**Name**: Thomas Preston

**Occupation**: Gentleman of property

**Home**: Ardwick

**Date**: April 5th 1822

**Source**: Redford v Birley 139-144

**Summary**: Testifies to seeing the cavalry coming onto the field in a somewhat disorganised fashion and that they attacked the people as they tried to escape past the Quaker Meeting House. Cannot however swear that was Manchester Yeomanry rather than a different cavalry unit.

**Done by**: RM

*Mr. Thomas Preston sworn: examined by Mr. Blackburne*.

Q. You, I believe, live in Manchester?

A. In Ardwick.

Q. Did you live there in 1819?

A. Yes; I lived there in 1819.

Q. Were you, on the 16th. August, in St. Peter's Field?

A. I was there before Mr. Hunt arrived, and remained there; and left the ground about the time Mr. Hunt was about to ascend the hustings.

Q. Were the various parties assembled about the hustings before you left the ground; did you see a great number of people?

A. Of course.

Q. I want to know what was the conduct and demeanour of these people, as far as it came under your observation?

A. It struck me as remarkably peaceable, and decorous.

Q. Did you remain there till it assumed any other character?

A. I have already said, I left the ground about the time Mr. Hunt ascended the hustings.

Q. Did you come back?

A. I returned back again; and, on returning, was passed by a troop of Cavalry.

Q. On returning, you say you was passed by a troop of Cavalry, what Cavalry?

A. I was not aware, at the time, what regiment it was.

A. Are you aware now?

A. Of course; I am now aware.

Q. Have the goodness to tell us?

A. I was told at the time, it was the Manchester Yeomanry.

Q. Where did you meet with them?

A. I believe it was in Cooper-street.

Q. Were they going towards St. Peter's Field?

A. Yes; at a sharp trot.

Q. Did you then go back again on the field?

A. I remained stationary; I saw them rush, in a broken and irregular line, towards the hustings.

Q. Where was you standing when you saw them?

A. I had moved a little to the left, so as to be somewhat nearer St. Peter's Church.

Q. Did you observe that they did any thing in their way?

A. I observed that they jolted in their seats, as if their horses were proceeding with an unsteady motion.

Q. Did you see them get up to the hustings?

A. I am not sure that I did.

Q. How far was you from St. Peter's Field, at the time when you saw this?

A. I am not aware of the distance.

Q. You can tell us nearly; was you one hundred yards or five yards?

A. Give me the map, and I will point it out.

(The witness pointed it out, and the map was then handed to the Jury.)

Q, Were there any houses between the place where you stood and St. Peter's Field, so as to intercept your view?

A. From the hustings—no.

Q. Did you afterwards see the Cavalry any where near the Quakers' meeting-house?

A. I saw some cavalry.

Q. How long after the time you saw them advancing to the hustings?

A. I should say, in common language, almost immediately; I cannot be asked to measure time.

Q. Did you observe what was done by them when they got there?

A. I saw them striking the people.

Q. Were there many or few people about there?

A. Where I stood, there were but few.

Q. Was it at this Quakers' meeting-house you saw the Cavalry?

A. Vast numbers.

Q. What were they doing?

A. It was towards the corner of the garden wall, that I first saw them assaulting the people.

Q. Was you or the Cavalry at the end of the wall?

A. The Cavalry.

Q. You say it was first by Cooper's garden wall; tell us what you saw there?

A. I saw them striking the people.

Q. What were the people doing?

A. The people were endeavouring to escape.

Q. That was before you observed them by the Quakers' meeting-house?

A. Immediately after.

Q. By the Quakers' school?

A. By the Quakers' school.

Q. Well?

A. I then got into a house that was behind me.

Q. When you got into this house behind you, what did you see?

A. I then saw some Cavalry dashing by the steps.

*Mr. Justice Holroyd*.—Were you in Cooper-street then?

A. No, my Lord.

Q. Where?

A. In a house near to the Quakers' chapel; I am not sure that was the name of the street; it was a house at this pile of buildings, (pointing to the map).

*Mr. Justice Holroyd*, — That is further from the field than Peter-street?

A. Just up to the Quakers' meeting-house; not in the main body of the field.

Q. Tell us then what you saw?

A. I saw vast numbers of fugitives, and Cavalry assaulting them, striking them with their sabres.

Q. Did you see anything more?

A. I saw the ground cleared, and the military drawn up in front of Windmill-street, in the line of Mr. Buxton's houses, and down Peter-street; I should suppose, in a line parallel with Mr. Buxton's houses.

Q. At the time when you saw this, did you see any resistance at all offered by the people to them?

A. None whatever.

Q. Did you see any thing more of the transaction?

A. Of course not; the meeting was then dispersed.

Q. When you first came on the ground, and saw this great number of people, did it create any alarm or terror in your mind?

A. No, certainly; it did not.

Q. Had you seen any of the parties come on to the field or not?

A. Yes.

Q. You had seen some?

A. I had seen them passing the streets.

Q. Were they then doing it in such a manner as to create terror and alarm to you?

A. No.

Q. Do you live with your father at Ardwick?

A. I live with my uncle.

Q. Is he a person of considerable property?

A. He is a man of property.

Q. How far is this place from the field?

A. A mile and a half, perhaps, or a mile.

*Cross-examined by Mr. Serjeant Hullock*.

Q. What led you to the field?

A. I believe that which led many others to go, mere curiosity.

Q. Had you been at any other meeting of a similar description from the same motive?

A. Yes; I believe I was on the ground when they held what was called “the Blanket Meeting”.

Q. From mere curiosity, I presume; a man of your fortune would not carry your blanket with you?

A. No.

Q. This was a better sort of meeting than that?

A. Rather larger.

Q. How many thousand men?

A. I cannot guess.

Q. Whereabouts?

A. I cannot estimate.

Q. Do you think eighty thousand?

A. I have answered your question; I cannot compute the numbers.

Q. In your judgment, do you think it could be less than eighty thousand, including men, women, and children; all sorts and sizes?

A. It was a large space they occupied.

Q. Do you know how many people can be put on a square yard?

A. No.

Q. You remember the blanket meeting, and you may remember the number of which it was composed; but I ask you, did you ever see so large an assembly as this before?

A. No.

Q. If such a number could be got together, you, would go to see it, out of curiosity?

A. I think not; I have had quite enough.

Q. Was you ever at a meeting in London?

A. Never; I am not in the habit of attending political meetings.

Q. What was this meeting?

A. I do not attend political meetings.

Q. Perhaps, if you stay, you will find that you have attended a political meeting; what do you call the blanket meeting?

A. A most absurd meeting, for a most absurd object.

Q. But it; was, a political meeting; they were going to reform the Government; but you felt no alarm?

A. No.

Q. I mean, for the people?

A. No.

Q. Do you live with your uncle as a gentleman?

A. I am of no business, no profession.

Q. How is it we had the pleasure of seeing you here?

A. My acquaintances knew I was there.

Q. Was you applied to by Mr. Hayward, of Took's Court?

A. I was subpoenaed by Mr. Hayward.

Q. At Manchester?

A. At Ardwick.

Q. Had you communicated to him that you could communicate matters of importance; how did he find you out—how did he happen to get at you?

A. I do not quite understand your question.

Q. Mr. Hayward subpoenaed you, you say?

A. Yes.

Q. Himself?

A. Himself.

Q. Had you any intercourse with him by letters on the subject?

A. Never.

Q. Did you know that you was about to be subpoenaed, before you saw the subpoena?

A. I was in hopes I should not have been subpoenaed; I objected to going.

Q. Then the first intimation you had, was the subpoena itself?

A. Yes; and a friend meeting me in the street, who said he was afraid they would subpoena me.

Q. And you became afraid too. You said you saw some Cavalry in Cooper-street?

A. I was not aware, at the time, that they were the Manchester Yeomanry.

Q. And you cannot know now?

A. I cannot swear that they were the Manchester Yeomanry Cavalry; but I have heard of it.

Q. Now that is exactly my case; you know there are other Cavalry besides the Manchester Yeomanry Cavalry?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you see Mr. Hulme, one of the Yeomanry Cavalry, carried off in, apparently, a lifeless state?

A. I am not aware of it; I cannot swear I did not; I have no recollection of it.

Q. You do not know whether that event took place, previous to the time of which you have been speaking?

A. I am not aware of it: I am not very well; it is well known to all my friends in Court, that I have not been well for some time.