



[The Pairc Deer Raid (1887)]

Glasgow Herald Wednesday 23/11/87, Page 7, Column 7
(From contemporary reports)

'Raid on Deer in Lewis' an attempt was made by the Sheriff and Procurator Fiscal the previous Saturday to dissuade the crofters and cottars from their plan to raid the deer forest. Previously, a meeting arranged for 12.0'clock that day fell through due to a 'prohibition from Edinburgh'. The large number of crofters and cottars who attended the proposed meeting as delegates became very angry when nobody turned up from Stornoway, as they had waited for most of the day. However, the prohibition was rescinded by telegraph on Saturday afternoon from Edinburgh and on Monday the Sheriff (Fraser) and Procurator Fiscal (Ross) proceeded to Lochs in a closed carriage. They saw Donald MacRae but few if any of the Crofters. Understood the expedition will start on Tuesday Nov. 22nd - the rendezvous being half way between Balallan and Eishken.

The raid itself started at daybreak in beautiful weather. A large number of squatters and young men assembled at Seaforth Head within 5 miles of Eishken Lodge, and then formed into small parties, driving and killing the deer until dusk. Tonight, they camp on the northwest shore of Loch Seaforth within 3 miles of the lodge. They have spars and sails for tents and meal to last 3 days. The raiders left various townships in Lochs early in the morning and proceeded to the agreed rendezvous in the centre of Park Forest. They had guns and flags and the Balallan people had a piper at the head. They had ropes sails and spars and meal for 3 days. A great slaughter is taking place of deer and they plan tonight to camp at Airidh-Bhruach. 2000 cottars, armed, and provided with tents and stores camped near the shore of Loch Seaforth. The crofters once cultivated all the lands under deer and they demand its restoration. The watchers in the forest made no attempt to stop the raiders and they marched triumphantly in, pipes playing. Then they split up to hunt deer all over the forest.

24/11/87

It is now reported that about 330 crofters and cottars took part in the raid and resumed on the second day (Wed.). It is expected that at the end of the 2nd day not an animal will be left alive. Large detachments of Ross-shire Police expect to be at the scene of the outrage this morning. A body of Marines is standing by on the Clyde Guard ship and 100 men of the Royal Scots proceed via Strome Ferry to Stornoway tomorrow.

The most striking thing about the raid is the organization and grim determination with which it has been conducted. It has for some time been known or suspected that a raid was contemplated. The forest is on the Matheson estate leased to a Mr. Platt. The grievance is against Lady Matheson for leasing to him some twelve square miles of hill, which they claim, should be divided into crofts. Their way of going about it is to plan a campaign against the harmless deer. They took with them meal, to vary the monotony of venison, enough for 3 or 4 days. They encamped last night upon the site of a famous Clan battle and with that mixture of sanctity and self-complacency which seems to characterise the Celtic race, after a hearty supper of stolen venison, prayed for a blessing on one and all engaged in the work of barbarity and robbery which they blasphemously called a 'Holy Crusade'. And now these poachers declare their desire to turn the dog kennels into Churches and the deer forests into crofts of cultivated land. When Statesmen and others openly advocate plans of campaign for Ireland, how can we be surprised if the Gospel finds ready belief and hearty acceptance among the half educated and hot-blooded peasantry of the Highlands? What is good for a Celtic Irishman must also be good for a Celtic Scotsman. No Plans were made to stop them - once again someone has blundered.

The whole expedition camped last night at Airidh Dhomhnuill Càrn; there the Macaulays and Macleods fought one of the last tribal combats of Lewis. The night was fine and some slept in the open, others in the tents. Pipers played and a huge supper of venison was served and then all retired quietly to rest after one had prayed aloud for a blessing, upon all engaged in the Holy Crusade. All passed off quietly during the night and in the morning an early start was made due to threatening rain. Companies of cottars and landless men joined the expedition today from all parts of Lochs and it is expected not a hoof will remain tonight. Sherriff Fraser and Fiscal Ross left Stornoway at 9a.m. on Wednesday by steamer for Lochs. Great excitement prevails throughout Lewis. It is said that the landless cottars were driven to desperation by famine and want whilst Lady Matheson refused to restore to them the lands that were formerly cultivated by crofters and are now a waste under deer.

No conflicts or riots of any kind have taken place so far. The Highlanders declare they want to transform the dog kennels into Churches and the forest into crofts. According to authoritative information the number taking part did not at the outset exceed 30, principally cottars and squatters from Crossbost, Cromore, Ranish, Balallan and

Gravir (but some more came on the 2nd day). Land hunger is the obvious cause of the rioting and raiding in Lewis. The two worst incidents were the deer raid and the Aignish riot, and in both Point and Lochs the land shortage was even more acute than elsewhere and the population was exploding to the pitch where overspill became absolutely necessary.

25/11/87

Sherriff Fraser met 40 men at Eishken on Thursday. They received him respectfully and listened to him reading the Riot Act, then explained their destitute state. They told him they were returning home. The raid has now been abandoned. The Ross-shire Police (about 20) got a very hostile reception from a large crowd at Stornoway pier. 80 Men of the Royal Scots are to leave Maryhill and a detachment of Marines is on the way from Plymouth called the Ajax and also 500 officers and men. Numerous fishing boats from Harris were seen cruising along the coast and it is said they were being used to freight deer, which had been killed. As an instance of the spirit, which has characterised the management of this vast estate by Lady Matheson, there was not a single case of a tenant not getting compensation when his house was taken away from him. Seventeen townships have been partly reclaimed from wasteland in different parts of the Island. After the land was reclaimed the townships in the Island were adjusted and allotted and rented anew at what they were considered worth. H.M.S. Ajax broke down on the way and never got beyond Arran. Several of the raiders suffered badly from stomach trouble due to the unaccustomed strong meat. The raid was first threatened to convince the authorities that the people were starving and needed help. The cottars maintained that the deer were getting fat upon the land whilst the people starved - therefore first get rid of the deer and we will also have meat for the winter.

28/11/87

Five prisoners charged with mobbing, rioting and intimidation. Donald Macrae said at a meeting of the Land League in Oban that the winged game had disappeared from Lochs and that the deer would soon follow. For the crofters were to have venison with their potatoes this winter. The chief end in view was to call the attention of the Country to the poverty in Lochs. They also (some of them) wanted to render the forest valueless for sport. The quarrel of the people was with the land system and not the Law. They felt they had providence on their side. The Free Church was blamed for the 'cloak of piety' over the raid.

Arrests: Balallan

1. Donald Mackinnon, a young man of 30 living with his father, a crofter. Mackinnon looked proud, rather than otherwise, and offered to go into the town without an escort.
2. Murdo Macdonald, a cotter with wife and six children.
3. Murdo Macleod, a young man squatting in the township and was then away at the Communion.
4. Roderick Murray, ex Ness, arrested in town when at Reserve drill.
5. Malcolm Mackenzie.
6. Donald Macmillan.

Reasons: Overcrowding; bad fishing; failure of crops; fall of price of cattle; lack of employment on the mainland. In the course of a conversation before the raid Donald Macrae told the Sheriff that it would undoubtedly be carried out as many of the people were actually starving and saw no other source of food. He told the Sheriff that if enough meal was provided to stave off starvation, then the raid could probably be prevented. Mrs Murdo Macdonald, the wife of one of the prisoners has 6 children and lives in a hovel. She stated that her husband had brought home only £1 from the east coast fishing. Nearly the whole of the money was given to the minister for meal previously received. There was no work for her husband who had spent his time since coming home from the fishing going over the crofts and picking up the diseased potatoes that had been left on the ground, it was mainly on these that they had existed. The children were 'meager'. They had nothing but salt with the potatoes. The object of her husband in going on the raid had been to obtain food. He did not bring any of the deer home, it was at least two months since there was a penny in the house. They had nothing but what the Lord sent them. She stated that her husband had never had the courage to approach the Parochial Board.

Another house - Roderick Montgomery is a handsome specimen of the stalwart Lewis men. He is one of the seven men selected by Lady Matheson to go to London to represent the Island at the Fisheries Exhibition. Since coming home he has repeatedly applied for work on the estate but failed to get it and as he has no land feels poverty severely. The house, although very poor, is very clean.

29/11/87

One of the men arrested has now been charged with having aimed a loaded gun at a Police Superintendent, an assistant factor and a crofter.

Arrest of Donald Macrae: Mr. Donald Macrae, teacher Balallan, formerly teacher of Maths and commercial at Inverness Academy, has been prominent as a leader of land agitation for a number of years. He was charged with inciting to mobbing and violence, and also of having taken part in the disturbance. The charge of inciting is founded on a speech made in Gaelic, in his schoolhouse at a meeting of the Land League. Several of the estate officials were present at the meeting. Roderick Mackenzie, Merchant, Balallan arrested on the same charge. Donald Mackinnon now charged with a much more serious offence - pointing a gun at the Superintendent. Donald was chased by the Superintendent and two others and threatened to shoot them twice. He then escaped.

(Notes by Angus Macleod)

Records arrested 29/11/87

John Matheson	26	3 Gravir
Malcolm Macritchie	29	Gravir
Murdo Mackenzie	35	4 Gravir
John Macleod	29	Cromore
Angus Macfarlane	23	10 Marvig
Alex Macfarlane	29	10 Marvig
Alex Kennedy	23	2 Calbost

Total expected to be prosecuted - sixteen

Kelp industry collapsed 1840-44; potato crop failed 1846; expansion of east coast fishing is spoken of in a report dated 1851; Lochs population; 1841 - 3653; 1881 - 6283; nearly doubled in 40 years; Lewis as a whole increased by 50% Lewis population in 1790 was 8311 and in 1881 was 25487.

Donald Macrae - Teacher
Roderick Mackenzie - Merchant, Balallan
Murdo Macdonald
John Matheson - Gravir
Malcolm Mackenzie - Crossbost
Donald Macmillan

Date of raid 23/11/87

Crofter debate in House of Commons - Glasgow Herald 22/2/88
Page 7 cols. 5-9, Page 8 cols. 1-7

A flag was carried

Donald speaking at the meeting: Until the warships come things will not improve. So long as there are deer in the forest, then so long will we be without land. The deer must be killed. Donald holds a supply of meal for distribution to families in want. 'Give them the bayonet', 'Give them the bullet', 'Shoot them down', 'why should such vermin live'. Such was the Christian counsel displayed in large type given by two of the leading Scotch Tory daily newspapers one morning in January, 1888, less than a quarter of a century ago. It was offered to the Tory Government, then in power, as the best advice they could suggest in dealing with five or six hundred starving crofters and cottars of the Island of Lewis who had forcibly driven the cattle and sheep off the farm of Aignish, which once belonged to the crofters, but who were driven off it just as their descendants were cleared off by the sheep and cattle.

The same journals, six weeks afterwards, published the first batch of decisions of the Crofter Commission from the Island of Lewis and from the districts in which these newspapers recommend the 'bayonet' and the 'bullet' as effective remedies for dealing with a desperate people, literally, many of them dying for want of the first essentials of life - food. Those decisions revealed the fact that these people - crofters and cottars - had been ruthlessly and systematically robbed, and that the estate management, alleged by these journals to have been a 'model' of generosity, had really been one of the most merciless in the Highlands.

The first batch of decisions related to the rents, and arrears of a hundred and fifty crofters in the five townships of Borge (or Five Penny), Mid-Borge, Upper Shader, Lower Shader, and Ballantrushal. The total of the rents was £444, and it was reduced to £354, showing a reduction of 42¾%. In other words, for every piece of land, the fair rent of which was £2.17s, the crofters had to pay a back-rent of £5, and this was only the average. There were about forty cases in which the rents had been reduced 50% and upwards - cases in which the crofters were charged more than double the fair rents of their holdings. In twenty cases the reductions were as follows: - 52½, 53, 54½, 55, and 55½ (four cases), 59 (two cases), 59¼, 59½, 60, 61, 61¼, and 62¾ per cent. These extreme reductions showed scandalous oppression.

The extortion, for example, of a rent of £4.14s for a holding worth 35s can hardly be characterised in respectable language. But this was not the worst part of the case. It had been found that justice demanded that the rate of reduction in arrears should be nearly double the rate of reduction in rent. The crofters were burdened in the estate books with £2422 of arrears, and the Commissioners declared in their decision that only £379 of that amount was justly due. The Court cancelled £2043, or 84½% on the average, and in a number of cases they wiped the arrears out altogether as an unjust claim.

The second batch had reference to the township of Balallan, where the agitation was strong. There the Land Court, as in the five townships named, dealt with the reductions and the arrears. In Airidh-Bhruach, famous on account of the Deer Raid, the reductions were the high averages of 53% in rent and 91% in arrears. One of the Airidh-Bhruach cases showed a rent reduction of 66¾%, the unfortunate crofter having had up till that time to pay to Lady Matheson exactly three times the fair rent of his holding. These disclosures regarding the 'model' estate put an end to the Tory libels upon the people.

The Island of Skye had absorbed so much of the time of the authorities that the impoverished Island of Lewis had been neglected till the late autumn of 1887, when Skye was silenced and the work there finished up by the seizure of Mrs Macrae's cradle and child for arrears of rates. But it would hardly be correct to say that the Lews was wholly overlooked by the Crown authorities that had a model representative on the Island in the person of Sheriff Black. This official tried to emulate his brother in Skye, Sheriff Ivory, and while the agitation was in progress he kept it well to the front by his eccentricities in the Lews. I reported him when he delivered an extraordinary harangue in the Court House of Stornoway on the occasion of him sentencing nine men charged with being concerned in the deforcement of a messenger-at-arms and his concurrents at Valtos, Uig.

In that wonderful speech which occupied three hours in delivery, this paragon of the law laid down in cross-examining the Rev. MacIver, one of the witnesses: 'that it was the parson's duty to tell the people to give up the land which they had taken from the tacksman and to pay the rents they had withheld from the landlord'. It should be pointed out that the Land Court did not exist at this time. If all the charges that this Sheriff leveled at the people of Lewis had been true the Crofters of the Island were not fit to live - at any rate not where there were sheriffs, landlords, and tacksmen. According to the Sheriff, these awful crofters of Lewis should have been shot down or banished from the Country. He had on this occasion his full war paint on and eager for blood. He declared that he would 'cut out the cancer' with a 'sharp knife' and would 'smite down lawlessness with a hand made in iron'.

The crofters of Lewis, according to Sheriff Black, were a 'shocking bad lot, 'they were robbing the landlords', they had several times 'attempted to commit murder by putting stones along the road', 'they were boycotting the tacksmen', and 'they were rebels with arms in their hands'. One wonders what became of this landlord creature. It was about this time that Lady Matheson exhibited a Valentine in Stornoway that she had received from some unknown donor. This Valentine, which, it is said, contained threats, and was supposed to have been sent to her ladyship by an exasperated crofter. All the evidence was the other way, that it was one of her own officials who had sent it. Why she should have been permitted to exhibit this document in the Post Office was difficult to understand, but no one knew better than she did that there was not a crofter on the Island that would injure a hair of her head, and, as it was stated at the time, 'a free gift of her whole estate would not bribe one of them to take her life'.

It was one of the estate officials or someone in the employment of the estate who sent to the North British Daily Mail by wire from the Post Office at Stornoway a detailed account of the burning of a farm steading near Stornoway without a word of truth in it. A reward was offered, but it bore no fruit, although the heels could have laid the person who sent it. On the suggestion of Sheriff Fraser, who knew well the difficulties of bringing home a charge to one of the clique who did the dirty work of the place the idea of prosecution was abandoned. Then came the two great episodes of the entire movement in the Highlands and Islands, the Deer Raid in November 1887, and the Aignish Riot in the early days of January 1888. From the picturesque or spectacular point of view no episode in the agitation approached the famous Deer Raid.

There was an Old Testament air about the whole business, something in it of the 'flight' from Egypt, with a modern Moses, leading forth the starving crofters and cottars of Lochs to a land, if not flowing with milk and honey, at any rate to a forest teeming with deer. It was the last of the pictorial incidents. The agitation was burning itself out for lack of fuel, when with startling suddenness there burst out from the dying embers an unexpected blaze, spluttering and flashing for a brief space with meteoric splendour, and revealing to the World in all its ghastly hideousness the abysmal misery of the crofter and cottar helots of the Lews.

Carlyle said that the French Revolution was the work of poachers, and in the Lews affair it was preachers organised on new lines that drew the eyes of the civilised world to the impoverished condition of the Islanders. They speak to this day of the 'year of the deer raid' and date local events from it. It took months to organise, and strange preliminary meetings were held in the Balallan School. One can recall these gatherings, the solemn prayers and the Psalm singing by which they were all opened, and the earnest supplication that the Almighty would bless the deliberations 'all for His glory'.

There were spies in Balallan in those days that had to be dealt with, and after the prayer and praise were over the chairman would intimate that the time for 'purging' the gathering had been reached. 'Purging' was a drastic process involving rough work. A committee of half a dozen stalwarts was appointed, who at once set about clearing the meeting of the suspects or Castle spies. The scimmages that ensued were of the most exciting description, but the committee always came out on top. When the suspect clung to a desk he was handled without mercy, lifted bodily off his feet, and amid Gaelic cries of 'mach leis, mach leis' (out with him, out with him) he was cast, in the most literal sense, into outer darkness. There were in Lochs at this time some 6000 souls, and the Parish was one great palpitating mass of poverty. In every clay hovel and dog hole there was real dearth - genuine want and misery, with their consequents, disease and death - the great Lord of hunger was King of Lochs.

A man named Joseph Platt held Park Forest upon lease. When the forest was created a great number of townships were wiped out, and the evicted shipped and dumped on inhospitable Canadian shores. There were men living at the time of the raid who could recall these atrocities, and the recollection kindled fires in their souls. Petitions of grievances to the Christian proprietary had been frequent. One was sent on the 22nd November

1881, signed by thirty honest fishermen, reminding her that the lease of the forest was on the eve of expiry, and asking a restoration of at least a portion of it to the people. This Christian man who took no notice of these fishermen. Another petition was sent on the 3rd January 1883, humbly praying her to remove the deer and give her starving cottars an opportunity of mere subsistence, but it, too, received the same treatment - deer was of much more account than the starving families of Lochs. It is five-and- twenty years since a telegram reached the 'North British Daily Mail' Office intimating in three words that the 'hunt is up'.

A representative left that night, and got to Stornoway late on Wednesday night. Mr. Donald Macrae met him. It was a wild, dark night, rain falling in torrents, and the wind howling and lashing the sea into hills of white foam. They drove via Balallan to Park Forest, a distance of some twenty miles. The raid began on Tuesday, and the raiders were summoned by horn as usual, each township sent forth its little army of starving and ragged men and women, headed in some instances by a piper. There never was witnessed in these north lands a stranger and more grotesque spectacle than this army of poachers. It was estimated that there were 1100 persons out for the hunt. Most of the men were armed with some kind of weapon. There were guns old and new and muskets, which had not been in use since the '45'.

Mrs Platt and some of her gillies met the procession before entering the forest. She attempted to speak to them, but was met from all sides with the remark, 'My lady, we have got no English'. The local factor put in an appearance, but he got no further with his counsel than 'an Annam a Dhia bheil an caothadh oirbh?' (In the name of God have you gone mad?)

On the Tuesday night the raiders encamped in a sheltered place in the heart of the forest, but on Wednesday the camp was removed to Airidh Dhomhnuill Càrn, and there it remained until the storm of rain drove the raiders home. The deer killed in the two days were set down by the raiders at 200 and from the number of skins in evidence after the raid 200 was probably not an exaggerated figure out of the estimated six or seven hundred head in the forest. One who was present in the following graphic words described the camp on Thursday night and its appearance at the time:

The camp, *he wrote*, was a huge rectangular pavilion facing leeward, and made of cabers covered with old sails. A long way before arriving at the camp its blazing fires were sighted, and the sounds of music were wafted over the gentle breeze. Being recognised as friends we were accorded a cordial reception. There would be in the tent at this time considerably over 100 persons, and five large fires of peat were burning brightly. The sight from the entrance was picturesque in the extreme. Behind were the lofty peaks of Silver Hill and the Monaidh Mhor, and in front the placid waters of Loch Seaforth, deep and dark, without a ripple. The night was one of the loveliest, and in every respect favourable to the raiders.

The interior of the camp was of such an extraordinary character that there is no other probably in Highland history, at any rate since Culloden, to compare with it. Imagine a tent one hundred yards long, with its open face illuminated by five peat fires, each as large as an ordinary hayrick. Over the one in the centre there was suspended a magnificent specimen of a royal stag. Within ten yards of this fire there was another of equal size, above which was the carcass of a deer broiling, and there was also an immense cauldron containing another stag reduced into chops, or what is known in the south as Irish stew.

Immediately behind these fires were the raiders in wild attire, either reclining on couches of heather or sitting upright on stones or boulders pretty much in the fashion of their forefathers when they roamed the ancient forests of Caledonia before the Saxon set foot on British soil. Some were eating, others attending to the fires, and a considerable number of them chanted Highland songs, mostly from 'Donnachadh Bàn nan Oran', such as 'Chunna' mi' 'n damh donn,'s na h-eilean'. On the approach of strangers to the camp there was not the slightest attempt to prevent them entering. On the contrary, they were asked to listen to the cause, which induced them to resort to this method of hunting for food, and to partake of a share of what was going.

Others and I did not hesitate to accept the invitation, and we sat down on a huge boulder close to one of the fires. One of the raiders said, 'Our forefathers selected Park Forest as the spot above all others in Lochs where God our Father in Heaven intended that we should dwell. But now we are slaves, while the land that is ours by right is consecrated to deer. But what is to be the end of the whole business? You ask, does any man in his senses suppose that the Country will stand by and see a whole Parish slowly starve to death merely because a few Highland lairds are determined to turn fertile lands into deer runs and sheep walks?'

Some of the incidents of this great poaching event have become part of Highland history. There was the grace of the white-haired patriarch, who, standing bare-headed with his back to the blazing peat fire, with uplifted swarthy hands, invoked the blessing of 'God the Father and God the Son' upon the venison festival. The subject was worthy of the brush of the immortal Rembrandt, the great master of light and shadow. In rich sonorous Gaelic the old man asked a blessing, 'upon each and all who were that day engaged in the holy crusade', and expressed in

words which have been preserved, the fervent hope that 'a Church to the glory of God would be erected on the Sacred spot upon which the camp stood to commemorate the event'.

The newspaper correspondent and Mr. Macrae returned from the camp at Airidh Dhomhnuill Càrn late in the morning to the schoolhouse at Balallan. They had not been there many minutes when a strange thing happened. There was a beggar's chap on the door, and then the face of a man, white as a sheet of paper, appeared. The man's name was Mackinnon. He said that while returning to his home from the camp with a deer head slung over his shoulder he was hotly pursued. He threw down the deer head and stood at bay, pointing the muzzle of his gun at the breast of the man who was nearest to him.

This man turned out to be the Superintendent of Police. Mackinnon by his action laid himself open to arrest; He was guilty of a serious crime. He was in a fever of excitement, and shook with fear. He was advised to disappear until the furore subsided. He went direct to the Castle and made contrite confession, and declared the names of the ringleaders of the raid. During the ten or eleven years of the agitation this was the only man who turned informer.

The raid amply achieved its purpose, it was the pyrotechnic climax of the revolt, and the episode will be remembered when most of the other incidents are forgotten as the final kick to a corrupt, mischievous, and worn-out system of land tenure in the Highlands and Islands. Tory M.P.s, Tory journals, and Highland lairds leagued together and sneered at the poverty of the people, and stoutly denied that the deer raid had its origin in want. The proprietors of the 'North British Daily Mail' sent a representative to the Lews to inquire into and report upon the destitution in the Parish of Lochs and other parts of the Island. He lived with the starving people for a fortnight.

On getting back to Glasgow he published the results of his investigations in a series of four consecutive articles. In a month a sum of not less than four thousand pounds sterling was subscribed to a Lews destitution or famine fund. The colonies responded nobly to the appeal, and many of the largest contributions came from exiles that had been hunted from the homeland by evicting landlords. Subscriptions came pouring in from far away beyond the Atlantic foam and the 'long wash of Australasian seas'.

Among those who sent donations were lumbermen from the backwoods of America and lonely shepherds in faraway New Zealand. No evidence could be produced, however, to convince the enemies of the people that the cottars were literally starving, and the Radicals in the House insisted that the Tories should make inquiries for themselves. Accordingly Mr. Malcolm McNeil, of the Board of Supervision, was commissioned to proceed to the Lews to investigate what was described as 'the sensational reports of a Glasgow newspaper'. Mr. McNeil made an exhaustive inquiry extending over a week, and at the close was good enough to tell the correspondent that he had found, unfortunately, the destitution not less but more than he (the correspondent) had described it.

The ringleaders were arrested, and many exciting incidents followed the day on which the raiders quitted the forest. A party of cottars, several of whom were armed with guns, met Sheriff Fraser and Superintendent Gordon when driving through the forest. When requested to return to their homes they refused, and the Sheriff was obliged to read the Riot Act and warn them of the consequences, which would follow, should they persist in disregarding his counsel.

The trial of the alleged raiders took place in the High Court, Edinburgh, but after all the ingenuity of the landlord party to manufacture a case, after all the evidence in Gaelic of the informer who taught English, and after all the eloquence of 'J.P.B.' Mr. Macrae and his fellow prisoners were declared 'not guilty'. Mr. Saw, now Lord Saw, who appeared for Mr. Macrae and Mr. Roderick Mackenzie, had this to say of the informer Mackinnon:

Were it not for Donald Mackinnon there would have been left no case for the Crown. The fact was that Donald Mackinnon should have been in the dock. This informer himself shot the deer and he tried to shoot Superintendent Gordon; a fact which was admitted by that man, and Mackinnon was then cast into prison on the twofold charge of taking part in the riot and threatening to take away human life. But after remaining in prison two days something happened. He went to Stornoway castle on the business of the Primrose League, and from that moment all the clouds disappeared from his horizon. He found himself all at once in a land of prosperity. Mackinnon seemed to say he was not only sorry for something he had done, but he was glad to blame somebody for doing something.

No jury in its senses would rely on what that man said, and he submitted that it had been proved that Mackinnon the informer had uttered not by Macrae, but the remark about Mrs Platt - the inhuman remark. He concluded by asking the jury to return a verdict of not guilty against his two clients so that they might be restored to the community which respected and admired and loved them, and he asked them to discharge the men from the grievous and cruel burdens which the Crown had thought fit to place upon them. The Lord Justice Clerk summed up strongly against the prisoners.

His Lordship, however, explicitly declared that deer were not private property, neither were grouse nor any other wild animals. The proprietor was entitled to prevent strangers coming on his grounds. The jury then retired at twenty minutes to four o'clock, and returned after an absence of half-an-hour. The Foreman said, 'We return the

verdict of not guilty'. The decision was received with applause. The reception, which Mr. Macrae got on leaving the Court, was enthusiastic in the extreme. He was carried shoulder high down the High Street of Edinburgh amid cries of 'down with the tyrants'. On the way home Mr. Macrae visited Glasgow, and the cordial greeting of his many friends was of a most boisterous kind. In the Waterloo Rooms he addressed a crowded meeting and made one of the most eloquent speeches of his life. The verdict had an immense effect all through the Highlands. The lairds were maddened to find that their last hope was gone.

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See also Hebridean Connections, for more information about the men and places involved:

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