

HO40/16 fol. 293. Account of **Samuel John Smith**.

'I **Samuel John Smith** of Gaythorn near Manchester Calico Printer upon oath say, that on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August I was in St Peter's Fields acting as a Special Constable near the stage [and] saw many persons marching in regular order with flags or banners caps of liberty, and music: they came into the field in separate bodies, and had a very imposing appearance; as they approached the stage they were ordered to halt and some were commanded to [the] front and these with the flags formed a line from the stage to St Peter's Street.

The crowd round me became very great insomuch that we were so closely pressed together as to make it very unpleasant, nearly all the men about me had large sticks much thicker and longer than necessary for walking sticks, some shouldered them, others at intervals waved them in the air which appeared to me intended for a menace. One of them, who stood immediately before me said, They will soon see what they have brought on themselves. This was said before **Hunt** arrived.

Amongst other expressions **Hunt** in his speech to the Mob said, "If our enemies create any disturbances get them down, quiet them, and keep them down." This was about the time the Military were seen in Dickenson Street, instantly a man (close to me) with a large stick in his hand said "Why that's killing them" another who seemed to be his companion replied "Aye" and both smiled. The impression on my mind was that we should be attacked soon, and my firm resolution was to defend myself to the last. Soon after the cavalry appeared and formed in front of the houses in Mount Street, when **Hunt** turned to **Johnson** and said, "there's a treat for you" in a short time they (the cavalry) approached the stage at a slow pace and with sloped swords: as the Trumpeter advanced near the stages one of the Mob struck his horse with a stick. I was about eight or ten yards from the stage and at one time separated from the rest of the constables by the great presence of the mob who before the cavalry had come up locked arms, by orders from the stage at least three deep, and I do not think it would have been possible to have executed a Warrant without the aid of the Military.

I was in the thickest of the cavalry a great many stones were thrown, but whether they began to throw before the Cavalry arrived, or not I cannot tell. On the Friday and Saturday preceding the meeting I took some time to have the stones and bricks removed out of St Peter's Field and its immediate vicinity so that on Sunday I saw the ground was perfectly clear. I also saw stones lying in the Channels near St Peter's on the Monday morning which I mentioned at the Police Office, and they were removed.

After the meeting was dispersed the ground was covered with stones brick bats and sticks.

From the information I received I was persuaded that there was much to be dreaded from the assembling of such an immense number of persons and in consequence I employed an extra watchman on the nights of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> to guard my premises. I also kept my gates closed the whole of the 16<sup>th</sup> being much alarmed for the safety of my family and property.

I have witnessed nearly all the mobs that have been in Manchester for the last forty years but I never saw one which was so much calculated to intimidate and menace as the one on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Aug<sup>t</sup> last in my judgment it appeared nearly approaching to Rebellion.

**S. J. Smith**

Sworn at Manchester this 17<sup>th</sup> day of April 1820 Before me **Rob<sup>t</sup> Fielden.**

