Document 13, Distribution of Papists' Horses; an explanation and notes

Unlike the rest of the documents in this bundle of papers, this one has no obvious connection with the Blair family. It is clearly older than the rest, Other documents in the catalogue at Northumberland Archives seem to relate to it, and may have come from the same source.

It dates from the period after the 1688 'Glorious Revolution', when the Catholic king James II was deposed and the Protestant William and Mary placed on the throne by Parliament. There was the possibility of a rising and/or invasion by the supporters of King James and his descendants (the Jacobites) throughout that time. If such action was threatened or took place, the local militia would be called out to defend the Government. Parliament passed an annual Militia Act, under which Papists, anyone reputed to be a Papist, and anyone refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the Crown, was not to be trusted as a member of the local militia. Instead, they were to pay a levy, based on the rental value of their estates, to cover the cost of so many horses and foot soldiers.

A nineteenth-century addition at the bottom of sheet 1 of our manuscript suggests it could be dated to 1688 or 1690, but a more likely date is c.1718-19. It describes Anna Maria Radcliffe as the widow of the Earl of Derwentwater, who was executed in early 1716 (and it seems whoever scrawled on it in blue pencil at a later date noted this too.) The clerk is able to value all the Catholic estates. By far the most obvious source for this would be the submissions made by all Catholic landowners to the Register of Estates required in 1717, and later published as Hodgson (ed), *Northumbrian Documents of the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Surtees Soc, Vol 132, (1918). This would be available, say by late 1717 or early 1718, from which to calculate what was effectively a militia tax on the Catholics (better to get their money than let them assemble actual horses just a few years after the 1715 Rising). In the first entry, Nicholas Sherburn, of Cartington had a registered rent of £560, the same as that on which his militia contribution was calculated. In a later entry Edward Errington is named alongside Edward Charlton for Wallick Grange (sic). According to the Surtees volume (p.67) he was buried at Warden in Sept 1719. Hence c.1718-19.

The explanation below has been prepared by Rick Osborn, who has done much recalculation and provided an amended spreadsheet showing how the clerk preparing the figures worked them out.

An explanation of the figures

What this 18th century spreadsheet does is to calculate the cash that each proprietor has to pay towards the cost of horses incurred by the local militia. The money due from each is based on the "Rentall" value of the property held by the proprietor. For each £500 of rental value the cost of one horse has to be paid. The payment is £8 per horse.
Thus on sheet 1, line 5: Cartington et al Snr have a rental value of £560. At £500 per horse, Cartington Snr. owes 1 and one tenth horses at £8 per horse payable = £8/16/0d.
Line 6: Cartington et al Jnr. have a rental value of £250. At £500 per horse: half a horse. At £8 payable per horse = £4/0/0d.

And so on. The reason for all those strange fractions after the rental value is that the writer is showing his workings and doesn't have the ability to use decimal fractions. They did not become used by people outside academic circles until the late 18th Century.
Thus in line 5, he needs to know how many 500s there are in 560. So, he subtracts 500 from

560 which gives him 1 remainder 60. He then has to find out what fraction of 500, sixty is: i.e. 60/500 which if you have decimal notation is easily seen to be 0.12. However, he approximates that to one tenth i.e. 0.1 which is a reasonable approximation: a discrepancy of only 2%. So the payment for one and one tenth horses is required.

Line 6 is easier for him. £250 is exactly half the value of a horse thus what is owed is half of £8.

The less wealthy papists only had to fund foot soldiers, at 30s (£1.50) each, and they are listed on the second sheet.

Notes on the amended spreadsheet

- All the added columns are shewn in red
- Column C: decimal representation of sum of vulgar fractions given in col. B
- Column D: Pounds shown in col A divided by total horses shown in col. C
- From an inspection of the value in col. D the figure of £500 is deduced as the unit of valuation of one horse
- Column E: expresses the degree to which the actual valuation deviates from the proposed ideal of £500. Since the maximum deviation is 0.02 and all deviations are in the taxpayers' favour, £500 is adjudged as vindicated
- Column H: since the per annum sum given in col. G is in an £. s. d. format intractable without an exorbitant amount of code, the col. G sum is recomputed as the number of pence equivalent to the col. G expression
- Column I: computes the amount, in pounds, to be paid by the taxpayer for each 'horseworth' given in col. C

The above are given for six entries. Others may choose to test the above assumptions by completing them for the remaining entries.

With thanks to Derek Cutts, Greg Finch, and Rick Osborn for the research on this document.