

Robert Mutrie's account, in Philip Lawson, "Reassessing Peterloo", *History Today* March 1988, and in Lawson, 'Peterloo: A Constable's Eye-View Reassessed', *Manchester Region History Review* III.i (1989), 39-41 (but Lawson badly misinterprets Mutrie's account.)

From Bute Mss. 373, Mountstuart, Scotland. Recipient is Mutrie's brother-in-law Archibald Moore, factor to Marquess of Bute in Scotland. Mutrie also in JLI and HO papers.

Manchester  
Thursday evening  
too late for post

My Dear Sir,

...It was a dreadful day Monday – I was at my post with them keeping an open passage betwixt the House where the magistrate was stationed and the Hustings from which the Great Men addressed the people – In witnessing such a multitude of poor deluded people coming on the green in regular military order with their monstrous clubs over their shoulders I felt much for them, for I was well aware that if not dispersed by the Military from that green, then, when dispersed of their own accord they would end their days work by murder and expire at night on the way home when perhaps many more lives would have been lost.

As it was, the Yeomanry came on the grounds gave three cheers and charged – not very quick, and using only the backs of their sabres – the constables were close behind them when the 15<sup>th</sup> Dragoons made their appearance and without previous knowledge of what was done they mistook us constables with our batons for the Reformers with pistols (I suppose) for in one moment upwards of 100 of us are laid on our backs – I was down but got up by laying hold a horses rein without being hurt – I was afterwards struck on the head with a sabre of the 15<sup>th</sup> and then by the Cheshire troop. Fortunately neither of them hurt me very much – I got to the hustings and in the scuffle for plunder I got hold of a very grand cap of liberty from one of the standards – I thought I could have secured this in my pocket, but unluckily it was red cloth lined with Tin so I could not squeeze it together.

After the rough usage I had received I did not much like the idea of trusting myself on foot amongst the soldiers again so I ordered my charger whose back I never left from 2 o'clock afternoon till 3 o'clock next morning. – being employed riding up and down the streets all the time with Mr. Norris the Magistrate and the Military – whereupon the Military went and constable Mr. [illeg.] with them – I got one troop of the 15<sup>th</sup> to attend with some foot soldiers – if you look at your map you will find that the most notorious part of the Town New Cross is in your neighbourhood – well on this delightful station I took my place – we charged and cleared the streets 50 times without using either swords or guns, but all to no purpose for the people came out again as soon as we retreated to the Cross.

The officer, Capt. Booth who commanded the troop of the 15<sup>th</sup> after we had been exposed to the pelting of stones for an hour or two got into the most furious passion and swore to Mr. Norris if he did not immediately read the riot act he would order his men to their quarters.

Mr. Norris was very averse that we should commence hostilities and with great reluctance gave his consent that it should be read. The moment it was read Capt. B. ordered the Infantry officer[s] to form a hollow square in the centre of the Cross, we all took shelter in the square when the word was given to fire in all directions – the square then opened and the horse charged every way upon the crowd – my mare grew quite mad and carried me over the back of many a poor Devil. – two people were shot in the first charge just opposite my room window. You may be sure I was (as well as my Mare) very thankful to get relieved at 3 o'clock in the morning. I got very little sleep all that week, as being in the very heart of the disturbances, I was liable to be called on every hour in the night. Hunt has got out on bail and returned here from Lancaster the night before last – he has taken up his residence at his friend Mr. Johnston's cottage. I think he will not venture to call another meeting but I am much afraid we shall have more disturbances in the neighbourhood – there is a very bad disposition yet left

in the people which nothing but blood will satisfy – they continue to meet in the neighbourhood for Military Exercise – this does not look like peace.