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‘Spies, informers and Thomas Howard’s defence of England’s northern frontier in 1523’•

The resurgence of war between England and Scotland in the early 1520s led to the greatest threat to the defence of Henry VIII’s northern frontier since the Flodden campaign of 1513. The return of John Stewart, duke of Albany, to Scotland in November 1521 after an absence of four years in France precipitated the resumption of hostilities. Henry VIII feared that Albany, regent of Scotland, had returned to marry his sister, Margaret Tudor, after obtaining her divorce from the earl of Angus, and place himself on the throne in the place of her son, James V. The Tudor monarch’s fears about the occupant of the Scottish throne combined with a volatile international situation, which saw the peace achieved between Charles V, Henry VIII and Francis I in 1518 crumble in the face of a resurgent Anglo-Imperial alliance against France. The long-standing Franco-Scottish alliance meant that it was highly likely that Scotland would be drawn into the war. While the Scots confined themselves to defensive measures when war finally erupted in the spring of 1522, as a result of the agreement made by Henry VIII and Charles V in July 1522 to launch a joint invasion of France the Valois king instructed Albany to encourage the Scottish lords to attack England.

As a result, Albany launched invasions of England in both 1522 and 1523.

George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, made little use of military intelligence when he led the defence of the north in 1522, which probably contributed to his poor handling of Albany’s march on Carlisle in September that year – a campaign which only collapsed because of disagreements amongst the Scots rather than as the result of a well-ordered English defence. In contrast, the more-skilled commander, Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, who had led English forces in France, Ireland and Scotland, placed military

• I wish to thank the two anonymous readers for their valuable comments on the article.

intelligence at the centre of his efforts to defend the north in the autumn of 1523.

Howard gathered as much information as he could from a range of spies and informers about Scottish military preparations. Intelligence was crucial because Howard had to defend the entire northern frontier, from Carlisle to Berwick, with limited resources. He analysed the reports he received and used them to make informed decisions about how best to deploy his soldiers. Howard sought information on a wide range of issues, from details about the size of the Scottish army and the manner in which Albany had mobilised his men, to specific information about who commanded the various contingents, where they were located, how effectively they were supplied, what the weather conditions were like, and the quality of artillery they possessed. Howard had to consider all these factors when preparing the defence of the north in 1523.

Despite the important role that intelligence gathering played in military activities during the early sixteenth century, little has been written about spying during the reign of Henry VIII.¹ Most studies of English spying concentrate on the later sixteenth century, which has given the impression that the principal developments in espionage took place under Elizabeth I as a result of the efforts of William Cecil and, especially, Francis Walsingham.² Studies of Elizabethan intelligence gathering largely

¹ For the English interrogation of captured Scot in 1522, see: G. Elton, 'Anglo-French relations in 1522: a Scottish prisoner of war and his interrogation', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, lxxviii (1963), 310-16

² For Elizabeth's reign, see: R. Adams, 'William Herle and the mid-Elizabethan polity', *Historical Research*, lxxxiii (2009), 266-80; S. Alford, *The Watchers: A Secret History of the Reign of Elizabeth I* (2012); S. Alford, 'Some Elizabethan spies in the office of Sir Francis Walsingham', in *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, ed. R. Adams and R. Cox

focus on the activities of ambassadors and little has written little about the role which spying played in English warfare in the sixteenth century. Given this gap in the literature, before moving on to examine in detail Thomas Howard's use of spies and informers in 1523 it is profitable to establish a typology of the principal forms of spying employed during this period.³ First, there was the type of diplomatic spying which took place at foreign courts and typically involved ambassadors or other high-status representatives of the monarch, such as heralds.⁴ This type of action is probably the most well-known form of early modern English espionage; certainly, it was used

(Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 42-63; J. Bossy, *Under the Molehill: An Elizabethan Spy Story* (New Haven, 2001); M. Leimon and G. Parker, 'Treason and plot in Elizabethan diplomacy: the "Fame of Sir Edward Stafford" reconsidered', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, cxi (1996), 1134-58; J. Bossy, *Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair* (New Haven, 1991); P. E. J. Hammer, 'An Elizabethan spy who came in from the cold: the return of Sir Anthony Standen to England in 1553', *Hist. Research*, lxxv (1992), 277-95. For the seventeenth century, see: A. Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Cambridge, 1994).

³ While sharing general characteristics, typologies of spying are at their most valuable when situated in the specific contexts of period and country. For a typology of spying for seventeenth-century France, see: L. Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris, 1990), pp. 107-8.

⁴ For heralds and spying, see: J. R. Alban and C. T. Allmand, 'Spies and spying in the fourteenth century', in *War, Literature and Politics in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. C. T. Allmand (Liverpool, 1976), pp. 76-7; G. L. Watson, 'Roger Machado, Perkin Warbeck and heraldic espionage', *The Coat of Arms*, ccxxviii (2014), 51-86.

extensively by Henry VIII. In 1522, Clarenceaux herald, returning from a diplomatic mission from Edinburgh, provided a lengthy account of the military activities he had observed, which led to an intensification of the Tudor monarch's preparations for war with Scotland.⁵ Second, there was the type of spying which took place during military campaigns. In July 1544, before laying siege to Boulogne, Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, noted that he had 'travayled for the sure knowledge [of the fortifications of the town] by all the meanes that I coulede devise aswell by the examinacion of espials and prysoners'.⁶ Third, merchants were a good source of intelligence as their commercial activities gave them access to distant lands. In 1539, during his campaign against Manus O'Donnell, who had emerged as the key threat to English rule in Ireland following the collapse of the Kildare rebellion two years earlier, Lord Leonard Grey had the Galway merchant Thomas Lynch, who was selling wine in O'Donnell lands, used this venture to report on the military readiness of the county and seek information about O'Donnell's

⁵ BL Cotton MS Caligula B/II, fols. 218r-221r (esp. 220v-221r) (*L&P* III. ii, no. 2054); TNA SP 49/1, fol. 132r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 2055).

⁶ TNA SP 1/189, fol. 204v (*LP* XIX. i, no. 882). See also here the information provided by one Lancelot Troylle, 'officier du gouverneur de Fyennes [a village in the Boulonnais]', who provided a detailed account of the fortifications of Boulogne and its surrounding forts, including drawing them on a map: BL Cotton MS Caligula E/II, fols. 269r-271r (*LP* XIX. i, no. 1033). Amongst the expenses listed for the costs of the army which captured Boulogne in 1544 was money for spies: TNA SP 1/194, fols. 144v, 145v (*LP* XIX. ii, no. 506).

plans to attack the English Pale.⁷ Yet using merchants in this manner was not possible for Thomas Howard in 1523 because the onset of the war had led to the cessation of trade between the two kingdoms, with both the Scots and the English working to stop cross-border communication as a means to prevent spying. Fourth, there were the wider networks of spies and informers operating in rival states. While this is often seen as an innovation devised by Walsingham in the 1580s, Henry's wars saw the extensive use of networks of long-established spies and informers who were paid to monitor developments in rival kingdoms.

This article will focus on this final group as during periods of open warfare it was often not possible to gain information through channels such as diplomatic personnel, who could be arrested, expelled or secluded, or merchants, who were often prevented from trading. In these circumstances, English authorities came to rely on long-standing spies who they trusted to provide reliable information, such as Isabella Hoppringle, prioress of Coldstream, who spied for the English over the course of three decades (see below). Certainly, throughout Henry VIII's reign the English relied on trusted spies to provide reliable information. During the conquest of Boulogne in 1544, Thomas Howard – again making extensive use of spies as he had done in Scotland two decades earlier – informed the royal council that he had a spy close to the French captain of Hesdin, who had proved himself to be trustworthy in the past and who continued to provide highly privileged information about French military plans. Establishing trust over a long period was especially important when spies were foreign born, and at the same time as Howard extolled the merits of his spy at Hesdin he also noted that while

⁷ *State Papers Published under the Authority of His Majesty's Commission: Henry VIII*, 11 vols (London, 1830-52), iii, pp. 140-2.

he had a 'good nombre of espies abroad' nonetheless 'smaller trust' should be given to their reports because they were French and had presumably been recruited for this campaign and had not established a longer relationship of trust.⁸

While there are a number of studies of spying in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (many of which focus on the Hundred Years' War), the extensive English governmental records for the early sixteenth century provide excellent materials with which to examine espionage in wartime.⁹ Even the calendar of entries in *Letters &*

⁸ TNA SP 1/191, fol. 8r (*LP XIX*, ii, no. 9). For spies reporting on the movements of the dauphin (who was correctly believed to be planning an attack on the English at Boulogne), see: TNA SP 1/193, fols. 32r, 39r (*LP XIX*, ii, nos. 353, 357).

⁹ For spying in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see: C. Allmand, 'Intelligence in the Hundred Years' War', in *Go Spy the Land: Military Intelligence in History*, ed. Keith Neilson and B. J. C. McKercher (1992), pp. 31-47; C. Allmand, 'Spionage und Geheimdienst im Hundertjährigen Krieg', in *Geheimdienste in der Weltgeschichte. Spionage und verdeckte Aktionen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. W. Krieger (Munich, 2003), pp. 97-111; M. Ballard, 'Etienne Fryon Burgundian agent, English secretary and "principal counsellor" to Perkin Warbeck', *Hist. Research*, lxii (1989), 245-59; D. Crook, 'The confessions of a spy, 1380', *Hist. Research*, lxii (1989), 346-50; J. C. Davis, 'Shipping and spying in the early career of a Venetian doge, 1496-1502', *Studi Veneziani*, xvi 16 (1974), 97-105; E. Denécé and J. Denuve, *Les services secrets au Moyen Âge* (Rennes, 2011); R. A. Griffiths, 'Un espion à Londres, 1425-1429', *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest*, lxxxvi (1979), 399-403; A. Hanham, 'Edmund de la Pole and the spies, 1499-1506: some revision', *Paragon*, vi (1988), 103-20; M. Kintzinger, 'Ignorantia diplomatica. Konstruktives Nichtwissen in der Zeit des Hundertjährigen

Papers provide clear evidence of the magnitude of state-sponsored spying which occurred under Henry VIII. For this article, I checked the entries in *Letters & Papers* against the originals as far as possible (and give both references gives in the footnotes), and in most cases the editors of *Letters & Papers* did a commendable job in summarising the key aspects of these spies' reports with a thoroughness not typical of all documents in this series.¹⁰ This is possibly because, as spying formed one of the key activities of Henry VIII's government, the editors of *Letters & Papers*, reflecting the era's concern

Krieges', in *Unwissen und Missverständnisse im Vormodernen Friedensprozess*, ed. M. Espenhorst (Mainz, Göttingen), pp. 13-40 (esp. pp. 38-39); J. Lelieve, 'Espionnage en Beauce à la fin de la guerre de Cent Ans', *Histoire locale Beauce et Perche*, xxxi (1969), 3-6; B. Léthenet, "*En espie et en aguet*": *La pratique du renseignement dans le Mâconnais durant la guerre entre Armagnacs et Bourguignons (1407-1435)* (Strasbourg, 2018); *L'envers du décor. Espionnage, complot, trahison, vengeance et violence en pays bourguignons et liégeois*, ed. A. Marchandise and J.-M. Cauchies (Neuchâtel, 2008); W. Paravicini, 'Ein Spion in Malpaga. Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der Urkunden des René d'Anjou und Karls des Kühnen für Bartholomeo Colleoni', in *Italia et Germania. Liber Amicorum Arnold Fisch*, ed. H. Keller, W. Paravicini and W. Schneider (Tübingen, 2001), 469-89; A. F. Pollard, *The Reign of Henry VII from Contemporary Sources*, 2 vols (London, 1913-14), i. 136-7; H. Thomas, 'Frankösische Spionage im Reich Ludwigs des Bayern', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 5 (1978), 1-21; D. M. Yorath, "'There and back again": the career of John Ramsay of Terrenzeane (c.1464-c.1513)', *Northern History*, lv (2018), 139-60.

¹⁰ *Letters and Papers. Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, ed. J. S. Brewer, 21 vols (London, 1862-1923).

with political history and the operation of the state, may have considered these documents to be particularly significant and thus worthy of fuller accounts.

Nonetheless, it is profitable to go beyond the calendered entries to look at the originals because they provide details which significantly alter our understanding of key events during this period. For instance, there is a wider perception in modern historiography that the lifting of the siege of Wark was seen as a disaster in Scotland and caused the final rupture between Albany and the Scottish lords.¹¹ Yet a closer examination of the spies' reports about the disagreements which arose between the Scots in the wake of the campaign throws a different light on the situation. For instance, on 5 November 1523 Thomas Howard wrote to Cardinal Wolsey with a description of a report he had received from one of his spies in Albany's army regarding the effects of the failed Scottish attack on Wark. Rather than emphasising a wider rift between Albany and the Scottish political elite, the reports make it clear that the ill-feeling was specifically between Albany and 'the gentilmen of the Merche and Tevidale' [i.e. the eastern borderers] and not the key Scottish lords (such as the earls of Lennox, Arran and Argyll) – crucial information which revises our knowledge of Scottish politics in the wake of the 1523 campaign.¹²

¹¹ See, for example: D. M. Head, 'Henry VIII's Scottish Policy: A Reassessment', *Scottish Historical Review*, lxi (1982), 8; R. Paterson, *My Wound is Deep: A History of the Later Anglo-Scots Wars 1380-1560* (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 159; J. Pinkerton, *History of Scotland*, 2 vols (London, 1797), ii, p. 231; M. W. Stuart, *The Scot Who Was a Frenchman: Being the Life of John Stewart, Duke of Albany, in Scotland, France, and Italy* (London, 1940), p. 167.

¹² T. N. A. SP 49/2, fo. 47r (L&P III. ii, no. 3512); *StP*, iv, p. 52. Other series of documents may also yield further information about spying and espionage during this period.

The records of the Tudor administration are full of references to spying because England, like other European states of the era, gathered intelligence as a means to gain advantage over rivals. Espionage during this period was to a large degree focused on gaining the short-term advantages crucial in countering the threat of foreign invasion.¹³ Yet in order to win these short term advantages it was necessary to put in place long-term systems to ensure that spies and informers were ready and in place to warn of any threats. Certainly, while English commanders employed spies during Henry VIII's offensive military campaigns, intelligence gathering was used most extensively to help defend the kingdom's frontiers.¹⁴ Rulers placed the security of their frontiers at the centre of their espionage activities. As Laurence Moal observes in his examination of the principalities of late medieval France, 'the frontiers were...the object of great surveillance by messengers and spies. Espionage was even considered an absolute

While I found little relating to spying in the 'King Remembrancer: Various Accounts' (TNA E101) for Albany's march on England in 1523, it is likely that these accounts contain references to payments made to spies, particularly those operating in France. For the records of expenditure relating to the wars in 1522, see: TNA E101/612/58.

¹³ This remained the case into the seventeenth century: Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, 301-2.

¹⁴ For the defence of the northern frontier in the sixteenth century, see: S. G. Ellis, *Defending English Ground: War and Peace in Meath and Northumberland, 1460-1542* (Oxford, 2015); R. W. Hoyle, 'Defending the borders of England against Scotland in the sixteenth century: an essay on border service', in *Frontiers, States and Identity in Early Modern Ireland and Beyond*, ed. C. Maginn and G. Power (Dublin, 2016), pp. 109-29.

necessity for princes'.¹⁵ Yet the focus on diplomatic spying in the modern historiography of espionage favours developments occurring at the centre of the kingdom rather than those happening on its peripheries. While information gleaned at the courts of rival princes provided an important source of intelligence for Henry VIII and his ministers, spying on the frontier was especially important during periods of war. The focus on the centre as reflects wider approaches to the study of Tudor England, with historians giving more attention to developments in the southeast than they do to circumstances on the frontiers. Yet as Steven Ellis has made clear in a number of important studies on Tudor frontiers, a considerable amount of government activity was focused on the defence of the borders.¹⁶ As such, a study of spying provides a further way to help us perceive the operation of the Tudor state. Indeed, given the central role that concerns about the defence of frontiers played in the emergence of

¹⁵ 'Les frontières font, en outre, l'objet d'une grande surveillance par des messagers et des espions. L'espionnage est même considéré comme une nécessité absolue pour les princes': L. Moal, 'Dans le royaume ou en marge? Les frontières des principautés (XIIIe-XVe siècle)', *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest*, cxxi-cxxii (2014), 10.

¹⁶ See especially: S. G. Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power: The Making of the British State* (Oxford, 1995); S. G. Ellis, *Defending English Ground: War and Peace in Meath and Northumberland, 1460-1542* (Oxford, 2015), S. G. Ellis, 'Tudor State Formation and the Shaping of the British Isles', in *Conquest & Union: Fashioning a British State 1485-1725*, ed. S. G. Ellis and S. Barber (London, 1995), pp. 40-63; S. G. Ellis, 'The English State and its Frontiers in the British Isles, 1300-1600', in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700*, ed. D. Power and N. Standen (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 153-81

nation states, an examination of intelligence-gathering activities can also help us better understand the wider operation of early modern governments.

As Thomas Howard camped beside the ruins of Jedburgh on 23 September 1523 (his soldiers had sacked the town on the previous day), he received news from English spies that the duke of Albany had landed in Scotland two days earlier accompanied by a French army.¹⁷ Returning to England to oversee the defence of the north, Howard called on his commanders to mobilise their spies to provide him with information about the size and composition of Albany's French force and his efforts to mobilise the Scottish population.¹⁸ Howard needed this information quickly because the lateness of the year meant that Albany would have to launch his campaign within a month if he hoped to avoid the onset of winter. The acquisition of intelligence was vital for Howard because it allowed him to see where he stood in relation to his adversary and to plan how best to deploy the resources available to him. Howard kept up his efforts to gain intelligence as a regular flow of information meant he could respond to the Scottish threat in the most effective manner.

Howard's efforts to obtain information on Albany's preparations were helped by the fact that his commanders already had extensive intelligence networks in place in Scotland. In particular, Howard looked to Thomas Dacre, warden of the West March and one of the leading noblemen in the north, to have his spies seek out information about

¹⁷ *L&P III*, ii, nos. 3350, 3360.

¹⁸ See for example: *State Papers, Henry VIII*, iv. 40-1; British Library, Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fo. 59r (*L&P III*, ii, no. 3403).

Albany's preparations.¹⁹ Yet Dacre was slow to provide information. On 9 October, Howard complained 'that he does not hear oftener of Scotch news, as Dacre has such good intelligence there' and instructed him not to spare the posts.²⁰ Certainly, intelligence gathering in itself was not enough: information had to be communicated quickly and effectively. Accordingly, Howard overhauled the post system running between the West March and East March, as well as that which connected him with Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey in London, as part of his efforts pass on information quickly to those individuals who were involved in the defence of the north. Indeed, the transmission of news from spies played an important, if neglected, role in the

¹⁹ *LP* iii, pt. 2, no. 3398. This was also the case in 1522, when Wolsey instructed the bishop of Carlisle, who relied on Dacre's spies, that 'good and substantiall espiall be contyunally made in Scotland for certeyn knowledge to be had of their preparations and intended purpose from tyme to tyme making diligent certificate therof to the kyngs highness or to me': The National Archives of the U.K., SP 49/1, fo. 203v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 2075).

²⁰ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3408. See also: *The Inland Posts 1392-1672: A Calendar of Historical Documents with Appendixes*, ed. J. W. M. Stone (1987), p. 3. Dacre had spies following Albany as he travelled across Scotland: *L&P* III. ii, no. 3431. In May 1514, Dacre replied to reports from the royal council that he 'make not good espial in Scotland, as I might doo' by saying that he 'maide the best espial at all times hiddertoward, and shall maike in tyme to com' but 'to have daily encombred the Kings grace, or you, in sending up writings be poostis of tryffills, and flieng tailes of noo certainty, like I suppose other has done, to no litell cost and charges of the Kings grace, I wold have bene loth to have done': Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/II, fo. 200v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 2913).

development of communication networks in early modern England.²¹ Information also had to be accurate, though there were problems with the reliability of some of the intelligence Dacre received from his agents in the days following Albany's arrival in Scotland. On 5 October, for example, Dacre reported that Albany had landed with only 1-1,500 infantry, when the actual number was perhaps four times this figure.²²

While faulty information was a serious problem because it jeopardised military preparations, Howard had multiple sources of information in Scotland and did not have to rely on Dacre's spies alone. Indeed, he informed Wolsey on 19 October that he had 'at the leste' twenty spies in Albany's company.²³ While Thomas Dacre was the probably the best-known spymaster in the north during this period, he was not the only English border lord to have agents in Scotland. For instance, Robert, lord Ogle – who played an important role in the defence of the north during this period – had a spy close to Albany who provided reliable reports about the movements of the Scottish army.²⁴ Senior English officials on the frontiers of the realm were also obliged as part of the duties of

²¹ The arterial route running from Carlisle to Newcastle was a key means of communication in early modern England: P. Harrison and M. Brayshay, 'Post-Horse Routes, Royal Progresses and Government Communications in the Reign of James I', *Journal of Transport History*, xviii (1997), 117.

²² Dacre later revised this figure up to 2,000 men, though this was still less than half the actual size of Albany's force: *L&P* III. ii, nos. 3395, 3409, 3431.

²³ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 39r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3445).

²⁴ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fo. 106r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3467). For Ogle and the defence of the north, see: S. G. Ellis, 'A crisis of lordship: Robert Ogle, fifth lord Ogle, and the rule of early Tudor Northumberland', *Northern History*, lv (2018), 61-75.

their office to use spies to obtain intelligence about the enemy.²⁵ Like the forts of Marke and Oye in the Calais Pale, northern castles such as Norham and Wark functioned as intelligence nodes.²⁶ Sir William Bulmer, captain of Norham, played an especially important role in supplying Howard with intelligence in 1523. As well as the three individuals Bulmer had in Edinburgh sending him reports about Albany's preparations, Norham's location on the border ensured that news provided by other important English spies passed through his hands, including intelligence sent by the prioresses of Coldstream and Eccles (both convents lay in the Scottish Borders and under ten miles from Norham).²⁷ These women were amongst the best English spies in Scotland and

²⁵ A. J. Macdonald, 'Did intelligence matter? Espionage in later medieval Anglo-Scottish relations', in *Intelligence, Statecraft and International Power*, ed. E. O'Halpin, R. Armstrong and J. Ohlmeyer (Dublin, 2006), p. 10; Alban and Allmand, 'Spies and spying', p. 86.

²⁶ For spying at Calais, see: I. Arthurson, 'Espionage and intelligence from the Wars of the Roses to the Reformation', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, xxxv (1991), 135-6; C. Allmand, 'Information et espionage pendant la guerre de Cent Ans', *La France et les îles Britanniques: un couple impossible?*, ed. in V. Gazeau and J.-P. Genet (Paris, 2012), p. 164; Alban and Allmand, 'Spies and spying', pp. 84-5.

²⁷ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fos. 497r-497v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3456); Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fos. 59r, 60r-60v (*L&P* III. ii, nos. 3403, 3404). Hoppringle also passed information to Sir John Bulmer (Sir William's brother): Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fo. 73r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3567); *L&P* III. ii, nos. 3304, 3305, 3570. In addition, the prioress of Eccles sent letters to lord Ogle who passed them on to Howard: Brit.

they provided a series of dependable reports about Albany's preparations. Whereas the intelligence Dacre received from his 'credible person' about the size of the French force was far below the real figure, the prioresses of Coldstream and Eccles provided accurate accounts about the quantity and quality of the army which arrived in Scotland with Albany.²⁸

These women reported on Scottish military preparations throughout October, taking considerable efforts to obtain reliable information. In addition to the pressure placed on these women by virtue of ruling religious houses situated on the Anglo-Scottish frontier, their family connections and kinship networks may have made them more inclined to spy for the English. Elizabeth, prioress of Eccles, was a member of the powerful Hume family which had long opposed Albany, who had executed Alexander, Lord Hume, in 1516.²⁹ While an rapprochement was reached between Albany and Humes in 1522, with the governor restoring Hume lands and offices (including that of George Hume as heritable bailie of Eccles priory³⁰), nonetheless they played a double

Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fos. 59r, B/VI, fo. 368r (*L&P* III. ii, nos. 3403, 3505); *L&P* III. ii, no. 3416.

²⁸ *L&P* III. ii, nos. 3395, 3409, 3431; Brit. Libt., Cotton MS Caligula B/III, fos. 59r, 60r-60v (*L&P* III. ii, nos. 3403, 3404).

²⁹ *The Heads of Religious Houses in Scotland from Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. D. E. R. Watt and N. F. Shead (Edinburgh, 2001), p. 74.

³⁰ K. Perkins, "Quhat say ye now, my lady prioress? How have yet usit your office, can ye ges?" Politics, power and realities of the office of a prioress in her community in late medieval Scotland', in *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. J. Burton and K. Stöber (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 130.

game. For instance, while David Hume of Wedderburn was one of the few Scots to actually invade England during Albany's attack on Wark in 1523, he also spied for the English on developments at the Scottish Parliament in the lead up to the campaign.³¹ Similarly, Elizabeth Hume sent her most trusted servants to Edinburgh specifically to monitor Albany's preparations. One of these individuals promised to give Bulmer 'four days' warning before the Duke sets forth, and, after he has set forth, to give two days' warning which way he will come'.³² Obtaining information about Albany's intended route was central to Howard's intelligence gathering because he needed to know which part of the frontier the Scots would attack.

Howard gave particular credence to the information he received from the prioress of Coldstream, Isabella Hoppringle, who had long spied for the English.³³ Her background was similar to that of Elizabeth Hume in that she came from a prominent border family who dominated local society (all the prioresses of Coldstream between 1475 and 1588 came from the Hoppringle family). Her brother, Alexander, later fled into England, suggesting that the family were inclined towards the English and thus more amenable to spying for them.³⁴ Like Elizabeth Hume, both Isabella Hoppringle's position as prioress and her family's elevated social standing gave her access to those in

³¹ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3489; George Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, ed. J. Aikman, 2 vols (Glasgow, 1827), ii, p. 287; *StP*, i. pp. 14-19.

³² *L&P* III. ii, no. 3403.

³³ For Hoppringle and spying, see: Perkins, 'Politics, power and realities', pp. 133-6.

³⁴ Ring, *Lennox*, 30.

power, which was a desirable attribute in spies.³⁵ She had proven track record of providing good-quality information and fed the English news about developments in Scotland throughout the summer of 1523.³⁶ Hoppringle was also first person to alert Howard to Albany's arrival in Scotland in September 1523.³⁷ Indeed, Hoppringle was present soon after Albany landed at Dumbarton and she followed him across Scotland, which allowed her to observe Scottish military preparations first hand.³⁸ Moreover, Albany passed close to her convent as he marched to attack England in late October, which put her in a good position to provide the up-to-date information Howard required. Hoppringle was also the first person to inform Howard on 4 November that Albany had disbanded his army following his unsuccessful siege of Wark, rather than simply withdraw from the frontier (Albany began his attack on Wark on 1 November and withdrew his army on 3 November). News of the dissipation of the threat to Wark came as a relief to Howard because – as he informed Henry VIII on 4 November – it would have been hard to keep the army together longer at this 'unreasonable tyme of the yere' in such 'foule' weather.³⁹ Howard then directed Hoppringle to send her agents to Edinburgh to report on Albany's intentions as he feared the Scots were planning a

³⁵ Kim Perkins, 'Hoppringle (or Pringle), Isabella', in *The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, ed. E. Ewan et al (Edinburgh, 2018), p. 201.

³⁶ See, for example: *L&P* III. ii, nos. 3304, 3305, 3350.

³⁷ One of her servants had also sent her details about Albany's arrival: *L&P* III. ii, no. 3350.

³⁸ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fo. 449v, B/III, fos. 60r-60v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3404).

³⁹ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/II, fo. 179r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3508). See also: Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/I, fo. 324r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3531).

further attack. He was particularly concerned because he believed that there were not enough English soldiers remaining on the frontier to resist a further invasion.⁴⁰

Hoppringle was close to Margaret Tudor, queen of Scotland, who also spied for the English in 1523. The friendship between Margaret and Hoppringle developed in 1515 when Margaret fled from the Scottish court to the Hume stronghold of Blackadder castle, which lay close to the convent at Coldstream.⁴¹ During her time at Blackadder, Margaret placed the convent under her protection and persuaded her brother, Henry VIII, to instruct his subjects to 'neythere in tynie of werre ner of peax ye make any invasyon upon the said place [Coldstream priory] nor violentelye take anye goodes or catalles therunto belonging, or mysentreat the religious persownes of the same'.⁴² Yet English commanders in the north continued to use the threat of destruction to pressure well-placed individuals such as abbesses of Coldstream and Eccles (whose lands lay adjacent to the castles from which Henry VIII's soldiers launched devastating raids into Scotland) to spy for them. While raiding was a regular part of life on the frontier, the violence the English inflicted on the Scottish Borders in 1523 was especially severe and led to the destruction of dozens of towns and villages and the burning of thousands of acres of land. In contrast to previous campaigns, the English did not spare religious houses (indeed, Henry VIII's armies destroyed abbeys such as Jedburgh and Kelso in

⁴⁰ *State Papers, Henry VIII*, i. 54.

⁴¹ W. K. Emond, 'The Minority of King James V, 1513-1528' (unpublished St. Andrews University PhD thesis, 1989), pp. 92-3.

⁴² *Chartulary of the Cistercian Priory of Coldstream with Relative Documents*, ed. C. Rogers (London, 1879), pp. xxi, xxiii.

1523).⁴³ Yet while Dacre burned the town of Eccles in 1523, after receiving a ceremonial submission from the nuns he agreed to spare their convent on the condition that they 'cast down before Sunday all walls and ditches of any strength'. Should the abbess fail to take the necessary measures, Sir William Bulmer was instructed to 'go and burn the abbey'.⁴⁴ As well as putting her convent beyond military use, the prioress of Eccles went on to spy for the English in 1523. This provided her with a means to maintain the good favour of her neighbours at Wark and Norham and avoid the destruction of her house and lands. This was an issue of particular concern following Howard's renewal of the war in September 1523, when he cut a swathe of destruction through Teviotdale. Her neighbor, Isabella Hoppringle, also spied for the English as a way to spare her lands from destruction. Thomas Grey, marquis of Dorset, informed Henry VIII in 1523 that he had agreed to Margaret Tudor's request 'to forbere and save fro brennyng a poore religeous house of nunnes called Caldstream' as Hoppringle 'is oon of the beste and assured spyes that we have in Scotlond, for which cause we may not well spare her'.⁴⁵

Yet these women were in a precarious situation as their immunity from violence depended on them continuing to supply English commanders with information. Despite

⁴³ When the English sacked Kelso in the previous year, they burned the town but spared the abbey: J. Morton, *The Monastic Annals of Teviotdale* (Edinburgh, 1832), pp. 97-8; J. Leslie, *The Historie of Scotland*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1895), i. 183; Edward Hall, *The Triumphant Reigne of Kyng Henry the VIII*, 2 vols (London & Edinburgh, 1904), i. 264.

⁴⁴ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3098. The prioress of Abbey St Bathans also spied for the English during this period. Moreover, she was convicted of supplying the English with weapons to invade Scotland in 1546: Perkins, 'Office of a prioress', pp. 133, 135.

⁴⁵ *Chartulary of Coldstream*, p. xxiv.

having the protection of Margaret Tudor and letters of safeguard from Henry VIII, Isabella Hoppringle had to continue to provide information to ensure that her house and lands remained safe from harm. Margaret Tudor told Howard that he should protect Coldstream only as long as the prioress was faithful or otherwise 'caws her place to be brwnt'.⁴⁶ Similarly, highlighting the consequences of providing flawed information, when Hoppringle informed Howard about the disbandment of Albany's army on 4 November she declared that 'if this prove not true' he should 'burn her house and church'.⁴⁷ Their situation of women such as the prioresses of Coldstream and Eccles was doubly precarious because there was the danger that the Scots would discover their spying activities. One of Hoppringle's kinsmen reported from Edinburgh on 13 October that the Scottish lords were 'evil contented at her' and that 'they say in this town that the Prioress is an Englishwoman, as she was before'. As such, he advised her to 'thresh out all the corn and put away the gear of the place' out of a fear of attack.⁴⁸

While the reports provided by the prioresses of Coldstream and Eccles were particularly important during Albany's campaign because intelligence played a formative role in Howard's defence plans, when threat of attack subsided in November 1523 and it became clear that the Scots were not planning a further invasion, the value of information declined – and so did the motivation to spare these lands from attack.

⁴⁶ *State Papers, Henry VIII*, iv. 58. For Margaret's protection of Coldstream in 1523 see: *Chartulary of Coldstream*, pp. xxiii-xxiv. Isabella's successor, Janet Hoppringle, also continued to feed information to the English into the 1540s: T. N. A., SP 1/155, fo. 131r (*LP* xiv, pt. 2, no. 723).

⁴⁷ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/II, fo. 179r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3508).

⁴⁸ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3426.

When Hoppringle met Sir John Bulmer on 26 November 1523 and passed on the news she had received from her servant in Edinburgh about the matters discussed in the Scottish Parliament, she complained that 'hyr neyboris of Werk' were 'eiiry day was bessy vyth hyr'. In other words, the Wark garrison, under the command of Sir William Lisle, had started to attack her lands now that Albany's campaign was over. Hoppringle reminded Bulmer of her proven worth as a spy and asked him to stop these raids, 'or ells she must neds tayk som other way for hyrsellff for zonder wyll be no bydyng for hyr wyth sych neghtborhede'.⁴⁹ Yet the attacks on her lands continued and in late December Hoppringle approached Thomas Dacre, who then had overall command in the north in place of Thomas Howard, and complained that 'Sir William Lisle and his retinue daily rob her.' She assured Dacre that she would continue to spy for him and asked in return that he compel Lisle to stop attacking her lands.⁵⁰ Yet Howard's withdrawal south had weakened her position, because while Dacre had command in the north during the winter of 1523-4 and based himself at Morpeth and Harbottle, his power base lay in the West March and the Middle March and he found it difficult to exert his authority in the northeast of the kingdom.⁵¹ On 27 December 1523, Dacre informed Howard that he had 'thrice commanded him [Sir William Lisle] not to meddle [i.e. attack Hoppringle's lands], but he does not mend. Wishes Surrey to write to him to that effect, or else authorise Dacre to commit him to ward', with the gravity of the punishment perhaps reflecting the value Dacre attached to proven spies.⁵²

⁴⁹ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fol. 73r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3567).

⁵⁰ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3666.

⁵¹ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, pp. 104-5.

⁵² *L&P* III. ii, no. 3666.

The English attacks on Hoppringle's lands may also have been a consequence of Howard's success in wasting the parts of the Scottish Borders lying adjacent to Lisle's base at Wark. In November 1523, Howard informed Cardinal Wolsey that English raiding parties invading Scotland in the wake of these campaigns 'be enforced to ride fer within the land or they can get any thing' because 'the contre is soo fer wast'.⁵³ The inability of English garrisons to pillage sufficient levels of food from lands close to the frontier probably made raiding the hitherto untouched estates of the prioress of Coldstream an enticing prospect, particularly because Wark castle – which had suffered most at the hands of the Scots in 1523 – looked directly on to these lands. Yet while raiding the priory's lands probably brought some temporary relief to the Wark garrison during the winter months, Lisle's actions damaged the wider defence of the frontier by threatening to push away one of the best English spies in Scotland during a period of open war. As such, on 21 January 1524 Howard instructed Dacre to 'redress the misorder of Sir William Lisle concerning the prioress of Coldstream.'⁵⁴

Maintaining the services of well-connected Scottish women such as Isabella Hoppringle was part of a wider English plan to place spies close to those persons at the centre political power in Scotland. When Howard learned that Albany was holding a meeting of the Council in Glasgow in early October, he instructed Dacre to 'send some sure man to Lady Hamilton, or else two others, to discover their determination'.⁵⁵ Lady Hamilton was probably Janet Bethune, the wife of James Hamilton, earl of Arran, or his daughter, Lady Helen Hamilton, who was married to Colin Campbell, son and heir of the

⁵³ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fos. 63-63v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3570).

⁵⁴ *L&P* IV. i, no. 47.

⁵⁵ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3382.

earl of Argyll. In any case, both these men were at the centre of Scottish military preparations in 1523, as the earls of Arran and Argyll (along with the earls of Lennox and Huntly) were responsible for mobilising the army.⁵⁶ While many elite English spies and informers were working independently – and probably without knowledge of each other – there were connections between some individuals. As we saw, Hoppringle was connected to Margaret Tudor, who was also spying for the English and smuggling letters out of Scotland with trusted servants, Patrick Sinclair and James Dogg (indeed, Hoppringle sheltered the men carrying Margaret's letters to Bulmer at Norham).⁵⁷ Furthermore, English commanders sought to place spies who were either themselves close to Albany – or who had access to people in Albany's favour – so that they could have reliable and prompt reports about his military preparations. For instance, Lord Ogle's unnamed spy was 'a credyble person' and a significant figure close to Albany (indeed, he provided detailed and accurate information about the movement of the Scottish army), while one of Dacre's spies 'spoke with a substantial man in the Scotch army' who on the eve of the siege of Wark provided a comprehensive account of the location and composition of Albany's force.⁵⁸ At the same time, Thomas Dacre's brother,

⁵⁶ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fo. 449v, B/III, fo. 60r (*L&P* III. ii, nos. 3368, 3404).

⁵⁷ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 42r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3457). Other inhabitants of religious houses on the borders were also spying for the English. In early October, for example, Howard paid one of the monks of Kelso for information: Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fo. 59r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3403).

⁵⁸ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fo. 106r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3467); *L&P* III. ii, no. 3487.

Sir Christopher Dacre, went to 'speak with certain of the Scotch army' – and these men provided excellent intelligence (see below).⁵⁹

The English had spies in the households of the most important Scottish lords. On 18 October, Howard informed Wolsey that Edde Story 'cheff off counsell with Davy Home...is one off myn espies without knowledge off his master'.⁶⁰ Story was well placed to act as an informant because David Hume of Wedderburn was one of the key members of Albany's army. Hume's men made up a large part of the Scottish army and he took a leading role in the campaign. Story fed important information about Albany's battle plans to the English and notified Howard as early as 18 October that Hume claimed the Scottish army would lay siege to Wark, information which was difficult to obtain and subsequently proved to be true.⁶¹ The English had other agents close to important Scottish nobles. As we saw above, one of Bulmer's spies, Davy Lauder – then a captive of the border laird, George Rutherford – was related to William, lord Borthwick, one of the leading men in Scotland (and who had charge of James V in October 1523). Lauder sought to obtain privileged information from Borthwick, which he could then pass on to the English. In particular, he told Bulmer he would persuade his captor to ask Borthwick 'which way the said duke wold com', one of the key pieces of information the English

⁵⁹ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3487.

⁶⁰ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 36r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3435). Thomas Cromwell and Cardinal Wolsey also placed spies in the households of important English nobles: Arthurson, 'Espionage and intelligence', 139-40

⁶¹ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 36r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3435).

were trying to obtain.⁶² Bulmer also had a spy close to one of Scottish wardens of the marches. While he did not specify if was Andrew Kerr of Cessford, warden of the Middle March, or Robert Maxwell, warden of the West March (there was no warden of the East March at this time), they were both leading men and sources of privileged information. Indeed, Bulmer's spy provided details of the size and location of Albany's ordnance, knowledge which he obtained through conversations with the warden.⁶³

Better yet than placing spies close to Scottish lords was to have these men pass on intelligence themselves. On 30 October, Walter Scott, lord of Buccleuch, and Mark Kerr of Dophinstone, two key border lords in the Scottish army, secretly met Sir Christopher Dacre and confirmed that Albany intended to besiege Wark, news which prompted Howard to immediately summon his forces – which were stationed right across the frontier – to join him in the east.⁶⁴ Kerr along with other unnamed Scots met Dacre again on the following day and informed him that David Hume of Wedderburn had led a thousand men into Northumberland and burned the villages of Brankston, Cornell and Learmouth. They also provided Dacre with a clear assessment of Albany's artillery, noting both the quality and quantity of his guns ('8 cannons, 2 double cannons and 24 falcons and serpentines'). Finally, they informed Dacre that Albany intended to

⁶² Borthwick had written to Rutherford to caution him to 'kepe no good[s] within viii miles of the borders, for and if he did it wold be tynt'. Lauder encouraged Rutherford to write back to thank Borthwick for this information and inquire further about his security, which he hoped would lead to news of Albany's plans: T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 36r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3435).

⁶³ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 37r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3446).

⁶⁴ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3486.

commence firing at Wark on the following day.⁶⁵ Members of other families from the Scottish Borders also brought news from the Scottish camp to the English. On 22 October, one of Nisbets, whose lands lay close to Jedburgh, crossed the Tweed to Norham to inform Sir William Bulmer that David Hume had joined sides with Albany. The news came as a blow to Howard, who had been relying on Hume to honour the promise he gave in early September that, in return for having his lands spared from burning during the Jedburgh campaign, upon Albany's return to Scotland he would cross into England, take an oath of loyalty to Henry VIII and put himself in opposition to the duke.⁶⁶ Although Howard failed to win Hume's support, many Scots assured themselves to English captains during the war and provided information. While the English strategy of developing 'assured Scots' (in other words, obtaining Scottish collaborators by offering them pledges, protection or financial rewards in return for information or other support) is seen as a product of the wars of the 1540s, it was used extensively in the early 1520s to obtain intelligence on Albany.⁶⁷ Indeed, English captains were assuring so many Scots that Thomas Dacre instructed Sir Thomas Forster on 8 February 1524 that 'neither the captain nor any other has power to assure any Scot without Dacre's consent. If they do, it is punishable. If they assure any Scot for obtaining information, they must inform Dacre in four days, if he be in the country; if absent, in

⁶⁵ Sir Christopher Dacre was to meet these men again on the following day: *L&P* III. ii, no. 3489.

⁶⁶ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fo. 498r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3456).

⁶⁷ M. Merriman, 'The Assured Scots: Scottish collaborators with England during the Rough Wooing', *Scottish Historical Review*, xlvii (1968), 10-34. For assuring Scots, see also: C. Kellar, *Scotland, England and the Reformation, 1534-61* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 95-6.

four days after his return.⁶⁸ By this time, Albany's campaign was long over and while England and Scotland remained at war there was little indication that major hostilities would resume. As such, the value of Scottish information had declined and Dacre was less inclined to have his captains offer privileges to the Scots in return for information.

English commanders had to identify which information they received from Scottish informers was likely to be true and which was likely to be false, as faulty reports were often worse than no reports at all. The English drew on multiple sources to try and verify the accuracy of the information they received. We can see this clearly when we examine Sir William Bulmer's responses to the intelligence he received from his spies. On 20 October, Bulmer shared with Howard the news that 20,000 men had mustered at Duns and Langton alone. Bulmer cautioned Howard about the accuracy of this information and stated that he believed that the spy was lying, 'for the parties wher they come from is not able to make ten thousand'.⁶⁹ Bulmer was also skeptical about reports he had received from spies stating that Albany 'hath carts with swords upon either side, and barbed horssis to drawe theym, which shuld go afore hym self.'⁷⁰ Yet it was easy to disregard information which later turned out to be true. On 22 October, a spy told Bulmer that Albany had already appointed captains to Wark and Norham and that he planned to be 'twenty days in England, and to plenneshe suche holds as he may get'. While Bulmer discounted this report and stated 'I think no noble man wold speke suche foolish words and therfor I think it be not trewe', in fact this broadly was Albany's plan

⁶⁸ *LP* IV. ii, no. 94.

⁶⁹ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 41r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3451).

⁷⁰ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 37r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3446).

in 1523.⁷¹ Bulmer also told Howard that the wife of one of his spies had reported that 'Anguesse is comyn home, and Davy Home is gon to the duk...neither of both I can beleve.' Yet while Angus remained in France, Bulmer later learnt that David Hume had indeed 'gon to the duk'.⁷² It could be difficult to differentiate false reports from those that were true, especially when English captains received a range of contradictory information from various sources. It was only the acquisition of multiple reports from independent sources which persuaded Bulmer that the information about David Hume was correct.

War offered Scottish informers an opportunity to profit by selling false information to English captains, who were anxious for news of Albany's preparations. For instance, an unnamed Scotsman came to William Lisle, captain of Wark, around 22 October claiming to possess a copy of a written commission from Francis I binding Albany to invade England by the following week in tandem with a separate offensive led by Richard de la Pole, the Yorkist pretender to Henry VIII's throne. While there were numerous reports that de la Pole was preparing to invade the realm in 1523, these were rumours and there is no evidence that Francis I was then planning to send de la Pole to invade England. As such, the document if it existed at all was almost certainly a fake made to substantiate the Scotsman's claims. Yet the deception was well devised and it played on a English fears that the realm was about be invaded in multiple places – an issue of particular concern in October 1523 as the bulk of the English army was then

⁷¹ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fo. 497v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3456).

⁷² Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fo. 497v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3456).

campaigning in France under the duke of Suffolk.⁷³ The Scotsman claimed he was an invaluable source of information and could 'give information of the Duke's purposes, which no other spy can'. As part of his efforts to convince Lisle about these credentials, he told him that James Hamilton, earl of Arran, had successfully mustered the men of the east. While evidence from various sources, including other English spies, shows that this was true, the Scotsman's claims that the other Scottish earls had successfully raised the men from their parts of the kingdom was incorrect (Scottish armies were then raised by dividing the kingdom into quarters, each of which was placed under the responsibility of an earl).⁷⁴ Military activity on this level would undoubtedly have been common knowledge across the region, which perhaps also suggests that the Scotsman might have come from an area lying in or close to the Scottish Borders (as did most of the informers who came to offer intelligence to the captains of Wark and Norham). Witnessing the general turn out of the army in this region, he probably assumed that all the other parts of the kingdom had followed suit, though in fact there had been a widespread failure of the Scottish army to mobilise elsewhere.⁷⁵ Informers such as this unnamed Scotsman could seek to profit from the war by professing that they held privileged information, claims which they could seek to substantiate by providing a combination of news which could be picked up easily in Scotland and other elaborated claims tailored to play on the issues of most concern for the English.

⁷³ See: S. J. Gunn, 'The duke of Suffolk's march on Paris in 1523', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, ci (1986), 596-634.

⁷⁴ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fo. 497v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3456).

⁷⁵ National Records of Scotland, CS5/34, fos. 20v, 21r. See also: N. R. S., E21/18, fo. 28v.

To avoid acting on the basis of suspect information provided by informers who came to castles such as Norham, the English sent spies to infiltrate the Scottish army when it left Edinburgh on 22 October.⁷⁶ These spies provided excellent information about Albany's army, including details about the composition and location of the contingents which comprised the Scottish army, an important consideration given that the soldiers were coming from various muster points.⁷⁷ It was desirable to have various spies in Albany's army because procuring independent reports which gave the same details about Scottish actions helped ascertain the reliability of information – and thus provide a good pillar around which to organise the defence of the frontier. To take one example, when Howard received several reports from his spies in the Scottish army that Albany had resolved to attack the East March, he instructed Dacre to come immediately with his force of 4,000 men from Carlisle.⁷⁸ Howard and Dacre sent trusted spies to infiltrate Albany's army as they relied on these individuals to quickly provide accurate information about any changes to Albany's strategy, so that they could alter their defence plans accordingly and best meet the changing nature of the threat.⁷⁹

Albany knew well the scale of English spying activities in Scotland. While the necessarily public nature of the mobilisation of Scottish forces, which saw proclamations issued

⁷⁶ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fo. 364r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3466); Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fo. 106r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3467).

⁷⁷ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fo. 106r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3467); *L&P* III. ii, nos. 3470, 3478; Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fos. 356r-356v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3481).

⁷⁸ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 43r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3468); *L&P* III. ii, no. 3469.

⁷⁹ See, for example: T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 43r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3468); *L&P* III. ii, no. 3469.

across the kingdom summoning all men between sixteen and sixty to join the army, meant that there was little he could do to prevent reports about these actions reaching Howard, nonetheless he sought to keep details of his wider strategy secret for as long as possible. He achieved some success in this respect and while Howard sought information about Albany's plans from the moment of the duke's arrival in Scotland in September, he did not get a definitive answer until late October.⁸⁰ Certainly, Howard had to deal with a mass of contradicting opinions about Albany's intentions. For instance, Margaret Tudor informed him on 29 September that nobody knew whether Albany would attack the East March or the West March, though she advised him to concentrate his resources in the east.⁸¹ Yet two days later her agent Patrick Sinclair told Howard that he believed Albany would attack Carlisle.⁸² On 5 October, Dacre assured Howard that Albany was planning to attack the West March, though by 18 October he admitted that he could 'git no certentie' about which way the duke would come.⁸³ The following day, still unable to get definite information about Albany's intended plans, Howard decided to base himself at Morpeth from where he believed he could equally well respond to attacks on 'theste or weste marche'.⁸⁴ The lack of clarity about Albany's

⁸⁰ Bodleian Library, Oxford, Tanner MS 90, fo. 47r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3369).

⁸¹ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B VI, fo. 449r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3368).

⁸² *State Papers, Henry VIII*, iv. 40-42.

⁸³ *LP* iii, pt. 2, no. 3395; Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/II, fo. 257r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3438).

⁸⁴ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 39r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3445). On 19 October, spies reported that while Albany was preparing to leave Edinburgh they did not know what part of the

strategy meant that Howard had to spread his forces spread across the frontier, a situation which benefitted the Scots by weakening the level of resistance the English could mount in a given area.

To impede English spying efforts, Albany only shared knowledge of his overall strategy with a select few persons. He did not inform many senior figures in the Scottish political hierarchy about his wider plans out of a fear that either they would pass information to the English or that their households were compromised. An English spy close to one of the Scottish wardens of the marches informed Bulmer that he was unable to find out from the warden – one of those people most affected by the campaign – where Albany would attack because the duke ‘kepe it to hym self’.⁸⁵ Another English spy reported that Albany was offering £100 in lands or goods to anyone who ‘could shewe hym of any Scotishman’ who had provided the English with details about his ordnance, while Margaret Tudor informed Thomas Howard that Albany ‘gyfyth not gret trast to the Scotys men’ in his army.⁸⁶ Fears that English spies had compromised the households of leading Scots led Albany to rely more heavily on his French forces. In contrast to the situation with the Scottish lords, it was much more difficult for the English to place spies amongst his French army, which was raised in Gascony. Albany also attempted to prevent English spies learning the full of extent of the artillery at his disposal. While Walter Scott of Buccleuch, Mark Carr of Dolphinstone and other leading

border he intended to attack: T. N. A., SP 49/2, fos. 39r-39v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3445). See also: T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 36r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3435).

⁸⁵ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 37r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3446).

⁸⁶ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 37r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3446); Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fol. 449v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3368).

men in the Scottish camp passed extensive intelligence to Sir Christopher Dacre about Albany's army, they were unable to provide details of the ordnance coming from Dunbar 'for the Duke hinges upon a thing which he wol make no Scotsman privy unto.'⁸⁷ Albany tried to keep Howard unsure about where he was sending his artillery. He dispatched some of his guns to Caerlaverock and Canonbie in the West March, probably both as a means to reinforce these places and to keep the English guessing about which part of the frontier he would attack.⁸⁸ By dividing his artillery, Albany could also hope to make it more difficult for English spies to learn the full extent of his firepower. Scottish artillery was of particular concern to Howard because of the threat it posed to border castles (James IV had used his artillery to force the surrender of Wark, Norham, Etal and Ford in 1513), in addition to which it gave a good indication of where Albany would attack.⁸⁹ Albany also prohibited all communication between Scots and English, an action in keeping with previous Scottish policy.⁹⁰ Yet while this prohibition had been issued earlier in the year, Albany took a range of measures to ensure that it was strictly enforced – and it is clear that his actions hampered English intelligence gathering activities. For instance, one of the prioress of Coldstream's agents in Edinburgh reported that Albany had forbidden communication with the English on pain of death,

⁸⁷ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3489.

⁸⁸ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B ii, fo. 257r; B iii, fos. 58r, 106r (*L&P* III. ii, nos. 3438, 3441).

⁸⁹ N. MacDougall, *James IV* (Edinburgh, 1997), pp. 271-3.

⁹⁰ N. R. S., E21/18, fo. 27v; Macdonald, 'Intelligence', p. 5. Furthermore, Albany intended to send Margaret Tudor to Perth to try and prevent her communicating with the English: Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/I, fo. 184v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3423).

with the result that ‘everyilke body is so rad that they dar tell [no] tydyngs for suspencion’.⁹¹ Similarly, Bulmer informed Howard on 22 October that of his ‘thre espialles at Edinburgh...I have no worde from theym this thre days. I am affraed the chef of theym be either hanged, or som myschef fallen vpon hym’. He then noted that while he was writing this letter ‘one of myn Espiall wifes’ came ‘and shewed me that hir husband was suspecte, so that he durst not come hymself’, and she reported that Albany had instructed Lord Hume ‘to kepe the Bordors for Espialls that non shall pas’.⁹² Albany took particularly strident measures to enforce this prohibition in the Scottish Borders, where communication between Scots and English was common. For instance, he sent French soldiers to Duns to ensure the ban was applied, possibly fearing that cross-border interests of local Scottish families could compromise the order’s effectiveness.⁹³ As in Edinburgh, the measures in the Borders had some success in hampering English spying activities. Following the issuing of the pronouncement at Duns in mid-October, Edde Storre, Howard’s spy in David Hume’s household, stated that he ‘dare not speak with Englishmen by daylight’.⁹⁴ Albany’s strict enforcement of the prohibition in communication made the prioress of Coldstream a particularly valuable spy for

⁹¹ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3426. During the wars of 1540s, the Scots again banned cross-border communication as a way to prevent the English from gathering intelligence: A. Blakeway, ‘Spying and intelligence in Scotland, c.1530-1550’, in *Crossing Borders: Boundaries and Margins in Medieval and Early Modern Britain*, ed. S. M. Butler and K. J. Kesselring (Brill, 2018), p. 99.

⁹² Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fo. 497r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3456).

⁹³ T. N. A., SP 49/1, fo. 36r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3435).

⁹⁴ T. N. A., SP 49/1, fo. 36r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3435).

Howard, because in 1509 James IV had granted her a licence to communicate with the English – and have up to twelve people from England on the priory grounds – ‘as wele in tyme of were gife ony happinnis as in tyme of pece’.⁹⁵

Edde Storre’s attempt to circumvent the ban by sending his sister to Howard with information probably reflects a belief that women were deemed less suspect than men. Certainly, a number of other English spies had their female relatives pass on information about Albany’s army in the wake of Albany’s enforcement of the proclamation.⁹⁶ On 19 October, Bulmer informed Howard that ‘this Monday at two of the clok at night come to me on of myn Espialles wif, he durst not com hym self bot sent her’. The unnamed woman brought valuable information about the location of Albany’s ordnance, which her husband had learned.⁹⁷ Similarly, on 23 October the wife of another English spy who was under suspicion came to Howard with information about Albany’s intentions.⁹⁸ English spy masters in France, such Thomas Spynelly, employed women as spies, while Philip Dacre met at Coldstream one ‘Maryon of Boukle’, who

⁹⁵ *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum. The Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland. A. D. 1488-1529*, ed. M. Livingstone (Edinburgh, 1908), i. 286.

⁹⁶ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fol. 58r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3441); T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 37r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3446). For women and children as spies, see: Allmand, ‘Intelligence’, p. 36; Arthurson, ‘Espionage and intelligence’, 145, 147; J. Daybell, ‘Gender, politics and diplomacy: women, news and intelligence networks in Elizabethan England’, in *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, pp. 101-19.

⁹⁷ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 37r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3446).

⁹⁸ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fol. 497r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3456).

provided information on Albany's preparations for his 1522 march on Carlisle.⁹⁹

Women were able to traverse the border with less suspicion than men, which important as the English preferred to receive information face-to-face than by letter in order to reduce the risk of the Scots obtaining evidence of spying.¹⁰⁰ In early October, Bulmer told Howard that 'Isabell Hopper is chardged to pas over the water' and that he would do the same himself and he wanted 'na writing but credence'.¹⁰¹ On the face of it, this report would seem to refer to Isabella Hoppringle the prominent English spy whose convent at Coldstream lay just upriver from Norham. However, it probably refers to Isobel Hopper the daughter of the wealthy Edinburgh merchant, Richard Hopper, who, following the death of her first husband, John Murray, married Archibald Douglas of Kilspondie, the brother of the earl of Angus. Given the enmity between Angus and Albany (and especially the fact that Albany had Angus exiled to France in 1522), Isobel

⁹⁹ T. N. A., SP 1/7, fo. 271v (*LP* i. no. 2777); Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fo. 486v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 2402).

¹⁰⁰ Like these women of the 1520s, we find women acting as spies and bringing information across enemy lines, often carrying it on their person, during the civil wars of the seventeenth century: Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, p. 20.

¹⁰¹ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fo. 60v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3404). Though there were also drawbacks to this method. On 22 October, Bulmer informed Howard that one of his spies 'com to me when the water was byg, and left his hors on the Scotishsyde; and ther come Scots and took his hors, and had hym away. I sent hym ageyn, and gaf hym money to by hym ane other hors: bot sen I can not here of hym': Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fo. 497r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3456).

had every reason to act against Albany and spy for the English, while her lands at Blackbarony – which she had inherited from her first husband – were in the borders.¹⁰²

It is also clear that Albany was using women as spies. In March 1523, the English arrested one Kate Ormston as a Scottish spy.¹⁰³ While Amy Blakeway and Alastair Macdonald have clearly demonstrated that English authorities regularly accused Scots of spying as grounds to interrogate them for information, it appears in this instance at least that Ormston was in fact a spy.¹⁰⁴ Like the English, Albany used women of high social status to gain access to powerful people: Ormston was a relation of Lord Borthwick (which is perhaps why she was able to gain access to the Lord Treasurer at Newcastle). During her interrogation she provided valuable information, including the news that Albany was suspicious of the nuns at Coldstream and intended to put them out of their house and place ‘sowgears’ (possibly meaning ‘wageouris’, the paid Scottish soldiers often employed for long-term garrison duty). Ormston also told the English that Albany was planning to invade England and that ‘Davy Home, of Wedderburn, the lord of Buccleuch, and Mark Karre, are his best friends’, which later turned out to be true (although as we saw above Buccleuch and Kerr were playing a double game). Her testimony was also valuable because she provided information about residents of

¹⁰² A. M. Godfrey, *Civil Justice in Renaissance Scotland: The Origins of a Central Court* (Leiden, 2009), p. 186; R. K. Marshall, *Virgins and Viragos: A History of Women in Scotland from 1080 to 1980* (1983), p. 37; M. Ring, *So High a Blood: The Life of Margaret Countess of Lennox* (London, 2017), p. 23.

¹⁰³ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fos. 88r-88v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 2911).

¹⁰⁴ Blakeway, ‘Spying and intelligence’, pp. 96-7; Macdonald, ‘Intelligence’, p. 7.

English villages on the frontier who were spying for the Scots, such as Hector Gray from Wooler who was passing news to Buccleuch and 'desiring him to be his good master'.¹⁰⁵

Although examples of spying are not as fully documented in the surviving Scottish sources as they are in the English records, nonetheless it is clear that the Scots also made use of extensive use of intelligence in the 1520s. The first action the lords of the Council took when preparing the defence of the borders against English attacks in the summer of 1523 was to instruct the borders lords who 'hald certane secret exploratouris and spyis amangis the Inglismen to bring thaim advertisment quhen the Inglis army schapis till invaid this realm, and in quhat part of bordouris and maner that thai intende to enter tharin'.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, in preparation for Albany's first expedition against England in August 1522, Carrick herald was caught spying when he tried to open mail carried by his English counterpart, Clarenceaux herald, relating to the state of the fortifications at Berwick.¹⁰⁷ In both 1522 and 1523, Albany also restricted details of his invasion strategy to all but a trusted few as part of his efforts to prevent English spies learning his intentions. This worked effectively in both instances and the English were unable to learn where he would attack until very late in the day.

Albany may also have had double agents at work in October 1523. While one Sandy Trotter provided the English with information about Albany's movements, Bulmer cautioned Howard that he was 'a spy of Albany's; so is another Trotter, dwelling in Cornell, whom Sandy may send in his place'.¹⁰⁸ Double agents were of particular

¹⁰⁵ Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/III, fo. 88v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 2911).

¹⁰⁶ NRS CS5/33, fo. 198v.

¹⁰⁷ Emond, 'Minority', pp. 307-8.

¹⁰⁸ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fo. 42r (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3457).

concern to the English because they could both report on the state of English defences and feed them false information about Albany's intentions. On 19 October, Howard told Wolsey his spies claimed that Albany 'boasts that Richard De la Pole will not fail to join him, or land in England when he comes to the Borders' and that 'either Albany doth marvellously dissemble, or Ric. De la Pole has 6,000 or 7,000 ready to invade England.'¹⁰⁹ As we saw, the French king was not sending de la Pole to invade England and these reports may have been fabricated by Albany as a way to stretch English forces and thus weaken the defence of the frontier. Howard also used counter-intelligence to try and disrupt Albany's preparations. On 11 October, he instructed Dacre to spread rumours that he was planning to burn Leith when Albany left Edinburgh to invade England.¹¹⁰ To lend weight to this story, Howard provided Dacre with a letter detailing this plan which stated that he had 'fifteen good ships of war ready, and when the Duke is with Dacre [i.e. in the West March] they shall land at Leith, and with the aid of 6,000 or 7,000 of the best horsed men he has, who will meet them at Edinburgh, in one day they shall burn Haddington, Edinburgh, Leith, and the best towns on the water, returning with all speed. Doubts not but the Duke in the meantime will have as much business as he can answer unto.'¹¹¹ Howard hoped that this letter would reach Albany and encourage him to either keep at least part of his army in Edinburgh – and thus weaken the force of the Scottish attack – and attack the East March, the strongest part of the

¹⁰⁹ T. N. A., SP 49/2, fos. 39r-39v (*L&P* III. ii., no. 3445).

¹¹⁰ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3418.

¹¹¹ *L&P* III. ii, no. 3417.

English frontier, rather than attack Carlisle which was in a poor state of defence.¹¹²

While there is no evidence that this letter ever reached Albany, Howard's hope that he would attack the East March was realised and the Franco-Scottish army laid siege to Wark, the strongest of the border castles.

Historians have highlighted the central role that Francis Walsingham played in developing networks of spies and informers to gain intelligence about threats or potential threats to the security of the Tudor state. Yet a study of Howard's activities in 1523 suggest that similar networks were already in place long before the reign of Elizabeth I and that Walsingham's intelligence efforts, while considerable, are less novel than they may appear. Long before Francis Walsingham set up his networks, spying and intelligence gathering was coming to the forefront of the operation of Tudor state as a result of Henry VIII's wars. Certainly, Thomas Howard, Thomas Dacre and the other English commanders in the north could not have received the information they did about Albany's campaign in such a quick manner if a network of spies had not already been in place. Howard had to defend the entire border with only limited resources and the intelligence he received from Scotland determined where he placed his men. As well as seeking tactical information about the size and location of Albany's army, which could be provided by having agents look and listen to what was happening around them, Howard successfully accomplished the much harder task of placing spies at the

¹¹² For the poor state of Carlisle's defences in 1522-3, see: Brit. Libr., Cotton MS. Caligula B/VI, fos. 339r-339v (*L&P* III. ii, no. 3415). See also: *L&P* III. ii, nos. 3395, 3398, 3407; H. Summerson, *Medieval Carlisle: The City and the Borders from the Late Eleventh to the Mid-Sixteenth Century*, 2 vols (Kendal, 1993), ii. 477-8.

very centre of power in Scotland.¹¹³ The English had a number of elite agents in Scotland who were able to get close to Albany and other major figures, and they had particular success in encouraging prominent men and women from the Scottish Borders to spy for them. The geo-political situation of the Borders meant that the Scottish crown was just one of multiple political authorities these men and women had to contend with. Passing intelligence to the English offered these individuals a way to safeguard their interests or obtain favours. In British terms, the historiography of spying is overwhelmingly Anglocentric and little work has been done on Scottish espionage.¹¹⁴ Yet the Scots had long made use of spies in their wars with England and continued to do into the sixteenth century.¹¹⁵

While political leaders from across Europe, from Gaelic lords to the Ottoman sultan, made use of espionage to achieve their goals, there were also crucial differences between forms of spying across Europe. In contrast to Venice, where the ruling Council of Ten organised the state's spying and espionage through a sophisticated bureaucratic system or the highly centralised intelligence service of Habsburg Spain at the centre of which stood Philip II, spying in England was much more devolved and left to the efforts

¹¹³ On the difficulty of obtaining 'strategic intelligence derived from within the enemy's higher circles of government or military command', see: J. P. Ward, 'Security and insecurity: spies and informers in Holland during the Guelders War (1506-1515)', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, ix (2012), 185.

¹¹⁴ For a notable exception, see: Blakeway, 'Spying and intelligence'.

¹¹⁵ For the Scots making use of spies in their invasions of England in the early fourteenth century, see: Macdonald, 'Intelligence'; C. MacNamee, *The Wars of the Bruce: Scotland, England and Ireland 1306-1328* (Edinburgh, 2006), pp. 94, 100.

of individuals – and would remain this way throughout the sixteenth century – to organise their own spy networks to suit their immediate purposes without the support of a wider bureaucracy created for this purpose.¹¹⁶ Moreover, in contrast to Venice, where commercial concerns provided a key impetus to the development of organised systems of intelligence, in Henrician England spying was overwhelmingly for the purposes of gathering of military intelligence.

Espionage was of course not a product of the sixteenth century.¹¹⁷ Spying in war was sanctioned by God – the Book of Numbers details how Moses had sent spies into Canaan (Numbers 13. 1) – while numerous influential ancient and medieval writers advocated the importance of spying in war.¹¹⁸ In the most recent study of Tudor espionage, Christopher Andrew notes that spying occurred during the Hundred Years' War and was recorded extensively in the chronicles of Jean Froissart, though he downplays the effect which these earlier precedents may have had on intelligence gathering in the sixteenth century. Andrew writes that Francis Walsingham (whom he credits as the individual responsible for fashioning 'what was then the world's most sophisticated intelligence system') could not 'learn much from the largely forgotten

¹¹⁶ I. Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service: Organizing Intelligence in the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2019) [I wish to thank the author for allowing me to consult the proofs in advance of publication]; C. Carnicer and J. Marcos, *Espías de Felipe II: Los servicios secretos del Imperio español* (Madrid, 2005).

¹¹⁷ Allmand, 'Information et espionage', p. 163; B. Léthenet, "'Selon les nouvelles que vous me ferez savoir". Essai sur le renseignement au moyen âge', *Revue du Nord*, ccciii (2013/14), 843.

¹¹⁸ Léthenet, 'Selon les Nouvelles', 844-5. 936.

lessons of foreign intelligence in the Hundred Years War'.¹¹⁹ Yet at the beginning of 1523 John Bouchier, Lord Berners, who as captain of Calais was responsible for undertaking major spying operations, published his English translation of Froissart's chronicles.¹²⁰ As this work was widely read by English social elites throughout the sixteenth century, Walsingham did not have to look far for precedents regarding spying activities. Certainly, numerous writers from the Hundred Years' War such as Philippe de Mézières and Christine de Pisan (many of whose works remained popular on both side of the Channel well into the sixteenth century) discussed spying, while numerous ancient writers, whose texts were being discovered anew in the sixteenth century, discussed espionage activities.¹²¹ Renaissance treatises on statecraft drew on these ancient texts and highlighted the importance of spying, with Niccolò Machiavelli in his discourses on Livy emphasising the key role that obtaining intelligence played in achieving military success.¹²²

¹¹⁹ C. Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (New Haven, 2018), 158, 160.

¹²⁰ *Sir John Froissart's Chronicles of England, France, Spain, Portugal, Scotland, Brittany, Flanders, and the Adjoining Countries Translated from the Original French, at the Command of King Henry the Eighth, by John Bouchier, Lord Berners*, 2 vols (London, 1812). For the popularity of Froissart's chroniclers in sixteenth-century England, see: Gunn, *English People at War*, p. 2.

¹²¹ Allmand, 'Information et espionage', p. 163. For an overview of the wide variety of sources detailing spying in the Middle Ages, see: Léthenet, 'Selon les Nouvelles', 848-51.

¹²² Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, trans. N. H. Thomson (London, 1883), pp. 405-8. See also: Stefano Musco, 'Intelligence gathering

Alastair Macdonald has shown that the use of intelligence during the Anglo-Scottish wars of the fourteenth century made little real difference to events on the battlefield.¹²³ Yet by the sixteenth century spying was playing a fundamental role for the English in helping to securing the frontier against Scottish attack. This may be because although some previous English monarchs had made use of spies, the early years of Henry VIII's reign saw royal officials make more extensive and systematic use of military intelligence than ever before. While Ian Arthurson attributes the development of spying during this period to the diplomatic activities of Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII's wars and the coterminous destabilisation of the frontiers made clear the need for a regular flow of information. If English commanders hoped to quickly and effectively respond to threats to the realm, it was important to have spies in place and ready to provide intelligence when required.¹²⁴ The quick pace at which military intelligence was gathered in October 1523 was only possible because the English crown already had spies in place in Scotland. It was not good enough just to have occasional reports from lone spies: Howard needed continual intelligence from multiple sources to quickly alter his actions to respond to the changing nature of the threat. While the anti-spying measures Albany introduced achieved some success, in the end the scale and efficiency of English spying played a major role in securing the defence of the frontier and halting the Scottish invasion at the Tweed.

and the relationship between rulers and spies: some lessons from eminent and lesser-known classics', *Intelligence and National Security*, xxxi (2016), 1025-39.

¹²³ MacDonald, 'Intelligence', pp. 12-13.

¹²⁴ Arthurson, 'Espionage and intelligence', 142.

While this article has explored one aspect of spying in Henrician England, it is clear that much work remains to be done on the early Tudor period. Whereas the war with Scotland in the 1520s was relatively contained, the Rough Wooings of the 1540s was a long and protracted conflict which led to the expansion of English rule into Scotland through the imposition of garrisons across the lowlands. Spying undoubtedly played a key role in this particularly because, as we saw, fortifications functioned as intelligence nodes, while the length of the conflict would have allowed English commanders an opportunity to build extensive networks of spies and informers. The lords deputy of Ireland employed spies as part of their efforts to defend the Pale following the upsurge in conflict there from the 1530s. When Scots from the Western Isles sought to expand further into Ulster in the 1550s, the lords deputy again as part of their defensive preparations sent spies to infiltrate the Scots.¹²⁵ Yet it is clear from even the published records that the scale of spying and espionage which took place in France, first of all from Calais and its surrounding forts and then at Boulogne in the 1540s, dwarfs that found on the frontiers with Scotland and Gaelic Ireland and much work remains to be done here.

Finally, as Henry VIII's vision of an integrated imperial monarchy and royal ecclesiastical supremacy led to threats not just from external enemies but also considerable internal instability, as seen most clearly in the Pilgrimage of Grace in the 1530s and again in the 1549 rebellions during the early years of his son's reign, it is highly likely that the methods of surveillance the Tudor monarch used against his

¹²⁵ TNA SP 61/3, fol. 20r; *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, Tudor Period, 1509-1547*, ed. S. G. Ellis and J. Murray (Dublin, 2017), pp. 81, 138, 262-3; *Calendar of State Papers Ireland, Tudor Period, 1547-1553*, ed. C. Lennon (Dublin, 2015), pp. 103, 129.

external enemies were also used to monitor his own subjects during these periods of crises.¹²⁶ Further work on this topic may extend back into Henry VIII's reign the considerable efforts to use spies to prevent domestic dissent that have been so well documented for the reign of Elizabeth and her Stuart successors. In sum, it is clear that military intelligence played a key role in the defence of the kingdom and more work on this topic stands to reveal the myriad of ways in which it impacted on the operation of early modern government.

¹²⁶ Thomas Cromwell certainly made extensive use of spies and informers in the 1530s: Cooper, *The Queen's Agent*, p. 163.