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Author: Ewen A. Cameron

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The Scottish Landed Estate: Break-up or Survival?

Ewen A. Cameron

There are two historical narratives of landed estates in modern British and Irish history. This essay proposes to examine these narratives – one of decline, the other of preservation – to assess the relationship between them and to add an additional dimension to the debate: the role of the state. This is more diverse than the familiar story of intervention in the aftermath of the Great War to break up landed estates and redistribute land. It involves the ownership of land and the subtle relationship between those who had access to state power and the form of the landed estate. At times the latter was an important venue in which high politics was played out but the link goes beyond that to the landed estate as a means of access to political power. Prior to addressing these matters, the opening section of the essay will deal with the narratives around the history of the landed estate in Britain and Ireland.

Narratives

First, we must deal with a story of 'decline', based on the changes to landholding in the period from the 1870s to the 1920s. The intervention of the state to restrict the freedom of action of landowners in the management of their estates, the preservation of their game and the disposal of their income were the key actions of the United Kingdom state in this period.[1] If the landed estate happened to be in Ireland or the Scottish Highlands there was an additional dimension of change. Legislation of 1870 and 1881 in Ireland and 1886 in Highland Scotland granted security of tenure and other rights to small tenants.[2] This has been interpreted as an intellectual shift away from the applicability of classical political economy to these areas, in favour of 'historicist' ideas about communal approaches to landholding. These were drawn from

[1] David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven, 1990); in a Scottish context see Annie Tindley, *The Sutherland Estate, 1850–1920: Aristocratic Decline, Estate Management and Land Reform* (Edinburgh, 2010).

[2] Ewen A. Cameron, *Land for the People: The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c.1880 – 1925* (East Linton, 1996), 16–39.

scholarship relating to the early history of tenure in these areas. The experience of village communities in India and other parts of the Empire have also been seen as influential.[3] Increasing fiscal demands on the income from landed property, it is held, undermined the economic basis of the large landed estate and precipitated extensive sales of land in the aftermath of the Great War, bringing to an end the age of the landed estate.[4]

Another important development was the decline of the great country houses and the disposal of the valuable art, furniture and other objects which the landed families had collected. There was no greater house in Scotland than Hamilton Palace.[5] The ducal family had acquired new wealth due to the rich seams of coal under their land. Ironically – deliciously so for Keir Hardie and other socialists who argued against the landowners' unearned increment from mineral royalties – the lucrative extraction of these natural resources undermined the foundations of the Palace and led to its abandonment and, ultimately, its demolition in 1919. Christies conducted two great sales of the contents: in 1882 (at which nearly £400,000 was raised) and then in November 1919 (raising £230,000).[6] The increasingly shaky foundations of Scotland's

[3] Clive Dewey, 'The Influence of Sir Henry Maine on Agrarian Policy in India' in Alan Diamond (ed.), *The Victorian Achievement of Sir Henry Maine: A Centennial Reappraisal* (Cambridge, 1991); S. B. Cook, *Imperial Affinities: Nineteenth-Century Analogies and Exchanges between India and Ireland* (New Delhi, 1993); Clive Dewey, 'Celtic Agrarian Legislation and the Celtic Revival: Historicist Implications of Gladstone's Irish and Scottish Land Acts 1870–1886', *Past and Present*, 64 (1974), 30–70; Clive Dewey, 'Images of the Village Community: A Study in Anglo-Indian Ideology', *Modern Asian Studies*, 6 (1972), 291–328; John Shaw, 'Land, People and Nation: Historicist Voices in the Highland Land Campaign, c. 1850–1883' in E. F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865–1931* (Cambridge, 1996), 305–24.

[4] Martin J. Daunton, 'The Political Economy of Death Duties: Harcourt's Budget of 1894' in N. B. Harte and Roland E. Quinault (eds), *Land and Society in Modern Britain, 1700–1914: Essays in Honour of F. M. L. Thompson* (Manchester, 1996), 137–71; John V. Beckett and Michael E. Turner, 'End of the Old Order? F. M. L. Thompson, the Land Question, and the Burden of Ownership in England, c.1880–c.1925', *Agricultural History Review*, 55 (2007), 269–88; John Beckett and Michael Turner, 'Land Reform and the English Land Market, 1880–1925' in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (eds), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750–1914* (Basingstoke, 2010), 219–36.

[5] 'Hamilton Palace: A Virtual Reconstruction', http://hamilton.rcahms.org.uk, [accessed 30 March 2017].

[6] Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven, 1997), 124–5, 255; Ian Gow, *Scotland's Lost Houses* (London, 2006), 26–42; Ian Gow, *Scottish Houses and Gardens: From the Archives of Country Life* (London, 1997), 128–40. *Country Life* published five articles on Hamilton Palace and its collections in 1919. The 1919 sale was reported in the *Scotsman*, 5 November 1919, 8; 6 November 1919, 9; 7 November 1919, 6; 8

greatest 'Big House' provide a seductive, but potentially misleading, metaphor for the fate of the landed class.

The other principal narrative of the history of the landed estate is confined to Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Most accounts agree that the landed estate was almost entirely eclipsed in the Republic of Ireland. Recent work has emphasised the extent to which this was unfinished business in 1922 and that successive pieces of Irish legislation completed the job begun by United Kingdom land purchase acts.[7] A preservationist narrative emphasises the ways in which the representatives of the British estates developed new ways of maintaining their elite status in the wake of the erosion of the economic foundations of their status.[8] The principal theme of this literature is the increasing role of the landed proprietors and country-house owners as actors in the preservation of 'heritage'.[9] The foundation of the National Trust for Scotland in 1931 (an organisation entirely separate from the older National Trust, operative in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and the Association for the Preservation of Rural Scotland, are the key Scottish markers of this process. A small group of landowners – the duke of Atholl, Sir Iain Colquhoun of Luss, Sir John Stirling Maxwell, the earl of Crawford and Balcarres – were central to the establishment of these organisations. They were careful to construct an image that their work was in the national interest.[10] This argument was given elegant literary expression by Sir James Fergusson of Kilkerran in a book-length hymn to the positive, albeit waning, influence of the landed class on the historical development of Scotland.[11]

These narratives are not necessarily competing, contradictory or paradoxical. Indeed, they fit together quite well. The construction of the narrative of preservation can be seen as a response to both the narrative of, and the real

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November 1919, 10.

[7] Terence Dooley, *'The Land for the People': The Land Question in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 2004).

[8] Modes of survival are at the centre of F. M. L. Thompson's Presidential Addresses to the Royal Historical Society and published in its *Transactions*, 5th series, 39, 6th series, 1–3.

[9] Mandler, *Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*; Olwen Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland: Land, Power and Social Elites, 1878–1960* (Dublin, 2009), David McCrone and Angela Morris, 'Lords and Heritages: The Transformation of the Great Lairds of Scotland' in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Elites* (Edinburgh, 1994), 170–86.

[10] Hayden Lorimer, *'Your wee bit hill and glen': The Cultural Politics of the Scottish Highlands, c. 1918–1945*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Loughborough, 1997), 74–92.

[11] James Fergusson, *Lowland Lairds* (London, 1949). Fergusson was the eighth baronet of Kilkerran, Ayrshire and served as Keeper of the Records of Scotland from 1949 to 1969.

evidence for, decline. The issue for discussion is the extent to which these narratives are exaggerated: was the decline as profound as many have suggested and were the preservationist activities as successful as is first apparent? There are, however, two other important points to be made and this essay will deal with them in more depth. The first is that the landed estate has survived, albeit in different forms and under new types of ownership, in Scotland in a way that it has not in Ireland. This is the basis for a continuing critique of 'landlordism' which draws on a range of different Scottish political traditions and remains relevant in contemporary times. This is evident from the Victorian era, during which the classic assailants of private landownership, such as Henry George and Alfred Russel Wallace, used Scottish material to make the case for land restoration or nationalisation.[12] It continued in the Edwardian period when Lloyd George attacked the duke of Sutherland as the epitome of the private owner of vast acreages.[13] During the inter-war period, when the once dominant Liberal party retreated to the margins of Scottish politics, fundamental arguments against private ownership of land were articulated by the left.[14] In the post-war period this was perhaps less evident, until land reform became realistic once again after the creation of the Scottish parliament in 1999. A polemical literature deals with the continuing problem of the concentration of Scottish land ownership. This raises the issue of the incompleteness of the narrative of decline and dispersal of landownership in Scotland.[15]

In response to this suggestion it might be argued that landownership has

[12] Henry George, 'The "Reduction to Iniquity"', *Nineteenth Century*, 16 (1884), 134–55; Alfred Russel Wallace, *Land Nationalisation. Its Necessity and its Aims: Being a Comparison of the System of Landlord and Tenant with that of Occupying Ownership in their Influence on the Well-Being of the People* (London, 1882), 29.

[13] Annie Tindley, '"The system of landlordism supreme": David Lloyd George, the 5th duke of Sutherland and Highland Land Sales, 1898–1919', *British Scholar*, 3 (2010), 24–42.

[14] Thomas Johnston, *Our Scots Noble Families* (Glasgow, 1909), James Ramsay MacDonald provided a Foreword for this book of essays which originated as articles in the Glasgow Independent Labour Party newspaper *Forward*. See also, Thomas Johnston, *A History of the Working Classes in Scotland*, 3rd edition (Glasgow, 1929).

[15] John McEwen, *Who Owns Scotland* (Edinburgh, no date), in his acknowledgements McEwen credits Gordon Brown for 'starting me off … and pressing me to go further'; an early essay by McEwen was published in Gordon Brown's *Red Paper for Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1975); Andy Wightman has taken on the mantle of McEwen. Among his many important publications are *Who Owns Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1996), dedicated to McEwen; *Scotland: Land and Power, The Agenda for Land Reform* (Edinburgh, 1999) and *The Poor Had No Lawyers: Who Owns Scotland (And How They Got It)* (Edinburgh, 2011). James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976) is the historical text upon which much of this agenda is built.

changed from the days of Victorian aristocratic lairds controlling vast estates. This point is, to a degree, valid and can be seen as the result of successive waves of land reform in Scotland. In the aftermath of the Great War the Land Settlement (Scotland) Act (1919) provided for the state-acquisition of large areas, especially in the highlands.[16] The vast bulk of this land remains in the hands of the Scottish Government at the present time. Even here, however, although the identity of the owner contrasts with the classic private laird, many of the essentials of the landed estate survived. Most of these estates were divided into crofts and operated a form of tenure which gave the tenant security and a strong degree of control over the land. When crofting was thought to be under threat in the 1950s one of the defences of it was a perception of the state as a constructive landowner.[17] Very few estates followed the Irish model of land purchase, although there was provision for this in the Scottish Congested Districts Act of 1897. Only one large estate, Glendale on the Island of Skye, went down this route.[18] A further, and seemingly new, form of ownership which has emerged in post-devolution Scotland is that by the 'community'. While this has enormous potential to deal with longstanding grievances relating to housing and employment in remote rural regions, it can also be seen as a repackaging of the traditional landed estate, rather than a complete overturning of its form.[19]

The re-packaging of landownership is more extensive and diverse than the concentration on the heritage sector would suggest. There are other ways in which landowners have sought to sustain their power and status which help to explain why they are still such a focus for the opprobrium of land reformers in

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[16] Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 166–90; Bob Chambers, *For Want of Land: A Study of Land Settlement in the Outer Hebrides, Skye and Raasay between the Two World Wars*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Aberdeen, 2013).

[17] PP 1953–4 VIII, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions* (Cmd 9091), 'Note of Dissent by Mrs Margaret H. Macpherson', 91. Mrs MacPherson was a well-known Labour activist in the Scottish Highlands and was often critical of that Lowland-based party for neglecting land-reform.

[18] Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 96–8.

[19] John MacAskill, *We Have Won The Land: The Story of the Purchase by the Assynt Crofters' Trust of the North Lochinver Estate* (Stornoway, 1999); Isobel MacPhail, *Land, Crofting and the Assynt Crofters Trust: A Post-Colonial Geography*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wales, Lampeter, 2002), 261–406; James Hunter, *From the Low Tide of the Sea to the Highest Mountain Tops: Community Ownership of Land in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Kershader, 2012); A. Fiona D. MacKenzie, *Places of Possibility: Property, Nature and Community Land Ownership* (Oxford, 2013); Ewen A. Cameron (ed.), *Recovering from the Clearances: Land Struggle, Resettlement, and Community Ownership in the Hebrides* (Kershader, 2013).

Scotland. Central to this survival is a close relationship, even a blurring of the boundaries, between the landed estate and the state.

Concentration of Landownership in Scotland

Much of the particular history of the land question in Scotland since the late nineteenth century stems from a growing realisation that it was concentrated in relatively few hands. Until the 1870s little was known about the concentration or dispersal of landownership in Britain. An official *Return of Owners of Land* in 1876 was followed in the late 1870s and early 1880s by successive editions of John Bateman's enumeration of landed proprietors. From this evidence it is clear that Scottish land was owned by a small elite: of land in estates of 1,000 acres or more, 1,758 landowners owned 17.6 million acres, 92 per cent of the total land area of Scotland. In England, estates of 1,000 acres or more amounted to only 12.8 million acres, or 56.1 per cent of the total land area. In Wales the figure was 1.5 million acres, 60.8 per cent of the total. The Irish figures are interesting in that 3,745 owners held 15.8 million acres, 78.4 per cent of the total. This figure would likely have been higher prior to the dispersal of encumbered estates in the aftermath of the Great Famine.[20] In some senses this division of the landowning classes into national groups gives a misleading picture. The duke of Buccleuch, for example, held land in six English counties and eight Scottish counties, the bulk of his 460,108 acres being in Scotland. The marquis of Bute held land in seven counties in Scotland, England and Wales amounting to 116,668 acres; 63,891 acres of which were in Scotland. Analysed by acreage, the largest landowner in the United Kingdom was the duke of Sutherland. He held 1,358,545 acres in Scotland and England, his vast Scottish estates only forming the most extensive part of his pan-British empire. In the county of Sutherland he had 1,176,454 acres and his marriage to the countess of Cromartie added 149,999 acres in the neighbouring counties of Ross and Cromarty.[21]

This excessive concentration of land did not necessarily bring great wealth to its owners. The most striking example of the gap between acreage and income is also the duke of Sutherland who earned 'only' £142,000 from his 1.36 million acres. The duke of Hamilton, whose estates were in industrial areas rich in minerals, gained the same income from around 160,000 acres. This pattern was evident in other areas of the country as well. A study of

[20] Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, 9, 54–5, 710–11.

[21] John Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, 4th edition (London, 1883), 63, 69, 431.

the South West of Scotland, an area much closer to the borders of the heavy industrial region where land values were much higher, bears out the same picture of concentration. It has been calculated that only 1.4 per cent of the owners of land of over one acre owned 82 per cent of the acreage and 60 per cent of the land value.[22] This suggests regional differences in the pattern of Scottish landholding.

The statistics in the *Return of Owners of Land* published by the House of Commons in 1876 have been analysed to show the effect of large estates (those over 1,000 acres in extent) on the pattern. The table has been ordered by counties according to the percentage of their total area in estates of 1,000 acres or more.

The counties most dominated by such estates were located in the north and west of Scotland, the crofting areas.[23] Of the twenty-four estates of more than 100,000 acres, fourteen were located in Inverness, Ross and Sutherland. If Argyll is added to this list, we find twenty three of the forty-four estates of more than 50,000 acres. The other counties high in the league table of concentrated landownership were also in geographically peripheral rural areas. There was a concentration in the North East: Banff, Nairn, Elgin and Aberdeen. The other identifiable grouping includes the industrial counties of Scotland; in these areas land was of much higher value and dispersed to a much greater degree. Thus, we find such counties as Fife, Stirling, Lanark, Renfrew, Dumbarton and Ayr in the lower reaches of the table. The division by county is a little arbitrary and gives a slightly misleading picture in some senses. There was considerable diversity within individual counties. In Fife, for example, there was a highly industrialized area, dominated by coal mining, in the south west of the county. By contrast, there was excellent arable-farming land in the north east. Similar internal diversity could be seen in Haddington, Edinburgh, Stirling and Linlithgow, in all of which coal mining was an important industry. Nevertheless, the large landed estate and the big house was less important in the social structure of these areas of Scotland, compared to the Highlands or the North East.

Relatively low landed incomes did not detract from social and political control. In late-Victorian Scotland a plethora of organisations were responsible

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[22] R. H. Campbell, *Owners and Occupiers: Changes in Rural Society in South West Scotland Before 1914* (Aberdeen, 1991), 98–107.

[23] T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1988), 301 makes the distinction between 'crofting' and 'farming' parishes in the highlands.

Table 1: Scottish landed estates of more than 1000 acres

County	Owners	Acres	Owners 1000+	% of owners	% of land
Sutherland	430	1299253	10	2.33	99.64
Inverness	1868	2589408	89	4.76	99.49
Ross	2044	1971682	65	3.18	98.93
Argyll	2864	2030948	145	5.06	98.75
Bute	736	138972	4	0.54	98.55
Banff	4025	407501	27	0.67	97.92
Peebles	699	232410	40	5.72	96.68
Nairn	537	120765	12	2.23	96.59
Elgin	2562	303168	27	1.05	96.52
Wigtown	1820	309087	32	1.76	96.04
Perth	7644	1612840	158	2.07	93.64
Aberdeen	7472	1255138	155	2.07	93.42
SCOTLAND	**132131**	**18946694**	**1758**	**1.33**	**92.81**
Kincardine	1383	244585	40	2.89	89.87
Roxburgh	2455	423463	67	2.73	89.63
Zetland	549	305383	32	5.83	89.52
Selkirk	706	161815	29	4.11	89.12
Dumfries	4177	676971	74	1.77	87.98
Forfar	9339	555994	75	0.80	87.98
Kirkcudbright	2386	571950	92	3.86	87.55
Haddington	1509	171739	35	2.32	86.88
Cromarty	231	18206	3	1.30	86.80
Ayr	9376	721947	109	1.16	86.48
Berwick	1744	292139	51	2.92	83.97
Clackmannan	1227	30189	7	0.57	82.02
Orkney	1308	220873	22	1.68	81.97
Dumbarton	2346	153736	23	0.98	78.55
Renfrew	5735	155321	25	0.44	74.67
Edinburgh	16945	231742	50	0.30	74.47
Lanark	20056	557919	87	0.43	73.97
Stirling	4257	284751	42	0.99	73.65
Fife	2562	304363	74	2.89	63.71
Linlithgow	1536	75785	17	1.11	61.90
Caithness	1028	471763	29	2.82	57.92
Kinross	727	44888	8	1.10	26.65

for local administration – Parochial Boards for poor relief after 1845, School Boards after 1872 and County Councils after 1889 – giving landowners a host of channels in which to exercise influence, to say nothing about their uninhibited direct power over their tenants before the 1880s. In 1874 poverty-stricken crofters at Bernera, in the west of the Island of Lewis, rioted about landlord encroachment of their grazing land. At the consequent trial in the Sheriff Court it became clear that Sir James Matheson's factor, Donald Munro, held so many local public offices that he was a virtual dictator in the island.[24] This event, and another protest against eviction at Leckmelm in Wester Ross, set the pattern for the 'Crofters' War' – at its most intense from 1882 to 1888 – although there were other waves of protests in the years just before and just after the Great War.[25]

Although it is a commonplace that 'anti-landlordism' is a strong tradition in Scottish politics, it is worth considering its precise form. Much of the protest and rhetoric was directed against the policies of owners of large estates rather than the existence of the large estate itself. Indeed, 'factors' (the Scottish term for land agents) tended to attract a greater degree of opprobrium than the landowners. This is evident in much of the Gaelic poetry of the nineteenth century. Indeed, no less a commentator than the pre-eminent twentieth-century Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean felt that this focus on factors detracted from the criticism which, in his view, ought to have been directed towards landowners.[26] There is no question that the factor, with his huge influence over the lives of insecure tenants, played an enormous role in the direct and indirect coercion that could be exerted through the landed estate. Indeed, when the state, through the Congested Districts Board, established its own landed estates in the Island of Skye in the early twentieth century it was aware of the opprobrium in which the factor was held. As a result, they determined to use an alternative title for its 'land manager'.[27] In the notes to his poem 'oideachadh ceart' (A proper schooling) another twentieth-century poet from Skye, Aonghas MacNeacail, makes an interesting point when he remarks,

[24] James Shaw Grant, *A Shilling for your Scowl: The History of a Scottish Legal Mafia* (Stornoway, 1992); *Report of the So-Called Bernera Rioters at Stornoway, on the 17th and 18th of July 1874* (no place, 1874).

[25] Iain J. M. Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest in the Scottish Highlands after 1914: The Later Highland Land Wars* (Aldershot, 2013).

[26] Samuel MacLean, 'The Poetry of the Clearances', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 38 (1937–41), 296, 319.

[27] See the discussion in National Records of Scotland, Congested Districts Board Files, AF42/1891; for background see the detailed account in Donald Shaw, *The Idrigill Raiders* (Ullapool, 2010).

correctly, 'no Scot from croft or tenement, needs to be told that the factor is the landlord's agent or rent-collector', thereby linking the rural and urban element of the politics of property relations and conflict. The principal urban protests over property were the rent strikes in Glasgow and other towns in 1915. The urban property market, especially in areas affected by the munitions industries, had been disturbed and landlords attempted to take advantage of high demand to raise rents. This led to protest, in which factors were burnt in effigy, and government intervention to restrict rent increases.[28]

We have seen how earlier attempts at land reform in Scotland did not lead to substantial erosion of the landed estate as an entity in Scottish society. From the 1920s to the advent of a Scottish Parliament in 1999 land reform remained part of the political and cultural debate in Scotland. There was widespread unease at the extent of the concentration of landownership. Aside from tinkering with crofting tenure, there was minimal land reform. Outside the Highlands it was not taken very seriously as an issue on a Scottish political agenda dominated by housing, industrial policy, oil and the constitution. There were, however, cultural attempts to link these issues with the politics of land reform and with the injustices of Scottish history. In the 1970s the '7:84 Theatre Company' were responsible for the staging of John McGrath's play about the history of the Scottish Highlands: *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black Black Oil*. The group took its name from the reported statistic that 84 per cent of wealth in British society was concentrated in the hands of only 7 per cent of the population. The premiere was held in Scotland's oil capital, Aberdeen, in 1973, and subsequently played to audiences in village halls throughout the Highlands, where the cheviot and the stag had been central to important historical forces. Each performance was followed by a ceilidh.[29] This drama was played out in a period when Scottish politics was opening up to new questions. The discovery of North-Sea oil had brought new possibilities to both Unionists and Nationalists. The period from 1967 to 1974 saw the move of the Scottish National Party from the fringes of Scottish politics towards its

[28] Aonghas MacNeacail, *dènamh gàire ris ' chloc, dàin ùra agus thagte: Laughing at the Clock, New and Selected Poems* (Edinburgh, 2012), 162–5; Joe Melling, *Rent Strikes: People's Struggle for Housing in West Scotland, 1890–1916* (Edinburgh, 1983).

[29] John McGrath, *Six-Pack: Plays for Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1996), 139–99; John McGrath, 'The Year of the Cheviot' in John McGrath, *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil,* revised, illustrated edition (London, 1993), v–xxix; Linda Mackenney, 'The People's Story: 7:84 Scotland' in Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace (eds), *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (Edinburgh, 1996), 65–7; Cairns Craig and Randall Stevenson (eds), *Twentieth-Century Scottish Drama: An Anthology* (Edinburgh, 2001), xii.

centre, and the years from 1974 to 1979 saw a long and tortuous debate over Scotland's place in the United Kingdom. They were years in which the pulse of Scottish politics quickened and there was renewed, although ultimately inconclusive, discussion of the land question.

Land reform only became a realistic prospect in Scottish politics with the election of a Labour government in 1997 and the creation of a Scottish parliament in 1999. A Land Reform Act followed in 2003. This had three objectives: to create a right of responsible access to land; to give communities the right to buy their land when it came on the market; and to give crofting communities, the inheritors of the reform of 1886, the right to buy their land at any time.[30] Alongside this formal legislative process, and accelerated by it, was the development and implementation of the idea of 'community ownership' of land. This flowed from the example of Assynt in Sutherland, to Knoydart on the west coast of Inverness-shire, Eigg in the Inner Hebrides and the small island of Gigha, just off the Mull of Kintyre. These were important events in seeming to break the logjam of Scottish land reform and putting these communities on a new footing.[31]

Community ownership has developed into a significant form of property holding for quite large landed estates. It can be seen as a quasi-democratic form of the landed estate, as well as an alternative to market-oriented forms of landownership.[32] Despite these important innovations, there are continuities with the traditional landed estate, however; not least the implication that land management, even in the interests of the 'community', can be carried out in large blocks of land. Community ownership is especially evident in the Hebrides, where 500,000 acres, from Galson in the north of Lewis to South Uist, are held this way and further bids are being made on the Pairc estate on Lewis. Stòras Uibhist (The Wealth of Uist), the largest of these estates,

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[30] Janet Laible, 'The Scottish Parliament and its Capacity for Redistributive Policy: The Case of Land Reform', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 61 (2008), 160–84; Charles R. Warren and Annie McKee, 'The Scottish Revolution? Evaluating the Impacts of Post-Devolution Land Reform', *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 127 (2011), 17– 39; John MacAskill, 'The Crofting Community's Right to Buy in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003', *Scottish Affairs*, 49 (2004), 104–33; Nicole Busby and Calum MacLeod, 'Rural Identity in the Twenty-First Century: A Community of Crofters or Crofting Communities', *Journal of Law and Society*, 37 (2010), 592–619.

[31] Alistair McIntosh, *Soil and Soul: People versus Corporate Power* (London, 2001), 131–47, 170–95, 262–78; Camille Dressler, *Eigg: The Story of an Island* (Edinburgh, 1998), 147–93; Catherine Czerkawaska, *God's Islanders: A History of the People of Gigha* (Edinburgh, 2006).

[32] This is an important theme in MacKenzie, *Places of Possibility*.

extends to 93,000 acres. It is perhaps doubtful if the framers of the legislation had estates of this size in mind when the 2003 Land Reform Act was passed and the Scottish Land Fund, recently re-established, was created. Thus, even within a novel development in the long debate over the Scottish land question there is evidence of the survival of the landed estate.

Land reform is an ongoing process in devolved Scotland. The Scottish government took action in 2012 to re-establish the Scottish Land Fund, wound up in 2006, but the cash at its disposal – £1 million in its first year, rising to £3 million in its third year – is not especially generous when one considers that the Board of Agriculture for Scotland had access to £2.75 million in 1919.[33] Since 2012 there has been increased activity. This was initiated by the appointment of the Land Reform Review Group by the Scottish Government.[34] The adverse comment on the interim report led the Government to expand the group.[35] Its final report was more comprehensive. It contains a host of recommendations, but it returns to the problem, defined in the Victorian period, of concentration of landownership. The group notes that in the past forty years there may have been 'a re-concentration of land ownership'. They conclude that 'the underlying structure of private estates … has continued to survive in rural Scotland.'[36] There seems to be no sign of the disappearance of the political issues surrounding the landed estate. In a striking constitutional development, the next stage in the re-heating of the debate on the Scottish land question came from the Scottish Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons. The Committee commissioned a briefing paper and this has stimulated debate. *432:50 – Towards a Comprehensive Land Reform Agenda for Scotland* (2013) seeks to tap into concerns about inequality of status and treatment in an age of austerity. The title, an echo of '7:84', refers to the ownership of 50 per cent of Scotland's privately-owned land by 432 persons.[37] The debate over the land question has survived in Scottish culture and politics.

The next section of this essay will examine some of the ways that this survival can be explained. This brings into focus the close relationship between the landed estate and the political elites at the heart of the British state.

The Landed Estate and the British State

[33] David Ross, 'Taking Control of a Vital Asset', *Glasgow Herald*, 18 December 2012, 19.

[34] Land Reform Review Group [LRRG], *Interim Report* (May 2013), 2.

[35] *Herald*, 6 June 2013.

[36] LRRG, *The Land of Scotland and the Common Good* (Edinburgh, 2014), 160.

[37] James Hunter, et al, *432:50 – Towards a Comprehensive Land Reform Agenda for Scotland: A Briefing Paper for the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee* (July 2013), 5.

The relationship between the landed estate and the British state is profound. The connection may be considered in the context of recent historiography which has begun to look at the state less as a bounded entity than as 'heterogeneous and multiplex', encompassing educational institutions outside its formal boundaries, systems of communications and networks of power. The next section will consider the Scottish landed estate in these terms.[38]

The landed estate was central to the administration of nineteenth-century Scotland. Before the establishment of elected County Councils in Scotland in 1889, local administration was carried out through a body of landowners, the Commissioners of Supply. The Commissioners had three functions. The first was the valuation of lands. This was important because local revenue was raised by rates which were based on such a valuation. Second, they were responsible for the imposing and recovery of rates so that expenditure could be undertaken. Third, the Commissioners fixed the number of police and paid the officers. Although the direction of the force was in the hands of the Sheriff – a legal appointment made by the Crown – county police forces were often criticised as being agents of the landowning class.[39] Who, then, were the Commissioners of Supply? There were three groups, each of them related to the landed class and the infrastructure of their estates. The first were owners of land valued at more than £100. The second were owners of houses valued at more than £200 and the third were the eldest sons and factors of owners of land valued at £400 or more.[40] Thus, until 1889 local government in rural Scotland was carried out by landowners. Further, revenue was raised by a property tax, so there was a clear incentive to limit expenditure.

A problematic element of this system, in the days before cross subsidy aimed at equalisation, was the vast disparity in the value of land, and hence the tax base, between the different counties. This can be seen from the following table, also drawn from the 1876 Return of Owners of Land, which shows the ten counties with the least valuable land and the ten with the highest.

The counties with the least valuable land were largely in the north of Scotland and those with the most valuable land were mostly in the south. A rate

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[38] Patrick Joyce, *The State of Freedom: A Social History of the British State since 1800* (Cambridge, 2013); a more traditional approach can be found in S. J. D. Green and R. C. Whiting (eds), *The Boundaries of the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1996).

[39] Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland [NRS], HH55/78, contains correspondence between senior police officers in Scotland and officials at the Scottish Office about this problem.

[40] NRS, GD40/16/6/6–9, Memorandum as to Local Government in Scotland, 18 November 1886.

of local taxation in Edinburghshire (Midlothian) would raise over 166 times the revenue produced by the same rate in Sutherland. Local administration was more straightforward in areas where the valuation of land and property was high. In areas where the value of land was low there was a choice between very high rates of local taxation to provide a meaningful level of service, or poverty-stricken local government. The latter tended to prevail as there was little chance of payment of the former from poor crofters. Also, in such areas the Commissioners of Supply tended to be a much smaller body as there were a few large landowners who exercised enormous influence. Thus, in some ways, it could be argued that local government prior to 1889 was not really conducted

Table 2: Land Valuation in Victorian Scotland

County	**Value/Acre (£)**
Sutherland	0.06
Zetland	0.11
Ross	0.14
Inverness	0.14
Orkney	0.28
Caithness	0.29
Nairn	0.35
Argyll	0.55
Banff	0.56
Ayr	1.55
Stirling	1.83
Haddington	2.03
Dumbarton	2.12
Fife	2.98
Clackmannan	3.23
Linlithgow	3.28
Renfrew	6.38
Lanark	7.31
Edinburgh	9.15

by the state at all, but by groups of unelected private individuals, mostly

landowners. A variant of this argument would be that the relationship between the state and the landed class was very close and the two spheres touched at various points. This structure helps to explain why once elected county councils were established, the landed class remained powerful. Indeed, it was not until the reform of Scottish local government in 1975, when the counties and burghs were replaced by a two-tier, functionally divided, system of Regions and Districts that the landed class relinquished their place in the administration of Scottish localities.

The landed estate was the basis of many national as well as local political careers. Landed MPs were very common in Scotland, especially in the north. The domination of Scottish politics by the Liberal party partly reflects the Liberal outlook of the Scottish landed class, until the rupture in the party over Irish Home Rule in 1886. The list of pre-1885 MPs for the constituencies in the Highlands, for example, is a roll-call of the landed elite of the area and demonstrates the vitality of family political dynasties: Cameron of Lochiel, a Conservative (Inverness-shire); Sir James Matheson and Sir Alexander Matheson (Ross-shire), the marquis of Stafford, later fourth duke of Sutherland (Sutherland); Sir Tollemache Sinclair of Ulbster (Caithness); Lord Colin Campbell and his brother, the marquis of Lorne, later ninth duke of Argyll (Argyll). This is not enough, however, to explain the political importance of the Scottish landed estate. Indeed, compared to England, the prominence of the great landowners in the parliamentary representation of Scotland was not especially significant. Within Scotland there were regional variations, especially a Highland/Lowland divide. The landlord dominance of Highland politics was virtually complete up to 1885. From the election of that year it was substantially eroded, although not entirely eradicated, as was the case in other parts of Britain.[41]

The success of the so-called 'Crofter MPs' in the period from 1885 to 1895 was notable but they were reabsorbed by the Liberal party in the mid-1890s and landlords returned to the representation of county seats. Sir Archibald Sinclair of Ulbster, later Lord Thurso, who had been a Cabinet minister in the Churchill wartime government, remained MP for Caithness and Sutherland until 1945.[42] Indeed, the long period of success for the Scottish Unionists

[41] David F Krein, 'The Great Landowners in the House of Commons, 1833–85', *Parliamentary History*, 32 (2013), 46–76.

[42] I. M. M. MacPhail, 'The Highland Elections of 1884–1886', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 50 (1976–8), 369–92. Annie Tindley, '"The sword of avenging justice": Politics in Sutherland after the Third Reform Act', *Rural History*, 19 (2008), 179–99;

from the 1920s to the 1950s meant that the owners of Scottish landed estates made a political comeback, often at the highest level. This group defies generalisation and ranges from the leading Orangeman Sir John Gilmour of Montrave (Secretary for Scotland and Home Secretary in the inter-war period) to the duchess of Atholl. The latter was known as the 'Red duchess', although her progressive politics can be overstated. She was notable for her opposition to appeasement, which saw her resign her safe seat and fight the ensuing by-election as an independent Unionist.[43] This trend culminated in the, albeit brief, premiership, as Sir Alec Douglas Home, of the earl of Home from 1963 to 1964.

A significant feature of the Scottish landed estate was the increasing use from the mid-nineteenth century of its sporting potential. This was an important way in which the political leadership of Great Britain came into contact with rural Scotland. Indeed, the coordination of the sporting and parliamentary seasons was central to the social calendar of the political and social elite. This can be evidenced in various ways. John Buchan's novel *John Macnab* (1924) tells the story of three such figures – Sir Edward Leithen, Lord Lamancha and Edward Palliser Yeates – who adopt the persona 'John Macnab' and lay a challenge to three landowners in the vicinity of the estate of their friend Archie Roylance that they can poach a salmon or a stag from their land. Buchan was a Tory of a particular Scottish kind. Although a Unionist MP for the Scottish Universities from 1927 to 1935 and later Governor General for Canada, he was a strong Scottish patriot. While his novel exemplifies traditional views about the sanctity of property, he also posed questions about the different values of a new class of non-native lairds. One of Macnab's targets is owned by an American family and another by an English war profiteer, the latter is initially the least sporting. Buchan drew on a real event for the kernel of his plot and it was hatched at Ardtornish Castle, the house of Gerard Craig Sellar, the grandson of Patrick Sellar (who is the principal villain in most narratives of the Highland Clearances).[44] A rather different literary evocation of

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Ewen A. Cameron, 'The Political Influence of Highland Landowners: A Reassessment', *Northern Scotland*, 14 (1994), 27–45; Ewen A. Cameron, *The Life and Times of* [*Charles*] *Fraser Mackintosh* (Aberdeen, 2000); Gerard J. De Groot, *Liberal Crusader: The Life of Sir Archibald Sinclair* (London, 1993).

[43] I. G. C. Hutchison, 'The Nobility and Politics in Scotland, c1880–1939' in Devine (ed.), *Scottish Elites*, 131–51; Stuart Ball, 'The Politics of Appeasement: The Fall of the duchess of Atholl and the Kinross and West Perth By-Election, December 1938', *Scottish Historical Review*, 69 (1990), 49–83.

[44] John Buchan, *John Macnab* (Edinburgh, 2007), see esp., 125, 224–5, 235; this edition

the Highland sporting estate was produced by the nationalist novelist Neil M. Gunn. His *Second Sight* was published in 1940 and concerns the pursuit of a legendary stag, 'King Brude'. In this book contrasts are drawn between the shooting tenants and their guests and stalkers, or ghillies. One of the latter has the facility of prophecy, the 'second sight' of the title, and evokes the sympathy of one of the more sensitive of the English sportsmen.[45] Nevertheless, Gunn saw the sporting estate as a malign force in Highland society: 'kept up by privilege and in the end devoted to preserving life in order to kill it.'[46]

The sporting estate had a wider political significance and was important in the ways in which the Highlands impinged on the public consciousness. Inverness was reached by a direct railway route from the south in 1863 and by the 1880s there was quite an extensive rail network in the Highlands.[47] This helped to facilitate the expansion of sporting estates, which in turn brought substantial business to the railway companies.[48] Most of the sport in the Highlands was deer stalking but from the middle of the nineteenth century grouse moors became numerous. The patronage of such estates by political and economic elites as owners, tenants and guests helped to integrate the Highland landscape, or a particular conception of it, with the mental landscapes of these groups. This crossed the political divide. In an attempt to expose what they saw as Liberal hypocrisy on the land question in the Edwardian period, the Scottish Unionists gathered information on sporting estates owned or rented by 'Radicals' and came up with thirty-five cases where

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has an introduction by the Scottish novelist, poet and mountaineer Andrew Greig who updated the story for the mid-1990s in his *The Return of John Macnab* (London, 1996). See also Christopher Harvie's introduction to the Canongate Classics compendium of *The Leithen Stories* (Edinburgh, 2000), viii–ix; Janet Adam Smith, *John Buchan* (London, 1965), 239–40, 263–4 and Andrew Lownie, *John Buchan: Presbyterian Cavalier* (London, 1995), 165–6. Perhaps stretching the point a little, Owen Dudley Edwards sees parallels between *John Macnab* and *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, see his 'John Buchan's Lost Horizon: An Edinburgh Celebration of the University of Glasgow' in Edward J. Cowan and Douglas Gifford (eds), *The Polar Twins* (Edinburgh, 1999), 233–4.

[45] Neil M. Gunn, *Second Sight* (London, 1940); another of Gunn's books, *The Lost Glen* (Edinburgh, 1932) contains an attack on the highland landed estate. The Irish writer Maurice Walsh, a friend of Gunn and a former colleague in the Excise Service, dealt with similar themes in his *Trouble in the Glen* (London, 1950), although it is set in the aftermath of the Second World War.

[46] F. R. Hart and J. P. Pick, *Neil M. Gunn: A Highland Life* (London, 1981), 171; Margery McCulloch, *The Novels of Neil M. Gunn: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh, 1987), 150.

[47] John McGregor, *The West Highland Railway: Plans, Politics and People* (East Linton, 2005).

[48] Alistair J. Durie, '"Unconscious benefactors": Grouse-Shooting in Scotland, 1780–1914', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 15 (1998), 65; P. J. G. Ransom, *Iron Road: The Railway in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2007), 92–3.

Liberal MPs or peers were sporting tenants.[49] The elite also helped to romanticise deer stalking and its effect on the landscape through their commissions to Sir Edwin Landseer, who abandoned his earlier interest in the people of the Highlands to concentrate on the animal which by the 1880s symbolised their displacement: the red deer.[50] The most extreme example of this invading force was an American businessman, W. L. Winans. He acquired ownership or tenancy of over 200,000 acres of land. His determination to exclude crofters was extreme, even to the extent of initiating litigation against a crofter who allowed a pet lamb to stray onto his land.[51] The edifice of the hunt was topped by royal patronage, with the future Edward VII a particularly keen participant.[52]

The fact that numerous leading politicians were keen sportsmen meant that the Highlands were familiar territory to many of them as they travelled north in August in pursuit of opportunities for shooting or angling. This meant that on occasion high politics were played out in the northern Scottish sporting environment. The 'Relugas compact' was hatched in September 1905 by Asquith, Grey and Haldane to remove Campbell-Bannerman from the leadership of the Liberal party. Asquith was staying at a country house in Morayshire; Grey, a dedicated angler, had a fishing lodge at Relugas, nearby.[53] The informal, even conspiratorial, nature of the Relugas compact hints at the possibility that much politics were done on Highland deer forests and grouse moors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even more remarkably, on 7 September 1921 the Cabinet met in Inverness to consider the Irish question and the possibility of a conference between representatives of Sinn Fein and the government. The location was determined by the fact that Lloyd

[49] London, House of Lords Record Office, Andrew Bonar Law Mss, ABL30/3/60, W. J. Marshall (Librarian, National Unionist Association) to Law, 27 October 1913.

[50] Richard Ormond, *The Monarch of the Glen: Landseer in the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 2005), 107–28.

[51] *Glasgow Herald*, 3 June 1885, 9; I. R. MacKay, 'The Pet Lamb Case', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 48 (1972–4), 180–200; Willie Orr, *Deer Forests, Landlords and Crofters: The Western Highlands in Victorian and Edwardian Times* (Edinburgh, 1982), 42.

[52] Antony Taylor, '"Pig-sticking princes": Royal Hunting, Moral Outrage, and the Republican Opposition to Animal Abuse in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *History*, 89 (2004), 30–48; Alistair J. Durie, 'Game Shooting: An Elite Sport, c. 1870–1980', *Sport in History*, 28 (2008), 431–49.

[53] Richard Burdon Haldane, *An Autobiography* (London, 1929), 158–9; George L. Bernstein, 'Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman and the Liberal Imperialists', *Journal of British Studies*, 23 (1983), 122; H. C. G. Matthew, 'Haldane, Richard Burton, Viscount Haldane (1856-1928), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33643 [accessed 30 March 2017].

George was spending his holiday at Flowerdale House, Gairloch, as a guest of Sir Kenneth MacKenzie. He had reached Wester Ross after staying with the duke of Atholl at Blair Castle. The King was a guest of the MacKintosh of MacKintosh at Moy, twelve miles south of Inverness and held a meeting with the Prime Minister on the morning of the Cabinet. Many ministers were in Scotland at this point in the year, the height of shooting season. Churchill was with the duke of Sutherland at Dunrobin (painting rather than shooting or fishing), and Sir Worthington Evans at Lord Lovat's residence at Beaufort, west of Inverness. Sinn Fein sent two representatives north with a telegram from Éamon De Valera for Lloyd George. They followed the Prime Minister to Gairloch and from Gairloch to Inverness. One of them, George Barton, waited in the Town Hall while the Cabinet meeting took place. On its conclusion he was handed a communication by Lloyd George and he left immediately to catch the train back to Euston.[54] This meeting exemplified the close relationship between the political elite, the state and the Highland sporting estate.

Events such as these may have helped to make the debate on the future of the Highlands more relevant to the political class, but it also provided excellent material for a powerful critique of the landed system upon which such sport was based. A radical newspaper in London asserted:

> We are evidently on the brink of hostilities in the far North. Every train to Scotland is heavily laden with its cargo of guns, ammunition, and provisions of all kinds; and every evening there is a busy scene at Euston Square and King's Cross, at the time of the night express … The jaded statesmen, who have done so much benefit to the English people in their late parliamentary labours, the 'mashers' and 'men about town' who naturally need some recreation after the exhausting duties of a London season, all these useful members of society are now off to Scotland to shoot grouse. It is right and proper that after much idling they should do a little killing.

The article finished on a more political note: 'The Highlands are not yet a paradise, even under a beneficent English rule; indeed a very clear proof of the contrary may be seen in the annual incursion of English sportsmen and

[54] *Scotsman*, 1 September 1921, 4; 2 September 1921, 4, 5; 3 September 1921, 9; 5 September 1921, 5; 6 September 1921, 5; 7 September 1921, 7; 8 September 1921, 4, 5; Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume IV, 1916–22* (London, 1975), 668; see also *Companion Part 3, Documents, 1917–22*, 1622.

the annual exodus of dispossessed Scottish crofters.'[55] Appropriation of land for an exclusive sporting activity was an affront to those who believed that the land of the Highlands could support a larger population.

Although commercialised sport was one factor in the depopulation of the Highlands in the nineteenth century it could be repackaged to meet military needs. Lord Lovat, in raising his Scouts for the second Boer War in 1899, demonstrated that the fieldcraft required to service the sporting economy could be utilised for military purposes. Lovat believed that stalkers and ghillies had skills which were in demand in South Africa.[56] He was disappointed in the way his Scouts were used in South Africa – deployed as a unit rather than individual Scouts being attached to other units.[57] Given the fears of racial degeneration which greeted the realisation of the unhealthy condition of many urban recruits, the Scouts' physiques were lauded.[58] The Lovat Scouts remained an important and highly distinctive element of the Highland military tradition after the Boer War, serving throughout the Great War on the Western Front and at Gallipoli and during the Second World War in such diverse missions as the occupation of the Faroe Islands and in the invasion of Italy in 1943.

More distinctive, however, was the fact that substantial areas of the landscape of the western part of Inverness-shire were used for training of special forces. The most famous example of this theme is the use of Achnacarry Castle (the home of the Camerons of Lochiel), near Spean Bridge, and its surrounding landscape for the training of Commando forces.[59] This was, however, only one of a number of examples of use of the landscape and coastline of western Inverness-shire for the training of special and covert forces. A

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[55] 'The War in the North', *Justice*, 18 August 1885.

[56] *Inverness Courier*, 5, 9, 16 January 1900; Francis Lindley, *Lord Lovat: A Biography* (London, 1935), 75–81, 171–96. M. L. Melville, *The Story of the Lovat Scouts* (Edinburgh, 1981), 4–8, 28–33.

[57] *Hansard*, HL Deb 18 July 1904 vol. 138, cc. 237–9.

[58] *Hansard*, HL Deb 19 May 1904 vol. 135, c. 318.

[59] Many country houses were requisitioned by the state during the two world wars. See John Martin Robinson, *Requisitioned: The British Country House in the Second World War* (London, 2014). Hamilton Palace, for example, had been a military hospital during the Great War. Rosneath Castle, belonging to the dukes of Argyll and much used by Princess Louise, duchess of Argyll (daughter of Queen Victoria), was used for naval planning during the Second World War. Much of the planning of the invasion of North Africa, 'Operation Torch', was carried out there. Rosneath was abandoned after the war and demolished in 1961 after an unseemly squabble between about its ownership and future, see Gow, *Scotland's Lost Houses*, 116–23; London, The National Archives of the UK, ADM1/23013 contains documents about the lengthy dispute between the Admiralty and the local authority about the decaying building.

prominent local landowner and military figure, Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat, was allegedly central in the identification of this district as suitable for a special training centre. Not only was it inside the protected area but it was ideal for training of special forces and other covert activities.[60]

The infrastructure which the state took advantage of during the Second World War was essentially that of the sporting estate. Although this was the second unintended military consequence of the sporting economy – after the formation of the Lovat Scouts in 1899 – critics of deer forests were not appeased. It is striking that Lovat and others deeply involved in the sporting economy of the Highlands were implicated in the selection of venues for this training and the creation of the ethos which it sought to impart:

> Highland sporting culture … lent something of its values to the idea of training as initiation, testing men against the challenge of the environment in order to develop and assess their fitness as individuals for the new, self-defining elite of special service.[61]

These ideals were deeply embedded in the masculine nature of Highland sporting culture as it developed from the middle of the nineteenth century. The technical skills of the hunt, some of which could be devolved to a specialist ghillie, were complemented by the ability to endure long periods in cold and wet conditions and to walk long distances.[62]

Conclusion

This essay has sought to explore the ways in which the Scottish landed estate, in contrast to the fate of its Irish cousin, has endured since the late Victorian period. As has been shown, this is a problematic project. There is a tendency, both in historiography and polemic, to celebrate the demise of the landed estate. There is an equally loquacious tendency to deplore the continuing power of landed estates in Scotland. The continuing politics of land reform in Scotland, in contrast to other parts of the United Kingdom and Ireland,

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[60] Lord Lovat, *March Past: A Memoir* (London, 1978), 173–8; Stuart Allan, *Commando Country* (Edinburgh, 2007), 37; Christopher J. Murphy, *Security and Special Operations: SOE and MI5 during the Second World War* (Houndmills, 2006), 25–40.

[61] Stuart Allan, *Commando Country: Special Training Centres in the Scottish Highlands, 1940–5*, PhD dissertation (University of Edinburgh, 2011), 45.

[62] Hayden Lorimer, 'Guns, Game and the Grandee: The Cultural Politics of Deerstalking in the Scottish Highlands', *Ecumene*, 7 (2000), 410–13; Buchan's characters in *John Macnab* endure much in their poaching expeditions.

indicate that problems remain. The successive phases of land reform from the 1880s to the 1920s, supplemented by land sales, seem not to have completed the job. A principal contention of this chapter is that, despite the tinkering with tenure and the substantial shift of land from the private to the public sector in the period from the 1880s to the 1920s and then to the 'community' in the last fifteen years, the landed estate remains the main form of organisation of land in many parts of rural Scotland, especially the Highlands. The owner-occupied farm, for example, has not gained such a firm foothold in Scotland as in England and is certainly not so prominent as it is in Ireland. The Highland croft is largely tenanted and although crofters have had an individual right to buy since 1976, the option has not been widely taken up. This can be seen as a continuity with the late nineteenth century when attempts to import Irish-style land purchase thorough a Scottish Congested District Board were unsuccessful. The endurance of the landed estate is not merely serendipitous. This essay has tried to show the ways in which the enduring concentration of landownership in Scotland created a powerful social and economic elite. Further, the connections between that group and the political elites at the heart of government, exercised, *inter alia*, through the sporting and military cultures associated with it, show that it was a deeply embedded feature of national life.

University of Edinburgh