

Name: Thomas Hopkins
Occupation: Picture-framer
Home: N/K
Date: 9 October 1819
Source: Lees Inquest 506 – 509
Summary: Testifies only to the nature of the meeting from 11.00am on 16 Aug, but the Coroner dismisses the witness & debate ensues relating to relevance of repetitious evidence of further witnesses called.
Done by: CW

THOMAS HOPKINS, called in, and examined by the CORONER.

Q. What are you?

A. I am a picture-frame, and looking-glass maker.

The WITNESS was now sworn by the CORONER.

Mr. HARMER (*to the Coroner*)—Shall we follow the straight course we did yesterday?

The CORONER—Yes.

The WITNESS examined by Mr. HARMER.

Q. Mr. Hopkins, were you at St. Peter's-field on the day of the Meeting—the 16th of August?

A. Yes.

Q. At what time did you arrive there?

A. I arrived there the first time, about 11 o'clock.

The CORONER (*to the Witness*)—Were you in the room yesterday?

A. No. I looked in at the door once, but I did not stop a quarter of a minute; nor did I hear any thing said.

The examination of the WITNESS resumed by Mr. HARMER.

Q. Were you, in point of fact, on the field when Mr. Hunt arrived?

A. I returned to the field, again, at about a quarter past 12 o'clock.

Q. And did you then remain on the ground until Mr. Hunt arrived?

A. Yes.

Q. Whereabouts did you take your situation?

The CORONER—If this witness is only to prove the general character of the Meeting, that is the evidence I have resolved to hear no more of,

Mr. HARMER—I shall ask him only a few particular questions.

The CORONER—If it be to the general character, or disposition of the Meeting, I will not hear it.

Mr. HARMER (*to the Witness*)—When did you first observe any disturbance?

The CORONER—Now, that is what I have resolved to hear no more of. This is

evidence of the disposition of the Meeting, and I have had quite sufficient of that sort of evidence.

A JUROR—I believe, so have we.

[Several of the Jury here expressed their satisfaction on this head.]

Mr. HARMER—If the Jury have had sufficient evidence as to the character of the Meeting, I am sure I will not call more witnesses on that subject.

Mr. HARMER—(To the Witness)—When the military came up, was your attention turned towards them?

The CORONER—That is the same sort of evidence.

Mr. HARMER—No, Sir, I beg your pardon. I want to prove the assault committed by the Military on the Meeting.

Mr. BARROW—That is involved in the character of the Meeting,

The CORONER—That has been proved, and denied.

Mr. HARMER—I mean to ask this gentleman, whether, his attention, being particularly called to the Yeomanry as they came up to the hustings, he saw them assaulted in any way whatever?

The CORONER—That has been asked of different witnesses more than twenty times; and you said you had five hundred witnesses more, to prove they were not. No one knows where this will end: and they say on the other side, that they have five hundred witnesses to prove the Yeomanry were assaulted. I will not hear any more of this evidence.

Mr. HARMER—I challenge them to the proof. But, Sir, I understood the other day, that the course you determined to be adopted, was this: That they were to call as many witnesses as they could, to prove that the Meeting was turbulent, because the Jury had expressed themselves perfectly satisfied upon the testimony of the witnesses I first called, that it was perfectly peaceable; and then I was to be allowed to call evidence to rebut theirs.

The CORONER—Did not Mr. Ashworth ask me, last night, whether it was necessary for him to call any more witnesses to prove the state and disposition of the Meeting? And I said, "no," and so did the Jury, because he said he could bring witnesses to that *ad infinitum*.

Mr. HARMER - But at present, Sir, they have only resorted to the evidence of two or three police officers., However, if you tell me positively, "I shan't" examine the witness to the points I was about to examine him to, of course I can't. Will you allow me to examine the witness?

The CORONER—To what facts?

Mr. HARMER—Why, to whether the Manchester Yeomanry did not ride into the Meeting, and cut several people.

The CORONER—No.

Mr. HARMER—Then you don't allow me to ask, Sir, whether the Manchester Yeomanry did not ride into the multitude, and cut several of the people?

The CORONER—You have heard my reasons.

Mr. BARROW—It is said, I have no more witnesses to prove this was a turbulent Meeting. I deny it; I have.

Mr. HARMER—Then go on, and call them. I could not suppose, that after descending to call the very dregs of the police, you could have any witnesses remaining, whose testimony was entitled to the least consideration.

Mr. BARROW—I have more witnesses to prove the Meeting was turbulent; but I submit, Mr. Coroner, that for the sake of our health, it is most desirable, that some limit should be put to these proceedings. I recollect, some years ago, (perhaps thirteen years ago) there was a trial at the Assizes at Lancaster, at which the present Chancellor of Ireland presided. It was a case as to the right of fishery, and it was stated that there were a hundred and fifty witnesses on one side; and a hundred and thirty on the other; and as these witnesses were to prove precisely the same facts

over and over again, the Judge said he would put a stop to it; for it was quite monstrous that such a number of witnesses should be examined, or listened to, in one cause, to the exclusion of all other business at the Assizes. If gentlemen would agree to examine a given number of witnesses on both sides, as to particular points, the trial might be got through: but if such an immense number of witnesses were to be produced, to prove precisely the same facts, there would be no definite end of the case. Well, in the present case, Mr. Harmer says that he has five hundred witnesses to prove that the Meeting was perfectly peaceable. I have a very considerable number of witnesses who could confirm the evidence of those I have already called. Already this inquest has been of more than eight days continuance; we have done that which is extremely fair—we have called a much less number of witnesses than Mr. Harmer has, and we are willing to let that part of the case rest where it is. But if he is to examine more witnesses, we must examine more; and God only knows where it will end.

Mr. HARMER—Still, Mr. Coroner, I am not at all removed from the position with which I set out; nor is the instance which Mr. Barrow has mentioned, of a case where there were a great many witnesses, at all analogous; for there the learned judge alluded to, proposed that the gentlemen should agree to take a certain number of witnesses on each side; clearly shewing, that it was not a matter of decision by his lordship, but that it was in fact a proposition for public convenience. But, Sir, it was expressly agreed, when Mr. Ashworth proposed to call witnesses to contradict my position that the Meeting was peaceable, and that the Cavalry made this outrageous assault upon the people, that I should be allowed to call witnesses to rebut the testimony of those he was to call, if I thought proper to do so. If you say that I am not to do it, of course I am obliged to bow to your decision.

The CORONER—If the Jury had not been satisfied with the number of witnesses examined to that point, I should not have come to this resolution. If each of you produces a given number of witnesses, then the credit and character of those witnesses will go to the Jury, and we shall be likely to come to some termination of this inquiry, within reasonable time. But I will not allow witnesses to be called for the amusement of Mr. Harmer, or any body else.

Mr. HARMER—I do assure you, Sir, it is no amusement to me.

The CORONER—If you produce any number of witnesses, with moderation, I will receive them; but I shall allow the other side to call the same number.

Mr. HARMER—Very well, Sir; but I did hope, as the gentlemen on the other side have said that they had so many witnesses, that you would hear a few more of them. If they have so many witnesses to prove the turbulence of the Meeting, I am sorry they did not proceed with them. I can only say, that now this gentleman is here, can examine him to some other points.

The CORONER—If you will consent to fix the number of witnesses that you are going to call, I will allow you to proceed.

Mr. HARMER—I will not make any compromise of the interests of my clients, which is against law.

The CORONER—Well, that is my conclusion.

Mr. HARMER—What is your conclusion, Sir? Will you be good enough to repeat it, in order that we may have it accurately?

The CORONER—Why, my conclusion is this:—if you will fix to have any number of witnesses to some one fact, and that number be a moderate number, I will receive them, and allow the opposite side to produce a similar number. But if you don't agree to this, we shall stop where we are.

Mr. HARMER—Then I don't agree to it, Sir.

The CORONER—You have had more than a month since the Assizes to prepare, and surely you have had sufficient time to collect all your witnesses together.

Mr. HARMER—Yes, Sir, and I have them here.

A JUROR—I think we have had plenty.