

HO40/16 fol.319 Evidence of George Brown of Manchester, Special constable, 11 April 1820.

Transcribed by Peter Castree and Susan Richardson

George Brown of Manchester Merchant upon his oath saith that he attended as a Special Constable on the area of St Peters on the 16th of August last. The directions he received were to get as near to the Hustings as possible which he did. That after being some time on the ground the cart forming the Hustings was removed from the Constables about six yards or perhaps a little more, and an order was then given by some one on the Cart to fall back six yards and link arms. At this period a rush took place on the part of the people who pressed in between the Constables and the Hustings and forced the greater part of the Constables back, this they effected by locking arms and pressing back at the same time. Informant being determined to maintain his position, did so, and was locked in between the first and second row of those next the Hustings, not however himself locking. He stood singly. This gave him an opportunity of observing that all those near him within several yards were firmly locked together forming an almost impenetrable Barrier round the Hustings. In this position Informant remained until the arrival of **Hunt** and the party with him, when a tremendous shouting took place. Informant heard **Mr Hunt** after he got on the Hustings say "If the enemy shows any symptoms against us, put them down, quieten them, and keep them down". At this period there were two men who were direct in front of Informant and nigh to the hustings one of whom said to the other "I reckon mon he means we mun kill 'em". The other answered "Eigh to be sure you foo' he does". Those two were linked in the row before Informant. About this time the Cavalry came in sight, and as they came round the Corner from St Peters Church Informant heard much hissing and groaning, the people turning at the same time towards the Cavalry. **Hunt** said loudly as they came up "the Cavalry are already in disorder. Be firm" on their forming in front of the Magistrates houses. **Mr Hunt** said to a person – Informant believes Mr Johnson – "There's a pretty sight for you". He then took off his Hat and said "let us give them a shout" when a great shouting took place and the people brandished their sticks in the Air.

Previous to the Cavalry coming up Informant could see at some distance, in Dickinson Street, a party of Infantry marching. It was at this period that he heard **Hunt** use the expression "If the enemy show any symptoms against us, put them down, quieten them, & keep them down" and at this period also there was a partial hissing. As the Cavalry were with the Constables endeavouring to approach the Hustings a great commotion ensued, and one of the men in front of Informant whom he had before heard talk of "killing 'em" turned round immediately and waved a large Club – larger than a walking stick and as thick as his wrist – at Informant's head. He prevented the blow by striking the man on his Arm with his Constables Truncheon. At this moment when the Cavalry were about half-way between the Magistrates house and the Hustings and in the act of approaching a great number of stones were thrown at the Constables and Cavalry, they appeared to be thrown from the end of Windmill Street and the opening between Mount Street and Windmill Street. Judging from what Informant himself saw he has no hesitation in saying that there were some thousands of men armed with sticks & bludgeons on the ground, among those who marched in bodies in Military Order through the Streets to the meeting.

That after the dispersion of the meeting, Informant saw many hundreds of sticks & bludgeons lying on the ground.

That from the great state of alarm in which he was, and the danger in which he thought the Town to be, he ordered his own warehouse to be closed during the whole of that day, & to his knowledge several hundreds of warehouses were closed also.

Informant's warehouse is in High Street, and in that Street and Cannon Street, the two principal Streets for warehouses in Manchester, they were nearly all closed.

George Brown

Sworn at Manchester the
eleventh day of April 1820
before me

J Silvester

[Added note with document:]

George Brown

Constables pushed away.
Stood alone within 2 Rows of Hustings

Locking of Arms & Throwing Stones

Suspension of Business
Closing Warehouses