which post he was dismissed following his attempted abduction of the wealthy widow, Lady Maud de Clifford, in November 1315 (see Andy King, 'Jack le Irish and the Abduction of Lady Clifford, November 1315: The Heiress and the Irishman', *Northern History*, 37 (2000)); Eure had still not recovered his manor by the following September.

[13] Eure's indenture with the earl is dated 29 December 1317 (above, n. 9).

[14] *List of Sheriffs*, PRO Lists and Index Society, 9, 161; *CPR 1307–13*, 521; *List of Escheators for England and Wales*, PRO List and Index Society, 72 (1971), 6. Eure had also served as knight of the shire for Northumberland in the parliament of October 1307 (*The Return of the Name of Every Member of the Lower House, 1213–1874* (Parliamentary Papers, 1878), 1, 28).

[15] *CPR 1313–17*, 25; PRO, E 101/377/1.

[16] PRO, E 101/378/6; SC 1/33/32 (calendared in *CDS*, 3, no. 384). This letter, dated just '13 August', is ascribed by Bain to 1314, presumably because the writer refers to the king's last departure from Berwick ('Sire puis se departir darrain de Berewyk'), which dates the incident to after the Scottish campaign of 1314. However, John de Felton was not appointed as constable of Alnwick until November 1314 (during the minority of Henry Percy, *CFR 1307–19*, 219), while 'Colle de Derby' may be identified with William Colle of Derby, who received a protection for one year, serving against the Scots, in October 1314 (*CDS*, 5, no. 2986); August 1315 therefore seems a more likely date. The leader of the would-be murderers is named as 'Sir John de Linborn", but he can safely be identified with Lilleburn.

[17] He was amongst those pardoned as adherents of the earl in November 1318, along with William de Roddam and Adam, son of Henry de Roddam – and Ralph de Lilleburn (*CPR 1317–21*, 233, 235).

[18] Odinel was presumably a son of the Odinel Heron (the youngest son of William Heron, lord of Ford) who died in 1312 (*NCH*, 11, 378).

[19] *Parliamentary Writs*, ed. F. Palgrave, 2 vols in 4 parts (London, 1827–34), 2 (2), app., 201.

[20] *CPR 1313–17*, 687. The unfortunate Mauduit also lost the ransoms of five other Scottish prisoners, who were seized by his fellow Northumbrian Thomas de Fishburne (ibid.; A. E. Middleton, *Sir Gilbert de Middleton*, Newcastle upon Tyne (1918), 37). Mauduit was admitted to the royal household in April 1312 and was still a member three years later (British Library, Cotton MS Nero C.VIII, f. 91; PRO, E 101/378/6, d.).

[21] PRO DL 29/1/3, m. 2, 2d; DL 28/1/13, m. 7d; *CIPM*, 6, no. 485; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, 350; Holmes, *Estates of the Higher Nobility*, 136; *NCH*, 2, 57. Galoun was granted properties in the vills of Embleton and Dunstan, in 1315; Craster was given some (very) minor properties in Yorkshire; Halton was intruded into the living of Embleton church.

[22] PRO, DL 25/3392; *CPR 1301–7*, 388; Yorkshire Archaeological Society, MS Grantley DD 53/III/489; J. R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster, 1307–22. A Study in the Reign of Edward II*, Oxford (1970), 20, 55. Lancaster's grant to Galoun of lands in Warenford, in 1319 (Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, 350), may have been in compensation for this loss of office.

[23] *CPR 1317–21*, 116, 123; "Chroniques de Sempringham", *Le Livre de Reis de Brittanie*, ed. J. Glover, RS, 42 (1865), 334; Yorkshire Archaeological Society, MS Grantley DD 53/III/490.

[24] *Parliamentary Writs*, 2 (2), 158; Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, 51–2, 180–2.

[25] Ibid., 52–3; Scott L. Waugh, "The Third Century of English Feudalism", *Thirteenth-Century England* 7 (1999), 57. Waugh comments that 'instead . . . they sometimes used their retinues directly to overawe' parliament; and here it is interesting to note that John de Eure's indenture with Lancaster required him to attend the earl at parliament.

[26] 'Se fore scutum episcopatui contra Scottos', *Historiæ Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres*, ed. James Raine, *SS*, 9 (1839), 98; J.R.S. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, 1307–24. Baronial Politics in the Reign of Edward II*, Oxford (1972), 127.

[27] For modern accounts, see Middleton, *Gilbert de Middleton*; *NCH*, 9, 106–12; Michael Prestwich, "Gilbert de Middleton and the Attack on the Cardinals, 1317", *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages*, ed. Tim Reuter (1992), 179–94; Richard Lomas, *North-East England in the Middle Ages*, Edinburgh (1992), 57–8.

[28] Middleton, *Gilbert de Middleton*, 29; Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, 204–7.

[29] Prestwich, "Gilbert de Middleton", 185–6.

[30] *CPR 1317–21*, 211–12; and cf. *CPR 1317–21*, 229–33. Many of the 1318 pardons granted to the earls' adherents specifically excluded the robbery of the cardinals, which has been taken as evidence of their implication in the plot – and, by extension, of the implication of the earl himself (Middleton, *Gilbert de Middleton*, *passim*); however, it is more likely that these were men who adhered to Middleton only after his rebellion had already got under way.

[31] *CPR 1317–21*, 88; and see above, p. 224.

[32] "Woodman Charters", tr. H.H.E. Craster, *AA* ^{3}, 5 (1909), 48; *CPR 1317–21*, 233, 416, 459. For Beanley's difficulties, see *Northumberland Petitions. Ancient Petitions Relating to Northumberland*, ed. C. M. Fraser, *SS*, 176 (1966), 165–6.

[33] *CPR 1321–4*, 127, 128; *Parliamentary Writs*, 2 (2), app., 201; "Chroniques de Sempringham", ed. Glover, 344.

[34] *CCR 1318–23*, 529; *NCH*, 2, 58. However, old grudges may have died hard, for in 1327, Halton was robbed of £100 worth of goods – by John de Lilleburn (PRO, KB 27/269, m. 17d; *NCH*, 14, 435).

[35] *CCR 1318–23*, 421.

[36] *CPR 1324–27*, 138, 149; PRO, C 260/35, no. 20A; *CCR 1323–7*, 589. Thomas de Heton had been instrumental in the capture of Gilbert de Middleton (British Library, Harley MS 655, f. 316; *Scalacronica, by Sir Thomas Gray of Heton, Knight*, ed. Joseph Stevenson, Edinburgh (1836), 144–5; *CPR 1317–21*, 75).

[37] *CPR 1321–4*, 204; *CFR 1319–27*, 333; *CIPM*, 6, no. 485.

[38] *Parliamentary Writs*, 2 (2), app., 201; British Library, Cotton MS Nero D.X, f. 112v.; *CPR 1321–4*, 203.

[39] *CPR 1321–4*, 200.

[40] *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous*, 2, no. 527 (131, 133); *CPR 1321–4*, 205, 233. Considering Mauduit's previous dispute with Lilleburn over the ransoming of Scottish prisoners (above, n. 20), this pairing was not perhaps the most inspired of appointments.

[41] J. G. Bellamy, "The Coterel Gang: the Anatomy of a Band of Fourteenth-Century Criminals", *EHR*, 79 (1964), 700.

[42] See the pertinent observations on this theme made by David Stocker, "The Shadow of the General's Armchair", *AJ*, 149 (1992), 415–20. See also C.L.H. Coulson, "Structural Symbolism in Medieval Castle Architecture", *JBAA*, 132, 73–90 (1979).

[43] Although the west curtain left a long perimeter to be defended, this perimeter was hardly in danger of serious assault – as anyone who has ever tried to climb up to the castle from the west will realise.

[44] These points are well illustrated by the aerial view of the castle in Summerson, *Dunstanburgh*, 23 (though see below, p. 229). A comparison might be made with Scarborough castle, where the curtain-walls were similarly built along the edge of a coastal outcrop, also enclosing a huge bailey.

[45] *CPR 1323–7*, 12; *CFR 1319–27*, 219. The foundations of a building still survive in the middle of the outer ward; this may perhaps represent the footings of the 'ancient hall' here alluded to – though 'ancient' seems an odd description of a building which can have been no more than ten years old in 1323.

[46] Summerson, *Dunstanburgh*, 20–1. The tower is named after John de Lilleburn, who appears to have had the tower built – or at least completed – while he was constable, in 1323.

[47] In the same year as work started on Dunstanburgh, Thomas spent £101 on a new gatehouse at Tutbury (which could perhaps be construed as defensive, though the design was distinctly old-fashioned, and hardly on a par with Dunstanburgh), £341 on a new hall at Pickering (more than the entire recorded expenditure on Dunstanburgh for this year) and £141 for a hall at Kenilworth, where the granary, stable and mill were also rebuilt. There was

also work on the accommodation at Leicester and Lancaster (Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, 26).

[48] S. K. Walker, "Letters to the Dukes of Lancaster in 1381 and 1399", *EHR*, 106 (1991), 68–75; R. L. Storey, "The Wardens of the Marches towards Scotland, 1377–1489", *EHR*, 72 (1957), 596–7; J. A. Tuck, "Richard II and the Border Magnates", *Northern History*, 3 (1968), 41–2.

[49] Gaunt's modifications are discussed by Malcolm Hislop, "John of Gaunt's Building Works at Dunstanburgh Castle", *AA*[5], 23 (1995), 139–44.

[50] Ibid., 139.

[51] It should be noted that the additional work undertaken by at Dunstanburgh by Henry Holme in 1383 (ibid.) had already been finished when the Scots sacked Wark castle in that June, and whilst a Scottish raiding party ravaged the country around Embleton in 1384, the period from autumn 1380 to spring 1383, when Dunstanburgh was being reworked, was comparatively peaceful – mainly due to a truce negotiated by Gaunt himself and which he was intent on preserving (*The Westminster Chronicle, 1381–1394*, ed. L. C. Hector & B. F. Harvey, Oxford (1982), 41–3; *NCH*, 2, 30; Alastair J. Macdonald, *Border Bloodshed: Scotland, England and France at War, 1369–1403*, East Linton (2000), 67–73).

[52] Matthew Johnson, "Castles and the Self-Fashioning of the English Aristocracy in the Fifteenth Century" (an unpublished paper delivered at Leeds, July 2000 – I should like to thank Professor Johnson for letting me have a copy); Philip Dixon, "Design in Castle Building: The Controlling of Access to the Lord", *Château Gaillard* 18 (1996), 47–56; idem, "The Donjon at Knaresborough: The Castle as Theatre", *Château Gaillard*, 14, 121–139 (1990). Knaresborough is a particularly interesting point of comparison, as it was re-modelled by Edward II for the use of Piers Gaveston, just a few years before the building of Dunstanburgh.

[53] The barbican at Tynemouth postdates that at Dunstanburgh, but seems to have been built in deliberate imitation of Alnwick (A. D. Saunders, *Tynemouth Priory and Castle*, London (1993), 26, 36); clearly, Gaunt was not the only Northumbrian landowner trying to keep up with the Percies.

[54] Bates, "Border Holds", 170. But cf. W. Douglas Simpson, "Dunstanburgh Castle", *AA*[4], 16 (1939), 33–4, and idem, "Further Notes on Dunstanburgh Castle", *AA*[4], 27 (1949), passim, who argues, unconvincingly, that 'the building of this astonishing fortress was due less to any private motive on the part of its founder . . . than to large considerations of public policy connected with the defence of Northumberland' (ibid., 1). His views have not found wide support (see, for instance, the pointed comments of C. Hunter Blair, appended as an "Editor's Note", ibid., 25–8).

[55] Colm McNamee, *The Wars of the Bruces. Scotland, England and Ireland, 1306–28*, East Linton (1997), 140–1.

[56] *NCH*, 2, 24.

[57] *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. Noel Denholm-Young, London (1957), 97. For the highly contemporary composition of the *Vita Edwardi*, see Chris Given-Wilson, "*Vita Edwardi Secundi*: Memoir or Journal?", *Thirteenth-Century England*, 6 (1997). There is a tantalising mention of Robert Bruce in connection with Dunstanburgh in a post-script attached to a letter of January 1319, which is unfortunately incomprehensible due to it having been cut in half (British Library, Cotton Charters, ii, 26, no. 46). The relevant line reads 'chastel de Dunstanburgh qe sire Robert Brus a. . .', which has been taken as referring to a Scottish attack on the place (*Regesta Regum Scottorum V, Robert I , 1306–29*, ed. Archibald A. M. Duncan, Edinburgh (1988), 145–6; McNamee, *Wars of the Bruces*, 90), but this is by no means clear – it might equally be a report of Lancaster's suspected dealings with the king of Scots.

[58] *Fœdera, conventiones, litteræ, et cujuscunque generis public acta*, etc., ed. T. Rymer (4 vols in 7 parts, Record Commission edn, 1816–69), 2 (1), 463, 474, 479 (it is interesting to note that in these letters, Lancaster is referred to as 'Roi Arthur' – which may reveal something about his self image); *Regesta Regum Scottorum V*, ed. Duncan, 151–2, 163, 692–3; Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, 301–3.

[59] *Historical Papers and Letters from the Northern Registers*, ed. J. Raine, RS, 61 (1873), 344–5; "Gesta Edwardi Tertii Auctore Canonico Bridlingtoniensi", *Chronicles of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. Stubbs, 2, 97; *The Anonimalle Chronicle, 1307–1334*, ed. Wendy R. Childs & John Taylor, Yorkshire Archæological Society Record Series, 147 (1991), 138; Ranald Nicholson, "The Last Campaign of Robert Bruce", *EHR*, 77 (1962), 233–46.

[60] *CIPM*, 3, no. 423, 304–5 (inquest *post mortem* on Edmund, earl of Lancaster). The earl also held fishing rights on the Tweed, worth £40 in time of peace – though Dunstanburgh could hardly have served to protect these.

[61] *Scalacronica*, ed. Stevenson, 140; Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, 130.

[62] *CPR 1313–17*, 344 (printed *in extenso* by George Tate, "Dunstanburgh Castle", *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists Club*, 6 (1896–72), 88).

[63] Charles Coulson, "Freedom to Crenellate by Licence – An Historiographical Revision", *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 38 (1994), 86–137. Coulson argues convincingly that licences to crenellate were not used by the crown to exercise any meaningful control over the construction of castles; however, the fact that Lancaster still bothered to obtain a licence for Dunstanburgh retrospectively, when his influence over royal government was increasing, might suggest that such licences were at least perceived as having some legal force, whatever the practical realities. After all, Thomas, earl of Lancaster, hardly needed the sort of prestige which Coulson argues such a licence offered; and of all 'private' castles, Dunstanburgh was surely enough of a status symbol in itself, without needing any additional confirmation of its standing.

[64] "Gesta Edwardi de Carnarvon", ed. Stubbs, 42; Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, 124–5; J.S. Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston, Earl of Cornwall, 1307–12. Politics and Patronage in the Reign of Edward II*, London (1988), 95. Furthermore, Bamburgh castle had been used to shelter Piers Gaveston from the Ordainers in 1311 (*Adæ Murimuth, Continuatio chronicarum*, ed. E. M. Thompson, RS, 93 (1889), 15).

[65] Phillips, *Aymer de Valence*, 88.

[66] Michael Prestwich, "Isabella de Vescy and the Custody of Bamburgh Castle", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 44 (1971), 148–52; *CPR 1307–13*, 465. Edmund de Mauley came second on a list of those the Ordainers were seeking to remove from the King's household, in December 1312 (*Edward II, the Lords Ordainers, and Piers Gaveston's Jewels and Horses*, ed. R. A. Roberts, Camden Society^3, 41 (1929), 17; Phillips, *Aymer de Valence*, 48–9).

[67] *Johannis de Trokelowe et Henrici de Blaneforde Chronica et Annales*, ed. H. T. Riley, RS, 28 (1866), 75; Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston*, 95–6; Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, 125. For Lancaster's presence at the opening of the brief siege of Scarborough, see *Trokelowe Annales*, ed. Riley, 76. I have to thank Professor Philip Dixon for drawing my attention to the significance of Gaveston's sea-borne flight from Tynemouth in this context.

[68] Summerson, *Dunstanburgh Castle*, 26.

[69] It has to be said that this ravine would have been vulnerable under conditions of close siege (ibid.), but given the topography of the site, it would hardly have been practical –or affordable –to extend the defences any further south. Anyway, in an emergency, it would surely have been possible to get a boat away from the shore to the east.

[70] 'Opinio tamen communis vulgi fuit quod disponebant usque Scotiam properasse', "Gesta Edwardi de Carnarvon", ed. Stubbs, 76; *Vita Edwardi*, ed. Denholm-Young, 123.

[71] *The Brut*, ed. Friedrich W. D. Brie, EETS, 131 (1906), 217.

[72] Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England,* c.*1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century*, London (1982), 74–5; John Taylor, *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century*, Oxford (1987), 276–7.

[73] Those who would still seek symbolism in Dunstanburgh Castle might care to note that, as constructed by Thomas of Lancaster, *all* of its defences were directed to the south, against England, rather than to the north, against Scotland – though this surely arises from the topography of the site rather than from deliberate and conscious artifice.