

Name: Robert Grundy

Occupation: In the woollen trade

Home: Salford

Date: 24th March 1820

Source: *Trial of Henry Hunt* 141-146

Summary: Gives detailed account of events of the 16th, where he saw no resistance made by the crowd. Interrupted by debate about whether a speech supposedly given by *Hunt*, or one supposedly given in parliament, would be acceptable in questioning. '*Mr. Hunt* bowed, and the witness said, I should consider such a speech very improper.'

Done by: RH

Robert Grundy called. (This witness refused to give his evidence, until he had had his expenses; but *Justice Bayley* said, he never knew of a *Judge* in similar circumstances ordering the expenses of a witness. *Mr. Hunt* said, so far as he was concerned, he was quite willing to pay him his expenses).

The examination then went on.

I am in the woollen trade, and live at Salford. I was at Manchester on the 16th of August. I did not see many of the processions coming in. It was about half-past eleven that I went into the field. I acted as special constable. I remained in that capacity in the field until about half-past one. I had not given in my depositions. I stayed in the field until you came, and some time afterwards. I remained until the cavalry made their appearance. The several processions were coming up in the meantime. I cannot say that I was in the line of constables, but I was very near them. Where I stood might be from 15 to 20 yards from the hustings. I went to *Buxton's* house after the cavalry appeared. The meeting was then partially dispersed. The parties came up in an orderly manner, they seemed to be four or five abreast, and had colours and music. No particular impression was made on my mind at the moment. They were as peaceable as it was possible for such bodies to be. I did not observe any staves, but I believe some had sticks. They were walking sticks, such as people generally have when they come from the country. I did not see any of them offer any insult or violence to the respectable people there. When I stood within 20 yards of the hustings, the people pressed very close against me. I did not then show my staff, and I think they might not have known that I was a special constable. Some of the constables did not exhibit their staves. I saw the cavalry arrive.

By the Court. —Was any opposition made to them? —I did not see any.

Anything to intimidate them? —Nothing that I saw.

Nor any groans or hisses? —I heard three cheers, and I believe the soldiers returned them. I did not hear hootings or hissings, or groanings.

Did you see any stones thrown at them, or up in the air? —I did not, my Lord.

Had you your eye on them as they were advancing? —No, I receded a little; I wished to get out of the meeting. This was on the right of the cavalry.

By *Mr. Hunt*—Had you any fears for your own safety of the town from what you saw? —Not any, until I saw the cavalry come upon the ground. I understood it was not the intention of the Magistrates to interfere with the meeting, and therefore I was easy on the subject. Upon this understanding, I felt no alarm from the conduct of the people.

Did you see the Yeomanry? —I saw them come up, and the people about me tried to get away. There was no resistance offered. I then, for the first time, began to be alarmed for my person.

Cross examined by *Mr. Scarlett*—I was a special constable for two years before. I believe they are generally persons of property. I am for Salford. I had heard of drillings in the neighbourhood often before. I did not hear any alarm amongst my acquaintance or friends at the meeting. I have no connection with any persons who were there. The bodies marched. They did not appear to have leaders. I say they came in sections, but by that I only meant that they came some abreast I did not see them in the streets. Those that went into the field marched, like a file of soldiers, abreast. I did not see that any of them had a mark of distinction, or command. They marched like persons who had been drilled. I don't know that their appearance confirmed in my mind what I had heard of drilling. I don't mean to say they walked as regular as soldiers, but they were a little more orderly than persons walk in the street.

From their manner of walking, do you think, on your oath that they had been drilled? —I

do think they had had some instructions.

Did you mean to say, that the impression on your minds was, that they had been drilled? —I have said I believed they had got instructions, but of drilling I know nothing.

How many were there? —About 60,000 but I don't know much of public meetings. Their conduct was quite peaceable. As they came in they formed round the hustings. I was never nearer to them than from 15 to 20 yards. I did not try to get nearer. I remained with a friend of mine, a special constable. I saw no reason to be alarmed in Manchester, after I heard that the Magistrates had determined not to interfere.

I'll put you a case. Suppose at that meeting speeches had been made of an inflammatory nature by various speakers, and in ridicule of the local authorities, that is, the Magistrates. I ask you, would you be confident that such a meeting would be safe in Manchester? —I think speeches of that kind always have a bad effect; but as I never heard such, I cannot give an answer.

Suppose a speech of this sort: "The farce of petition is now over; a million and a half of men have petitioned for Reform, the greater part have been rejected, and none attended to, and should the people ever again stoop to anything like petition, they will deserve what they now suffer for their dastardly conduct. But we are confident that the spirit of the country will never again condescend to pray to those whom the people themselves ought to delegate. The most determined men in the country are in the ranks of the Reformers. Where can the clans of corruption find writers of equal talent to *Cobbett*, or resolution to *Cartwright & co*? Behind you is starvation; before, the battalions of corruption. On all hands we see nothing but great Noblemen, placemen, Pensioners, and a horde of black cattle whom they call Bishops Fundholders who consume 40,000,000l. a year of the public money, and those who give you a bullet when you cry for bread." Do you think, after hearing such a speech as that, there would be no danger from the mobs? (This was part of a speech of one of the defendants at a public meeting).

Mr. Hunt said this was not proved to be a speech of his, and it might have been made by the *Learned Counsel* himself for ought he knew.

Mr. Scarlett —Is that decorous?

Justice Bayley —I think the question may be put, not as purporting to be words used by you, but as a supposition of the *Learned Counsel* himself. He may ask the witness his opinion of what the probable effect of such words would be upon such a multitude, and in the temper in which he described them.

Mr. Hunt bowed, and the witness said, I should consider such a speech very improper.

By the Court. —You are asked, would it produce anger? — I can't answer that, I am no politician.

Did the people appear to you to be of the labouring classes? —Generally speaking, they were.

Were there not complaints of distress among that order in the neighbourhood? —A great many.

From what you saw and knew, did you think they were discontented? —I did not think many of the working classes were discontented.

Did you think that the meeting of such persons would not be inflamed by such a speech as this? —I should think, from such a speech to the lower class, they would.

Did you see in *The Manchester Observer* an account of Resolutions passed at Smithfield? —No: I don't read it.

Suppose a resolution was proposed like this. "That laws and taxes ought not, in consequence, to be obligatory upon those who had no voice in making them. That it is expedient, after the 1st of January 1820, not to submit to any taxes except imposed by those who were fully and fairly delegated by the mass of the people, and chosen by all the voices in the State." (This also is a resolution passed at the same meeting at *Smithfield*). —Would that inflame or produce danger at such a meeting? -- I don't know the lower classes enough to give an opinion. A great deal would depend on the way in which they bore their sufferings. I was not aware of what was to be done there. I don't know that seditious publications had been circulated at Manchester for some time preceding.

If such were, would it make you think they would be dangerous? — I think them improper; but it would depend on the degree of irritation they would produce.

Did the appearance of the people seem to be the result of a previous arrangement? I think so.

By the Court, —Do you think they could come in that way without a previous

arrangement? —I do not.

By Mr. *Scarlett*. —Am I to understand you to say that people coming together in such numbers would not create alarm? —I think that where there are great numbers there is great danger but the character of the meeting appeared to be perfectly peaceable. I never said such a meeting ought to be dispersed. I don't know *Carlile*.

Re-examined by Mr. *Hunt*. — I read in the papers of the meeting in *Smithfield*. If these resolutions passed *Smithfield* had no bad effect would you think they would be worse at Manchester? I do not think they would, except that from the general feeling amongst the lower classes they might think themselves more interested here than in London.

Did you hear that the resolutions at London produced any bad effect? —No.

What reason have you to think, that it would be worse at Manchester than at London? —No other than the condition of the manufacturing classes.

If such a speech as that about black cattle had been used at Wigan without any bad effect, do you think it would be worse here? —I do not; Wigan is a manufacturing country.

Suppose any one, and he a man of great sense and talent and legal knowledge, used such a speech as this to a multitude "As a lawyer, I would say the first meeting was illegal"——

Sergeant Cross rose to object to reading the speech in Parliament.

Mr. Hunt—Oh Mr. *Cross*, you need not say anything—Never fear, we shall never have your speech in Parliament.

(This speech which he was about to read, was Mr. *Scarlett's* upon the late New Bills).

Mr. Hunt read "As a lawyer, I would declare the first meeting was illegal. The object was then changed. The second took place, and what followed—Orator *Hunt* was arrested, and the people were cut down by the yeomanry." —Now what would be the effect of such a speech as that to a multitude?

Mr. Scarlett (warmly)—My Lord, as a Member of the House of Commons, I must protest against having read here what was spoken there.

Mr. Hunt—The *Learned Counsel* is a little warm. I never said it was his speech.

Justice Bayley —I must insist that there be no more interruptions. Mr. *Scarlett* is now arguing, and when he has done, I will hear you in reply.

Mr. Scarlett—I put a speech to the witness, which had been actually spoken by one of the defendants at a public meeting, and I asked him what he thought would be the effect of such a speech addressed to the meeting at Manchester. It was as a means of knowing his opinion as to its capability of excitement that I put it; but does it therefore follow, that he can make use of a speech that never was spoken to a multitude, and which I believe to be Mr. *Denman's* speech in the House of Commons, and ask the witnesses opinion of it. It would be quite competent for him, as I have asked what the effect of an inflammatory speech would be, to ask what would be the probable effect of a moderate one, under the like circumstances; but certainly not a speech in Parliament.

Justice Bayley —I will not suffer you, Mr. *Scarlett*, to go upon these grounds. When a little while ago, I permitted you to read a speech from a paper, it was not because it was Mr. *Hunt's* or any other, but merely as a supposition of your own, and I thought you were at liberty to put any numbers of sentences together, and ask the witness what he thought would be the effect, if so and so were spoken.

Mr. Scarlett —My object is to know, whether or not, the defendants have conspired to excite discontent. I'll prove, that this speech had, in fact, been circulated previously, with that view. I do not charge the defendants with a riot.

Sergeant Cross. —Before the trial is over, we will prove that this speech was made by one of the defendants,

Mr. Hunt—My Lord, may I be allowed to speak a word?

(Mr. *Scarlett* was rising at the time).

Justice Bayley — When the *Counsel* for the Crown have done, I will then hear you.

Mr. Hunt (with a profound bow)—Most certainly, my Lord.

Justice Bayley —Then don't bow in word, and contradict it by your actions.

Mr. Hunt then apologised, but, at the same time, took occasion to complain, that, however kind the Court was to him, he was not often enough allowed to reply to the observations of *Counsel*. He contended, that the speech was not proved to be his and that though the paper in which it was, was put in as evidence, merely on account of an advertisement—yet, from the case of the *King v. Perry*, it was laid down, that a detached part of a newspaper could not be given in evidence, unless it was proved by itself.

Mr. *Scarlett* repeated that no one was at liberty to use the speech of a Member of Parliament. If he had published that speech with his name he could be indicted for it; but as it could not be printed without a breach of privilege, it never could be given in evidence, and therefore ought not to be alluded to here.

Mr. *Justice Bayley*—The situation I am placed in is rather a delicate one. If the question had been whether the speech of a Member of Parliament was to be given in evidence, as a lawyer, I could have no hesitation in disposing of it; but that is not the question now. The question is for the witness to say, whether he thought such and such a speech (I don't care where it was got) would have any, or what effect upon a multitude in the temper that he has described that of Manchester. I looked upon them as naked specimens of speeches, which might as well be made in Court, and pronounced to the witness. It was precisely for this reason that I permitted *Mr. Scarlett* to use the other speech, not as one of any of the defendants, but of an unconnected and disembodied piece of composition. As *Mr. Scarlett* then thought proper to use a certain set of words, I can see no objection to *Mr. Hunt's* using another; but I don't care whether they have been spoken by a man in Parliament or out of it. I think, therefore, he may put them purely as his own supposition to the witness, and get an opinion upon their probable effect if they had been spoken. It gives me some pain to make this decision, but as a lawyer I must do it.

Mr. Scarlett—I now move my objection.

Mr. Hunt—Yes, when you can no longer make any use of it

Justice Bayley—I would rather the question had not been put.

Mr. Scarlett—My Lord, I am now anxious it should.

Mr. Hunt—My Lord, I don't desire it should. Your Lordship has said it cost you some pain to decide in my favour, and though I see the advantage of putting it, yet I will refrain from doing so, not from any regard to the feelings of *Mr. Scarlett* at the awkward situation that I would put him in, but simply from what has fallen from your Lordship, that you did not wish it should. I therefore decline asking the question. (A stifled buzz of applause in the Court followed this declaration).

Witness continued. —I thought the people would have come in that manner from having heard of the meeting without being previously agreed amongst themselves. I have been to the Manchester races. There used to be great crowds there. They came there in the same way that these came. There was nothing different in the deportment of the people from orange or club processions. I have lived in the neighbourhood for 15 or 16 years. I have seen benefit societies. They march with music and banners. I have seen processions on occasion of proclamation of peace. They also have flags, but not so numerous as they were on this occasion.

By the Court—When I said they could not come in without a previous arrangement, I meant both the time and manner of their coming. I don't think it was necessary they should have concerted amongst themselves; for the meeting was publicly advertised. It is probable they might have communicated with each other, but I do not think it was necessary to their coming.