

# **The 'Crofters' War' of 1886** **as reported in *The Scotsman* newspaper**

**Transcribed by Iain Campbell**

In 1886 a revolt by the islanders of Tiree, later known as the 'Crofters' War', was reported in detail in *The Scotsman* newspaper. The reports, published from 21<sup>st</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> August 1886, gave day-by-day accounts of the insurrection and the authorities' response to it by sending in the Royal Navy, Marines and police.

The articles paint a vivid picture of the whole event and the mood of the participants on both sides. Then, as now, reporters added 'colour' to their stories by commenting on the latest rumour or supposition, the weather, a beautiful sunset, young Tiree women flirting with the soldiers, and the sporting bag of game of some officers. The three witches of Kilkenneth even get a mention.

The source materials for this collection were photocopies of the original newspaper articles purchased during research at the National Library, Edinburgh. I am indebted to and acknowledge all those un-named individuals whose efforts in preserving and later transferring the newspapers to microfilm have enabled this essentially disposable written word to survive and be available to future generations as valuable first-hand accounts, personal views and opinions of events as they happened. Although somewhat embellished by the journalists in the style of the day they still make interesting reading some 124 years later.

Except for the names of people, which are shown in bold italic print, the text and punctuation in the transcripts are reproduced as written in the newspaper articles as well as could be made out from the often poor photocopies and small print. To help readers looking for Tiree relatives, the names of and information about people mentioned in the articles are listed in Appendix 1 after the last transcript.

The 1886 uprising resulted in eight Tiree men being arrested, brought to trial in the High Court, Edinburgh, and sentenced to imprisonment. The trial proceedings were reported in *The Scotsman*, and transcriptions of these articles will be added to the present collection when they are completed. Following the imprisonment of the men there were many protest meetings across Scotland, and petitions were raised urging their release. One such petition was from the women folk of Tiree to Queen Victoria herself.

Undoubtedly, there must be much more information yet to be uncovered about this episode in Tiree's history. For instance:

- Who were the 75 families served with writs for eviction, and why?
- What documents await discovery in the National Archives, Edinburgh?
- What material is there in Duke of Argyll's estate papers?

*Iain Campbell*  
*24<sup>th</sup> November 2009*

**the transcripts begin on the following page**

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July 1886.

## Lawlessness in Tiree

### A Police Invasion

Our Oban correspondent telegraphed last night that a large force of police under command of *Captain Mackay, Chief-constable of Argyllshire*, would leave Oban late that night by the steamer *Hebridean* for Tiree, in order to enforce respect for the law in that Land League ridden island. For months past the Leaguers have adopted peculiar means of exercising their authority over the law abiding and respectable portion of the inhabitants, and gross insults have been offered to several of the residents. The immediate cause of the present police invasion is the forcible seizure of the large farm of Greenhill by the Land Leaguers at Whitsunday. This farm was relinquished by the late tenant and taken by a *Mr McNeill*, a member of the League and a brother of the president of the branch. The Leaguers however refused to let him take possession, drove off his cattle and installed themselves on the homestead. They have since continued to pasture their stock on the ground, have levied fines on any offending crofter whose cattle might stray upon the farm, and acted generally in high-handed fashion. The constabulary will reach Tiree about four o'clock this morning, but as the Leaguers are on the watch it is not known whether their landing will be peaceable or otherwise."

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Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1886.

## The Tiree Expedition

OBAN. Wednesday night---The legal expedition to Tiree---apparently the first instalment of a determined effort, too long delayed, to make the Queen's writ run in the Western Isles, as well as in the rest of the United Kingdom---has produced great excitement in Oban among both townsfolk and visitors. During the day the general talk in this beautiful centre, which has been called the Charing Cross of the Highlands, has almost invariably recurred to this topic, which possesses an enhanced interest from the fact that there is no telegraphic communication with the far away island, which has attained a bad eminence in the public view on account of the extraordinary action of the natives.

To-night the arrival in the beautiful bay of the Royal Yacht *Osborne*, with the *Duke and Duchess of Connaught* on board, turned public attention in that direction for a time. It was about eight o'clock when this tidy vessel, which has been cruising in the western seas for a week past, dropped anchor.

[The reason for this visit is revealed in *The Scotsman* of Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1886, the death of a crewman following medical treatment and his subsequent funeral was reported.]

Despite the gloomy nature of the weather, the sky being veiled with dark clouds, and showers of rain falling at intervals, quite a flotilla of small boats surrounded the Royal yacht as long as daylight lasted, and she was also inspected by crowds from the shore. The current conversation was not turned entirely from the state of affairs in Tiree, however for when other subjects flagged it flowed back into that familiar channel.

Of course, the lawless condition of the island, which was one of the first places in the west country to become tainted with the pernicious doctrines of the Land League, has been matter of notoriety for some time. Paragraphs have appeared from time to time, in the first place, with reference to the hectoring attitude of the land Leaguers in regard to the inhabitants generally, and latterly towards one of their on members in particular.

The circumstances of the case, which are familiar in this district, are sufficiently curious to merit recapitulation.

It appears that some time ago death overtook *Mr MacLean, the tenant of Greenhill*, a name which describes to some extent the nature of the holding. The family of the late occupant were desirous of renewing the lease, but wished before doing so to obtain not only certain improvements, but a reduction of rent. On these terms being declined, the farm was taken on let by *Mr McNeill*, a member of the Land League and a brother to the president of the local branch of that organisation, at the same rent as that offered to the *MacLean* family, but without the improvements. The Land Leaguers, who here as elsewhere, have exercised a terrorism which has compelled many of the crofter class to become identified with them even though their sympathies were little affected by revolutionary, ideas, simulated deep indignation at the back sliding of one of their number. Determined that he should not enjoy what they designated his "covenant of evil" they flung his furniture out of his house, and drove his cattle from the fields. The respectable portion of the community took occasion to condemn such proceedings but without effect, though their fruitless protest may have exposed them to some risk, recent visitors to the island state that people who dared to express opinions unpalatable to the tyrannical council which has charged itself with the management of insular affairs are pretty certain to be brought speedily to book. It seems, indeed, that the law abiding section of the population has been subjected to gross insults on several occasions. The instigators of the Greenhill outrage managed in a characteristic fashion to combine some pecuniary advantage with their righteous indignation, for they had no sooner expelled *McNeill's* stock from the pastures than they put on their own instead, and have since strenuously resisted all attempts to dislodge them. Primarily, it was on account of this unlawful occupation that the present expedition was undertaken. *Mr Nicolson, Messenger-at-Arms, Glasgow*, having been entrusted with the service of summonace upon the usurpers, with a view to the rehabilitation of the tenant in his rights, the officer and his concurrents were accompanied by about twenty commissionaires, and escorted by a like number of policemen, under command of *Captain Mackay of the Argyllshire Constabulary*, making altogether a body of about fifty men. It was intended that the party should sail last night by the well known steamer *Hebridean*; but this was frustrated through the dread which steamboat managers have of bringing down upon themselves the resentment of the islanders by carrying those representatives of the law for whom they have conceived a bitter antipathy.

The officials in charge of this steamer did not deem it expedient to accept the patronage which the messenger-at arms and his friends intended to bestow upon their vessel. Perhaps they had in view of the threat used towards a skipper who makes frequent voyages to Tiree---namely that if his ship brought any sheriff-officers to the island they would take care that she did not take any back as they would sink her. In the circumstances the authorities had applied to *Mr McLaughlan, Glasgow*, who has a fleet of fishing streamers and one of his vessels reached this port in the small hours of this morning. The party was speedily marched onboard and the boat steamed away about four o'clock. During the night the wind began to blow pretty steadily from the

east, and although the steamer would arrive off the island in the forenoon, it is not believed that she would have taken the pier, as the water is excessively rough in a breeze such as this as has been blowing all day. The black squall which passed over these waters in the afternoon must have told severely on the steamer lying off the shore in the event of her being unable to take the pier.

Details of the voyage are not expected at the earliest till tomorrow afternoon, when the steamer *Trojan*, of the Highland Fisheries Company (Limited), arrives here from the island in her capacity of dispatch boat.

On the subject of the mission the leaders of the expedition were naturally reticent to a degree, and opinion is divided as to whether or not anything will be done in the way of breaking up the Land League beyond the service of the summonses.

The probability is that nothing more will be done in the meantime although it is suggested that should any of the islanders claim protection a police guard will in all likelihood be placed at their disposal. In the discussion which is taking place on the matter, the general desire appears to be that the expedition may put an end to the "fooling" as the Yankee visitors call it, which has far too long disgraced this part of the country. Of course there is in opposition to this the loud-voiced expression of the class who pose as crofter's friends and who while keeping out of the meshes of the law themselves do not hesitate to give their scandalous disciples advice calculated to entangle them in their folds. The ingenuity of these persons is exercised in endeavouring to find excuses for those whom they would fain regard as their protégés, and some of their statements in reference to the sufferers add insult to injury. It is pointed out, however, that locally, at any rate, folks know their character, and are therefore aware of the value to set on their utterances.

Despite the downpour of rain in the afternoon and the presence of the Royal yacht in the bay in the evening, not a few calls were made at the piers to ascertain if anything had been heard of the expedition. People were eager to know what reception would be accorded it, and in reference to the attitude of the crofters there is conflict of views.

The self styles friends of the class declare that police interference will be resented as it was in Skye when the first expedition went to the braes; but, doubtless, the wish is father to the thought. On the other hand, it is believed that the sight of some fifty resolute men, and the certainty that resistance will only lead to a larger expedition, will induce them to accept the summonses in the first instance, whatever course they may pursue subsequently. It is hoped, however, that all doubts on these points at any rate will be laid to rest tomorrow afternoon when the intelligence from the island is received.

Our Oban correspondent telegraphs some particulars in addition to those contained in our reporters dispatch. *The ejectments number 75* and in order to serve them full five miles have to be travelled. It is stated that *McNeill's grandfather* went to Tiree from Colonsay as a sub-factor, and that the family were unpopular. The Land Leaguers are alleged to have sent special messengers via Tobermory to warn the islanders of the approach of the officers.

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Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1886.

## The Tiree Expedition

### Deforcement of the Officers –Threatening Attitude of the Islanders

OBAN, Thursday night—The tension of feeling in this district with regard to the Tiree expedition has been relieved to-night by the intimation that the officers have been deforced, that they abandoned their purpose and that they will return to town as speedily as possible. It is universally admitted that the triumph of lawlessness in the island must be short lived, as all parties agree that steps are certain to be taken at once for the vindication of the law, which has thus been outraged. During the day intense excitement has been manifested in the doings on the island, and even the presence of the *Duke of Connaught* at the funeral in the cemetery, and the departure of the *Osborne* for Belfast, only temporarily diverted attention from the subject, which was uppermost in the minds of the majority of those in the neighbourhood. Intelligence of a certain kind was gleaned earlier than was anticipated but it merely served to whet the appetite for further particulars which were not forthcoming for several hours. The steamer *Pioneer*, one of the vessels of *Mr McBraynes*'s numerous fleet, reached the Bay from Tobermory between eleven and twelve o'clock. On her arrival the captain was able to state that the steamer chartered for the expedition had been lying overnight in Tobermory Bay. It is the *Nigel* one of the newest and best boats which *Mr McLaughlan, fishcurer, Glasgow*, has had built for the purposes of his trade. The officials of the *Pioneer* had held no communication with those of the *Nigel*, because, although willing enough to do so personally, they had to abstain for business reasons; for, strange as it may sound in the ears of Scottish people generally, one set of men who held communication with another under such circumstances, among the Western Isles would be boycotted.

It transpired, however, in the town where those on the *Pioneer* picked it up, that the *Nigel* had reached Tiree after a pretty rough passage and had landed her party. The debarkation of *Mr Nicolson, the Glasgow Messenger-at-Arms* with his attendant commissionaire and police escort, had, according to the statement made at Tobermory, met with no opposition. Perhaps it may be as well to explain that the commissionaires, who are of course ex-soldiers were taken in addition to the force of police under *Captain Mackay, the Chief Constable of Argyllshire*, because a similar body had successfully carried out an eviction in Ardnamurchan a short time ago. Of course the fact that this landing was effected without resistance was not regarded as a guarantee that the service of the evictions would be allowed to take place in peace. It was at any rate a satisfactory contradiction to the assertion of the so called crofters friends who have been loudly declaring that the officers would never be allowed to put a foot on the island. The service of as many as **75 notices of eviction** on persons resident fully five miles from the pier was obviously a process which would naturally take some considerable time. During that period the *Nigel* could not long lie off the island in the easterly gale which prevailed, there being no safe anchorage on the coast. It was therefore arranged that she should proceed to Tobermory, and lie there for a time fixed upon between the parties, and that she should return at the expiry of this period to take the officers on board again. In consequence of this arrangement the *Nigel* steamed to Tobermory, where the *Pioneer* found her last night and left her this morning. The fact that the men of the *Pioneer* should treat those of the *Nigel* as though they belonged to a plague-stricken ship will doubtless appear strange to people throughout the country. It may be added however, that what they did for prudential

some of the people of this town did for personal reasons; and the incidents connected with her start which have just come to light illustrate this in a forcible manner. The departure was witnessed by several persons even though it did not take place till between three and four o'clock yesterday morning. It is admitted by some who saw her leave that they kept out of sight as much as possible in case they may be asked to lend a hand in any way. Personally they state they would have had no objection in the world to have done this, had they been asked; but, at the same time, they were conscious that had the fact that they did so become known they would have been "marked men". The whole of the spectators were not in the background, and several persons stood on the pier quite close to the point of departure. On completion of the preparations, some of those on board shouted to those persons to throw off the ropes which fastened the vessel to the pier. The request though several times made was utterly disregarded and in the end one of the deck hands had to jump ashore clear the ropes and leap aboard again as the vessel moved away.

It was not till half past four o'clock today that any further word was heard in regard to the adventures of the expedition. The steamer *Trojan* of the Highland Fisheries Company (Limited) made her first run today from the outer islands in connection with the evening trains to the south. The courteous agent of the company, **Mr Blackie**, had hoped that she would reach the South Pier by four o'clock and by that time a considerable number of people waited her arrival. On account of a head wind and other atmospheric disadvantages, it was after that hour before she began to round the top of Kererra. The pier was reached about half-past four o'clock and the captain as he stood on the bridge was assailed with questions about the Tiree expedition by the anxious throng who clustered along the sea wall. In answer to the queries which reached him long before the vessel could be moored, he shouted, "Officers driven back by the islanders"

The announcement was received in silence, and some of those in the gathering appeared rather scared at it. From the statements of the officers and passengers of the *Trojan*, the deforcement of the officers appears to have been of the most determined nature.

One of the passengers, **Mr Maclean**, a member of the family of the late occupant of Greenhill farm, was an eyewitness to the proceedings. The *Nigel*, after rather a wild voyage, drew to the Tiree shore at an early hour in the forenoon. It was found impossible for the steamer to take Scarnish Bay, where passengers and goods are usually landed. On rounding a point Gott Bay was entered and there quieter waters enabled the debarkation of the members of the expedition. The steamer after making the arrangement previously mentioned made her way to Tobermory Bay.

Landed on the inhospitable shores the officers had to tramp about half a mile to Scarnish Inn. In accordance with an arrangement formerly come to the leaders were met at the inn by the Duke of Argyll's factors, **Messrs Wyllie and McDermid** and there was a consultation between them which lasted till about one o'clock.

The intimation that the hated limbs of the law had actually invaded the island flew like wildfire from one end of it to the other. In answer to a "fiery cross" which was sent over the place a gathering of the natives took place on the grassy incline behind Greenhill farmhouse. The men grasped formidable cudgels and hurried to the rendezvous followed by the women and children, all vowing to make the service of ejectments in the island impossible. Meantime the officers began their march inland in weather of the most unpleasant description. It was not by any means an enlivening march—occasionally over rude apologies for roads, under a sky veiled with dark clouds, which discharged heavy showers at short intervals. During an hour they were

on the tramp, and they served several ejections, generally by putting them under the doors of the dwellings of the persons for whom they were intended. One old woman who was the recipient of a legal document, expressed herself surprised, in voluble Gaelic, from which the party was only too glad to make an escape. The old lady whose anger they excited was almost the only native they had seen, all the other inhabitants of the district they traversed having seemingly obeyed the summons to meet on the Greenhill farm. Soon, when they had walked about three miles from Scarnish, they came in sight of the grassy upland which as has been said rises behind the farmhouse. On the face of it they saw about three hundred men, carrying sticks; and while some brandished their weapons, others sharpened the points of them with knives, in order to make them as like spears as possible.

The moment the members of the expedition came in sight, the watchers on the greensward set up a yell, which rang through the island solitude, and assumed a threatening attitude. It was deemed expedient in the face of hostile demonstration to call a halt, and the procession was drawn up to await development of events.

Part of the crowd on the hill by-and-by detached itself from the rest and came down to meet the expedition. The crofter delegates intimated their intention to resist all legal action which would have the effect of depriving them of the Greenhill lands, which they have seized.

It was stated with a frequency that showed the phrases to have been studied, that they are willing to pay rent for the farm, but that as long as they have a drop of blood in their veins they will not give it up. "Why," asked *Mr Wyllie*, "if they wished to pay rent for the farm had they not petitioned the Duke of Argyll on the subject?"

The answer to this was that there was no use whatever in approaching his Grace, as they had petitioned him over and over again without receiving any answer.

It may be mentioned in reference to this statement that no memorial couched in respectful terms has been received by the Duke without having immediate attention paid to it. During the time the conference lasted much more was said, but nothing to the purpose beyond a determination not to allow the legal process to be carried any further.

The officers being thus deforced, resolved to abandon their attempt in the meantime, and to leave the island as quickly as possible. With a view to this, they turned amid the exulting cheers and insulting jeers of the mob, and marched back to Scarnish Inn, which they reached at an advanced hour in the afternoon. One of the natives, who dared to hold the factors horse was threatened with death by his comrades, had to flee for his life, and had ultimately to take shelter in the factor's house. The yelling of the crowd frightened rather a valuable horse, which ran away and impaled itself on a fence, sustaining injuries which terminated fatally. The whole of the members of the expedition had to find accommodation in the little inn at Scarnish, which was, of course filled to overflowing. It is believed that the *Nigel* was to have returned for them this afternoon under the arrangements made by the leaders; but the weather was so boisterous that she did not venture beyond the protection of Tobermory Bay. The captain of the *Trojan*, who is probably the most experienced navigator of these waters, was unable to enter Scarnish Bay today, and had to round the point to Gott Bay before he could take some passengers and cargo onboard. In the event of the storm moderating an attempt will be made tomorrow, it is believed, to bring the party off the island and convey it to the mainland.

Tonight the disturbance in Tiree is the general subject of conversation in Oban, and although there is a perfect downpour of rain, groups of people are to be found discussing it wherever there is the least shelter. It is conceded, even by the friends of

the rioters, that they have gone a little too far on this occasion and that "it will be the worse for them in the end". The crofters seem, from the latest accounts, to have actually used violence towards some of the officers before they beat a retreat. On some of the crofters attempting to turn the heads of the horses in the procession, several constables interfered, and were rather roughly handled in consequence. The native who has drawn down upon him the resentment of his fellow islanders is a joiner, *John Mackinnon*, who recently accepted a situation from the factor, although he had been, like *Mr McNeill*, the new tenant of Greenhill, a Land Leaguer. On various points in the island a strict watch is being maintained, and the men on the lookout are linked in such a manner that signals can be sent from one end to the other with great rapidity. It is likely that the usual steps will be taken to bring the ringleaders of the deforcement to task for their acts. It should not be difficult to do this, because, in addition to the local factor, *Mr McDermid*, there are two or three old constables in the expeditionary force to whom almost every inhabitant of the island is well known. The *Marquis of Lorne* arrived in town this evening on his way to Mull, where one of the lodges of the Argyll family is situated. It is thought probable that his Lordship will take an early opportunity to visit Tiree, in the inhabitants of which he has always evinced a great interest.

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> July 1886

## **The Tiree Expedition**

### Part Report

The officer (messenger-at-arms) and his protection met it is clear, with a hot reception on the part of the Islanders, men, women, and children, the men carrying sticks, the women stones, and the children helping to swell the cry of anger which were set up at every step. The officer appears to have declared himself deforced when it was clear to all that he could not proceed further. No personal injury, however, was inflicted. On the way from Greenhill farm to the Inn of Scarnish, the police say they were fired upon by a man hiding somewhere near to the path; and a similar statement was said to have been made by others of the sheriff officers party who had passed the same place a little earlier. Before the police left Tiree yesterday morning a great body of crofters and cottars made a demonstration at the Inn at Scarnish, but nothing came of it. The islanders supplemented their expressions of detestation of the officers by telling them that when they had "a Parliament of their own" people of the description of the officers would not be allowed to set a foot upon their domain. The next step of the authorities will, it is expected, be the apprehension of the offenders by an armed force.



Monday 26<sup>th</sup> July 1886

## The Lawlessness in Tiree

### Sailing of an Armed Force

The Government have decided to send a naval force to the island of Tiree. On Saturday night the troopship *Assistance*, at Portsmouth, received orders to sail in two hours for Scotland. Messengers were sent in all directions to summon the crew who were on leave; and at eight o'clock the ship sailed, leaving many of her men behind. The vessel was under orders to call at Plymouth on Sunday morning, and after embarking one hundred marines was to leave immediately and proceed at full speed.

- A Plymouth correspondent telegraphing last night says: - The *Assistance* arrived in the Sound this afternoon and after receiving the contingent of marines sailed immediately for Oban. **Captain Eagles** and **Lieutenant Connolly** are in command, and they are accompanied by 2 colour sergeants, 6 sergeants, 8 corporals, 4 buglers and 125 men. Each man has one hundred rounds of ammunition, and tents are provided for camping out.

### The State of the Island

Oban Saturday night:- The commissioners who accompanied the police to Tiree left Oban by the 5:25 train this morning for Glasgow, which is the headquarters of the corps. Here they have not been looked on with favour, and in Tiree the people evidently knowing that they were unarmed, merely jeered at them, telling them repeatedly that they had "not the power to kill even a black man". It is difficult to say whether or not the defiant bearing which the islanders have assumed will be maintained in the face of an armed force. Of course sympathisers with the crofters here declare that, from communications which they have received today, they are certain the Tiree people will not budge an inch from the position they have taken up in reference to Greenhill Farm.

On the other hand, persons who are fully conversant with the circumstances, and intimately acquainted with the Island population, are convinced that the pressure of a firm hand at this crisis will repress the rebellion. It is evident that, in the meantime, Tiree has been plunged into a state of utter lawlessness. The only law which obtains there is the dictation of the Land League.

During the greater part of the week the place has been in a ferment of excitement. The most extreme methods of "boycotting" are in daily operation.

For giving accommodation to the members of the expedition, the hotelkeeper at Scarnish has become a "marked man". The stock of provisions in the house rapidly disappeared before the attack made upon it by such a large party as the members of the expedition formed. Nothing could the hotelkeeper obtain from any of his fellow islanders.

The result was that the expeditionary force had in the end to be reduced to starvation rations during the time they remained in his place of public entertainment. The natives shunned the innkeeper and his family as though they were lepers. On the day when the party left, the man who had been his oldest and dearest friend passed him on the road with averted head, and disregarded his salutations. The innkeeper's son was one of the drivers in the procession, and he had to make an oath under threats of personal violence, never to undertake a similar duty again.

It was the son of the agent for the owners of the steamer *Aros Castle* (which calls at Tiree) who was the other driver, and he had to swear to the same effect. In addition to this the islanders have apparently resolved to visit the supposed iniquity of the son on the father. The officers of the vessel have received intimation that until a new agent is appointed she had better cease to stop at the island. It has been resolved in the meantime that nobody belonging to the place shall be allowed to travel or send their goods by her.

By the steamer *Pioneer*, from Tobermory, which entered the Bay about noon, came **Mr Nicolson**, Edinburgh, the *messenger-at-arms*, and his son who acted as his concurrent. The deforcement they state to have been of the most determined kind, but they have nothing to add to the official account of the affair, which has been already published.

**Captain Mackay, the Chief Constable**, has the names and addresses of about a dozen of the ringleaders in the disturbance. In the police force there are several constables who knew almost every inhabitant of the island. The person who fired upon the retreating party at Balliemartine is described as "a tall dark man". On the knoll from which he fired there is a low hedge and he kept himself concealed behind it as much as possible. The police believe that they will be able to trace him, as several members of the party caught glimpses of him. It remained with the Procurator Fiscal to initiate proceedings, and it is believed that he has put himself in communication with the Lord Advocate on the subject. Whether the islanders will resist an armed party remains to be seen, but just now they are resolute in their determination to prevent what they call "man-lifting". From one end of the island to the other, look-outs are stationed to guard against a surprise landing.

Guns are said to be kept loaded in the houses and the leaders of the Land league boast that they can have 100 serviceable weapons at their bidding on a quarter hours notice by horn signal. The island smiths are busily engaged manufacturing spears of iron, to be fixed bayonet-like on the points of enormous cudgels which the men carry. Stones have been wheeled great distances, mostly by women, and built in heaps at fixed stations.

It was stated by the passengers of the steamer *Trojan*, which arrived between two and three o'clock, that the excitement in Tiree had greatly subsided today; but information indicated that extensive preparations are being made for further manifestations of lawlessness. One of the passengers was **Mr Wylie the Duke of Argyll's chamberlain**, who gives an account of what happened at Island House during the period the police remained in the place. The result of the consultation which **Mr Wylie** and **Mr McDiarmid (the resident factor)** had with the leaders of the expedition was, that the messenger-at arms should be unaccompanied, save by his concurrent and the protecting forces. It was thought that the presence of the representatives of the Duke of Argyll might have an irritating effect upon the community, and it was desired that nothing of this nature should form an element in the case. On the departure of the force from Scarnish, **Mr Wylie** and **Mr McDiarmid** proceeded to Island House, the residence of the later, some five miles southwest of the hotel.

The first intimation they had of the deforcement was brought them by the mounted guide, a man who was lately engaged by the factor, but who had previously been, like the new tenant of Greenhill, a prominent member of the Land league. About five o'clock this horseman came riding furiously up to the mansion, with word that the expeditionary force had been repulsed and that he had fled from the fury of the mob. Two hours later an angry crowd of 300 persons appeared on the green in front of the house. In the most forcible terms at their command, they informed the Dukes

chamberlain that they would never relinquish their hold of the farm, for which however, they expressed themselves willing to pay rent.

On *Mr Wylie* asking them why they had not made such an offer to his Grace, by memorial or otherwise, at a time when it could be accepted the reply was that they had sent numerous petitions without receiving any acknowledgement. It was impossible, answered the chamberlain that this could have been the case as all representations of a respectful kind received early attention. The assemblage after a great deal of heated talk withdrew.

During the next day the representatives of the Duke saw the people from all points of the compass streaming in the direction of Scarnish from morning till evening. It was not till about seven o'clock that any of them favoured Island House with another visit. From 200- 250 men put in an appearance then, and by that time they had perused the copies of the petition for interdict, served at Ballephuil, to which they took exception in several particulars.

The chamberlain and the factor gave what explanations they could, but naturally the discussion; led to no good result. On the previous night the men were full of life, but now they seemed to be physically exhausted. Despite this fact, they made a couple of pipers, who accompanied them play a reel while they danced on the sward before the mansion. It is needless to discuss in the meantime, the action to be taken in regard to the seventy writs not served, out of the seventy five issued. The case of the deforcers must be dealt with before any fresh steps can be taken. It is though probable however that the armed force to be sent out to make the arrests will remain on the island for some time, and protect the officer of Court in serving the writs.

In regard to the suggestion of the *Marquis of Lorne* that the Crofters Commission should select Tiree as an early, if not the first, meeting place, numerous comments are being made. It is pointed out that, while this course might have at first a soothing effect it would in the end only add fuel to the flame. Of some the Court, bound to uphold the common law, could not look at the claim of these people, who have nothing to urge in defence of their illegal possession save their "earth hunger". The familiar cry that the Commission is an instrument of landlordism would then be raised, and the agitation would probably blaze out more fiercely than ever. In this and in other islands people have been taught to expect from the Commission things which it cannot grant. The Commission will not be in a position to hold courts for several weeks to come. It is stated by the representatives of the proprietor of Tiree that investigation is not shunned but on the contrary, courted; and that nothing is more desired than that the light of a judicial tribunal should be shed upon various matters connected with the island.

The messenger-at-arms, *Mr Nicholson*, arrived in Edinburgh on Saturday night and has forwarded a report to the Lord Advocate.

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Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> July 1886

### Affairs in Tiree

Tiree Tuesday:- During the past 24 hours intense excitement has prevailed among the island population over the news of the approaching naval expedition. The first announcement was brought to the island by passengers on board the steamer *Trojan*, which arrived about one o'clock yesterday afternoon. The vessel had a pleasant voyage, for the weather was almost all that could be desired, there being brilliant sunshine and a northerly breeze.

On her departure from Oban at half past seven in the morning, two or three of those onboard were aware of the sailing of the expedition, but they arranged that no hint should be dropped to the islanders, in order to prevent any unnecessary foment. But at Tobermory other passengers came onboard, and that in a somewhat excited state. It seemed that a telegram had just been received at Tobermory, giving the Sheriff-Substitute and the Procurator Fiscal their instructions to proceed with the expedition; and this fact had spread through the place like wildfire. The matter was instantly the object of conversation in the little town, and further concealment was useless.

Coll was the first stoppage after Tobermory, and the news was of course left there. When the vessel at length reached Tiree, the knots of men collected on the knolls at Scarnish showed that many were on the lookout for news.

Of course, the first question asked, when the small boat from shore gained the steamer, was what action had the authorities taken?

The answer, that a naval expedition had started, appeared to come as a startling surprise. The moment a return was made to the harbour a voluble conversation in Gaelic arose between some of the boatmen and their comrades, who had been waiting on the beach. It was evident that the momentous tidings were being communicated, and that they were being received first with incredulity, and then with consternation. Soon messengers started forth to all parts of the island with the news. In about a couple of hours there was hardly a soul out of the two or three thousand inhabitants who was not aware of the fact.

The men were speedily in consultation. Of the results of their deliberations, several versions, of a most conflicting nature are given.

One party is said to be in favour of a continuation of the battle against law declaring that the islanders have never been better prepared, and that they will receive assistance from their neighbours. Probably the talk about the guns that would be at the command of the leaders, in answer to the horn summons, is a piece of gross exaggeration. There may be a few on the island, and there are formidable sticks and stones, and the like; but whether any of these will be used is doubtful. It may be mentioned that the Tiree people are, as a rule, tall and lissom, with a certain swarthinness, which to the credulous, would seem a kind of confirmation of the well worn tradition that they are to a large extent of Spanish origin.

One who has lived among them for a considerable period states, at the same time, that they are not the great warriors their friends paint them. "I am certain" he observed, "that a small party of men from Aberdeen or Newcastle who have real grit in them, and who don't know what fear means, could easily maintain order in the island".

While it is said there are some who would continue the spirit of resistance, there is a large party in favour of the policy of peace. It is by these that, though it is right to resist the police and other officers representative of unjust laws, it is wrong to adopt the same course in regard to members of the services who uphold royalty. Despite the facts that they speak of Tiree as their "Kingdom", and that they desire a "Parliament"

of their own, they are loud in their professions of attachment to the Queen and her family. It is urged moreover that, as the Skye people had not rushed on the points of bayonets, they should not do so either. The great bulk of the population is undoubtedly identified with the Land Organisation on the island; but a large percentage of it has little sympathy with its objects. To start with, it obtained a large following of cottars and fishers drawn to it by the hopes which it held out of an immediate improvement in their condition. The pressures applied by these men forced their crofting neighbours and others to identify themselves with the movement. For a long time men who had failed to turn out when the horn sounded were "marked". The result has been that latterly the Land Leaguers have had it all their own way. It is clear, however, that many of those who have thus been compelled to enter the organisation will refuse to offer the least resistance to a fully equipped force. The better class of members in the land organisation often express regret at the position in which they have been placed, and anxiety to be freed from it.

On the subject of resistance or submission there have been thus many protracted discussions; gleams of light in the cottage windows in the small hours indicated that during the night that had just passed, this and other subjects were long and anxiously talked over. During the night also a constant watch was maintained for the Government troopship, and signals were passed along the island at short intervals. It is expected that the *Assistance* will steam into Gott Bay, a little to the north of Scarnish, where the best anchorage on this stormy coast is to be obtained. In the event of this surmise being correct, the expeditionary force will have to walk seven or eight miles in order to arrest the leading deforcers- if arrests are in contemplation- who number about a dozen.

The islanders in defending their position, revert to the periods about thirty years ago, when, it is alleged, their rights were curtailed. It is stated that the then factor deprived the people of Ballephuil, in the southwest corner, of a stretch of Ben-Hynish, which was a portion of their common pasture. Notwithstanding that deprivation, they have continued, they say to pay the same rent as before, and in giving evidence before the Crofters Commission, they claimed over £1000 as excess rent extracted from them. The business is still more complicated, however, by a statement to the effect that part of the outrun of Ballimartine- the adjoining township on the northeastern side- was added to that of Ballephuil about the same period- a vague period which is not in conversation determined.

In this case also compensation is demanded. It is not alleged, though, that they ever had any share of the farm of Greenhill, of which they now retain possession in the face of the law.

The latest statement in regard to this holding is that *Mr Lachlan McNeill*, the new tenant, has resolved to have nothing to do with it. For this assertion there is nothing more than the common talk of the island, but unless the existing lawlessness is repressed he will likely be compelled to adopt that course.

During a long series of years only one policeman was required for Tiree and Coll jointly. The islanders here began some time ago to "boycott" the officer and two others have been sent to keep him company, and to obtain evidence of lawless proceedings.

The Island of Tiree is of an almost unique character among those of the Western Sea. Its physical features are so unlike those of its neighbours that one, on visiting it for the first time, experiences something of the feelings of a discoverer. The eye is at once attracted in approaching it by the beautiful graduations of colour presented to it. Purple waters become green as they shallow to a white beach. Rich vegetation covers

the island at almost every point. The sand, which is quite white, plays an important part, for it is composed of disintegrated shells, in the form of a powder, which sustains vegetation. Did the sand happen to be of the ordinary kind the place would speedily become a bank incapable of bearing any plant, for frequently it is whirled along by the wind in clouds, and sometimes whitens the distant hillsides as a passing shower.

Last year a large area, a little away from the sea, was covered by a gale with sand to a considerable extent but instead of being still a waste, like the scene of the famous Morayshire sandstorm, it is coated with verdure.

From a picturesque point of view, this pearly sand has more attractions than one for, when the tide ebbs, it is left with a surface smooth as be, which reflects in a marvellous fashion on the tints of the sky. The island is fertile, being almost entirely green. The only exception is a rocky belt, extending from Gott to Balephetrish Bays, which is not without a beauty of its own, enhanced by an extensive growth of wild flowers. For the rest, there are great tablelands of short grass, mixed with clover, shamrock, and other plants. The vegetable life keeps quite close to the ground, however, trees or even tall shrubs being utterly unknown. On the western land are three low hills green to their summits, and those are the only eminences worthy of the name. The number of horses, cattle and sheep which these plains and uplands carry is wonderful. It would be difficult, indeed to see, anywhere in the south, a stock as large on such a comparatively restricted area. Of course, little ground is under tillage, and with the exception of potatoes and rye, little is grown. The horses are generally light, but they find a ready sale. Only pure Highland Cattle are bred by the crofters, but Ayrshire's are preferred by the farmers. For the most part, the sheep are held by the latter classes, although the crofters are not destitute of them.

The island has possibly the best snipe shootings in the country, but this is nearly all that can be said from a sportsman's point of view. Of course, there are wild duck and other birds, which help make a sportsman's bag.

The houses of the crofter and lower classes are of a curious description. Parallel walls are built, and the space between them filled up with sand, while the whole is roofed with thatch, frequently covered with felt. The structures are necessarily of great thickness and the doors and windows, being at the inner wall, are sunk in deep recesses. On the whole, the interiors are comfortable, no wretched hovels, like those to be seen in Skye and elsewhere, being observable here. In connection with every house is a garden, but it is almost invariably overrun with weeds. The people, who seem to do little or nothing, live and dress in a much more comfortable style than corresponding sections elsewhere, especially in cities.

### **The Movements of the New Expedition to the Island**

Oban Tuesday Night:- Attention was divided at Oban today between the expected arrival of the troopship *Assistance* with the marines for Tiree and the preparations for the new expedition. The arrival of the *Assistance* especially was awaited with keen interest, and as it had been expected overnight it formed the engrossing topic of conversation among the loiterers on the piers and Promenade. It was expected that at the latest, she would reach the Bay between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, and as the day wore on and no sign of her appeared, the most ridiculous rumours were circulating regarding her.

According to one she had gone to pieces on the island of Gigha, and another stated that she was ashore at Islay. Taking into account, however, a strong wind blowing

from the north, and the fact that she is not a particularly fast vessel, the *Assistance* is not likely to reach the bay before an early hour tomorrow morning. Owing to the non-arrival of the troopship, the precise movements of the expedition could not therefore be determined today. The Argyllshire force, however, will consist of 60 men, 20 more than accompanied the messenger-at-arms on his last expedition. These will, as before, be under the command of the Chief Constable of the county, and are drawn-35 police from the county itself, and 15 police from Inverness-shire; the remaining 10 are commissionaires. The main body of the force arrived from Crinan along with the Chief Constable by the steamer *Chevalier* tonight. Their arrival at the pier excited none of the somewhat hostile demonstrations which had characterised their reception on their arrival for the previous expedition, matters having become in general opinion, too serious now to be deemed lightly of. By the same steamer ***Sheriff Forbes Irvine*** arrived from Edinburgh, and the entire force will be under his directions. The messenger-at-arms ***Mr Nicolson*** and his concurrent arrived from Edinburgh tonight. It need hardly be stated that the present expedition has a twofold object- to serve the 70 interdicts still remaining to be served; and to deal with the ringleaders in the deforcement of the last week. It is stated accordingly, that the steamer *Nigel*, which has again been specially chartered for the expedition, and which has arrived in Oban Bay, will on her way out call at Tobermory for the local Fiscal, ***Mr Sproat***, who will prosecute inquires with a view, possibly, to the arrest of the leaders of the late disturbance. It should also be mentioned that ***Sheriff Irvine*** is in communication with the Lord Advocate to the same end, and that, even supposing the troopship should arrive earlier than is expected, the expedition may not, for the reason stated, be able to start before noon tomorrow. In any case, it is stated that the *Nigel* will follow in the wake of the troopship, to allow the debarkation of the Marines before the police force is landed. The point at which the expedition will land will depend, of course, mainly on the state of the weather.

Since Saturday evening no authentic news has been received at Oban from Tiree, and, consequently, the arrival of the *Trojan* today was awaited with the deepest interest. Among the passengers were a number of crofters, who have left Tiree to join the fishing on the east coast. They are asked whether they thought it probable that the islanders would offer resistance to the armed force. Their view was that a collision was not at all probable. They did not believe that, in ordinary circumstances, the islanders would show the least inclination to fight. It was believed, however, on the island that the intention of the authorities was to lift the cattle of the crofters from the farm at Greenhill and impound them, as was done in the case of the crofters of Valtos in Lews last year.

If that were done, they said a determined resistance on the part of the crofters might be looked for. Asked as to the report that the smiths on the island were busily engaged in making spears, they seemed inclined to shuffle the inquiry; but, in reply to the question as to the truth of the report that there were on the island 100 guns, they inquired with some sarcasm, whether it was probable that crofters would be allowed to carry a gun as long as there was a factor or a rabbit on the island! They were told that it was the intention of the authorities to arrest the leaders of the deforcement last week. They did not consider, however, that any resistance to such a course would be offered, but they stated that it was the intention of the leaders of the movement to lay their case before the Sheriff Principle, who was expected to accompany the expedition, and to state the reasons for their action, conceiving that by doing so they were more likely to reach a settlement than by representations to the factor, whom they believed to be opposed to their interests.

On the arrival of the *Trojan* at Oban an incident occurred which excited a good deal of surprise, and may help to illustrate the state of matters on the island. Just as the passengers were about to land, two constables who had come across with the steamer arrested one of the passengers, and had him conveyed to the police station. The police preserve the greatest reticence in regard to the affair, but it subsequently transpired that the man arrested was a Tiree man, against whom there was alleged a charge of having some months ago scuttled off the English coast, a vessel of which he was the owner, and which it was stated he twice insured. The explanation of the affair would appear to be that the local police had not ventured to arrest him openly on the island, but having observed him leave the island today by steamer, two of the force of three stationed at present there came out to the steamer by different boats and arrested him in the manner described. They left the island in charge of a solitary policeman.

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Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> July 1886

## Affairs in Tiree

### Meeting of Crofters and Cottars

Tiree, Wednesday afternoon- The position of matters on the island remains unchanged. The commitment among the islanders has apparently quite subsided, and today the people are going about their ordinary occupation. Scarnish which is the expected landing place of the marines, wears a perfectly lifeless aspect, there being almost nobody to be seen about the place. Last night a representative meeting of crofters and cottars was held at Moss, seven miles distant from Scarnish, and the centre of the disaffected district. There were between 200 and 300 people present. The people assembled in front of the church. One of the number, **Mr Hector Stewart**, translated into Gaelic several passages from an article in Saturday's Scotsman describing the deforcement on Wednesday of last week. The reading of the passages was followed by cries of "Lies" and the special correspondent, who was present, was asked to state where he had got his information, and to explain several of the statements, which some of the speakers characterised as "up and down" lies.

The correspondent said he declined to discuss the matter with them, or to give the names of his informants. **Mr Lachlan Brown**, a crofter, said the correspondent should have got his information from respectable people on the island, and not from people in Oban. The passages he and others objected to included the allegations that stones were thrown, that windows and doors were broken, and shots fired by the crofters. An adjournment was made to the public school where the chair was taken by **Mr Donald Sinclair, joiner**, Barrapool. After the usual fashion, the meeting was opened with praise and prayer in Gaelic. The prayer was said by **Mr Donald Macarthur**, who, in the course of it asked the Almighty to protect the Tiree crofters and cottars from liars and slanderers. The Chairman afterwards observed that they had often opened the meeting in the name of the Lord as they used to do and that they were asking and working always for the truth.

**Mr Donald McKinnon, Cartwright**, who was then called upon detailed at considerable length the action of the Land League in regard to Greenhill farm. Prior to Whitsunday last, they had agreed that no intending offerer need give an offer for the farm as the people intended to have the farm when it became vacant to be sub-divided amongst themselves, or, at least amongst so many as the farm would suitably



accommodate, at whatever rent the Land Court might fix. The present *Neil McNeil* used the expression at one of the meetings that if such an officer came, if there were not other means of turning him back than hanging to the chimney or the white house on Greenhill, that that should be done. On the evening of the sale of stock at Greenhill, it was found out that *Mr Lachlan McNeil*, the president's brother, was the new tenant, and that *Mr Thomas Barr*, farmer, had purchased stock for him. The following day the president attended by request a meeting of the land League, at which they remonstrated with him for having betrayed them; whereupon he declared that he would be the first to catch his own brother by the throat and force him back from the farm.

At the meeting they passed a resolution putting *Mr Neil McNeil* from the chair. *Mr Lachlan McNeil*, being new tenant, who declared himself a Land Leaguer, was asked if he was willing to turn away from the farm peaceably, and he answered, not if the Duke would help him. After that *Mr McNeil* was ordered to take away the cattle which had been bought at the sale for him, and he refused to do so, stating that whoever took the farm should buy the cattle. Coming to the deforcement of the police *Mr McKinnon* said that when the force was observed approaching the west end of the island, it was thought it was a large funeral, until it came near hand and then it was found out that it was an army of policemen. They were led by *John McKinnon*, a joiner in Tiree, and now ground officer. It was thought at first that the expedition had come for the pulling down some houses, and the people followed them up, and discovered they were serving interdicts. The crowd then gathered round, and accompanied the policemen and those in machines, and the guide on horseback. No one interfered with the policemen, but some of the crowd ordered the machine away, and the man still hesitated. Then they were to force him away, still keeping clear of the police. At this stage the policemen were informed of a crowd that had gathered at Greenhill, the next place they intended to visit. When they heard of this they quickly turned back, without their leader, and the people did not follow them. In regard to the charge that shots were fired at the police, he had to state that it was only a young man from Glasgow, who was amusing himself, and had no evil intention. The young man did not belong to their part at all. *Mr McKinnon* then said that in two different interviews with the Dukes Chamberlain it was admitted both that there were misstatements in the interdicts and that they required correction in regard to the alleged stone throwing and damage to property. He had to state that there was not a word of truth in the reports. (Cries of "All lies; the Scotsman is full of lies") *Mr Lachlan Brown*-It is full of lies up, and full of lies down-damned lies. (Laughter) *Mr McKinnon* (continuing) denied also that the women were screaming and hiding themselves in the corn. The people never knew anything about that at all till they saw it in the papers. He further stated that the people who were served with interdicts had taken their cattle off the farm at Greenhill. He supposed if there was any truth in this military expedition people would have to submit quietly. He concluded by moving the following resolution, which was unanimously adopted:-  
 "That this meeting intends to adhere to its former resolution regarding the farm at Greenhill, if it can be done without acting contrary to what is right and just, and agrees not to molest any military force which may come to the island"

The proceedings then terminated. The following telegram has been received from **Lord Archibald Campbell**:-

“To **McDonald, guide, Iona.**

Make for Tiree. Beg the people not to break the peace from me. Ask this. Sail without delay. **Archibald Campbell** “Coutts Bank”

In accordance with this request, **Mr McDonald** has visited the island and circulated the contents of the telegram

### **The Naval Expedition**

Oban, Wednesday night:- H.M. troopship *Assistance* reached Oban Bay from Plymouth this morning shortly after nine, after a passage of about sixty hours, having been detained at Plymouth till late on Sunday night. Her arrival caused a good deal of excitement among the townsfolk, and a large crowd lined the promenade at the railway station during the greater part of the forenoon. The *Assistance* on her arrival was joined by a number of officers of Marines, who had arrived at Oban by rail on the previous evening. It was understood that the departure of the expedition would be delayed till the arrival by the train at noon of a dispatch from the Lord Advocate containing final arrangements. The constabulary forces were kept in readiness at the police station, and their baggage was gathered on board the steamer *Nigel* ready for an immediate start. The day passed on, however, without any further sign of departure. The police were kept hanging about the station, and the *Assistance* and the communication at noon, but stated that arrangements had not yet been finally settled. The officials maintained the closest reserve regarding the probable movements of the expedition, and in the suspense, owing to the want of precise information as to the arrangements, absurd surmises were circulated in town. These were principally, in effect, that an arrangement had been come to with regard to affairs in Tiree, and that, consequently, the marine force would proceed no further. More probably, however, it was considered inadvisable to proceed to Tiree, as the troopship, which it was estimated would take nearly ten hours to make the trip, would not be able to reach the island in time to effect a convenient landing. It is considered probable, therefore, that a start will be made at daybreak today. It is evidently expected that the police may have to remain some time on the island. Arrangements have been made for supplying them with blankets and rugs, and a consignment of these, ordered from Glasgow this morning arrived by the evening train. Arrangements have also been made to accommodate the police in one of the barns of Greenhill farm during their stay on the island.

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Friday 30<sup>th</sup> July 1886

### The Tiree Expedition

Tiree, Thursday:- The *Assistance* has not come in sight today at the time of writing; but it is doubtful whether anything could be done in the way of landing the expeditionary force, as a south easterly gale is blowing and a drizzle of rain falling. On the coast of Scarnish the steamer's place of call, the sea is churned into white foam, which leaps high above the rocks at the entrance to the harbour; and even in Gott Bay, where the debarkation is likely to take place, there is a heavy surf. It is obvious now that there will be no collision between the islanders and the members of the force, for in spite of the "tall talk" in which the people indulge, and the desire of many of them to resist all attempts to enforce the law, the leaders have sufficient control to prevent any such misguided action as an attempted conflict with the marines. The excitement, which has been considerable on Monday night, gradually subsided on Tuesday, and had entirely disappeared on Wednesday. It has been impossible till now on account of the inaccessibility of the island, to detail the events of the two days last mentioned.

On Tuesday there was a great bustle in Scarnish from morning till night; but this would have been the case even apart from the expected appearance of the naval expedition, for three steamers called that day, and several Tiree people resident in the south, who had taken their holidays in the island left, as did two or three emigrants, members of the *Mclean family*, who formerly occupied Greenhill, bound for Glasgow, en route for Australia. By seven o'clock the green knolls all around the little basin guarded by picturesque rocks which form Scarnish harbour were covered with people. The *Trojan*, on her way to Oban, hove in sight about an hour later, and the ferry boat had to make two runs with passengers and goods to and from the steamer. Loud cheers were given by the folk left in the boat and those stationed on the knolls as she steamed away with their friends from the Green Isle to which they are passionately attached. The *Aros Castle* brought up off the shore almost immediately afterwards; but it did not take her crew long to transact their business, as the local agent is "boycotted" because he had driven one of the vehicles for the police. Even the sailing of the second steamer did not greatly diminish the number of people gathered in the vicinity. For this state of matters an explanation was not far to seek as, anticipating the arrival of the *Assistance*, the islanders, not content with the usual outlook, thronged in large numbers to watch for the expected steamer.

The occupation, if it deserves the dignity of that appellation, seemed exactly suited to the circumstances, for the weather was lovely, and they had practically abandoned work. Lying in groups outside of the knolls, they escaped the keen northerly blast which literally swept the island, there being no eminences to break its force. Looking over the sunlit waters, where birds fluttered near the shore, and the porpoises wheeled further off, they kept their eyes turned to the grey peaks of Mull, the direction from which the Government vessel was expected to appear. During the time thus spent, their talk was of the expected warship, and they expressed surprise at such an expedition being sent to Tiree at all.

The Scotsman of Saturday, which was the latest newspaper in the hands of the islanders, then was discussed with great animation. It may be mentioned that the official account, which was compiled with the greatest of care from the statements of many persons of all ranks who took part in the police expedition, was questioned in almost every particular. In point of fact, however, the people seem to have little notion of the extent to which they had been carried by their excitement on that

occasion. One or two visitors who happen to be in the place also loudly condemn it as “highly coloured” but these persons were not even present at the deforcement, and are proceeding upon the stories of those who were themselves guilty of that act. Indeed, they deny that any deforcement took place, because the protecting force, although treated to a “demonstration of strength” did not suffer injury. Of course this only shows that their knowledge of the law is as meagre as it is of fact; but such people nevertheless do a vast amount of mischief among the credulous islanders, who are delighted to find men apparently of education and position arguing their case for them and making denials for them that they would not be prepared to do even for themselves. During the past few days the Scotsman representative has made minute inquiries on the spot, and has found that the detailed account for which particulars were formerly supplied to him by officials and others above suspicion is substantially correct. The suggestion thrown out by the Oban folk when the *Marquis of Lorne* was there last week, that his Lordship might visit the island, in the natives of which he has always evinced a deep interest, has had a great deal of consideration. Despite the compliments paid to “the good man the proprietor” when the Royal Commission on the crofter question sat here, there are not wanting now expressions of hostility towards the Argyll family. Of these the most violent come from the women, one of whom declared the other day that “it would have been a good thing if the Campbell’s had died out a hundred years ago”. The men content themselves as a rule with the declaration that the Duke has been a hard man with the islanders. In the Marquis of Lorne they pretend to have more faith, and they profess to believe that he would do more for them if he had the power. On every hand from Caeoles in the north to Balliphuil in the south is heard the statement that unless his Lordship “come to divide the land” he had better stay away. It is thought desirable by those on the island who are in a position to judge, that he should not visit the place just now, for feeling has risen to such a pitch that they do not believe that he would be safe from insult at the hands of some of the wilder spirits. The whole of these discussions are interesting because they show the drift of the minds of those on the island, and illustrate the disastrous results of the pernicious doctrines rooted and nourished by the Land League. It became known a little after midday that the troopship would not be in sight that day, word of her movements having probably being brought by some fishing smack. On this the people dispersed, and as few of them had been in their beds all night, the majority of them retired to their houses to rest before attending a mass meeting at night. The gathering was held at Moss, about 6 miles as the crow flies, and considerably more by road, from Scarnish, in the heart of the disaffected district. Despite the difficulty of reaching the place, the innkeeper of the island refusing to drive anybody in that direction, the Scotsman reporter attended the meeting in order to ascertain in an authoritative way their version of the present state of matters. The step seemed to him all the more necessary that it was openly stated in Scarnish in the afternoon that he was to be “escorted to the *Trojan* early next morning” It was a lovely evening, and the sun was setting behind Ben Hough, along the sides of which trailed the smoke from the kelp, burning on the shore at the north-western corner of this little kingdom, when the Scotsman representative approached the rendezvous, which is precisely what the name implies. By the time he reached the place a considerable crowd had gathered, and the people were still to be seen crossing the moor in the early twilight. On joining the assemblage, he was speedily asked if he attended on behalf of this journal, and on answering in the affirmative, he was requested to supply the names of the persons who supplied him with information, as the Scotsman had they said, for years insulted the islanders generally, the Tíree men

in particular. Of course our representative replied that he was there neither to disclose the sources of information furnished nor to discuss the policy pursued by the journal he had the honour to represent, but to give the public the benefit of what might be said on that occasion. One of the leaders declared that it was nothing short of an insult for the Scotsman reporter to attend their gathering, and two or three others appeared to be considerably irritated, but almost the entire mass of the men who numbered between two and three hundred, remained quiet and respectful. It is beyond doubt that the islanders are a fine body of men, tall and athletic, and at this meeting they were seen at their best, as it was a representative gathering of crofters and cottars from all the different districts. The usual circle in which the men sit was formed in front of the church, but as darkness was already creeping down, an adjournment was made to the school room, which was filled to overflowing, many crowding round the door. Dimly lit by means of an oil lamp which stood on a table, where lay a copy of the Gaelic Bible, another book, and the Scotsman of Saturday, containing the official account of the police expedition. This place had a rather singular appearance. Of the meeting a report has already been sent by steamer to Barra for transmission, but a few descriptive and other notes may be added. The chairman was *Mr Donald Sinclair*, Barrapool, a middle-aged man of grave aspect, who conducted the proceedings in a most orderly fashion. Devotional exercises took place at the outset of the proceedings, and were taken part in by the men present, who remained seated during the whole of them. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Psalm was sung, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Isaiah was read, both in Gaelic. In the psalmody every two lines were read out in the old fashioned way before being sung. Prayer was then offered up, also in Gaelic, with great fervour by *Mr Donald McArthur*, a comparatively young man. The chairman, in a few preliminary remarks, declared that as the League with which they were connected had been "asking and working always for the truth" they had nothing to fear from the presence of a Scotsman reporter, who would he hoped, report what took place there. On this *Mr Duncan McKinnon*, a handsome fellow, of stalwart build, detailed the steps which had been taken in regard to Greenhill farm in graphic terms. Proceeding from the resolution of the people before Whitsunday to take the farm at a fair rent, and subdivide it, he explained that they considered they had been betrayed by their president, *Mr Neil McNeill* who was they believed, the backer of *Mr Lachlan McNeill* in taking the farm. The people did not, he said, use violence when the cattle were removed, but simply walked with them off the farm. Owing to the dull trade this year, the crofters and cottars could not dispose of their cattle, and unless they took Greenhill farm they could do nothing with them except drown them. Of course he went on to remark, the cattle pastured quietly there until the police came to serve interdicts, when no violence whatever was used. On the occasion of the first visit to Island House, they explained to *Mr Wylie* and *Mr McDiarmid*, he said, that they intended to keep Greenhill vacant, and that they would not allow any one to take a lease of it, seeing that they wished to portion it out among themselves, at whatever rent the Land Court might fix. The reason of this was that there was no work on the place, and that their intention was to live by the soil; for, seeing that there were no other means to live by, they were to take up the pick and spade, and to till the ground, with the view of taking from it the subsistence they were otherwise denied. In addition they told the factor, he proceeded, that it was not fair for the Duke of Argyll to stand against them in making a peaceable arrangement, seeing that they did not want the land for nothing, but were willing to pay the fair rent for it. If the Duke would not make a peaceable arrangement with the people, they considered that it was he, and not they, who broke the law. The intention of the people, as they explained to officials, was to stand up for their resolution until

they were forced back with the bayonet. These were the very words used. Proceeding to Scarnish Inn, to have a peaceful interview with the officer who was at the head of the police, nobody answered them till a subordinate officer insolently did so from an upper window. On that they wrote a letter to the officer at the head of the force, in which they asked his intentions, and learned that no other writs would be served. In the letter they told him that they intended to keep Greenhill farm, and that it was too bad of the Duke to seek to take it from them, seeing that they were willing to pay fair rent for it. The islanders he said were a peaceable people, but it was not wise for the Duke to provoke them if he wanted to keep the country in peace. On the occasion of the second interview, the chamberlain and factor admitted, he said, that there were mis-statements in the interdicts which required correction. Once more he protested that no violence had been used by the people towards the police or any other body. For his own part, he considered that had the police done their duty they would not have been the means of bringing a larger expedition to the island. Had the messenger-at-arms come quietly, service would have been accepted, as it was the appearance of such a force that irritated the people. Turning to the question which doubtless occupied the most of their thoughts, he said he supposed if the military came, as was rumoured, they had to submit quietly to them. During this speech **Mr Lachlan Brown**, a man in middle-life, with clustering hair and prominent moustache, of deep black, threw in interpellations which had often a good deal of humour. On one occasion in referring to the Scotsman, however, he indulged in an outburst of swearing, which sounded rather incongruous to say the least of it, in a meeting opened with devotional exercises. The chairman claimed that since the Land League began operations three years ago there has never been so few cases in Tobermory Court House. For the most part the assemblage remained remarkably quiet, merely shouting their assent in Gaelic when appealed to on any particular manner. In the end it was unanimously agreed to adhere to the former resolutions regarding Greenhill, if that could be done without acting contrary to what was right and just, and not to molest any military force which came to the island. The exact weight to be given to the islander's idea of the first portion of the motion may be gathered from the fact that in the course of their speeches they claimed to have "carried on our affairs peaceably and in the name of God, seeking for justice."

In regard to the second portion, it is only necessary to say that while the men gathered in that manner made this declaration in private conversation earlier in the day with individuals removed from the restraint put upon them by the leaders of the Land League who are directing the matter the desire to fight was frequently expressed. On the passing of the resolution the conversation drifted into Gaelic and in that language they discussed how they should act on the arrival of the Marines. One proposal was that they should assemble to see them come ashore and another was that they should remain at their ordinary avocation. In the end, the later was agreed to, and the meeting dispersed about eleven o'clock. The crofters and cottars then returned to their homes and a new day had broken before many reached them. Just before dawn there was a brilliant display of *aurora*, a phenomenon which to the superstitious mind, is fraught with portent.

The excitement had almost entirely subsided in the island yesterday, the near approach of the expeditionary force having evidently had a salutary consequence upon the natives. Scarnish which in the previous forenoon been as busy as a county town on market day was almost deserted. People went about their occupations, however in a listless way, and were evidently exercising in their minds as to the raid to be made upon the island. In the more remote parts there was more excitement, and

the matter was eagerly discussed, though the tone was, as expected more conciliatory than formerly.

The arrival of the *Trojan*, which is generally the event of the day, failed to excite much attention, although they brought several passengers who, in times when feelings ran less high, would have caused a good deal of stir. One of them was *Mr William (?) the Procurator Fiscal, Tobermory*, who came to pre-cognise witnesses in connection with the recent deforcement. It is not likely that any arrests will be made on this charge until he has completed his investigation. The object of the expedition will therefore be in the first instance, to serve the seventy writs that could not be served on the previous occasion. It seems that the five persons on whom the writs were served have taken their cattle off the pastures. The threat is held out, however, that others will be found to take their places, and that this will be continued until legal processes have been exhausted in the case of almost every crofter and cottar in the place.

Another passenger was a member of the Irish National Land League, who began the moment he arrived to preach the doctrines of that organisation. The steamer brought intimation that the expedition had reached Oban, and that it would likely appear off the island before morning. During the day the weather was of the most charming description, for in the morning there was brilliant sunshine, and in the afternoon that silvery light which produces such beautiful effects in the western seas. In the evening a close watch was kept on Gott Bay, near Scarnish, where the landing was expected to take place. It is impossible to see this bay in good weather without being charmed with its beautiful form and exquisite tints. The silvery beach of pulverised shells, which is called the Traigh-Mor, or great strand, is a graceful crescent. It is backed by the soft verdure which is characteristic of the island. And which has, at a distance, the appearance of a velvety carpet. Of the marvellous hues of water it is difficult to give any adequate conception. Delicate shades of green at the edge merge, as the depth increases, into blue, flecked with white. The extreme points of the bay are bold headlands, with outlying rocky islands, and over a great stretch of purple sea lies the fantastic Dutchman's Cap and other isles, backed by the faint outline of the Mull hills. On such a day as this, however, it is simply a grey sheet of seething water. One of those superstitions, which have their favourite abode in the Western Isles, has cropped up in connection with the present expedition. It is stated that in regard to it "coming events cast their shadows before" many years ago. On the island there are still old men who say they remember when a visionary army passed over a part of the island. The scene of the phantom march was the extensive sands of the Traigh Bhagh of Hinnish Bay, about two miles west of Scarnish. It is mentioned that those who profess to have seen it observed the red coats of the soldiers and the polished bayonets on the muskets they carried. The superstition has been regarded in an entirely prophetic aspect and it has been said a real army would yet tread in the footsteps of this ghostly band. It remains to be seen whether or not the Marines will obligingly condescend to fulfil this island prophecy.

Last night the usual outlooks and signals had disappeared, the people having evidently agreed to abandon them in the meantime. It is known, however, that a strict watch was kept, and that arrangements were made to have intimation sent all over the island when the troopship came in sight. It may be interesting to teetotallers to know that in Tiree their pet theory of total prohibition is rigidly enforced as far as the letter of the law is concerned. The island does not contain a single licensed house for the sale of drink, the inn at Scarnish, which is the only place for accommodation of strangers, being conducted on temperance principles. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that there is no liquor to be had on the island, for even the casual visitor who

finds that the water, which is certainly good, does not agree with him has little difficulty in obtaining some of the white wine of the country with which to improve its flavour. In point of fact, although there is not much drunkenness there is a good deal of drinking in Tiree, and the islanders whose word may be taken for what it is worth say there would be less of it if liquor was made an ordinary article of trade. Of the whisky consumed a portion may be made in this little kingdom, but it can only be a small part, the rest being obtained in "greyboards" from Glasgow and Oban. The traveller who has say for his stomach's sake availed himself of their illicit trade in mountain dew, will probably wish that all their other faults were as venal as this one.

OBAN Thursday night- Up till tonight the Tiree Expedition has got no further than Oban. So little had the authorities made known their intentions that last night the police force had not the slightest notice regarding the arrangements, and were under the impression that they would be aroused for a start at day break. It appears, however, that the announcement of the dispatch of the *Ajax* from Portsmouth to join the expedition had been telegraphed to *Sheriff Irvine* early in the day, and that it was on that account the departure was delayed. It is now stated that the expedition will start on the arrival of the *Ajax*, which left Portsmouth yesterday forenoon. The news of the dispatch of the *Ajax* was received at Oban at first with a certain amount of incredulity. When the news was confirmed to-day it began to be treated rather as a joke, in view of the peaceful attitude now assumed by the men of Tiree and only a few would credit the authorities with having any ulterior motive. It is stated to-night that the object of sending the *Ajax* to Oban was that she was coming to resume her station as guardship on the Clyde in any case, and that immediately on landing the Marines at Oban she will return to the Clyde. The Highland Fisheries steamer *Trojan* arrived from Tiree this afternoon bringing the latest news, which is that a considerable number more of the crofter's cattle were removed last night from the Greenhill pastures and that the rest will probably be driven off to-day.

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Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July 1886

**The Tiree Expedition**  
(from our own reporter)

Tiree Friday- The inflated talk of the islanders about fighting has disappeared, but though less turbulent they are as lawless as ever. Despite the fact that they have removed their cattle from Greenhill, they are still determined at the earliest opportunity, to take the farm and sub-divide it among themselves. It must be borne in mind that it is not only the inhabitants of the western district who are under the spell of such pernicious doctrine; the natives of the other parts frankly admit that they intend to take a similar course, neither the withdrawal of stock from Greenhill Farm, nor the resolution not to molest the marines, has led to any modification in the aggressiveness of the leading members of the land League towards those who refuse to recognise their authority. Decent people at a hamlet called Sandaig, who refused to join the organisation, have to feed their cattle by hand, whilst other stock occupies their pasture; have to submit to their corn patches being trampled down, and have to endure an amount of persecution which is almost incredible. Dark hints too are



thrown out of impending outrages under the cover of night. On this matter a *Temperance Lecturer* at present on the island has urged that at a mass meeting to be held on Saturday, they should agree that whoever commits injury to persons or property shall be cut off from their fellowship. Probably the momentary expectation of the expeditionary force, will have more effect than any arrangement of this kind. It is hoped by all who value the good of the community that the presence of the marines may help to restore a public opinion which will put an end to the reign of terror which has existed on the island. The Irish National Land League emissary has left the place after a short visit. Notwithstanding the resolution that the expeditionary force should find the people at their ordinary avocations, work has not been resumed. One moving through the island yesterday afternoon could scarcely resist the impression that there was something unnatural in the stillness which prevailed. Despite the density of the population, the place seemed at first deserted; but a sharp look-out revealed clusters of faces at the recessed windows from which numerous eyes peered at wayfarers with curiosity and suspicion. On the western side of Ben Hough, however, a watch was kept all day, in spite of stormy weather; and it has been resumed today, when the atmospheric conditions are delightfully fine. It is stated that several of those who took a leading part in the deforcement are now in hiding. Today *Mr William Sproat, Procurator Fiscal, Tobermory*, accompanied by *Mr Duncan Mackenzie, sheriff-clerk*, preceded to Barrapole, in the west end of the island, to examine witnesses in connection with the deforcement. It is in some respects a pity that the government vessel has been so long delayed. The suggestion is beginning to be made that perhaps after all she may not come. Probably the people begin to think those friends in the south whom they credit with extraordinary influence may have stopped the expedition. In the event of this idea gaining wide acceptance there can be little doubt that a fresh outbreak will take place.

LATER- It has just been ascertained that there are about twenty head of cattle again on Greenhill pasture today. Of this there are two probable explanations, either that the delay of the expedition has emboldened some of the wilder spirits to return to their old courses or that they have allowed their animals to stray, as they term it, on to the fields. The *Assistance* and the other vessels have not come into sight at the time of writing.

TIREE Friday evening- Once more a despatch has to be forwarded from this little "kingdom" before the *Assistance* and the other vessels with the expeditionary force have come into sight of it. The whole of the cattle have now been removed from the Greenhill pastures, after grazing there for about two months. On the evening of Wednesday the removal was begun, and yesterday forenoon it was completed. The idea in the minds of the islanders is that when the expeditionary force comes it will find the stock gone. The service of writs will be accepted, and the cattle of those who receive these documents removed, but other stock will take their place. In thus obeying the letter of the law they hope to break the spirit in such a persistent fashion that the Duke of Argyll will be compelled to make what they call a peaceable arrangement with them. Of course this would deprive the duke of the right of choice in the selection of tenants, which he has stated he regards as "the most essential of the duties and of the rights of ownership" Perhaps the most revolting phase of the lawlessness of the Tiree folks is the religious cloak in which they endeavour to hide its deformity. One of the cant phrases in their mouths is, "We carry on our affairs peaceably and in the name of God seeking for justice"

In the opinion of a local gentleman who has abundant means of knowing the facts and probabilities the arrival of the expedition will aid in the establishment of a healthy public opinion which will be the best antidote to the poisonous doctrines of the Land League. "Depend upon it" he said to our reporter, "there are many in the Land League against their own inclination who will be only too glad of the opportunity of asserting their freedom" The public conscience once roused would, in his opinion, manifest itself with such rapidity that, he added jocularly, we will have more difficulty getting rid of the marines than of the League. For sometime past the cottars and fishers whom the Duke of Argyll has designated the "detritus" of the old subdivided crofters have exercised a terrorism which is expected to disappear when there is a fully equipped force in the island to assert the majesty of the law. During the brief stay of the emissary of the Irish land League he visited several centres of disaffection, and addressed small bodies of men in a characteristic fashion. On the whole they listened to him quietly, but they are not likely to follow his advice. In point of fact, the attitude they have assumed is far more revolutionary than anything which has taken place in Ireland. Doubtless the Hibernian agitator thought his views extreme, but they were really "as water unto wine" compared with those of a Scottish brother in trade who stumped the island recently on a similar mission. Of course the islanders laid before their newly found sympathiser their stock grievances. The usual tales of eviction and the like have been proved by the proprietor to have no foundation, but they continue to give vent to them with parrot-like persistency. Perhaps there are a few who take the same lenient view of their conduct as he has done in regard to this murmuring. In his communication to the Royal Commission on the crofter question he said "I lay however very little blame to the tenants into whose mouths these irrelevant complaints have been put. When men of that class are exposed to hearing and reading every day one continued, repeated, and reiterated set of stories, and when belief in these stories is instilled into them by an active propaganda, it is very difficult for them to resist the influence"

The crops on the island are in a fairly good condition notwithstanding the manner in which they are neglected. The cereals are light and mixed with wild flowers. Potatoes give promise of an excellent return, but they are hardly ready for use yet. The garden plots attached to the houses although they might supply vegetables of almost any kind, are overrun with nettles, dandelion and other weeds.

### **The Movements of the Expedition**

OBAN Friday- *HMS Ajax* arrived at Oban this forenoon, and came to anchor opposite Dunolly Castle. Her arrival created great stir in town, and the day being beautifully calm and bright every boat that could float was speedily freighted with sightseers, and rowed to the neighbourhood of the huge turret ship. Boat hirers reaped a great harvest for a few hours, and when *Ajax* weighed anchor at 5 o'clock this evening and steamed slowly for the Sound of Mull she was followed for some distance by quite a flotilla of small craft. It is understood here that the *Ajax* will not proceed beyond Tobermory where she is to await further instructions from headquarters. The troopship *Assistance* left harbour before 4 o'clock, but as her steaming qualities are not great, it is fully believed she cannot reach Tiree tonight, and as there is no safe anchorage, she will probably not venture near the island till tomorrow morning. The charter steamer *Nigel* left at half-past four, with a total of 60 on board - 35 Argyllshire constables, 15 from Inverness-shire, and 10 Commissionaires.

*Sheriff Irvine* accompanies the expedition and *Chief Constable Mackay* and *Superintendent Fraser* are also onboard. It is whispered in the town that the *Ajax* has not been merely sent in connection with the alleged deforcement at Tiree and there is every likelihood that the present naval expedition may yet be heard of in some other portion of Hebridean waters. In fact Skye where the Queen's writ has been a dead letter for a long time, is named as likely to receive the attention of the turret ship before she returns homeward. In no other way can a satisfactory reason be given for the appearance of the *Ajax* here. It would be ridiculous to think of summoning such a huge force to deal with the outbreak in Tiree.

### A League Protest

An open air meeting under the auspices of the Scottish Land Restoration League was held last night at Govan Cross. *Mr John Wylie* took the chair. About 400 persons attended but they were composed almost entirely of the rag tag and bobtail of Govan. Respectable working men held aloof. The speeches delivered from the improvised platform were of an inflammatory character. It was moved

“That this meeting strongly condemns the section of Government in permitting armed assistance to be sent to the Duke of Argyll to enable him to enforce his unjust and immoral claim to appropriate the results of the labour of the already impoverished community of Tiree; and we also protest against the action of the local authorities in granting the use of the taxpayers servants (the constables) for similar purposes”

This motion was carried unanimously, and the proceedings shortly afterwards terminated.

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1886

### Affairs in Tiree Arrival of the *Assistance* and *Ajax*

Tiree Saturday morning (via Oban)- Today the *Ajax*, the *Assistance* and the *Nigel* are lying opposite the mouth of Scarnish harbour and preparations are afoot for the landing of the Marines. The new expedition did not reach Tiree until nearly ten o'clock last night. The troopship *Assistance* had left Oban about twenty minutes from four yesterday afternoon, half an hour in advance of the steamer *Nigel*, conveying the police and the messenger at arms; and the *Ajax* did not leave until about half an hour later. The vessels took the route by the Sound of Mull. The *Assistance*, which sailed very slowly, was overtaken by the *Nigel* long before the Sound was cleared, and the smart little steamer had to slacken speed several times in order to keep at a respectful distance behind her Majesty's troopship. Her scruples on the score of etiquette were removed, however, when the *Ajax* overtook both ships just outside the Sound. When the *Ajax* had taken the lead the *Nigel* made the best of her way after her and both left the *Assistance* far behind, crossing to Tiree in the full blaze of the setting sun. The sea was as smooth as glass. The expedition headed straight for Scarnish Bay, and the *Ajax*, which reached about a quarter of an hour ahead of the *Nigel*, came to anchor half a mile from the shore. The *Assistance* came up alongside half an hour afterwards. It being late, the landing of the Marines was delayed till the morning. The *Nigel*

however sent her boat ashore with *Superintendent Fraser*, Lochgilphead; *Inspector Cameron*, Tobermory and *Sergeant Fraser*, Oban to make arrangements for lodging and supplies for the police force, who made themselves as comfortable for the night onboard as the circumstances would permit. The approach of the vessels had been sighted far off by the islanders, and on all the points along the coast small groups collected to watch their arrival. On landing at Scarnish the police officers were received without any demonstration by about a dozen persons who had collected on the rocks. The arrangements for the landing will be completed today.

During the greater part of yesterday there was great stir at Scarnish, where both the *Trojan* and the *Hebridean* called early in the afternoon. Of course everybody was anxious for news from the outer world about matters in general and the expedition in particular. It was reported that the government vessels were likely to appear that day, as the *Assistance* was waiting for the *Ajax*, which had now arrived. On the part of a portion of the community, much regret was felt at this intimidation as every hours delay appeared to aggravate the situation. The ringleaders of the Land League were jubilant, and the opinion was freely expressed that their "friend in the south" had succeeded in stopping the expedition. In the course of the afternoon, *Mr Donald Sinclair*, the President of the League; *Mr Lachlan Brown* one of its chief props; and other members, gathered on the green in front of the post office. For the most part their conversation turned on the brothers *MacNeill*, and they complained bitterly of having been betrayed by them. It was stated that *Mr Neil MacNeill* only used his position as President of the League to secure the farm for his brother, *Mr Lachlan MacNeill*, also a Land Leaguer. They were as loud in their protestations that they will not resist an armed force as they were a week ago that they would. The determination to keep Greenhill and to take other farms as they fall vacant is as strong as ever it was among them. In deforcing the officers of the Court of Session they admit they made a mistake, which they say will certainly not be repeated; for they will after this accept service, and obey the behests of the Court, while others take their place in putting cattle on the pasture. The only hope is that public opinion, which will be liberated by the presence of the expeditionary force, will prevent anything of the sort. It is beyond doubt that many have been coerced to join the League, and a still larger number to express sympathy with it, who, in their hearts detest alike its objects and its methods. One result of the delay of the expedition was a return to the insolence to strangers, whom they viewed with suspicion. The talk of "dropping people over the pier" and the significant question "Can you swim?" put to several of those to whom they objected, formed an ample indication of the spirit which prevailed. It leaked out, in the course of the afternoon, that the emissary of the Irish National Land League, who left in the morning, had really had a somewhat adventurous time at the western end of the island. The talk in which he indulged was listened to quietly, but some of his advice was of such a character as to arouse suspicion. On parting with him the leaders of the people came to the conclusion that he was not what he professed to be at all, but a Government spy, whose object was to trap the leaders into a declaration in favour of violence. In consequence of this they treated him to a "peaceable demonstration", which in their own phrase,"made it necessary for him to leave at four o'clock in the morning to catch his boat".

Last evening, *Mr William Sproat*, Procurator Fiscal, Tobermory, made a visit to the heart of the disaffected district - the Moss district. It is a great stretch of grass, which had at one time been a peat moss. The farm of Greenhill was at the end of the journey. It has a charmingly situated farm house of which the Land leaguers retain the key. From the knoll at the back of the house a glorious view is obtained over the sunlit

waters- Skerryvore Lighthouse, Barra and South Uist, all forming features of the scene. Large numbers of animals were on the fine pastures around the farmhouse. Between horses and cattle there could not have been less than a hundred when the Procurator Fiscal arrived in the evening. On the farm, a little way behind the house, stands a cottars cabin formerly occupied by a farm servant which has been taken possession of by the members of the land organisation. The dwelling was occupied with men, who were busily engaged in making it comfortable by plastering the walls for the tenant to whom the Land League allotted it. In passing through the doorway **Mr Sproat** addressed the men, but received no answer. The moment he left a young man sped to the knoll behind the house. On the summit he displayed a long fishing rod, with a white streamer tied to the end of it. It was evident that this was the signal for a gathering, and men, starting apparently from the ground, ran towards the knoll. In the course of a few seconds, about twenty men with staves occupied the knoll. The signalling was, at the same time, continued, and other persons could be seen hastening to the place. Pausing for a few moments **Mr Sproat** seated himself on the grassy ledge and surveyed the crowd, who talked in Gaelic in a loud tone, and gesticulated wildly. The Procurator Fiscal then walked back past the crowd, who maintained a respectful silence until he was clear of them. Two constables attracted the attention of the crowd who cried out "Slash them, slash them" and though the order was not obeyed they jeered and yelled at the policemen. On the way back to Scarnish crowds were observed on the headlands, and others hurrying along the road. The usual signals too were in operation and great excitement prevailed. It was at once guessed that the expeditionary force was in sight, and just as the harbour was reached, the three vessels dropped anchor opposite the entrance. The **Rev. Mr Mackay**, the Free Church minister, who is absent from the island, has written urging the men not to resist the law.

Today the weather is bright and the sea calm, so that there will be no difficulty in landing the Marines and police. The work of debarkation was begun about seven o'clock when a steam launch with two boats in tow brought a large party of Marines from the *Ajax* to the shore. Forty nine writs were afterwards served, no opposition being offered.

Tuesday 03<sup>rd</sup> August 1886

## **The Tiree Expedition**

### **The Marines in the Island Service of Writs**

TIREE, Sunday (delayed in transmission)

The Tiree Expedition has successfully performed the first part, at least, of the mission the whole of the writs deemed necessary in the meantime having been served without the least show of resistance on the part of the islanders in spite of the bellicose attitude they assumed prior to its appearance.

Debarkation was begun a little after seven o'clock yesterday morning. The boats of the *Ajax*, *Assistance* and *Nigel*, towed by the steam launches, speedily brought the Marines and constables ashore at Scarnish, and the preparations were made for an immediate march through the island.

On a little plateau at the head of the harbour the Marines mustered, a fine body of 250 men, under the command of *Colonel Mackay Herriot*. The other officers were *Captains Eagles, Wylde and Lang; Lieutenants Clavel, Anderson, Curtoys, Daniel, Connelly and Poulter; and Dr Todd, RN*. There were another 150 Marines on the vessels. Piling their arms on the grass the men awaited orders to take the road on what at that time did not seem likely to be a pleasant tramp, for rain had begun to fall. The police constables, who numbered fifty, of whom thirty five were drawn from Argyleshire and the remaining fifteen from Inverness-shire, took their places on a green in the front of the inn, under the direction of *Captain Mackay*, the chief constable of Argyleshire. *Sheriff Principle Irvine* was present at the head of the expedition; *Mr Sproat Procurator Fiscal*, Tobermory, and *Captain Inglis* of the *Assistance*, being also present. People gathered in small knots on the green knolls around Scarnish to witness the massing of the forces, and they viewed the proceedings with stolid gravity. It was about a quarter past eight o'clock when a start was made to the ringing notes of the bugles, which were echoed and re-echoed all around. The police took the lead, followed by the officers of the court and the sheriff, for whose accommodation a carriage driven by a stranger, none of the natives daring to give such service, was provided although he hardly ever used it; while the rear was brought up by the Marines in the following order:- Advance double file, connecting link, battalion and rear guard. On the march being begun the rain was falling heavily but it speedily cleared away, and delightfully fine weather was enjoyed for the rest of the day. The first signs of the impression created by the redcoats were visible among a large herd of Highland cattle that ran wildly about in the marshy pastures above the village.

The bugle heralded the approach of the party to the hamlet of Hainish where there was a considerable turn-out of old men, women and children though the sturdy fellows usually seen were conspicuous by their absence. Passing through the village there was a halt at An-t-Ard a point which projects into Hynish Bay and from the grassy slopes and sandy hollows splendid views were obtained on the one hand of the famous Reef of Tiree and on the other of the great stretch of sea, over both of which sunshine and shadow were chasing each other. The marines, officers and men alike, were anxious to know the nature of the work they were likely to have, and in the course of a quarter of an hour contrived to pick up a good deal of information on the subject. On resuming the march the force rested on to the Traigh Bhagh of Hynish Bay. From a well among rushes just below Crossapoll water was served out to the members of the party, and while this was being done, some men who passed in a string of carts looked rather grimly at the strangers. In this neighbourhood some of the open furnaces used for burning the sea-tangles in the manufacture of kelp were examined with a good deal of curiosity by several of those connected with the expedition. The sea side was left a little after ten o'clock, and instead of the road which would have led to Ballimartine, the houses of which looked pretty with the sunlight upon them, there was a march inland to Island House. It was expected that a guide for the expedition would be obtained here, but this expedition was disappointed, none of the folks with sufficient local knowledge having the courage to undertake such an unpopular office. On the road through Heylipoli there were comparatively few people, although groups were gathered here and there, mostly of old men, women and children. In a hayfield near the Established Church manse there were five men, all wielding the scythe, but this was the only display of labour witnessed in the course of the day. In sight of Moss Church another halt was made, and the force was viewed from the surrounding eminences by small groups of people. Immediately after passing

the church the party met the President of the Land League, **Donald Sinclair, a joiner** residing in the township of Barrapoll, on whom a writ was served. **Inspector Cameron**, Tobermory asked him if any of the other people of the township were at home, whereupon he replied snappishly, "I don't know; you ought to know that yourself" during the rest of the march he kept close to the messenger-at-arms. In Loch Phinll, the edge of which was skirted, stood large numbers of Highland cattle, knee deep in the water. On reaching Barrapoll, where there was an assemblage of about a score of people, among whom, as before, there were few young men, a stoppage was made. The people of the place began at once to supply the members of the party with milk, scones and other marks of hospitality, and this was repeated at various points on the route. The children in return were kindly treated by the strangers.

About half past eleven the expedition emerged into the wider field of Catchean, bounded on the east side by low white sand hills, and extending for a mile and a half between the little hamlet of Barrapoll on the south, situated at the side of a small sandy-beached loch from which it takes its name, and the little township of Ballimeanach and Sandaig on the east most shore of the island. In this field a halt was called, and the messenger-at-arms accompanied by his concurrent, **Inspector Cameron**, and one of the local constables, proceeded to the hamlet of Barrapoll, where writs were served upon **Donald McNeill**, an old cottar, who received the document personally, and upon **Lachlan Morrison, Duncan Morrison, and Neil Carmichael, all cottars**, for whom copies were left. About twenty people gathered in front of the hamlet and watched the proceedings quietly. A number of the people returned after the service of the writs to the field.

The column was then headed for Sandaig, and the men, piling arms on the grass, had an hour for lunch, during which the islanders, who could see the redcoats a long way off across the level field, came up in small knots from all quarters, and at once established themselves on good terms with the Marines. A good deal of chaffing went on, the people suggesting that if they sent the police home and encamped there they would be glad to keep them as long as they liked to stay, and saying that the pretty sight would be worth all the trouble that had been given them. The march to Ballimeanach was resumed a little after one, with an escort, from which it could be seen that the red-coats possessed no small attraction for the young women of the island. At Ballimeanach a little hamlet of two or three cottages, a writ was served personally upon a young man **John Maclean**, crofter, and, proceeding a few hundred yards in the same direction, past the works of the British Sea Weed Company, the little township of Sandaig was reached, at the head of a white sandy beach, on which the long swell from the Atlantic could be seen breaking with a fringe of glistening foam. At Sandaig writs were served in absence upon **Charles Macarthur, Hector Kennedy, Dugald Maclean, Archibald Macarthur and John Macarthur, all cottars**. At the house of **Archibald Macarthur** the officers were met by an old woman who allowed herself of a mind to give expression to her feelings in fervent language at the action of the authorities. She was with difficulty restrained by a handsome young girl, whose dress - an arrangement in black and red - seemed to indicate that its owner had travelled beyond the limits of the island. At Sandaig a considerable group of men were encountered for the first time. These were principally the employees of the British Sea Weed Company and are nearly all fervent land leaguers. The direction of the expedition after leaving Sandaig lay north through the farm of Greenhill, which has been the very head and front of offending in the present difficulty. The column marched across the head of Ghressamuill Bay. At Greenhill farmhouse was a crowd of men, who ran down as the column marched past. At the other end of the farm the

township of Kilkenneth began, and writs were served first upon three old women locally known as the three witches of Kilkenneth. *Mrs Macarthur*, an old woman was first encountered outside her door, and she enquired naively, when the writ was put in her hands, if she might fling it to the winds. She kept up a rattling conversation with the police officers and when the Sheriff came up, inquired whether he would take a tumbler for the paper he had given her, an offer which the Sheriff when the remark was translated to him respectfully declined. Some time was lost while the cottage of *Flora Macarthur* was being discovered. The bystanders, though they put themselves to some trouble to get water for the police were not communicative, and some of them who were asked to point out the house said he would be no party to such coadset. A considerable crowd collected, and two men, *Don Mackinnon, joiner*, Balivulin, and *Don McDonald*, Kilmaluag accepted service of their writs on the spot amid considerable good humour of the part of the crowd. The officers had finally to leave that part of the township without finding *Flora*, but in crossing to the livening music of bugles to the other side of the township along a narrow lane between waving fields of bere, barley and clover *Flora* was encountered by a dykeside among a group of female sympathisers and writ was very unwillingly put into her hands. The other writs served in this township were upon *Mr Campbell, crofter; John Maclean, crofter; Neil Brown, crofter; Colin Mackintyre crofter; John Macdonald, crofter; and Alexander Macintyre, mason*. Here also a notice of ejectment was served upon *Archibald Maclean*, Kilmaluag, who, it is alleged, had squatted without permission. The next township visited was Moss to the west of Kilkenneth, where 14 writs were to be served. A march of a mile or so across mossy fields, with the music of the bugles to keep up the pace, brought the troops to the outskirts of the township. A turf wall which marked the boundary formed rather an impediment to the baggage part of the expedition, the pony having to be unyoked and the carriage lifted over the dyke. Here a halt was called and while the messenger at arms and the party proceeded to the township to serve the writs the troops had the advantage of the ministrations of an old woman, who chose suitable texts from the Gaelic Testament, which she held in her hand, and preached in shrill tones against the oppression of the poor. She was persuaded however to give up her preaching, and to fetch a pail of milk. The serving of writs in Moss occupied nearly two hours. The houses were far asunder, and the officers had difficulty in finding the houses of the persons on whom the writs were to be served. The first writ was left at the house of *John Macarthur, crofter*, at the door of which a number of women gathered, making great lamentation. On crossing to the cottage of *Don Kennedy, sen*, Donald was found bringing home the peat turf in panniers laid in a primitive fashion across a pony's back by means of a wooden saddle resting on a straw cushion. *Donald* received the writ with a very doubtful air, and had it explained to him by the inspector that if he kept his cattle off Greenhill, the writ would do him no harm. Was it not, he asked, as well, since the grass was growing at any rate, that it should be used, since people were willing to pay for it? A detour around Moss, in the course of which several writs were served brought the officer to the house of *Archibald Macarthur* who was not in, but his wife received the writ with what was taken to be a threat that the officer would be doing something else before long.

It was six o'clock, but one paper- a notice of ejectment- had still to be served on a fisherman, *Archibald Campbell*, who had squatted on a sea-beaten corner of the island. The house he had built, which was much more rude in construction than most of those on the island, was reached after a long walk among sandhills and grassy patches. No one responded to the knocking at the door, and a "patent door" service, as



it is technically termed, was effected. The force had been left on a stretch of grass by the side of Loch Bhasapoll when this detour was being made, and on his return to the halting place the messenger-at-arms declared his work done.

In all 49 persons were served with writs- 5 at Barrapoll, 1 at Ballimossach, 5 at Sandaig, 9 at Kilkenneth, 14 at Moss, 11 at Ballivullin, 2 at Kilmoluaig, and 2 at Cornaigmore- and these with the 5 formerly served at Balliphuil, give a total of 54. Twenty writs in regard to the Sandaig case are to be served in the meantime. On the way back to Scarnish was past Cornaigbeg, along the shore of Balliphetrish bay, across the only rocky belt in the island from the Cladach of Chr???? Traig Mor, and down through the white sand to the harbour. The Marines finding that the job was over, came away at a swinging pace, blowing bugles and singing until the rocks re-echoed the sounds of the lyrics, the most popular seemed to be "The Union Jack of Old England", "John Barleycorn" "Hold the Fort" "Far Far Away" "Sailing sailing over the bounding main". In a short time the marines overhauled and passed the constables. On various points of the march crowds gathered, groups of women having in more than one place stationed themselves among the rocks. The red-coats were universal favourites, and various friendly salutations were addressed to them, and under their wing seven police constables were safe from insult. Towards the close of the march a couple of marines had to fall out of the ranks, but the main column kept up the pace till Scarnish was reached at half past eight, the police and the main body of the column of marines arriving together. On reaching the harbour, the marines from the *Ajax* were marched down the left of the harbour and those from the *Assistance* halted at the Inn and served before embarking with rations of rum. The police were taken onboard the *Nigel*, where they put up for the night. During the day the blue-jackets landed the tents and stores for the marines and stored them in a house near the head of the harbour, where several of the marines mounted guard during the night. Sunday passed quietly few of the marines being ashore but a number of their officers landed and in glorious weather enjoyed a ramble among the sand hills.

### TIREE Monday (2<sup>nd</sup> August)

The *Ajax*, the *Assistance* and the *Nigel* are still riding at anchor outside Scarnish Harbour. In the morning the torpedo boat of the turret ship went to Tobermory with official dispatches. It is not known what the next step of the expedition will be, but it is generally expected a force will be stationed on the island for a considerable period. Tents and other equipment have been brought ashore for 150 marines and accommodation is being provided for 15 constables. The people, notwithstanding their hospitality in the course of the march through the island, continue to boycott all who supply the representatives of the law with assistance in any shape or form. It is a matter of public notoriety that the family who keep Scarnish Hotel would be in sore straits had it not been for the resources of its own farm and of the various steamers to assist it. One peculiar feature of the march was the absence among the spectators of able bodied men in all quarters, except in the vicinity of Greenhill. The people who gathered in groups by the roadside were for the most part old men, women and children. From Sandaig to Kilkenneth however the men who accompanied the expedition were almost entirely tall, swarthy fellows. Greenhill which is a finely situated farm- its Gaelic name means Sunnyside- comprises about 300 acres, cultivated to a large extent. The Government officials here are highly indignant at the use which is being made of their names by certain journals, whose correspondents are attempting to belittle the recent outbreak. One of these officials has discovered that

his authority has been advanced for a long statement which does not contain a single word of truth. Of course this gentleman who is a valued and trusted agent of the Government in the west country has made no allegations of the kind to be found in the statement to which his name has been attached. It is well that the public should know the exact position of the representatives of these newspapers, who were not near the place till a week after the late deforcement. Despite the fact that there is a hotel at the harbour these persons are living with the disaffected people in their huts, assisting them in framing their resolutions, and otherwise identifying themselves with them. It is an easy matter for anyone to estimate the value of statements which find their way into print through such a channel. The islanders undoubtedly declare themselves to be a peaceable people, but the hostile demonstration at Greenhill as late as Friday evening, when they thought the expedition had been countermanded, was an evidence of the hollowness of the profession of some of them. It is not yet known whether or not any arrests will be made in connection with the recent deforcement but it is not improbable that the ring leaders may be served in the course of a few days. Some of the islanders still brag that they will halt the process of man-lifting, as they call it but they are almost certain to be as quiet then as they were on Saturday in the presence of an armed force. Last night large numbers of blue jackets, marines and sunderymen? Were ashore on special leave and divine service? Sunday in Tiree was something else than unredeemed dullness. The men who were hospitably treated by the island people, whose best feature is unstinted hospitality, at least to friends, seemed greatly interested in what they say. Great disappointment was expressed however at the total profession of the island. During the early part of today the stewards of the big ships have been to obtain supplies. The task has proved somewhat difficult. Today the *Assistance* proceeds to Tobermory to coal and a stock of goods will be obtained there. The steamer *Trojan* also brought extensive supplies from Oban this afternoon.

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> August 1886

### **The Island of Tiree**

Tiree Tuesday- It is currently reported on the island that a fresh herd of cattle had been driven onto the Greenhill pastures. Beyond this incident scarcely anything occurred yesterday worthy of chronicling, and even at Scarnish, where the presence of vessels of the expedition might be expected to keep up the appearance of life, the day passed in sleepy fashion. The members of the police force wandered about the harbour most of the day, finding it hard to keep themselves amused. The arrival of the rail steamer from Oban about half past one with stores for the troop ship and the mails service to bring a good number of the natives to the post office. A good many persons hung about the post office most of the afternoon and there was talk of holding a mass meeting at Moss today. The hut behind the post office where the stores landed from the *Assistance* are kept was the centre of attraction, and there in the evening a number of young men of the neighbourhood had a friendly tussle with the members of the "force" at putting a stone, in which the police had the best of the encounter. Some of the officers of the marines shot over the Moss district in the centre of the island, and enjoyed a good days sport, returning with a bag of about forty snipe and a dozen plovers and wild ducks. The marines have not yet landed, but they will probably go under canvas today, as the *Assistance* is expected to proceed at once to Tobermory to coal. The police are still making the best of the accommodation onboard the *Nigel* but

there is some talk of putting them up in an old house, once a church, and now a store on the north side of the harbour. The *Ajax* keeps up the daily communication with the outer world by sending one of her torpedo boats each morning to Tobermory for dispatches. Yesterday there was a heavy sea outside, and the sight of the alien craft tearing through the water was very pretty. Last night she did not return, and the *Ajax* when darkness fell scanned the sea with a powerful electric search light which cast a broad glare over the water for over a mile and lit up the surrounding air with striking effect. Today as the torpedo boat did not make her appearance, the turret ship got underway in order to search for her. **Captain Mackechnie**, of the *Trojan*, received instructions, at the same time to keep a look-out for her crossing from Coll to Mull. The steamer this morning sighted the missing boat rounding the most westerly point of the larger island. It was ascertained that on attempting to return to the *Ajax* she had encountered such heavy seas that she had been compelled to put back to Tobermory, where she remained overnight. The messenger-at-arms **Mr Nicolson**, Edinburgh, and his son went by the *Trojan* from Tiree to Oban today. It is expected that the 150 marines likely to be landed today will be encamped in the neighbourhood of Scarnish Harbour. Nothing has transpired as to the future movements of the *Nigel*, but it is expected that after landing 15 constables for whom accommodation is provided, she will go to Glasgow.

Tobermory, Tuesday Evening (3<sup>rd</sup> August) :- The troopship *Assistance* came into Tobermory Bay this evening. After coaling she will return to Tiree. **Sheriff-Principle Irving** is onboard, but goes back with the ship. The marines were landed at Tiree before leaving. The purveyors of the ship complain that in Tiree they are unable to obtain any food supplies. The natives will not sell any of the islands produce for the use of the members of the expeditionary force. Since the march around the island on Saturday, the attitude of the islanders towards the marines has, they say, undergone an unpleasant change. Not a drop of milk can be obtained, and even a glass of water has been refused. Upwards of 100 marines and 50 blue jackets have been allowed ashore at Tobermory and they appear to be enjoying themselves. The news shop was besieged, and in a few minutes every newspaper was sold. Much curiosity to see the description of last Saturday's proceedings was evinced by both soldiers and sailors.

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> August 1886

### **Landing of the Marines Islander Arrested**

Tiree, Friday morning:- At eight o'clock this morning the marines from the *Assistance* were landed, drawn up at the southern end of the harbour, and marched west in the direction of Greenhill, headed by a police force and accompanied by **Sheriff Irving**. The object of the expedition, it is stated is to make arrests. A drizzling rain is falling. The departure of the expedition was kept entirely secret and it was viewed somewhat in the nature of a surprise when its movements were observed. In front marched a body of about 50 policemen, then came **Sheriff Irving** on foot, accompanied by **Captain Mackay**, and a small body of marines marched immediately behind. A considerable distance in the rear came the main body of marines in full marching order, with leggings, greatcoats, and knapsacks. The extreme rear was brought up in the customary manner by a guard. For about an hour and a half the

expedition slowly wended its way over the wet sandy roads occasionally leaving the road and marching along the seashore to cut off a bend in the road. All the time a drenching rain fell and a thick mist hung over the surrounding country giving the landscape an extremely dreary aspect. Scarcely a living being was passed in the course of the march.

At last the cluster of cottages and huts called Ballemartin, five miles from Scarnish was reached. Scarcely had the township been entered than a halt was made, and a few policemen, advancing towards a group of men who were standing gossiping at a gable, laid hands on one of them and brought him away. Not the slightest resistance was made, his companion merely looking on. **Colin Henderson**, the man who was apprehended, expressed a desire which he pressed with some persistency, to be allowed to go home to change his clothes; but he was informed the clothes would be sent in the evening by his friends to the place of his confinement. Immediately the arrest was made, a man was observed to mount a horse and dash off across country at full gallop, and a horn was heard sound. The policemen then marched a few hundred yards further down the road, and entered the house of **Hector Macdonald**, like **Henderson, a fisherman**, and arrested him. In this case also the apprehension was effected without even the faintest sign of resistance, **Macdonald** coming out of the cottage with a smile on his face. The natives most of whom were women, surveyed marines then moved on to another road to make further arrests. At the hour at which this message was dispatched across the island (10am) to Scarnish, to be conveyed by steamer to Lochboisdale, the nearest available telegraph office, other arrests were in contemplation.

Shortly after the expedition left Scarnish a second body of marines landed there, and erected tents on the shore a short distance behind the inn. It is intended that the marines shall live on shore, at least in the meantime, for more convenience and in case of stress of weather. Yesterday the *Ajax*, in consequence of stormy weather, was compelled to get to sea. Provisions sufficient to last for a week have been got ashore. The departure of the expedition has not aroused any excitement at Scarnish.

Tobermory, Friday night:- The turret ship *Ajax* is still lying in the bay. During the day, through the courtesy of **Captain Durrant** and the officers, she was visited by large numbers of people of the town, by whom the guns and the machinery were viewed with wonder and admiration. In the forenoon the steam pinnace, a barge, and the cutter under the command of **Lieutenant Smyth**, with a full compliment of sailors, went outside the bay for gun practice and boating drill. A number of the officers of the ship fished the Minnish lochs during the day and had good sport. In the evening about a hundred blue jackets and marines came ashore.

A skiff from Tiree which left Tobermory on Wednesday night with dispatches for **Sheriff Irving** returned this afternoon. The boatman reports that a large body of marines were landed this morning at seven o'clock at Scarnish along with the police. The marines drew up in full marching order opposite the inn, and the force, accompanied by **Sheriff Irvine**, marched away about eight o'clock along the main road, which leads to the disaffected part of the island. Yesterday was so stormy that it was impossible for any action in the direction indicated being taken, no communication between the vessels and the island being possible.

A telegram has just been received from the Admiralty containing an order for the departure of the *Ajax* tomorrow morning for Greenock, to take up her position as guardship on the Clyde.

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## Appendix 1

**The 'Crofters' War' of 1886**  
**People & ships named in *The Scotsman* reports of 21<sup>st</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> August 1886**

[Page ref is the first mention of the name in the reports. There are multiple mentions of some people or ships.]  
 [Abbreviations: MAA = Messenger-at-Arms; OIC = Officer-in-Charge.]

Surname	Name	Title/Trade	Township	Vessel	Page ref.	Remarks
Anderson		Lieutenant			30	Marines
Barr	Thomas	Farmer	Ballyphetrish		17	Farmer at Ballyphetrish
Blackie	Mr	Agent		<i>Trojan</i>	6	Highland Fisheries Co Ltd
Brown	Lachlan	Crofter	Moss		16	Middle-aged, prominent moustache
Brown	Neil	Crofter	Kilkenneth		32	Writ served on him
Cameron	Mr	Inspector	Tobermory		28	
Cameron		Inspector	Tobermory		31	
Campbell	Archibald	Lord			18	Telegram quoted
Campbell	Archibald	Fisherman	On coast		32	Notice of ejection
Campbell	Mr	Crofter	Kilkenneth		32	Writ served on him
Carmichael	Neil	Cottar	Barrapoll		31	Writ served on him
Clavel		Lieutenant			30	Marines
Connaught		Duke of		<i>Osborne</i>	2	Royal Yacht
Connaught		Duchess of		<i>Osborne</i>	2	Royal Yacht
Connolly		Lieutenant		<i>Assistance</i>	9	Troopship
Connolly		Lieutenant			30	Marines
Curtoys		Lieutenant			30	Marines
Daniel		Lieutenant			30	Marines
Durrant		Captain		<i>Ajax</i>	36	
Eagles		Captain		<i>Assistance</i>	9	Troopship
Eagles		Captain			30	Marines
Fraser	Mr	Superintendent	Lochgilphead		27	
Fraser	Mr	Sergeant	Oban		28	
Henderson	Colin	Fisherman	Ballemartin		36	Arrested
Herriot	Mackay	Colonel			30	Marines colonel
Inglis		Captain		<i>Assistance</i>	30	
Irvine/Irving	Forbes	Sheriff	Edinburgh		15, 35	
Kennedy	Donald		Moss		32	Senior
Kennedy	Hector	Cottar	Sandaig		31	Writ served on him
Lang		Captain			30	Marines
Lorne		Marquis of			8	
Macarthur	Archibald		Moss		31	Writ served on him
McArthur	Archibald	Cottar	Sandaig		31	Writ served on him
Macarthur	Charles	Cottar	Sandaig		31	Writ served on him
McArthur	Donald				16, 21	Young man, prayer reader
Macarthur	Flora		Kilkenneth		32	Writ served on her
Macarthur	John	Cottar	Sandaig		31	Writ served on him
Macarthur	John	Crofter	Moss		32	Writ served on him
Macarthur	Mrs	Witch	Kilkenneth		32	Writ served on her
McBrayne	Mr				5	Owner of a fleet of steamers
McDiarmid	Mr	Factor	Island House		6	Duke of Argyll's factor in Tiree
McDonald	Donald		Kilmaluag		32	Writ served on him
McDonald	Flora	Crofter	Moss		37	Ref. To my great-great-grandmother
MacDonald	Hector	Fisherman	Ballemartin		36	Arrested
MacDonald	John	Crofter	Kilkenneth		32	Writ served on him
McDonald	Mr	Guide	Iona		18	Circulated a telegram

Surname	Name	Title/Trade	Township	Vessel	Page ref.	Remarks
MacIntyre	Alexander	Mason	Kilkenneth		32	Writ served on him
MacIntyre	Colin	Crofter	Kilkenneth		32	Writ served on him
Mackay	Mr	Captain			2	Chief Constable Argyllshire
Mackay	Mr	Reverend	Tiree		29	Free Church Minister (Tiree)
Mackechnie		Captain		<i>Trojan</i>	35	
Mackenzie	Duncan	Sheriff Clerk	Tobermory		24	
Mackinnon	Donald	Joiner	Balivulin		32	Writ served on him
McKinnon	Donald	Cartwright			16	
McKinnon	Duncan				20	Handsome fellow, stalwart build
McKinnon	John	Joiner & Factor	Greenhill		8	Resented as new tenant of Greenhill
McKinnon	John	Joiner			17	Ground officer
McLaughlan	Mr	Owner	Glasgow		3	Owner of fishing steamers
McLaughlin	Mr	Fishcurer	Glasgow	<i>Nigel</i>	5	Businessman with own ship
Maclean	Archibald	Squatter	Kilmaluig		32	Notice of ejectment
Maclean	Dugald	Cottar	Sandag		31	Writ served on him
Maclean	John	Crofter	Ballimeanach		31	Writ served on him
Maclean	John	Crofter	Kilkenneth		32	Writ served on him
Maclean	Mr	Tenant	Greenhill		3	Late tenant (deceased) of Greenhill
McLean		Family	Greenhill		19	<i>En route</i> for Australia
McNeill	Donald	Cottar	Barrapool		31	Writ served on him
McNeill	Lachlan	Tenant	Greenhill		2, 13	New tenant Greenhill, Land Leaguer
McNeill	Neil				17	
McNeill	Neil				17	
McPhail	Hector	Crofter	Moss		37	Ref. To my great-great-grandfather
Morrison	Duncan	Cottar	Barrapool		31	Writ served on him
Morrison	Lachlan	Cottar	Barrapool		31	Writ served on him
Nicolson	Mr	MAA	Glasgow		3	Messenger-at-Arms (MAA)
Lorne		Marquis of	Oban		8	Arrived in Oban this evening
Poulter		Lieutenant			30	Marines
Sinclair	Donald	Joiner	Barrapool		16	
Sinclair	Donald	Chairman			20	Middle aged, of grave respect
Sinclair	Donald	President			28	Land League
Smyth		Lieutenant		<i>Ajax</i>	36	OIC steam pinnace
Sproat	William	Procurator Fiscal	Tobermory		15, 23	
Stewart	Hector	Gaelic Translator	Moss		16	Meeting at Moss
Todd		Doctor			30	Royal Navy
Wylde		Captain			30	Marines
Wyllie	Mr	Factor			6	Duke of Argyll's factor
Wyllie	John	Chairman	Govan Cross		27	Scottish Land Restoration League
				<i>Ajax</i>	24	Royal Navy warship
				<i>Aros Castle</i>	10, 19	Inter-island steamer
				<i>Assistance</i>	9	Royal Navy troopship
				<i>Chevalier</i>	15	Steamer of McBrayne's fleet
				<i>Hebridean</i>	3, 28	Well known steamer
				<i>Nigel</i>	5	Ship of Highland Fisheries Co Ltd
				<i>Osborne</i>	2	Royal Yacht
				<i>Pioneer</i>	5	Steamer of McBrayne's fleet
				<i>Trojan</i>	4	Ship of Highland Fisheries Co Ltd
				Torpedo Boat	33	Used to send dispatches from <i>Ajax</i> to Tobermory

*This is the end of the immediate news reports of the incident and general turmoil that took place on Tiree during the summer of 1886. A further transcription of the trial reports, again taken from The Scotsman, is currently underway and is hampered by the great difficulty I am having in reading the poor photocopies. The trial took place in October of 1886 in Edinburgh's High Court and not as might have been expected in Inverary Sheriff Court, such was the Establishment's concern to punish the usurpers of authority and the Rule of Law. However it is a 'dry' read when compared to the above tale, which was written as it unfolded with all the rumours, suspicions and sketches of the folk involved in the 'Crofters' War of 1886'.*

*I hope others find this of as much interest as I have despite not having found any references to my own ancestors as I had hoped. They lived as crofters in the centre of all the trouble at Moss township. But as Hector McPhail and Flora McDonald (my great-great-grandmother) were about 60 years old at the time perhaps they were supporters rather than activists in this general civil protest. Hector was literate and writing letters appealing for road improvements in Moss in early 1900s, so he was a man with a community conscience. He died in 1907, still in Moss where he had worked a croft for over 40 years.*

*Iain Campbell  
24 November 2009*