

## The Patronage of Organised Sport in Central Scotland, 1820-1900

N. L. Tranter  
*University of Stirling*

One of the most striking of the many dramatic changes in popular culture which occurred in nineteenth century Britain was the emergence of a sporting culture startlingly different from that of the past. In the course of the second half of the century levels of participation in outdoor physical recreation increased substantially. The socio-occupational composition of sports players and spectators broadened. Rules of play were codified, standardised and generalised. Casual, ad hoc arrangements for the conduct of sport gave way to formally constituted and more permanent club and competitive structures, and sport became increasingly commercialised.

Underlying this transformation in the extent and character of sporting activity were the forces of modern economic growth. Just as the new environment of urban-industrialism created an urgent need for types of physical recreation different from those of earlier times, so too, by the later decades of the century, it had created many of the conditions necessary for these recreations to emerge: higher per capita real incomes, improved standards of education, cheaper and more efficient methods of transport and communication, greater and more uniform amounts of leisure time, and the technology capable of producing the range of facilities and equipment required by an extensive commitment to sport. The contribution of such forces to the nineteenth century revolution in sport has already been thoroughly discussed and needs no further elaboration here.<sup>1</sup>

Detailed analysis of the origins of organised sport in one region of the central Scottish lowlands, however, suggests that there was another significant influential force at work, a force which has not yet received the attention it deserves. The successful initiation and subsequent early development of a modern sporting culture required more than an environment suitable in terms of income levels, amounts of leisure time, and production, transport and communications methods. It required, too, the existence of considerable numbers of private individuals willing and able to serve as patrons. In an age when sport neither received nor expected to receive much help from central or local government,

1. See, for instance, Peter Bailey, *Leisure and class in Victorian England: rational recreation and the contest for control, 1830-85* (London, 1978), ch. 4. James Walvin, *Leisure and society. 1830-1950* (London, 1978), chs. 2, 5, 7. Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution. c.1780-1880* (London, 1980), ch. 5. Wray Vamplew, "Sport and industrialization: an economic interpretation of the changes in popular sport in nineteenth century England," in *Pleasure, profit and proselytism. British culture and sport at home and abroad, 1700-1914*, ed. J. A. Mangan (London, 1988), 7-20.

the assistance provided by private patrons was vital. Without it, the growth of organised sport would have been seriously retarded.

The area analysed in the present paper covers a fifteen to twenty mile radius of the town of Stirling in central Scotland. It incorporates a rich diversity of economic, social and demographic conditions, ranging from the predominantly rural economy of districts to the north and west of the town, where communities were relatively small, scattered and generally declining in size, to the more varied economy of districts to the south and east, where agriculture co-existed with extensive mining, manufacturing and commercial activity and where individual communities were larger, less diffuse and generally growing. Between 1821 and 1901 the total population of the region rose from 122,180 to 231,358.<sup>2</sup>

The extent to which the sports clubs and competitions of central Scotland relied on private patronage is evident both from the disastrous consequences that sometimes followed its withdrawal and from the fierceness of criticism usually directed at those who refused requests for aid. Indicative of the damage that could be caused by the withdrawal of patronage are the demise of the Stirling Horse Races in the mid-1850s and of the Milngavie Highland Games in 1887; the collapse of the Stirling Boat Club and Regatta in the early 1860s, the Dunblane Cricket Club in 1880 and 1896 and the Doune Cricket Club in 1888, and the disappearance of cricket at Kilsyth in the late 1880s; the dissolution of the Grangemouth Football Club in 1888; and the temporary absence of the Strathallan (Bridge of Allan) Games in 1882. "Comment from us is needless," the *Stirling Journal* noted in disgust in 1861 when Sir James Alexander, president of the Bridge of Allan Curling Club, failed to produce the "expected" refreshments for players competing in the annual match for the President's medal.<sup>3</sup> In 1892 the Thornhill Curling Club publicly expressed its annoyance at an attempt by the new owner of the ground on which its pond and storehouse were located to extract an economic rent for facilities that had been available to the club at little or no charge for twenty years. Not even a lengthy and often praised record of support could save a patron from public criticism if his behaviour failed to match expectations. When, in 1873, Lord Abercromby threatened to deny the Bridge of Allan and Blairlogie curling clubs their customary access to Airthrey loch if they did not expel a member with whom he was in dispute, he was warned "not to carry personal spite into public matters" and reminded that "aristocracy should behave as a real aristocracy."<sup>4</sup> Five years later, Abercromby was again rebuked, this time for refusing to allow two members of the Blairdrummond Curling Club who had fallen through the ice during a match against Bridge of Allan into Airthrey Castle to dry off.

---

2. The region includes the whole of the counties of Stirlingshire and Clackmannanshire, fifteen parishes in southern Perthshire, and the parishes of Bo'ness and Carriden in the county of West Lothian, Carnock, Saline and Torryburn in Fifeshire and Cumbernauld and Kirkintilloch in Dumbartonshire.

3. *Stirling Journal*, 13 September 1861.

4. *Ibid.*, 10 January 1873.

Fortunately for the cause of organised sport incidents of this kind were rare. Requests for assistance were hardly ever refused, and most sports institutions had little difficulty securing and maintaining happy relationships with the sponsors they needed. Whatever problems organised sport faced, a shortage of willing and generous patrons does not appear to have been among them.

I

Private patronage provided institutional sport with three basic types of assistance: prizes for competition, sometimes in the form of cash, more usually in the form of cups and medals or gifts in kind—clothing, food, paintings, snuffboxes, kettles and drinking mugs, fishing books and tackle for anglers, bowls for bowlers, curling stones for curlers, golf balls and clubs for golfers, quoits for quoiters; finance, buildings, equipment and access to the necessary land, water or ice; and motivation and administrative expertise. Of these, prizes for competition were by far the most common if probably the least significant for the growth of organised sport. To the extent that they enhanced the attractiveness of club membership and stimulated interest among spectators, of course, their contribution should not be underrated. Nor should we understate the stimulus sport derived from the willingness of private patrons to supply clubs with essential equipment or refreshments at matches and business or social functions. The loan of a horse-drawn roller to the Stirling County Cricket Club or of carts to the Blackford Quoiting Club to enable members to transport their quoits to away games, the provision of free barrels of ale to celebrate the opening of a bowling club's season or of food to the Doune Castle Football Club for the entertainment of visiting teams undoubtedly played their part in promoting the attractions of organised sport. What mattered more, however, was the readiness of private patrons to provide finance, land, administrative skill and, sometimes, even innovatory initiative.

Monetary donations were a common feature of patronage in most sports. In 1875 George Ure & Co., Messrs. Smith & Wellstead, George Paterson of Thornton and Andrew Stirling of Bonnyfield gave "large contributions" towards the £400 needed by the Bonnybridge Bowling Club for a new green;<sup>5</sup> and in 1900 Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman £20 towards the cost of a green for the newly formed Stirling Spittalmyre Bowling Club. In 1875 the Bo'ness Carriden Cricket Club received a £5 donation from its patron, Sir James Hope; in 1881 the Bonnybridge Cricket Club "considerable" financial help from James Smith of Ingleside and John Ure of Wheatlands, and the Dunblane Cricket Club donations totalling over £18 from John Stirling and Captain and Mrs. Stirling towards the £60 required for ground improvements;<sup>6</sup> and in 1893, the Dunblane Football Club £5 from Sir Donald Currie towards the cost of a football pitch and gymnasium in Duckburn Park. Among the many curling clubs which received monetary assistance was the Dunblane, which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary

---

5. *Stirling Observer*, 16 September 1875.

6. *Stirling Journal*, 8 April 1881.

in 1867 with "large" subscriptions from Mrs. Stirling, Sir William and Lady Anna Maxwell-Stirling of Keir, John Murray of Edinburgh and a Mr. Roger of Glasgow; the Dollar and Devonvale, recipient in 1885 of £100 from Sir Septimus Leishman of Broomrig to help meet the cost of an artificial pond; and the Braco Ardoch in 1891, "cleared of all outstanding debts" by Colonel McCallum and presented with a "handsome" donation by Mr. Nelson of Braco Castle.<sup>8</sup>

The sports which benefitted most regularly from monetary donations were boatracing, horse racing and highland games. The 1864 Grangemouth Regatta and Games received financial backing from Lord Zetland and "the whole of the gentry of the port and neighborhood."<sup>9</sup> The 1866 Stirling Regatta was sponsored by the Town Council, which subscribed three guineas, and twenty-nine of the wealthiest landowners and property-owners in the district. The Stirling Horse Races relied heavily on financial support from the Town Council and innkeepers of Stirling, the town of Bridge of Allan and large landowners like William Ramsay, William Forbes and Lord Zetland, who subscribed twenty guineas a year. In addition to an unknown number of small donors, the Stirling Highland Games of 1870 boasted nine official patrons, each giving between £1 and five guineas towards the cost of prizes and administration, and 43 donors of sums ranging from five shillings to £5. Included in this latter group were the Stirling Town Council, the Duke of Montrose, three army officers and twelve men employed in trade, public service or other professional occupations. Twenty-three of the remaining twenty-six were substantial landowners and property-owners, "nearly all the landed gentlemen and noblemen of the counties of Stirlingshire, Clackmannan and Perth."<sup>10</sup> Besides officers of the Stirling Garrison, the 1868 Strathallan Games had thirty-six official patrons and eight official patronesses, their names reading like a roll-call of the region's propertied elite—Sir James Alexander, chairman of the organising committee, the Earl and Countess of Mar, Lord and Lady Erskine, Lady Alexander, Sir Andrew Orr of Harrieston, William Forbes of Callendar House, James Johnston MP, of Alva, and his wife, Major and Mrs. John Campbell of Inverardoch, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Houldsworth of Craigforth, Captain John Buchanan and Henry Rudd of Kilbryde Castle among them. The number of patrons providing financial backing for the Larbert and Stenhousemuir Games of 1877, which included "most of the local gentry," and the inaugural Drymen Games of 1889, supported by "the Duke of Montrose and all the resident country gentlemen," is no less impressive.<sup>11</sup>

In the absence of an adequate supply of publicly-owned recreational ground, the growth of organised sport was particularly dependent on the willingness of private landowners to grant sportsmen access to the land, water or ice they

---

7 Ibid., 29 March 1867.

8 Ibid., October 1891.

9 Ibid., 30 September 1864.

10 Ibid., 29 July 1870.

11 Ibid., 27 July 1877, 30 August 1889.

needed. In this respect, too, the response of the private sector was generous. Occasionally, it took the form of leases or donations of ground for the use of whole communities. In 1859 and 1877, for example, the Earl of Mar agreed to lease land for a games park to the town of Alloa. Gifts of land for games parks were made by Sir Archibald Edmonstone to the town of Kilsyth in 1862, by James Johnstone to the residents of Tillicoultry in 1873 and by John Burn Murdoch and the Earl of Moray to Doune in 1875 and 1887. More commonly, however, grants of access to land or water were tied to specific sports clubs or sporting events. Typical of the many examples quoted in the local press was Archibald Orr-Ewing who allowed the Kirkintilloch Fishing Club free use of Loch Endrick, gave the Balfron Curling Club a pond and ground for a clubhouse and provided his Ballikinrain estate football team with a field for its matches; the Stirling family of Kippendavie who leased land in Kippeuross Park to the Dunblane Cricket Club, supplied free of charge a pond for the Dunblane Curling Club and a field for the Dunblane Corinthians Football Club, built a pavilion in Duckburn Park for the Dunblane Football Club and permitted the use of Duckburn Park for the annual Dunblane Highland Games; and the landlords of the Woodside Hotel at Doune who supplied pitches for quotters and ground for the annual Doune pigeon shooting match.

Roughly half of all the men and women recorded in the newspapers as sponsors of organised sport served in an official capacity as club patron or president and can be assumed to have played some part in the processes of decision-making and administration. In a few cases their contribution to the growth of institutional sport went even further. Three of curling's earliest patrons, the Earl of Dunmore, P. M. Stewart, MP and Captain Osborne, were primarily responsible for the formation of the Airth and Bruce Castle Curling Club in 1842 and were credited with much of the responsibility for the general revival of enthusiasm for curling which occurred in the district around Airth during the early 1840s. Major Bontine of Gartmore and the brothers John and Henry Houldsworth led the revival of interest in cricket in Stirling in 1863 by assisting in the foundation of a Stirling County Cricket Club. William Ramsay of Barnton and Sauchie was justifiably described as the "guiding spirit" behind the resuscitation of the Stirling Horse Races in 1836," while John MacFarlane of Coneyhill, Bridge of Allan, provided most of the initiative as well as the finance and equipment required for the institution of the first Stirling Boat Club and Regatta in 1854. Without the active involvement on its committee of Major Henderson and Sir James Alexander, its principal patrons, it is unlikely that the Strathallan Highland Games would have attracted the amount of financial support needed to develop as they did. On a less exalted level we may note the contribution of Robert Sorley of the Commercial Inn to the establishment and management of the annual Thornhill pigeon shooting match, of Peter McCallum, landlord of the Red Lion, to the annual Buchlyvie pigeon shoots, and of William Jones of the Doune Castle Hotel to the clay

---

12. *Ibid.*, 22 September 1837.

pigeon contests held in Doune in the 1880s. By constructing bowling greens and quaiting alleys, such publicans as Charles Bissland of the Milngavie Douglas Arms, Mr. Best of the Milngavie Black Bull and James Aitken of the Carron Inn played an important role in the development of sport in the region.

Tables 1-5, based largely on biographical data contained in newspapers, summarise the occupational status of 410 men and 96 women who sponsored institutional sport. Tables 1 and 2 refer solely to those who accepted official posts as club patrons, patronesses or presidents. Tables 3-5 include all those known to have provided assistance to organized sport, whether or not they held official positions within institutions.<sup>13</sup>

As Table 1 shows, the offices of club patron and president were dominated by individuals drawn from the ranks of the local nobility and property-owning elite. These groups accounted for almost nine out of every ten institutional patrons and presidents. By contrast, the contribution of other relatively prosperous sections of the community was negligible, suggesting that in their choice of patron or president sports institutions were motivated less by financial considerations than by a wish to associate themselves with someone who could provide them with a measure of social influence and respectability or access to the land and water their activities required.

The region's landowning elite was clearly not reluctant to fulfill these functions. Typical of the response were men like Major Chalmers, "always willing to

Table 1. The occupations of club patrons, patronesses and presidents, 1820-1900.

Occupation/Status	Per Cent of Total	Number
Nobility	21.8	26
Property owners	67.2	80
Public service/professional	9.2	11
Dealers	0.8	1
Manufacturers	0.8	1
TOTAL	99.8	119

13. The classification of occupations used is that devised by W. A. Armstrong, "The use of information about occupation," in *Nineteenth century society. Essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data* ed. E. A. Wrigley, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 296-310. The one major variation from Armstrong's classification is that the category "Industrial Service" (accountants, insurance agents and inspectors, unspecified managers, and the like), for which local representatives are few, is included with "other," a miscellaneous category chiefly composed of general and unspecified labourers, scholars or students, pensioners and men of unknown occupation. The nobility is defined as dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, barons, and their wives and offspring: it includes HRH the Prince of Wales, honorary president of the Alloa Prince of Wales Club. The category "Dealers" includes butchers, commercial travellers, drapers, grocers, hoteliers and innkeepers, ironmongers and merchants: "Public service and professional"—army officers and soldiers, bankers, chemists, doctors, policemen, lawyers and solicitors, teachers, and the like: "Builders"—builders, contractors, joiners, masons, plasterers, plumbers, etcetera: "Manufacturers"—manufacturing employers, bakers, confectioners, factory workers, printers, shoemakers, smiths, tailors, tanners, watchmakers, and so on.

promote the comfort and happiness of the Larbert Curling Club":<sup>14</sup> the Kippen-davie family, to whom "the Dunblane Curling Club is under many and lasting obligations":<sup>15</sup> Major Henderson of Bridge of Allan, "so well known in the district for his promotion of everything connected with the national games and sports for which Scotland is so conspicuous":<sup>16</sup> and John Burn Murdoch of Doune, who "deserves great praise for granting ground on which cricket, football and other gymnastic sports can be played" and who "for several years (has) encouraged all outdoor sports."<sup>17</sup> Many of the patrons and presidents represented in Table 1 were associated with more than one sports club or organisation and were willing to maintain their association for long periods. Lord and Lady Abercromby, for instance, were patrons of the Airthrey Castle, Bridge of Allan and Tullibody curling clubs and of the Airthrey Spa, New Wellhouse and Bridge of Allan bowling clubs. The Dukes of Montrose patronised the Stirling County Cricket Club, the Aberfoyle and Killearn Strathendrick curling clubs, golf clubs at Dunblane, Milngavie and Stirling and the Stirling Football Club, and also acted as stewards of the Stirling Horse Races: and Colonel Murray of Polmaise Castle the Stirling Borestone bowling and curling clubs, the Stirling County Cricket Club and, on its formation in 1870, the Stirlingshire Curling Province. Sir James Maitland served the Borstone Bowling Club as official patron for some twenty years, Major Moray Stirling of Abercairney and his family were "long patrons of the Abercairney Curling Club," while the Doune Curling Club was "patronised for many years by the Earls of Moray"<sup>18</sup>

On the evidence of the data assembled in Table 2, the sport most favoured by the men and women who accepted official posts with sporting organisations was curling, which accounted for almost two-thirds of all institutional patrons and presidents. In other sports the willingness of sponsors to formalise their involvement was much less apparent. Bowling, cricket, football, golf, horse racing and tennis each accounted for around one in twenty of all official patrons and presidents: angling, boating, quoits and other sports for even fewer.

In part, of course, the concentration of formal patrons, patronesses and presidents in the sport of curling is merely a consequence of the relatively large number of clubs the sport contained. Possessed of many fewer clubs, sports such as angling, boating, bowling, golf, quiting and tennis offered fewer opportunities for official patronage.<sup>19</sup> In part, too, curling's dominance may simply reflect a bias in the nature of newspaper evidence. Biographical data on patrons and presidents are derived chiefly from press reports of club annual general meetings and social functions, and it is possible that these either occurred more regularly or were more regularly reported for the sport of curling than for other

---

14. Stirling Journal, 23 February 1866.

15. *Ibid.*, 10 February 1865.

16. *Ibid.*, 2 April 1858.

17. *Ibid.*, 2 June 1876.

18. *Ibid.*, 13 January 1871, 14 December 1888.

19. At its peak, between 1871 and 1880, the number of curling clubs in the region totalled 100. By comparison, the maximum number of angling clubs extant in any one decade was 28 (1881-90), of bowling clubs 43 (1891-90), golf clubs 31 (1891-90), tennis clubs 19 (1881-90) and quoits clubs 45 (1891-1900).

Table 2. The distribution of club patrons, patronesses and presidents by sport, 1820- 1900\*

sport	Per Cent of Total	Number
Angling	1.7	3
Boating	0.6	1
Bowling	5.1	9
Cricket	8.5	15
Curling	62.1	110
Football	5.6	10
Golf	4.0	7
Horse racing* *	5.6	10
Quoits	1.1	2
Tennis	5.1	9
Other	0.6	1
TOTAL	100.0	177

\* Includes men and women of known and unknown occupation or status. Those holding offices in more than one institution are counted for each institution they served.

\* \*Stewards of the Stirling Horse Races.

sports. Neither separately nor together, however, can these explanations fully account for the size of the discrepancy in favour of curling. The number of curling clubs was no greater than the number of cricket clubs and, ultimately, far smaller than the number of football clubs, in both of which sports elected patrons and presidents were considerably less numerous.<sup>20</sup> Sports such as bowling, cricket, golf and tennis, moreover, were no less likely than curling to have their business and social affairs fully reported in the press. It follows that the apparent preference of patrons for curling cannot be explained solely as an artefact of the statistics. As a sport which relied especially heavily on the goodwill of private landowners for access to lochs and ponds and which more often than most physical recreations brought landowners into direct contact with their tenants and estate workers, curling was in special need of patronage from the propertied elite and in a particularly favourable position to attract it.

The region's wealthiest landowners and property-owners were also the single most important source of the prizes donated to organised sport, responsible for

20. The number of cricket clubs reached 173 between 1871 and 1880 and the number of football (soccer and rugby) clubs 574 between 1891 and 1900.

The Patronage of Organised Sport in Central Scotland

Table 3. The occupations of prizegivers by sport, 1820-1900. Per cent of total.

Occupation/Status	Sport						
	Bowling	Curling	Golf	Quoiting	Shooting	Other	All
Nobility/ property owners	14.7	55.3	35.7	10.5	6.3	35.7	32.4
Dealers	36.8	15.3	14.3	31.6	62.5	21.4	27.3
Public service/ professional	27.9	9.4	50.0	15.8	—	14.3	18.1
Manufacturers	13.2	11.8	—	26.3	31.3	21.4	14.4
Builders	4.4	4.7	—	5.3	—	7.1	4.6
Agriculture/ fishing	1.5	2.4	—	5.3	—	—	1.9
Transport	—	—	—	5.3	—	—	0.5
Domestic Service	—	1.2	—	—	—	—	0.5
Other*	1.5	—	—	—	—	—	0.5
TOTAL	100.0	100.1	100.0	100.1	100.1	99.9	100.2

\*A bowling green keeper

roughly one-third of all the prizes given (Table 3). Compared with that of official patrons and presidents, however, the socio-occupational distribution of prizegivers was relatively diverse. Over a quarter of all prizes were supplied by tradesmen and between a tenth and a fifth by men employed in public service/professional and manufacturing occupations. Within the dealing trades the most frequent donors of prizes were hotel and inn keepers (22 per cent of the total in this category), followed by merchants and drapers (each providing 15 per cent of the total), jewellers (14 per cent) and grocers (12 per cent). By contrast, the contributions of butchers (7 per cent), stationers (5 per cent), storekeepers (3 per cent) and all other tradesmen (7 per cent) were modest. Army officers donated 18 per cent of all the prizes given by men in public service and professional occupations, doctors 15 per cent, clergymen 13 per cent, bankers/bank agents and solicitors 10 per cent each, teachers 8 per cent, burgh magistrates and newspaper editors 5 per cent each, and the remainder 15 per cent. Of the manufacturers who donated prizes 26 per cent owned or managed large industrial establishments, 16 per cent were saddlers, 13 per cent each were brewers, clothiers or shoemakers and 10 per cent watchmakers.<sup>21</sup> Of the ten builders known to have given prizes

21. The remaining three manufacturers were a baker, a blacksmith and a gunmaker.

four were painters and three plumbers. The contribution of building, agricultural, transport and domestic service occupations to prizegiving, together less than 8 per cent of the total, was negligible, and that of the labouring classes-skilled workers other than independent craftsmen, the semi-skilled and unskilled-practically nil. Overwhelmingly, and in no way surprisingly, it was the prosperous land-owning and property-owning classes, middle class public service and professional men and self-employed tradesmen or craftsmen who supplied the bulk of the prizes that were so vital an incentive to the growth of organised sport.

Table 3 also shows that the socio-occupational composition of prizegivers differed considerably from one sport to another. Bowling obtained almost two-thirds of its prizes from tradesmen and men employed in public service and professional occupations. Over half of the prizes given to curling came from the nobility and property-owning elite. The nobility and property owners, together with public service and professional occupations, provided between eight and nine out of every ten prizes given to golf. Shooting competitions relied chiefly on tradesmen and men from manufacturing occupations for their prizes. The same two groups also dominated the list of prizegivers to the sport of quoiting, though in this case the occupational distribution of donors was relatively diffuse.

To some extent inter-sport differences in the socio-occupational composition of prizegivers merely reflect differences in the socio-occupational structures of the membership of individual sports. Half of all the prizes given to golf clubs came from men in public service and professional occupations who comprised 86 per cent of all golf club members. Tradesmen and public service professional men, who accounted for over half of all club bowlers and three-quarters of all bowling club officebearers and function attenders, supplied two-thirds of all bowling prizes. Tradesmen and manufacturers, 57 per cent of all quoiters, also provided 57 per cent of the sport's prizes. Yet prizegiving was not a wholly incestuous affair. The nobility and property-owning elite comprised little more than one in twenty curling club members but contributed over half the prizes. Tradesmen made up only 2 per cent of all institutional quoiters yet gave almost a third of its prizes: manufacturing occupations 55 per cent of all quoiters but only a quarter of all donors of prizes to the sport. Overall, the men likely to be most often asked to donate prizes, wealthy landowners and property-owners and tradesmen, were disproportionately represented among prizegivers.

In Table 4 the data are rearranged to indicate the type of sport most favoured by individual categories of prizegivers. The nobility, landowners and property-owning elite of the region directed the bulk of its prizegiving at the sport of curling. Tradesmen and men in public service and professional occupations displayed a preference for bowls. The former group were also attracted to curling and shooting, the latter to curling and golf. The distribution of prizegiving among manufacturers was more diffuse, though weighted toward bowls and curling and, to a lesser extent, quoits and shooting. Men in the building trades were primarily concerned with the development of curling and bowls. On the

## The Patronage of Organised Sport in Central Scotland

Table 4. The sporting preferences of prizegivers by occupation, 1820-1900. Per cent of total.\*

Occupation/ Status	Sport						Total	N
	Bowling	Curling	Golf	Quoiting	Shooting	Other		
Nobility/ property owners	14.3	67.1	7.1	2.9	1.4	7.1	99.9	70
Dealers	42.4	22.0	3.4	10.2	16.9	5.1	100.0	31
Public service/ professional	48.7	20.5	17.9	7.7	—	5.1	99.9	39
Manufacturers	29.0	32.3	—	16.1	16.1	6.5	100.0	31
Builders	30.0	40.0	—	10.0	—	20.0	100.0	10

\*Of the four prizegivers in agricultural occupations, two gave to curling, one to bowling and one to quoiting. The sole prizegiver in each of the categories "transport," "domestic service" and "other" gave to quoiting, curling and bowling respectively.

whole, the preferences of prizegivers were for sports in which they themselves were most involved as official patrons, players and administrators.<sup>22</sup>

Table 5 summarises the socio-occupational structure of the men and women who supplied sports institutions with the land and water they required. Seventy per cent of them came from those sections of society which owned or rented the bulk of the region's land, the nobility, the property-owning elite and farmers. A further 20 per cent was provided by tradesmen, of whom nine out of ten were hotel or inn keepers. Within the limitations of the sample, the land grants of the nobility favoured the sports of bowling, curling and, more surprisingly, football. Other wealthy landowners and property-owners preferred curling and athletics. Hoteliers and publicans concentrated on bowls and quoits, farmers on quoits and athletics.

## II

The motives which underlay the patronage of organised sport by the propertied and commercial upper and middle classes of central Scotland were highly complex. Some were specific to individual sports. Angling clubs, for instance, were valued partly as a means of facilitating negotiation with landowners over access to rivers and lochs, partly as a way of ensuring that waters were adequately stocked and not over-fished, and partly as an agency for combatting problems of river pollution. Cycling clubs were seen by some of their support-

22. For a detailed analysis of the socio-occupational composition of the personnel involved in organised sport in central Scotland see Neil Tranter. "The social and occupational structure of organised sport in central Scotland during the nineteenth century," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 4 (December, 1987): 301-14.

Table 5. The occupations of donors of land and water by sport, 1820-1900. Per cent of total.\*

Occupation/ Status	Sport								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nobility	2.9	15.8	10.5	15.8	14.3	3.7	—	13.3	9.0
Property Owners	31.4	36.8	41.4	63.2	33.3	3.7	—	53.3	33.1
Dealers	8.6	36.8	10.5	—	19.0	44.4	27.3	13.3	19.9
Agriculture/ fishing	37.1	—	15.8	10.5	33.3	40.7	63.6	20.0	27.1
Manufacturers	14.3	10.5	5.3	5.3	—	7.4	—	—	6.6
Public service	2.9	—	10.5	—	—	—	—	—	1.8
Transport	2.9	—	—	—	—	—	9.1	—	1.2
Miners	—	—	—	5.3	—	—	—	—	0.6
TOTAL	100.1	99.9	100.0	100.1	99.9	99.9	100.0	99.9	99.9
N	35	19	19	19	21	27	11	15	166

\* Cols. 1. Athletics.

2. Bowling.

3. Cricket.

4. Curling.

5. Football.

6. Quoiting.

7. Shooting.

8. Other.

9. All Sports.

Individual donors are counted once only for each sport but for each sport to which they donated. "Other" includes angling (three cases), archery (two cases), golf (five cases), horseracing (one case), skating (two cases) and tennis (two cases).

ers as a device for assisting parliamentary candidates in election campaigns; horseracing as vital for maintaining the quality of the country's horse stock which "has done us well in battle and opened up an immense commerce . . . with foreign countries."<sup>23</sup> The revival of highland games gatherings stemmed, at least partly, from a desire to preserve ancient highland cultural and athletic traditions which were thought to be in danger of dying out.

In most cases, however, the patrons of organised sport were motivated by broader objectives. Many of them shared the view, cultivated by elite school headmasters and their pupils in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century, that participation in organised sport was a powerful influence for individual and communal self-discipline and improvement. One of its most significant benefits, it was believed, was the promotion of "manliness," defined as the capacity not only for unflinching courage and resolve in the face of mental and physical challenge but also for accepting victory as well as defeat with honour and good grace. In the words of Kenneth Brand, secretary of the Stirling

23. *Stirling Journal*, 3 November 1854.

County Cricket Club, cricket “is a fine education for young men,” imparting “the courage to stand up to fast bowlers, command of mind, full control of faculties and rapidity of judgement.”<sup>24</sup> Sports like cricket, “Argus” claimed, encouraged self-restraint, patience and mental steadfastness, obedience and subordination to a common goal, alertness and a sense of opportunism, awareness of the value of skill and training, the wisdom never to underestimate an opponent and the virtue of being able to accept “the superiority of others without jealousy or petulance.”<sup>25</sup> Such qualities, of course, could only be promoted in circumstances where sportsmen competed on equal terms, when natural differences in physique were equalised by the imposition of rules of play which permitted fair competition: nothing was to be gained from contests in which the physically strong were able to dominate the physically weak by brute strength alone. The point was well made by a spectator incensed by the “charging, butting and scrimmaging” of the visiting Wanderers team at a soccer match between Doune Vale of Teith and Dunblane Wanderers in 1881.

Football is a manly game but it should not involve an inconsiderate amount of violence. Doune people don't believe that brute force is an athletic sport. Before the game can properly be called manly rules should be introduced placing the physically weaker members of a team more on an equality with the stronger.<sup>26</sup>

For those patrons imbued with the ideology of the elite schools games cult organised sport had a second important objective: the improvement of mental and physical health. “We know of no amusement more calculated to promote health and exercise the physical and mental energies of our young men,” the *Stirling Observer* wrote of cricket.<sup>27</sup> Bowling was as “favourable to mental ease” as to physical well-being.<sup>28</sup> Golf fostered “health in body and mind.”<sup>29</sup> Highland games were “good for the nerves.”<sup>30</sup> Rounders “wakened the dormant spirits and energies of our youths,” while football provided vital mental stimulus for “young men shut up in factories, warehouses and shops.”<sup>31</sup>

Particular stress was given to the physical benefits to be derived from an active participation in sport. To John MacFarlane, founder and patron of the first Stirling Boating Club, rowing was “excellent for the health of young men.”<sup>32</sup> Commenting on the formation of a cricket club at Kirkintilloch in 1862, the *Stirling Journal* noted that opportunities for sport were more essential in towns than in villages where the nature of work was less sedentary and provided more fresh air; and they were especially vital in towns like Kirkintilloch where the weaving trades “weaken muscular power and blunt physical energies.”<sup>33</sup> In the

---

24. *Ibid.*, 3 June 1898.

25. *Stirling Observer*, 6 August 1855.

26. *Stirling Journal*, 1 April 1881. For an excellent discussion of the concept of manliness see Joe Maguire, “Images of manliness and competing ways of living in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain,” *British Journal of Sports History* 3 (December, 1986): 265-87.

27. *Stirling Observer*, 29 March 1860.

28. *Ibid.*, 15 September 1836.

29. *Stirling Journal*, 21 August 1886.

30. *Ibid.*, 7 December 1866.

31. *Ibid.*, 15 June 1888. *Stirling Observer*, 23 February 1888.

32. *Stirling Journal*, 19 October 1860.

33. *Ibid.*, 27 June 1862.

words of the *Stirling Observer*, “to the clerk, teacher and artisan (football) gives physical activity to counteract the influence of daily employment. To the rigorous and active it combats sedentary occupations, excessive reading and close application to business.”<sup>34</sup> Bowling was a particularly suitable exercise for “those no longer young or unable for violent games.”<sup>35</sup> Athletics “train our youth for the labour of life in whatever sphere they may be placed . . . whatever goes to increase the public health-to render the rising generation not enervate or effeminate but otherwise-is of the first importance,” the *Stirling Journal* insisted in 1851. 36 Physical recreation, “Junior” argued half a century later, was crucial to the maintenance of that “healthy constitution which is so much needed in this age of progress and activity.”<sup>37</sup>

To disciples of the elite school games cult organised sport was also seen as a valuable weapon in the struggle to maintain communal stability and harmony. In central Scotland, as elsewhere, a conviction that “Satan finds mischief for idle hands” acted as a powerful incentive for the creation of enjoyable distractions.<sup>38</sup> As property owners with vested interests in preserving social discipline, many of the region’s sporting patrons shared the view that “to keep people quiet, besides instruction to the mind, exercises of the body are required.”<sup>39</sup> Sport, it was believed, distracted the working classes from crime, drunkenness and other forms of anti-social behaviour. “Whenever cricket is widely practised, crime is very light,” the *Stirling Journal* claimed, quoting the views of Mr. Baron Platt in an address to the grand jury at the Lancaster Assizes. Regattas and horse races combatted “the riot and drunkenness to which the labouring populations are too often disposed.”<sup>41</sup> According to their promoters, athletic sports like those introduced at Arnprior and Thornhill in the 1850s and 1860s and the highland games gathering instituted at Gartmore in the 1870s would reduce drunkenness and draw people away from “more dangerous amusements.”<sup>42</sup> Bowling afforded “a capital chance to young men of an hour or two in healthful recreation rather than in consuming their time in indoor pursuits of a more objectionable character.”<sup>43</sup> Rifleshooting and rowing imparted “temperance and self-control,” football a spirit of “fairplay . . . obedience, self-restraint and discipline and the value of cooperation and self-sacrifice,” while quoting drew men “away from the dram shop” and was “beneficial to morals.”<sup>44</sup> As the *Falkirk Herald* wrote in summarising the value of physical recreation for the improvement of individual behaviour and character:

---

34. *Stirling Observer*, 28 February 1882.

35. *Stirling Journal*, 22 May 1885. A wish to improve the health of residents was the main motive behind the donation of a bowling green to the village of Blackford in 1861. *Ibid.*, 10 May 1861.

36. *Ibid.*, 5 September 1851.

37. *Stirling Observer*, 2 August 1900.

38. *Stirling Journal*, 22 June 1888.

39. *Ibid.*, 29 August 1851.

40. *Ibid.*, 22 August 1851.

41. *Clackmannanshire Advertiser*, 17 August 1844.

42. *Stirling Journal*, 22 January 1858, 20 January 1865, 25 October 1878.

43. *Ibid.*, 30 June 1854.

44. *Ibid.*, 7 September 1860, 15 September 1876, 2 March 1888, 10 December 1897. *Bridge of Allan Reporter*, 25 April 1891.

## The Patronage of Organised Sport in Central Scotland

To give the artisan and his family the chance to enjoy the open air in pleasant walks of flowers and gardens surrounded by his social equals and superiors while some of his mates dance or play manly sports is to elevate his moral nature, increase his desire for self-improvement, foster love for wife and children, make him a better citizen and a wiser man . . . and increase the condition and prospects of the whole community.<sup>45</sup>

It was, however, for its contribution to the break-down of barriers between the sexes, the generations and, above all, the different socio-occupational classes that organised sport was most prized as an instrument for promoting social harmony. Archery and croquet, two of the few sports in which men and women could compete on more or less equal terms, were especially commended for their ability to “draw the sexes together.”<sup>46</sup> Bowling “knitted youths as well as older members of the community together” and induced a “good feeling (which) benefitted the community at large.”<sup>47</sup> The St. Fillans Highland Games were believed to “bring the higher and lower classes of the community together” and to foster “the very best feeling between landlords and tenants.”<sup>48</sup> The revival of bowling at Falkirk in the 1850s was confidently expected to break down “the many partitions which divide our community with so many parties”; cricket to promote “a desirable harmony among the various classes from which its members are recruited”; curling to reduce the number of “radical opinions and strikes among the working classes”; while of golf James McKillop MP claimed that “no other pastime in so short a time has wielded so potent an influence in the fusion of the classes.”<sup>49</sup>

Important though the objectives of the elite school and university games ideology were in persuading upper and middle class residents of central Scotland to patronise sport, the weight of evidence in the region’s newspapers suggests that their influence was at least matched by three other objectives, none of which were represented in this ideology: to improve the quality of life for a population short of opportunities for recreational entertainment; to enhance the prestige of the communities in which patrons lived or with which they were closely associated; and to promote individual or community wealth.<sup>50</sup>

For much of the first half of the nineteenth century, and in many places even later, opportunities for participating in and watching sport were severely limited. “This is the only day for the sport of the turf which the inhabitants of this district have an opportunity of witnessing throughout the year . . . We only wish that such occasions were not so few and far between,” it was noted of the annual horse race meeting organised by the Stirlingshire Yeomanry Cavalry in the Stirling Kings Park in 1830.<sup>51</sup> The revival of a Stirling Boat Club in 1864 was

---

45. *Falkirk Herald*, 9 November 1848.

46. *Stirling Journal*, 28 August, 9 September 1864.

47. *Ibid.*, 1 November 1895.

48. *Ibid.*, 4 September 1828.

49. *Ibid.*, 12 August 1859, 29 March 1867, 20 October 1899. *Bridge of Allan Reporter*, 25 June 1870.

50. Initially, some elite school headmasters also saw organised sport as a means of attracting pupils and enhancing the status of their schools. But these motives had no place in the philosophy of the games cult which ultimately developed in elite schools and universities.

51. *Stirling Journal*, 5 August 1830.

considered “absolutely essential . . . in a town like Stirling, where opportunities for indulging in manly exercise are extremely few.”<sup>52</sup> In 1866 the Stirling Regatta remained “almost the only manly sport in the district”<sup>53</sup> In 1874, at the opening of a new curling pond by the Stirling Castle club, regret was expressed that “John Frost has not deigned to look freezingly on the efforts of the club to add to the scanty amusements of the people.”<sup>54</sup> As late as 1897, Councillor Thomson could value the Scottish Central Cycling Club simply as a means of filling “the frequent hours which sometimes hang so heavily with young men.”<sup>55</sup>

Elsewhere in the region the situation was no better. “The want of amusement has been long and sorely felt,” it was reported of Doune in 1865.<sup>56</sup> “How pleasant and encouraging to see gentlemen desirous of promoting our pastimes and breaking that monotony of which so many complain,” the *Bridge of Allan Reporter* wrote of a gift of a pair of silver-mounted bowls to the Wellhouse Bowling Club by a Mr. Melrose the following year<sup>57</sup> “Nothing is more needed than a source of public amusement,” the *Stirling Observer* commented on a proposal to institute regular Saturday evening football matches at Callander in 1864.<sup>58</sup> A decade later, however, there remained “a great want of some innocent recreation for the youth of Callander.”<sup>59</sup> Prior to the completion of a bowling green in May 1865 the inhabitants of Kilsyth had “no attraction during relaxation from business.” Even at the end of the 1880s the town still had “great need for a game in summer evenings to waken the dormant spirits and energies of youths.”<sup>60</sup> At Grangemouth as late as 1875 the inhabitants were “seldom . . . treated to any species of outdoor amusement.” At Doune there were no sports other than quoiting “in which numbers could engage.”<sup>61</sup>

In the absence of regular opportunities for playing and watching sport, it should not be surprising to discover that some sporting patrons were motivated by no more grandiose an ambition than to bring pleasure to people who deserved some relief from the depressing monotony of a life devoid of the enjoyment of physical recreation. The claim made by the working men who comprised the crew of the Scottish Central Railway Rowing Club, that their “only object . . . is amusement after working hours,” was not a reason for participation that was likely to upset those many potential patrons who believed that “human nature craves for excitement during its leisure hours” or that “recreation is necessary to soothe the drudgery of common labour.” Thus, John MacFarlane, founder and patron of the first Stirling Boat Club, thought it

---

52. *Ibid.*, 10 March 1865. “No-one will deny there is a field for this,” *Stirling Observer*, 31 March 1864.

53. *Stirling Journal*, 27 July 1866.

54. *Ibid.*, 20 February 1874.

55. *Ibid.*, 5 November 1897.

56. *Stirling Observer*, 27 April 1865.

57. *Bridge of Allan Reporter*, 27 April 1866.

58. *Stirling Observer*, 28 January 1864.

59. *Stirling Journal*, 14 May 1875.

60. *Ibid.*, 15 June 1888; *Stirling Observer*, 4 May 1865.

61. *Ibid.*, 22 July 1875; *Stirling Journal*, 25 June 1875.

62. *Ibid.*, 1 July 1853, 14 September 1885; *Falkirk Herald*, 30 August 1860.

quite sufficient that the only benefit of boatracing for spectators was the “excitement and enjoyment” it provided.<sup>63</sup> To R. J. Girdwood, their secretary, the Strathallan Highland Games were valuable “as much for the amusement they provide for residents as for their power in attracting visitors.”<sup>64</sup> The inauguration of a bowling club at Borestone (Stirling) in 1858 and of a highland games gathering at Callander in 1888 are but two of numerous examples of sporting institutions intended solely “to provide amusement.”<sup>65</sup>

Pride in community was another consideration which prompted the region’s more prosperous citizens to support the cause of organised sport. Adequate facilities for physical recreation and success in sporting competition soon became important symbols of achievement in the rivalry between neighbouring communities for status and prestige. In the provision of opportunities for sport and the maintenance of satisfactory competitive standards it became increasingly important not to fall behind and a matter of shame whenever this occurred.

“Why should Stirling, so famous in other respects, be behind towns not half her population with regard to the employment of the sports of the turf?” the *Stirling Journal* inquired in 1829.<sup>66</sup> “Boatracing is now a favourite amusement even at obscure, remote places, and we don’t see why Stirling should be behind its neighbours in this respect,” the *Journal* similarly lamented in 1853.<sup>67</sup> In a letter to the press in 1870, “A Supporter of Highland Games” expressed sarcastic approval of the long-delayed decision to introduce a highland games gathering at Stirling, “Every large city in the neighbourhood, Alva, Tillicoultry, Bridge of Allan and Dunblane, have their games in the midst of teeming populations. Why should not this ‘mere hamlet’ of Stirling follow their bright example?”<sup>68</sup> By failing to provide a public skating rink and swimming baths Stirling was “a long way behind other towns,” complained PWL in 1885 and a Mr. Bayne in 1898.<sup>69</sup> But it was not only at Stirling that patrons of organised sport were motivated by concern for community status. “Why should Alloa, with all its advantages for the practice of this healthful and delightful exercise, be behind its neighbours? Why should not we, like our more enterprising and energetic neighbours in Stirling, have an annual regatta?” one Alloa resident asked in response to the collapse of the town’s boat club in 1858.<sup>70</sup> In 1880 the leading citizens of Dunblane were urged to provide a park for football and other games so that “Dunblane would not be behind places of lesser size and population.”<sup>71</sup> “If Alva and Tillicoultry can have them surely Alloa can?” the

---

63. *Stirling Journal*, 7.7 July 1855.

64. *Ibid.*, 1 August 1865.

65. *Ibid.*, 3 September, 1858, 30 August 1888.

66. *Ibid.*, 2 July 1829.

67. *Ibid.*, 15 July 1853.

68. *Ibid.*, 20 May 1870.

69. *Stirling Observer*, 16 July 1885. *Stirling Journal*, 23 December 1898

70. *Ibid.*, 7 May 1858.

71. *Ibid.*, 24 September 1880.

*Alloa Advertiser* complained of the failure to arrange a highland games gathering in 1885.<sup>72</sup>

Once established, sports institutions were expected to be a credit to the community they represented, and were severely criticised whenever they were not. Of the failure of a Stirling crew to win the MacFarlane Challenge Cup at the 1858 Stirling Regatta the *Journal* wrote: "It is little short of a disgrace to the club that they allow the cup to leave the town every year . . . surely there are as many gentlemen amateurs in Stirling as might form a crew which could maintain the credit of our ancient town against allcomers?"<sup>73</sup> In October 1882, after several successive defeats and within six months of being congratulated, "for its endeavours to uphold the traditional reputation of the good old village," the Doune Vale of Teith Football Club was advised to "break up and get reorganised. . . [I]f our local bodies cannot give a better account of themselves in the future they should, like our bowling club, throw up the sponge and stay at home or, like our draughts club, disband and disappear."<sup>74</sup> To the men and women who patronised sport as a means of enhancing the status of the community in which they lived it was vital that sporting institutions performed honourably.

No less frequent an explanation for the patronage of organised sport in central Scotland during the second half of the nineteenth century were the opportunities it afforded for making money. Hoteliers and innkeepers like William Wright, patron of the Doune Quoits Club, Robert Sorley, promoter of the Thornhill glass ball shooting competitions, Thomas Adam, treasurer of the Denny and Dunipace Pigeon Shooting Club, and William Jones, founder and promoter of the Doune clay pigeon shoot, and businessmen like the Stirling gunmaking firm of Maloch, Michie and Crockart, who organised pigeon shooting matches in the Stirling Kings Park and donated prizes to the annual glass ball competitions at Aberfoyle and Dunblane, would no doubt all have been disappointed had their sponsorship not yielded a commercial return. Even some of the patrons drawn from wealthy landed and propertied backgrounds were not immune to considerations of personal financial gain. Given his belief that public parks only encouraged laziness among working men, the Earl of Mar's decision in 1859 to make the Doctor's Park available to the town of Alloa as a games' park, for example, can only be explained by the annual rent of £7 he was to receive "for one of the most unproductive pieces of ground on his estate."<sup>75</sup> In the early 1890s, even at what was described as a "greatly reduced rent," the Stirling County Cricket Club still paid one of its patrons, Colonel Murray or Polmaise, the not inconsiderable sum of £30 a year for use of the Easter Williamfield ground.

Throughout the last twenty years of the century the promotion of amateur athletics events, sometimes in association with cycling, quoiting and five-a-side

---

72. *Alloa Advertiser*, 4 July 1885.

73. *Stirling Journal*, 5 March 1858.

74. *Ibid.*, 20 October 1882. See also *ibid.*, 23 March 1883, 27 August 1886

75. *Ibid.*, 20 May, 27 May 1859.

soccer tournaments, was regarded as a useful, additional source of income by organisations as diverse as brass bands, boys' brigades, bands of hope, public park committees, temperance societies, oddfellows' and foresters' associations and cricket clubs. They were particularly popular with soccer clubs, large and small, professional and amateur. In 1894 subscriptions were solicited towards a prize fund for an amateur sports meeting on the Tulloch Knowe at Doune in an attempt to revive the "once famous" Vale of Teith Football Club. In 1899 the Dunblane Football Club organised an athletics competition in an effort to raise funds to meet the soaring costs of professionalism. From such large, professional soccer clubs as Alloa Athletic, East Stirling, Falkirk, Stenhousemuir and Stirling Kings Park to small, amateur clubs such as Auchterarder, Cowie Wanderers, Doune Teithbank Rovers and Milngavie, amateur athletics meetings were seen as a necessary weapon in the battle to remain solvent.

It was, however, with the aim of promoting the prosperity of the communities in which they lived that commercially motivated patrons of organised sport were primarily concerned. In the course of the second half of the nineteenth century the provision of decent facilities for physical recreation came to be widely regarded as essential for the attraction of residents and visitors. "We need all the advantages the town affords to make it a place of agreeable resort to strangers," the *Stirling Journal* noted in 1854 when recommending the erection of a signpost to direct visitors to the Guildhall bowling green.<sup>76</sup> The construction of a bowling green at the Mine House, Bridge of Allan, and of golf courses at Aberfoyle, Alva, Balfron, Bridge of Allan, Callander, Drymen, Milngavie and Tillicoultry in the final decade of the century were all intended by their promoters to attract new residents and visitors. "A golf course is as necessary to a health resort as a good water supply," the *Stirling Observer* commented in 1896, reiterating a commonly-held belief that the local Kings Park course, "more than any other institution . . . the means of bringing people to settle in Stirling," had done "not a little to attract visitors to spend their summer holidays in the town and its neighbourhood."<sup>77</sup> As Provost Philip of Bridge of Allan remarked,

The prosperity of Bridge of Allan depends greatly on visitors and there is nothing like providing the means of healthy amusements for inducing visitors to come . . . it is a duty to give ample facilities for bowling, cricket, curling, tennis, golf, etc., so as to induce visitors to come and bring prosperity to the town.<sup>78</sup>

Sports which attracted large crowds of spectators, like boatracing, horse racing and highland games, were particularly valued for the revenue they generated. In 1829 the *Stirling Journal* proposed a levy of five shillings a head on "all respectable citizens" to help revive the Stirling Horse Races, which "caused more money to be spent (from the influx of nobility, gentry and strangers) than any other."<sup>79</sup> "It is only right that we should look well to visitors

76. *Ibid.*, 24 March 1854.

77. *Stirling Observer*, 30 May 1896; *Stirling Journal*, 9 August 1895, 17 April, 24 April 1896.

78. *Bridge of Allan Reporter*, 8 October 1898.

79. *Stirling Journal*, 16 July 1829.

to the town. Whatever brings money . . . does good eventually to all inhabitants engaged in trade," the *Journal* wrote in support of an appeal for donations towards the 1864 Stirling Regatta.<sup>80</sup> Revenue-raising considerations were especially significant in the establishment of highland games gatherings. "It is plain that whatever attracts visitors must be advantageous to the town," the *Journal* concluded of a proposal to begin a highland games event at Stirling in 1851.<sup>81</sup> According to a supporter of the revived Stirling Games of 1870, "with the opening of the railway to Oban, Dollar and other places we must do our utmost to draw attention to our attractions." To this end, the games would "keep up our name and reputation . . . attract people to the town and increase the circulation of money."<sup>82</sup> The Strathallan Games, declared R. J. Girdwood, not only benefitted Bridge of Allan's lodging house keepers by permitting an "early start to the season" but also brought in large sums of money which "ultimately permeated through the whole community."<sup>83</sup> As the Strathallan Games committee significantly remarked when agreeing to ban the sale of alcohol at the 1894 gathering only after some of its members offered to stand surety for the £65 or so that might be lost in revenue as a result of the experiment, "first and foremost we are businessmen."<sup>84</sup>

### III

Generalisation about the relative importance of individual impulses for patronage is not easy. Apart from the fact that many of the men and women who sponsored organised sport had more than one purpose in mind, regional analyses of the kind attempted in this paper suggest that the aims of patronage varied considerably both from sport to sport and place to place. Local newspaper references to the value of boating, for example, most frequently stress the contribution it made to physical health and the status and wealth of the community. Cricket and curling were most often valued for their promotion of health and social harmony; football for its contribution to health, "manliness" and community identity; golf, horseracing and highland games gatherings for the part they played in enhancing community prosperity and prestige; and quoting for fostering physical fitness. In industrial and mining districts like Falkirk and Alloa, where the availability of employment was all that was required to attract and retain immigrants, emphasis on the commercial value of sport was relatively muted. In residential and "tourist" communities like Bridge of Allan and Callander, which relied heavily for their prosperity on the provision of an environment attractive enough to lure new, leisured or commuter residents and summer visitors, sport was more often patronised for commercial reasons. Thus, whereas the formation of a bowling club at Falkirk in 1840 was intended to provide "a few hours of healthful recreation and invigorating sport"

---

80. *Ibid.*, 8 July 1864.

81. *Ibid.*, 5 September 1851.

82. *Ibid.*, 20 May, 27 May, 3 June 1870.

83. *Bridge of Allan Reporter*, 1 August 1865

84. *Stirling Journal*, 6 July 1894.

for the town's leading residents, the construction of a bowling green at Airthrey Wells, Bridge of Allan, in the same year was solely intended to attract visitors.<sup>85</sup> An Alloa Regatta was begun in 1858 principally out of anxiety not to fall behind neighbouring Stirling in the provision of water sports: a Loch Lubnaig Regatta at Callander in 1860 chiefly to make the town more attractive to summer tourists. Attempts to generalise the motives of those who sponsored organised sport have not always taken sufficient account of variations of this kind.

Clearly, the patronage of popular sport by upper and middle class inhabitants of central Scotland was prompted by a wide variety of considerations. For many patrons patronage was probably regarded as no more than the fulfillment of a traditional social obligation which had survived into the nineteenth century as the price that had to be paid in return for the privileges of rank and wealth. For at least some, however, the sponsorship of sport had more positive aims. Recently it has become fashionable to argue that organised sport was essentially the creation of a British upper and middle class school system whose alumni subsequently introduced it to the wider community in order to promote the virtues of health, "manliness," self-discipline and social harmony.<sup>86</sup> Such motives, as we have seen, were by no means absent from the intentions of many of those who patronised institutional sport in the Scottish central lowlands. Locally, however, they appear to have figured no more prominently among the intentions of sport's patrons than several other aims. To judge from the relative frequency with which they were reported in the region's newspapers, a concern to enhance individual and community wealth and status and a simple desire to improve the quality of life for a population relatively starved of opportunities for recreational enjoyment, objectives which have little or no place in the aims of the elite education games cult, were at least as important. By continuing to undervalue the rich array of evidence contained in newspaper sources and focusing too narrowly on the records, activities and ideology of the elite school community, historians of sport run the risk of distorting and unduly restricting the range of forces which encouraged upper and middle class men and women to support the early development of modern, organised sport.

---

85. *Ibid.*, 3 April, 7 August, 21 August 1840.

86. See especially J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian public school: the emergence and consolidation of an educational ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); J. A. Mangan, "Catalyst of change: John Guthrie Kerr and the adaptation of an indigenous Scottish tradition," in Mangan, *Pleasure, profit and proselytism*, 86-104; J. A. Mangan and C. Loughlan, "Fashion and fealty: the Glaswegian bourgeoisie, middle class schools and the games ethic in the Victorian and Edwardian eras," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 5 (May, 1988): 133-5; Timothy J. L. Chandler, "Emergent athleticism: games in two English public schools, 1800-60." *Ibid.* 5 (December, 1988), 312-30; Kathleen E. McCrone, *Sport and the physical emancipation of English women, 1870-1914* (London: Routledge, 1988).