

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS, SPORTING ESTATES AND THE ARISTOCRACY

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The Highland Sporting Estate looms large in the analysis of both 19th and 20th century debates about landownership (Cameron 1991; Grant 1989; Hunter 1974, 1976, 1995; Lister-Kaye 1994; Smout 1993). The idea of the sporting estate in social and economic terms as a place in which private indulgence continues to take precedence over social and economic development in certain areas is a key reason why such an issue continues to stir the public consciousness everytime an estate falls onto the open market. Whilst other types of holdings such as working farms may be placed on the land market with as much regularity as sporting estates, no other holding attracts land prices which bear so little relationship to the productive capacity of the land.

The aims of this paper are as follows:

- One of the key traditional defences of private landownership in Scotland has been that the private sporting estate, and the different forms of blood sport associated with such, makes a significant contribution to the economic development of local communities. This paper questions the precise nature and extent of this economic contribution by way of comparing the economics of shooting with the more profitable forms of recreation in the Highlands.
- Sport and leisure are often forgotten aspects of Scottish social and political affairs. While this paper specifically connects with contemporary debates about land reform in Scotland, it is also a

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reminder that while our leading social and political commentators should not provide sport and leisure with an over-determined degree of importance, neither should they marginalise its contribution to Scottish affairs.

- Rather than accept one of the most prominent English theories on the decline and fall of the British aristocracy, this paper questions the extent to which such an analysis does in fact hold up when faced with Scottish evidence.

SPORTING ESTATES AND SCOTTISH AFFAIRS

At least five initial points are worth mentioning. First, the emergence of the new Deer Commission for Scotland, introduced through the Deer Bill and intended to replace the old Red Deer Commission (founded 1959), has highlighted the continuing power of the 'sporting landowner'. In the five months between January and May 1996, which it took to progress the Bill through the Upper Chamber of the House of Lords, 78% of the debate, according to Hansard, has been dominated by those who had to declare an interest by virtue of owning a sporting estate (**The Herald** 13 May 1996, p.1). Prominent among those were Lady Saltoun of Abernethy, whose contributions amounted to 125 column inches in Hansard; the Earl of Woolton - 49 column inches; Lord Burton of Dochfour - 32 column inches; and Lord Pearson of Rannoch, the absentee owner of a sporting estate on Rannoch Moor and chairman of PWS insurance brokers, who accounted for 491.5 column inches or 24 pages of Hansard. The Government conceded that at least one third of the new Deer Commission of Scotland will represent the sporting interest.

Second, through a series of timely articles, Hunter has emphasised both the symbolism and importance of Highland landscapes and land reform to contemporary Scottish politics and society (Hunter 1995). Land remains in the late 20th Century a potentially powerful symbol for both industrial and rural Scotland. Why do so many Scots think that the current debate over the buying and selling of the Island of Eigg matters? What emotive force is it that grips the Scottish media whenever some community, however small, gets drawn into conflict with their local landowner? Meaningful answers to these questions can be given through not only acknowledging the contemporary social and political importance of rural landscapes and land reform, but also grasping the politics of land, sport and leisure so often

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marginalised and dismissed by leading Scottish social and political commentators.

Third, the emergence of the Land Register (Scotland) Act (1995) and the publication in 1996 of **Who Owns Scotland Now?** and **Who Owns Scotland** have provided a clearer empirical basis for the analysis of a changing pattern of landownership in Scotland (Cramb 1996; Wightman 1996). The enduring power of Scottish elites, in particular the aristocracy, is a theme that is central to these two texts, and yet perhaps the most detailed social-historical analysis of the aristocracy remains the two volumes of work produced by David Cannadine, **The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy**, and **Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain** (Cannadine 1990, 1994).

Fourth, we are fortunate that public money was made available in the 1940s to fund the 'West Highland Survey' (Fraser Darling 1955). Reflecting upon the 1940s, Frank Fraser Darling pointed out that the Highlands were 'a devastated countryside and that is the plain, primary reason why there are now so few people and why there is a constant economic problem'. In a contemporary critique of 'The Survey', Hunter (1994) has suggested that there is a consistency between this view and that of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) who have stated their intention to reverse the process that Fraser Darling called a 'drawdown of natural capital'. Hunter cites a most telling paragraph of Fraser Darling's when he concluded that the Highlands and Islands

are unable to withstand deforestation and maintain productiveness and fertility. Their history has been one of steadily accelerating deforestation until the great mass of the forest was gone, and thereafter certain forms of land usage have prevented regeneration of tree growth and reduced the land to crude expressions of its geological composition.

Any observer need only glance up from the car speeding through almost any Highland glen to see the effects of this 'draw down'. The causes of this state of affairs are plain. The maintenance of (encouraged by a subsidy for) upland sheep grazing, and the management of many sporting estates heedless of ecological principles, combine to exacerbate a situation which has now become dire and in need of urgent attention (Lister Kaye 1994).

Finally, anyone who totters into Edinburgh's Waverley station in August and catches sight of any one of the 'London Society Glossies' cannot fail to notice

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the imagery that constructs and accompanies the glorious twelfth of August and the start of the grouse shooting season. 'Will it be Glorious ?' was the critical remark which covered the front page of **The Scottish Field** (August 1996). 'How we love our Highland playground' trilled over the cover page of an earlier copy of **The Scottish Sporting Gazette and International Traveller** (1994, p.14). The whole notion of the Highlands as a natural playground is itself a constructed aspect of identity which sits alongside a much critiqued Scotland as a brand of identities constructed through tartan, castles, mist, mountains, golf, sporting estates, whisky and the Highlands of Scotland as Europe's last wilderness. It was precisely this ahistorical devaluation of the true natural and cultural 'heritage' which has prompted writers such as Hunter (1995) to ask why Scotland sells itself so short to the tourist.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE BRITISH ARISTOCRACY?

In the pages of **The Shooting Party** (1991), Sir Randolph Nettlebey asks: if you take away the functions of the aristocracy, what can it do but take games and leisure seriously? The idea that sport and leisure may help to socialise certain groups into a way of life experienced by the hereditary aristocracy is a theme that has been central to a number of historical sociological studies such as those by Cannadine (1990, 1994) and **Etiquette and the Season** by Davidoff (1993). Although Gladstone called the British landowners of the 19th century a leisure class, in reality they were far from being anything like a homogeneous social or political grouping. The acquisition of Scottish sporting estates during the second-half of the 19th century was brought about by the actions of a number of major and minor aristocrats whose differences were as marked as their similarities. As such, any thesis which argues that as a group Scottish elites of the 19th or 20th century were uniformly guilty of the conspicuous consumption of leisure must remain open to debate.

The social relationships seen by many historians as the crucial underpinning of aristocratic power in rural England have not operated to the same degree in Scotland (Hutchinson 1994). As a hypothesis, the idea of social deference, carefully nurtured by the upper classes and closely connected with the concept of a common identity of interests and values among entire rural communities, might also break down when faced with Scottish evidence. The main agencies for fostering a deferential dialectic were different if not lacking in Scotland when compared to England. The great rural sports of cricket and fox-hunting were virtually absent from Scotland. Apart from

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patronage of Highland Gatherings and Games, the nearest substitute might be curling at which Lord Balfour of Burleigh and the Duke of Atholl were ardent exponents, but even these sporting forms were never socially all-embracing.

The changing fortunes of Scottish and British aristocrats meant that Gladstone's leisure classes of the 19th century had in many cases become the labouring aristocracy by the 1920s. The **Estates Gazette** explained in 1922 'these are the days in which the great residential properties of the country can only be owned and kept up by those whose income is from sources apart from the property itself' (July 1922, p.17). It is a theme that is echoed in **Strathalder: A Highland Estate** which remains a critical comparative account of a traditional Scottish sporting estate in its heyday and the gradual transformation of the estate from a traditional way of life in the early 1900s to a commercial business in the 1980s (Grant 1989). Texts such as **Strathalder** provide for a rich archival record and vivid reminder of a vanishing way of life, an existence in which some Highland sporting estates in the 1920s were about employment, security and a way of life which sustained and reproduced small pockets of community that might otherwise have fragmented within the grander scale social and economic development. To what extent was the laird of Strathalder an archetypal hereditary laird of the late 19th and early 20th century? 'He lived permanently on the estate, apart from a month or two in London, he regularly visited estate workers' homes, entertained guests and estate workers on a lavish scale, and always had parties in the mansion house at Christmas and New Year for tenants and employees' (Grant 1989, p.26).

The power and influence of Scotland's landed magnates has long been identified as one of the key distinctive features of the pattern of landownership in Scotland. By and large there has been little movement in the Top Twenty chart of landowners in Scotland for more than a century. On a wider British scale the top ten individual landowners in 1875 and 1994 were as in table 1.

The mighty magnates of the 1990s such as the Duke of Buccleuch, the Duke of Argyll, the Farquharsons of Invercauld, the Duke of Westminster, the Earl of Seafield, the late Duke of Atholl, and the Countess of Sutherland owned great acreage in 1875, the last occasion when a comprehensive land register was compiled. The 1871 official enquiry into landownership in Britain was designed to show that land was far more equitably distributed than the radical critics of the day made out. What it actually revealed was a pattern of

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landownership in Britain and Ireland more concentrated and more monopolistic than almost any other country in Europe. In 1872, the 1500 largest landowners in Scotland held over 90% of the country, a figure which had only dropped a percentage or two thirty years later (Wightman 1996, p.10).

Table 1

The Top Ten British Individual Landowners 1875 and 1994

(a) Top Ten Landowners, 1875 (Britain)

Owner	Acres	Estimated Rent
Duke of Sutherland	1,358,546	£141,679
Duke of Buccleuch	459,108	£215,593
Earl of Breadalbane	438,358	£58,292
Sir Charles Ross	356,600	£17,264
Earl of Seafield	305,930	£78,227
Duke of Richmond	286,411	£79,683
Duke of Fife	249,220	£71,312
Alexander Mathieson	220,663	£26,461
Duke of Atholl	201,640	£42,030
Duke of Devonshire	198,493	£180,795

(b) Top 10 Individual Owners, 1994 (Britain)

Owner	Acres
The Duke of Buccleuch/Buccleuch Estates	277,000
The Prince of Wales/Duchy of Cornwall	141,000
Duke of Atholl	130,000
Captn Farquharson	120,500
The Earl of Seafield	101,000
The Duke of Westminster/Grosvenor Estates	95,100
The Duke of Northumberland	95,000
Countess of Sutherland	83,239

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Sir Donald Cameron of Lochiel	76,000
The Earl of Stair	43,674

*Adapted from : R Taylor and K Cahill, 'Keep Out This Land is Their Land' **The Guardian**, 13 August, 1994, p.19.*

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A small group of landowning families has remained relatively stable throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and as such have witnessed the arrival and departure of various people who might fit more easily within any nominal notion of a capitalist class or business elite. Those whose ownership of Highland estates has not been dependent upon old hereditary wealth or have been part of a traditional labouring aristocracy have been joined at various points throughout the 1990s by the nouveau riches such as Philip Rhodes the property developer, Ann Gloag owner of the Stagecoach bus company, Peter de Savaray, Malcolm Potier, Keith Schellenberg, Mohammed Al Fayed owner of Harrods, Professor Maruma the German spiritual artist, and Fred Olsen the Norwegian shipping magnate.

The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy is by no means the only account of the collapsing power of the aristocratic laird in Britain, but it is arguably the most comprehensive (Cannadine 1990). The thesis itself is straightforward in that it is argued that during the 1870s the patricians of Britain were in the most part the most wealthy, the most powerful and the most glamorous people in the country. In terms of objective economic circumstances the British landed establishment still formed the country's wealthy elite during the third quarter of the Victorian period. Individually most of them owned estates of at least 1,000 acres and collectively this meant that they possessed the overwhelming majority of the land of the British Isles. During the 100 years which followed, their wealth withered, their power faded and perhaps a collective sense of identity and purpose gradually weakened (Cannadine 1990).

What, according to Cannadine, was to bring about the decline of this powerful aristocracy? The explanation provided is that the gradual loss of material and economic power since the 1880s was matched by a fall in status as at a local and regional level prestige deteriorated. At the national level the political power of the aristocracy both in the House of Lords and the House of Commons also suffered. By the 1980s the old landed order had effectively ceased to be an economically definable class. More specifically it is suggested that the gradual decline of the landed aristocracy in Britain over the last 100 years has given rise to the notion that the traditional landed class has ceased to exist as the unchallenged and supreme elite in which wealth, status and power were highly correlated and under-pinned by territorial pre-eminence (Cannadine 1990, p.693). By the end of the Second World War the austere and egalitarian world of Welfare State Socialism meant that most surviving landowners operated within a political climate in which economic

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privileges, political influence and social status were no longer the accepted role for a labouring aristocracy. In post-war Britain from Attlee to Thatcher to Major, wealth, power and status were no longer inextricably linked with hereditary titles or hereditary territory.

Economically, the combination of continued austerity and increasing taxes meant that estates fragmented and tumbled into open markets after 1945. The late 1950s and early 1960s brought a slight remission underpinned by rising land values, and yet any respite was soon to be marginalised by the end of the decade as a result of rising costs and increased taxes which made the traditional estate an economic burden for all but the extremely wealthy. Politically, the post-war picture was equally bleak, and while the Tory Governments between 1951 and 1964 were more patrician in facade and substance than the post-1945 Labour government, comparative and historical political reality was such that the aristocracy as a governing elite had been pushed geographically and politically to the margins of power. In only, for example, what was then Rhodesia, Kenya, Northern Ireland and the deepest shires and districts did the political power of the landowner linger on. In the world of Wilson, Callaghan, Heath and Foot public life in Britain was even less aristocratic than in the days of Attlee, while in the petty-bourgeois world of Thatcher the old territorial class army - with few exceptions - appeared at best ceremonial and anachronistic and at worst plain irrelevant (Cannadine 1990, p.707).

In social terms, the men and women of the gentry and the grandees have arguably dwindled in terms of importance and number. The honours system is now completely divorced from its patrician and old territorial base while even the House of Lords finds it difficult in the 1990s to defend the idea of hereditary titles. Perhaps the greatest threat to the patrician status system was that between 1965 and 1983 no hereditary titles of honour were created. Not only the Labour governments of Wilson and Callaghan but also the Tory administrations of Heath and (at least initially) Thatcher assiduously refused to give out hereditary peerages or baronetcies. For the first time since 1660 the size of the hereditary peerage noticeably declined. Mrs Thatcher's three hereditary creations since 1980 have done little to reverse a downward trend or, to use Cannadine's (1994) terms, the decline of Grandeur. Neither Whitelaw nor Tonypanady have heirs to inherit the title and since the Macmillan earldom in 1983 there have been no further new creations.

While a social calendar of events undoubtedly exists, including many sporting events, in a hostile political and economic environment a low-

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profile aristocratic existence seems more prudent if not inevitable. Even among the few patricians who remain atypically wealthy, the general rule nowadays is one of inconspicuous consumption. It is politically unwise to flaunt any remaining wealth, especially when as a minority the notable often wish to present themselves as a harried and persecuted minority.

With the end of Empire, jobs for the wealthy patricians evaporated and the game of cultural gatekeepers of national heritage helped to fill the unemployment gap on the curriculum vitae. Leading sociologists have suggested that the promotion of the stately homes business allows the lairds to insinuate that their own history is tied up centrally to the nation's history (McCrone and Morris 1994). Scotland through the biographies of the great and godly families becomes the self-defined focal point of the heritage of a stateless-nation. History becomes the means of justifying the social order rather than the legacy of a troublesome past. Heritage tends to fuse the national and the local - the history of the nation is presented through the history of the family and the stately home. The contents of the houses are presented as the treasures of the nation with the lairds as the custodians of the nation's heritage. Macro and micro histories become fused, and in a post-modern age in which the authority of the nobility and the crown is being questioned, to capture the nation's history is quite a feat (McCrone and Morris 1994, pp.170-185). This is not to deny the presence of other national histories such as those presented by the National Trust for Scotland, but the essential point is that the remaining aristocracy - the heritage of the traditional patrician class - have succeeded in converting their own and the nation's history into commodities whereby they can save themselves (McCrone and Morris 1994, p.185).

HIGHLAND GAMES, SPORTING ESTATES AND THE ARISTOCRACY IN SCOTTISH AFFAIRS

Undoubtedly the mighty magnates have been joined in the 1990s by a number of corporate lairds and trusts such as the Bocardo Société Anonyme and Ross Estates Ltd, the Co-op Wholesale Society Ltd, Eagle Star, Gallagher Pensions Trust Ltd, Midland Bank, the John Muir Trust, the Scottish Wildlife Trust, the Church of Scotland and the Assynt Crofters Trust. The State itself through the Crown Estate, the Ministry of Defence, the Forestry Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage still owns vast tracts of land. Yet as table 2 suggests, what is significant is not so much the decline and fall of a landed elite or a traditional aristocracy, or even the extent to

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which changing patterns of wealth behind estate ownership emerged, but rather the stability of landownership and in particular the enduring nature of Scotland's magnates and those members of a British aristocracy who own land in Scotland.

Table 2

Top 20 aristocratic landowners in Scotland 1995	
Owner	Acres
Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry	261600
Capt AAC Farquharson of Invercauld	120500
Earl of Seafield	101000
Duke of Westminster	95100
Crown Estate Commissioners	94015
Countess of Sutherland	83239
Viscount Cowdray	76600
Sir Donald Cameron of Locheil	76000
Duke of Roxburghe	65600
Baroness Willoughby de Eresby	63200
Duke of Argyll	60800
John A Mackenzie of Gairloch	56900
Earl of Cawdor	56800
The Queen	55270
Marquess of Bute	53990
Sir Ivar Colquhoun of Luss	50000
Lord Burton	48000
Earl of Dalhousie	47200
Lady Anne Bentinck	45000
Earl of Stair	43674
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,554,488</i>
% of Scotland - top 20 aristocratic estates	8.01%
Total Acreage above 5000 acres owned by aristocracy	2,554,399

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As a % of Scotland's total land mass 13.16%

*Source: Adapted from A Wightman **Who Owns Scotland**, Edinburgh, Canongate, 1996, p.162.*

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The evidence that has been presented here has attempted to question the extent to which David Cannadine's argument concerning the decline and fall of the British aristocracy does in fact hold true when tested against Scottish evidence. It is a concern which is supported by Rosie's account of the establishment and the aristocracy in Scotland (Rosie 1992). Scotland's landed class has to an astonishing degree survived almost a century of muddle and change. Survival strategies have included marrying into new money, setting up trusts, carving out a niche in the city, letting out sporting rights, promoting family and heritage and selling off fractions of the estate. Despite the cost of maintaining huge estates and crumbling castles, inheritance taxes, hostile governments, calls for land reform and public access to land, Scotland's magnates and those members of the British aristocracy who own land in Scotland remain remarkably resilient.

The role of the aristocracy in 1990 is overwhelmingly less important than that of their forebears a century ago. Economically speaking they no longer by themselves own the majority of land, they do not in themselves constitute the wealthy elite, and even the very richest of them are a minority amongst the contemporary super-rich. Politically they no longer form the governing class and most grandees and gentry play a reduced role in local or regional politics. Socially the honours system has ceased to be hereditary or territorially based and many of the great ornamental roles are played out by numerous people from a far from homogeneous social background. The Duke of Buccleuch, for example, although having once served as a Tory MP, is now almost overtly anxious to avoid public life and controversy. Perhaps the remaining aristocracy seem less conscious of their own class identity, and yet the owners of the houses of Argyll, Buccleuch, Home, Roxburghe, Stair, Airlie, Lothian, Montrose, Hamilton, Moray, Westminster, Burton, Cowdray, Dulverton and others still control about 13% of Scotland.

In the early 1990s at the top of the aristocratic ladder were Britain's 24 Dukes and Duchesses and no fewer than eight of them (33%) were Scots (Rosie 1992, p.28). They were the Dukes of Hamilton, Argyll, Atholl, Buccleuch and Queensberry, Fife, Montrose, Roxburghe and Sutherland. Some of their titles predated the Union of 1707. Next are the Marquises, and again the proportion of Scots is high. Scotland in 1992 had only 9% of Britain's population but it had more than 25% of its Marquises, these being Aberdeen and Temair, Ailsa, Bute, Huntley, Linlithgow, Lothian, Queensberry, Tweedale and Zetland. Of the five women who are Countesses in their own

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right four are Scots: Dysart, Loudon, Mar and Sutherland. Of the 16 women in 1992 who were baronesses in their own right, five held Scots titles.

The Earl of Airlie and The Marquis of Huntly are but two minor aristocrats in terms of landownership, and yet their position as landowners in their respective localities brings with the title certain forms of symbolic and ceremonial power. The Earl of Airlie is reputed to own 37,300 acres of land north of Kirriemuir in Angus. According to Rosie, the Earl is in many ways the quintessential Scottish aristocrat, living in the royal county of Angus alongside the Queen and the Earls of Strathmore, Southesk, Dalhousie and Woolton (Rosie 1992, p.28). His principal residence, Cortachy Castle, is set in heavily wooded land beside the River South Esk. Educated at Eton, and having served with the Scots Guards, he remains well connected with the ceremonial establishment. Like past Earls of Airlie who owned land in Glenisla, the Earl of Airlie's patronage gave him control over the proceedings of the Gathering of the Glenisla Highland and Friendly Society, a Gathering which dates back to 1852.

The Airlie family are illustrative of the fact that networks and family connections play a key role in preserving and supporting the landowning interest (Wightman 1996, p.155). Networks in conjunction with organisations such as the Scottish Landowners Federation help to sustain a core body of beliefs and attitudes with regards to preservation of sporting estates, the sanctity of private property rights, and exaggerated claims concerning the contributions which rural sports make to both the local economy and rural employment. Such connections and indeed the sporting season itself provide insights into the heart of the British and Scottish establishment. The Queen Mother is the daughter of the 14th Earl of Strathmore (Glamis in Angus). The Queen (land in Angus and Aberdeenshire) herself has a cousin, the fifth Earl of Granville (North Uist Estate) whose daughter is married to Jonathan Bulmer (Amhuinnsuidhe Estate in Inverness-shire) whose brother David also owns Ledmore Estate in Sutherland. The second Earl of Granville's daughter was the mother of John Granville Morrison, Lord Margadale (Islay Estate). The Queen is also related to the Earl of Airlie (Airlie Estates) through his brother, Sir Angus Ogilvy who is married to Princess Alexandra of Kent. The Countess of Airlie is also Lady to the Bedchamber of the Queen. The Queen's aunt, the Duchess of Gloucester, is the third daughter of the seventh Duke of Buccleuch whose widow was the daughter of the 13th Earl of Home. The current Duke of Buccleuch's sister is the Duchess of Northumberland (Burncastle in Berwickshire).

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The Marquis of Huntly remains in charge of Aboyne Castle Estate Trustees and yet perhaps the significance of the position is more symbolically displayed at the Aboyne Highland Gathering (Aboyne Games Programme 1993, p.9), a Gathering at which a nominal unity sometimes conceals the fact that at the same event there co-exist different seating arrangements, different styles of dress, different social codes and prescriptions, all of which serve to unite and segregate different social groups. At Aboyne the ceremonial display of flags is but one small indicator of the social spaces which different people occupy. At the opening of the Gathering the Royal banner or flag is the first to be raised, shortly followed by the banner belonging to the Marquis of Huntly, who fulfils the dual roles of feudal superior and local patron to the Aboyne Highland Gatherings and Games. Subsequent banners, raised on either side of the two flags, tend to provide not just a galaxy of colours but also an insight into the upper circles of power and social structure within the district, the Highlands and Scotland. As one organiser noted 'the flags are enjoyed by the tourist but they also indicate who is present at the Gathering' (interview August 1996).

In the 1990s it would be foolish to overemphasise the politics of rural sports and leisure. Yet contemporary issues, such as the call by the Scottish Landowners Federation to subsidise the grouse shooting season, are reflective of a value system which supports the preservation of the sporting estate by framing it within a set of arguments which have at times more to do with ideology than substantive evidence. The most popularly quoted figure is that of £10 million pounds produced for the rural economy during the grouse shooting season in August and September (**Scottish Field** August 1996, p.19). The Scottish Landowners Federation commissioned the Game Conservancy Scottish Research Trust to carry out an economic study of grouse shooting season (Scottish Landowners Federation 1996). It concluded that between 1989 and 1994:

- the revenue generated fell by 60% while costs rose by 40%, leaving landowners with an annual loss of more than £10 million;
- the number of jobs created by the sport fell from 980 to 580;
- there are 486 grouse moors in Scotland which produced just under 235,000 birds in 1989;
- by 1994 the number of birds had fallen by 30% with 1975 being the last really good year for grouse shooting;
- in 1994 revenues from grouse shooting stood at about £3 million against a total expenditure of £13.7 million.

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Such an economic deficit in many cases is sustained through the transference of assets through the mixed estate economy or the transference of assets from alternative sources of income earned by respective landowners, which help to sustain and preserve a particular tradition and way of life. In support of this economic malaise the Scottish Landowners Federation argued that (**The Herald** 8 August 1996:7):

- the activity maintains employment, attracts tourist income and maintains the natural habitat;
- investment in moorland and conservation management was the best way to maintain the rich diversity of wildlife on the Scottish uplands;
- field sports should be eligible for European funding on the grounds that they provided employment in rural areas;
- the sport deserved long term support because of its economic and environmental benefits.

The extent to which the sporting estate in general has contributed to both local economies and the indulgence of the wealthy has been the subject of a growing body of social and economic research. Although there are around 7761 properties rated for shooting purposes in Scotland, according to estate agent surveys there are around 800 large sporting estates in Scotland (British Association For Shooting and Conservation 1990). Normally 25-30 sporting estates are on the market at any given time in the year. The main sporting estate agents are Knight Frank and Rutley, Savills, Strutt and Parker, Bidwells and Finlayson Hughes. In 1982 the all-round sporting estate produced on average 50 stags, 500 brace of grouse, 200 salmon, with an 8 bedroom lodge and a couple of estate cottages which in total would have sold for around £970,000 in 1982, £5.5 million in 1990 and £3.5 million in 1992 (Bond 1993, p.71). Between 1982 and 1992, with the market peaking in 1990, prices for sporting estates seemed to have dropped significantly, and in some cases by 40% between 1982 and 1992. According to Finlayson Hughes, the average estate in 1992 would have cost around £100,000 per annum to run with the income from sport generating around £50,000 per annum (Finlayson-Hughes 1992).

The only comprehensive survey of the economic impact of sporting shooting in Scotland concluded in 1992 that

- the estimated direct income generated during 1990 was £28.6 million;
- the total participant expenditure during 1990 was £78 million;

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- sporting shooting in Scotland employed 12,397 people full time;
- the resulting estimated direct and indirect employment generated stood at 7,217 (full time equivalent jobs);
- while the estimated number of properties rated for shooting purposes was 7,761, the estimated number of properties used for shooting purposes was only 3,298.

Data on the economic impact of different types of shooting is difficult to ascertain precisely since it is often mixed. The overall conclusion from the report funded by the Scottish Development Agency was that sporting shooting properties in their many different forms made a significant contribution to the fragile rural economy of Scotland (British Association For Shooting and Conservation 1990). The 1992 report was commissioned by the Scottish Landowners Federation and therefore it is not surprising that the findings tended to support existing patterns of land management and income generation.

By 1995 the market price for sporting estates was down in relative terms on 1990 or 1991 prices; however a steady rise had evolved when compared with 1993 prices. In July 1995, Strutt & Parker estimated that 19 sporting estates of between 1100 acres and 48,000 acres, totalling 194,000 acres, about 1% of Scotland's land mass, had become available for purchase (**The Herald** 10 July 1995, p.7). It goes without saying that one has to be sufficiently wealthy to run a sporting estate because they are not in themselves designed to make profit. Most sporting estates run at a loss since their economy is based upon a recreational activity, which continues to be a symbolic element of an elite lifestyle and which contributes to a mixed estate economy rather than a form of recreational capitalism as an end in itself. Even an impassioned advocate of sporting estates such as Michael Wigan claims that there are no pure deer forests which turn in a regular profit. Estimates of the private subsidy required range from £4 per acre for disadvantaged West Coast Estates to £2 for land in the eastern and central Highlands which has some additional income from grouse shooting (Wigan 1991, p.9). As such it is important to temper the assertion that this form of recreational capitalism makes a major contribution to the Scottish economy, rural or otherwise.

For instance the economic impact of sporting estates is low when compared to that of hillwalking and mountaineering (Highlands and Islands Enterprise 1996). Highlands and Islands Enterprise concluded in 1996 that:

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- allowing for multiplier effects, total mountaineering related expenditure amounted to almost £149 million in the HIE area;
- a direct annual income of £34 million secured 3,950 full time jobs in the HIE area and £53 million and 6,100 full time jobs in the Topographical Highland Area;
- such impacts represented between 2-3% of employment and income in the HIE area alone;
- much of the expenditure occurs outside the main tourist season and in remote areas where it forms a particularly important source of income, which extends the tourist season, and reduces seasonal unemployment.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The ownership of Highland sporting estates has been central to the landownership debate for over a century. In the 1880s when the impoverished Lewis cottars sent a delegation to see Lady Matheson, widow of the drug baron who had cleared Carnish on the island of Lewis, in order to plead for access to land given over to sport, she retorted that these lands were hers and that local cottars had nothing to do with them. Whether it be the last decade of the 19th century or the last decade of the 20th century it would appear that similar questions are being asked about the social and economic impact of sporting estates in the Highlands of Scotland.

First, the estates attract, just as their unnatural development during the Victorian period attracted, a wealthy elite whose priorities have not always been that of rural development and community sustainability. The Wilderness experience which is captured in the sporting shoot is no more natural than the clearances from Strathnaver in Sutherland or the land raids in Argyll, Caithness and Perthshire which occurred intermittently between the 1880s and 1920s. Both were created by men and women and both were brought about as a result of a particular concern for social and economic development. The systematic development of sporting estates has facilitated the conspicuous consumption of leisure for some and has been supported and legitimated through a number of ideologies concerning employment, heritage, forms of land management and the contribution made by such sporting forms to the local and national economy. In most cases there needs to be a much closer match between evidence and practice.

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Second, perhaps the fundamental issues concerning the existence of so many sporting estates in the mid-to-late 1990s is that they tend to exchange hands on a frequent basis, they contribute to the gross under-utilisation of vast tracts of land, and they tend to command a market value which is often determined by the status incurred through owning a sporting estate rather than the actual realistic value of the land. Even in simple economic terms, the available evidence in the late 1990s would seem to indicate that the economic impact of hillwalking, mountaineering and associated activities far outweighs the economic impact of the sporting estate in the Highlands of Scotland. It might even be suggested that such forms of land management in certain cases, not all, have contributed to a series of deserted landscapes and have been a factor inhibiting the repopulation of the Highlands. To borrow an analogy from the late Sorley MacLean, in symbolic terms it might be suggested that the vast tracts of land and empty spaces preserved for the 'monarchs of the glen' are but reminders and symbols of a time when the Highlands of Scotland were thickly populated and culturally, socially, and economically capable of sustaining thriving local communities. The ghosts of the past in the present.

Third, the development of forests (especially broadleaved) is a form of land use clearly in conflict with traditional sporting interests. Indeed, browsing pressure from deer (and sheep) is now well understood as the major factor inhibiting the regeneration of native tree species (Lister Kaye, 1994). The value of forests in sustaining human population in rural areas has now become an important contemporary political issue. The imperative is such that non-governmental organisations, 'quangos' and political parties now find themselves working together on a number of initiatives which would previously have been considered the sole province of pressure groups. An example of this is the Forests and People in Rural Scotland Initiative (FAPIRA 1995) which is an informal partnership established in 1994 between the Forestry Authority, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Rural Forum Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Office Environment Department and World Wide Fund for Nature (Scotland). Its stated purpose is to 'promote the social value of woodlands and ways of deriving the greatest social benefits from woods and forests in rural areas, particularly for local people'. Such partners, together with the Crofters Union and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities demonstrated their intentions by the funding of a discussion paper entitled 'Forests and People in Rural Scotland' (FAPIRA 1995).

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Fourth, this article has attempted to illustrate that many of the taken-for-granted assumptions about Cannadine's (1990) thesis in **The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy** do in fact tend to falter when faced with Scottish evidence. For many traditional Scottish elites and aristocrats, leisure was not an end in itself, or a form of consumption which replaced patrician duties, but rather the necessary precondition for a dutiful and worthwhile activity. It is possible to accept that during late 19th century the stable world of patrician activity - territorially defined, politically related, and socially exclusive - was beginning to breakdown without accepting that such a demise or fall from grandeur occurred at similar rates in both Scotland and England. The extent to which the Scottish aristocracy have survived and adapted is as compelling a thesis as that which is offered by Cannadine.

Finally, in terms of policy implications the traditional mode of maintaining large estates in their present form has generally been the long-term option favoured by the Scottish Landowners Federation and many individual estate owners. The break up of large estates has often been viewed as an irrelevant approach to rural development. Yet current government suggestions such as community forests, crofting estate buy-outs and other initiatives designed to empower local communities are all problematic unless the Scottish Office recognises that the system of land holding in Scotland remains problematic. The case for the break up of certain forms of landholdings was recently put forward by Professor Bryden in the Third McEwan Memorial Lecture on Land Tenure in Scotland (**The Scotsman** 27 September 1996:16). The core recommendations were essentially:

- the veil must be lifted on exactly who owns the land and who exactly benefits from the current pattern of landownership;
- permits could be introduced for the transfer of land above a certain size in designated areas;
- the use of market regulation in conjunction with certain residence qualifications could be used to actively discourage large-scale monopolistic ownership in certain cases.

In addition, a body of knowledge more congruent with reality on the economic benefit of sport and recreation to the local economy and local estate might help to challenge certain cherished myths which have often become enshrined in the strategic management of some sporting estates.

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February 1997