Peterloo Thomas Chadwick

Thomas Chadwick to James Chadwick, 17 August 1819. Leach/Tweedale Archive.

Box 7: Items 22 & 26. Also a typed transcript from the Rochdale Observer, 25 Nov. 1933, in a separate bound volume on open shelves labelled ‘Leach, Tweedale, Chadwick’, together with a photocopy of the ms transcript in Box 22. It is by Mrs Tisdall of 75 Stockton Rd, York, a descendant and owner of the Leach/Tisdall archive. Despite family legend the writer was not himself present at Peterloo.

‘Rochdale August 17th 1819

Dear James,

You will have heard by the 5 o'clock mailing last night from Manchester some account of the inhuman outrage committed upon the unarmed, peaceable assembly yesterday. I am not able to give a correct account myself but every spectator with whom I have spoken agree in one particular, viz. that in 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour after the Meeting opened the yeomanry Cavalry intermixed with the Iniskilling [sic] Dragoons made a furious charge upon the People cutting & trampling on all before them not an insult was previously offered to them in any shape whatever it is calculated there were not less [than]\* 150,000 People on the ground wedged as close as possible so that for a while it was totally impossible to give [original ends here, now from Tisdall ms. transcript] way to them, and the havoc this made is impossible to describe.

Report speaks of various numbers killed. Weighing every account, I believe there must be at least ten or thereabouts killed\*, and hundreds upon hundreds wounded. A Mr Arthur Humson or Howarth of Hulme, I cannot get the name correctly, is one of them, and the landlord of the Bulls Head, Market Place, another, and a man of the name of Tilford, who kept the White Bear Inn here some years ago, and one or two of the Dragoons or Yeomanry Cavalry – one or two women and a child, and some country men. It is impossible to say with any confidence who or how many. A great many extravagant storys are told which cannot be reconciled, but I expect to get Roe’s account to-morrow or the next day, which I will send you. Several thousand people went from here. I have seen several wounded ones – my neighbour Barnish was there, and gives the best account; he saw the whole of it. There is some danger of a riot to-day; there are hundreds going. The military fired upon the folks last night [8 o'clock]\*\* down Ancoats Lane. One man was there killed and many wounded; reports say more. Since I am talking of so much butchery I will just add that on Monday evening week one of the defenders of our faith in Bank Street in this town turned out of his [word missing] I do not know whether drunk or sober [word missing] stuck his bayonet into the [word missing] bowels of William Robertson[‘s]\*\* [word missing] Sayers, whom he met in the street without exchanging a word. The man died of it on Friday. You see I have no room for business, and to-day I have less inclination.

With aff[ectionate] love,

I am your Brother,

Thomas Chadwick.’

\*Conjectural – damaged.

\*\* In Rochdale Observer transcript, not Tisdall’s. Online version has 9 o'clock: <http://www.link4life.org/discover/local-history-online/riots-radicalism/peterloo/peterloo-an-account>