

DEER FORESTS, SPORTING ESTATES AND THE ARISTOCRACY

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Introduction

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. Their role as a status symbol which is capable of attracting world-wide attention and consequently foreign ownership of land is but another touchstone which tends to fire both the contemporary and historical public and private debate about land reform in Scotland. They attract, just as their creation attracted, a wealthy elite whose priorities have not always been that of rural development and the re-generation of local communities (Cramb 1996; Wightman 1996).

This paper attempts to illustrate that many of the taken for granted assumptions about 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 sport and 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 the late nineteenth 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. Yet what is evident as a result of recent research and invaluable contributions made by Wightman and others is the extent to which the Scottish Aristocracy have survived and adapted and that this survival is as equally compelling a thesis to that which is offered in the works of Cannadine and in particular *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*.

In order to address such themes this paper is divided into four parts:(i) the first part considers several current debates relating to sporting estates and Scottish affairs ; (ii) the second part considers the development of deer forests and sporting estates during the 19th Century; (iii) the third part presents a critique of Cannadine's thesis on the Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy while the final part (iv) considers the survival of a Scottish land based aristocracy and their role in Highland Games and Sporting estates.

Deer Forests, Sporting Estates and Scottish Affairs

The research presented in this paper adds to an existing body of substantive knowledge concerning the social, economic and historical development of sporting estates in the Highlands of Scotland (Bond 1993; Grant 1989; Hart-Davies 1978; Kerr 1995; Liddell 1993; McConnachie 1923; Orr 1982; Satterley 1992; Wigan 1991). A number of contemporary concerns 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 has taken 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 1996:1). 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, since the publication in 1995 of *The Other Side of Sorrow: Nature and People in the Scottish Highlands*, Hunter (1995) has through a series of timely articles emphasised both the symbolism and importance of Highland landscapes and land reform to contemporary Scottish politics and society. Land remains in the late 20th century a potential powerful symbol for both industrial and rural Scotland. 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 acknowledging not only the contemporary social and political importance of rural landscapes and land reform, but also grasping the politics of land, sport and leisure so often 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* and *Who Owns Scotland Now?* 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 the latter two texts and yet perhaps the most detailed social-historical analysis of the aristocracy remains the two volumes of work produced by David Cannadine namely, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, and *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain* (Cannadine 1990, 1994). This paper questions the extent to which aspects of the general British thesis portrayed by Cannadine are in fact matched by Scottish evidence.

Fourth, we are fortunate that public money was made available in the 1940s to fund the 'West Highland Survey' (Fraser Darling, 1955). The importance of this work cannot be overestimated as it provides a marker for a comparison almost 50 years on. 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' Jim 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 their 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, according to Lister-Kaye, dire and in need of urgent attention (Lister Kaye, 1994).

Fifth, although the American millionaire Walter Winan organised deer shooting with all the thoroughness of a military operation in the late 1800s, killing as many as twenty stags a day with the help of up to forty men and a team of ponies (Kerr, 1996:64), a new culture of high-tech, highly organised deer killers have emerged in the late 1990s. Spurred on by the increasing price of venison the era of highly organised deer poacher is a current problem facing many Highland estates. Residual ideologies die hard and rural communities have traditionally taken the view that the shooting of a wild deer on the estate is every Highlander's birthright. Yet the external threat of organised gangs of poachers from South of the Border have in many cases helped to bridge an ancient rift between landowners and tenants. Low detection rates, plentiful game, the BSE crises and the profit to be made from mass poaching are but a few of the reasons for the evolution of the more organised, technologically sophisticated poacher of the late 1990s. According to one report organised gangs from South of the Border have using infra-red spotlights, specially trained lurcher dogs, to track down large numbers of deer, cutting herds by as much as 30% (*Scotland on Sunday* 16 March 1997:8). The demand for low-fat meat and

the impact of the BSE crisis in the cattle industry means that a deer carcass can fetch up to £100. Although it is illegal to use image-intensifying night-sights in Scotland to shoot deer and despite the fact that poachers can in theory be fined up to £1,000 per deer, in practice few cases ever reach court.

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 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* (1994:14). 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.

Sporting Estates in Victorian Scotland

The rapid, uneven and yet systematic development of this uneven form of recreational capitalism became one of the hallmarks of the second half of the Victorian period (Jarvie, 1991). It cannot be argued that there was a direct monocausal link between the financial difficulties of sheep farming and the development of the Highlands as a sporting playground during the Victorian period. However, the decline in the fortunes of sheep farming, the increasing wealth of the metropolitan sectors of capital, the influence of not only the traditional aristocracy but also the nouveaux riches, and an improved network of communications were certainly some of the key structural factors whereby estate owners looked to an increasing return in rent from the leasing of sporting estates.

Any sizeable tract of land primarily or partly designed for deer stalking and other forms of field sports qualifies as a sporting estate. Commenting on

the mid-Victorian period J.A.Cameron (1986:15) was to write

“the transition from sheep farms to sporting estates, which began around the 1850s, continued throughout this period and was a trend perceived by the crofting population as an even greater misuse of land-with valuable grazings being given over to sport of the privileged few”

The development of sporting estates and their association with the conspicuous consumption of leisure for the rich did in fact occur much earlier in the 19th century if not before (Gilbert, 1976).For instance in 1810 Mar forest had been let to Sir Harry Goodriche for as much as £1,200. Its 10,000 acres were extended in 1829 and again in 1838, covering 60,000 acres by 1839. In 1811, according to one account, there were only six deer forests in which red deer were actively preserved for sport, namely those at Atholl, Black Mount, Glenartney, Glen Fiddich, Invercauld and Mar (Clutton-Brock and Albion, 1989). In 1812, Highland lairds such as the Duke of Gordon advertised Glenfeshie (Cairngorms) in the *Times*. That year it was let to Grant of Ballindalloch for only £70 (Orr,1982).By 1827 Rothiemurchus had been cleared of sheep for grouse shooting. By 1833 the Earl of Malmesbury was offering sporting rights on Harris for as little as £25. That same year, suggests Malmesbury, sporting estates had become all the rage. Estates such as Strathconon received enquiries from London, Cumberland and Ireland before being leased to the Marquis of Bath for £1,200 in 1854 and the Irishman Sir John Latouch of Newbury for £2,200 in 1855.By 1859 the shooting value of the land on the Glengarry estate had surpassed its grazing value. Even in remote areas proprietors enjoyed the benefits from sporting rent. Sconcer on Skye was let for 7 years in 1855 at the cost of £500p.a.

As guides to the frequency of both popular and aristocratic sporting culture the *Statistical Accounts of Scotland* are by no means ideal (Steven, 1995). Both the *Old Statistical Accounts* (OSA), which cover the 1790s, and *New Statistical Accounts* (NSA), which cover the 1830s and 1840s, tend to underestimate the level of sporting activity. Although at the micro level the evidence contained within the parish accounts of daily life in the late 18th and early 19th century Scotland might be used to challenge monolithic explanations of the social and economic influence of the Industrial

Revolution, few of the contributors were specifically asked to comment upon sport and recreation during the period covered by the accounts (Tranter,1987).

Despite such limitations, there is, nonetheless, sufficient information to establish the existence of deer forests and sporting estates in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland during the period between 1790 and 1840. For instance evidence from the parish records account for deer forests at Crathie (Aberdeenshire OSA,Vol:XIV:464); Kilmuir-Easter (Ross and Cromarty OSA,Vol:XVII:191); Eddrachillis (Sutherlandshire OSA,Vol:XVIII:402); Cabrach and Mortlach (Banffshire OSA, Vol:XVI:116) and Halkirk (Sutherlandshire OSA, Vol:XVII:107) by the 1790s. By the 1840s additional forests are accounted for at Glen Orchy (Argyllshire NSA, Vol:XVI:117); Kingussie and Strath (Invernesshire NSA,Vol:XIV:66); Blair Atholl and Comrie (Perthshire, NSA, Vol:X:563); Kilmanivary (Ross and Cromarty NSA,Vol:XIV:507) and Kirkmichael (Banffshire NSA,Vol:XII:299).The results of this exercise are summarised in Table 1 :

Table 1: References to Red Deer in Old and New Statistical Accounts:-

- o - mention/occasional visit
- x - present
- * - deer forests

County	Parish	Old Statistical Account	New Statistical Account	County	Parish	Old Statistical Account	New Statistical Account
Aberdeen-shire	Kemnay	o		Perthshire	Auchterarder	o	
	Tullynestle		o		Auchtergaven	o	
	Lamphanan		x		Kenmore		x
	Glen Muick	x			Fortingall		x
	Auchindoir	o			Blair Atholl		*
	Crathie - Braemar	*	*		Comrie		*
	Alford	x	o		Moulin		o
	Birse	x	x		Longforgan	x	
Argyll-shire	Strathdon		x	Dowally	x		
				Doune	x		
	Callandar			Killin			
	Kildalton	o					
	Dunoon	o					
	Jura	o	x				
	Ardchattan		x				
	Kilfinichen	x	x				
	Kilmelfort		o				
	Glen Orchy		*				
Morvern		x					
Lismore/Appin	o						
Torosay	x	x					
			Ross and Cromarty	Kincardine		*	
				Kiltearn	x		
				Roskeen		x	
				Fodderty		o	
				Applecross		x	
				Barvas		x	
				Lochs		x	
				Kintail		x	

Deer Forests, Sporting Estates and the Aristocracy

	Kilmalie	x		Dingwall		o
				Glen Shiel		x
Inverness-shire	Portree		x	Lochalsh	x	
	Kilmorack		x	Contin	x	
	Laggan		x	Kilmuir Easter	*	
	North Uist		x			
	Harris		x	Sutherland-shire	Loth	x
	Moy & Dalarossie	x	x		Kildonand	x
	Kingussie	x	*		Dumess	*
	Boleskine/Abertarff		x		Farr	x
	Glen Urquhart Moriston		o	x	Rogart	o
	Strath (Skye)	x	*		Golspie	o
	Portree	o			Dornoch	o
	Glen Elg	x				
	Alvie	x		Banffshire	Kirkmichael	x
	South Uist	x			Inveravon	o
	Small Isles	o			Boharm	o
	Kingussie/Inch	o			Mortlach	*
					Cabrach	*
Angus	Edzell	o		Caithness	Latheron	x
	Tannadice	x			Wick	x
	Loch Lee	o			Reay	x
Elginshire	Ardclach		x	Nairnshire	Rafford	x
					Rothiemurchs	x

A more qualitative account might include some of the following entries such as the events at: Dowally (Perthshire) where ‘Red Deer have been shot which weighed above 18 stone and it would not be difficult for the Duke to furnish a Royal hunt’ (OSA, Vol:XII:374); Monymusk (South and West Aberdeenshire) where ‘of late years great numbers of deer and roes resort to this place’ (OSA, Vol:XIV:623); Cabrach (Banffshire) where ‘the forests of Glenfiddich and Black Water are stored with deer’ (OSA, Vol:XVI:116); Moy and Dalarossie (Invernessshire) where ‘Red Deer are very famous around the source of the Findhorn river’ (OSA, Vol:XVII:231); Halkirk (Sutherland and Caithness) where ‘Na shean [Lord of the Venison or game] were seen as sport and amusement’(OSA, Vol:XVIII:107); Crathie and Braemar (Aberdeenshire) where ‘The Earl of Fife and Mr Farquharson of Invercauld have each of them extensive forests well-stocked with red and roe deer’ (OSA, Vol:XIV:464) and at Mortlach (Banffshire) where ‘in the forest of Glen Fiddich there is an abundance of red deer’ (OSA, Vol:XIV:324).

The Earl of Fife and Farquharson of Invercauld are but two of the many members of the hereditary aristocracy associated with shooting in the parish records: ‘the forest of Lewis (Ross and Cromarty) was devoted by the first Earl of Seaforth to the exclusive maintenance of red-deer for sporting purposes’ (NSA, Vol:XIV:160); the Marquess of Abercorn regularly went shooting on the banks of Lochlaggan (Ross and Cromarty)

(NSA, Vol XIV:420); in the parish of Portree (Invernesshire) Lord Macdonald's forest at Sconcer abound with red-deer (NSA, Vol XIV:222); in the parish of Edenkille (Elgin) the noble family of Moray were reported to go shooting for several weeks of the shooting season (NSA, Vol XIII:186); in Kirkmichael (Banff) the Duke of Richmond leased his portion of the hill for shooting at a rate of £300 in 1842 (NSA, Vol XIII:299); the hunting of deer regularly graced 'the south bank of the Marquis of Breadalbane's estate' in Dull (Perthshire, NSA, Vol XI:755) in 1843; while in 1835 the late Duchess of Gordon was said to have regularly let her summer shooting quarters in the parish of Alvie (Invernesshire NSA, Vol XIV:86).

The Oban Times of 22nd February 1879 carried an advertisement by J Lyall Wilson (publisher of the Sportsman and Tourists' Guide) intimating the setting up of an agency for the letting of moors, deer forests and salmon fishings (*The Oban Times* 22 February 1879:4). The Duke of Atholl and the Duke of Sutherland were but two from a list of notable gentlemen who agreed that their name could be associated with such a development. By the 1880s the development of sporting estates had developed at such a rate that their demand exceeded their supply (Orr, 1982:33). Large tracts of land were still held by the British Aristocracy such as the Duke of Westminster who owned Reay forest and the father of Lady Londonderry, Henry Chaplin, who rented more than 70,000 acres in Sutherland in the early 1880s. By this time one fact was obvious, rents had increased to such a level that potential shooting tenants required a considerable supply of capital to finance the outlay of a forest or sporting estate. Strathconan which was let to Edward Baring in 1875 for £1,500 was taken by Lord Manners in 1880 for £2,500 and Edward C. Guinness in 1882 and 1883 for £2,900 (Orr, 1982:38). Blackmount was sublet to the Austrian ambassador, Count Karolyi for £2,000 in 1880, to Anthony Gibb for £3,250 in 1881, to H. Allsopp for £3,300 in 1882, 1883, 1884 and to Mr Cooper for the stag season only for £3,000 in 1885 (Orr, 1982:38). The contribution which sporting rent made to the overall economics of the estate can in part be gleaned from Table II which suggests from the figures provided that sporting rent on average contributed to about 44% of the income generated from estate rental:

Date	Estate	Estate Rental (£)	Sporting Rent (£)	%
1877	Balnagowan	14,343	4,035	28
1882	Coigach	5,460	2,700	50
1882	Arisaig	2,000	330	17
1883	Gaick	8,648	5,950	69
1883	Glenstrathfarrar	3,160	2,850	90
1893	Lewis	15,731	3,000	19
1893	Invereshie	8,260	6,012	73
1893	Glengarry	7,743	3,412	44
1893	Cromartie	12,600	5,500	44
1893	Dunrobin	38,327	13,583	35
1893	Scourie	2,358	1,380	59
1893	Assynt	3,502	950	27
1880	Breadalbane	62,551	11,703	19
			Average	44%

Source: Scottish Centre Research Papers in Sport, Leisure and Society 1997: Vol 2:36

It has often been suggested that the development of sporting estates provided an invaluable boost to the local economy, and their creation helped to cushion the effects of a declining sheep market and the falling price of wool. *The Sportsmen's and Tourists Guide* of 1907 referred to the annual expenditure on shooting as 'a golden stream of no small magnitude and one which benefits all classes alike' (*The Sportsmen's and Tourists Guide* 10 September 1907:5). In reality the benefits to many local communities were minimal. In 1895 *The Oban Times* expressed the opinion that such revenue comes 'only nominally into the country. Almost immediately it passes South where the laird has passed his summer...The people are in no way benefited' (*The Oban Times* 12 October 1895:12). John MacDonald, a merchant in Inverness complained that shooting tenants brought their supplies from the large stores in London (*The Oban Times* 12 October 1895:12). Lord Breadalbane in purchasing supplies for Blackmount, regularly obtained his groceries from Coopers in Glasgow and only his bread in Bridge of Orchy (S.R.O GD.112.16.9, *Breadalbane papers*). In 1883 the Minister of Kintail, who was one of the most

vociferous opponents of sporting estates, maintained that the sums paid in rent were chiefly taken away from the Highlands and expended in London and elsewhere with only a very small proportion being spent on local improvements (*Napier Commission*, Appendix 436:1884).

This is not to deny the fact that by the latter half of the Victorian period some shooting tenants did spend profusely, a fact that was recognised by the Napier Commission of 1884. The shooting tenant of Kinlochewe forest during a ten year lease from 1883 spent almost £3,800 every year (*Napier Commission*, Qu 42:732:1884). At the same time the tenants of four sporting estates on the Northern slopes of the Grampians spent over £7,000 every year (*Napier Commission*, Qu 43:466:1884). In 1872 the Marquis of Westminster was said to have spent £7,000 at Lochmore and was reported to be spending £6,000 a year, including rent, on the Glendhu and Reay estates in 1892 (Orr.,1982:66). General Crealock having rented the shooting at Patt on Loch Monar in 1899 did arrange for meat and fish from local suppliers but only until he could fill his larder with freshly caught venison and salmon. In spite of these impressive examples this injection of capital probably had a limited effect on the local economy, a point which was noted by the Land Enquiry of 1912 when it concluded that:

Even if sportsmen (and women) spend large sums in a neighbourhood... this is no sound argument in favour of sport. The expenditure may be some palliation locally but to compare the distribution of wealth with the production of wealth as if the two were of the same nature is bad logic and bad economics.

The development of certain areas of the Highlands and Islands for sporting purposes was also the subject of tension and conflict between landowners and crofters. The politics of land reform during the Victorian period contributed to the broader politics of Irish nationalism, Celtic radicalism of the time and the specific politics associated with both the Highland Land League Reform Association (H.L.L.R.A.) and events leading up to the passing of the Crofters Act in 1886. Both Michael Davitt and John Murdoch toured the Highlands in 1887 openly attacking not only the patterns of landownership in Scotland but also the notion of the Highlands as a sporting playground for the Southern aristocracy in particular. Scarcely a decade went by during the nineteenth century without various

forms of popular protest against the broader actions of landowners, whether they be specifically brought about by the development of sporting estates which threatened the livelihood of crofters who were pushed out to the edges of the Highland periphery, or part and parcel of the social and political unrest brought about by social and economic transformations of the period (Jarvie, 1991:79). Popular forms of protest against the development of sporting estates and the non-productive use of land continued intermittently into the 1920s. There were key locations, notably Barra, the Uists, Lewis and Skye but there were also land raids in other parts of the Highlands such as Argyll, Caithness and Perthshire (Burnett, 1984:11) .

The issue of the so called land problem gave rise to a division of opinion which ultimately contributed to the demise of the H.L.L.R.A and the Celtic radicalism of the time. While the likes of John Murdoch and John Macdonald of Morvern may have favoured state ownership the likes of Shaw Maxwell of the Scottish Land Restoration League did not go as far as land restoration but just land reform. Alexander Morrison of the Skye branch of the H.L.L.R.A maintained that the people were loyal subjects and not revolutionists, communists or socialists. The crofters merely wanted fair rent, security of tenure, compensation for improvements and restoration of land which they had previously occupied as tenants. The crofters wanted legislation along the same lines as the 1881 Irish Land Act, a wish that was partially but not wholly granted with the passing of the Crofters Act of 1886.

When the Crofting Act came in 1886 the recommendations moved far beyond those of the Napier Commission since it largely followed the enactment's of the Irish Land Act in granting security of tenure, fair rent and compensation for outgoing tenants. It also paved the way for the Crofters Commission with the power to fix fair rents. Yet the Act is worth remembering for its shortcomings as well as its virtues. It was regarded by right wing Liberals, Tories and Landowners as 'a dangerous affront to the sacred rights of property' (Maclean, 1986). The next Scottish secretary was a Tory, A.J. Balfour, son of the man who cleared Strathconon. Although many forfeited estates were restored in 1782 , crucially, the Crofters Act failed to return land that had been taken from the descendants of those crofters whose existence was being further threatened by the systematic development of sporting estates during the Victorian period.

As such it is important to remember that the popular and systematic development of hunting and shooting might have been seen as all the rage by the likes of Queen Victoria, the Winan brothers and Captain Arthur Walsh.M.P were not as popular with all social classes alike. At least two contrasting points of view emerged and in part are encapsulated in the thoughts of Lt General Henry Crealock who maintained that (Napier Commission 41,032-3):

Scotland herself has enormously benefitted by the rise in the value of shootings and fishings; the consequent increase in the sporting income to proprietors has enabled them to open up the country by good roads and assist in the formation of railroads and telegraphs while comfortable lodges and inns have been built in hitherto inaccessible places

and Robert Somers (1985:38) who in *Letters from the Highlands* wrote :

If game was not separated from the ordinary produce of the soil, for their use, the land would be worth more to the farmer, who would consequently pay a larger rent for it, and be liable for a larger assessment, of the poor-rate increased upon all other classes, for the special convenience of sportspeople? Game preserving, by injuring crops, and retaining large tracts of land in a state of waste is one of the principal sources of pauperism...

The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy?

As Isabel Colegate makes Sir Randolph Nettlebey ask, in the pages of *The Shooting Party*, 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 *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, *Aspects of Aristocracy*, and *The Best Circles:Society, Etiquette and the Season* (Cannadine 1990, 1994; 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 homogenous 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. To what extent in 20th century Scotland might it be more meaningful to talk of a sense of distinction between any “Real Aristocratic Society” and a more aspirant “Reel Aristocratic Society”?

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 foxhunting were virtually absent from Scotland. Apart from 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 nineteenth 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” (*Estates Gazette* July 1922:17). 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 as much 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 in the Highlands. To

what extent was the laird of Strathalder an archetypal hereditary laird of the late nineteenth and early twentieth 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 1989:26).

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 follows:

Table III: The Top Ten British Individual Landowners 1875 and 1994

Top Ten Landowners, 1875 (Britain)

	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

Top 10 Individual Owners, 1994 (Britain)

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

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

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 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 1996:10).

A small group of landowning families have remained relatively stable throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, 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 riche 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. Indeed as Table IV [Top 30 Wealthiest Landowners] indicates, while land, in 1996, remains a significant source of wealth for certain members of the landed aristocracy, the source of wealth behind landownership in Scotland is diverse.

Table IV: The 30 Wealthiest Landowners in Scotland 1996

Owner	Property	Source of Wealth	Acres	Wealth (£m)
Duke of Westminster	Westminster Estates	Land	95100	1650
Lisbet Koerner (1)	Corrour	Food Packaging	48210	1000
Bruno Schroder	Dunlossit	Banking	16500	950
Edmund Vestey	Assynt & Benmore	Food, shipping & Finance	86300	650
Robert Fleming	Blackmount & Dalness	Banking	88900	560
Earl Cadogan	Snaigow	Land	4000	450
The Queen	Balmoral & Delnademph	Inheritance	55270	450
Viscount Cowdray	Cowdray Estates	Media	76600	400
Simon & Henry Keswick	Glenkiln & Hunthill	Commerce	22481	380
Cayzer family	Kinpurmie and others	Caledonia Investments	9500	325
Cameron Mackintosh	North Morar	Entertainment	12000	250
Duke of Northumberland	Burcastle	Land and art	9000	250
Ann Gloag	Beaufort Castle	Buses	128	220
Bulmer family	Ammhuinnsuidhe	Cider	50900	170
John Menzies	Kames	Newsagent	1390	150
Sir Jack Hayward	Dunmaglass	Finance - Grand Bahamas	13000	140
Duke of Sutherland	Mertoun	Land and Art	4750	140
Marquess of Bute	Bute Estates	Land	53990	130
Phil Collins	Pennyghael	Pop music	7900	115
Lord Laing and family	Land in Moray & Argyll	Food Manufacturing	27100	81
Lady Anne Cavendish-Bentinck	Langwell & Braemore	Land	45000	80
Salvesen family	various properties	Food distribution	13295	75
J Crosthwaite-Eyre	Camusrory	Publishing	8129	70
Earl of Rosebery	Dalmeny Estates	Land	22400	70
Duke of Roxburghe	Roxburghe Estates	Land	65600	70
Lord Robert Iliffe	Syre and Rhifail	Marinas and property	25853	69
Leon Litchfield	Tulchan & Bowland	Plastics	26950	68
Christopher Moran	Glenfiddich & Cabrach	Finance and property	41500	65
Earl of Inchcape	Glenapp & Dryfehead	Trade & Finance	14085	44
Duke of Buccleuch	Buccleuch Estates	Land and art	261600	40
		TOTAL	1207431	£9112

Source: A Wightman “The Gentry, The Foreigners and the Native Scots” *The Herald* 23 April 1996:10.

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 wealth 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 1990:693). 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 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 under-pinned 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 as bleak and while the Tory Governments of 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 1990:707).

In social terms, the men and women of the gentry and the grandees have arguably dwindled. 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 Tonyandy have heirs to inherit the title and since the Macmillan earldom in 1983 there have been no further new creations.

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

Just as the old aristocracy ceased to dominate the land as the new plutocracy translated their new wealth into old forms of prestige, so the landed classes took up new forms of money-making. In Cannadine's words "during the last twenty years or so, they have invented a new role for themselves, as the self-appointed guardians of the so-called 'national heritage' (Cannadine 1990:707). This is entirely consistent with the main thesis in the sense that while Cannadine acknowledges that heritage has become strongly associated with the remains of a landed aristocracy, the explanation for this is that it is but a further indicator of their decline from grandeur and patrician status. 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 1994:170-185). 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 1994:185).

What is of particular significance to this paper is the extent to which Scottish evidence supports the Cannadine thesis that as Modern Britain has declined, the aristocratic fall from patrician status has been matched by the decline and fall of the British aristocracy. Undoubtedly the mighty magnates have been joined in the 1990s by a number of corporate lairds and trusts such as the Bocardo Societe Anonyme & 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 V [Top 20 Aristocratic Landowners] 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 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 V: 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
Total	1,554,488
Total Acreage above 5000 acres owned by aristocracy	2,554,399
As % of Scotland's total land mass	13.16%
% of Scotland-Top 20 aristocratic estates	8.01%

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

Highland Games, Sporting Estates and the Aristocracy in Scottish Affairs

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, it is not so much the decline and fall of a landed elite or a traditional aristocracy that is important but rather the stability of landownership and in particular the enduring nature of Scotland's magnates and those members of the British aristocracy who own land in Scotland.

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 homogenous 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 in Scotland 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 13.0% 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 per cent) were Scots (Rosie 1992:28). 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 count-

esses in their own 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 1992:28). His principal residence, Cortachy Castle, is set in heavily wooded land beside the River South Esk. English 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 also illustrative of the fact that networks and family connections play a key role in preserving and supporting the landowning interest (Wightman 1996:155). 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 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).

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 1993:9). This is 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 both 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 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 1996:19). 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: (i) the revenue generated fell by 60% while costs rose by 40%, leaving landowners with an annual loss of more than £10 million; (ii) the number of jobs created by the sport fell from 980 to 580; (iii) that there are 486 grouse moors in Scotland which

produced just under 235,000 birds in 1989; (iv) that by 1994 the number of birds had fallen by 30% with 1975 being the last really good year for grouse shooting and (v) that in 1994 revenues from grouse shooting stood at about £3 million against a total expenditure of £13.7million.

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: (i) the activity maintains employment, attracts tourist income and maintains the natural habitat; (ii) investment in moorland and conservation management was the best way to maintain the rich diversity of wildlife on the Scottish uplands; (iii) field sports should be eligible for European funding on the grounds that they provided employment in rural areas and (iv) the sport deserved long term support because of its economic and environmental benefits (*The Herald* 8 August 1996:7).

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, coupled 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 1993:71). 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 (i) the estimated direct income generated from sporting shooting during 1990 was £28.6 million; (ii) the total participant expenditure on sporting shooting during 1990 was £78 million; (iii) sporting shooting in Scotland employed 12,397 people full time; (iv) the estimated direct and indirect employment generated by sporting shooting stood at 7,217 (full time equivalent jobs) and (v) 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 Scottish Development Agency funded report 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.

Sporting estates tend to be valued not on the land but on the price that people are willing to pay to catch salmon or shoot stags. During 1990 these charges averaged £13,000 per fish and £30,000 per stag. Between 1990 and 1997 these prices fell as low as £5,000 per salmon and £18,000 per stag as owners sought to dispose of their estates as the recession deepened (*The Herald* 10 July 1995:7). 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. Strutt & Parker estimated that in July 1995, 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 1995:7). By February 1997 the market value of a Highland sporting estate was again on the rise with some predicting that purchase prices were now verging on 1989 or 1990 levels (*The Herald* 25 February 1997:11). It goes without saying 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 have some additional income from grouse shooting (Wigan 1991:9). 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 [HIE] concluded in 1996 that : (i) allowing for multiplier effects total mountaineering related expenditure amounted to almost £149 million in the HIE area ; (ii) 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 [TOP]; (iii) such impacts represented between 2-3% of employment and income in the HIE area alone ; and (iv) 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 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 nineteenth century or the last decade of the twentieth 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 concern for the social and economic development of certain local communities. 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, in many cases false 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.

Second, just as both the Napier Commission of 1884 and the Land Enquiry of 1912 questioned the extent to which the local and regional economy of the Highlands benefited from the influx of major and minor aristocrats and the nouveaux riches of Victorian period, so have a number of recent reports questioned the economic and social impact of the sporting estate in the late 1990s. By providing forms of short-term seasonal employment, sporting estates have done little to provide alternative full-time employment in compensation for falling full-time employment opportunities. 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.

Third this paper has attempted to suggest that some of the taken for granted assumptions about 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 re-placed patrician duties but rather the necessary

precondition for a dutiful and worthwhile activity. It is possible to accept that during late nineteenth 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. Yet what is evident as a result of recent research and invaluable contributions made by Wightman and others is that the extent to which the Scottish Aristocracy have survived and adapted is as equally compelling a thesis to that which is offered in the works of Cannadine and in particular *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*.

Finally it might be fitting to borrow an analogy from the late Sorley Mclean to bring this paper to a close. For writers such as Raasay born Sorley Maclean locality, community, physical environment and the past are forever intermingled. An inescapable fact of that history was the clearances that took place on Raasay in the 1850s. It was the implications of the clearances that the poet wrestled with in the poem Hallaig-the name of one of the twelve Rassay townships cleared during the 19th century. In Hallaig as in the most ancient Gaelic poetry, trees so long regarded as reverential by Celts, are much in evidence. But Maclean's trees are symbols as well as simple objects of affection. The trees represent the township's former occupants-its ghosts and presences, its living past in the present. In the same sense it might be suggested that the vast tracts of land and empty spaces preserved for monarchs of the glen and sporting purposes in the 1990s 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.

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The Sports Historian No. 18 (1)

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