

# 'To brave hardship willingly:' Sir Ralph Gray and the siege of Roxburgh

*Gilbert Bogner*

## SUMMARY

*In spite of his remarkable alabaster tomb effigy at Chillingham, Sir Ralph Gray (d. 1443) has been a largely overlooked member of the Grays of Heaton, a family about which much has been written. This article pieces together the life and career of this interesting Northumbrian, with an emphasis on his best known military action, the defence of Roxburgh during the Scottish siege of 1436. The Grays rose dramatically through military service during the fourteenth century. Sir Ralph's career serves as an additional example of knightly advancement in the Gray family. The reputation he built through his faithful service on the Border and later in France contributed to the restoration of the family's reputation after the treason and execution of his father.*

## INTRODUCTION

ONE OF THE MORE SPLENDID NORTHERN MONUMENTS of the fifteenth century is the impressive tomb of Sir Ralph Gray (1406–43) and his wife, Elizabeth Fitzhugh, in Chillingham's Church of St Peter. It was built by Sir Ralph's son, another Sir Ralph (d. 1464), to honour his dead father and perhaps to reflect the importance of the Gray family in general, which had risen dramatically during the fourteenth century, chiefly through their military activities. The Grays of Heaton were a family of warriors, a fact that is demonstrated by the alabaster tomb effigy of Sir Ralph in full plate armour. He is depicted wearing the 'S-collar', the livery collar given to loyal adherents of the Lancastrian regime, a fitting symbol for his career of faithful military service to the Crown.<sup>1</sup> It is ironic, however, that although much has been written about other members of the family, both famous and infamous, very little has been said about the Gray for whom the monument was constructed. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to recount and assess the life and contributions of this very visible, yet often overlooked, member of an illustrious northern family. In an earlier account, he was dismissed as having done 'little if anything to win fame'.<sup>2</sup> I argue that, on the contrary, Sir Ralph Gray's career of faithful service in war and government, especially his stalwart defence of Roxburgh against a major Scottish siege, not only brought him personal glory and advancement, but helped to restore the reputation of his family, a reputation that had been tarnished by the treason and execution of his father.

## YOUTH, FAMILY, AND INHERITANCE

On 2 August 1415, Sir Ralph's father, Sir Thomas Gray, went to the block. The tale is well known. A man of considerable status in the north, Sir Thomas Gray had enjoyed the favour of Henry IV, having been taken as a minor into the king's household to serve as an esquire, and allowed to come into his inheritance when he was only sixteen years old. As Sir Thomas

himself later admitted, however, his financial difficulties and ambitions led him eventually to be drawn into the infamous Southampton Plot to dethrone Henry V, hatched in all likelihood by Richard, Earl of Cambridge, to whose daughter Gray had married to his eldest son, Thomas. Part of the plan was to promote an insurrection in the north with hopes of local complicity and Scottish aid, ironic given the Gray family's long history of good service on the Border. When the conspiracy was revealed, Sir Thomas was arrested on 31 July at Southampton, where the king was preparing for his invasion of France, and promptly confessed.<sup>3</sup> Following his execution, his head was sent to Newcastle, where it was prominently displayed on a spear.<sup>4</sup> One can only imagine the horror and shame of Gray's widow, Alice Neville, daughter of Ralph, first Earl of Westmorland, and their two young sons, the ten-year-old Thomas and his eight-year-old brother, Ralph, the subject of this article. Whereas Alice would remarry and Thomas would die in his minority, Ralph Gray would grow up with the stigma that he was the son of a traitor.<sup>5</sup>

On 19 May 1426, a nineteen-year-old Ralph Gray, along with a number of other young esquires, stood in the great hall of Leicester Castle amid grand pomp and circumstance. Before him were the four-year-old Henry VI and the young king's uncle John, Duke of Bedford. Surrounding him were the Lords and Commons who were representing the realm in the parliament being held there. The occasion was the knighting of the young king, in celebration of which he would then dub more than thirty esquires, including Gray. To those among them who, like Gray, had not yet seen military service, this honour was no doubt intended to remind them of their chivalric obligations in a time of pressing national need, for England was at war on two fronts.<sup>6</sup> We do not know if Ralph was already sporting the unusual clipped moustache and small beard with which he would be rendered in alabaster on his tomb many years later, but he must have stood there proudly, no doubt in his tabard of red with a rampant silver lion, the Gray arms.<sup>7</sup> Whilst there is no hard evidence for what chivalry meant to Gray, we know that among the nobles and knights of his day it was a practical, soldier's code in which personal glory was won through loyal service in war, and one in which wisdom and moderation were as important to success as were prowess and valour.<sup>8</sup> A. J. Pollard has asserted that in the North East especially, men took their knighthoods seriously and chivalry was expressed in the practical exercise of arms, mainly against the Scots.<sup>9</sup>

Given that, Sir Ralph may have wondered whether he would be able to live up to the chivalric reputation of his ancestors, who through their military service had lifted the Gray family from relative insignificance to national importance during the fourteenth century. He must have been very familiar with the *Scalacronica*, which recounted the daring exploits of his great-great-grandfather, Sir Thomas Gray I (d. 1344), and his great-grandfather, the second Sir Thomas Gray (d. 1369), the author of the work.<sup>10</sup> The first Sir Thomas had tirelessly battled the Scots for more than thirty years, including fighting at Bannockburn in 1314 and withstanding two sieges as constable of Norham castle between 1319 and 1331. His son, the chronicler, followed in his military footsteps, serving Edward III both on the Border and in France, participating for example in the battle of Neville's Cross in 1346 and travelling to the Continent with the Black Prince in 1359.<sup>11</sup> As he knelt before the third monarch of the Lancastrian line, perhaps Ralph also remembered his grandfather, the third Sir Thomas Gray (d. 1400), who by lending his support to the usurpation of Henry Bolingbroke in 1399, and defending the Border for the new king, had set the stage for the continued social climb of the Grays under a new dynasty.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, the treason of Sir Ralph's father stood in stark contrast to the deeds of the illustrious Grays of the past.

As a beheaded traitor, Sir Thomas Gray's lands and possessions had been confiscated by the Crown in 1415, opening the possibility of a long-term or even permanent forfeiture that might have meant the family's ruin.<sup>13</sup> The Gray properties were restored to them, however, probably as part of Henry V's need to secure the northern Border on the eve of his French invasion. Although the family had been restored in economic terms, however, they undoubtedly needed to rescue their reputation. Part of this may have been accomplished by the activities of Sir John Gray, our subject's uncle and the younger brother of the traitor. A soldier through and through, Sir John had helped put down Owain Glyn Dŵr's rebellion, he had fought at Agincourt and during the conquest of Normandy, he was made a Knight of the Garter in 1418, and lost his life in the king's service at the Battle of Baugé in 1421.<sup>14</sup> Sir John's loyal military service certainly must have had a powerful impact on the king, not only in convincing him to keep the Gray estates intact but also in rebuilding the family's chivalric name in his eyes.<sup>15</sup> For all his military enthusiasm, though, it was not Sir John, but young Ralph who would eventually inherit the Gray properties and become the head of the family. It would ultimately be up to him to set the family on the ladder to greatness again.

Following the execution of the fourth Sir Thomas, the Gray estates were given to Sir John to hold during the minority of the heir, Ralph Gray's ten-year-old elder brother, Thomas.<sup>16</sup> Since this Thomas died during his minority, however, the vast Gray patrimony would come to Ralph, who was of age in 1427.<sup>17</sup> Around the time he came of age, perhaps late in 1427, Gray was married to Elizabeth Fitzhugh. The union must have been an advantageous one, for she was the daughter of Henry, third Lord Fitzhugh, of Ravensworth, Yorkshire, K. G. (d. 1414), who had served as chamberlain to Henry V.<sup>18</sup> Among the holdings in Northumberland that our extremely fortunate young man entered into in 1429 were the castle and manor of Wark-on-Tweed; the manors of Doddington, Howick, Hawkhill, Ross, and Akeld; the vills of Learmouth, Pressen, Nesbit, Heddon [Hetton], and Middlemast Middleton; properties in Alnwick, Eworth [Ewart], Coupland, and Newton-by-the-Sea, and various other lands in the wards of Glendale and Bamburgh.<sup>19</sup> Among his Durham properties were the castle and manor of Heaton, in Northumberland, and lands in Consett and Wolsingham.<sup>20</sup> Even though it is unclear how the Grays acquired Chillingham castle and manor, Ralph Gray seems to have been the first of his family to possess it and use it as his seat.<sup>21</sup> Although a source of wealth and influence, in this dangerous Border region such a vast patrimony also meant the responsibility to defend it against Scottish attacks.

### EARLY CAREER ON THE BORDER

Conditions on the Anglo-Scottish Border in the late Middle Ages are well known. Alternating periods of open warfare and truces peppered by private raids and counter-raids often created severe devastation and led to the construction and maintenance of an array of royal and private fortifications throughout the region.<sup>22</sup> Although technically there had been a truce with Scotland since the release of James I from English captivity in 1424, private feuds and raids on the Border continued and tensions ran high.<sup>23</sup> On 6 March 1430, in anticipation of Scottish action, the northern counties were arrayed. Sir Ralph Gray's first governmental service was on the Northumberland commission, where he served in the company of an impressive group of local notables with much experience fighting the Scots; these included Henry Percy, the Earl of Northumberland, by whom he was retained for life.<sup>24</sup> Among the others were John, Baron of Greystoke, Sir Robert Umfraville, Sir Robert Ogle, and Sir William

Elmeden.<sup>25</sup> In addition to the advantageous Percy retainer, establishing connections with older, more experienced men like Greystoke, Umfraville and Elmeden could not but have been beneficial to Gray. In the event, no Scottish invasion occurred, but conditions on the Border would continue to worsen.<sup>26</sup>

The next few years of Sir Ralph's life are something of a mystery since his name does not appear in any records until 12 February 1433, when he shows up on a commission to enquire by oaths in Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmorland concerning 'wards, marriages, reliefs, escheats and rights concealed from the king,' as well as other offences committed in those counties.<sup>27</sup> In an effort to curb what was perceived as a growing degree of lawlessness in England, the parliament of 1433 required all prominent individuals to swear a comprehensive oath against maintaining lawbreakers or hindering the wheels of justice. To that end, lists were compiled by county, and commissioners were assigned to take the oaths of those so listed. Since most of these lists are arranged in a rough order of importance, it is a testament to Sir Ralph's growing prominence that his name is second only to Umfraville's on the Northumberland list.<sup>28</sup> As relations with the Scots continued to deteriorate, the English took a number of defensive measures, culminating in commissions of array for the northern counties on 10 July 1434. The seriousness of the situation is reflected by the long list of prominent individuals, including Sir Ralph, listed on the Northumberland commission.<sup>29</sup> No doubt wanting to dress in a style befitting his station, Sir Ralph had had dealings with London tailors, for on 1 June 1435, he was pardoned for not appearing to answer a plea that he pay a debt of £8 3s 7d to the executors of the Will of Thomas Bright, a tailor of London.<sup>30</sup>

Although he had dabbled in defensive preparations, Gray's military service to the Crown did not begin in earnest until 24 June 1435, when he was given a one-year appointment as Warden of Roxburgh Castle, succeeding the experienced and highly respected Sir Robert Ogle the elder.<sup>31</sup> As was the case with previous captains of the castle, he would be given £1000 per annum during truce and £2000 in time of war for its safekeeping, the first instalment of which was issued on 11 July.<sup>32</sup> Originally a Scottish fortification, Roxburgh had been for the most part in English hands since 1291 and was one of the principal pieces in England's strategic scheme on the Border. Indeed, the Crown expended a large amount of resources in garrisoning and victualling its principal royal castles in Scotland, Berwick and Roxburgh, in spite of the great difficulties involved.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to his new position at Roxburgh, Gray possessed and was thus responsible for the defence of Wark-on-Tweed and Castle Heaton. Since the royal castles simply could not provide an adequate defence by themselves, the maintenance and supply of such private fortifications was crucial. Indeed, building, residing in, and occasionally defending such structures were typical of the northern gentry and were an indicator of status as well as a practical measure.<sup>34</sup> Wark, for example, had been the target of many military actions since its construction in the early twelfth century. Acquired by the third Sir Thomas Gray in 1398 from the Earl of Westmorland, in 1399 the castle and the village were captured and destroyed by the Scots who, took Sir Thomas's children and held them for ransom. Although the (reconstructed) castle was taken by the Scots again in 1419, and its garrison killed, Sir Robert Ogle and his men quickly retook it after noticing that the Scots had unwittingly left some of their rope ladders hanging from the walls. While Ogle distracted the Scottish commander in a parley, his men scaled the ramparts and slaughtered the surprised garrison.<sup>35</sup> We do not know as much about the building or military history of Heaton, but it seems to have been quite formidable as well. (Eventually, it would be captured and destroyed by James IV in his

invasion of 1496.)<sup>36</sup> Through appointment and inheritance, then, Sir Ralph Gray was now responsible for three of the major strongholds in a line that ran along or near the Tweed from Roxburgh to Berwick, the first line of defence against Scottish attacks.

As the truce of 1430 was due to expire on 1 May 1436, the prospect of war loomed ominously as that year began and, given the exposed strongholds under his command, Sir Ralph must have felt the tension. Other royal business had to progress, however, and on 29 January he was employed as a commissioner in Northumberland to collect the unusual income tax to which the parliament of 1435 had agreed.<sup>37</sup> Since it was conditioned in part by England's growingly desperate military situation in France and, given the often coordinated military efforts between the French and the Scots since the early fourteenth century, this extraordinary tax may have seemed to those in the north a harbinger of renewed Scottish action on the Border. In March, James I made it clear where his political sympathies lay by finally sending his daughter Margaret to France to marry the Dauphin Phillip, thus firmly cementing the Auld Alliance. Over the ensuing months, while the Scots prepared to invade, the English reinforced their positions with men drawn from other northern counties and with weapons sent from London, and by making some last-minute repairs to Berwick and Roxburgh.<sup>38</sup> On 21 May and 10 July, Gray was issued sums of £366 12s 1/2d and £153 6s 8d, respectively, to pay for munitions at Roxburgh.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, the English government's great financial difficulties contributed to a general vulnerability in the north. By the end of July, the situation was dire: the terms of the Wardens of the Marches expired and no new appointments were made, while the resulting uncertainty about their wages, and rumours that Berwick would be James's target, led many of the garrison there to desert.<sup>40</sup> In the event, though, James chose Roxburgh as his target, and on 1 August 1436, he and his vast Scottish army settled in around the castle.<sup>41</sup>

### THE SIEGE OF ROXBURGH

One of the more formidable strongholds on the Border, the town and castle of Roxburgh were in an excellent geographical position. Located between the Tweed and the Teviot, just south of their confluence, the town was protected by water on three sides, and to the south-west there was only a narrow entrance at a point where the two rivers once nearly came together. The castle was located here, on a piece of high ground, thus protecting the only vulnerable side. Although we are unsure of what the castle looked like in 1436, we know that it included what was called a 'great toure' or donjon. This would have been surrounded by a curtain wall with a number of other towers; inside would have been an area divided into several closes containing other buildings as well.<sup>42</sup> The castle mound fell sharply down to the rivers on two sides and was protected on the south-west by a deep ditch.<sup>43</sup> It was probably there, across the ditch, facing the main gatehouse, where James placed the bulk of his force. Estimations of the size of the Scottish army in the chronicle accounts vary widely, but numbers of between 100,000 and 200,000 are typical. Whilst these numbers are surely exaggerations, they give some indication of the great size of James's force, in stark contrast to Sir Ralph's garrison of only eighty men.<sup>44</sup> In addition, the king's formidable and expensive artillery train was made up of 'fine large guns, both cannon and mortars, and gunpowder and carriages and wagons and many other things utterly indispensable for a siege'.<sup>45</sup> The artillery included a massive bombard named the 'Lyon' and other pieces made in Flanders by some of Europe's best gunsmiths.<sup>46</sup>

According to the laws of war accepted by combatants at the time, the commander of a besieging force would first send to the garrison commander a formal summons to surrender. Thus James would have sent a herald forward to present his demand for entrance to *his* castle and town, and explain the consequences of refusal should the fortress be taken by assault.<sup>47</sup> James had it announced that he would not withdraw until Roxburgh was completely destroyed.<sup>48</sup> Sir Ralph thus found himself in the difficult position of all besieged captains: having to judge whether it was better to capitulate or to hold out. If he refused the summons to surrender and the fortress was then taken, he, the garrison, and the townspeople would be at the mercy of the attacking commander. We do not know what King James would have done with them in such a case but the laws of war condoned unspeakable brutality — the killing of men without quarter, the raping of women, the forfeiting of all property. In giving up without a fight, however, Gray would have been regarded as a traitor to his lord and king, to whom he had sworn a solemn oath to keep Roxburgh.<sup>49</sup> In the end, while the danger that James's vast army and powerful guns would prevail was very real, one can speculate that Sir Ralph simply could not bear the possibility of following his father to the block, staining his family name with the blot of two generations of traitors. Thus, 'well provisioned and not overawed', Gray refused to surrender, and James set his skilled German gunners to work, formally beginning the siege.<sup>50</sup>

Very few details of the progress of the siege of Roxburgh were recorded, but we can glean some information from the chronicles, though that information is incomplete and at times conflicting. Some imply Scottish incompetence or half-heartedness. After emphasizing James's careful preparations and the massive size of his force, the *Scotichronicon* tells us that '[f]or fifteen days these men devoted themselves to the siege and earned no praise there', and adds that in the process 'they rashly and incautiously [lost] enough shooting equipment and arrows seemingly for the whole kingdom.'<sup>51</sup> *The Book of Pluscarden* is more damning, describing their efforts as 'a fortnight [of] doing nothing worth recording' due to infighting and division.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, the so-called *Metrical Chronicle* tells us that the Scottish assaults were both fierce and persistent:

And to the castell ane greit seig he [James] set.  
Baith da and nycht so scharplie did assailzie,  
That tha within on force wes maid to failze. . . .<sup>53</sup>

The author of 'The Latin Brut' tells us that during James' attacks, Gray and his men guarded the castle 'bravely', and withstood James's attacks 'manfully',<sup>54</sup> a sentiment echoed by Hardyng's *Chronicle*:

Syr Raulfe Graye thē kept it frō all shames,  
Agayn his soutes, ý then were full stoute. . . .<sup>55</sup>

After enduring such steady bombardment for about two weeks, however, the *Metrical Chronicle* implies that Gray began to lose heart,

And wes reddie, without ony rebous,  
At thair desire for to gif ouir the hous.  
Ane da was set to commoun of sic thing  
Betuix the captane and the Scottis king;<sup>56</sup>

If this is indeed what happened — no other chronicle mentions it — Sir Ralph perhaps reasoned that he had held out for an honourable period, given the strength of the Scottish force, and he may have decided that after a fortnight of bombardment, meeting to discuss surrender terms was the prudent thing to do.<sup>57</sup> It should be noted that the author of the *Incerti scriptoris chronicon Angliae* tells us that Gray held out for nearly a month, longer than the fortnight mentioned in the *Scotichronicon* and *The Book of Pluscarden*.<sup>58</sup> Whilst James certainly did not have to show mercy at this point, the king may have felt that coming to terms and quickly securing the castle and town was more important than the unrestricted plunder that was his right if he eventually took them by assault. That James was willing to discuss terms at all, however, implies that Gray and his men must have been putting up a formidable defence.

In the end, though, no surrender occurred. Instead, the Scots withdrew and their siege was a humiliating failure: 'our men returned home ignominiously without achieving their object.'<sup>59</sup> The sources are divided as to the reason for this rather sudden retreat. *The Book of Pluscarden* implies that the siege broke down because of 'a detestable split and most unworthy difference arising from jealousy' in the Scottish camp.<sup>60</sup> The *Incerti scriptoris chronicon Angliae* agrees that James did not have the support of his nobles, but goes on to say that it was lack of food that finally caused him to withdraw.<sup>61</sup> A more dramatic explanation, given in the *Metrical Chronicle*, is that, right after the day was set for negotiation, James's queen, having had word that a rebellion against her husband was imminent, arrived at the siege to warn the king, and to name names. News about this threat on his life, its author suggests, caused James to abandon 'Richt haistelie' his investment of Roxburgh.<sup>62</sup> A more likely explanation for the king's hasty retreat, though, was the massive relief force that had been summoned on 10 August and which was now heading toward Roxburgh.<sup>63</sup> 'The Latin Brut', for example, tells us that the Scots quickly dispersed when they got word of the force, which was being led by the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Durham, and the Earl of Northumberland.<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, one of the continuators of the *Brut* tells us that Sir Ralph actually left the castle at some point and personally arranged for relief. As soon as the Scottish king got word of Gray's departure, we are told, 'he soddenly brak his siege & went his way, levyng moche ordynnance behind him; wher he gat no worsshipe.'<sup>65</sup> Whatever the reason, or combination of reasons, for their rapid departure, as this account indicates, the Scots apparently left behind the king's expensive and prestigious artillery train, underlining his humiliating defeat.<sup>66</sup> One can imagine Sir Ralph's relief and jubilation as he watched his enemies slink away, leaving an incredible booty of siege guns, including the prized 'Lyon'.

R. L. Storey, in his evaluation of the siege, concludes that 'the disaffection against James that led to his murder in the following year was the chief cause of England's bloodless defensive victory.'<sup>67</sup> This is rather too dismissive, however, of the role Sir Ralph Gray and his men must have played by their stalwart resistance. In Raymond Campbell Paterson's assessment, 'It is certainly true that Gray carried out an able and tough defence', and there is nothing in the sources to suggest otherwise.<sup>68</sup> If he had not, James would likely have taken the castle no matter how much 'disaffection' he faced, considering the resources at his disposal and his strong motivation to assert royal power at home with a victory against the English.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, if James withdrew because he got word that a relieving force was on the way, the king still must have perceived Gray's defence as sufficiently 'able and tough' for the castle to hold out until such a force could arrive. If after a massive and sustained bombardment, Gray considered surrender, it is no wonder. Few men, even more experienced ones, ever had to face such a large Scottish royal army with only eighty men. In fact, it had been ninety years since

any king of Scotland personally led a force against an English target.<sup>70</sup> We do not know if Sir Ralph's victory at Roxburgh was 'bloodless', as Storey suggests. It is quite possible that he lost men in the bombardment and that he and his troops took some Scottish lives as well. That the victory was, again in Storey's words, 'defensive' certainly does not diminish its significance in an age in which siege and the resistance to it were so central to war-making.<sup>71</sup>

### POST-ROXBURGH CAREER ON THE BORDER

Whatever the circumstances, the siege of Roxburgh must have demonstrated to the Crown Gray's competence as a commander. The state of war with Scotland continued until May 1438 and during this time Gray remained in command at Roxburgh, indenting with the king on 22 November 1436 and 21 November 1437.<sup>72</sup> Since there was a state of war, he was to receive £2000 per annum for the keeping of the castle. However, the Crown's lack of money is demonstrated by a Privy Council order on 18 November 1437 that Gray's command would be renewed only if no one could be found who would 'take it better cheep'.<sup>73</sup> He was advanced £400 for munitions on 29 August 1436, £433 6s 8d for the castle's general safe custody on 5 December 1437, and another £50 on 11 February 1438.<sup>74</sup> Following his success at Roxburgh, his responsibilities on the Border were widened. On 15 October 1436, he and other prominent Borderers were commissioned to provide justice in the East March by hearing and determining all pleas and quarrels.<sup>75</sup> On 16 February 1437, he was granted the offices of Chamberlain and Customer of Berwick;<sup>76</sup> and on 4 March and 20 April he was given the power to grant letters of safe conduct to those travelling between the East March and Scotland.<sup>77</sup>

The state of war with Scotland technically ended when a new nine-year truce was negotiated in 1438, and Gray was appointed one of its conservators on 31 March.<sup>78</sup> In that year, Gray would reach the peak of his military career. Having proven his loyalty and ability at Roxburgh, he advanced to the highest level of military command in the north. The truce began on 1 April and on the same day Gray and his cousin Sir Robert Ogle (d. 1469) were appointed joint Wardens of the East March and Berwick-upon-Tweed, the indenture coming on 24 May.<sup>79</sup> Sir Ralph would also share his command at Roxburgh with Ogle until mid 1439.<sup>80</sup> As Wardens of the March, the two knights were commissioned specifically to redress breaches of the truce, to defend the Border by calling out the array of Northumberland when needed, and to receive those who wished to declare their allegiance to Henry VI.<sup>81</sup> In general, Wardens of the Marches had wide ranging powers to maintain the defence of the Border, including the power to organize raids into enemy territory, to exercise control over the captains of castles, and to require the assistance of the various county and town officials in their March.<sup>82</sup> Gray and Ogle would indent again to be Wardens of the East March and Berwick on 17 February 1439 and would remain so until 1 April 1440, when they were replaced by Henry Percy, son of the Earl of Northumberland.<sup>83</sup> As northerners very familiar with the perils of the Border and the skills needed to defend it, Gray and Ogle were well suited to the position of Warden, and may even have complimented one another, with Sir Ralph's evident prudence balancing Sir Robert's apparent aggressiveness.<sup>84</sup>

Since it was a time of truce and both governments were preoccupied with other concerns, their terms turned out to be rather uneventful.<sup>85</sup> Sir Ralph's influence was increased on 1 March 1439, when he was appointed a JP in Northumberland.<sup>86</sup> He and Ogle were among those commissioned on 11 March to inquire into the condition of the town of Bamburgh, which its inhabitants claimed was 'so impoverished, burned, wasted and destroyed by

incursions of the Scots that there are scarcely inhabitants left sufficient for payment of the fee farm.<sup>87</sup> The finding of their investigation is very revealing of the results of Scottish raiding over the years: Bamburgh was indeed so wasted that where there were once 120 powerful burgesses inhabiting the town, only thirteen impoverished ones remained, unable to pay the amount owed.<sup>88</sup>

An indenture of 8 November shows that Gray had resumed his sole custody of Roxburgh castle, being then appointed for two years, and on the following day he was granted an advance of £500 for its keeping.<sup>89</sup> Before the end of 1439, he was ordered to come to the king bringing 'all the letters and evidences belonging to Master Adrian Phisicien [probably a diplomat] who lately came from Scotland', and to ensure that Roxburgh was well guarded while he was employed on this journey.<sup>90</sup> The king, on 20 June 1440, ordered the keeper of the Privy Seal to draw up an indenture with Gray, 'oure trusty and welbeloved knight', to hold Roxburgh for another six years after the previous indenture expired.<sup>91</sup> On 20 July 1440, Gray was again appointed to the offices of Customer and Chamberlain of Berwick.<sup>92</sup> In addition to other monies provided to him over the next several years as captain of Roxburgh, he was granted £25 on 12 July 1440 specifically for 100 bows and 200 sheaves of arrows.<sup>93</sup> His good service was rewarded on 19 March 1442, when he received a lifetime grant of his Berwick offices and of several fisheries in the Tweed with all fees and profits thereof.<sup>94</sup>

### SERVICE IN FRANCE

It was during these years that Gray's life took a rather unexpected turn. Between February 1441 and Michaelmas 1442, in addition to holding his Roxburgh command, he served as captain of Mantes, an important fortress on the Seine, northwest of Paris, although he may not actually have arrived in France until the summer.<sup>95</sup> Since the defection of the Duke of Burgundy at the Congress of Arras and the death of the Duke of Bedford in 1435, things had not been going well for English forces on the continent. The French campaign in the Île de France and the resulting capture of Paris in 1436 were tremendous blows.<sup>96</sup> Yet the English reacted with a great determination to retrench themselves and to fight on.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, the income tax of 1436, which Gray had helped collect, was intended to help finance a renewed English effort in France.<sup>98</sup> The financial situation in general, however, was grim and, except for some brief moments of English glory in the years to follow, the initiative would lie with the French.<sup>99</sup> At first glance, accepting a post in what was, by then, a losing war in France might seem an unusual direction for a man who had seemingly already achieved a formidable reputation through his good service on the Border. In fact, the recruitment of northerners for service in France had become very difficult by the 1440s; Borderers without previous experience in the war, like Gray, who were willing to commit themselves to a post at an exposed town in Normandy, were a minority. More generally, the conflict in France had become an effort carried on mainly by professional soldiers who had made a career out of the war, and by English residents of Normandy who had already invested in the defence of English territories there. Any Englishman who would make such a drastic career change at this point in the war was rare.<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, Sir Ralph was still a relatively young man of 35 years in 1441. Since the situation on the Border had become relatively peaceful, the logical place to carve out an even greater military reputation was France, even though the situation there may have seemed grim.<sup>101</sup> That he is listed on the retinue roll of Richard, Duke of York, the new lieutenant-general in France, may indicate that a connection to that

prominent peer was a motivating factor in Gray's decision.<sup>102</sup> In any case, Gray's experience at Roxburgh would have prepared him nicely for this role on the larger international scene.

As captain of Mantes, much of Sir Ralph's participation in the war effort would have been related to the actions of Sir John Talbot and, for a time, Richard, Duke of York, in support of English-held Pontoise, which, beginning in June 1441, was besieged by an army led by King Charles VII himself. Mantes would have been important as a step on Talbot's main supply route down the Seine from Pont-de-l'Arche. After boldly penetrating the French investment and supplying Pontoise with men and materials on 22 June, Talbot withdrew to Mantes on his way to Rouen, and thus would have briefly enjoyed Gray's hospitality there. When faced with the combined forces of York and Talbot in mid-July, Charles retreated across the Seine to Poissy. Talbot and his army then returned to Mantes in the last week of July, where Sir Ralph would undoubtedly have assisted his crossing of the Seine in pursuit of the French king. Charles survived Talbot's raid, however, and on 16 August resumed the siege. In late August, Talbot returned to Mantes, making it a sort of headquarters for spying on Charles and continuing to supply Pontoise. Gray's role as captain must have been essential in facilitating Talbot's operations. Although Pontoise was finally taken by a French assault in mid-September, Sir Ralph could have taken pride in his support of Talbot's dogged efforts, which helped to prevent a more serious French penetration of Normandy, and made for him an important connection with the most respected military commander of his day.<sup>103</sup>

After Gray's captaincy at Mantes ended in September of 1442, we lose track of him. He died on 17 March of the following year.<sup>104</sup> During a heraldic visitation conducted in the late fifteenth century, his grandson, the sixth Sir Thomas Gray (d. 1498), stated that Sir Ralph had died in France.<sup>105</sup> Although we do not have any corroborating evidence for this, being killed in the French war would explain his rather surprising death at the young age of 36. We know he had been in command at Mantes only six months before, and there is no apparent reason Sir Thomas would volunteer information to the herald about his grandfather that he knew to be false.<sup>106</sup> Four days after Sir Ralph's death, the Privy Council appointed William Neville, Lord Fauconberg, to replace him at Roxburgh and ordered letters to be sent to Gray's lieutenant there, thanking him for his good service, asking him to continue in his role, and promising to reward him and his soldiers at a later time.<sup>107</sup>

## CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

An important Gray heraldic badge, which appears prominently on Sir Ralph's tomb at Chillingham, was the ladder. According to Andy King, the badge, as well as the title of the *Scalacronica* — the Latin *scala* means 'scaling ladder' — was probably inspired by a pun on the Gray surname, for the Old French *gree* translates as 'stair' or 'step'.<sup>108</sup> Although the scaling ladder is an appropriately military image for a militarily oriented family, the surname, chronicle title, and badge also suggest the idea of advancement. As King deftly demonstrates, the advancement of the Grays through military service during the fourteenth century was truly remarkable. I would add, though, that in spite of more limited opportunities in the mid-fifteenth century, Sir Ralph Gray's career can serve as an additional case study of knightly advancement in the Gray family. His inheritance, into which he entered in 1429, meant that from the beginning, he was responsible for Wark and Heaton, two of the major private fortifications along the first line of Border defence. Faithful service on commissions of array and inquiry in the early 1430s may have contributed to his first appointment as Warden of

Roxburgh in 1435. His stewardship of a prominent royal stronghold during the two years of war that followed and, most importantly, his defence of the castle in 1436, undoubtedly served as an important step in his further advancement. We do not know if Gray had any military experience prior to the siege. However, he displayed good leadership in withstanding the Scottish king, and the king's formidable artillery, until the news of an approaching relief force compelled a retreat. All this could only have bolstered Gray's reputation, thus leading to more significant responsibilities. As joint-Warden of the East March in 1438–40, he climbed to the highest rung of military leadership in the North and was also jointly responsible for the defence of Berwick, at which he had been granted the important offices of Chamberlain and Customer. During these years, he was entrusted to be a conservator of the truce with Scotland and a JP in Northumberland. Finally, his continued captaincy of Roxburgh at home was complemented by military command on a grander scale in France when he was made captain of Mantes in 1441. There is no hint that he executed his responsibilities there with anything but trustworthiness and skill, helping to facilitate Talbot's operations against the French. The fact that he was awarded the 'S collar' was an implicit acknowledgement of his value to the Crown. In Chillingham, Sir Ralph's armoured effigy is a final expression of the personal reputation he had built, an indication that his son remembered him, and wanted others to remember him, in essentially chivalric terms. Decades later, the sixth Sir Thomas Gray must have thought it important that future generations remember that his grandfather had given his life in France in the king's service. Through a life spent tirelessly defending the Border and then the English possessions in France, Sir Ralph Gray had indeed 'scaled the ladder'.

In the broader sense, our knight's winning a glorious reputation for himself probably contributed significantly to restoring the reputation of the Gray family name, which had been sorely damaged by his father's beheading. King tells us that 'despite [Sir Thomas Gray's] condemnation and execution for treason, the family emerged unharmed from this escapade, and his son went on to inherit an undiminished estate.'<sup>109</sup> Whilst he is correct that the Grays suffered no permanent financial harm, since they were not attainted, I would argue that the contributions of Sir Ralph toward restoring the Gray family honour should not be discounted. Throughout his career, he demonstrated that, unlike his father, he would provide loyal military and administrative service, assuring the Crown, the nobility, and his fellow gentry that the Grays could fully be trusted again. By making the most of the opportunities before him, Sir Ralph Gray made it clear that his father's fall was an anomaly and that the family was prepared to 'scale the ladder' again.

When our knight died, the heir to the Gray lands, influence, and restored reputation was his elder son and namesake, Ralph (d. 1464).<sup>110</sup> It was probably around 1450 that young Ralph chose to commemorate his father in alabaster by having the impressive Chillingham monument built. Since Sir Ralph's career has not been carefully examined before, it has been assumed that the monument could not really have been built to reflect his life and deeds, which have been assumed to be lacklustre, but rather was intended merely as a display of the wealth he left his son or as a symbol of the general importance of the Gray family.<sup>111</sup> Once Sir Ralph's career is recounted in full, however, one can more comfortably believe that the son was specifically commemorating the father's chivalric reputation, and perhaps also indicating his own intention to pursue an active knightly lifestyle in imitation of it.<sup>112</sup> There is no doubt that the younger Ralph began his own climb to greatness with significant advantages due to his father's fame and wealth. Since Sir Ralph had been a tenant-in-chief, his son was a ward of the Crown and he and his mother were living in the royal household in 1445, when

he is referred to as a king's esquire.<sup>113</sup> Of age in 1449, he came into his father's vast properties and represented Northumberland in the Commons. Following in his father's footsteps, he served as joint-Warden of Roxburgh in 1452–60, and surpassed him in chivalric honour when he was made a Knight of the Bath, *c.* 1453. Prominent also in local government, the younger Sir Ralph served on several royal commissions between 1454 and 1460, was appointed Sheriff of Northumberland in 1455 and 1459, and was a conservator of the truce with Scotland in 1457. However, the political milieu in the late 1450s and 1460s was a great deal more uncertain than it had been in the time of the elder Sir Ralph, and loyalty during the Wars of the Roses was a much more slippery slope. Still faithful to the Lancastrians at Towton in March 1461, he helped the Yorkists besiege Alnwick Castle in November of that year. Entrusted with the keeping of the castle after its fall in 1462, Gray switched sides again the following year, turning Alnwick over to Margaret of Anjou. Attainted in 1464, he was subsequently captured, tried, and beheaded as a traitor.<sup>114</sup> It is ironic that, although the circumstances were very different, this Sir Ralph would bring back the stigma of treason to the Gray family that his father had worked so hard to overcome.<sup>115</sup> It is also ironic that shortly after his joint-Wardenship at Roxburgh ended, the castle, the site of his father's greatest triumph, would be lost to another Scottish royal siege, in August 1460, and razed.<sup>116</sup>

In the 1930s, a gold armorial signet ring was found in an Alnwick market garden. The device carved on the bezel is a ladder supported by two horned rampant beasts. Since the workmanship has been dated to the mid-fifteenth century, since he was the first Gray to use the ladder badge, and since the beastly supporters are virtually identical to those on a surviving seal of his, the original owner 'can be identified with a reasonable degree of probability' as the subject of this paper. On the ring are engraved the words, 'e paine en dure de bon cor' — 'to brave hardship willingly'.<sup>117</sup> Given his life of loyal military service on the Border and in France, including his successful defence of Roxburgh, Sir Ralph Gray could not have had a more fitting motto.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> On the tomb itself, see: Heslop and Harbottle 1999, 123–34 (plate two in this article contains a marvellous photograph of the reclining couple); Hunter Blair 1930a, 5, 15–17; Coss 1996, 21–22; Dodds 1935, 311–13, 319–21; King 2005b, 72; Bates 1891, 298–300.

<sup>2</sup> Heslop and Harbottle 1999, 126.

<sup>3</sup> Pugh 1988, 102–5, 127, 161–6; Allmand, 1992, 74–6.

<sup>4</sup> CCR 1413–1419, 226–7; Pugh 1988, 122; Allmand 1992, 77.

<sup>5</sup> Dodds 1935, chart facing 328. His maternal connection with the Nevilles was no doubt of value to him throughout his career.

<sup>6</sup> Griffiths 1998, 80–81; Given-Wilson and Curry 2005, '1426 February — Introduction'; Shaw 1906, 130–31; Metcalfe, 1885, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Heslop and Harbottle 1999, 131.

<sup>8</sup> Barnie 1974, 58–9, 62, 69, 75, 89, 93–4.

<sup>9</sup> Pollard, 1990, 208–15.

<sup>10</sup> The best edition of the work is King 2005a.

<sup>11</sup> King 2005b, 58–60. For the biography of the second Sir Thomas Gray, see Theolier 2004. For the Gray pedigree, see: Dodds 1935, chart facing 328; Hunter Blair 1930b, 53–4.

<sup>12</sup> See his biography in Roskell *et al.* 1993b, 222–5.

<sup>13</sup> King 2005b, 60, 69–70.

<sup>14</sup> King 2005b, 71–2; See Sir John's biography in Cokayne, 1926, 136–8.

<sup>15</sup> King 2005b, 71–2.

<sup>16</sup> King 2005b, 71. In addition to Thomas, Ralph had four younger siblings: William (d. 1478), who would attend Balliol College, Oxford, and pursue a career in the church, eventually becoming Bishop of Ely in 1454; a daughter who may have married into the Arundel family; Joan (d. 1488), who married Sir John Salvain (d. 1469); and Margaret, who took as her second husband Roger Widdrington (d. 1451): Dodds 1935, chart facing 328. Note that Hunter Blair 1930b, 54, has William as the second son and Sir Ralph as the third.

<sup>17</sup> King 2005b, 72; Dodds 1935, chart facing 328. The fifth Sir Thomas may have been dead in 1420 since in that year Ralph 'is returned as holding the lordship and seigniorial rights of Akeld': Cully 1913, 41. On 22 January 1427–8, an inquisition *ad inquirendum* found Sir Ralph's claim to the Gray estates was good; he had livery of them in 1429: Fawcett 1922, 346.

<sup>18</sup> By her, Gray would sire three children, two sons and a 'child not named': Dodds 1935, chart facing 328; Heslop and Harbottle 1999, 126; Wedgwood 1936, 397–8.

<sup>19</sup> Stamp and Lyle 1906, 78, 86–7; Roskell *et al.* 1993b, 13–14, 18; Cully 1913, 41; Bateson 1895, 96; Vickers 1922, 42, 81, 95, 162, 171, 221, 234, 241–2, 283–4, 324.

<sup>20</sup> King 2005b, 58; Bates 1891, 14; Roskell *et al.* 1993b, 223; Fawcett 1922, 345–46; *CPR 1405–1408*, 433; *CPR 1408–1413*, 399.

<sup>21</sup> Bates 1891, 297–8. It may have come to the Grays through a marriage with an heiress of the Heaton's 'as they quartered their arms *vert a lion rampant within a bordure engrailed argent*.' William de Heaton (d. 1400) possessed it and his estates passed to his three daughters: Bates 1888, 339. Sir Thomas Gray was granted custody of William's lands in Northumberland during his minority and his marriage on 31 Oct 1399: *CPR 1399–1401*, 33; *CCR 1399–1402*, 156. On Henry V's 1415 list of Border fortifications, Chillingham's owner is given only as the heir of Sir Alan de Heaton (d. 1388): Bates 1891, 14.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Miller 1960; Tuck 1985; Hay 1975; Storey 1961; and Neville 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Griffiths 1998, 154–9.

<sup>24</sup> Bateson 1895, 415.

<sup>25</sup> *CPR 1429–1436*, 71.

<sup>26</sup> Griffiths 1998, 159–61.

<sup>27</sup> *CPR 1429–1436*, 276. The commission also included Northumberland, Ralph, Earl of Westmorland, Thomas, Lord Dacre, and Umfraville.

<sup>28</sup> *CPR 1429–1436*, 396. A detailed description of the oath can be found in Given-Wilson and Curry 2005, '1433 July — Text/Translation', 'Membrane 17'. See also Bogner 2004, 179–80.

<sup>29</sup> *CPR 1429–1436*, 359–61; Griffiths 1998, 160.

<sup>30</sup> *CPR 1429–1436*, 437.

<sup>31</sup> TNA, E404/51/318; Hunter Blair 1953, 43–44; Balfour-Melville 1936, 228–9.

<sup>32</sup> *CDS 1108–1516*, 222–3: £250 for a quarter of a year. This was followed on 26 Nov. with £200: *CDS 1357–1509*, 224.

<sup>33</sup> Hunter Blair 1953, 21–3; Tabraham 1994, 165–67; Goodman 1998, 161–2, 164–5, 172.

<sup>34</sup> Goodman 1998, 167–70.

<sup>35</sup> Watt 1987, 113. For some other accounts of the incident, see Bennet 1965b, 32; and Jackson 1992, 120–22.

<sup>36</sup> Rowland 1969, 43. Although the castle of Heaton is first mentioned on Henry V's list of 1415, the manor had been acquired by the Grays from the de Heaton family in the thirteenth century: Jackson 1992, 42.

<sup>37</sup> *CFR (1430–1437)*, 258. Also included on this commission were the bishop of Durham and the prominent northern knights, Robert Umfraville, William Elmeden and John Bertram. For the 1436 tax, see Gray 1934.

<sup>38</sup> Griffiths 1998, 161–2; *CCR 1435–1441*, 66; *CPR 1429–1436*, 611; Balfour-Melville 1936, 228–9.

<sup>39</sup> *CDS 1357–1509*, 225.

<sup>40</sup> Storey 1961, 160–61. Michael Brown argues that there was really no general breakdown of English defences on the Border, especially at Roxburgh, which was kept well armed and supplied: Brown 2000, 164.

<sup>41</sup> Brown 2000, 163.

<sup>42</sup> Tabraham 1994, 165–6. For a marvellous painting of how the castle might have looked in the fifteenth century, see Spratt. A 1416 description of the state of the castle lists, in addition to the

donjon, a number of named towers, a 'Stokhouse', 'two posterns on the Teviot side', 'a timbered draw-well and a Hall': Bennet 1965a, 26.

<sup>43</sup> Hunter Blair 1953, 21. The last time Roxburgh had been besieged was during the so-called 'Foul Raid' of 1417, when it was successfully defended by Sir John Bertram: Watt 1987, 87; Brown 1998, 215–16. For Bertram's heroic preparation and defence, see Roskell, Clark, and Rawcliffe 1993a, 212.

<sup>44</sup> Kingsford 1913, 322, gives a figure of 140,000 men-at-arms, while Skene 1880, 287, tells us that more than 200,000 assaulted Roxburgh. Watt 1987, 297, tells us that, with a few exceptions, 'all laymen who were of the age of discretion (that is between the ages of 16 and 60)' were summoned, with the resulting force equaling 200,000 men-at-arms 'and as many or more foot soldiers and carts'. An unusually low figure of 'more than 900' is given in Gairdner 1880, 165. See also Storey 1961, 161; Balfour-Melville 1936, 229; and Brown 2000, 163–4.

<sup>45</sup> Skene 1880, 287.

<sup>46</sup> Patterson 1997, 73; Brown 2000, 163.

<sup>47</sup> Perhaps this was the Marchmont herald, which James created to commemorate in advance what he presumably believed would be the certain capture of the 'Marchmont', another name for Roxburgh: Brown 1998, 245. See also Brown 2000, 163.

<sup>48</sup> Giles 1848, 16. Thanks to Fr. Paul-Alexander Shutt of the Saint Vincent College Department of Modern and Classical Languages for his kind assistance with the translation of this passage.

<sup>49</sup> Keen 1965, 120–24. For the savagery allowed after taking a fortification by storm, see Bradbury 1996, 317–24.

<sup>50</sup> Sadler 2005, 326; Keen 1965, 120; Brown 2000, 163–4.

<sup>51</sup> Watt 1987, 297. Balfour-Melville 1936, 230, characterizes it as the 'idle squandering of arrows and cannon-balls to no purpose'.

<sup>52</sup> Skene 1880, 287.

<sup>53</sup> Turnbull 1858, 554. This is echoed by one of the continuators of the *Brut*, who tells us that with his men and cannons James 'did moche harme þere as he come': Brie 1808, 470.

<sup>54</sup> Kingsford 1913, 322: 'Jacobus, Rex Scotorum, periurus, Castro de Rokesborgh ... obsidionem apposuit; ubi nichil profecit. Nam Radulphus Gray, miles ... cum quater viginti armatis viris dictum Castrum fortiter custodiens eidem Regi et suo exercitui viriliter resistebat.' For similar language, see Gairdner 1880, 165–6. See also Matheson 1999, 57–8. The remark in Patterson 1997, 79, that Gray's defence 'apparently [caused] the Scots to exhaust their ammunition at a fairly early stage' may be an interpretation of the passage in the *Scotichronicon*, quoted previously, that the Scots 'rashly and incautiously [lost] enough shooting equipment and arrows seemingly for the whole kingdom...': Watt 1987, 297.

<sup>55</sup> Ellis 1812, 397.

<sup>56</sup> Turnbull 1858, 554–5.

<sup>57</sup> Since many medieval sieges were ended through negotiation, it is not unreasonable that such a meeting was arranged. See Bradbury 1996, 313–15, 325–34.

<sup>58</sup> Giles 1848, 16.

<sup>59</sup> Watt 1987, 297.

<sup>60</sup> Skene 1880, 287. Whilst it is unclear what caused such a division, Macquarrie 2004, 219, suggests that the Scottish nobles, already angered by James's heavy handed rule, were now able to oppose the king more vigorously, since in the field they were armed and united. Duncan 1976, 22, regards it likely that the split occurred because the army would rather have gone on a more lucrative plundering raid through northern England than besiege Roxburgh. This sentiment is echoed by Dickinson 1977, 219. It is possible that the dissention was because James was prepared to negotiate a surrender, while others hoped for capture by storm and the rich rewards that would follow. For similar disagreements between James I of Aragon and his army, see Bradbury 1996, 314–15.

<sup>61</sup> Giles 1848, 16.

<sup>62</sup> Turnbull 1858, 555.

<sup>63</sup> Macpherson *et al.* 1819, 295; Brown 2000, 164.

<sup>64</sup> Kingsford 1913, 322. This is supported by Gairdner 1880, 166; and Ellis 1812, 397.

<sup>65</sup> Brie 1808, 505. If either of the two posterns in the wall facing the Teviot in 1416 were still there, it could have been used by Sir Ralph as a sally port for this venture: Bennet 1965a, 26. Such a rapid

move on Gray's part, however, seems rather unlikely and no other source mentions it. Michael Brown argues that a relief force had been planned for some time: Brown 2000, 164.

<sup>66</sup> Skene 1880, 287.

<sup>67</sup> Storey 1961, 161.

<sup>68</sup> Patterson 1997, 79.

<sup>69</sup> For the king's attempts to assert royal power on the Marches, see Brown 1998, 244–6.

<sup>70</sup> Brown 1998, 245.

<sup>71</sup> For the subject of siege warfare, see Bachrach 1994; and Bradbury 1996.

<sup>72</sup> TNA, E101/71/3/899 (On this document, there is a large, partially intact seal of Sir Ralph's arms — gules a lion rampant within a Border engrailed argent — with the shield tilted and what seems to be an animal's head.); TNA, E404/53/147; TNA, E404/54/135.

<sup>73</sup> Nicolas 1835, xxiv, 75.

<sup>74</sup> *CDS 1357–1509*, 225, 227–8. In 1437–8, he purchased cannons, two barrels of gunpowder, and twenty crossbows: Hunter Blair 1953, 44.

<sup>75</sup> Macpherson *et al.* 1819, 296.

<sup>76</sup> Macpherson *et al.* 1819, 299.

<sup>77</sup> With Sir William Eure and Sir John Bertram on 4 March, and with Bertram, Sir Ralph Greystoke, and Sir Robert Ogle on 20 April: Macpherson *et al.* 1819, 299–300. Conscious also of the security of his personal properties, on 14 July 1437 Gray leased by deed the park of Consett and the park of 'Ladlee in the vill of Wolsyngham', Durham, to Henry Vasey for life, with reversion to Sir Ralph and his successors: Handcock 1883, 398. This was apparently done without episcopal licence: Fawcett 1922, 346.

<sup>78</sup> Macpherson *et al.* 1819, 303; *CDS 1357–1509*, 228.

<sup>79</sup> Macpherson *et al.* 1819, 304–5; Storey 1957, 600–1; Hunter Blair 1950, 58; TNA, E101/69/1/279 (Note: 'Rauf Gray' is added above first line on the indenture, perhaps indicating that it was originally to be just Sir Robt Ogle.); TNA, E404/54/300; *CPR 1436–41*, 187. As was customary, they would receive, *per annum*, £5000 in war and £2500 in peace and truce for the March, £200 in war and 100 marks in peace and truce for Berwick. For Ogle, see Fraser 2004, 604. Continuing as captain of Roxburgh in 1438, Gray was granted the following sums for its safe keeping: £16 on 13 May, £544 14s 6 1/2d on 27 May, £56 on 26 June, £166 13s 4d on 30 June, and £100 on 14 July: *CDS 1357–1509*, 229–30.

<sup>80</sup> TNA, E404/54/310; *CPR 1436–41*, 187, 204; *CDS 1357–1509*, 231–2. As joint-Wardens, they were issued the following sums: £534 12s 9d on 26 Nov 1438; £66 13s 4d on 21 Feb 1439; £56 13s 4d on 12 June 1439; and £357 13s 11d on 19 June 1439: *CDS 1357–1509*, 231–2.

<sup>81</sup> TNA, C47/22/11/48; *CDS 1357–1509*, 230.

<sup>82</sup> Hunter Blair 1950, 24. The best description of the history of the office can be found in Storey 1957, 593–615. See also Pollard 1990, 150–53.

<sup>83</sup> TNA, E404/55/146; Macpherson *et al.* 1819, 313; Storey 1957, 614.

<sup>84</sup> This impression of Ogle's personality is deduced from episodes like his impetuous raid and subsequent capture by Scots in 1435, his bold attack at St. Albans in 1455, and his assault on Holy Island in 1462: Bradley 1983, 169–70; Gillingham 1981, 88–9; Fraser 2004, 604.

<sup>85</sup> Griffiths 1998, 402–4; Patterson 1997, 80.

<sup>86</sup> *CPR 1436–41*, 587–8.

<sup>87</sup> *CPR 1436–41*, 270.

<sup>88</sup> *CPR 1441–46*, 403. For some of the economic effects of Scottish raids, see Miller 1960, 5–8.

<sup>89</sup> TNA, E101/71/4/905; TNA, E404/56/135; *CDS*, 4, pp. 232–3.

<sup>90</sup> *CDS 1108–1516*, 296.

<sup>91</sup> Nicolas 1835, xxxii, 120; TNA, E404/58/85.

<sup>92</sup> Macpherson *et al.* 1819, 316.

<sup>93</sup> *CDS 1357–1509*, 234. Sums granted to him as captain: £137 6s 8d on 2 May 1440; £513 6s 8d on 12 May (*CDS 1357–1509*, 234); £66 13s 4d on 27 Oct 1441, £500 on 16 Nov (this one to be rendered by Master William Gray, his brother), £6 on 24 Feb 1442, £961 13s 4d on 20 Nov, £233 19s 8d on 22 Nov. (*CDS 1357–1509*, 236).

<sup>94</sup> *CPR 1441–46*, 54. The fisheries were: 'Crabwater, Lawe, Aldstelle, Abstelle, Calett, Tutyngrforde, Deirmouth, Newater, Northycrow, and Hondewater': *CDS 1357–1509*, 236. A commission was

appointed on 23 March to inquire into Gray's titles to lands and tenements in Consett: Fawsett 1922, 346.

<sup>95</sup> Curry 1988, 168, n. 19. According to Curry, he would have commanded a garrison of 270 men at Mantes (Curry 1988, 168, n.12). In a list of the garrison at Mantes, dated 18 October 1441, there are 95 men-at-arms, 25 'men-at-arms, foot', and 104 archers, for a total of 224 soldiers under Gray's command at that time (BN\_msfr\_25776\_1538, from the AHRC-funded database www.medievalsoldier.org, accessed 25 January 2013). See also Demay 1885, 448, for a description of a document of 30 September 1441 concerning wages of the garrison of Mantes serving under Sir Ralph. He is listed on the retinue roll of Richard, Duke of York, the new lieutenant-general in France (TNA, E101/53/33), an expedition that set sail in June of 1441: Griffiths 1998, 459.

<sup>96</sup> Griffiths 1998, 443.

<sup>97</sup> Keen 1986, 390–91.

<sup>98</sup> CFR 1430–37, 258; Keen 1986, 391.

<sup>99</sup> Keen 1986, 393–5.

<sup>100</sup> Jamieson 1994, 113–14. See also Powicke 1969, 371–82; and Keen 1989, 297–311. For an example of one of those English professional soldiers who was still serving in France at this time, see Bogner 2009, 104–26.

<sup>101</sup> Perhaps he was driven to emulate his great-grandfather, Sir Thomas, author of the *Scalacronica*, who had fought for Edward III in France as well as on the Scottish Border, or his uncle, Sir John, who had served Henry V so actively in France and was made a Knight of the Garter as a reward for his loyal efforts there. See above.

<sup>102</sup> TNA, E101/53/33.

<sup>103</sup> Pollard 2005, 54–7.

<sup>104</sup> Dodds 1935, chart facing 328. Writ of *diem clausit extremum*, 3 April 1443: CFR 1437–45, 233.

<sup>105</sup> Hunter Blair 1930b, 54. In his introduction, Hunter Blair characterizes the pedigrees contained therein as 'of high quality and of general accuracy' (xiii). For a brief notice of the sixth Sir Thomas Gray, see Hunter Blair 1942, 71.

<sup>106</sup> It is worth noting that if he indeed died in France, his body may not actually be buried in the tomb that bears his effigy. See Heslop and Harbottle 1999, 126, 131.

<sup>107</sup> Nicolas 1835, xlix–l; 249–50; Hunter Blair 1953, 44–45. Curiously, sums of £72 13s 4d and £10 were granted to Sir Ralph as Warden of Roxburgh on 6 April and 12 May 1443 respectively: CDS 1357–1509, 236–37.

<sup>108</sup> King 2005b, 57.

<sup>109</sup> King 2005b, 70.

<sup>110</sup> The boy's mother, Elizabeth, was granted the marriage of her son in November 1443 for a sum of 400 marks: CPR 1441–46, 258. See also Devon 1837, 447, for a payment of £196 13s 4d she made to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, for the marriage. Our knight's second son was the fifth Sir Thomas Gray, who was married to Elizabeth, daughter of Edward, lord Burgavenny: Dodds 1935, chart facing 328.

<sup>111</sup> Heslop and Harbottle 1999, 126; King 2005b, 72.

<sup>112</sup> For the chivalric significance of knightly tomb effigies, see Keen 1984, 169; and Pollard 1990, 209.

<sup>113</sup> CPR 1441–46, 258; CPR 1441–46, 353. According to the latter document, Elizabeth was 'daily attendant on the queen's person'.

<sup>114</sup> See his biographical notices in Wedgwood 1936, 397–8; Hunter Blair 1934, 108–9; Hunter Blair 1942, 68; and Hunter Blair 1953, 45. For the ceremony and significance of the Knights of the Bath, see Pilbrow 2002, 196–218, which begins with a description of Sir Ralph being ceremonially stripped of this honour prior to his execution.

<sup>115</sup> In spite of his treason, his lands were returned to his widow in 1465 and entered into by his son the sixth Sir Thomas Gray in 1473, when he was still a lad of only seventeen years: Wedgwood 1936, 398.

<sup>116</sup> Tabraham 1994, 167; Hunter Blair 1953, 45.

<sup>117</sup> Hunter Blair 1935, 277–9 (motto on 277). Thanks to Dr Doreen Blandino of the Saint Vincent College Department of Modern and Classical Languages for her kind advice on the translation of the motto.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- CCR 1399–1402, 1413–1419, 1435–1441: *Calendar of the Close Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, 1892–1954*, London.
- CDS 1357–1509: Bain, J. (ed.) 1888, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office, London*. Vol. IV. A.D. 1357–1509, Edinburgh.
- CDS 1108–1516: Simpson, G. G. and Galbraith, J. D. (eds.) 1986, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland preserved in the Public Record Office and the British Library, Volume 5 (Supplementary)* A.D. 1108–1516, Edinburgh.
- CFR 1430–1437, 1437–1445: *Calendar of the Fine Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, 1911–62*, London.
- CPR 1399–1401, 1405–1408, 1408–1413, 1422–1429, 1429–1436, 1436–41, 1441–46: *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, preserved in the Public Record Office, 1891–1916*, London.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALLMAND, C. 1992 *Henry V*, Berkeley, CA.
- BACHRACH, B. 1994 'Medieval siege warfare: a reconnaissance', *Journal of Military History*, 58, 119–33.
- BALFOUR-MELVILLE, E. M. W. 1936 *James I, King of Scots 1406–1437*, London.
- BARNIE, J. 1974 *War in Medieval English Society: Social Values in the Hundred Years War 1377–99*, Ithaca, NY.
- BATES, C. J. 1888 'Notes on Chillingham Castle', *PSAN*<sup>2</sup>, 3:32, 338–9.
- BATES, C. J. 1891 'The Border Holds of Northumberland', *AA*<sup>3</sup>, 14, 1–448.
- BATESON, E. (ed.) 1895 *A History of Northumberland issued under the direction of The Northumberland County History Committee, 2*, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- BENNET, G. W. 1965a 'Roxburgh Castle', *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, 37:1, 24–7.
- BENNET, G. W. 1965b 'Wark Castle', *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, 37:1, 29–34.
- BOGNER, G. 2004 'The English knights of 1434: a prosopographical approach', *Medieval Prosopography*, 25, 179–80.
- BOGNER, G. 2009 "'Military" knighthood in the Lancastrian era: the case of Sir John Montgomery', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, 7, 104–26.
- BRADBURY, J. 1996 *The Medieval Siege*, orig. pub. 1992, Woodbridge.
- BRADLEY, P. 1983 'Anglo-Scottish Relations During the Fifteenth Century: 1399–1485' (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Emory University).
- BRIE, F. W. D. (ed.) 1808 *The Brut, or The Chronicles of England*, Part 2, London.
- BROWN, M. 1998 *The Black Douglases: War and Lordship in Late Medieval Scotland 1300–1455*, Phantassie.
- BROWN, M. 2000 *James I*, 2nd ed., East Linton.
- COKAYNE, G. E., et al. (eds.) 1926 *The Complete Peerage; or, A history of the House of lords and all its members from the earliest times*, 2nd ed., 6, London.
- COSS, P. R. 1996 'Heraldry and monumental effigies in the North East', in Faulkner, T. E. (ed.) *Northumbrian Panorama: Studies in the History and Culture of North East England*, London, 3–32.
- CULLY, M. 1913 'Akeld Tower', *AA*<sup>3</sup>, 9, 37–43.
- CURRY, A. 1988 'Towns at war: relations between the towns of Normandy and their English rulers, 1417–1450', in Thomson, J. A. F. (ed.) *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, Gloucester.
- DEMAY, G. 1885 *Inventaire des sceaux de la collection Clairambault à la Bibliothèque nationale*, 1, Paris.
- DEVON, F. 1837 *Issues of the Exchequer: Being a Collection of Payments made out of His Majesty's Revenue, from King Henry III, to King Henry VI. Inclusive*, London.
- DICKENSON, W. C. 1977 *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603*, Oxford.
- DODDS, M. H. (ed.) 1935 *A History of Northumberland issued under the direction of The Northumberland County History Committee, 14*, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- DUNCAN, A. A. M. 1976 *James I, 1424–1437*, Glasgow.
- ELLIS, H. (ed.) 1812 *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, London.

- FAWSETT, J. W. 1922 'The Manor of Consett', *PSAN*<sup>3</sup>, 10, 345–8.
- FRASER, C. M. 2004 'Ogle, Robert (VI), first Baron Ogle (c.1406–1469)', in Matthew, H. C. G. and Harrison, B. (eds.) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 41, Oxford, 604.
- GAIRDNER, J. (ed.) 1880 *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, Camden Society, 2nd ser., 28, London.
- GILES, J. A. (ed.) 1848 *Incerti scriptoris chronion Angliae de regnis trium regum Lancastrensiu Henrici IV, Henrici V, Henrici VI.*, London.
- GILLINGHAM, J. 1981 *The Wars of the Roses: Peace and Conflict in Fifteenth-Century England*, London.
- GIVEN-WILSON, C. and CURRY, A. (eds.) 2005 *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, CD-ROM, Scholarly Digital Editions, Leicester, 'Henry VI'.
- GOODMAN, A. 1998 'The defence of Northumberland" a preliminary survey', in Strickland, M. (ed.) *Armies, Chivalry and Warfare in Medieval Britain and France*, Stamford.
- GRAY, H. L. 1934 'Incomes from land in England in 1436', *English Historical Review*, 49, 607–39.
- GRIFFITHS, R. A. 1998 *The Reign of King Henry VI*, 2nd ed., London.
- HANDCOCK, G. F. 1883 'Durham Records: Cursitor's Records: Inquisitions post mortem, &c.', *Reports of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records*, 44, appendix, 310–542.
- HAY, D. 1975 'England, Scotland and Europe: the problem of the frontier', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 25, 77–91.
- HESLOP, D. and HARBOTTLE, B. 1999 'Chillingham Church, Northumberland: the south chapel and the Grey tomb', *AA*<sup>5</sup>, 27, 123–34.
- HUNTER BLAIR, C. H. 1930a 'Medieval effigies in Northumberland', *AA*<sup>4</sup>, 7, 1–32.
- HUNTER BLAIR, C. H. (ed.) 1930b *Visitations of the North, Part III: A Visitation of the North of England circa 1480–1500*, Surtees Society, 144.
- HUNTER BLAIR, C. H. 1934 'Members of Parliament for Northumberland (September 1327–September 1399)', *AA*<sup>4</sup>, 11, 21–82.
- HUNTER BLAIR, C. H. 1935 'A medieval armorial signet ring', *AA*<sup>4</sup>, 12, 277–9.
- HUNTER BLAIR, C. H. 1942 'The Sheriffs of Northumberland. Part I, 1076–1602', *AA*<sup>4</sup>, 20, 11–89.
- HUNTER BLAIR, C. H. 1950 'Wardens and Deputy Wardens of the East Marches of England towards Scotland in Northumberland', *AA*<sup>4</sup>, 28, 18–95.
- HUNTER BLAIR, C. H. 1953 'The Wardens of Roxburgh Castle,' *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, 32:1, 21–45.
- JACKSON, M. J. 1992 *Castles of Northumbria: A Gazetteer of the Medieval Castles of Northumberland and Tyne and Wear*, (Medieval Castles of England, 3), Carlisle.
- JAMIESON, N. 1994 'The recruitment of northerners for service in English armies in France, 1415–50', in Clayton, D. J., Davies, R. G., and McNiven, P. (eds.) *Trade, Devotion and Governance: Papers in Later Medieval History*, Gloucester, 113–14.
- KEEN, M. 1965 *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages*, London.
- KEEN, M. 1984 *Chivalry*, New Haven, CT.
- KEEN, M. 1986 *England in the Later Middle Ages: A Political History*, orig. pub. 1973, London.
- KEEN, M. 1989 'The end of the Hundred Years War: Lancastrian France and Lancastrian England', in Jones, M. and Vale, M. (eds.) *England and Her Neighbours, 1066–1453: Essays in Honour of Pierre Chaplais*, London, 297–311.
- KING, A. (ed.) 2005a *Sir Thomas Gray: Scalacronica, 1272–1363*, Surtees Society, 209.
- KING, A. 2005b 'Scaling the ladder: the rise and rise of the Grays of Heaton, c.1296–c.1415', in Liddy, C. D. and Britnell, R. H. (eds.) *North-East England in the Later Middle Ages*, Woodbridge, 57–73.
- KINGSFORD, C. (ed.) 1913 *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century*, New York.
- MACPHERSON, D., CALEY, J., and ILLINGWORTH, W. (eds.) 1819 *Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londinensi et in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi asservati*, 2, London.
- MACQUARRIE, A. 2004 *Medieval Scotland: Kingship and Nation*, Stroud.
- MATHESON, L. M. (ed.) 1999 *Death and Dissent: Two Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, Woodbridge.
- METCALFE, W. C. 1885 *A Book of Knights Banneret, Knights of the Bath, and Knights Bachelor, made between the Fourth Year of King Henry VI and the Restoration of Charles II*, London.

- MILLER, E. 1960 'War in the North: the Anglo-Scottish Wars of the Middle Ages', The St John's College, Cambridge Lecture, Hull.
- NEVILLE, C. 1996 'Local sentiment and the "national" enemy in Northern England in the Later Middle Ages', *Journal of British Studies* 35, 419–37.
- NICOLAS, N. H. (ed.) 1835 *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, 5, London.
- PATTERSON, R. C. 1997 *My Wound is Deep: A History of the Later Anglo-Scots Wars 1380–1560*, Edinburgh.
- PILBROW, F. 2002 'The Knights of the Bath: dubbing to knighthood in Lancastrian and Yorkist England', in Coss, P. and Keen, M. (eds.) *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, Woodbridge, 196–218.
- POLLARD, A. J. 1990 *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War, and Politics 1450–1500*, Oxford.
- POLLARD, A. J. 2005 *John Talbot and the War in France 1427–1453*, orig. pub. 1983, Barnsley.
- POWICKE, M. R. 1969 'Lancastrian Captains', in Sandquist, T. A. and Powicke, M. R. (eds), *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Bertie Wilkinson*, Toronto, 371–82.
- PUGH, T. B. 1988 *Henry V and the Southampton Plot of 1415*, Gloucester.
- ROSKELL, J. S., CLARK, L., and RAWCLIFFE, C. (eds.) 1993a *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons (1386–1421)*, 2, Stroud.
- ROSKELL, J. S., CLARK, L., and RAWCLIFFE, C. (eds.) 1993b *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons (1386–1421)*, 3, Stroud.
- ROWLAND, T. H. 1969 *Medieval Castles of Northumberland*, Northern History Booklets, 1, Newcastle.
- SADLER, J. 2005 *Border Fury: England and Scotland at War, 1296–1568*, Harlow.
- SHAW, W. A. 1906 *The Knights of England: A Complete Record from the Earliest Time to the Present Day of the Knights of All the Orders of Chivalry in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Knights Bachelors*, 1a, London.
- SKENE, F. J. H. (ed.) 1880 *The Book of Pluscarden*, 2, The Historians of Scotland, 10, Edinburgh.
- SPRATT, A. 'Reconstruction of Roxburgh Castle 1460', the Maybole website: <http://www.maybole.org/history/castles/roxburgh.htm> (accessed 30 April 2013).
- STAMP, A. E. and LYLE, J. V. (eds.) 1906 *Inquisitions and Assessments relating to Feudal Aids, with other analogous documents, A.D. 1284–1431*, 4, London.
- STOREY, R. L. 1957 'The Wardens of the Marches of England towards Scotland, 1377–1489', *English Historical Review* 72, 593–615.
- STOREY, R. L. 1961 *Thomas Langley and the Bishopric of Durham 1406–1437*, London.
- TABRAHAM, C. J. 1994 'Two dogs and a bone: the story of Roxburgh Castle', *Château Gaillard: Études de castellologie médiévale* 17, 165–7.
- THEOLIER, J. C. 2004 'Gray, Sir Thomas (d. 1369)', in Matthew, H. C. G. and Harrison, B. (eds.) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23, Oxford, 458–9.
- TUCK, J. A. 1985 'War and society in the medieval North', *Northern History* 21, 33–52.
- TURNBULL, W. B. (ed.) 1858 *The Buik of the Cronicles of Scotland; or A Metrical Version of the History of Hector Boece; by William Stewart*, 3, Rolls Series, 6, London.
- VICKERS, K. H. (ed.) 1922 *A History of Northumberland issued under the direction of The Northumberland County History Committee*, 11, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
- WATT, D. E. R. (ed.) 1987 *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower in Latin and English*, 8, Aberdeen.
- WEDGWOOD, J. C. 1936 *History of Parliament: Biographies of the Members of the Commons House 1439–1509*, London.

Department of History, Saint Vincent College, 300 Fraser Purchase Road, Latrobe, PA 15650, USA.

[gil.bogner@email.stvincent.edu](mailto:gil.bogner@email.stvincent.edu)

