

Name: John Lees (no relation to dead man Lees)

Occupation: Pattern-drawer

Home: Cheatham

Date: 9 October 1819

Source: Lees Inquest 562 – 565

Summary: Testifies detailing Yeomanry cutting at people with their sabres and of his own wounding by Captain Birley. Coroner is unhappy with evidence because it does not directly relate to the death of John Lees (subject of this Inquest).

Done by: CW

JOHN LEES examined by the CORONER.

Q. Your name is John Lees?

A. Yes.

Q. Of where?

A. Of Cheatham.

Q. What are you by business?

A. I am a pattern-drawer.

The WITNESS sworn, and the Examination resumed by the CORONER.

Q. What do you know respecting the death of John Lees?

A. I went to the field on the 16th of August; and I went up to the hustings, and I was there before Mr. Hunt came to the field, and I was there when he got on the hustings, and all was peaceable and quiet there.

The CORONER.—We have had enough of that before. I shan't examine you any more.

Mr. HARMER.—Then, Sir, I will.

The WITNESS examined by Mr. HARMER.

Q. What do you know as to any one being struck near the hustings?

A. But I say, that all the people were quite quiet and peaceable.

The CORONER.—Will you hold your tongue, Sir? I have told you, that we have had enough of that.

The Examination of the WITNESS resumed by Mr. HARMER.

Q. Now listen to me. Were you standing within ten yards of the hustings?

A. Yes, I was.

Q. Now, while you were so standing within ten yards of the hustings, did you see any person wounded with the swords of the Manchester Yeomanry?

A. Yes.

Q. Whom did you see wounded?

A. Myself.

Q. What, within ten yards of the hustings?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you see any body else wounded that you know?

A. I cannot identify any body else that was wounded but myself. I saw plenty down, and I saw the Manchester Yeomanry dealing it out with their sabres pretty liberally; and it was as much as I could do to take care of myself.

Q. You could not attend to other people, did you say?

A. No. I could not attend to other people's wounds.

Q. After you were wounded, what did you do?

A. The first time I was wounded, I was standing close to the hustings.

Q. I asked you, where you went after you were wounded?

A. I went away, but slowly; because the people could not get away for the crowd, if they were ever so inclined to go.

Q. Did you as soon as you could, go right away?

A. I went to the corner of Windmill Street, coming down to Deansgate.

Q. The corner next Deansgate?

A. Yes. And there three of them made an attack on me.

The CORONER.—I won't admit that; it is not evidence.

Mr. HARMER.—I submit Sir, that it is evidence. I say, it is one continued attack upon this witness; and when Mr. Ashworth produced a witness, named Booth, to prove that he was three times attacked, each of them at a considerable distance from the field, I objected to it; but Mr. Ashworth said, that the three attacks were all a continuation of one and the same attack, and then you suffered that witness to give evidence of what had happened to him at a distance of three hundred yards from the hustings.

The CORONER.—That was not evidence to accuse any particular individuals; but it was merely evidence to shew the disposition of the Meeting.

Mr. HARMER.—You took it down, Sir. Besides, this is evidence to shew the disposition of the Yeomanry.

The CORONER.—You, Mr. Harmer, called witnesses to shew the disposition of the Yeomanry; and I said, that unless it was contradicted, it would stand as it was; but if it was contradicted by a greater number of witnesses, I said, I would allow you to call witnesses to contradict them again. As far as numbers go, the witnesses are materially in your favour. But this is no testimony as to the death of John Lees; and therefore I cannot receive it.

Mr. HARMER.—I am going to see, Sir, whether it applies to the death of John Lees, or not.

The Examination of the WITNESS resumed by Mr. HARMER.

A. How long did you remain there?

I was wounded by Mr. Birley.

Mr. BARROW—You were told, that was not evidence.

The CORONER.—Why will you give such things in evidence, when you are told such things are not evidence? It shews a very bad disposition.

A. It does not shew any such thing.

The Examination of the WITNESS resumed by Mr. HARMER.

Q. Now attend to me, and answer my questions. How long did you stand there?

A. I stood there about five or ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour. I can't exactly say which. I had no watch with me; and if I had, I had not time to look at it.

The CORONER.—I must now examine him.

The WITNESS examined by CORONER.

Q. After that, what did you do?

A. Three of the Yeomanry rode up to me.

Q. I did not ask you about the Yeomanry. I ask you, what did you do?

A. They began cutting at me, and I fell down to save myself; and after they had gone, I picked myself up, and went home.

Q. I ask you, what you did after that?

A. I went home, after I saw what was going on, and when I perceived that they were dealing it out every where with their sabres.

Q. After you went home, did you return any more to the ground?

A. No, I did not.

The WITNESS examined by Mr. HARMER.

Q. Were you cut within ten yards of the hustings?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you identify the person who cut you?

A. Yes; it was Captain Birley.

Q. Was he with several other persons using their swords?

A. Yes.

Q. What number of them can you identify?

A. The Trumpeter Grimshaw, and Captain Birley, in the hole.

Q. Were they at the hustings at the same time, and using their swords on the people?

A. Yes, they were at the time I was cut.

Q. What do you mean by the "hole."

A. The hollow down in the bottom here (*pointing out the spot on the plan, near which the hustings stood, and which was the west part of the field.*)

[During the preceding examination Mr. Ashworth again left the room.]

The WITNESS cross-examined by Mr. BARROW.

Q. Do you know the names of any of the persons whom they individually cut?

A. The names of the people that they cut.

Q. Yes.

A. I don't know the names of any of them that they cut, but I saw them all lying down, all about.

Q. Have you any reason to believe that you saw, at or about the hustings, a man of the name of John Lees, wounded?

A. Yes; mine is that name.

Q. But you don't live in Oldham, you know.

A. No.

Q. Then I ask you, whether you saw a man named John Lees, concerning whose death we are now assembled to inquire, cut down, at or near the hustings?

A. I don't know the man; but he might have been my right-hand man who was cut down, for aught I know.

Q. But you don't know that the person, concerning the cause of whose death we are now assembled to inquire, was cut down near the hustings?

A. No, I do not; and I don't come to swear to that; but he might as well be cut down there, as me.

Q. Or he might as well not, you know?

A. I don't know for that.

The WITNESS examined by the CORONER.

Q. Do you mean to say, that you saw these persons inflict a wound on any persons near the hustings?

A. Yes; Captain Birley wounded me.

Q. You know that is not what I mean. Did you see them wound any other persons? and I will have an answer to my question.

A. Well, and I shall give you a correct one, as far as I know; They were all strangers about me; and I cannot swear to them being personally cut.

Q. You are cautious. Will you swear that there was any mischief done to them?

A. Yes; they did mischief to them.

Q. What mischief did they do?

A. Why, they might inflict wounds on them; I saw them cutting at them. To be sure they might cut their hats, or miss their stroke for what I know.

The CORONER.—Then confine yourself to the truth.

A. I do.

The CORONER.—If you were not to talk so fast, you would have more credit paid to you. You may now go.

[The witness retired.]