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# Peterloo 2019

## Press Pack

200th anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre  
16 August 1819



Manchester Histories is leading Peterloo 2019, a programme of activity that will mark the 200th anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre with public events, learning opportunities and creative exploration developed in partnership with cultural organisations and communities across Greater Manchester



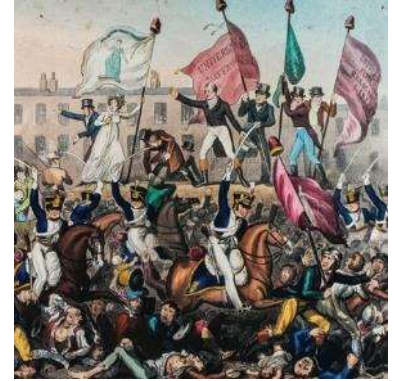
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## Peterloo 2019 Press Pack

### Introduction

**Peterloo1819.co.uk**  
**#Peterloo2019**

On **16 August 1819** 60,000 people gathered on what was then known as St Peter's Field in Manchester to peacefully demand the reform of parliamentary representation. When troops, including local yeomanry, charged the crowds, the tragic result saw 18 people lose their lives and around 700 injured and was to become known as the **Peterloo Massacre**.



Peterloo symbolises public protest, the struggle for democracy and the fight against political repression, at a time when such was the need for economic, social and political reform that ordinary people in numbers never seen before took to the streets.

A watershed moment in British history and an event that in its time was reported upon worldwide, and yet, awareness levels of the Peterloo Massacre remain relatively low.

Manchester Histories, a growing and dynamic charity that works collaboratively to reveal, share and celebrate Greater Manchester's diverse and often hidden histories and heritage, is using the 200th anniversary to shine a light on this chapter of history and its contemporary relevance.

Working with key cultural organisations and communities across Greater Manchester and with the support of **The National Lottery Heritage Fund**, **Peterloo 2019** has been created. It will deliver a programme of activity that combines public events, learning opportunities and creative exploration.

Peterloo 2019 is a campaign about the people by the people, with every aspect of the project from development to delivery **co-produced** with members of the public, cultural organisations, historians, writers and artists. This will include a team of **Peterloo Ambassadors** who will be working with and in communities across Greater Manchester.

***"The Peterloo Massacre plays a significant role in the history of Manchester. The fall-out from what followed was felt across the country and continues to be felt two hundred years later. We want to ensure that more people know about what happened at Peterloo and consider some of the parallels of what happened then and what is happening today, not just in Manchester but also globally."***

**Karen Shannon, Chief Executive, Manchester Histories**



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### Peterloo 2019

Each of the Peterloo 2019 projects explores the story, legacy and contemporary relevance of the Peterloo Massacre through the themes of **freedom of speech, democracy and protest**.

### Peterloo 2019 Commemorations

The **Peterloo 2019 Commemorations** open with **Manchester Histories Festival** on **Friday 7 June 2019** and culminate on the 200th anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre (**16 August 2019**). The programme across the summer will showcase events, talks, walks, creativity, artistry and the work of community groups and cultural organisations across Greater Manchester. With **Manchester Central Library** as the Peterloo 2019 hub, an array of opportunities will imaginatively illuminate the world of Peterloo and its relevance today.



On **16 August 2019** a **permanent memorial to Peterloo** will be unveiled in a day of poignant reflection. The work is by artist **Jeremy Deller** and has been commissioned by **Manchester City Council**.

### Protest Music

The legacy of Peterloo meets the powerful force of protest music. Students from **Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM)** will collaborate with urban music artists on a series of sessions to produce their own pieces of modern protest music. This will lead to a performance at RNCM on **6 July 2019** as part of Peterloo 2019.

The music will also be brought together as a podcast, providing the opportunity for any artist with a passion for protest to be part of the musical archive that will be created.

### My Family Tree – a Peterloo Descendants Story

Working in partnership with **Manchester & Lancashire Family History Society** and **Michala Hulme**, a leading oral historian and genealogist based at **Manchester Metropolitan University**, a search is being made across the UK and beyond for descendants of those who witnessed the Peterloo Massacre.

The project will enlist the help of historical researchers to uncover modern day relatives, encouraging them to meet and connect with each other and Peterloo historians to share their stories.

What emerges from these encounters will be made into a film that will be screened as part of the commemorations.



*Failsworth Veterans of Peterloo  
© Gallery Oldham*

'**My Family Tree**' will offer a **genealogy open day** taking place at Manchester Central Library, giving people the chance to delve into their own family's histories inspired by Peterloo.

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### Peterloo 2019 Learning Resources & Animations

A learning strand for young people is being created by Manchester Histories and **People's History Museum**. Developed in consultation with schools and young people, lesson plans, activities and assembly presentations based upon the themes and legacy of Peterloo are being developed for **primary and secondary schools**. They will look at what life was like in 1819, what happened, what might happen today and the role of citizenship. This will be a very visual experience, including the production of animations developed in conjunction with young people to inspire the learning journey. The project is supported by **Historic England** and the **Politics Project**.

The Peterloo 2019 learning resources will be available from late April 2019.

### HOME BFI Academy

Partnering with **HOME** and the **British Film Institute**, Peterloo 2019 has given young people a platform through filmmaking to explore how the themes of protest, democracy and freedom of speech relate to their daily lives.

A group of **16 to 19 year olds** has attended workshops, worked with some of the crew members from **Mike Leigh's Peterloo** film and learnt about everything from storyboarding to soundtrack editing before creating their own film. This was premiered at a special event at HOME and will now be screened at a number of international film festivals.



The film can be seen at: [manchesterhistories.co.uk/projects/peterloo2019](http://manchesterhistories.co.uk/projects/peterloo2019)

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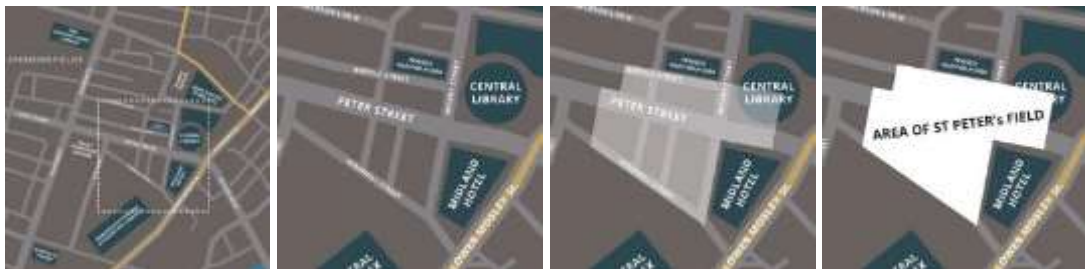
### Cultural Collaboration

Facilitated by Manchester Histories, individuals, groups and cultural organisations across Greater Manchester have worked together to collectively plan and map out ideas for the 200th anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre.

Since June 2014 regular meetings, creative consultations and conversations have been taking place, this will continue as the development of Peterloo 2019 takes place, with much of the content having been inspired by the collaborative process.



The establishment of a **creative identity** has also been collaborative in its approach, with over 120 members of the public and representatives of cultural organisations involved.



It takes its shape from the geographical area in which people gathered, with green chosen as the lead colour to represent the hope, optimism and peaceful nature of the protestors as well as the green of St Peter's Field.

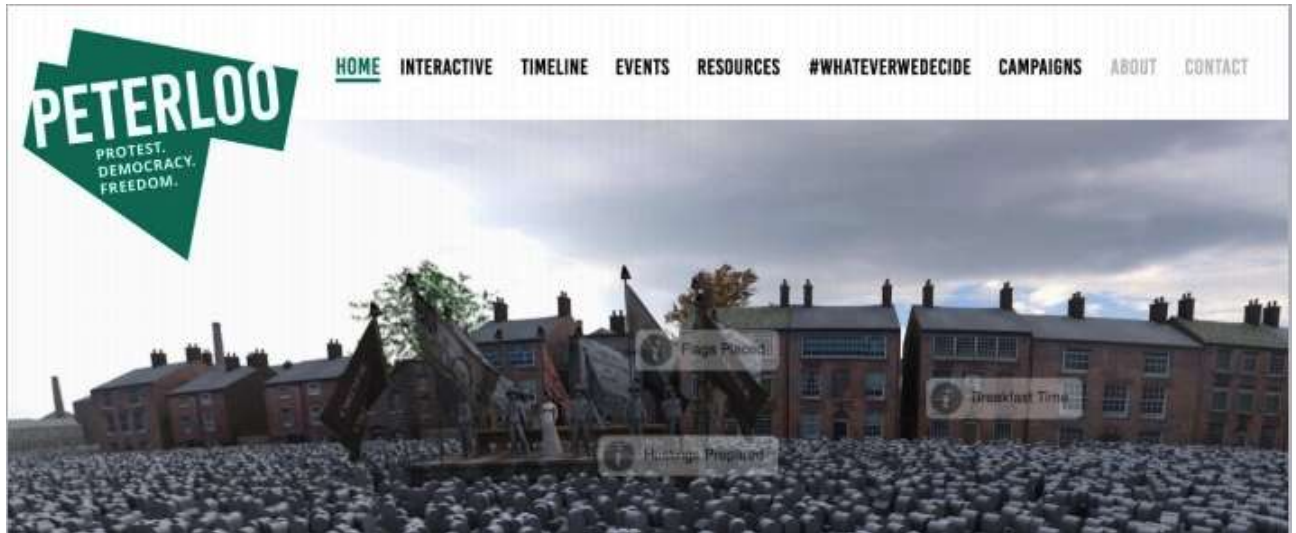
This identity is now available for any cultural organisation or community group to use, with the access point here: [manchesterhistories.co.uk/getinvolved/page.aspx?ID=261](http://manchesterhistories.co.uk/getinvolved/page.aspx?ID=261)



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[Peterloo1819.co.uk](http://Peterloo1819.co.uk)

A dedicated website where the story of Peterloo is told and events taking place across Greater Manchester throughout the anniversary year can be found is underway and will launch in early **March 2019**.



**Peterloo1819.co.uk** will visually illuminate the narrative – placing the user in St Peter's Field (now the area between Manchester Central Library and Manchester Central), as the setting would have been on 16 August 1819 – making it accessible and engaging to a contemporary audience.

This will be a legacy piece of work that will ultimately draw together and record everything that takes place as part of Peterloo 2019.

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### Protest and Peterloo: the story of 16 August 1819

By **Dr Shirin Hirsch**, Researcher at People's History Museum and Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University



*On 16 August 1819 60,000 people congregated in St Peter's Field in Manchester, with demands for the right to vote, freedom from oppression and justice. Despite its peaceful beginning, this was a day that would end with a bloody outcome.*

### From Waterloo to Manchester

In 1789 the **French Revolution** shook the world and the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity spread rapidly. In Britain, less than 3% of the population could vote and the system was entirely corrupt. The ideas of the French Revolution were therefore eagerly received and most powerfully expressed in **Thomas Paine's** book, the *Rights of Man* (1791). Paine's words inspired ordinary people to question the systems they lived under, systems that had been challenged by those across the channel. The British government prepared for war not simply to defeat the revolutionary 'menace' in France, but also to destroy the revolutionary 'menace' in Britain that Tom Paine had helped unleash.

Britain eventually won the **Napoleonic Wars** (1803 – 1815) against France, but at great expense and with a huge national debt. Moreover, the militant ideas from France lived on. Returning British soldiers, like **John Lees** who was a veteran of the victorious battle of Waterloo, were now living not in the prosperity of the victor, but in poverty. Lees came from Oldham and when he returned home he continued his trade as a cotton spinner, but now with drastically reduced wages. Lees was one of those who protested in Manchester on 16 August 1819 and, having survived the battlefield, was to lose his life at the hands of his own army in the Peterloo Massacre.

In the days that followed, the massacre was named '**Peterloo**' by a journalist in a mocking reference to the celebrated victory at Waterloo in the Napoleonic Wars that Britain had fought. Lees' dying words to his friend were, at "Waterloo there was man to man, but at Manchester it was downright murder".



*Manchester Heroes, George Cruikshank, September 1819 © People's History Museum*

### Representation

In the context of poverty and the huge numbers of working people pushed into the industrial centres in and around Manchester, a reform movement demanding the right to representation captured the minds of large numbers of ordinary people. Despite the growing population of Manchester, there was no MP to solely represent the area. A demonstration was called in Manchester, which by being postponed to Monday 16 August 1819, meant people were readily prepared for it.

A Monday seems a strange day to choose, yet for the handloom weavers, who were still the majority in the cotton trade in the area, after working all weekend they traditionally took Mondays off. These workers, who feared for their jobs and standard of living, made up a large component of the protestors.

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### Preparing for the protest

The industrial towns surrounding Manchester put huge efforts into the preparations in the weeks beforehand and contingents from each area had different creative responses.

**Oldham's** centrepiece was 200 women in white dresses and a banner of pure white silk, emblazoned with inscriptions including 'Universal Suffrage', 'Annual Parliaments' and 'Election by Ballot'. They marched to Manchester through the moors, joining the **Saddleworth** group, whose banner was pitch black with the inscription 'Equal Representation or Death' over two joined hands and a heart. These words would be used by the magistrates after the massacre to justify their actions. The banner, the magistrates argued, was a clear sign of revolutionary intent.

### How a peaceful protest met with violence

The protestors were peaceful and unarmed. The weaver and reform leader **Samuel Bamford** wrote later how the drilling of the **Middleton** contingent in the build up to the demonstration meant that, on the day, every hundred men and women had a leader whose order they were to obey and each leader had a sprig of laurel in their hat as a 'token of amity and peace'.

On arriving in St Peter's Field, an observer described "large bodies of men and women with bands playing and flags and banners...There were crowds of people in all directions, full of humour, laughing and shouting and making fun. It seemed to be a gala day with the country people, who were mostly dressed in their best and brought with them their wives..."



*Still from Mike Leigh's 'Peterloo'*

The crowds waited in eager anticipation to hear the principal speaker of the day, **Henry Hunt**. According to witnesses, tens of thousands of people waited in the square, so tightly packed together that "their hats seemed to touch". In an overlooking building, staring down on the scene, were the **magistrates**. After two hours of observing, they gave the orders to the enforcers of law surrounding the crowd that the protestors must be dispersed, while the radical reform leaders were to be arrested. On hearing these orders the recently formed, **Manchester and Salford Yeomanry** pulled out their sabres and charged the crowd on horseback. The first victim of the attack was a two year old child, **William Fildes**, who was thrust from his mother's arms when she fled the cavalry. At least 18 people were killed, of whom four were women, and up to 700 were injured; 168 of these were women even though in numbers they comprised only 12% of those present.

### Women at Peterloo

Historians have noted that women were disproportionately targeted at Peterloo; their presence shocked the establishment, challenging the prevalent ideas of women as subservient and domesticated wives. While the reform movement called for the vote for men (under the slogan 'Universal Suffrage'), women were beginning to organise and even to take a lead within the movement, with female reform groups emerging across Lancashire.

As President of the **Manchester Female Reform Society**, **Mary Fildes** was the most prominent woman. On the day of the massacre she stood on the stage as a key figure next to Henry Hunt. When the yeomanry



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attacked, she was slashed across her body and seriously wounded. Mary Fildes would go on to have a role in the emerging **Chartist movement**, yet so many other women who also took a leading role in the reform movement of this period are little discussed in our history.

### Legacy of the Massacre

The **British government** was keen to cover up the massacre, imprisoning the reform leaders and clamping down on those who spoke out against the government. Within days the massacre was being reported upon both nationally and internationally. However, with the implementation of the new Six Acts legislation, it became extremely dangerous to even publish words that discussed the Peterloo Massacre, and taxes on newspapers were increased so that working class people would be less likely to read them. When **Percy Bysshe Shelley** heard of the massacre, he penned the poem *The Masque of Anarchy*, powerfully indicting those who were responsible. Yet Shelley could not find a publisher brave enough to print his words, with the genuine threat of imprisonment hanging over radicals in this period. It was only in 1832, after Shelley's death, that the poem was first published, and the new Chartist movement would take up his words with gusto.



*Newspaper reports on Peterloo*  
© People's History Museum

*2019 marks 200 years since the Peterloo Massacre; a major event in Manchester's history, and a defining moment for Britain's democracy. A moment when ordinary people stepped up to protest in a way that has made its mark in history and with a legacy that lives on to today.*

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As the national museum of democracy, **People's History Museum** is dedicated to sharing and exploring the stories of those who have fought for rights, representation and equality throughout its galleries and changing exhibition spaces.

To find out more visit

[phm.org.uk](http://phm.org.uk)

To arrange a visit or interview email

[Clare.Short@fidopr.co.uk](mailto:Clare.Short@fidopr.co.uk)



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### Key Partner Events

**Disrupt? Peterloo and Protest** (Saturday 23 March 2019 to Sunday 23 February 2020)  
**People's History Museum, Manchester**

Part of the national commemorations marking 200 years since the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester in 1819, this headline exhibition for 2019 tells the story of Peterloo and highlights its relevance today, examining issues within our democracy that people are campaigning for 200 years on.



The exhibition features objects, including original Peterloo artefacts, brought together for the very first time, alongside pieces telling more recent stories of protest. A short film commissioned especially for the exhibition brings to life the story of Peterloo, protest, and the road to democratic reform.

A creative space within the exhibition is a Protest Lab; an experimental gallery for individuals, communities and organisations to use to share and develop their views and ideas for collective action.

People's History Museum, open every day 10.00am to 5.00pm. The museum is free to enter with a suggested donation of £5. Visit [phm.org.uk](http://phm.org.uk) for more information.

**Peterloo** (Thursday 21 March 2019 to Sunday 29 September 2019)  
**The John Rylands Library, Manchester**

Fake news. Fractured politics. A state against its people. Discover the story of the Peterloo Massacre in The John Rylands Library's latest exhibition.

Uncover the personal stories behind the protest that shocked Britain. Explore the Library's original handwritten records to learn the names of the ordinary Mancunians who sacrificed their lives for liberty. See the documents that show how the city authorities tried to conceal the atrocities they committed against their own people. Get up close to historic newspapers, and be inspired by the journalists who tirelessly sought to report truth, expose corruption and seek justice.



The Peterloo Massacre was a crucial step on Britain's long journey to democracy. In today's climate of heated political debate, viral media and clashing opinions, the story of these Manchester radicals resonates more than ever before. Come and consider: how different is Britain 200 years later?

The John Rylands Library, open Tuesday - Saturday 10.00am to 5.00pm; Sunday - Monday 12.00pm to 5.00pm Visit [www.library.manchester.ac.uk/rylands/](http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/rylands/) for more information.

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**Get Together and Get Things Done** (Friday 17 May 2019 to Sunday 29 September 2019)

**Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester**

Get Together and Get Things Done is part of a city-wide programme in 2019 to commemorate the bicentenary of the Peterloo Massacre. Inspired by Peterloo, Manchester Art Gallery will explore with people the wider theme of the crowd through international historic and contemporary art and group activity, looking at how an art gallery can be shaped by the crowds that use them.



Manchester Art Gallery, open Monday 11.00am to 5.00pm; Tuesday - Sunday 10.00am to 5.00pm, including bank holiday Mondays; first Wednesday of every month open until 9.00pm. This is a free exhibition. Visit [manchesterartgallery.org](http://manchesterartgallery.org) for more information.

**Peterloo: news, fake news and paranoia** (Friday 31 May 2019 to mid-September)

**Working Class Movement Library**

200 years ago in St Peter's Field a crowd calling for electoral reform was attacked by the Manchester & Salford Yeomanry, an event that has become known as Peterloo. This exhibition explores the historical context, the prevailing paranoia and the reactions of the establishment, utilising the Library's extensive Peterloo holdings.



Working Class Movement Library, exhibitions open Wednesdays - Fridays 1.00pm to 5.00pm, and the first Saturday of the month 10.00am to 4.00pm. Visit [wcml.org.uk](http://wcml.org.uk) for more information.

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[Peterloo1819.co.uk](http://Peterloo1819.co.uk) will feature a full programme of events being organised by cultural organisations and communities.

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### Peterloo 2019 Spokespeople

#### Karen Shannon, Chief Executive of Manchester Histories



Karen has managed all of the partnership work that has led to the creation of Peterloo 2019. She has also overseen the public and cultural meetings that have taken place to enable all parties to contribute to the way in which the bicentenary of Peterloo is marked.

Karen can give an overview of the project and its themes, and talk about the connectivity across Greater Manchester that is behind Peterloo 2019.

#### Janine Hague, Project Manager Peterloo 2019



Janine is managing all of the project activity that will take place under the Peterloo 2019, thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund. She is working with community groups and cultural organisations across Greater Manchester, details and outcomes of which she can share.

#### Jenny Mabbott, Head of Collections & Engagement at People's History Museum



Jenny can illuminate the story of Peterloo to audiences from both a historical and contemporary context.

She can draw upon her experiences of working as Head of Collections & Engagement at People's History Museum, where the story of Peterloo is told in its main galleries, and her work to support the development of Peterloo 2019.

#### Michael Powell, Learning Co-ordinator Peterloo 2019 & Programme Officer at People's History Museum



Michael has been responsible for developing the learning programme that is being created in partnership with People's History Museum. He can talk about this programme, what it will deliver, the resources that it will feature and how the learning will be made relevant to young people.

#### Dr Shirin Hirsch, Researcher at People's History Museum and Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University



Shirin is a historian in residence at People's History Museum. She specialises in the history of modern Britain with a particular focus on the labour movement, as well as questions of race and Empire. Shirin is currently undertaking research on Peterloo and the global context of the early 1800s democracy movement in Manchester.

She can share insight into the background and context of Peterloo and how these threads live on.

#### Professor Robert Poole, Historian



Historian, lecturer and author Robert Poole has been an advisor to Peterloo 2019 and the partners and communities involved. Having written extensively on the subject, 2019 will see the publication of his new book *Peterloo: the English Uprising*.



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### Peterloo 2019 Links and Contacts

Peterloo 2019 creative identity toolkit: [manchesterhistories.co.uk/getinvolved/page.aspx?ID=261](http://manchesterhistories.co.uk/getinvolved/page.aspx?ID=261)  
 Peterloo 2019 image library: [flickr.com/photos/151241428@N08/collections](https://www.flickr.com/photos/151241428@N08/collections)  
 Peterloo 2019 website: [Peterloo1819.co.uk](http://Peterloo1819.co.uk)  
 Manchester Histories website: [manchesterhistories.co.uk](http://manchesterhistories.co.uk)

### Partner list

Lead funder and partners: The National Lottery Heritage Fund  
 People's History Museum  
 Manchester City Council  
 Greater Manchester Combined Authority  
 Manchester University  
 Manchester Metropolitan University  
 Historic England  
 Archives +  
 Creative Manchester  
 British Council

Media partners: The Guardian  
 BBC Radio Manchester

### Social media

#### #Peterloo2019

Facebook: [@manchesterhistories](https://www.facebook.com/manchesterhistories) [@peterloo2019](https://www.facebook.com/peterloo2019)  
 Twitter: [@mcrhistfest](https://twitter.com/mcrhistfest) [@Peterloo2019](https://twitter.com/Peterloo2019)  
 Instagram: [manchesterhistories](https://www.instagram.com/manchesterhistories)

### Contacts

<p><b>Peterloo 2019 Press Office</b></p> <p>For further information on Peterloo 2019, to organise interviews, visits or images please contact:</p> <p>Laura Sullivan / Clare Short at Fido PR        Email: <a href="mailto:Laura.sullivan@fidopr.co.uk">Laura.sullivan@fidopr.co.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:Clare.short@fidopr.co.uk">Clare.short@fidopr.co.uk</a>        Phone: 0161 832 3588</p> <p>A Peterloo Massacre timeline is available via the press office.</p>	<p><b>Peterloo 2019</b></p> <p>For any other enquiries please contact:</p> <p>Janine Hague Peterloo 2019 Project Manager        Email: <a href="mailto:Janine@manchesterhistories.co.uk">Janine@manchesterhistories.co.uk</a>        Phone: 0161 306 1982</p>
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### For enquiries about the Peterloo memorial being created by Jeremy Deller:

Jane Lemon, Manchester City Council News & Media, [j.lemon@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:j.lemon@manchester.gov.uk) / 0161 234 1010.

