General editor's introduction

Brodie Castle lies between the towns of Nairn and Forres in the County of Moray in the north of Scotland. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the estate ran into financial difficulties as a result of the extravagance of the 19th Brodie of Brodie (as the laird was styled). In 1789 the 21st Brodie sailed to India to work for the East India Company in an attempt to recoup the family's fortunes. But in India he was himself extravagant and built a second Brodie Castle, this time in Madras (Chennai).¹ But before he could make a real Indian fortune, he died in a sailing accident in 1802. His younger brother, Alexander, who never succeeded to the title or the estate, did however make a very considerable fortune in India and this enabled him to purchase the estates of Thunderton House in Elgin, and of both Arnhall and the Burn in Kincardineshire. He was thus able to upstage the main branch of the family. Subsequently, the Burn estate was bought by two brothers, John and William Shand, who had made their fortunes in Jamaica. The Burn estate and its fine eighteenth-century mansion are now owned by the Goodenough Trust and are devoted primarily to educational purposes, such that academics and students can hold 'reading parties' and research symposia there.²

Meanwhile, in another part of Scotland, Colonel Allan Macpherson, who had just returned from India with a moderate fortune (he had been duped out of much of it by his more famous cousin, James Macpherson the fabricator of the Ossian sagas), bought a small 2,000-acre estate at Blairgowrie in Perthshire on the edge of the Highlands. The centre of the estate is Newton Castle, a Scottish tower house with eighteenth-century additions. The Macpherson family subsequently produced a succession of sons who worked or settled in the West Indies, in New South Wales and returned to India in the later nineteenth century to join the civil service. Estate and castle are still in the hands of the Macphersons, the present incumbent being Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, a former High Court judge who conducted the celebrated Macpherson enquiry into the Metropolitan police.³

Yet another estate in Perthshire, Garth in Glen Lyon, had been owned by Major General David Stewart (1772–1829), a Governor of St Lucia, then by Sir Archibald Campbell (1769–1943), Governor of New Brunswick. In 1880 it was bought by Sir Donald Currie (1825–1909), who had made his fortune in imperial shipping, first by founding a

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line between Liverpool and Calcutta in 1862 and then by establishing the Castle Line to the Cape in 1872. He became such a shrewd operator that he made a considerable fortune from the Cape service, was elected Liberal MP for Perthshire and, in 1900, created the Union-Castle Line by incorporating his rival, the Union Line.⁴ He soon owned the adjacent estates of Glen Lyon (purchased in 1884) and Chesthill (1903), restored the beautiful village of Fortingall and indulged in various other acts of philanthropy.

These three examples of the imperial connections of Scottish estates are all personally known to me and illustrate the ways in which it is a particular pleasure to introduce this remarkable book by Stephanie Barczewski. She has produced a highly detailed study which provides solid evidence for the manner in which money derived from the empire was invested in estates from the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. She approaches this work from a variety of different angles, first analysing the various categories of imperial employment, as merchants, Indian nabobs, West Indian planters, military and naval officers, and administrators, as well as from the point of view of the imperial culture of display in country houses, embraced in the discourses of 'commodities', 'cosmopolitanism', 'conquest' and 'collecting'. Moreover, as she rightly implies, in all of this we should blur the distinctions between so-called 'formal' and 'informal' territories of the imperial economic nexus.

The result is a work which constitutes a strikingly valuable addition to the understanding of imperial fortunes in the formation and survival of the various landed classes of Britain, the aristocracy, the gentry, and the new rich. In the course of this, she provides striking proof of the powerful urge to join the landed classes even when this invariably meant that income from imperial fortunes was not exploited as fully as it might have been. Those who sought out landed estates and great houses were driven as much by social, cultural and emotional reasons as financial ones. There are two other outstanding characteristics to this book. One is that it successfully combines the cultural economy of empire with its political economy, a development a number of historians have called for. Moreover, Barczewski also makes geographical connections which, though not particularly surprising, have not been noticed before. The second is that the book admirably surveys these phenomena throughout the whole of both Britain and Ireland.

Of course, as Barczewski points out, not all entrepreneurial families who made their money from empire necessarily went there. Merchants in colonial trades, shipbuilders supplying vessels to imperial shipping companies, shopkeepers of major multiples (like Lipton's, who owned

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tea estates in Ceylon), manufacturers and exporters whose prime markets were in the colonies (including for example armaments), metal traders drawing on the products of imperial mining, even the owners of exporting coal mines or those used to fuel ships can all be seen to have made imperial fortunes and some at least of these set out to join the landed classes. Moreover, as Barczewski points out towards the end of the book, the imperial connections of landed families were inevitably known to local populations, to estate and other workers, and to the large class of domestic servants who worked for them. Many such people had their eyes on emigration in any case (even if that was predominantly to the United States until the introduction of quotas in the twentieth century), and those who read the ubiquitous press in the Victorian period and later knew very well the significance of empire for particular localities. Thus it is possible to view the cultural and economic relationships which Barczewski exposes as having an even more extensive social and cultural impact.

But some of these wider implications deserve to be the subject of further studies. As it is, Barczewski has supplied an exceptionally valuable underpinning for all future studies of imperial fortunes and their conversion into landed estates and country houses.

Notes

- 1 Brodie Castle in Chennai is now the music college of the Carnatic. Brodie Castle in Scotland is owned by the National Trust for Scotland.
- 2 In pursuit of these purposes I have stayed at the Burn House and walked over its estate on the River North Esk on several occasions over the past fifty years.
- 3 The imperial connections of the Macpherson family are charted in Stephen Foster, *A Private Empire* (Millers Point, New South Wales, 2010).
- 4 Andrew Porter, *Victorian Shipping, Business and Imperial Policy: Donald Currie, the Castle Line and Southern Africa* (Woodbridge, 1986).