

Name: Samuel Morton

Occupation: Fustian manufacturer

Home: Manchester – Near St. Michael's Church

Date: 16th March 1820

Source: Trial of Henry Hunt, 17-19

Summary: Saw *Hunt* inciting the meeting on 9th August 1819. Saw the meeting of the 16th from Withy Grove. Saw flags, banners etc. 'He thought there would be a disturbance and a fight; there was no fighting, but something that he did not like.'

Done by: RH

Samuel Morton examined by *Mr. Cross* — I lived near St. Michael's Church, at Manchester, on the 9th of August; saw a crowd near my house that day; there was a great noise that *Johnson*, *Hunt*, and *Moorhouse*, were coming; they came on a large piece of ground near the Church, opposite the sign of the Church public-house. *Hunt* and *Johnson* were in a gig, and *Sir C. Wolseley* and some others in a chaise. There was a large collection of people, about 1. *Mr. Hunt* got on his legs, and addressed the people. Among other things he began making allusion to the Manchester Magistrates: he compared them to nine tailors on a shop board. This I supposed was for forbidding the meeting, which he (*Hunt*) said was a legal one. He encouraged them to be firm and come forward, and no doubt they would prosper.

Mr. Hunt — Will your Lordship tell the witness to say how I encouraged them?

Justice Bayley — You will by-and-by, *Mr. Hunt* set all that right by your own examination.

Witness went on. He advised the people to be firm. He (witness) saw several placards forbidding the meeting. They were up in several parts of the town. They were signed by nine persons, five of whom he knew to be Magistrate. There was a great multitude of people, and a noise. He could not say that *Hunt* made any particular allusion to those papers; but he told them there would be a meeting on the 16th, and to come forward then. There was a loud huzza, and cries of "We will, we will." *Hunt* waved his white hat; *Johnson* was by *Hunt's* side; he waved his hand a little. It continued from half an hour to three quarters. They then went off to *Johnson's*. There were many thousand moving about on Monday the 16th. He saw them from Withy grove. He saw *Hunt*, *Johnson* and others, he believed, in a carriage. There were people after them five or six abreast. They kept step very well like soldiers. He could not tell the numbers, but it was nearly half an hour before they passed, and they continued moving all that time. They came either from the Oldham or the Rochdale road. He heard a bugle blow, which appeared as a signal for their halting. They halted during the half hour he mentioned. They had a black flag with 'Liberty or Death' These were the words, or similar.

'No Corn Laws' was inscribed upon another.

Mr. Hunt here wished for the production of the flags, as their production would be the best evidence. It appeared they were taken. The *Judge* said, there was only evidence as to two being taken. The Witness continued. —There were several other flags with caps of liberty at top. One had "*Hunt* and Liberty," on it. He saw them come opposite to *Mr. Murray's* house. *Murray* is a constable. *Murray* was very ill at that time, and in his bed-room. They hissed opposite the house. They also shouted out, that they wanted some 'White Moss Humbugs.' They had halted at that time. The carriage had gone on, and was not then in sight. The town was very tumultuous, and, for myself, I was alarmed. I lived in the town forty years, and never saw anything so tumultuous there before. Public business did not go on as usual. I did nothing. I was afraid. There were so many running up and down, it was hardly safe. I am a manufacturer, and could not certainly attend to my own business.

Cross-examined by *Mr. Barrow* —He did not mean to say that *Moorhouse* was in the carriage on that day.

Cross-examined by *Mr. Holt*. —Did not know *Saxton* (*Saxton* was here pointed out to him, and witness said he was a stranger to him). He did not see him on the 9th or 16th.

Cross-examined by *Mr. Hunt*—I am a fustian manufacturer. The people were running up and down in the streets. This was after the procession. I carry on business at my own house. It was not in the street where the crowds were, I was going about my business when I saw the people at Withy Grove. I was alarmed. I did not go home to my own business, but went on a little further, to the corner of Hanging Ditch. This was about a stone's throw from Withy-grove. I

was alarmed at the black flag. I thought they were going to level something. I am a married man, and have a wife and seven children; I took care where they were; they were at the house; there were none of them at 'Peterloo', as you call it. I depend on what they told me. I never went to the meeting. My lad was at his work in High-street. The reason why witness did not go home to his family was, that he wished to see the crowd pass. He saw the black flag. He thought there would be a disturbance and a fight; there was no fighting, but something that he did not like. There was a trumpet blowing, and they generally fight after blowing the trumpet. His meaning of a riotous meeting was, a number of people racketing together. There were several weavers came up to *Hunt* without coats. There were many women and grown up girls; —could not say whether the women joined in the march; could not say whether the women walked arm in arm with the men; —could not say whether they were alarmed. He saw several whom he knew at the procession on the 16th. He went home about one o'clock to his dinner, though he was alarmed. He was as much afraid after dinner as before.

Mr. Hunt—If you had been at home attending your business, you would not have seen this procession.

Witness. —Sir, if you had continued in London, there would have been no-one there.

Cross-examination continued. —I have been in York since Sunday. I saw the processions of the Candidates in the city. I saw the bands of music and the flags, but was not afraid. There was no black flag there. My opinion of the difference between the two meetings (that recently at the election, and the one at Manchester) is, that the one looked like war and disturbance, and the other like merriment and rejoicing. (Some approbation was here manifested, which *Justice Bayley* strongly condemned). My reason for making this difference is, that I had heard of the intended meeting at Manchester, and seeing the people coming, I was afraid; there were some of the people in the York procession drunk. The sober procession looked more like war than the drunken one. I'd not see a flag with a bloody pike on it at York; nor a flag with the motto, 'We will conquer our enemies.' Witness could not say whether the allusion to the conduct of the Magistrates at Manchester did not arise from the wording of their notice.

Re-examined by *Mr. Johnson*. —There are many men in Manchester greater levellers than I am. I have been in Lancaster gaol. I have not, since I came out, paid any of my old debts; I have paid all those debts I have contracted since that period; I was discharged under the Insolvent Act. I can fight a little at times; I never fought with *Mr. Heatley*, for asking rent from me. If it ever comes in my power I intend to pay my debts. I have been unfortunate, and I gave up all my property to my creditors. It is two years ago, since I took the benefit of the Act.