

Lords vs Commoners: The Landlord's Game

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Go!

1 DUKE STREET
 Welcome to the Grosvenor Estate, owned by the Duke of Westminster. He began one town in Bloomsbury, London, a Privately Owned Public Space (POPS), just off the approximately named Duke Street. Increasing numbers of one-public spaces in London are being enclosed and privatized by companies and developers.

2 GROSVENOR SQUARE
 The Grosvenors inherited Mayfair 300 years ago, when it was just fields, now it's one of the richest neighborhoods real estate on the planet. For decades, the US Embassy was based in Grosvenor Square, but on a long lease from the Duke. This year it has finally moved north of the river - fifty years after the 1963 riots in the Square to protest the Vietnam War.

3) GHOST HOUSE
 No. 41 Upper Grosvenor Street has been empty for almost 15 years. It's owned by an offshore company based in the British Virgin Islands. It's a similar story at No. 11, a decade ago the empty mansion was squatted by an artists' collective. For years, the world's wealthiest people have treated London properties as assets rather than as homes. Meanwhile, rough sleeping in London continues to soar - just squating has been outlawed.

4 GROUSE HOUSE
 Town meets country. No. 12 Upper Grosvenor Street is home to City Asset Management - whose wealthy boss Oliver Oley runs a gross shooting club group, called the Pigeon The Hunt. Gross income covers an area of England the size of Greater London and are the richest club men to be laid out. The Duke of Westminster owns a huge grouse moor in Lancashire.

5 TREASURES LAND
 This is the first time the Office of Statistics has reported that the UK's wealth of the richest 1% has increased for the first time since 2008. The Office of Statistics has reported that the UK's wealth of the richest 1% has increased for the first time since 2008. The Office of Statistics has reported that the UK's wealth of the richest 1% has increased for the first time since 2008.

6 FORTONS
 Fortnights is the most expensive restaurant in the world - with an average price of £100 per person. It's the most expensive restaurant in the world - with an average price of £100 per person. It's the most expensive restaurant in the world - with an average price of £100 per person.

7 HAZELHURST HOTEL
 The Hazelhurst Hotel is the most expensive hotel in the world - with an average price of £100 per night. It's the most expensive hotel in the world - with an average price of £100 per night. It's the most expensive hotel in the world - with an average price of £100 per night.

14 GHOST TOWN
 Ghost Town is a privately owned public space (POPS) in London, owned by the Duke of Westminster. It's a ghost town - with no one living there. It's a ghost town - with no one living there. It's a ghost town - with no one living there.

13 TWO OTIES
 The Two Oties is a privately owned public space (POPS) in London, owned by the Duke of Westminster. It's a two oties - with no one living there. It's a two oties - with no one living there. It's a two oties - with no one living there.

12 TREASURES LAND
 The Treasures Land is a privately owned public space (POPS) in London, owned by the Duke of Westminster. It's a treasures land - with no one living there. It's a treasures land - with no one living there. It's a treasures land - with no one living there.

11 LAND LOBBY
 The Land Lobby is a privately owned public space (POPS) in London, owned by the Duke of Westminster. It's a land lobby - with no one living there. It's a land lobby - with no one living there. It's a land lobby - with no one living there.

10 CONQUEST CORNER
 The Conquest Corner is a privately owned public space (POPS) in London, owned by the Duke of Westminster. It's a conquest corner - with no one living there. It's a conquest corner - with no one living there. It's a conquest corner - with no one living there.

9 ELITE STREET
 The Elite Street is a privately owned public space (POPS) in London, owned by the Duke of Westminster. It's an elite street - with no one living there. It's an elite street - with no one living there. It's an elite street - with no one living there.

8 PARK LANE
 The Park Lane is a privately owned public space (POPS) in London, owned by the Duke of Westminster. It's a park lane - with no one living there. It's a park lane - with no one living there. It's a park lane - with no one living there.

PAY A TAX ON YOUR EMPTY HOME

GO TO JAIL you're a TAX DODGER

THE LANDLORD'S GAME

From a privately-owned public space (POPS) owned by the Duke of Westminster to the ghost town of Cadogan Square, the Landlord's Game took about 100 people on an educational walk around the richest boroughs of London. The event was organised by the Land Justice Network as part of the week of action, Lords vs Commoners. The aim was to raise awareness of the incredible inequality of land ownership, both in rural and urban areas.

More than a third of our land is still owned by the aristocracy, whose ancestors seized it during the Norman Conquest. By fencing off land and using violence to exclude people, landowners (the lords) have deprived the rest of us of what should be a shared resource.

The vast majority of us, the commoners, own little or nothing. Even the land that was once meant to be common land has been taken away from us. Land saved for community use, such as for hospitals, fire stations, school playing fields, is increasingly being sold off and asset stripped by private developers.

Land issues lie at the heart of so much inequality and environmental degradation in society today. Landowners are able to control and exploit our natural resources and force the rest of us to be beholden to them for food, shelter and other needs. Despite their huge wealth, our taxes are used to pay landowners millions in farming subsidies and housing benefit, increasing inequality still further.

From publicity material by the [Land Justice Network](#)

The Birth of the Landlord's Game

The action group of the LJN met several times to discuss what we might do in London for the Week of Action. There were so many possibilities that it was difficult to decide! In the end we decided to focus on an area of London that is owned by two of the main aristocratic families whose ownership of this prime real estate dates back to the Norman Conquest - the Duke of Westminster and the Earl of Cadogan. Though many of London's main landowners are companies, such as the Canary Wharf Group, the role of the aristocracy in land inequality in Britain remains a major issue and obstacle to land reform.

The next step was to decide what to do exactly. We wanted the event to be both a form of protest but also educational. We didn't just want to stand in front of an empty property and shout. The inspiration for doing an actual walk came from the example of the [Closed House](#) event in Tower Hamlets. Participants, supplied with [a map](#) designed by Lucy Rogers, walked from Whitechapel through to Bethnal Green and finished at the Hollands Estate. There were a number of stops at various places that were under threat by developers. The event was both a public protest against gentrification and a very informative walking tour as we heard from people active in different campaigns along the way. The map was a very important resource. The map and the walking in the physical space shown in the map were an effective way of making the issues visible.

Taking this as a model, we transferred it to the Lords vs Commoners theme. This idea was further developed by giving the name 'The Landlord's Game' to the event. This was inspired by the fact that the area of Mayfair, south Kensington and Chelsea contains some of the most highly priced property in the game of Monopoly. In addition, housing and empty properties are a key problem faced by Londoners. Grenfell is not far from the ghost town of Cadogan Square.

However, it was not only housing that was highlighted by the walk. In the Land Justice Network we are concerned about all issues to do with land and this includes offshore property investors, the increasing use of parks as places to make money and the fact that huge swathes of Britain are reserved for hunting grouse. All of these issues ended up being highlighted by the tour.

The hard work

Once we decided on the general idea, the practical hard work began. A couple of people, in particular Guy Shrubsole of [Who Owns England?](#), spent time working out a possible route for the walk which involved pouring over internet sites to find key addresses and then piecing it all together. Then of course it had to be walked to see if it would 'go' as a walk for a large group of people. It was brilliant work because a route was devised that was not too long and had a number of stops which highlighted a variety of land-related issues.

Once the route was decided, people went to work on developing publicity material as well as [the map resource](#) for the walk. We worked on a joint text and once this agreed then the material had to be designed. Fortunately, we had an excellent designer, Nick Hayes, to help out and some superb material was produced. Everyone helped with spreading news about the event with many hundreds of leaflets handed out and publicity on social media.

On the day

April 14th came around all too quickly. We had been nervous about what the day would bring but, when the day came, we had the only good day in weeks of bad weather. And people came! We estimated that up to a hundred people participated in the walk at some point with most staying with us from beginning to end. We started in Brown Hart Garden, a privately owned public space, with speakers on both urban housing and agricultural land issues. Then we set off with banners and placards. Guy Shrubsole heroically led us through most of the stops, providing a wealth of information but we also had other speakers where appropriate and participants chipped in with their knowledge. The stops included

- The Ghost House - leased by an offshore company based in the Virgin Islands and empty for 15 years.
- Grouse House - premises of Odey Asset Management whose wealthy boss runs a shooting lobby group which promotes grouse moors.
- Hyde Park - where we heard from Dave Morris of the Friends of London's Parks about how parks are under threat.
- Grosvenor Crescent - the most expensive street in the UK, with an average house price of £16.9 million
- The headquarters of the Country Land and Business Association – its 36,000 members own 50% of the rural land of England and Wales.

We finished in Cadogan Square, which has a private, fenced-off garden reserved for the residents, even though a majority of the homes are empty. Our last speaker was Pilgrim Tucker who is working closely with Grenfell survivors. She highlighted the extreme disparities in this area compared with the area around north Kensington, only a few miles away. While Grenfell survivors still fight to get rehoused, empty houses are all around us in this part of the borough.

More details, and pictures, of the walk are on the [Land Justice Network web site](#).

Feed-back

The response from participants was overwhelmingly positive. The weather certainly helped but the quality of the speakers and the resources such as the map and accompanying information was a key factor in making the event memorable. They provided key facts and brought land issues to life. The walk and the stops chosen gave a visible form to the injustices of land ownership, making it so much more meaningful than reading about the issues in the papers or on social media. We hope to do more such walks in different parts of London, making visible what is happening to London as property developers transform our communities in ways that few people want.

You too can use the [Landlords Game Map](#) to explore the walk for yourself.