

Name: Hulton, William

Occupation: Magistrate

Home: Hulton, 12 miles from Manchester

Date: 18th March 1820

Source: Trial of Henry Hunt, 49-56

Summary: Ordered the deployment of the military to support the yeomanry in dispersing the crowd. Gives a detailed account of his movements at SPF. 'I gave orders to Col. *L'Estrange* to advance to the support of the Yeomanry; I never thought it would be necessary to disperse them violently, as I thought they would disperse on the apprehension of those named in the warrant; and I will add, that we had no previous intention whatever of dispersing the crowd, I witnessed none of the scenes that took place after.'

Done by: RH

W. Hulton, Esq. examined by *Mr. Scarlett*—I am a Magistrate of the county of Lancaster, and was at Manchester on the 16th of August. The magistrates first assembled at the Star Inn, and then adjourned to *Mr. Buxton's* house, which over-looked St. Peter's area. We assembled between ten and eleven o'clock, and received information on oath relative to the approach of large bodies of people. As Chairman of the Bench of Magistrates for the counties of Lancaster and Chester, much of my time was taken up in writing; but I frequently looked out of the window, and saw large bodies of men approach. The first came by Mosley Street towards St. Peter's-square, with banners and music. They were apparently divided into sections, and had persons walking at the side, who, from time to time, seemed to give the word of command. This observation more particularly applied to the first body, for the others were too far off to be so minutely observed; All the bodies, however proceeded regularly, and in a remarkable manner, for they did not march straight to the hustings, but wheeled when they received the word of command The persons in command went up to the hustings and deposited their colours. They were regularly received with loud huzzas. The men appeared to me to be beautifully exact in coming up to the hustings, but I could not mark their motions afterwards. The division which advanced from Mosley-street, by St. Peter's Square, marched with particular precision. I could not see what sort of order was kept by the division which came along with *Mr. Hunt* I should think, having seen regiments reviewed, that the first division consisted of 4,000 or 5,000 men; they had music, but I do not know that they had any Drums. I observed the division which escorted *Mr. Hunt*; he was in a carriage, in which I believe were also *Johnson, Moorhouse, and Carlile*: the extraordinary noise which was made on the approach of *Mr. Hunt* induced me to walk to the window, and mark what was going forward: the hustings were moved in the course of the morning: this I knew, because it had been the desire of the magistrates to form a line of constables from the hustings to the house where the magistrates were; but I observed that a number of men had rushed in, locked their arms together, and surrounded the hustings. I could perceive from the window different people coming forward to address the meeting: from the situation in which I was placed, I had a view over almost the whole of St. Peter's area: the number of persons assembled was estimated at 50,000; the meeting did undoubtedly inspire terror in the minds of the inhabitants. I received depositions on oath to that effect, and I myself marked the extraordinary way in which the people approached.

Mr. Hunt—I desire that those depositions may be produced.

Witness. —I have not got them.

Justice Bayley —You must speak, then, as to your own opinion; you cannot state the opinions of others.

Witness continued— Many gentlemen stated to me that they were greatly alarmed; and, looking to all the circumstances, my opinion was that the town was in great danger. The population of Manchester and Salford, according to the census of 1805, was 100,000 souls. Manchester is a large place, and contains many shops and warehouses. The Magistrates, in consequence of these proceedings, deemed it necessary to issue a warrant for the apprehension of the supposed leaders, which was given to *Nadin*, either in the presence of one of the Chief constables of the town, or else it was handed to him by the constable. I

cannot say whether the warrant was brought back after it had been made out. In giving the warrant to *Nadin*, he said he could not execute it without military aid.

Mr. Hunt objected to hearing what *Nadin* said.

Witness continued. —He refused to serve the warrant without military aid, and made use of this remarkable expression—

Justice Bayley intimated to the witness that he could not state the observation of *Nadin*.

Witness continued. —The reason *Nadin* gave was perfectly satisfactory. I then wrote two letters, one to the Commander of the Yeomanry Cavalry, and the other to *Colonel L'Estrange*, requiring, them to come to the house where the Magistrates were, which they accordingly did. A troop of the Manchester Yeomanry soon after arrived from the Mosley Street. The troop came at a quick pace and formed a line under the wall of the Magistrates house. The moment they appeared, the crowd set up a tremendous shout. They groaned and hissed, and those men who had sticks shook them in the air. I saw those sticks lifted up in a menacing manner. I had a full view on the whole. I can positively swear that I saw the sticks flourished in this manner; and I even heard the expressions of some of the people who were near the military. Whilst the cavalry were forming, some of those persons who were nearest to them turned or advanced towards them. After the mob had set up this shout, the cavalry waved their swords. They then advanced. I believe the Boroughreeve was with them, when they formed for that purpose. From the appearance of the crowd, and from their general conduct, I conceive it was totally impossible for the constable to serve the warrant without the assistance of the military: I wrote at the same time, to *Colonel L'Estrange* and the Commander of the Manchester Yeomanry and supposed the two forces would have arrived at the same moment on the ground; but I was informed that from the appearance of the crowd, it was thought that it would be dangerous for *Colonel L'Estrange* to lead his men through a narrow pass, where there was, only room for a single soldier at a time. He afterwards brought up two troops of the 15th Dragoons, and two of the Cheshire Yeomanry. When the Yeomanry and Constables approached the hustings, I saw stones and brick-bats flying in all directions. I saw what appeared to me to be general resistance. In short, when *Colonel L'Estrange* arrived at the Magistrates' house, with the 15th and Cheshire Yeomanry, I perceived that Manchester Yeomanry to be completely beaten. The crowd closed the moment the Yeomanry entered; and when *Col. L'Estrange* arrived, and asked what was to be done, so convinced was I of their perilous situation, that I exclaimed, "Good God, Sir, don't you see how they are attacking the Yeomanry?" My idea of their danger arose from my seeing sticks flourishing in the air as well as brickbats thrown about. I believe the Yeomanry went about four abreast, but their horses being raw, unused to the field, they appeared to me to be in a certain degree of confusion. They must penetrate through the crowd to get to the hustings, and as fast as they advanced the crowd closed in around them. I saw distinctly from the window where I stood, an immense body of people between the house and the Yeomanry, when they advanced to the hustings. In a few minutes some of the parties were taken into custody. On my saying to *Col. L'Estrange*, "Good God, Sir, don't you see they are attacking the Yeomanry? — disperse the crowd" — he advanced, and the dispersion of the crowd took place. I am not sure whether *Col. L'Estrange* advanced with the whole or only with a part of his force. Having spoken to him, I left the plain. I do not know how many prisoners were brought in.

Cross-examined by *Mr. Barrow*—There were four persons in the coach which brought *Mr. Hunt*; there were a man and a woman on the dickey; the woman waved something that looked like a white pocket handkerchief.

Cross-examined by *Mr. Hunt*. I declare that I have related every thing exactly as I saw it. I could not see distinctly, so as to know you on the hustings; I mean that I could not distinguish your person from that of another. The hustings were, I believe, about 3 or four hundred yards from the window where I stood: but though I saw a map of the place, with the admeasurement, I cannot speak exactly to the fact. I could not distinguish you from another; but I could perceive the persons locked together round the hustings, because they formed a complete cordon, and were bare-headed. I believe solemnly that those people round the hustings, were locked arm-in-arm. I saw them linked, I believe, by the arms. They were as close together as ever they could be, and were distinguished from the rest of the crowd. Though the distance was so great as to prevent me from distinguishing an individual on the elevated hustings, still I, and others, could see the persons beneath locked together. I swear this from my own knowledge and observation, and not from what I was told.

Mr. Hunt—Can you, Sir, standing in that elevated situation, and looking round on the comparatively small number of persons now present, see whether their arms are locked?

(Here a very considerable tumult of approbation was manifested, partly in the galleries, but principally in the lower part of the Court. His lordship strongly commented on such impropriety of conduct, and a gentleman was immediately brought into the witness' box, and was accused of having joined loudly in it. His lordship, after a suitable admonition, committed him to the Castle gaol). The trial then proceeded.

Mr. Hunt You will now look round on the benches, where that crowd is elevated one above another, and say whether you can see what they are doing with their arms?

Witness. —Must I answer that, my Lord?

Justice Bayley. —You may declare whether the opportunity you had of viewing the meeting on the 16th of August was better than that which you have of seeing the people now present.

Witness. —I had a much better opportunity of seeing the persons at the meeting than I have of observing those in the Court.

Mr. Hunt—Could you see the arms of the persons then?

Witness. —I could see them wedged, and I believe, linked together

Mr. Hunt. —Could you see any part of their arms?

Witness. —I could distinctly see the outside men linked

Mr. Hunt—Then, from the appearance of the others, you believe the rest were linked.

Witness—I have no doubt of it. I described before what I will state again, that I saw a body of men ten deep, whom, on my oath, I believe to have been linked arm in arm, and many of whom I had, an opportunity of ascertaining were so linked. There was a space within this circle, which admitted the hustings, and almost some of the mob. I could distinguish the circle from those who were nearer the hustings because the men who composed it were bare-headed. When you came upon the ground, there was immense shouting. I conceived it to be applause, huzzaing. I cannot say whether the people were looking towards the carriage when they manifested this applause. I did not see the people turn towards the special constables, and applaud them; but many circumstances might have occurred while I was not at the window.

Mr. Hunt— speak merely of what took place at a time when you stated that you were at the window. Did any portion of the people, when I was advancing, turn round and give a shout of defiance to the constables?

Witness. —Not that I know of. The shouts of applause that were bestowed on you had great influence with me in signing the warrant, because you brought with you a great accession of strength to the numbers already collected.

Mr. Hunt— You say, depositions were made before me, in the singular number; and a warrant issued by me, in the singular number. Were you Commander-in-Chief of the magistrates on that day?

Witness. —I was president of the Lancashire and Cheshire Magistrates. I did not know that I used the regular number. The warrant was signed by me and others. The first deposition, not against you *Mr. Hunt* but with respect to the alarm of the town, was made about half past or 12 o'clock The last deposition was made immediately after you ascended the hustings; it was made by a person named *Owen*; I could not swear to your person; but it was made after the carriage had drawn up, and the people had alighted. I have not got that warrant; I delivered it into the constable's hands; it is often the case for constable to return a warrant when it has been served; but as there were Magistrates senior to their age and service, it was not returned to me. I do not know the exact terms of that warrant, as I have not seen it since. It was placed in the hands of *Mr. Nadin*, and directed him to arrest *Messrs. Hunt, Johnson, Knight* and *Moorhouse*. *Owen's* affidavit was made before the warrant was granted, and after you had ascended the hustings. When the warrant was made out, I had a very strong idea that its service would be a task of great difficulty. Neither I nor any of my constables, to my knowledge, called on the people to make way for the constables to approach the hustings I was not elected chairman of the Magistrates on this occasion because no one else would undertake the task: the situation was offered to no one else. I was never in the army; I was for a short time in the local militia.

Mr. Hunt. — I believe you saw very little service until that day.

Witness. —I don't call it service. The letters to *Col. L'Estrange* and the commanders of the Manchester Yeomanry were sent at the same time. The reason why the two forces did not arrive at the same time was, because was deemed prudent that, instead of *Col. L'Estrange*. proceeding through a very narrow street, he should advance to the area by a circuitous, but more open, route. I think the warrant granted on the oath of *Owen* set forth that you,

Moorhouse, Johnson, and Knight, were proceeding through the town in a car.

[*Hunt*]. Then, as I was in a barouche, that is not correct.

Justice Bayley. – You cannot make any remark on the warrant, unless it is produced in court.

Witness continued. – I did not say that when you approached, the mob set up a shout of defiance. – I said, when the Yeomanry arrived, the people set up a shout – groaning, hissing and brandishing their sticks. When I stated that I wished to convey my opinion to the jury, that the shout was given in defiance of the military, I also said, and I repeat, that that part of the crowd nearest the military faced towards them. They hooted, hissed, pointed at them, and brandished their sticks. I believe those who were nearest to the Yeomanry rather approached them. Then the cavalry in forming waved their swords, and advanced to the hustings. If I were called on to state the particular pace in which they advanced, I would say it was something of a trot, or rather prancing; the horses were fidgeting in consequence of the noise, and they were not in good order, I saw none of the cavalry galloping; the pace I wish to describe was between walking and trotting. I believe they advanced on the right of the constables; but the line of constables had, I believe, been previously broken. The letter I sent to the officers were written in conjunction with all my brother magistrates. The space the cavalry occupied in their advance was immediately filled up by the people. I cannot say that it as filled up by the constables on the right, and the people on the left, endeavouring to escape. I only know the space was immediately filled up. I think decidedly that the space was filled up for the purpose of closing upon them, and cutting them off.

Justice Bayley - Do you think it was done to pull them off their horses and injure them?

Witness - I certainly do, my Lord. The impression made on my mind, at the time was, that the people closed in order to injure the Yeomanry. There might be some constables mixed with the people: I could not see them. I do not know that the closing was effected by the rushing in of *Nadin* and the constables. I believe the people wanted to close on the cavalry. I will swear that many of the people did not fly when the first body of the cavalry rode in amongst them. They fled when they saw the second body. The moment *Col. L'Estrange* advanced with his squadron, the general flight, according to my belief, took place. I saw very few children in the crowd. I cannot undertake to swear that I saw one. There were a good many women undoubtedly. I heard the women particularly noisy in hooting and hissing the cavalry when they first appeared. When the Yeomanry advanced to the hustings, I saw bricks and stones flying. I have not stated that they were levelled at the yeomanry, nor can I swear it I wish to convey to the jury that those' stones were thrown in defiance of the military. I saw them attacked, and under that impression, I desired *Col. L'Estrange* to advance. I said, For God's sake, see how they are attacking the Yeomanry—save them, or Words to that effect. There was not time for me to consult my brother magistrates as to sending in more military but they were with me in the window, and I should certainly conceive they heard me. I did not take the responsibility upon myself. They, at that moment, were expressing fears themselves.

Mr. Hunt—What fears? Fears that the people would hurt the Yeomanry or the Yeomanry destroy the people?

Witness. —I have answered that. They saw the perilous situation in which the Yeomanry were placed; I do not recollect how many of the magistrates were with me. -Some of them endeavoured to get into the crowd, but without effect. I and my brother magistrate, *Mr. Tatton*, tried get into the crowd but were repulsed. That was after the first body of cavalry had arrived, and proceeded with the constables towards the hustings. The attempt was made before the dispersion, and subsequent to the advance of the cavalry. Neither I nor any of my brother magistrates had attempted to persuade the people to disperse. I saw some of the parties march into the field in beautiful order.

Mr. Hunt— And this thing, which was so beautiful, created alarm in your tender heart?

Witness. —That body which marched so beautifully, did create great alarm in the town. Several of these persons had large sticks, I won't say shouldered like muskets, but they had them up to their shoulder. This applied principally to the party that entered from Mosley street, The others I could not see.

Mr. Hunt- Why did you leave the window?

Witness. —Because I gave my orders to *Col. L'Estrange*.

Mr. Hunt—Was the carnage too horrible to look at?

Witness. —I would rather not see any advance of the military.

Mr. Hunt—Then you gave orders for that which you had not courage to witness.

Witness. —I gave orders to *Col. L'Estrange* to advance to the support of the Yeomanry;

I never thought it would be necessary to disperse them violently, as I thought they would disperse on the apprehension of those named in the warrant; and I will add, that we had no previous intention whatever of dispersing the crowd. I witnessed none of the scenes that took place after. I went downstairs just as *Mr. Hunt* was brought in prisoner. I did not see any of the killed; I believe I did see one man wounded, who was brought into *Buxton's* house, but I would rather not swear it, I saw none at the time, but I have some faint recollection of having seen a wounded person—a woman carried in a chair—two or three hours after I saw a woman brought into *Buxton's* house in a faint state, but not wounded, as I can recollect. I did see one woman in a faint state, advanced in pregnancy, and blood flowing from her bosom. I think that is the woman to whom I alluded. I do not recollect having had a woman in a fainting state pointed out to me, and a person asking for a little water for her. I was busy looking at you, Sir (to *Hunt*). I do not recollect having said to *Col. L'Estrange*, in *Buxton's* house, "*There, Sir, is your prisoner; march him off to the New Bailey. I commit him to your care.*" I do not believe I did. I do not recollect some person pointing out to me the danger which there would be in sending you (*Mr. Hunt*) among the yeomanry and constables ("who had been already attacking me," added *Mr. Hunt*). I wished to send you in a coach. I did not think it safe to send you among the crowd. I had heard that *Mr. Hunt* had been struck at, but I will not swear it."

By *Mr. Scarlett* - I and another magistrate, (*Mr. Tatton*) attempted to force our way into the crowd, but could not effect it. We had our horses ready saddled, to have ridden in if it were possible, and then we attempted it on foot, but could not succeed. I positively swear that we had no previous intention of dispersing the crowd; or, if other magistrates had such intention, it was not known to me. Our first thought of dispersing the crowd was when we found the yeomanry in danger. We found it absolutely impossible to execute the warrant by the aid of the police alone. We conceived at first that *Mr. Hunt* was not sufficiently identified with the multitude, till we had depositions to the active part he was taking in the meeting. Our reason for ordering the execution of the warrant was, that from the information we had received and our own observation, we considered the town in imminent danger from the crowd, and that the men named were the leaders. I think I saw one man brought into *Buxton's* house wounded.

By the Court. —I have acted as a magistrate for nearly nine or ten years. I have acted as such since I came of age. I do not live at Manchester; I live at *Hulton*, twelve miles from it. There were ten magistrates present. The magistrates of Cheshire and Lancashire were called on to act together on this occasion. Nothing but a conviction of the existence of imminent danger could have induced me to order *Col. L'Estrange* to do what he did. I think that I ought to have been struck out of the commission if I had acted otherwise. I should not have discharged my duty if I had not done so. If the constables had not informed me that it would be impossible to execute the warrant, I should not have ordered the Manchester Yeomanry to advance.

By the Court, at the request of *Mr. Hunt*—"Had you heard that a warrant had, under similar circumstances, been peaceably executed at a large meeting in *Smithfield*?"

Mr. Hulton. —I certainly had, and this was one reason which induced me, when I had consented to sign the warrant, to order its execution at the meeting, and, my Lord, I beg to add, that I also wished the public should know that it was the leaders of these proceedings, and not the people, who were objectionable. I never heard till this moment, that *Mr. Hunt* had, on the Saturday preceding the 16th, offered to surrender himself, if there was a warrant against him. I had heard that *Mr. Hunt* had called and asked whether they had a warrant against him, but not more.

By *Mr. Barrow*. —I never gave it a thought whether the warrant was to operate only on those who were on the hustings. It was against *Hunt* and others.

By the Court. —I could judge by the motion of a large body, whether they had their arms locked, without actually seeing their arms.

Here the gentleman's examination closed; and *Justice Bayley* observing to the jury that they must now be fatigued, he would have the Court adjourned to Monday.