A gamekeeper’s trade is more dangerous than the lot of a soldier,’ observed one historian in the last century, and so it was to prove for Joseph Butler, the ill-fated keeper of Lord Lisburne of Traw- good. On a cold moonlit November evening in 1868, he was shot dead in the chest at close range by William Richards, a poacher, commonly known as Wil Cefncoc.

But the trade of the keeper was a dangerous one, the punishment for poaching was also grim. The gravity regarded the pursuit of poachers and hares as God-given right and had legislated to consolidate the sacred status of their game by passing a series of Acts known as the Game Laws.

On average, over 400 poachers a year in the first half of the last century were punished either by hanging, transportation, jail or fines which they could ill afford.

On 28th November Wil Cefncoc and his two companions, Morgan and Henry Jones, two brothers of the Lisburne family, set out to poach on the Trawgood estate. They were only ten miles from the constabulary station.

Two shots were fired, one dead, the other wounded. The constable then arrived on the scene and took the two poachers into custody. The constable then jumped into the car and drove back to the farm of the Lisburne family.

On arrival at the farm, the constable found that the two poachers were still alive and well. They were then taken to the police station and charged with poaching.

On the following day, the two poachers were tried at the Lisburne family. They were found guilty of poaching and sentenced to be whipped in the public square. The two poachers were then whipped in front of the whole town. The constable then took the two poachers to the police station and charged them with poaching.

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