THE DEFENCE OF THE SCOTTISH BORDER

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Introduction

Scotland's relations with her southern neighbour, England, were often bad, and for significant periods there was outright war between the two countries. In these circumstances it might be expected that a system of defence would be developed, perhaps combining regular patrols, on land and sea, with physical barriers and strongholds. Administrative arrangements would surely be in place to allow large defence forces to be brought speedily to deal with any invasion in force. Curiously, such a comprehensive system of defence has not been suspected by historians or castle experts, nor does it immediately appear that the evidence for one has been missed.

The Scots normally placed all their trust in themselves in person for the defence of their country, not fortifications or mercenaries. There were feudal obligations on some landholders dating back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to provide men equipped for war, but the main basis for service by most throughout the Medieval Period was the age old obligation on the able-bodied to join the host or common army for the defence of the realm whenever required, but normally for no more than forty days in any one year. That way an army of over twenty thousand combatants could be raised for campaigns in the sixteenth century. The national host would normally have been rather less in size in earlier times, but estimates of its size then are little better than guess work.[1] The Scottish army remained largely an amateur affair until the creation of effective militia armies by the Covenanters in the civil wars of the seventeenth century.

How the Scots dealt with the Border itself and transgressions across it is worthy of further examination. In popular Scottish belief the country can be viewed as a heroic Celtic nation keeping the English at bay, and prior to that the might of imperial Rome. The defence of a borderline ought to be key to this type of historical analysis, and it is the purpose of this paper to provide an overview of how that might have worked in the years from the emergence of a strong, unified northern kingdom to the union of the crowns of Scotland and England in 1603.

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[1]   D. H. Caldwell, 'The Use and Effect of Weapons: The Scottish Experience', *Review of Scottish Culture*, 4 (1988), pp. 53-55; D. H. Caldwell, *Scotland's Wars and Warriors. Winning against the odds* (Edinburgh: The Stationery Office, 1998), pp. 22-23, 26-27.

The Border (see Maps 1 and 2)
"The Border" is a concept that is readily understood by Scots and clearly identified as the frontier with England, running from Gretna at the head of the Solway Firth to the lower reaches of the River Tweed, excepting Berwick-upon-Tweed at the river-mouth. The frontier zone with England might reasonably, however, be thought of as a much wider area extending westwards along the Solway Firth and round the south or north end of the Isle of Man depending on the period in question. Scotland was awarded Man by Magnus, King of Norway, through the Treaty of Perth in 1266 and last held it in 1333. The Scots never forgot that this was part of their heritage and briefly took the island again in 1456, about when King James II's younger son, Alexander, was given the subsidiary title of Lord of Man when he was made Duke of Albany.[2] The island was also overrun by a joint raid mounted by the MacDonalds and the MacLeans in 1533, not apparently without the connivance or tacit approval of King James V.[3]

The frontier with England should also be perceived to have continued even further westwards to Ireland. The complex interrelationships of Scotland and the Scots with that country and its people have not received the attention they deserve. King Robert Bruce's brother Edward, was King of Ireland from 1316 until his death in 1318, and while the Wars of Independence effectively ended the possibility of Scotsmen and Englishmen owning land in both Scotland and England the same was not the case for Ireland. There, English administrations had to thole considerable penetration by families originating in the West Highlands and Islands and deal with the constant threat of military incursions from those parts, often funded and supported by native Irish lords. Clann Iain Mhoir under the leadership of the MacDonalds of Dunyvaig (Islay) held considerable lands in Antrim and the two main clan leaders, Angus MacDonald of Dunyvaig and Sorley Boy, had their status as Irish (and therefore English) landholders recognised by Elizabeth I in 1586.[4] Kings Edward I and Edward II viewed Ireland as a significant source of supplies and men for their campaigns in Scotland in the early fourteenth century. Six thousand foot and a thousand hobelars (lightly armed horsemen) were sought in 1322, although then, as in

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[2]   N. Macdougall, *James III A Political Study* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982), p. 37, pp. 42-43; 'Stewart, Albany, Duke of Albany', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com.

[3]   D. H. Caldwell, *Islay The Land of the Lordship* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008), pp. 80-81.

[4]   For reviews of these Scoto-Irish links see G. A. Hayes-McCoy, *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland (1565-1603),* (Dublin: Edmund Burke, 1996; a facsimile reprint of the 1937 edition); S. Duffy (ed.), *Robert the Bruce's Irish Wars* (Stroud: Tempus, 2002); Caldwell, *Islay*, pp. 77-103.

earlier campaigns, less may have been delivered in practice.[5] In the later medieval period the military traffic was all one way, from Scotland to Ireland, but the union of the crowns in 1603 gave King James VI and I the opportunity of turning Irish-based resources against the incorrigibly contumacious MacDonalds. For instance, in 1615 the men and siege guns that reduced their castle of Dunyvaig to surrender came from Dublin.[6]

The evolution of the Anglo-Scottish (land) Border took many years. A significant date is 1018 when a northern army under Malcolm II of the Scots along with Owen the Bald of Strathclyde defeated a Northumbrian army at Carham on the River Tweed. Over the succeeding centuries the borderline in the east of Britain was to change on several occasions but the Tweed was to become a default position that still marks the division between England and Scotland to this day. The only long term departure from the Tweed as a frontier was the annexation by the English of the Scottish burgh of Berwick-upon-Tweed, on the north side of the mouth of the Tweed. It was last held by the Scots in 1482. In the west the Solway Firth was to mark the dividing line, with the Tweed-Solway line being confirmed by the Treaty of York in 1237. A relatively minor adjustment was made by agreement in 1552 when the so-called Debateable Land in the south-west between the River Sark and the River Esk was divided between the two countries.

The administration of this international frontier is also reasonably well known. Prior to the Wars of Independence border issues were dealt with by the relevant sheriffs. By the sixteenth century administrative arrangements were in place on both the English and the Scottish side for dealing with relatively minor infringements of the sovereignty of the two countries. There were three marches on each side of the border, an East, Middle and West, each under the care of an official called a warden. The Scottish East March covered Berwickshire, extending from the east coast inland to Lauder and Hume, and included the fertile farmlands of the Merse. The Scottish Middle March consisted of the shires of Peebles, Selkirk and Roxburgh, but in the sixteenth century Liddesdale, essentially the parish of Castleton with a twenty mile stretch of the border, was separated off and placed under the care of a keeper who had the same status as a warden.[7] Liddesdale included the important fortress, Hermitage Castle, and a

5   M. Brown, *Bannockburn The Scottish War and the British Isles, 1307-1323* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 83-84, 163.
6   Caldwell, *Islay*, p. 99.
7   T. Rae, *The Administration of the Scottish Frontier* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1966).

significant concentration of tower-houses. The West March brought together the shires of Dumfries and Kirkcudbright with a relatively short land frontier but a long southern border along the Solway Firth.

The wardens provided a frontline of defence and could call out all the men of the Marches who were liable for military service. They could base defence and counterattack on strongholds held by themselves or other border nobles, sometimes at royal expense.[8] In periods of war lieutenants of the Marches could be appointed to whom the wardens were subordinate and who could better control the military resources of all the marches.

Much, perhaps most, of medieval cross-border warfare is unrecorded, involving small forces of a hundred or fewer reivers (border raiders), often mounted and essentially looking for animals and other booty to take home. Sometimes raids were much larger affairs, organised by leading chiefs or nobles, but still with the prime function of making money. The dividing line between legitimate military activity that was sanctioned by the State or pillaging and robbery that was criminal, was often difficult for all parties to agree on, but it was the latter that the wardens and other border officials should have been attempting to suppress and seek redress for.

Whether the Scots or the English were better at reiving and raiding, or made more out of it in the long term, is a matter that has not been settled, but the Scots certainly benefited greatly at certain periods, not least in the years of ascendancy under Robert Bruce after his victory at Bannockburn in 1314.[9] In times of out and out war as well as relative peace reiving was a constant risk or opportunity, and one that was tolerated, if not encouraged by Scottish and English administrations. James V's notorious, but not reliably documented, suppression of border reivers in the late 1520s or early 1530s was the exception rather than the rule.[10] Cross-border raids were an activity that could only be effectively suppressed when there was whole-hearted commitment to do so from the political establishment on both sides of the Border, as increasingly in the later part of the sixteenth century and decidedly after 1603.[11]

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[8]   Rae, *Scottish Frontier*, pp. 43-47.
[9]   For a general survey of reiving see G. MacDonald Fraser, *The Steel Bonnets. The Story of the Anglo-Scottish Border Reivers* (London: Pan, 1979).
[10]   J. Cameron, *James V The Personal Rule, 1528-1542* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 1998), pp. 70-92.
[11]   J. Goodare, *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford: University Press, 1999), pp. 254-263.

Given that the Border was formed and maintained for much of its history in conditions of hostility between Scotland and England it is perhaps surprising that it shifted so little and remained so relatively undefended. From a topographical viewpoint there was no overwhelming logic to the selection of this particular line, running for much of its length over the top of the Cheviot Hills. It was distinctly disadvantageous to the Scots since much of their best land in the Merse was adjacent to the Tweed.

The ancient Romans, who are generally considered to have had a good understanding of geography and military matters, demonstrated that Britain could effectively be divided north-south, but on lines different to the medieval frontier. The Emperor Hadrian was responsible for the wall of about 122 AD that bears his name, stretching from Bowness on the Firth of Solway to Wallsend on the north bank of the River Tyne. Twenty years later the Emperor Antoninus Pius had a new frontier wall built between Old Kilpatrick on the Clyde and Carriden on the Forth. Both these walls survived into medieval times as obvious monuments, and their construction by the Romans or ancient Britons, and function as barriers or frontiers, was commented on by historians, for example, John Fordun writing in the late fourteenth century. He misattributed Hadrian's Wall to the Emperor Severus in a passage of hopelessly bad history, partially derived from the work of the eighth-century historian Bede, but identified its function as being to keep out the Picts and the Scots from invading the south.[12] For the Antonine Wall he had the name "Grimsdyke" and believed it had been constructed by the Britons immediately after the departure of the Romans, also to keep out the Scots and Picts.[13]

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[12]   W. F. Skene (ed.), *The Historians of Scotland*, vol. 4, *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), pp. 55-57. Compare A. M. Sellar (ed.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England* (London: George Bell and sons, 1907), pp. 19-20. http://www.giveshare.org/churchhistory/venerable-bede-history.pdf (December 11, 2008).

[13]   Fordun, *Chronicle*, 80; Bede, *History*, 23. http://www.giveshare.org/churchhistory/venerable-bede-history.pdf (December 11, 2008). The walls are both represented on the map of Britain in Matthew Paris' *Abbrevatio Chronicorum* of 1250-1259 (British Library, Cotton MS Claudius D.vi). There is a reproduction of this with a key to the text in P. Hume Brown, *Early Travellers in Scotland* (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1978, a facsimile of the 1891 edition), between pp. xxvi and 1.

There is no evidence that either wall served as an international boundary in Post-Roman times. Some stretches of earthworks elsewhere, including the Deil's Dyke in Galloway and the Catrail or Picts' Work Ditch in the East borders (Selkirkshire and Roxburghshire), have been identified in the past as possible early medieval frontiers, but this interpretation is not now held in favour.[14] There is no evidence that a continuous barrier or fortification for the Scottish-English frontier was ever seriously considered, at least prior to the 1580s, when Christopher Dacre, an English gentleman, submitted to his government a plan for what amounted to a contemporary version of Hadrian's Wall, complete with "state of the art" bastions. His proposal, which would have been prohibitively expensive, was ignored.[15] The only section of the frontier that was marked by a properly surveyed and constructed earthwork, flanked by ditches on both sides, was the dividing line ("The Scots Dyke") agreed in 1552, some four miles long, through the debatable land at the head of the Solway Firth in the south-west.[16]

Castles and Strongholds
The Scots did not have strong points right on the border with England, with the notable exception of Berwick-upon-Tweed, a burgh, in existence prior to the accession of King David I in 1124. Berwick was a major port and trading centre at the mouth of the River Tweed. It had substantial walls around the town and an important castle. It was captured by the English in 1296 and thereafter changed hands more than once. It was last under Scottish control in 1482.[17] The English developed Berwick as an important supply base in the Wars of Independence and as a border fortress from 1558 with sophisticated *trace italienne* earthworks.[18] There were two other

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14   A. Graham, 'The Deil's Dyke in Galloway', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 83 (1948-1949): 174-185; Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), *The County of Roxburgh*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956), pp. 479-483, and *The County of Selkirk* (Edinburgh: Her Majesty's Stationery office, 1957), pp. 126-127.

15   M. Merriman, *The Rough Wooings. Mary Queen of Scots 1542-1551* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2000), pp. 385-387.

16   Merriman, *The Rough Wooings*, pp. 376-380.

17   G. S. Pryde, *The Burghs of Scotland A Critical List* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, on behalf of University of Glasgow , 1965), no. 1.

18   *Trace italienne* fortifications had massive earthwork ramparts with large pointed bastions positioned in such a way that pieces of artillery in positions recessed behind the flank of one bastion could fire along the front of the adjacent ramparts and bastion. As the name suggests, this style of fortification was developed in Italy, and made its earliest appearance in Britain in the middle of the sixteenth century. See D. H. Caldwell and G.

notable English strongholds on the south bank of the Tweed, Norham Castle and Wark Castle, both dating to the early twelfth century. Along with Berwick they were maintained through to the sixteenth century and were together a useful check on Scottish invasions into the English East March. King James IV showed considerable determination to reduce Wark and Norham with his artillery train in campaigns in 1492, 1493 and 1513, and would probably have gone on to tackle Berwick as well if he had not met an untimely death at Flodden in 1513. The English, like the Scots, had no fortresses positioned on the rest of the frontier.

Scottish administrations could think in terms of establishing groups of castles to serve as lines of defence. The obvious example dates to the reign of James IV (1488-1513). It is the line of castles, refurbished or newly built, the length of the peninsula of Kintyre and Knapdale. From north to south it includes Castle Sween, Tarbert, Skipnes, Airds, Saddel, Kilkerran and Dunaverty, mostly in the hands of trusted royal supporters than royal garrisons.[19] Here the intention was to threaten or provide a defence against the powerful and often hostile Lordship of the Isles which had shown itself capable of mounting devastating raids into the Firth of Clyde and encroaching on royal lands there.

If defence and attack of Berwick is excepted, it would appear that the Scots never made any serious attempt to repulse a major English force at the Border. Nor is it apparent that the Scots ever developed a clear, overall strategy for defensive lines inland from the Border, although the distribution of some early royal burghs and castles appears to make a line based on Berwick in the east, then westwards by Roxburgh, Jedburgh, Selkirk and Peebles. With the possible exception of Selkirk, all date back to the mid twelfth century or earlier, all had royal castles, and except Jedburgh, were administrative centres for sheriffs.[20] All were on potential invasion routes and could have acted as effective military bases – garrisons, supply bases and muster locations. There is widespread belief that Scottish towns lacked defensive walls but these burghs may not all have been totally unprotected.

	Ewart, 'Excavations at Eyemouth, Berwickshire, in a mid 16th-century *trace italienne* Fort', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 31 (1998), pp. 61-119.
19	RCAHMS, *Argyll 1* (Edinburgh: RCAHMS, 1971), 157-184; RCAHMS, *Argyll 7* (Edinburgh: RCAHMS, 1992), pp. 245-259.
20	Pryde, *Burghs*, nos 2, 10, 17, 41. For the castles see RCAHMS, *Roxburgh 1*, 210 (for Jedburgh Castle); RCAHMS, *Roxburgh 2*, 407-411; RCAHMS, *Selkirk*, pp. 47-49; RCAHMS, *Peebleshire 2* (Edinburgh: RCAHMS, 1967), p. 263.

Certainly Roxburgh had walls, and Peebles by the 1570s.[21] Further south and west the royal burgh of Dumfries with its castle, also a centre of a sheriffdom, protected Nithsdale, and the Bruce burgh and castle at Lochmaben covered Annandale and the route northwards to Lanark, approximating to the present M74.[22] Such strategic thinking, however, did not square with the successful tactics adopted by King Robert Bruce and other Scottish commanders in the Wars of Independence. They notoriously preferred guerrilla warfare and the destruction of castles once they had captured them.

An act of parliament of 1535 ordered that every man in the Borders with land worth £100 should build a barmkin (a fortified enclosure) of stone and lime, three score foot square (about eighteen metres square), with walls an ell (about a metre) thick and six ells high, for protecting himself, his tenants and their property in troublesome times. A tower might be included in the barmkin. Men of lesser resources should build peels (defensive palisades) and "great strengths" as they please. All this was to be done within two years.[23]

There is no evidence that the passing of this act presaged the building of numerous barmkin, towers and peels of the specified types. Rather, most men of any substance would probably have already looked to their own safety by erecting such defences. When the historian John Major wrote in 1521 of two strongholds to every league, to act as a defence against invaders, he was scarcely exaggerating, and this plethora of fortified houses was to be found in the marches on both sides of the border by the sixteenth century.[24] Although many of these strongholds are called castles by the Scots they are mostly little more than homes with a show of defence or houses with stout walls and a strong front door. Architectural historians now grade the houses into three groups:

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21   RCAHMS, *Roxburgh 1*, p. 252; C. Martin and R. Oram, 'Medieval Roxburgh: a preliminary assessment of the burgh and its locality', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 137 (2007), pp. 357-404; RCAHMS, *Peebleshire 2*, p. 277.

22   Pryde, *Burghs*, nos 24, p. 105.

23   The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland, http://www.rps.ac.uk, RPS, 1535/31 (December 26, 2008).

24   J. Major, *History of Great Britain* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1892), pp. 29-30.See the map of defensible houses in southern Scotland and northern England about 1500 to 1625 in P. G. B. McNeill and H. L. MacQueen (eds), *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Medievalists and Department of Geography, University of Edinburgh, 1996), p. 433.

1. tower-houses, typically rectangular structures with a vaulted ground floor and three to four stories, surmounted by battlements or turrets.
2. peel-houses, typically oblong, gable-ended houses with clay-bonded walls and a hall above an unvaulted ground floor used for storage.
3. bastles, typically small, gable-ended houses with a vaulted ground floor and living accommodation in an upper storey.

These houses provided a certain amount of security for the owner, his family and tenants, but the wise householder would probably normally have abandoned his home in the face of a serious threat rather than be trapped inside.

A trick adopted by some Borderers to prevent the complete destruction of tower-houses abandoned on the approach of an invading force is recorded by the Earl of Surrey in 1523 when he burned the burgh of Jedburgh. The Scots had filled the vaulted ground floors of their towers with turfs and burning straw to try and prevent the English blowing them up with gunpowder; but Surrey, anticipating this stratagem, covered his powder barrels with salt hides and took with him pieces of timber to roll the barrels down from a safe distance "as wine doth into a cellar".[25]

Few even of the tower-houses were well designed for mounting a vigorous defence and were vulnerable to destruction by artillery which was a real threat in the sixteenth century. An option for literally lessening the blow of the latter was to have the walls "vawmewred" with earth or turf to take the impact of gunshot. This is what Sir Andrew Ker did to his castle at Cessford in Roxburghshire in advance of the arrival of an English force in 1523 under the command of the Earl of Surrey. Despite having three siege guns and several smaller pieces Surrey believed he would have not taken it unless Ker had surrendered on terms.[26]

The English recorded in 1528 that the peel of "Ill Will Armstrong", a notable reiver, was so strong that they could not burn or destroy it except

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[25]   J. S. Brewer and others (eds), *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII* (London: Public Record Office, 1864-1932), vol. 3/2, no. 3360.

[26]   *Henry VIII Letters and Papers*, vol. 3/2, no. 3039; RCAHMS, *Roxburgh 1*, pp. 128-131.

with axes.[27] A possible explanation of their problem comes from Bishop Leslie's *History*, first published in 1578. There, some of the houses of the lesser border lairds and other headmen are described as being four square towers, called peels, made of earth alone so that they could not be burned or easily knocked to the ground.[28] Leslie would appear to have misunderstood that these were stone houses clad in earth rather than totally of earth. This change in meaning of the word "peel", from enclosure to tower house, was general in the later sixteenth century. The peel-house at Littledean in Roxburghshire was attacked by the English in 1544 but escaped because it was "mured" with earth.[29]

A tower-house held by a determined garrison might be a significant thorn in the flesh, as Langholm Castle in Dumfriesshire, which in 1547 was occupied by the English. The Scots retook it, but judged that a considerable artillery train and a large army were necessary to achieve this end.[30] Later the same year it was the turn of a Scottish garrison to resist an English army. The tower in this case was actually the steeple of Annan Church held by seven gunners paid for by the government along with fifty-seven local men, all under the command of James Lyon. Their position was strengthened by having the whole ground storey of the tower "rampired" with earth, but even so the Scottish governor seems only to have expected them to resist an enemy attack for four hours without receiving relief.

The English army arrived at Annan on the evening of Sunday 11 September and that same night summoned the captain to render the tower. He refused, and the next day the assault began in earnest. The English had

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[27]   *State Papers of Henry VIII* (London: Public Record Office, 1830-1852), vol. 4, p. 492.

[28]   *Historie of Scotland, written first in Latin by the most reverend and worthy Jhone Leslie, Bishop of Rosse, and translated in Scottish by Father James Dalrymple 1596* (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 188-95), vol. 1, p. 98.

[29]   J. Morton, *The Monastic Annals of Teviotdale* (Edinburgh, 1832), 100; RCAHMS, *Roxburgh 1*, pp. 261-262.

[30]   J. Bain and others (eds), *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary Queen of Scots 1547-1603* (Edinburgh: H. M. General register House, 1898-1969), vol. 1, p. 9; T. Dickson, J. Balfour Paul and others (eds), *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland* (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House and H. M. Stationery Office, 1877-1978), vol. 9, pp. 85-94; G. A. Bergenroth and others (eds), *Calendar of Letters, Despatches, and State Papers, Relating to the Negotiations between England and Spain* (London: Public Record Office, 1862-1919), vol. 9, p. 126.

no heavy siege guns, only six field pieces which they laid at eight o'clock in the morning to beat against the battlements of the tower. Under cover of this barrage and also fire from several archers and hagbutters (hand gunners) they attempted to draw a pavise (shield) of timber up to the side of the tower under the shelter of which six pioneers could work at undermining the wall. The Scottish defenders, however, successfully managed to put a stop to this work by dropping great stones from the steeple top down on the pavise below, smashing it and killing four of the English.

The English next set their men to cut the east end of the choir of the church and this had the desired effect of causing the whole end of the church to collapse, including part of the tower. The falling roof and timber killed seven of the Scots. The next step was to turn the guns against the door of the tower at first floor level which was only now exposed with the destruction of the choir. At this point, about four in the afternoon, the Scots lowered their flag and asked for mercy which was refused them, and so they surrendered unconditionally. The English commanders, after some deliberation, decided to spare all of them and keep them prisoners.[31]

The Italian Enea Silvio Piccolomini (later Pope Pius II) has left an account of his journey from Scotland to England in the 1430s, including an incident both highlighting the prevailing feeling of insecurity and explaining what may be regarded as the normal function of a border castle. Although the particular context relates to the English side of the Border it cannot be doubted that circumstances would have been little different north of the frontier. Enea had crossed the river forming the frontier (the Tweed) and was being entertained at a farmhouse near or in a large town (Berwick). At two in the morning all the men left to go to a distant keep (possibly Norham) for fear of the Scots who might cross the river at ebb-tide. Enea was actually left behind on the excuse that the Scots would not harm a stranger. The women too were abandoned since any outrage done to them would not have been regarded as a great misfortune. Later in the night there was a panic caused by the dogs barking and geese cackling, and the women fled in all directions, only returning when it was clear that the alarm had been caused by the arrival of friends, not enemies.[32]

Naval Defence
The English used ships for invasion forces and supplies on many occasions but Scottish administrations were slow to develop a naval policy to deal with this threat. Three successive kings, James III, James IV and James V

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[31]   *Calendar State Papers Scotland*, vol. 1, no. 42.
[32]   Hume Brown, *Early Travellers*, pp. 28-29.

did take an interest in ships that could be used in warfare, successfully, as most famously with Sir Andrew Wood as commander. In the summer of 1489 with the royal ships the *Yellow Carvel* and the *Flower* he defeated an English flotilla of five heavily-armed ships which had been preying on Scottish shipping in the Firth of Forth. In the following year he defeated another force of three English ships lying in wait for him off the Isle of May.[33] Wood's exploits as a naval commander were to be matched later in the reign and the 1520s by Robert and Andrew Barton, and David Falconer.[34]

The *Yellow Carvel* and *Flower* were probably armed merchantmen of no great size. With the help of French ship-wrights, however, James IV embarked on a programme of building larger ships primarily intended for war. In 1502 work was commenced at Leith on a great ship, almost certainly that afterwards known as the *Margaret* in honour of James' queen. The ship was undoubtedly a carrack, a broad, sturdy type of ship with high castles at stern and bow. She had three masts with merses (fighting tops) and was armed with artillery, including one large gun and several smaller pieces, and crossbows. When she sailed with the rest of the fleet in 1513 she had a crew of a hundred men and five gunners.[35]

An even larger ship, the *Michael*, was begun soon after the completion of the *Margaret*, perhaps in 1507, under the supervision of another French shipwright, Jacques Terrell, at the new royal shipyard at Newhaven, just to the west of Leith. When she was launched in 1511,[36] it is clear she was an impressive ship, perhaps the largest afloat at that time. Contemporary sources say she was a vessel of a thousand tons, and she carried a crew of two hundred and ninety three men along with gunners and officers.[37] King James boasted to the English ambassador that she fired sixteen large guns a side.[38] For his last disastrous campaign against the

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[33]   R. Lindesay of Pitscottie, *The Historie and Cronicles of Scotland* (Scottish Text Society, 1899-1911), vol. 1, p. 229; N. Macdougall, *James IV* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 1998), pp. 226-227.

[34]   W. S. Reid, *Skipper from Leith* (Philadelphia, 1962).

[35]   *Treasurer Accounts*, vol. 2, pp. 281, 282; vol. 3, pp. 90, 142; vol. 4, pp. 505-507.

[36]   *Treasurer Accounts*, vol. 4, p. 313.

[37]   *Treasurer Accounts*, vol. 4, pp. 502-505, 507; G. R. Elton, 'Anglo-French relations in 1522: A Scottish Prisoner of War and his Interrogation', *English Historical Review* (1963), p. 314; *Henry VIII Letters and Papers*, vol. 1/2, no. 2204. Compare Pitscottie, *Historie*, vol. 1, pp. 251-252.

[38]   R. K. Hannay and D. Hay (eds), *The Letters of James the Fourth 1505-13* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1954), p. 321.

English in 1513 James was able to put together a fleet of over twenty ships, including three large royal ships, well armed and provided with guns. Perhaps if he had lived, James could have developed these naval assets into an effective defence force for Scotland's east coast. Instead, the resource was frittered away, the succeeding administrations for the young James V having no concern for maintaining it. James V did take an interest in naval affairs after he came of age in 1528, but the resources at his command were considerably less than those enjoyed by his father at the end of his reign. Indeed, when he sailed to France in 1536 to find a wife the largest ship in his small fleet of six was the *Mary Willoughby*, an English ship captured three years earlier by Hector MacLean of Duart.[39] For his expedition to the Western Isles in 1540 his fleet of six had the *Salamander*, a gift from the French king, as his flag ship, very probably with *Mons*, the great iron bombard in Edinburgh Castle, on board.[40]

By the end of the reign of James V in1542 the southern coast of the Firth of Forth was well protected by castles, mostly in royal hands. Two of the main ports, Dunbar and Blackness, were defended by major royal castles with provision for mounting large pieces of artillery.[41] These fortifications may have been part of a conscious, long term strategy to protect the approaches to Edinburgh and the fertile, populated heartlands of Scotland, but as events in the 1540s were to demonstrate, they were not adequate. In 1544 an English army landed at Granton, then undefended, and proceeded to take Leith, the port of Edinburgh, from the landward side, despite hasty attempts by the Scots to dig earthwork defences. A few days later the English had little difficulty in forcing their way into the town of Edinburgh. Only Edinburgh castle remained secure.[42] Three years later an English fleet, undeterred by any threat from the castle on Inchgarvie where the Forth narrows sufficiently for the erection of a rail bridge in the late nineteenth century, sailed on to Blackness and bombarded all the Scottish

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39   Cameron, *James V*, 131; Caldwell, *Islay*, p. 81.

40   Cameron, *James V*, 245: D. H. Caldwell, 'Postscript Mons Meg's original Carriage and the Carvings of Artillery in Edinburgh Castle' in D. H. Caldwell (ed.), *Scottish Weapons & Fortifications 1100-1800* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1981), pp. 437-441.

41   I. MacIvor, 'Artillery and Major Places of Strength in the Lothians and the East Border, 1513-1542', in D. H. Caldwell (ed.), *Scottish Weapons & Fortifications 1100-1800* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1981), pp. 94-152.

42   *Henry VIII Letters and Papers,* vol. 19/1, nos 472, 483, 518, 533, 534, 'The Late Expedicion In Scotlands ... 1544' in J. G. Dalyell (ed.), *Fragments of Scottish History* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1798), pp. 1-16.

ships sheltering under the guns of the castle.[43] The only other port on the east coast with fortifications specifically built to protect it was Aberdeen, with a blockhouse begun in 1513.[44]

The maintenance of a strong castle and fort at Dunbar was, however, crucial in preventing the English establishing a "pale" (an English administered region) in the south-east in 1547.[45] Since Dunbar was perceived by the English to be too strong to capture they not only denied themselves the opportunity of supplying their garrisons by sea but allowed Dunbar to be occupied by the French forces that came to support the Scots. The English became reliant on overland supply routes up the coast from Berwick and over the hills from Roxburgh to their main base at Haddington. They could not maintain this situation beyond 1550, and were thus forced out of Scotland.[46]

Naval defence of the west coast and islands appears never to have been a simple matter from the perspective of kings and governments mostly based in the eastern Lowlands. Indeed a major problem long after 1266 was the threat from the very naval forces, those of the Hebridean clans, that could have provided protection against English depredations. Indeed, legislation of 1430 required all barons and lords living on or near the west coast of the mainland to maintain galleys. The insistence that this was particularly to apply to those who lived opposite the Isles is an indication of whence it was believed invasions would come.[47]

Down to the seventeenth century Hebridean clans controlled significant resources in ships. These were little different from Viking long ships – boats that were designed as troop carriers rather than vessels for engaging in battle at sea.[48] In the Wars of Independence the English played

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43   G. Lefevre-Pontalis (ed.), *Correspondence Politique de Odet de Selve, Ambassadeur de France en Angleterre, 1548-49* (Paris: ed. scietifique, 1888), 203, 212; *Calendar State Paper Spain,* vol. 9, pp. 168-169.

44   D. H. Caldwell, 'A Sixteenth-Century Group of Gun Towers in Scotland', *Fort* 12 (1984), pp. 16-17.

45   For Dunbar see MacIvor, 'Artillery and Major Places of Strength', pp. 104-117; D. R. Perry, *Castle Park Dunbar Two Thousand Years on a Fortified Headland* (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Monograph 16, 2000), pp. 11-16, 92-97.

46   Caldwell and Ewart, 'Excavations at Eyemouth Fort'.

47   RPS, 1430/21 (December 5, 2008).

48   D. H. Caldwell, 'Having the Right Kit: West Highlanders Fighting in Ireland', in S. Duffy (ed.), *The World of the Galloglass. Kings, Warlords*

for the support of local lords. In 1301 Angus Og (MacDonald) is to be found in English service as one of the leaders of a fleet in the waters around Bute and Kintyre,[49] and John (MacDougall) served as an English admiral in the years 1311, 1314 and 1315. In 1315 he took the Isle of Man for his English masters and helped oppose the Bruce brothers in Ireland.[50]

Scottish administrations do not appear to have developed shipyards in the Firth of Clyde to match those in the east, although Dumbarton was used for shipbuilding and repair work in the winter of 1494-1495 in connection with naval expeditions to the Isles, and served as a base for ships in royal service in later campaigns in 1504 and 1506.[51] Dumbarton was the only port on the west coast that had a significant level of protection, provided in this case by a major royal castle. James V's fleet that took him to the Isles in 1540 sailed from Leith.[52]

In the Post-Wars of Independence era English invasion of the west was rarely viewed as a serious risk. A planned capture of Dumbarton Castle in 1544 by a fleet commanded by the Scottish renegade Earl of Lennox with support from Donald Dubh, the MacDonald pretender to the Lordship of the Isles, failed largely through English mismanagement.[53] An English fleet sent from Ireland in 1558 to wreak revenge on James MacDonald of Dunyvaig for his depredations in that island caused damage in Kintyre, Arran and the Cumbraes, but bad weather prevented it striking at the MacDonald heartlands in Islay.[54]

Concentrating Resources
The lieges were expected to supply their own weapons, equipment and food when they were called out to join the host.[55] Provision was sometimes made, as in 1523, 1545 and 1572, for burghs to provide food to supply the army "on ane competent price", and for officials on royal estates to furnish

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	and Warriors in Ireland and Scotland, 1200-1600 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 144-151.
49	J. Stevenson, *Documents Illustrative of the History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1870), Vol. 2, pp. 435-437.
50	W. D. H. Sellar, 'Hebridean Sea Kings: The Successors of Somerled, 1164-1316', in E. J. Cowan and R. A. McDonald (eds), *Alba Celtic Scotland in the Medieval Era*, (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2000), pp. 216-217.
51	Macdougall, *James IV*, p. 105, 185, 188, 189.
52	Cameron, *James V*, p. 245.
53	Caldwell, *Islay*, p. 83.
54	*Calendar State Papers Scotland*, vol. 1, no. 410.
55	Caldwell, 'The Use and Effect of Weapons', pp. 53-62.

carriage horses and men to transport these supplies. [56] In 1523 four commissars were to pass to all the burghs on the borders and other places to make open proclamation that all with corn, hay and fodder for the horses should furnish it forthwith for the army for ready money.[57] Otherwise, there seems to have been little expectation that border burghs or castles were significant arsenals or storehouses ready to supply royal or government forces.

It took weeks rather than days for a successful mobilisation of the host (army) to counter an enemy invasion. Precise details rarely survive for how this was done. They do, however, for 1547. Preparations by the English for their invasion in September of that year were well known by the Scottish administration, and the governor, the Earl of Arran, was well prepared. Letters were sent out on the third of August warning the lieges to be ready to muster on eight hours notice. The actual instructions for the musters were issued on the seventeenth August, with threats and reminders being sent on the following days. Fiery crosses were also sent round as a sign of the seriousness of the situation. The contingents for the host were required to muster at Fala on the northern edge of the Lammermuirs severally from the twenty-eighth to the thirty-first of the month.[58] Other muster points on other occasions included Ellem and Lauder in Berwickshire, Melrose in Roxburghshire, Roslin Moor in Midlothian, and Edinburgh itself.

There were many crossing points on the land frontier and routes through the marches for raiding parties, but for large armies encumbered with baggage and artillery the main options approximated to the modern roads, like the A1 from Berwick up to Dunbar and Haddington, and the A68 from Carter Bar to Jedburgh and Lauder. They were not well maintained or easy to traverse in bad weather. The itineraries of the English kings, Edward I and Edward II, in their invasions of Scotland are particularly well documented. Edward I's initial conquest in 1296 saw him take Berwick and journey round by Dunbar and Haddington before turning south by Lauder, Roxburgh and Jedburgh to secure Liddesdale. He thus, as well as heading as far north as Elgin, traversed in the one campaign more of the border region

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[56]   Treasurer Accounts, vol. 8, p. 395; J. H. Burton et al (eds), *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1877-1967), vol. 2, p. 151; R. K. Hannay (ed.), *Acts of the Lords of Council in Public Affairs 1501-1554* (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1932), p. 176ff.

[57]   *Acts of the Lords of Council*, p. 180ff

[58]   *Treasurer Accounts*, vol. 9, pp. 106-111; D. H. Caldwell, 'The Battle of Pinkie' in N. Macdougall (ed.), *Scotland and War AD79-1918* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1991), pp. 61-94.

than any other known invader.[59] The English chronicler, John Hardying, who visited Scotland 1417 x 1421, reported the best way for an English army to enter Scotland was the A1 route. An alternative strategy was a three-pronged attack using that route and two others via Lauder and a way from Dumfries to Ayr, with all three armies meeting up in Glasgow.[60] In 1547 the English actually launched a major two-pronged attack, with their main force, supported by a fleet, taking the A1 route, and a diversionary force heading west along the north side of the Solway Firth for Annan and then inland to Castlemilk and Dumfries.[61]

Most large armies from 1430 onwards were provided with artillery and the administration had to deal with the logistics of putting together an artillery train and moving it to wherever it was required.[62] In 1496 the artillery for a campaign into the English East March was gathered at Restalrig, near Edinburgh, on the thirteenth of September but going via Haddington and a route over the Lammermuirs represented today by minor roads, only crossed the Tweed, about eighty miles away, on the twenty-first of September. Even this progress was only made possible by the decision to hire horses rather than requisition oxen.[63] For the attempt to take Norham Castle in the following year the artillery train was pulled by oxen and appears to have taken about twice as long on the road as the guns in the previous year.[64]

In mobilising forces to oppose an invasion timing was crucial, not least since the lieges could only be expected to serve for a maximum of forty days a year, and the host could at best be expected to average about fifteen miles a day.[65] Good intelligence or advance warning of enemy intentions was therefore crucial. There were two main methods – spies and bale fires (beacons). It cannot be doubted that from time immemorial warning of invasions was provided by spies. Their use was not officially

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[59]   Hume Brown, *Early Travellers*, 1-6; McNeill and MacQueen, *Atlas*, pp. 86-90, 99.

[60]   Hume Brown, *Early Travellers*, pp. 16-23. For Hardyng see 'Hardyng, John' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, http://www.oxforddnb.com.

[61]   Caldwell, 'The Battle of Pinkie'; Merriman, *The Rough Wooings*, pp. 232-264.

[62]   D. H. Caldwell, 'The Scots and Guns', in A. King and M. Penman (eds), *England and Scotland in the Fourteenth Century: New Perspectives*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 60-72.

[63]   *Treasurer Accounts*, vol. 1, pp. 280, 291, 295, 297, 300.

[64]   *Treasurer Accounts*, vol. 1, pp. 346-350.

[65]   Caldwell, 'The Use and Effect of Weapons', p. 57.

organised to any great extent in Scotland and the Scots certainly never developed such a network as Tudor England. It was envisaged in 1523 that border nobles would have "certane secret exploratouris and spyis" in England and he who first brought sure tidings of an invasion would be rewarded with ten angel nobles.[66] Much use was also made of a certain Allan Turner in the period 1545 to 1548 to gather information in England.[67]

In "The Statutis and use of Merchis" of 1384 there is a list of sites for bale fires in the West March,[68] and in an act of parliament of 1455 another for bale fires in the East March, with procedures for their use. Reference is made to the walkers of the fords (on the Tweed) between Berwick and Roxburgh who would light the first warning bale fires in an emergency.[69] In the aftermath of the defeat at Flodden in 1513, and ten years later in 1523, it was ordered that bale fires were to be made in the Borders and Lothians as a warning of English invasions,[70] and the sites and keepers of seven beacons along the east coast from St Abbs Head to Binning Hill by Linlithgow were identified by the Privy Council in 1547 in anticipation of the English invasion that September.[71]

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the provision of artillery for campaigns on land and sea was an important aspect of military planning. Nobles and lairds did have guns, normally just for defending their castles, and there is little evidence that any, with the notable exception of the Earls of Argyll (of which more below) felt obliged to provide them for government or royal service, despite legislation in 1456, 1471 and 1474 enjoining the great barons to provide themselves with "carts of war" (carts mounted with field-guns) for protection of the realm, and later acts of 1535 and 1540 requiring them to have hagbuts of crok (small pieces of artillery fitted with a mounting hook).[72] These sixteenth-century acts also applied to the burghs which also kept their guns for use at home.

Maintaining, supplying and deploying artillery for national defence was thus essentially a matter for monarchs, regents, and their

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[66] *Acts of the Lords of Council*, pp. 169-170.

[67] *Treasurer Accounts,* vol. 8, pp. 399, 480, 483; vol. 9, pp. 34, 35, 43, 61, 127, 139, 142, 166, 176, 187, 196, 215, 216, 226, 252.

[68] T. Thomson and C. Innes (eds), *The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland* (Edinburgh (by command of King George III), 1814-1875), vol. 1, p. 716.

[69] RPS 1455/10/2a (December 12, 2008).

[70] *Acts of the Lords of Council*, 5, p. 171.

[71] *Register of the Privy Council*, vol. 1, pp. 73-75.

[72] RPS, 1456/5, 1471/5/5, A1474/5/5, 1535/29, 1540/12/65 (January 14, 2009).

administrations.[73] In terms of defence of the border it made sense to have the main arsenal of guns, at least from the early sixteenth century, in Edinburgh Castle, which was rightly regarded as almost impregnable. From there artillery trains could be wheeled out for service in the borders, to oppose an English invasion force, or to be put aboard ships at Leith.

For most of the fifteenth century the number of guns in the royal arsenal was probably rather limited, but by 1513 King James IV could deploy an impressive number, including a siege train of seventeen pieces for battering down Norham Castle, two siege guns lent to O'Donnell in Ireland, and numerous pieces supplied for the fleet.[74] Apart from the arsenal in Edinburgh Castle surviving inventories show that there might be significant numbers of guns in other royal castles including Dunbar, Blackness, Stirling and Dumbarton. To these, in terms of national defence, might be added the guns of the Earls of Argyll, based in their castles in Argyll. The fourth earl was given a cannon from the royal collection in 1543 to help him perform his duties as Lieutenant in putting a stop to unrest in the Highlands and Western Isles, and he or later earls were to field this and/or other guns in royal campaigns later in the century.[75] The real significance of the Campbell's guns from our point of view is their availability to protect or enhance the interests of the Scots and their Irish allies in Ulster, as apparently in 1555 and 1558.[76]

The Scottish Crown may have had at its disposal in the later part of the sixteenth century somewhere in the region of eighty large cast bronze or iron guns, some sizeable wrought iron pieces and other smaller pieces.[77] Although this might, at first sight, appear to be an impressive collection, it

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[73]   D. H. Caldwell, 'Royal Patronage of Arms and Armour Making in Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Scotland', in D. H. Caldwell (ed.), *Scottish Weapons & Fortifications 1100-1800*, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1981), pp. 73-78; D. H. Caldwell, 'The Royal Scottish Gun Foundry in the Sixteenth Century', in A. O'Connor and D. V. Clarke (eds), *From the Stone Age to the 'Forty-Five*, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1983), pp. 427-449.

[74]   *Treasurer Accounts*, vol. 4, pp. 451-507, 515-518, 527.

[75]   *Acts of the Lords of Council*, p. 535; *Calendar of State Papers Scotland*, vol. 1, no 905; *A Diurnal of Remarkable Occurrents that have passed within the country of Scotland, since the death of King James the Fourth till the year 1575* (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1833), pp. 331

[76]   Caldwell, *Islay*, p. 86.

[77]   D. H. Caldwell, 'Guns in Scotland. The Manufacture and Use of Guns and their Influence on Warfare from the Fourteenth Century to c.1625' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 61-65.

should be realised that on several occasions in the sixteenth century, for instance at Tantallon Castle in 1528 and St Andrews Castle in 1546-1547, the Scots failed to take fortresses, apparently because they were unable to bring enough fire-power to bear. At other times, for example at Leith in 1560 and Edinburgh castle in 1573, they had to rely on guns and troops sent to their aid by the English.

Flight or Fight?

Invasion forces, the majority of which came through Berwick into the Merse and the Lothians, normally penetrated well into Scotland with little or no resistance. The Scots might clear the land in advance of their enemy of food and supplies and mount counter-raids into England. Thus in 1322 King Robert Bruce led two devastating raids into England as the large army of Edward II lumbered as far as Edinburgh through countryside cleared of cattle.[78] In 1385 the Scots, reinforced by a French contingent under Jean de Vienne, raided into the English East March as far as Morpeth when they became aware of a large English army led by King Richard II moving north towards them. The Scots and their allies withdrew, and cleared the Scottish countryside to prevent their enemy finding anything worth pillaging and, more serious for them, any food. This was probably the main reason why they had to withdraw after a few days. Meanwhile the Scots and French mounted a new devastating raid into the English West March.[79] The English had destroyed the abbeys of Dryburgh, Melrose and Newbattle, and burnt Edinburgh, but from a military point of view, the Scots came out well. They could get more that was of value to them out of pillaging in England than the English could get out of Scotland. More than that, it then cost the Scottish government nothing to put an army in the field, but a great deal of money in wages and expenses for the English to do likewise. Finally, it was not good for the prestige of the English king or the morale of his men to fail to find an enemy to defeat in battle.

A more dangerous strategy was to select a field of battle well in advance of the enemy and wait for them to come and attack, as brilliantly at Bannockburn in 1314, but disastrously at Falkirk in 1298. In 1547 the Scots

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[78]   Brown, *Bannockburn*, 163-165; McNeill and MacQueen, *Atlas*, p. 99, 102.
[79]   J. M. B. C. Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Oeuvres de Froissart publiées avec les variants des divers ammuscrits* (Brussels: Devaux, 1867-1877), vol. 10, pp. 317-319, 333-339, 387-405; Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, D. E. R. Watt et al (eds) (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987-1998), vol. 7, pp. 403-407; *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun* (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1903-1914), vol. 3, pp. 23-25, 28-31; Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana* (London, 1863), vol. 2, pp. 129, 131-133.

were seriously wrong footed by mustering at Fala on the A68 before realising that the main English force was coming up the A1 route from Berwick. A belated attempt was apparently made to dig trenches to oppose this onslaught at the Pease Burn defile near Cockburnspath in Berwickshire, but the Scots quickly came to the decision that their best opportunity for opposing the enemy lay in defending the crossing of the River Esk at Musselburgh, near Edinburgh. The disastrous defeat of Pinkie followed on from this.[80]

Defending the Indefensible?

The Scots had a frontier with the English which was indefensible. Equally, the English were no more able to defend that border, however it is defined in terms of length and depth, than the Scots. The Scots were much more vulnerable in large scale warfare since they lacked the money, resources and manpower of England, and many of its fertile heartlands were in easy reach of invading armies. Scotland's western flank also often appeared as another frontier zone with an inimical Lordship of the Isles which even engaged in diplomatic activity with the English Crown.[81] Nevertheless, Scotland survived as an independent nation, only joining with England in 1603 through that country accepting King James VI of Scotland as its own monarch. This surely has to be seen in large measure as due to a successful long term strategy by the Scots in dealing with their frontier.

It is worth re-examining the opinions of early writers on matters to do with the defence of the realm. Firstly John Major wrote in his *History of Great Britain* of 1521 that the Scots did not have walled cities so that they could get face to face with an enemy without delay. Besides there were a plethora of strongholds, two "to every league", which acted as a defence against invaders. If their cities and strongholds, particularly those in the borders, were protected by entrenchments they might provide shelter to an enemy in the event of them being captured.[82] Major's view was taken up by the Scottish nobility in a set of "devises" drawn up in 1560, which went on to recommend the demolition of all the fortifications made or begun since the Treaty of Boulogne in 1550, and also the French fort on Inchkeith in the Firth of Forth. Histories and experience had taught them fortresses had never preserved the country from invasions and the main reason that Scotland had so long remained a free nation was the lack of them, since an enemy, finding no place to lodge himself, could only burn a small part of

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[80] Caldwell, "The Battle of Pinkie".
[81] Caldwell, *Islay*, pp. 49-75.
[82] Major, *History*, pp. 29-30.

the country before departing – "and that better it is to have a spylt [spoilt] countrye than a tynt [lost] countree".[83]

Another early writer, John Leslie, the Bishop of Ross, wrote in his *History of Scotland*, first published in 1578, that in 1556 the nobility would not suffer a tax to be raised for the hiring of an army of mercenaries to defend the borders. This was because it was the custom, as well as the law, that they should defend the king's right. The kings were styled "of Scots", not "of Scotland" because of their trust in their people. Hired soldiers were not so zealous in fighting for liberty or able with such courage to defend their wives and children, goods and dwellings. Moreover, the realm was not rich enough to defend the borders and make raids against the English.[84]

Mercenaries ("wageours") were certainly an expense that Scottish governments rarely chose to afford, and when they did, only in small measure, as in 1455 when Parliament agreed to a force of twelve hundred spearmen and archers, divided into three forces, to guard the border with England.[85] That number of men might have patrolled the eighty to ninety mile stretch of country fronting the enemy, reasonably effectively, but could hardly have mounted serious opposition to any large scale invasion. Possibly more effective would have been the force of a thousand horsemen that was to guard the Border in 1545 for a space of three months, but such measures, it has to be understood, were unusual, and in 1545 required the uplifting of a special tax for paying the men's wages.[86] Smaller forces of mercenaries were sometimes employed in times of crisis to garrison castles near the Border. For instance, twenty-four footmen were to be feed to hold Ayton for forty days early in 1514, two gunners with hagbuts (hand guns) were paid in 1532 for holding Billie, and twelve hagbutters were hired to hold Home in 1547 against the approaching English.[87] These are all castles in Berwickshire.

The analyses of both Major and Leslie are clearly perceptive and well informed. Here we will finish by focussing on the latter's observation that the realm was not rich enough to defend the borders and make raids against the English. The Scots never totally crumpled under the damage caused by invading armies and were even prepared to lay bare their own

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[83]   *Calendar State Papers Scotland*, vol. 1, p. 432.
[84]   Dalrymple, *Historie*, vol. 2, pp. 362-363.
[85]   RPS 1455/10/15 (December 12, 2008).
[86]   RPS 1545/9/28/26-27 (January 14, 2009).
[87]   *Acts of the Lords of Council*, 13; *Treasurer Accounts*, vol. 6, p. 158; vol. 9, p. 100.
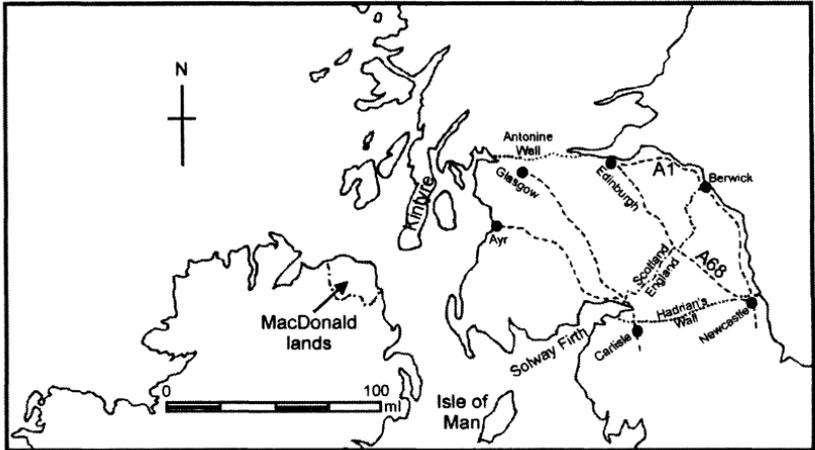
territories and destroy their own strongholds to prevent the English enjoying them. Scottish armies invading England probably generally got more booty of value to them than their enemies brought back from Scotland. Successive generations of Scottish borderers mounted raids, big and small, across the land frontier with England and Islesmen from Argyll and the Hebrides took ship to Ireland to offer their services as mercenaries to native lords or even to settle there. That ability and willingness to see the borders as a gateway to exploit militarily is what sustained the Scots. Making raids was more profitable as well as better strategy than defending the borders.

Maps
1. The wider frontier zone, including Scotland, England and Ireland.

2. The Scottish Marches.