THE SCOTTISH POLICY OF THE PERCIES AND THE STRATEGY OF THE REBELLION OF 1403

By PETER McNIVEN, M.A., Ph.D.
SUB-LIBRARIAN IN THE JOHN RYLANDS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF MANCHESTER

THE battle of Shrewsbury, perhaps the best known single incident in the reign of Henry IV, might also seem to be one of the more straightforward events in a troubled and often confusing reign. The restlessly ambitious Percies, driven by real or imagined grievances to take up arms against the king whom they had helped to place on the throne four years earlier, were apparently simply outfought by Henry and his courageous young heir-apparent. The complaints of the Percies, too, may readily be discovered in their manifesto and in contemporary chronicles. Yet it can be argued that the most fundamental question about this rebellion has still not been satisfactorily answered: why were the Percies defeated?

At first sight, the issue may seem to have long since been settled. Any student of Shakespeare might point to the failure of the earl of Northumberland to appear in time to take part in the battle; the equally critical absence of Owen Glendower's Welsh rebels; the impetuosity of Northumberland's son Henry "Hotspur"; and the determination and valour of the king and the prince of Wales. In the matter of simple fact, Shakespeare's account contains much truth. But one or two political and military facts seem to demand rather more attention than they have received. The chronicles give a strong impression that Hotspur was taken by surprise and put at a distinct disadvantage by Henry IV's advance on Shrewsbury, and there are suggestions that he was heavily outnumbered. What is therefore remark-

1 For a concise study of the development of relations between the Percies and the king, see J. M. W. Bean, "Henry IV and the Percies", History, xliv (1959), 212-27.
2 Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part I, Acts IV and V.
3 The Dietadaces Chronicle, printed in conjunction with the article by M. V. Clarke and V. H. Galbraith, "The Deposition of Richard II", Bulletin, xiv (1930), 178, maintains that Hotspur had only 7,000 men, while the king had 60,000. A Scottish chronicler (Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun, ed. F. J. Amours (1903-14), vi. 407) puts the numbers at 20,000 and 30,000 respec-
able is that, in the circumstances of 1403, the Percies ought to have held most of the advantages in a sudden military campaign against the king.

While the lavish rewards which the Percies obtained from Henry IV have often been noted, the collective nature of these grants has perhaps been insufficiently emphasized. The wardenships of the east and west marches and the keeping of the castle of Roxburgh \(^1\) gave the Percies total control of the defences of the Scottish border. Hotspur's tenure of the constableships of the castles of Flint, Conway, Caernarvon and Beaumaris, together with other Welsh responsibilities,\(^8\) placed virtually every significant military post in north Wales in his hands. His constableship of Chester castle and his office of justice of Chester gave him responsibility for holding down the county which had almost wholeheartedly supported Richard II.\(^3\) Northumberland's custody of two-thirds of the Mortimer lands—a considerable portion of which lay on the Welsh border—during the minority of Hotspur's nephew the earl of March \(^4\) gave the Percies further, if less direct, obligations to uphold the royal authority in a region which was a potential source of disturbance even before the outbreak of Glendower's rebellion. The nature of these grants was fully in keeping with the prominent military role which the Percies had played in Henry's invasion in 1399.\(^5\) Given that Henry's insurrection against Richard inevitably took a military form, this role might be said to have been predictable. Few great men could claim to be so well qualified in the practicalities of campaigning as Northumberland and his son. One of

tively, while a French source (J. de Wavrin, *Collection of the Chronicles and Ancient Histories of Great Britain, 1399-1422*, Rolls Series (1887), pp. 59, 62, gives "more than 26,000" and 60,000 respectively. The *Annales Henrici Quartii in Johannis de Trohelow . . . Chronica et Annales*, ed. H. T. Riley, Rolls Series (1866), p. 365 says that Hotspur's army numbered 14,000. When the discrepancies and almost certain over-estimates have been taken into account, these figures still appear to represent a strong tradition of a royal superiority in numbers which tallies well with the equally general suggestion that Hotspur was taken unawares by the king before he had completed the marshalling of his troops.

\(^2\) Ibid. pp. 37, 155, 158.
\(^3\) Ibid. pp. 37, 158.
\(^5\) Bean, 215.
Henry's first acts on becoming king was to create Northumberland constable of England. The holder of this office was officially deemed to be the commander-in-chief of the king's armies. Most medieval lords who had held the title could claim to be fitted for war, but in the hands of a man like Northumberland, the office took on a far more positive significance. If the Percies remained Henry's friends and loyal subjects, their military expertise and dominance could be expected to give the king maximum security in the more distant and turbulent regions of his kingdom. If, however, they were to become discontented, they could hardly have been better placed to stage a successful military coup.

Moreover, the Percies would have had other advantages in a conflict with the Crown. They held extensive estates in Northumberland, Cumberland, and all three Ridings of Yorkshire. Their power as feudal lords in these regions, far from the surveillance of London, was immeasurably greater than that of any equivalently endowed southern lord. Any study of the Percies' strength in the north, to say nothing of their experience in the field, would suggest that if they rose against the king at a time of their own choosing, defeat should have been almost inconceivable. Yet they were beaten, and the circumstances of their defeat call for one immediate comment. All the evidence suggests that they failed to make use of almost every one of the obvious resources at their disposal, and that the greater part of Hotspur's army consisted of men of Cheshire—the very county

1 CPR, 1399-1401, p. 28.
3 See Annales Henrici Quarti, p. 363; Dieulacres Chronicle, pp. 177-8; Eulogium Historiarum, ed. F. S. Haydon, Rolls Series (1858-63), iii (Continuatio Eulogii), 396; Northern Chronicle, printed in C. L. Kingsford's English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century (1913), p. 281. The deep involvement of Cheshire is indicated by the fact that the whole county was compelled to pay a fine of 3,000 marks for a pardon after the rebellion (36th Annual Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, Appendix II (Calendar of Recognisance Rolls of the Palatinate of Chester), p. 103); the city of Chester had to pay 300 marks or offer military service of equivalent value for a separate pardon (ibid.). The presence in the rebellion of 1403 of apparently reliable men who had remained loyal to the Crown during the Cheshire rising of 1400 provides further evidence of the extent of the support which Hotspur received (see P. McNiven, 'The Cheshire Rising of 1400', BULLETIN, lii (1970), 392-6).
which he had beaten into submission in 1399. The reasons for
the Cheshire men's willingness to support their recent oppressor
are not in doubt, nor are the fighting qualities of the men who
came near to victory against the odds. What is more remarkable
is that Hotspur recruited no really significant body of troops from
any other source. This is all the more inexplicable when a
comparison is made between Hotspur's rebellion and that of his
father in 1405. On the latter occasion, large numbers of York-
shiremen, many of whom were clearly tenants or near neighbours
of the Percies, took up arms against the king. Even in the
pathetically insignificant rebellion of 1408, more than a thousand
Yorkshiremen may have risen in the depth of winter to march
with the long discredited and outlawed Northumberland. Why,
then, did Hotspur not have with him not only the men of York-
shire but those of the Percy strongholds of Northumberland and
the more recently acquired Cumberland estates? Why was the
rebellion of these greatest of northern feudal barons in effect a
Cheshire insurrection? The traditional answer—that the earl
of Northumberland was prevented from bringing up his York-
shire levies by the unexpected arrival of the king, and that Owen
Glendower failed to keep his assignation with Hotspur, must be
examined carefully; but it might be argued that historians have
been too ready to accept that the rebels' plans were thwarted by
circumstances which could have been foreseen and catered for by
experienced men of war undertaking the greatest and most
hazardous venture of their lives.

This latter argument is all the more relevant in the light of the
impression given both by contemporary chroniclers and modern
historians that the Percies were planning to overthrow Henry
virtually from the moment that the conflict between themselves
and the king came to a head in the autumn of 1402. An examina-
tion of the various points of contention, however, shows that the
last "new" source of dissension—Hotspur's refusal to surrender

1 Ibid. 375-96.
2 See McNiven, "The Betrayal of Archbishop Scrope", BULLETIN, liv (1971),
190-2, 199-200.
3 The Northern Chronicle, p. 283, states that eight hundred men joined the earl
at Ripon alone.
his principal prisoner, the earl of Douglas, after the battle of Humbledon—arose at least eight months before the outbreak of open hostilities. If the Percies were really plotting insurrection throughout these eight months, they could hardly have made worse use of the time available to them.

J. M. W. Bean’s article on the relations between Henry and the Percies, while providing an excellent analysis of the growth of conflict between the two parties, leaves one major question unanswered: what was the immediate cause of the outbreak of rebellion in July 1403? If a strictly chronological approach is taken, it could be claimed that the revolt was set in motion by the latest of a series of disagreements over the payment of the Percies’ forces on the Scottish marches. On 26 June, the king received a letter from the earl of Northumberland complaining of Henry’s failure to provide for these forces; days later his son was hastening south in rebellion. This would imply, however, that while the Percies were not prepared to rise in the heat of the great personal quarrels of 1402, they were driven to action eight months later by Henry’s refusal—which might be more accurately termed inability—to make payments which they were in a position to know could not be made. It may be of more relevance to attempt to discover the Percies’ true priorities in their evident quest for aggrandizement, and to consider the way in which these priorities had affected their relations with the Crown. It is possible to claim that Henry’s grant to Northumberland of the wardenship of the west march, nearly two months before Richard II’s deposition, was the price asked by the earl for his support of the revolution. While it may be countered that Northumberland did not need to be bribed, the grant nevertheless showed where the Percies’ prime interests lay. Their total control of the border after 1399, combined with their extensive territorial holdings in Northumberland and Cumberland, gave them the opportunity to consolidate and develop the role to which they had

1 Bean, “Henry IV and the Percies”, 212-27.
3 P.R.O., E403/565; see Bean, “Henry IV and the Percies”, 219-20 for further discussion.
apisred in Richard’s reign—that of assuming complete responsibility for the defence of the north while using this responsibility both to reinforce their feudal dominance in northern England and to attempt to expand their own territories at the expense of the Scots. Moreover, the combination of military commands and political weight which the Percies possessed placed them in a strong position to aspire to the manipulation of governmental policy in the furtherance of these aims. There must be grounds for suspicion that the king’s decision in 1400 to revive the claim of English suzerainty over Scotland and to invade that country, at a time when his tenure of the English throne was not yet completely secure,¹ was the result of pressure from his most prominent and assertive baronial supporters. The Percies’ preoccupation with the border was well demonstrated in an ingenuously frank letter from Hotspur to the king in 1401, in which he complained of lack of funds for that region and signed himself “warden of the east march” in spite of the fact that he was serving in Wales at the time and was supposed to be engaged in the suppression of a serious rebellion there.²

If the Percies aimed to use their virtual monopoly of military commands to further their northern ambitions, where did these ambitions stand by the autumn of 1402? By their own very demanding criteria, they had suffered a series of reverses. They had been denied the means to pursue an aggressive policy on the border. Hotspur had been relieved of his command of the important border outpost of Roxburgh, which had been given to the Percies’ great rival in the north, the earl of Westmorland,³ in a move which could be interpreted as indicating that the king was beginning to pursue a policy of checks and balances in the north. Henry’s refusal to consider the Percies’ schemes for a settlement with the Welsh rebels ⁴ had a double implication. As well as preventing the release of troops which might have been made

² Proceedings and Ordinances, i. 150-1.
³ Rotuli Scotorum, ii. 161.
⁴ Incerti Scriptoris Chronicus Angliae, ed. J. A. Giles (1848) (known as Giles’ Chronicle), pp. 30-32.
available for service on the border, it struck a blow at the Percies’ attempts to use their military strength to pursue policies independently of the Crown. The king’s refusal to allow the ransoming of Hotspur’s brother-in-law Edmund Mortimer, after his ignominious capture in a battle against the Welsh, may be seen at least in part as further evidence of Henry’s determination to take a firm stand on the issue of the Percies’ freedom of action, and Hotspur’s refusal to surrender the earl of Douglas provided the king with yet another occasion to attempt to curb the Percies in a matter which affected them even more directly.

Henry’s own position in the autumn of 1402 could be stated in simpler and starker terms. He was faced with the possibility that the Percies might take their arguments with him to the point of open insurrection, and that the very advancements which he had given them would render them invincible. Furthermore, the open defection of Edmund Mortimer to the cause of the Welsh rebels in December 1402 raised the possibility that Hotspur might join his brother-in-law in proclaiming the Mortimer claim to the throne. There was the only slightly less grave problem that Henry was almost wholly dependent on the Percies for the defence of the northern frontier, and that the Scots could be expected to take prompt advantage of anything which might cause them to neglect their duties.

What happened in the months which followed the rapid worsening of relations between king and Percies during 1402?

Most of the chronicles suggest such an open breach that one is left with the impression that the Percies spent the next few months plotting the revolt of the following summer. However, one important and relatively neglected document provides the basis for a very different view. On 2 March, the king granted to the earl of Northumberland and his heirs the greater part of the estates of the earl of Douglas. In spite of the unequivocal and

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2 Hardyng, p. 360; Annales Henrici Quart., p. 366.


4 See e.g. Giles’ Chronicle, p. 32; Continuatio Eulogii, p. 396; The Brut, or the Chronicles of England, ed. F. W. D. Brie (1906-8), p. 548.

5 Rotuli Scotiae, ii. 163-4.
extraordinary nature of this award, it has received very diverse
treatment from historians. A few, such as Wylie, who devotes a
whole chapter to "the annexation of southern Scotland",1
acknowledge its potential significance, but a surprising number of
reputable authorities have ignored it completely.2 The majority
of historians who have neglected the award seem to have done so
in the belief that the Percies' subsequent rebellion—which, it is
usually implied, was already being prepared—prevented it from
having any real meaning. At least one author, while mentioning
the grant, maintains that it was so unrealistic that it almost
completely failed to satisfy the Percies, who had hoped for more
immediate and tangible rewards.3 However, the assumption
that it is unprofitable to consider the significance of the grant
because of the change in circumstances brought about by the
Percies' rebellion ignores the fact that a full three months elapsed
between the award and the revolt, during which time they could—and, it will shortly be suggested, did—consider their attitude to
its terms.

It is, however, the intrinsic significance of the document,
rather than its hypothetical consequences, which has been most
neglected. By virtue of its very existence, the Douglas grant
changed the political situation in at least four crucial respects.
Firstly, it was tantamount to a declaration of war. In theory, it
either committed the English government to the support of the
Percies' schemes for territorial expansion, or recognized their
claim to conduct themselves in the north as autonomous warlords.
Secondly, it appeared that Henry was no longer at odds with
Hotspur over the question of the surrender of the earl of Douglas.
Though the award was made to the earl of Northumberland,
Hotspur was not only the latter's heir, but the obvious leader of
any military attempt to implement the grant.4 As there was

1 Wylie, i. 337-40.
2 These include J. L. Kirby, Henry IV of England (1970), E. F. Jacob, The
Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485 (1961), and, perhaps even more surprisingly, nearly
all Scottish historians.
3 C. Oman, History of England from the Accession of Richard II to the Death of
Richard III (1906), p. 179.
4 There seems no justification for J. H. Ramsay's claim (Lancaster and York
(1892), i. 55) that the award was intended as a "sidestroke" against Hotspur.
never any hint that Douglas's surrender was demanded after 2 March, or that the king was subsequently concerned about Hotspur's defiance, it appears that Henry had suffered a complete loss of face. Thirdly, the award greatly enhanced the status of the Percies at the expense of the earl of Westmorland. Though the latter's established interests in Annandale and Roxburgh were specifically safeguarded, the implementation of the grant would have given the Percies control of a northern feudal "empire" comprising most of the southern uplands of Scotland, virtually the whole of Northumberland, much of Cumberland and vast areas of Yorkshire. In the face of this overwhelming superiority, the Nevilles would have been almost reduced to the status of minor barons. This would surely have been a poor reward for Westmorland's loyalty and unexceptionable conduct since 1399, and appeared to represent a reversal of the policy set in motion in March 1402, when Westmorland was given custody of Roxburgh. Finally, the annexation of the Douglas estates would have adversely affected the fortunes of George of Dunbar, the Scottish earl of March, who had been a client of Henry IV since 1400. Even if Dunbar were to be restored to his old estates in the course of an English invasion of southern Scotland, he would be hemmed in by large blocks of Percy territory to the west and south. His only reward in the north for his defection to Henry's cause and his vital role in the victory at Humlebdon would thus be to be surrounded by the estates of a powerful and acquisitive neighbour who might be expected to find little difficulty in intimidating or overwhelming him.

By the mere act of drawing up the Douglas grant, Henry had not only capitulated to virtually every demand that the Percies had ever made of him, but he had also reversed policies initiated less than a year earlier to curb their ambitions and had antagonized the Scots and two important baronial supporters in the process. Why, then, had he made an award which was outrageously provocative, politically unsound, and at variance with his own apparent convictions? The only satisfactory answer seems to be that all the risks and concessions appeared preferable

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1 Rotuli Scotiae, ii. 163.
to the danger inherent in allowing the Percies to remain disaffected. Henry had good reason to believe that the powers which he had given to the Percies made them potentially the greatest threat of all to his rule.

What was the Percies' attitude to the grant? It has been noted that by the autumn of 1402, all the basic grievances which are conventionally assumed to have led to their rebellion already existed. By 2 March 1403, however, most of these grievances seem to have been removed. Did the Percies still persist, in spite of Henry's concessions, in the resolve to overthrow the king which is attributed to them by the majority of historians?

The answer to this question depends to a considerable extent on the significance of the events which followed almost immediately on the making of the Douglas grant. The basic facts seem to be agreed upon by all authorities. In the spring of 1403, Hotspur invaded Scotland and laid siege to a small fortress called Cocklaw or Cocklaws. The Scots refused to surrender, and an agreement was reached whereby the castle was to be handed over by 1 August if it was not relieved by Scottish reinforcements in the meantime. This campaign has tended, especially in English sources, to share the fate of the Douglas grant in being overshadowed by the Percies' rebellion, and those authorities which have given it attention provide a remarkable diversity of interpretations. It has been claimed or implied that it was an attempt to implement the award; that it was simply one of a series of Anglo-Scottish border incidents; and that it was staged by the Percies in order to further the insurrection which they had been planning for the past few months.

The arguments that the Percies were not reconciled with Henry by the Douglas grant, and that they were using the Cocklaw campaign as a cover for treason, fall into two categories. Some historians maintain that they mounted a campaign in order

1 Scottichronicon, iv. 1152-9; Wyntoun, vi. 405-6; Annales Henrici Quartii, pp. 360-1.
2 E.g. Oman, p. 179; Wylie, i. 338-9.
3 This is the impression given by the Annales Henrici Quartii, p. 360. Jacob's apparent ignorance of the Douglas grant leads him (op. cit. p. 47) to describe the Cocklaw campaign as a "Scottish riposte" to the defeat at Humbledon.
to collect troops which could then be used against the Crown, while others believe that the compact with the Scots over the relief of the castle was a cover for a conspiracy to bring in Scottish military aid against Henry. Claims that the whole exercise involved some form of subterfuge have been supported by at least three factors: the alleged proximity of Cocklaw to the English border and the Percies' estates; its supposed insignificance and vulnerability; and a passage in Walsingham's *Annales Henrici Quartii*. The latter chronicle states that Hotspur crossed the border and ravaged southern Scotland without meeting resistance. When he returned to England, he announced that he had undertaken to receive the surrender of a certain castle if it had not been relieved by 1 August. Many English lords and other men therefore made preparations to meet the Scots in battle, but the whole story was subsequently proved to be a myth. A combination of these elements suggests that the Percies laid token siege to the most convenient Scottish fortress, which they were quite capable of taking at their pleasure, for some ulterior motive.

At this point it seems pertinent to establish one matter of positive fact which has some bearing on these issues—the precise location of the fortress in question. The problem has sometimes been compounded by the reference, in certain English works, to two castles—Cocklaw and Ormiston. Hardyng, who claims to have been personally involved, refers to Cocklaw, as do the Scottish chronicles, while the earl of Northumberland, in his letter to the king dated 30 May 1403, mentions Ormiston. Some historians have therefore maintained that two separate places were involved, and have tried to establish their locations. Ramsay states that Cocklaw was situated just over the border from the Percies' estates in Northumberland, and that Ormiston was not far from Roxburgh. No contemporary source mentions

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3 *Annales Henrici Quarti*, pp. 360-1.
4 Hardyng, p. 351.
5 *Scotichronicon*, iv. 1152-3; Wyntoun, vi. 405.
6 *Proceedings and Ordinances*, i. 203.
two castles, however, a fact which is not surprising since it may be discovered with the aid of any reasonably large scale map that Cocklaw castle lies just outside the village of Ormiston, to the east of Hawick.\(^4\) Ramsay's Cocklaw is an uninhabitable fell near the Cheviot. The charge that the Percies marched on the nearest border fortress in order to further some devious scheme thus loses much of its credibility. If one returns to Walsingham's account with the geographical facts in mind, one then has a picture of an invasion of Scotland in which Hotspur proceeded unopposed across a considerable tract of enemy territory before coming to a halt outside an important town in Teviotdale in the very heart of the region which had been allocated to the Percies by the Douglas grant.\(^8\) The best interpretation of this narrative is surely that it is a broadly accurate description of a determined campaign to implement the terms of the award.\(^8\) An awareness of the location of Cocklaw puts into clearer perspective the issue of the Scottish reaction to Hotspur's manoeuvres. The duke of Albany, the regent of Scotland, is said to have overruled the argument of certain of his advisers that Cocklaw was too insignificant to be worth the risk of a confrontation with Hotspur's troops.\(^4\) While Ramsay's location of Cocklaw might suggest that the views of Albany's critics were sound, the capture of the "real" Cocklaw by a major English force could indeed have opened the way to an annexation along the lines of the Douglas grant. The true location of Cocklaw seems to militate against the theory that Hotspur's compact with the garrison marked the beginning of collusion with the Scottish government. The investment of a critically-situated fortress, preceded by English depredations which may have extended across half the breadth

\(^1\) Hume Brown, p. 201, and G. Buchanan, *History of Scotland* (1824-7), ii. 70, are aware of the correct location.

\(^4\) The *Scotichronicon* (iv. 1158) and Wyntoun (vi. 406) mention that the English were also holding the castle of Innerwick, near Dunbar, at the same time—a statement which may be taken as further evidence of the seriousness both of the English campaign and the threat to the integrity of the Scottish kingdom.

\(^8\) The principal weakness of the Scottish historians is that they do not seem to be aware of the Douglas grant—only MacKenzie (p. 101) mentions it. It is strange that the Scots are so inclined to believe in the theory of collusion between Hotspur and Albany when their own chronicles give not the slightest support to such an interpretation.
of southern Scotland, was hardly the ideal means of winning friends across the border.

It is difficult to reconcile Hotspur’s decisive move into Scotland, within two months of the Douglas grant, with the theory that the Percies’ principal aim was still the overthrow of the king. It seems far more likely that they had obtained, for the time being, exactly what they wanted, and that they had no immediate cause to seek Henry’s deposition—quite apart from the apparent incompatibility of a policy of opposition to the Crown with an attempt to annex the southern territories of an understandably hostile neighbouring state.

While there seem to be good grounds for believing that Hotspur set out with the intention of implementing an agreement which had healed the rift between king and Percies, it cannot be denied that his advance came to a halt at Cocklaw. Recognition of the location of that castle does little to allay the suspicions of those who cannot understand why, if Hotspur was set on conquest, he withdrew his forces as soon as he encountered the slightest defiance. Such an interpretation probably underestimates the strength of Cocklaw’s spirited and possibly unexpected resistance. Although all the sources agree that Cocklaw was only a small fortress, the Scotichronicon maintains that it withstood a considerable bombardment from the English siege engines.¹ Hotspur’s experience of siege warfare in Wales doubtless made him reluctant to suffer similar frustration in the pursuit of his own enterprise. A far more crucial factor, however, was the relationship between Hotspur’s negotiations with Cocklaw and the latter’s dealings with the Scottish government. The lord of Cocklaw, James Gladstone, made an early application to Albany for assistance, and received prompt assurance that the necessary relief would be sent.² It was thus very quickly established that the issue would not be between the greatest lords of the north of England and one small castle, but between the personal forces of an English baron and the armies of the kingdom of Scotland.

Albany’s swift acceptance of the challenge meant that the freedom of action which the Percies had taken upon themselves

¹ Ibid. 1153. ² Ibid. 1156-7; Wyntoun, vi. 405.
had placed them in a potentially disastrous situation. They had proceeded in the belief that once they had secured the Douglas grant from the king, they would be able to further their ambitions without the encumbrance of practical royal supervision. The Scottish Council is said to have been divided as to whether aid should be sent to Cocklaw,¹ and the Percies may be forgiven for having acted on the assumption that a demoralized Scottish government would acquiesce in the loss of the castle and lack the will to check the English advance. They now found themselves in a position which, for all their military strength in the north, they could hardly expect to be able to handle on their own. It is more than likely that Hotspur could have reduced Cocklaw before 1 August, but the slightest delay, in the face of Albany’s immediate commitment to resist the English invasion, would have meant that he would have faced virtually the entire might of the Scottish nation almost as soon as he had crossed the Teviot.

The Percies’ response to their predicament may be seen in two apparently reputable sources which are probably complementary. The better known is a letter from the earl of Northumberland to the English Council, dated 30 May 1403, in which he informed the councillors of the arrangement with the Scots and asked for financial assistance. He requested that the “money which was owed” to the Percies should be sent back north with the very bearers of the letter before 24 June.² Two general points may be made about this document. Firstly, although it concerned border finance, it was not, by contrast with certain earlier letters, in any way a complaint. It contained nothing which suggested that the peace between Henry and the Percies had been broken over the one previously contentious issue not solved by the Douglas grant. Secondly, although there is evidence that the Percies had reason to believe that they would have to face the greatest army which the Scots could field against them if they were to persist in their aims,³ they were at pains to

¹ *Scottichronicon,* iv. 1157.
² *Proceedings and Ordinances,* i. 203-4.
³ The *Scottichronicon*’s figure of 100,000 for Albany’s muster (iv. 1158) is surely a gross over-estimate, but still suggests that a very formidable force had been raised.
minimize their predicament and to avoid asking for direct assistance from the king. This letter in itself suggests that the Percies were attempting to retain their freedom of action to the extent that they were concealing a genuine need for royal intervention.

However, Walsingham may supply the second half of the story. He states that the Percies publicized their pact with the Scots throughout England, and that many men prepared to go to their assistance. The chronicle specifically emphasizes that the Percies actively discouraged the king from taking any part in the military preparations. This seems to indicate that they were attempting to recruit volunteer forces to take part in a private venture, and it may be conjectured that the arrears which they demanded of the king were intended to finance this extension of their enterprise. According to the Percies, these arrears amounted to £20,000, and if they had obtained this sum, together with substantial support from young lords eager for military glory, there would have been a strong possibility that they could have met Albany on equal terms. The suspicion has been raised that the Percies were using the Cocklaw campaign as a pretext for mustering forces which they would then turn against the Crown. If this was the case, why did these men not take part in the rebellion in July? It may be appropriate here to examine the charge, made principally by Hardyng but also hinted at elsewhere, that many lords had expressed their support in writing for the Percies' scheme for the overthrow of the king. Hardyng claims to have seen the actual letters, and the historian is faced with the unpleasant choice of deciding either that the attitudes of the greater part of the baronage were at variance with all outward appearances, or that Hardyng was an unmitigated liar. In the light of Walsingham's statement, however, there may be an honourable explanation. If Hardyng did see letters, they may have been in support of the Scottish enterprise rather than of any conspiracy against the Crown.

1 Annals Henrici Quart, p. 361.
2 Proceedings and Ordinances, i. 205.
3 Hardyng, pp. 351-2, 361; Northern Chronicle, p. 281; Giles' Chronicle, p. 34.
Within about three weeks of the sending of the letter of 30 May, the Percies received a reply from the king. Henry evidently made it clear that if they wished to pursue their own ambitions in Scotland, they should do so with their own resources. The remark attributed to the king that he considered them strong enough to deal with Cocklaw may be taken to imply that if this was not the case, they should not demand aid which would amount to a full-scale English declaration of war on Scotland. The reply which Henry received from the earl of Northumberland was very different in tone from the letter of 30 May. In a letter from Healaugh in Yorkshire, dated 26 June, the earl accused the king of jeopardizing the good name of English chivalry by his refusal to send anything but a token sum to finance the campaign, and bitterly charged him with failing to make the appropriate payments for the defence of the border. It seems, however, that not only had Henry done his best to meet the Percies' financial demands, but that the money they had received was adequate to maintain security on the border in normal circumstances. It was not, of course, sufficient to finance the conquest of a sizeable portion of southern Scotland. What may have infuriated the Percies more than most aspects of the affair was the fact that Henry had shown himself unimpressed by their claim that their campaign in Scotland was an altruistic labour undertaken for the benefit of the kingdom of England. They had been made to face the fact that while the king had felt impelled to grant them freedom of action in the north, he was not prepared—or indeed able—to put any more of the resources of the Crown at their disposal. The only way in which the Percies could realize the ambitions which they had entertained for two decades, and which had recently seemed within their grasp, was to control the kingdom and bend the whole machinery of government to their will.

The developments of May and June 1403 had, however, confronted them with a serious dilemma. On the one hand, it was clear that they could not obtain the resources which they needed in order to continue their policy of expansion northwards while Henry occupied the throne. On the other, any attempt at

1 Proceedings and Ordinances, i. 204.  
2 Ibid. 205.
revolution would have entailed a diversion of immense proportions. The Percies may have had the potential strength to seize the kingdom by a military coup, but it was far more questionable whether they could dethrone Henry while ensuring that their northern interests were not jeopardized by repercussions from the Scottish enterprise which they had recently set in motion.

It is in the light of this self-inflicted predicament that we should consider Hotspur's remarkable decision to make the men of Cheshire the nucleus of his insurrection. This decision involved the taking of a considerable calculated risk. There were good reasons why Hotspur might have failed to raise support in Cheshire. It had been Hotspur who had put down the first signs of resistance to Henry's invasion of the county in 1399,¹ and he had subsequently, as justice of Chester, held the responsibility for the enforcement of obedience to the new regime, and, more particularly, for conducting the enquiry into the abortive rising of January 1400.² He had to gamble on the likelihood that the Cheshire men's dislike of Henry and loyalty to the memory of Richard II was greater than their antipathy towards himself as the recent agent of royal policy. His experience in Cheshire and his knowledge of the attitudes of individual members of the gentry qualified him to balance these factors, and it can only be admitted that the conclusion that he reached was sound.

If it is accepted that Hotspur could rely on widespread support for his cause in Cheshire, there were certain advantages in his apparently eccentric scheme. Firstly, though Cheshire certainly cannot have been regarded as wholly reconciled to the change of ruler, a Percy rebellion based on that county would surely have come as a complete surprise. Secondly, the rebellion would begin much nearer to the heart of England than if it had broken out on the Scottish border.³ Thirdly, and perhaps most important, Cheshire was an ideal starting-point for a rebellion based on the most respectable excuse for an attempt to overthrow Henry—the charge that he had fraudulently deposed the rightful king. If to these strategic and political factors was added the known military expertise of the Cheshire men, the plan might be

¹ Annales Henrici Quarti, pp. 250-1.
² P.R.O., Chester 25/10, m. 2.
regarded as a stroke of outrageous genius. There were, however, three other important potential sources of support for a Percy rebellion, all more obvious than Cheshire: the border army which had recently besieged Cocklaw, the retainers and tenants of the Percy estates throughout northern England, and Owen Glendower’s Welsh rebels. Whatever the virtues of the Cheshire scheme, the fact remained that Hotspur was already in command of an army formidable enough to give the Scots cause to fear for the integrity of their kingdom. If the Cheshire levy was an excellent, if unorthodox, beginning for a rebellion, it would surely have been logical for it to be reinforced at an early stage by the border army. All the evidence suggests, however, that the only men from the border to accompany Hotspur south were his personal associates and their entourage. The border army appears to have remained at its post throughout the campaign which led to Shrewsbury, and the reason for its lack of involvement is crucial to the whole issue of the development of relations between the king and the Percies in the first half of 1403. The circumstances on the border, which had been created by the Percies’ ready acceptance of an award which was calculated to heal the breach between themselves and the Crown, meant that it was inconceivable that troops should be withdrawn to serve elsewhere. Hotspur’s march south entailed the temporary abandonment of the attempt to implement the Douglas grant, but it could not be guaranteed that the Scottish forces which he had provoked into action would turn about with relief when they discovered that Cocklaw was no longer threatened. The withdrawal of the border army—the force which, in the last resort,

These included Thomas Knayton and Roger Salvayn, both esquires of Hotspur, who are said to have brought the Percies’ manifesto to the king before the battle (Hardyng, p. 352). Knayton was constable of Bamburgh castle (CPR, 1401-5, p. 252). Other rebels with a definite Percy connection were William Ferour, a yeoman of Hotspur and keeper of Carlisle castle gaol (ibid. 1399-1401, p. 38; 1401-5, p. 253), and John Ambell, Hotspur’s chaplain (ibid., p. 371; Ches. Recog. Rolls, p. 240). The only other men of the “far north” specifically mentioned as having risen with Hotspur were six men who were given “safe-conduct and protection” for three weeks on 28 July, one of whom, John Myndrym or Mundreme, held land in Carlisle (CPR, 1401-5, p. 249; P.R.O., E357/15, m. 4).
was all that stood not only between Scots and Percies but between Scotland and England—would have been perilous in almost any circumstances, let alone those of the summer of 1403. Although the scheme to begin the rising in Cheshire could be regarded as intelligent and imaginative strategy, Hotspur was probably compelled to consider this manoeuvre primarily because his most obvious source of manpower could not be used. This seems the weightiest evidence against the argument that the Cocklaw campaign involved collusion with the Scots. The most practical assistance which Hotspur could have received from Scotland would have been an assurance that there would be no attack from north of the border in the event of the withdrawal of English forces. It is quite clear from the Scottish chronicles, and indeed implicit in most English contemporary sources, that Hotspur's border policy was calculated to render any such arrangement impossible. The virtual absence of evidence of the service of border men in Hotspur's army also seems to discredit the claim that he recruited men for his rebellion on the pretext that they were to march against the Scots. When Hotspur summoned men on these grounds between April and June 1403 he was telling the truth; they were still officially engaged on their mission when Hotspur fell at Shrewsbury.

Hotspur had ensured that the border army could neither be used as the initial nucleus of his insurrection nor as a reinforce-ment for his Cheshire rising, but he might still have been expected to receive early assistance from another source. His father, who was certainly in Yorkshire on 26 June, must surely have been in a position to strengthen the rebel army with substantial levies from that county. All the evidence suggests, however, that while Hotspur was recruiting in Cheshire, his father remained inactive. The reason for this inactivity may be examined at a slightly later juncture. In the meantime, it should be noted that Hotspur's campaign proceeded in a manner which seemed to indicate that he was not waiting for any reinforcements from his father, but that he was pursuing a calculated scheme in which the men of Yorkshire had no immediate part to play.

1 Continuatio Eulogii, p. 396.
2 Proceedings and Ordinances, i. 205.
Some time in the first week of July, Hotspur left the border with a small band of supporters and headed south without pausing for serious recruitment. The size of his entourage may have been sufficiently small for it not to have aroused suspicion, and, in any case, the posts which Hotspur held in Cheshire gave him every right to be travelling to that county. It was the composition of this small force which needed to be concealed, for as well as certain of Hotspur's closest northern retainers, there were a number of Scots headed by the earl of Douglas, who had been released from captivity to fight alongside his former adversary. Though Hall claims that Hotspur had considerable Scottish support, the more plausible contemporary reports of a very small initial force seem to indicate that only the Scottish prisoners were involved.

Hotspur arrived in Cheshire on about 9 July, and set about raising the population throughout the following week. This relatively long period of recruitment suggests that he had done little to prepare the ground before him. Once the Cheshire army had been collected, he set off at speed again, this time along the Welsh border. This move perhaps demands even more attention than it has received. It could be argued that Hotspur's most obvious next move would have been to join forces with the Percies' Yorkshire tenants. A move towards Derbyshire would have set him on the straightest route to London and have given time for Yorkshiremen to join him, but this was evidently not his intention. The popular explanation for his southward move is,

1 The *Dieulacres Chronicle* (p. 177) notes that Hotspur passed through Lancashire. Here he presumably recruited Sir Gilbert Halsall of Halsall, near Southport (ibid. p. 180; *CPR*, 1401-5, p. 252), Thomas Bradshaw of Haigh, near Wigan (ibid. pp. 247, 256), and Geoffrey Bold, who held the manors of Whittlewick, near Eccles, and Lower Darwen (ibid. p. 258), all of whom are known to have been involved in the rising.

2 The apparently enthusiastic participation of Douglas is something of an enigma, as it is difficult to see what reward he could have obtained, in the event of a rebel victory, which would not have conflicted with the Percies' very evident northern interests. The impression given by Wyntoun (vi. 407) that the warlike Douglas was simply relieved to be able to exchange captivity for freedom to fight Englishmen is perhaps not quite as naive as it appears.


4 *Dieulacres Chronicle*, p. 177.

5 Ibid. 177-8; *Annales Henrici Quarti*, p. 363.
of course, that he intended to unite with Glendower's Welsh rebels.¹

There seems little doubt that there had been contact at some point between Glendower and the Percies.² There was every reason why lords involved in the military government of Wales should have been negotiating with the leader of the Welsh rebels. But it may also be argued that, from the first stages of this contact, these two superficially very dissimilar parties had certain interests in common. The Percies may well have been prepared to come to an understanding with the Welsh in order that they might be free to further their true ambitions in the north. They were probably not unduly troubled by the fact that such an arrangement would be less acceptable to other English landowners who had their principal vested interests in Wales. From the end of 1402, after the marriage of the renegade Edmund Mortimer to Glendower's daughter, the Percies and Owen even had a relative in common. There are certainly suggestions that Hotspur contemplated a link with the Welsh rebels. William Lloyd, a Denbighshire man in Hotspur's service, is said to have acted as a messenger between his master and Glendower,³ and the Shropshire rebel John Kynaston was charged with having attempted to obtain help from Owen.⁴ Hardyng maintains that Hotspur and the Welsh rebels were to meet on the banks of the Severn.⁵ Yet although this seems to suggest a junction of the two armies at or near Shrewsbury, it is not only quite clear that Glendower failed to arrive at the battle, but that there was never any likelihood that he would do so. Chroniclers and historians have attempted to explain his absence by maintaining that he was afraid to risk his

¹ E.g. Hardyng, p. 361; Ramsay, i. 60; Oman, p. 180.
² See Giles' Chronicle, pp. 30-32; Proceedings and Ordinances, ii. 59-60; Hardyng, p. 360; Ellis, Original Letters, ii. i. 9.
⁴ P.R.O., Chester 3/22 no. 5. Kynaston was the steward of Richard, Lord Lestrange, in the lordship of Ellesmere (CPR, 1401-5, p. 253). He also held property in Cheshire (P.R.O., Chester 3/22 no. 5). He had been involved in a land transaction with Hotspur (Ches. Recog. Rolls, p. 448) and also seems to have had some connection with David ap Blethyn ap Ithel, a Welshman who rose with Hotspur in 1403 (ibid. pp. 236-7, 274).
⁵ Hardyng, p. 361.
irregular forces against trained English troops,\(^1\) that he feared betrayal,\(^2\) or that he was unable to arrive in time.\(^3\)

A study of the dates of the respective movements of Hotspur and Glendower in July 1403 throws some light on the relationship between their rebellions. English records of the first twelve days of July indicate that Glendower made a sudden foray into southwest Wales, where he had not previously mounted any significant operations, and, in a rapid series of manoeuvres, captured the strategically crucial castles of Carmarthen and Newcastle Emlyn before advancing into the traditionally English stronghold of Pembroke.\(^4\) It is, however, unsafe to argue that Glendower, in spite of his sympathy with Hotspur, was too far from Shrewsbury at the time of the developments of mid-July to render any assistance to his ally. An examination of the dates shows that both rebels began their rapid marches at virtually the same time. The nearer Hotspur approached Wales, in fact, the further Clendower retreated from him. By the time that the Cheshire army was being mustered, Glendower could hardly have been further away. Lloyd believes that the most plausible reason for the halting of Glendower's advance into Pembroke was that he learnt of Hotspur's appearance in Cheshire and wished to make a more positive contribution to their joint enterprise.\(^5\) The absence of records after 12 July makes it impossible to know Glendower's movements between that date and the battle of 21 July, but there is no indication that he made any dramatic eastward move, even though nine days marching at the same rate as his earlier westward dash would probably have brought him to Shrewsbury in time. It therefore seems almost certain either that there was no direct connection between the two movements, or that Glendower's march was an integral part of their joint strategy. If there was a connection, there are good

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\(^1\) This explanation is suggested as a possibility by Lloyd, pp. 70-71.

\(^2\) *Continuatio Eulogii*, p. 396.


\(^5\) Lloyd, p. 69.
reasons for supposing that neither party intended that Glen-
dower should confront a major force of English troops. It was
common knowledge that the Welsh rebels had performed poorly
on occasions when they had faced English forces in a conventional
battle.\(^1\) Glendower could, however, be of considerable indirect
assistance to Hotspur. If it is true that he had 8,000 men at his
disposal,\(^8\) his resources would have been quite adequate to
occupy the attention of all the English forces on active service in
Wales. His sudden appearance in the south-west, where he
could be expected to tie down any troops stationed in that
region and draw towards him other forces serving between the
Welsh border and Pembrokeshire, would almost certainly have
prevented any of these men from acting against the northern
rebels. Owen's manoeuvre would have had this effect regardless
of whether there was any collusion. The timing of the rebels'
respective marches, and the evidence of communication between
Glendower and the Percies both before and after the rebellion of
1403, suggest that it is more than likely that there was some
connection.

If Hotspur was not marching to meet Glendower on the
Severn, what was his purpose in moving in that direction? The
probable answer seems almost too obvious: he was simply
making for Shrewsbury.\(^8\) Shrewsbury was the headquarters of
the prince of Wales and of the only significant force involved in
the suppression of the Welsh insurrection which was not at that
moment serving in the field and which was therefore not im-
mediately concerned with Glendower's westward move—of
which its commanders, at the time of Hotspur's arrival in Che-
shire, can hardly have been properly aware. This army was the
nearest body of "loyal" troops to any centre of northern revolt,
and the one with which any northern rebels would have to deal
first. The fact that the rising began, to all intents and purposes,
in Cheshire, within easy striking distance of Shrewsbury, meant
that Hotspur could raise an army which could march on that
town with the dual advantage of superiority of numbers and the

\(^1\) Ibid. pp. 32, 39; Jacob, pp. 38, 44.
\(^8\) Ellis, Original Letters, ii. i. 16.
\(^8\) Cf. Lloyd, p. 70.
element of surprise. There was a further respect in which Shrewsbury was particularly important to Hotspur. His uncle, the earl of Worcester, was the prince's guardian and governor.\textsuperscript{1} One source maintains that Worcester abstracted money from London—presumably to finance his nephew's campaign—before going over to the rebels,\textsuperscript{2} but it seems unlikely that he would have drawn attention to himself by a sudden flight from the capital, and it is far more plausible that he slipped away from Shrewsbury at the latest possible moment. It may be noted that Worcester had property and military responsibilities in south-west Wales,\textsuperscript{3} and may therefore have been able to make some indirect contribution to the success of Glendower's foray into that region.

Hotspur could reasonably expect to surprise and overcome the prince's forces at Shrewsbury. This would have completed the first stage of the insurrection and have placed the rebels in a very favourable strategic position. There would have been no royal army between the insurgents and the south. All other English forces would have been held down in west Wales by Glendower's troops. The Percies would have held a virtual monopoly of effective military power, and would have been well placed to increase this power still further. A declaration of solidarity with the Welsh rebels could have been expected to lead to the recruitment of Welsh malcontents along the whole length of the border, while the combination of Hotspur's immediate military strength and his recent political and judicial involvement in the region might have led to the defection of Englishmen who either felt impelled to join a movement which appeared likely to succeed, or were vaguely dissatisfied with the Lancastrian regime. Before he reached Shrewsbury, Hotspur had recruited a number of Shropshire men, some of them, apparently, by intimidation,\textsuperscript{4} and it might be assumed that victory over the prince would have been followed by the adherence of many other similar men, especially, perhaps, the tenants of the Mortimer lordships which had been committed to the custody of the

\textsuperscript{1} Annals Henrici Quartii, p. 361.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{3} He held the castle of Emlyn Huckirch, in Carmarthenshire, the castle, town and lordship of Haverford, in Pembrokeshire, and received an annuity from the issues of the latter county (CPR, 1399-1401, pp. 110, 526). He was the king's lieutenant in South Wales in 1402 (ibid. 1401-5, p. 53).
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid. p. 253.
Percy's early in the reign. Hotspur could thus have attained a position of overwhelming strength, within two or three weeks of his arrival in Cheshire, without the assistance of either the army of the Scottish march or the Percy supporters in Yorkshire, and his movements seem to prove that this was his intention. It is inconceivable, however, that Hotspur believed that he could defeat the king with these forces alone, and it is necessary to consider the most crucial of the enigmas concerning the 1403 rising—the role of the earl of Northumberland.

While an apparently accurate account of Hotspur’s itinerary and recruiting campaign can be built up fairly readily from the almost completely consistent narratives of the chronicles, his father’s movements present a very considerable problem. All historians must begin with the premise that the earl was not at Shrewsbury, and that his presence there, with only a proportion of the forces which were potentially at his disposal, could have transformed defeat into victory. Hardyng, the only chronicler who claims the credentials of an eyewitness, says categorically that Northumberland

Came not out of Northumberland,
But failed hym (Hotspur) foule without witte or rede.¹

While this statement does not necessarily prove that Hardyng was in a position to pass judgment upon the reasons for the earl’s absence, if the latter was really in Northumberland at the time of the battle, it could be maintained that he could never have been in a position to aid his son, and the allegation that he failed to support the rebellion deserves some attention.

In the middle of August, when the earl finally submitted to the king at York, he claimed to be innocent of any involvement in Hotspur’s treason,² and a literal acceptance of Hardyng’s words would seem to provide evidence in his defence. There is, however, evidence for the “prosecution”. On 22 July, an order was issued to the earl of Westmorland and other northern loyalists to go north to deal with the earl, who had risen “in Northumberland”.³ At the very least, this command shows that Henry had

¹ Hardyng, pp. 361-2.
² Continuatio Eulogii, p. 398.
³ CPR, 1401-5, p. 294.
reason to believe that Northumberland was in a particular locality and that he was conducting himself illegally at a time when he could not know of his son's defeat and death. Moreover, two chronicles which are inconsistent in at least one major detail agree that the earl marched south at about this time with a sizeable army—a statement which suggests something more than the legitimate movement of a great lord and his followers. The account of the earl's trial in the Westminster parliament of 1404 contains further hints. Northumberland, who faced possible conviction for treason, was instead found guilty of the comparatively trivial offence of "trespass", and this trespass was stated to have been a breach of the law governing retainers. While it is in the last resort impossible to pronounce on the validity of these proceedings, the Parliament Roll gives a distinct impression that the earl was permitted to escape lightly, and that the fact that he was guilty of some offence was not in dispute. A conviction for trespass suggested that it could not be denied that the earl had assembled retainers illicitly, and that the Lords in parliament had chosen to turn a blind eye to the use—which was probably all too evident—to which he had intended to put his private army. A further argument against the earl's innocence may be found in the conduct of the commanders of Percy castles between Northumberland's surrender to Henry in August 1403 and his rehabilitation in the following summer. During this time, these men consistently refused to surrender their castles when Henry's agents attempted to take them into the hands of the Crown, and it is difficult to imagine that this defiance, which itself verged on treason, was not the result of orders issued by their master. If, therefore, it seems almost certain that the earl was a party to his son's rebellion, what role was he intended to play, and why was he unable to save Hotspur at Shrewsbury?

The evidence for Northumberland's movements is even more tenuous than the positive evidence for his guilt. There seems

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1 Annales Henrici Quartii, p. 371; Northern Chronicle, p. 281.
2 Rot. Parl., iii. 524.
3 Proceedings and Ordinances, i. 209-10, 213-16; Rotuli Scotiae, ii. 165; Cal. Close Rolls, 1402-5, p. 206.
4 It is, of course, still possible that Hotspur was the prime mover in the revolt of July 1403.
to be general agreement that he came south with an army and that he was turned back by the earl of Westmorland. Walsingham dates this incident as 30 July, while the *Northern Chronicle*, which contains many circumstantial details which appear to be accurate, places the encounter before the battle. The latter interpretation has an obvious attraction. It suggests that a force which ought to have arrived at Shrewsbury in time was thwarted by the intervention of the king’s principal supporter in the north. At least two arguments, however, conflict with this satisfyingly neat explanation. Firstly, Henry issued Westmorland with orders on 22 July to deal with Northumberland, and it would seem rather too much of a coincidence if Westmorland, who might be expected to have been inadequately aware of the nature of the rebellion at that date, had successfully anticipated the king’s orders. On the other hand, Walsingham’s dating fits the probable course of events very satisfactorily. Eight days would probably be needed for Westmorland to assemble a force substantial enough to confront Northumberland and to find an enemy who was on the move and not anxious to make himself conspicuous.

Secondly, the agreed outcome of the confrontation—the immediate flight of Northumberland—suggests that Westmorland had raised a substantial army on the authority of the king. It seems unlikely that if Westmorland had discovered evidence of Northumberland’s rising before Shrewsbury, he would have been able to muster an army of his own local followers at a few days’ notice which was sufficient to thwart the forces of a neighbour who was both more powerful and better prepared.

If Walsingham’s chronology is correct, it becomes necessary to account for the fact that Northumberland was moving forces illegally a full nine days after the battle of Shrewsbury. Is it possible that in the period of time during which Westmorland was informed of the king’s wishes, assembled an army and discovered the whereabouts of the rebels, no news came to the earl of Northumberland of the disaster of 21 July? If the earl knew

1 *Annales Henrici Quartii*, p. 371.
2 *Northern Chronicle*, p. 281.
3 *Annales Henrici Quartii*, p. 371; *Northern Chronicle*, p. 281.
of the outcome of Shrewsbury, what could he expect to achieve with a force which proved inadequate to resist Westmorland's hastily mustered troops? Some ideas may be sought in the slight evidence of his itinerary. Both Hardyng and the royal command of 22 July agree that he was in Northumberland at some point in the rebellion, and the latter document shows that he was at least believed to be still in that county the day after the battle. However, Walsingham maintains that after his encounter with Westmorland, Northumberland "turned round" and fled to Newcastle. As Newcastle is situated on the southern border of Northumberland, this account suggests that unless the earl had been proceeding in some unaccountably eccentric direction, the encounter took place outside that county. It may be noted that the earl of Northumberland's Cleveland estates, which were to provide a contingent of rebels in 1405, were little more than forty miles from Newcastle. Hardyng's charge that the earl "came not out of Northumberland" may be accurate so far as it refers to the days before the battle, but it seems impossible to sustain as a more general statement. It may be conjectured that the encounter occurred somewhere in Yorkshire, and probably in the north of that county. However, it seems unlikely that Northumberland had called a significant number of his Yorkshire retainers to arms. Northumberland had had almost a month in which to mobilize his extensive potential following; his rival had only been given a week. Northumberland's precipitate retreat suggests that there was no possibility that he could push Westmorland aside, and that he was probably outnumbered. It therefore appears that he had only left Northumberland a day or two before 30 July, and had not yet recruited men in Yorkshire. This supposition may be supported by the lack of action against Yorkshiremen after the rebellion. It therefore seems that not

1 Annales Henrici Quarti, p. 371.
3 The only Yorkshiremen whose involvement in the rebellion appears to have been recorded were Thomas Scalby of Ottringham, near Hull (CPR, 1401-5, p. 251), John Nowell of Shadwell, near Leeds (ibid. 252), Randolph See, who held property in York (ibid. 242, 253), and Sir John Pudsey of Bolton, Yorkshire (ibid. 247; T. D. Whitaker, History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven, 3rd ed. (1878), p. 126).
only was Northumberland not intended to be at Shrewsbury at
the date on which the battle was fought, but that he could not have
joined forces with his son—even assuming that the latter had
waited for him after 20 July—until a week or more after Hotspur
appeared before that town. Did the earl, through neglect, lack of
enthusiasm, or perhaps illness, let his son down?

The main flaw in the argument that Northumberland failed
his son lies in the assumption that the rebels must have aimed at
an early conjunction of forces. This view owes a great deal to
hindsight, and need not necessarily be correct. Hotspur's dash
to Cheshire and his advance on Shrewsbury were clearly intended
as his enterprise alone, and given the high degree of Cheshire
support which did in fact materialize, it was one which he ought
to have been able to execute without his father's assistance. The
rebellion may best be seen in the light of the overall strategic
situation, and of the aspects of that situation which favoured the
Percies. There were, as has already been observed, two arenas
in which military forces were actively deployed in July 1403—
the north of England, especially the Scottish border, and Wales.
The Percies had a virtual monopoly of military control on the
border, and this monopoly was backed, from the point of view of
prospective rebels, by reserves of retainers distributed through-
out most of the northern counties. The rebels' immediate need
was to deal with the other area of military activity, and here the
Percies had a number of advantages: the hatred of Cheshire men
for Henry IV; the support, deliberate or incidental, of Glen-
dower; the presence in the "enemy" camp of the earl of
Worcester, who was ideally placed to betray the prince of Wales
both before and after his defection; Hotspur's own previous
military and political influence in the area; and the Percies' control of part of the inheritance of the boy whom they intended
to make king. Hotspur's relative youth and vigour, as well as
his recent association with the west, made it natural that he,
rather than his father, should head this stage of the rising. The
rebels had good reason to believe that before the end of July,
military control of Wales and the Welsh border would be almost
completely in rebel hands.

At some point, of course, word of these developments was
bound to reach the king. The defection of the earl of Worcester from the prince's entourage would have been the point of no return in this respect, although as Hotspur had every right to be in Cheshire, and as his true intentions may not have filtered through to Shrewsbury immediately, it must have seemed at least possible that the king might not learn of the insurrection until after the prince's army had been defeated. Henry would not have been able to raise an army and march to within reach of either of the two areas of revolt for another week or so, and his military and strategic problems would then have been formidable. If he had remained in the south in an attempt to levy a really large force, his enemies would have had ample time to converge on him. If he had set off immediately to gather troops on the way north, he would have been in a perilous predicament when he reached the north midlands. Whichever direction, west or north, he were to take—and the choice had to be made—he would be advancing into hostile territory while giving the forces of whichever of his enemies he chose not to confront ample time to close on him from the rear. As the earl of Northumberland already controlled, or had the potential for raising, the rebel forces of the north, there was no reason why he should move out of his ground until the last days of July—the earliest time at which the king might be expected to arrive in the critical area. Moreover, there were reasons why he should remain in Northumberland for the greater part of the month. After Hotspur's sudden departure at the beginning of July, the troops on the Scottish border needed a leader in the event of the outbreak of hostilities. If there had been collusion with Scotland, of course, this would not have been necessary, but in that case it would also not have been necessary to leave the border army at its post. There is not even any indication that the Percies had taken the step—which would in many ways have made sound tactical sense—of intimating to the Scottish government their willingness to abandon the siege of Cocklaw and to bring about a state of informal truce. In fact, the possibility must be considered that Northumberland intended, if his son's venture proceeded particularly favourably, to remain on the border until 1 August in the hope that developments in Scotland might enable him to keep his options open in
the north at the same time as the rebellion was in progress in England.

The Percies' strategy was a combination of audacious extemporisation and sound military judgment. Its failure was due primarily to the fact that it was based on the apparently accurate premise that it took cognisance of all the men assembled in arms in England and Wales in the first half of July 1403. From as early as the first days of Hotspur's recruiting campaign in Cheshire, however, there was an unforeseen factor—the army of the king himself—and for this crucial flaw in their scheme, the Percies had only themselves to blame.

The earliest evidence that this army was on the move is Henry's letter from Higham Ferrers, in Northamptonshire, dated 10 July, informing his councillors that he was proceeding north to assist the Percies before embarking on an expedition against the Welsh. As this force was obviously mustered before Hotspur's arrival in Cheshire, and as the latter seems to have taken the prince by surprise after more than a week's recruiting within forty or fifty miles of Shrewsbury, it seems highly improbable that Henry knew anything of the insurrection by that date. It is far more likely that his explanation was at least broadly genuine, and that his main concern was the security of the Scottish border. If, as has been suggested, the Percies' actions had precipitated a real risk of invasion, there was good cause for the king to intervene or at least investigate, whatever his attitude towards the Percies and their attempts at self-aggrandizement. There may, however, have been an additional and more specific factor in Henry's decision to go north. Several sources emphasize the prominent role played in the campaign by the Scottish earl of March. The latter, as has been noted, had failed to obtain any reward for his efforts at Humbledon. If the Percies had now over-reached themselves, to the extent that there was a danger of an assault on northern England, the possibility that Dunbar might recover his lands in south-east Scotland would have receded rapidly. In these circumstances, he may have believed that it was in his interests to play upon the combination of the

1 *Proceedings and Ordinances*, i. 206-7.
2 *Giles' Chronicle*, p. 33; *Annales Henrici Quarti*, p. 364; *Usk*, p. 252.
Percies’ exorbitant demands, and their inability to cope with the situation, in order to persuade the king that he might prove a less demanding guardian of English frontier interests.

The Percies may have been aware that Henry intended to march against the Welsh, and have timed their rising on the assumption that they would hold the north and the west by the time that the king had set out from London. Henry’s northern enterprise was by way of being a diversion, and one for which the Percies were fatally unprepared. The king must have learnt of the rebellion within a day or two of his departure from Northamptonshire, and by 16 July he had ordered twelve counties to raise further troops, had arranged for the preventive detention of prominent Percy retainers or sympathizers in Yorkshire, and was hastening to deal with the still inadequate forces of Hotspur and the Cheshire men. Five days later, the outnumbered rebels were defeated after a valiant and protracted attempt to overcome the odds against them. Northumberland’s move south in the following week may have been a premature rather than a belated manoeuvre. It may have been news of the king’s arrival in the midlands which caused the earl to collect a small force in Northumberland and hurry south. Even if he knew of the battle and had some idea of its outcome, it is possible that he was insufficiently informed of the precise military situation, and believed that his arrival, with such men as he could raise in Northumberland and Yorkshire, might still turn the tide. His encounter with Westmorland may not only have shown him the degree to which Henry and his supporters had mobilized against him, but also have brought him definite news of the defeat and death of his son.

1 CPR, 1401-5, p. 297.

2 Ibid. These were John Bank, Leonard Dautre, William Mallom, Henry Preston, Alan Caterall, Robert Hilton, Gerard Salvayn, Randolph See, John Pudsey, John Colville of Dale, John Percy of Kildale, John Ask and Richard Fairfax. Salvayn was a kinsman of Hotspur’s esquire Roger Salvayn, and came under suspicion again in 1405 (ibid. 1405-8, p. 67). See and Pudsey actually managed to join the rebels in 1403 (ibid. 1401-5, pp. 242, 247, 253), and See was executed for his rebellion two years later, as was Colville (ibid. 1405-8, p. 69). Percy (ibid. 48) and Fairfax (ibid. 79) also rose in 1405. Though the other seven appear to have kept clear of trouble, Henry’s suspicions seem to have been directed along the right lines.

3 For accounts of the battle, see Dieulacres Chronicle, p. 180; Annales Henrici Quarti, pp. 367-8; Continuatio Eulogii, p. 397; Usk, p. 253.
and brother.\footnote{Annales Henrici Quarti, p. 371, implies that Northumberland did not know of Hotspur’s death until his flight to Newcastle.} Thus the Percies lost a rebellion which they had both the means and the ability to win, and the reasons for their defeat were paradoxical. If, as has often been implied, they had set themselves on a clear course of insurrection after their disagreements with the king in 1402, they ought to have succeeded in a military coup. Instead, they accepted the conciliatory offer made to them by the king and embarked on a venture—their attempt to implement the Douglas grant—which went a long way towards precluding any scheme of rebellion. Bold and imaginative planning, when they finally decided to rise, gave them an opportunity to overcome the obstacles which their acquisitive northern policy had set in the way of the employment of their more obvious resources in a successful rebellion. It could not prevent the king from taking the action which was arguably the logical consequence of their dangerous efforts to conduct foreign policy at a local level in their own personal interests.

During the first four years of the reign, the Percies appear to have had two overriding and interrelated ambitions: to pursue a policy of expansion in the north and to control the government of England in their own interests. At the beginning of 1403, the implementation of the latter aim, by way of insurrection, may have been within their reach. By choosing “loyalty” in exchange for what they hoped would be the fulfilment of their other ambition, they seem to have lost sight of the potential connection between the two projects. After the setback of Cocklaw, they chose to assail the king in writing on his failure to provide the means by which they might achieve the expansion which he had allowed them to seek, when a temporary but immediate and total abandonment of that aim in favour of a concerted attempt at a coup might have given them the opportunity to fulfil both their ambitions in succession. The Percies’ selfishness, unreasonable demands, and apparent insatiability make them unsympathetic figures: yet it can be argued that it was a parochial and ingenuous attitude towards political realities, which almost bordered on innocence, which led to their downfall in the world of sophisticated power politics.