

Taxing the North-East: Northumberland and the Knights' Fees Subsidy of 1428

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SUMMARY

This paper examines the Northumberland returns relating to the parliamentary knights' fees subsidy of 1428; the first lay tax imposed on this county since 1346. These returns demonstrate the relative efficiency of local officials in bringing Northumberland back into the payment of lay taxation. All inquisitions relating to Northumberland landholdings were undertaken prior to the collection date stipulated by parliament. Collectors did, however, commit a series of administrative errors, ranging from their assessment of landholders holding less than a quarter of a knight's fee and clerics, to their serious under-assessment of many knights' fees. Additionally, the Northumberland returns provide a window onto Northumbrian aristocratic society prior to the Wars of the Roses. A high level of sub-infeudations by the Percy and Neville families justifies, to an extent, historians' emphasis on the increasing polarisation of the Northumbrian polity as the Lancastrian period progressed.

INTRODUCTION: LAY TAXATION IN LATER MEDIEVAL NORTHUMBERLAND

DURING THE LATE THIRTEENTH AND EARLY FOURTEENTH CENTURIES, Northumberland contributed towards the fractional lay taxes which parliament had taken to granting on individuals' moveable property as a means of funding the crown's wars. Although these taxes ranged from a ninth in 1297, to a twentieth in the countryside and a fifteenth in towns in 1307, Northumberland is recorded as having contributed around £1,000, irrelevant of the rate at which particular taxes were set (Willard 1907–8, 238). This ambiguity was attributed by Willard to officials' common practice of taxing individuals at roughly the same rate every time parliament conceded a new tax.¹ Willard viewed the Northumberland officials' failure to accurately re-assess the region for new lay taxes in the context of regular complaints, made by local officials at the exchequer, of poverty caused by Anglo-Scottish border warfare which made it difficult for Northumberland taxpayers to foot their tax bills.²

As the military exigencies of border warfare increased during the first phase of the Hundred Years' War, Northumberland came to be habitually exempted from fifteenths and tenths conceded by the Commons.³ The government's idea was that, in the absence of a standing royal army, Northumberland's blanket exemption from lay taxation would better equip border barons to fight the Scots. Several historians have concluded from this that the state made no effort to bring Northumberland back into the payment of lay taxation during the Middle Ages.⁴ Yet this is to ignore Lancastrian experimental taxes on baronial incomes. Neither of the taxes on elite income from lands in November 1404 and 1411 were imposed on Northumberland. Yet the parishes and knights' fees tax of 1428, granted by the Commons to fund the expansive military expenditures sustained by Henry VI's minority government,

charged Northumberland with regard to landholders' knights' fees; feudal landholdings which, historically, were deemed sufficient to financially support knights.

This paper aims, firstly, to explain why Northumberland was subject to the knights' fees tax of 1428.⁵ The focus here is on the historic precedent provided by the feudal aid of 1346 which assessed Northumberland, and the favourable political and military circumstances of Henry VI's early minority. The second aim is to trace the relative efficiency of officials in assessing Northumberland landholders in 1428. Material from the Northumberland tax assessments demonstrates that, unlike the levy of 1346, the knights' fees tax of 1428 was assessed speedily. Nevertheless, a range of errors appear to have characterised Northumberland officials' administration of the knights' fees tax which were not a factor elsewhere in the country. The third aim is to employ the Northumberland returns to examine the political society of Lancastrian Northumberland. Attention is drawn to the increasing polarisation of the local polity, reflected in an increase in the practice of subinfeudation on the part of the Percy and Neville families to their supporters.

THE KNIGHTS' FEES TAX IN NORTHUMBERLAND: HISTORIC PRECEDENTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE DYNAMICS

Henry VI's minority government anticipated that the parishes' component of the parishes and knights' fees tax would invoke a high level of nationwide administrative and logistical problems.⁶ It was therefore felt that this subsidy would prove impossible to assess in a geographically distant county such as Northumberland, which had no administrative framework in place to assess a conventional fifteenth and tenth, let alone a complex and unprecedented new tax. As noted above, however, the knights' fees component of the 1428 tax was imposed on Northumberland and charged landholders, here as elsewhere in the country, six shillings and eight pence per knight's fee.⁷ Holders of three quarters of a knight's fee; half a knight's fee; and a quarter of a knight's fee; were charged a proportionate sum of a full knight's fee. Holders of less than a quarter of a knight's fee, meanwhile, were exempted in light of the post-Black Death squeeze on landholders' finances which is known to have intensified during the 1420s (Britnell 1995; Hatcher 1996). Similarly, clerical holders of knights' fees were exempted in recognition of their contribution towards clerical tenths.

The subjection of Northumberland to the knights' fees tax is explained, to an extent, by the fact that this subsidy grew out of a so-called feudal aid; the best known later medieval example of which was the knights' fees levy of 1346, imposed by Edward III on the knighting of Edward, the Black Prince (Jurkowski, Smith and Crook 1998, 47–8). A feudal aid was *not* a parliamentary tax levied in the event that the government secured the consent of MPs to meet a publicly-defined national military emergency, but was rather a royal prerogative imposition.⁸ As a result, Northumberland landholders were unable, in 1346, to fall back on the county's now-conventional fiscal exemption. Consequently, the 1346 levy charged Northumberland landholders, as it did landholders elsewhere in the country, forty shillings per knight's fee, or a proportionate sum for those who held a fraction of a knight's fee. As the exchequer records attest, this provided future governments with an administrative precedent for assessing Northumberland.⁹

When, however, in 1404 and 1411 the government of Henry IV, in response to declining fifteenth and tenth revenue, a fall in indirect tax receipts and mounting expenditures, re-framed the feudal aid as a national tax dependent upon parliamentary consent,

Northumberland was exempted from payment.¹⁰ This seems to have been due in part to political considerations by the early Lancastrian government; general instability in the far North around the time of Henry IV's crushing of the Percy uprising made it impolitic for Henry IV to try and impose new lay taxes, even lay taxes based on the 1346 feudal aid, on Northumberland.¹¹ Additionally, renewed, intense, Anglo-Scottish border skirmishes meant that Northumberland landholders could have credibly claimed that they could not afford to contribute to these special taxes.¹²

Henry VI's minority regime was far better placed than the government of his grandfather had been to assess Northumberland for the 1428 knights' fees tax. Firstly, parliament more than halved the chargeable rate from twenty shillings per knight's fee in Henry IV's time to six shillings and eight pence per knight's fee in 1428.¹³ The Commons' idea was to fund the crown's increasing military costs in the least burdensome manner conceivable for the lay elite, an important consideration for penny-pinching Northumberland landholders not accustomed to public fiscal contributions. Moreover, the minority regime made a considerable political effort to placate both the restored Percy family and their Neville rivals and there was something of a lull in Anglo-Scottish hostilities as a result of a seven year truce signed in 1424.¹⁴ These factors, viewed in the context of the government's instigation of a tax modelled on the 1346 feudal aid but charged at between a fifth and a sixth of the value of this aid, led the exchequer to charge county officials to assess and tax landholders in Northumberland.¹⁵

How effective were Northumberland officials in administering the knights' fees tax of 1428? One way of assessing this is to compare the timeframe in which Northumberland officials conducted their assessments in 1428 with that of their predecessors in 1346. In his study of the levy of 1346, Harriss has shown that the opposition of Northumbrian potentates to payment of this imposition was such that it took local officials over a decade to assess and tax landholders (Harriss 1975, 411–16). Viewed in this context, the exchequer was still accounting with Northumberland officials who were yet to complete their assessment and collection tasks in 1360.¹⁶ It looks as though parliament's insistence on the lower rate of six shillings and eight pence per knight's fee and the relatively favourable political and military circumstances sketched in the previous paragraph served to offset similarly protracted assessment difficulties in 1428. Table 1 tabulates the seven Northumberland wards employed as tax districts in 1428 and the dates when the inquisitions into landholders and their landholdings in the different wards were conducted.¹⁷

Table 1 Dates when inquisitions were conducted in Northumberland wards in 1428.

WARD	INQUISITION DATE
Bamburgh	6 May
Coquetdale	8 May
Glendale	10 May
Inter North	20 April
Inter South	2 May 1428
Tynedale	4 May
Tynemouth (liberty)	4 June 1428

The various Northumberland inquisitions were undertaken between 20 April, in the Inter North ward, and 4 June, in the liberty of Tynemouth. This timeframe complies with parliament's stipulation that local collectors bring revenue from the knights' fees tax into the exchequer by 24 June.¹⁸ A recent examination of the exchequer's administration of the knights' fees tax on a national level has shown that local officials in most southern and midland counties, with the exception of Hertfordshire and Norfolk where taxpayers are known to have resisted payment, conducted inquisitions at similar dates to those discussed above for Northumberland (Brayson 2016). Viewed in this context, then, it is clear that Northumberland officials were able to relatively quickly secure landholders' payment of the knights' fees tax in 1428.

This is not, of course, to say that officials' assessment of landholders in Northumberland was a simple matter. Geo-administrative changes since the mid-fourteenth century required officials to revise the tax districts which had been employed both in 1346 and, during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, for the administration of conventional lay taxes. Most wards, that is to say, Bamburgh, Tynedale, Glendale and Coquetdale, stayed the same in 1428. Yet the Embleton liberty, employed by officials in 1346, was abandoned in 1428, whilst the Tynemouth liberty, which was absent from the 1346 returns, was used as a tax district in 1428.¹⁹ Moreover, what had simply been the Inter ward in 1346 was split between Inter North and Inter South in 1428.²⁰

Logistical complexities aside, it seems that Northumberland officials committed a number of errors in their assessment of landholders. Officials in the southern and midland counties of the country are known to have been meticulous in noting in their assessments the exemption of holders of less than a quarter of a knight's fee and clerical landholders in 1428 (Brayson 2016). Yet none of the figures listed as having held less than a quarter of a knight's fee in the Northumberland returns are stipulated as having been exempted from payment of the knights' fees tax. This included important landholders such as John, Lord Greystoke, a Percy retainer,²¹ as well as lesser gentlemen such as John Serf, a member of the affinity of John le Scrope.²² Similarly, none of the clerical landholders listed in the Northumberland returns, which included the Priory of Tynemouth and the Priory and Convent of Hexham, are stipulated as having been exempted from payment of the knights' fees tax.²³

It is difficult to say why Northumberland officials failed to take account of the exemptions noted above. Perhaps the terms of the knights' fees tax were simply not transmitted accurately to such a distant part of the country which was unfamiliar with assessing national taxes? Whatever the truth of the matter, it is very likely that officials' failure to exempt landholders in possession of less than a quarter of a knight's fee and clerical landholders was only discovered when they accounted with the exchequer. The barons of the upper exchequer historically prided themselves on their thorough accounting with local officials during the so-called audit of account (Willard 1934, 276–307), so it is probable that the Northumberland landholders who had been wrongly taxed in 1428 successfully lobbied the exchequer to be remitted from their payments during the exchequer's audit of the Northumberland account. This would explain the fact that the total yield discernible from the Northumberland assessment returns is three pounds in excess of the sum total given for Northumberland in the enrolled account, £21 13s. 4¾d.²⁴ Nevertheless, this suggestion must remain speculation since a thorough examination of the exchequer memoranda rolls relating to the period 1429–30, when the enrolled account stipulates that the Northumberland account was audited and closed, reveals that no audit for this county has survived.²⁵

Two inter-related additional points need to be made in the context of officials' administration of the knights' fees tax. Firstly, Northumbrian landlords' incomes are known to have been squeezed more than seigniorial incomes in other English regions from the late 1420s as a result of renewed plague, murrain, harsh weather and crop failure, which served to speed up national trends towards higher wages, lower rents and peasants' collective bargaining for securer tenancies.²⁶ It is thus possible that officials' assessment of lesser landholders such as John Serf, who ought to have been exempt from the knights' fees tax, was financially ruinous; a theory which would support the hypothesis that those who had been unlawfully taxed in Northumberland in 1428 successfully lobbied the exchequer to have their payments remitted. Secondly, and more significantly, officials may have grossly under-assessed certain Northumberland landholders' knights' fees with the aim of encouraging the latter's administrative co-operation and tax payment. This possibility, which we shall see relates to the Percy and Neville support bases, is discussed in detail in the following section.

THE KNIGHTS' FEES TAX IN NORTHUMBERLAND: LANDHOLDING AND POLITICS

The 1428 returns, when compared with returns relating to the 1346 feudal aid, permit an assessment of changes in the pattern of landholding in Northumberland over the course of the later medieval period. Table 2 tabulates the number of knights' fees held by the second Earl of Northumberland, Henry Percy, and the second Earl of Westmorland, Ralph Neville, in 1428, and by their predecessors, in 1346.²⁷

Table 2 Knights' fees held by the Percy and Neville families in 1346 and 1428.

	1346	1428
Percy	3	4½
Neville	1	1½
Total Northumberland Fees	145	70

These statistics draw attention to the relatively low number of knights' fees held by the Percy and Neville families, both in 1346 and in 1428, notwithstanding the former's holding more than double the fees of the latter on both occasions. Nevertheless, the number of Northumberland fees held by both the Percys and the Nevilles did rise marginally, from four in 1346 to six in 1428.

Perhaps a more useful indicator of changes to the Percy and Neville landholdings is to be found in an examination of long-term fluctuations in their subinfeudations to others; that is, their bestowing of knights' fees on fellow Northumberland landholders.²⁸ Table 3 tabulates the number of knights' fees recorded as having been subinfeudated to others by Henry Percy and Ralph Neville in 1428, and by their predecessors in 1346.²⁹

The number of knights' fees subinfeudated by the Percy and Neville families is recorded as having increased from nineteen and a half in 1346 to thirty one in 1428. Viewed in its own right, this is a striking increase in the number of knights' fees subinfeudated by the two principal Northumberland families. Yet there is good reason to suggest that the above figures

Table 3 Knights' fees subinfeudated by the Percy and Neville families in 1346 and 1428.

	1346	1428
Percy	16½	26
Neville	3	5
Total Northumberland Fees	145	70

underestimate the extent of the Percy and Neville families' landholdings. As both Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate, the 1428 returns record a striking decline in total knights' fees over time, from 145 in 1346 to 70 in 1428.³⁰

It is likely that there would have been a minimal reduction in Northumberland knights' fees during the course of the later Middle Ages, owing to changes to the border between Northumberland, Westmorland and Scotland.³¹ It is inconceivable, however, that geo-administrative changes could have resulted in a more than fifty per cent collapse in total knights' fees, as these figures would indicate. This would have required the 'wastage' of scores of fees, which was not legally possible in later medieval England, as evidenced by the broadly static number of knights' fees, over time, in other English counties.³² What must, then, have happened in 1428 is that as many as sixty to seventy Northumberland taxpayers failed to disclose their knights' fees, most likely as a result of their unwillingness to contribute the full amount which they owed at a time when their feudal incomes were seriously eroded.

That the Percys and the Nevilles held, or had subinfeudated to others, a number of these additional knights' fees is evident from a preliminary examination of the assessments. In the Bamburgh ward, the Percys were recorded in 1428 as having subinfeudated to others around half the number of fees that they had subinfeudated in 1346.³³ It is inconceivable that the Percy presence in Bamburgh declined during the course of the late Middle Ages. Henry V had appointed Henry Percy to be warden of Bamburgh castle; a position which, it is known, the second earl used to increase his family's standing in the ward.³⁴ What appears, then, to have occurred in Bamburgh is that the locally-dominant Percy family subinfeudated fees to figures who were under-assessed in 1428. Thus, Richard Grey, whose family historically held subinfeudated fees from the Percys, was only disclosed as holding one knight's fee with regards to Hawkhill and Howich manors in 1428.³⁵ His ancestor Thomas Grey, however, had been assessed for two knights' fees with regards to these same two manors in 1346.³⁶ Similarly, Thomas Beauchamp held half a subinfeudated knight's fee from the Percys with regard to Charlton manor.³⁷ In 1346 the Earls of Arundel had held two knights' fees from the Ogle family with regard to this same manor.³⁸

Similar points can be made regarding the Nevilles' knights' fees. Such was the extent of the Nevilles' later medieval ascendancy that scholars have opined that their Northumbrian affinity came to exceed that of the Percys by the late Lancastrian period.³⁹ This is not, however, borne out by the growth in the Nevilles' recorded Northumberland knights' fees between 1346 and 1428, which leaves the Nevilles behind the Percys in their landholdings.⁴⁰ This raises the possibility that knights' fees within the Neville sphere of influence fell under the radar in 1428. It looks as though the Nevilles were not, themselves, directly under-assessed in 1428, since the first Earl of Westmorland's inquisition *post mortem* of 1425

corroborates Northumberland officials' 1428 assessments in identifying Westmorland's family as directly holding one and a half knights' fees (Parkin and Stevenson 2003, 573–4). Yet the same cannot be said of figures to which the Neville family subinfeudated knights' fees. Thus, in 1346, the Greystoke family held two and a half knights' fees from one Edmund Crauster with regard to the village of Middleton Morrel in the Tyndale ward.⁴¹ Yet in 1428 Robert Ogle held one quarter of a knight's fee from the Earl of Westmorland for this same village.⁴²

The foregoing discussion leads us to hypothesise that a number of Northumberland landholders to whom the increasingly regionally-dominant Percy and Neville families subinfeudated knights' fees agreed to co-operate with tax officials on the condition that the latter under-assess them; an accord which officials would, conceivably, have been willing to make in order to facilitate their administrative duties. One could theoretically attempt to build upon this suggestion and trace the proportion of Percy and Neville supporters under-assessed in relation to the total number of under-assessed Northumberland landholders in 1428. This would, however, require a detailed, inter-ward, study of Northumberland landholders which charted historic changes in the possession of all knights' fees. Such a study would also have to confront the difficulties of working with inquisitions *post mortem*, specifically as far as the occasional failure of inquisitions to identify the number of knights' fees held by landholders for particular villages and manors is concerned.⁴³ These lines of enquiry are beyond the scope of this article, hence the selective points made above regarding subinfeudations in Bamburgh and Tyndale.

These issues notwithstanding, it is certainly telling how the Percys and the Nevilles used the increased scope of their landholdings as a political tool for their respective families' gain. In 1346, both the Percys and the Nevilles had bought fees from others, as well as subinfeudating to a whole range of relatively obscure figures.⁴⁴ In this early period before they emerged as the principal Northumbrian families, they thus behaved as did other similarly ranked county gentry families. By 1428, however, in keeping with their increased dominance within landholding society their subinfeudations were to a relatively tight group of figures who had emerged as their political supporters. Thus, Henry Percy subinfeudated knights' fees to figures associated with his wardenship of the Northern border, such as the Greys noted above, William Eure and John, Lord Greystoke.⁴⁵ Similarly, Ralph Neville subinfeudated knights' fees to figures, such as Lord Wells, who were associated with his County Durham affinity, and others, such as Robert Ogle, whose families had come, during the early fifteenth century, to be linked to the Neville dynasty.⁴⁶

The striking enthusiasm of the Percy and the Neville families to subinfeudate knights' fees to political allies complements their well-recorded 'bastard feudal' policy of retaining increasing numbers of baronial and gentry supporters during the second quarter of the fifteenth century.⁴⁷ Viewed in this context, the knights' fees tax evidence discussed above seems to add weight to the suggestion, of historians such as Bean (1958, 69–80), Storey (1966, 24–32) and Griffiths (1968, 589–632), that the period between the mid-fourteenth century and the reign of Henry VI witnessed the emergence of a structurally unstable regional polity characterised by two over-mighty rival power groups. Nevertheless, these historians' correspondent focus on the inevitability of a breakdown of civil order and of armed private war in the late Lancastrian period may not be justified. As Pollard has shown, during the minority of Henry VI, both Henry Percy and Ralph Neville sought to employ their increasing political strength in Northumberland to more effectively manage their estates and pursue an internal family struggle, rather than turn on one another (Pollard 1990, 245–6).

That a political crisis was averted in Northumberland, during the 1420s and 1430s, is largely testament to a series of deft policies instigated by Henry VI's minority government. The king's ministers appear to have recognised that a Northumberland landholding class which was increasingly polarised between two rival affinities had the potential to implode at any time and thus required a high level of royal supervision. The regime therefore took the unusual step of developing a direct landholding presence in Northumberland. The 1428 knights' fees tax returns show that the king's eldest uncle, the Duke of Bedford, unprecedentedly held a knight's fee and subinfeudated two other knights' fees on behalf of the crown in the Tyndale ward, where the Percy and Neville interests were closely balanced.⁴⁸ This development needs to be viewed in the context of royal attempts, during the early years of Henry VI's reign, to cater for the political and territorial ambitions of both the Percys and the Nevilles through allocating a place for both on the minority council, attempting to fund old debts to the Percys and giving the Nevilles a free hand in County Durham (Harriss 1988, 120, 122, 146–7; Pollard 1990, 95).

The lesson of these initiatives was that vigorous, proactive government initiatives could, at least for a time, provide for a certain degree of order in Northumberland. It could be argued that, from the 1440s onwards, the adult Henry VI's weak, incoherent policy towards his greater subjects failed to contain escalating local tensions which were borne of increasing 'bastard feudal' excesses (Watts 1996, 123–259; Carpenter 1997, 87–135). The fact that there were no knights' fees taxes during Henry's majority unfortunately means the exchequer evidence discussed in this article for the 1440s is absent. It seems almost certain, however, that the Percy and the Neville families acquired and subinfeudated more knights' fees to their supporters, consonant with the increased scale of their retaining activities drawn attention to by Bean and others (Bean 1958, 69–80; Storey 1966, 24–32, 142–50; Griffiths 1968, 589–632). Whether or not a more effective king than Henry VI would have been able to deal with this situation is, of course, a matter for historiographical debate, which is beyond the remit of this enquiry.

CONCLUSIONS

A number of key points emerge from this study. Firstly, the Commons' imposition in 1428 of a low chargeable rate in comparison with the feudal aid of 1346, viewed in the context of favourable political and military circumstances, enabled Henry VI's minority regime to assess Northumberland for the knights' fees tax. Secondly, officials' relative speed in assessing landholders and bringing in tax revenue, notwithstanding relatively minor administrative hiccups, was very likely facilitated by their tacit compliance in the serious under-assessment of many knights' fees, which we have viewed in the context of a series of examples relating to Percy and Neville familiars. This hypothesis is consonant with what we know of the striking failure of Northumberland officials to equitably assess landholders for the 1435 income tax,⁴⁹ and the state's exemption of Northumberland from later experimental taxes as well as fifteenths and tenths.⁵⁰

Thirdly, through placing statistics relating to the Percy and Neville families' increased hegemony as landholders in the context of published scholarship on their broader 'bastard feudal' policies and the intervention of the crown, this article has refined the conclusions of Bean, Griffiths and others relating to the relative instability of political society in late Lancastrian Northumberland. In particular, it has shown that, at least until the 1430s, worsening

ruptures within the Northumbrian polity were kept under control by the proactive government of Henry VI's minority. It is hoped that this approach is of historiographical and methodological value to students of landholding society in other areas of the country prone to political disturbance prior to the Wars of the Roses.

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NOTES

¹ Willard (1934, 138–47). This appears to have characterised the administration of pre-1334 lay taxation in most areas of the country.

² Willard (1907–8, 237–42). For evidence of Northumberland collectors' regressive taxation of individuals who held less than the pre-1334 'taxable minimum' of 10s., see Willard 1934, 162.

³ In 1334, parliament froze the national yield of a fifteenth and tenth on the basis of a national quota which apportioned fixed sums to individual counties. For the exchequer's failure to enforce a quota on Northumberland, see Willard (1934, 11–13, 346) and Ormrod (2008, 641).

⁴ Donkin (1973, 81); Schofield (2004, 63). Both of these authors talk of the 'customary' post-1334 exemption of Northumberland from lay taxation.

⁵ Owing to its palatinate status, County Durham was exempted from later medieval lay taxes, including the knights' fees tax of 1428. Yet it is interesting to note that, towards the end of March 1428, the Bishop of Durham ordered a survey to be made of prebends; an indication that royal pressure may have been placed on the bishop to assess County Durham for the parishes component of the 1428 tax: Storey 1959, 79–80. This would be consonant with Edward III's imposition of the parishes tax of 1371 on Durham (Ormrod 1988, 78).

⁶ The parishes tax was an unprecedented lay tax which charged parishioners ten per cent of the value of their parish church. The government feared that the novel duties which local officials would have to undertake for this tax, such as the re-assessment of the wealth of urban churches and the conducting of inquisitions into individuals resident in rural parishes, would make it difficult to effectively and time-efficiently administer (Brayson 2016).

⁷ *PROME*, parliament of 1427–8, item 13. See note 15 for the exchequer's writ to the Northumberland collectors.

⁸ Royal prerogative impositions were non-negotiable since they were rooted in subjects' feudal obligations to the monarch, on whose behalf they held land. Public taxes, however, had to be negotiated by the monarch with parliament, which spoke for the realm. For a more detailed discussion, see Harriss (1975, 21–4).

⁹ The exchequer material relating to the 1346 tax is at E 179/158/18mm. 2, 4–5, 10 (indentures with collectors); E 179/158/17 (assessments); E 359/5 rot. 10d. (enrolled account).

¹⁰ This has been established through an examination of the enrolled exchequer account of both of these taxes, at E 359/29, rots 1–2, and E 359/29 rot 3, respectively. It is not possible to comment on the tax on elite incomes from land of March 1404, since parliament instructed the exchequer to destroy all records of this tax, yet it seems very likely that this subsidy also exempted Northumberland (Kirby 1970, 168–9).

¹¹ For a recent evaluation of the early Lancastrian government's efforts to manage the volatile situation in the North-East, see Arvanigian (2008).

¹² This centred on a re-ignition of the Percy-Douglas feud in the early 1400s, followed by an uneasy truce (Fraser 1885, 372–6; Macdonald 1995, 60–4).

¹³ A point also made by Soos (2006, 160–2).

¹⁴ For the minority regime's adept handling of the Northumbrian polity, see the discussion in the following section of this article. For Anglo-Scottish relations in the 1420s, see Griffiths (1981, 156).

¹⁵ *CFR*, 15, 217. The Northumberland officials appointed by the crown were Adam Killyngworth, Roger Ussher, William Yonge, John Parker, Edward Wetwang and Thomas Houbourne.

¹⁶ On 12 March 1360, local jurors oversaw an exchequer-mandated inquisition into outstanding sums owed by Northumberland collectors for the 1346 feudal aid. The collectors argued that post-plague de-population and poverty prevented them from administering and bringing in arrears: E 179/238/131.

¹⁷ The following table is based on an examination of the wards listed in the Northumberland inquisitions at E 179/158/37 and E 164/4 (this latter file is an early Tudor transcript of documents relating to the parishes and knights' fees tax, which includes the Bamburgh ward inquisitions which are not included in the bundle of Northumberland inquisitions). It needs to be noted that, although the Northumberland inquisitions are printed in *Feudal Aids*, 4, the author has worked primarily from the archival sources cited in this and subsequent notes, owing to the incomplete nature of the printed transcripts, which also contain numerous errors of transcription.

¹⁸ *PROME*, parliament of 1427–8, item 13.

¹⁹ For Embleton in 1346, see E 179/158/17, rot 5m. 3. For Tynemouth in 1428, see E 179/158/36 rot. 2 d.

²⁰ For Inter in 1346, see E 179/158/17 rot. 4. For Inter North in 1428, see E 179/158/36 rot 4. For Inter South in 1428, see E 179/158/36 rot. 5. For the ancient division between Inter North, between the Tyne and the Wansbeck, and Inter South, between the Wansbeck and the Coquet, see Fraser (1968, xiii).

²¹ E 179/158/36 rot. 5. This was the same John Greystoke whose family was assessed as bringing in an annual income of £650 across England in 1436: Gray 1934, 617. As far as the knights' fees tax of 1428 is concerned, however, it is impossible to say whether the Greystoke holding under discussion, that of Benridge in the Inter South ward, valued at 1/6 of a knight's fee by the collectors, was under-assessed, since Lord Greystoke's inquisition *post mortem* states that he held this farm for 'service unknown': *eCIPM* 24-498, Available at <http://www.inquisitionspostmortem.ac.uk/view/inquisition/24-492/496> (accessed: 13 March 2016).

²² E 179/158/36 rot. 4.

²³ For the Priory of Tynemouth, see E 179/158/36 rot. 4. For the Convent of Hexham, see E 179/158/36 rot. 3.

²⁴ E 359/27 rot 6 d.

²⁵ Both the King's Remembrancer Roll and the Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer Roll for the exchequer year 1429–30 (E 159/205 and E 368/201, respectively) have been consulted. Particular attention has been paid to the *Status et Visus Comptorum* (States and Views of Account) section of these rolls, since they allow the historian to follow each stage of the accounting process for the parishes and knights' fees tax in individual counties before accounts were closed.

²⁶ (Pollard 1989; Pollard 1990, 30–52). For a theorisation of the post-plague 'feudal crisis', see Brenner (1985) and Hilton (1985).

²⁷ The following table is based on an examination of the 1428 Northumberland particulars of account at E 179/158/36 and the 1346 Northumberland particulars of account, at E 179/158/17.

²⁸ In the central Middle Ages, subinfeudation legally transferred feudal obligations from the former holder of a knight's fee to the new holder. The 1290 Statute of *Quia Emptores*, however, stipulated that subinfeudation no longer transferred feudal obligations on to the new holder of a knight's fee. As Pollock and Maitland pointed out, this meant that subinfeudation came to be more of a commercial transaction; a sale (Pollock and Maitland 1968, 332–3). This does not alter the crucial fact, however, that subinfeudation provided lords with a means of shoring up local support amongst lesser countrymen who owed them their knights' fees during the age of 'bastard feudalism'.

²⁹ The following table is also based on an examination of the sources referenced at note 27.

³⁰ The 70 recorded fees in 1428 is stipulated only on the enrolled account (E 359/27 rot 6 d), whereas the 145 recorded fees in 1346 are recorded in the local particulars of account (E 179/158/17) as well as the enrolled account (E 359/5 rot. 10 d.).

³¹ For fourteenth-century Northumberland and its borders, see Fraser (1968). For border changes in the fifteenth-century, see Neville (1998).

³² For the legal situation, see Bean (1968, 180–234). For the number of fees in other counties in 1428, see Brayson (2016).

³³ E 179/158/36 rot. 4d.

³⁴ During this period the Percys were also restored to their wardenship of the Northern March, which helped to extend their influence throughout the area in question (Dodds 1926, 217–20). For a discussion of the broader political ascent of the second Earl of Northumberland and his constructive relationship with Henry V, see Rose (2002, 441–53).

³⁵ E 179/158/36 rot. 4d. It is not possible to cross-examine the number of knights' fees held by Ralph Grey for these two manors in the *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, since his post mortem entry states that the number of knights' fees relating to these manors is 'unknown': Holford 2009, 62. This appears to be an issue with a number of Northumbrian landholders in possession of knights' fees for relatively obscure villages and manors.

³⁶ E 179/158/17 rot. 5 m. 2.

³⁷ E 179/158/36 rot. 4d.

³⁸ E 179/158/17 rot. 5 m. 2.

³⁹ See, for example, Anthony Pollard's remark that 'One family, the Nevilles, stands out head and shoulders above all other peers' (Pollard 1990, 94).

⁴⁰ The Nevilles' knights' fees increased from 1 in 1346 to 1.5 in 1428 (based on a comparison of the sources listed in note 17). It is important to point out that this does not necessarily contradict historians' focus on Neville dominance. It is just that the Nevilles' geo-political strength was mainly in County Durham, not Northumberland (Liddy 2008, 33–4; 76–123).

⁴¹ E 179/158/17, rot. 3.

⁴² E 179/158/17, rot. 3.

⁴³ Carpenter (2012, 47–78) has touched upon these kinds of methodological problems in using the inquisitions *post mortem*, especially as far as minor gentry are concerned.

⁴⁴ For example, the Percys held several Coquetdale fees from the Ogle family: E 179/158/17 rot. 6.

⁴⁵ E 179/158/36 rot. 5.

⁴⁶ E 179/158/36 rot. 3.

⁴⁷ For a good introduction to the literature on this subject with full references, see Pollard (1990, 80–143).

⁴⁸ E 179/158/36 rot. 3.

⁴⁹ Ross and Pugh (1953) emphasise the failure of the 1435 tax to assess the Percys: 'Northumberland's income . . . was more than double that at which he was rated for purposes of taxation' (Ross and Pugh 1953, 9).

⁵⁰ For the failure of the 1450 tax to assess Northumberland, see Virgoe (1982, 138). For the exemption of Northumberland from mid-to-late fifteenth-century fifteenths and tenths, see Schofield (2004, 63).

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