**Name**: Thomas Sharp

**Occupation**: Iron merchant and former boroughreeve and special constable of Manchester (acted as special constable on August 16th, 1819)

**Home**: Rusholme

**Date**: April 9, 1822

**Source**: Redford v Birley, 497 - 504

**Summary**: Sufficiently alarmed by appearance of meeting to make provision to close his warehouse (for fear the iron within would be used as a weapon), to ensure his daughters were not at school in Manchester, and to arm himself and his brother with pistols (which he claims not to have fired). Believed from comments of crowd members that the intention was to take over property and reverse social order. Did not see the Yeomanry wound anyone (although was stunned by for some time) but saw crowd throw stones and hit soldiers with sticks.

**Done by**: RM

*Thomas Sharp, sworn: examined by Mr. Serjeant Hullock.*

Q. You are an iron-merchant, Mr. Sharp, and I believe have been the boroughreeve of Manchester?

A. I have.

Q. And have acted as one of the chief constables?

A. No; not as chief constable. I have repeatedly acted as special constable; I was so on the 16th. August.

Q. Where did you live in August, 1819?

A. In a village called Rusholme, about two miles from Manchester?

Q. You had a house also at Manchester?

A. I had.

Q. Was you apprized of the state of the public mind before the 16th.?

A. I was.

Q. Had you any opportunities of seeing the different parties proceeding into the town of Manchester towards Peter's Field?

A. I had, and took particular pains to make my observations for reasons of my own.

Q. What was the result of your observations?

A. The result was, in fact, I was perfectly well convinced, that a general expectation prevailed among the people who were coming to the meeting, that some very important event would occur in the course of the day: and that an opportunity for the plunder of the town, and a scramble for property, would be afforded. That was the decided impression on my mind early in the morning.

Q. Did you observe whether any of the persons had sticks?

A. I did. I beg to state that my observations applied to straggling parties, coming early in the morning. I had particular reasons for mixing among them; my observations were made in the principal streets approaching the area of Peter's Field; that is, Mosley-street and Piccadilly, which you will find in the map are the main approaches from Stockport, Oldham, and the towns in the neighbourhood of Oldham and Middleton. I devoted about an hour and an half, from eight in the morning till half-past nine, in walking along Mosley-street and Piccadilly, observing the demeanour of the people as they came into the town, and listening to a variety of expressions, and observing small parties.

Q. Well?

A. A great proportion of them had sticks of various dimensions; some were evidently saplings, or entire plants of themselves, and had recently been cut or taken up; they were in the hands of the younger and more athletic proportion of the people—a circumstance I noticed. I also heard a variety of expressions used, which have been borne testimony to in this Court, and which created the impression on my mind which I have stated, that they expected some great event—some change.

Q. Do you remember any particular expression that has not yet been adverted to?

A. I particularly remember two; one being addressed to myself; that was the second. It arose out of one that had just been made and at which I smiled.

Q. State the first?

A. I was standing on the steps of the Portico newsroom, in Mosley-street, and one of the persons in a party of five or six, observed that he should like to go in there; or used that or some expression like it.

Q. Go in, do you mean, to see it?

A. He should like to go in and see the inside. He used an expression to that effect. The reply of one or two of his companions was, if he would have a little patience, he might do so before night; and many another building, or many another house.

Q. Was that what excited a smile?

A. I stood a few yards from them, and I met a gentleman to whom I stated the circumstance, and we mutually smiled.

Q. Was any observation made in consequence?

A. Immediately, by another of the party, I was addressed is this way; we had had our way long enough, it would be their turn before night.

Q. You heard several other expressions?

A. A very great number.

Q. Were they of a similar tendency, and likely to excite apprehensions of the same nature as those you have alluded to?

A. Exactly.

Q. Did you take any precaution in respect of your personal safety?

A. With respect to my personal safety, I certainly went to my house in town, and loaded a brace of pistols. With respect to the safety of my property, I proceeded to my office in Market street which is one of the principal streets in the town. I stated to my confidential clerk ---

Q. You gave some orders to close your warehouse?

A. I was only going to assign a reason.

Q. You desired him to close the warehouse?

A. In case of disturbance in the street, to close the warehouse. This was sometime before ten.

Q. Were there any things in the warehouse which might have been used by the mob?

A. In an offensive manner; yes, a great number.

Q. Bars of iron?

A. A great number of short bars of iron, very much in the form of a straight sword blade. I was the more anxious that the warehouse should be closed on that account, for I had once before ---

Q. That was the reason for giving these directions; you did so in order to prevent these articles from falling into the hands of the-mob?

A. Yes.

Q. I believe you had two daughters at school at Manchester?

A. I had.

Q. Were they in the habits of coming from your house in the morning?

*Mr. Justice Holroyd*.—What can that have to do with this cause?

*Mr. Serjeant Hullock*.—Your Lordship will find it has to do with it; they came from a distance; from the witness's house in Rusholme to Princess-street.

*Witness*.—They did.

Q. Did the appearance of things induce you to take any steps concerning them?

A. It did.

Q. Did you send to the school for them?

A. I went to the school myself, from the field.

Q. Did you go for the purpose of removing them from the apprehended danger?

A. I did.

Q. Your object, I believe, was anticipated?

A. It was; their mother had not sent them; she had left them at a relation's in Oxford-street.

Q. I do not ask you as to the particular circumstances that occurred on the march to the field, but I will ask you, did you sign the declaration which was made before the Magistrates?

A. I did.

Q. Did you sign it from a feeling of apprehension for the safety of the town?

A. I did, most assuredly.

Q. Did you see the Yeomanry come on the ground?

A. I did.

Q. And halt and form just before Mr. Buxton's house?

A. On the right.

Q. Did you observe in what manner they were received by the assembly—by the mob?

A. I did, particularly.

Q. Have the goodness to state their manner, and the impression it made on your mind?

A. As soon as I arrived in front of where the Magistrates were, I immediately looked round to the hustings, and I observed that Mr. Hunt was directing the attention of the people round the hustings to the point where the Yeomanry were assembled before Mr. Buxton's house. The whole of the compact body was formed with their backs to Mr. Buxton's house; they faced about towards the Yeomanry, and immediately set up a most tremendous shout, accompanied with hootings and hissings. It was a shout which differed very materially from the cheers that hid been given to the parties on the ground; it appeared to me to be an act of defiance. Immediately, as many of the compact body as I could see, from the situation where I was, commenced linking hands or arms, with their faces towards the Yeomanry; and it appeared to me that they were determined to resist any attempt, to interfere with their proceedings.

Q. Did the Cavalry begin to advance?

A. Very shortly after.

Q. Did you and your brother advance with them?

A. We were on the left of the Cavalry.

Q. Did you, as the Cavalry advanced, observe any thing on the right side of the Cavalry?

A. I did.

Q. As they were penetrating through the crowd?

A. As they approached the compact part of the crowd round the hustings.

Q. What did you perceive?

A. I observed several sticks, on the right of the Cavalry from me, elevated so high above the horses’ backs, that I could distinctly see them; and in the act of striking.

Q. Did that produce any effect on the horses?

A. It occasioned many of the horses suddenly to swerve, and rendered them more unsteady. In consequence, they pressed more on the special constables; and, to avoid being trampled upon, I retreated with my brother to the rear of the Yeomanry Cavalry.

Q. Was you able, from your position then, to observe anything more before the Yeomanry reached the hustings?

A. I never removed my eye from the hustings till the Cavalry surrounded them. I beg to observe here, that in returning to the rear, I did not turn, but pushed my way back, which enabled me to continue my view of the hustings. The moment that the head of the column of the Yeomanry approached the side of the hustings next to Mr. Buxton's house, I observed a brickbat hurled from the high ground along Windmill-street, towards the hustings. A short interval elapsed before the Yeomanry had entirely surrounded the hustings, and at the same moment that was effected, as I supposed, I saw a considerable number of stones and brickbats both; I could distinguish their various forms.

Q. Before that, had you seen any thing take place on the part of the Yeomanry—had they done any thing?

A. I certainly think not; for I watched them most jealously.

Q. You have stated you kept your eye on the spot; in your judgment, if any act of offence had proceeded from the Yeomanry up to that time, must you have seen it?

A. Certainly, I think I must. I watched them most attentively, and had very good reason for doing so. May I state what I think they did as to the waving their swords?

*Mr. Serjeant Hullock*.—State any thing you saw.

*Witness*.—As they approached the compact body, they waved their swords over their heads, with a view of intimidating them, and inducing them to make way; but distinctly over their helmets.

Q. Did the Yeomanry, at the time they reached the hustings, experience a serious resistance?

A. I considered, a serious resistance.

Q. Did you afterwards see the Dragoons come on the field?

A. Yes; I saw the 15th. Hussars come on the field, and the Cheshire Yeomanry; the 15th had advanced.

Q. Now at the time the 15th. and the Cheshire Yeomanry came on the ground, was that portion of the Manchester Yeomanry who had advanced up to the hustings, in jeopardy and danger?

A. I think, very considerable danger.

Q. In your judgment, would they have been overwhelmed if they did not receive the assistance they did receive from the Dragoons and the Cheshire?

A. I think they must; inevitably.

Q. In your judgment, was the immediate intervention of the Dragoons and Cheshire, necessary for the salvation of the Yeomanry?

A. I thought so. I was very anxious for their arrival some time before they made their appearance.

Q. Was that anxiety occasioned by your fears for the safety of the Manchester Yeomanry?

A. It was. I thought they must be overwhelmed in a very few minutes.

Q. In your judgment, would it have been safe, under all the circumstances, to have attempted the execution of a warrant by the civil power, without the aid of the military?

A. I decidedly think, that to have made such an attempt would have been an act of the greatest possible temerity—perfect madness.

*Cross-examined by Mr. Evans.*

Q. Where were you when you saw all this—how near?

A. When the Yeomanry advanced, I was near the point they halted at.

Q. I mean when you saw the stones thrown?

A. I followed the rear of the Yeomanry as well as I could, and was very near the outskirts of the compact body before the hustings; at the distance of twenty yards from the hustings; not thirty, I am convinced.

Q. What became of your pistols?

A. I gave one to my brother on the field, and had the other in my pocket.

Q. You and your brother had these two loaded pistols on the field. What size might the pistols be?

A. Not the screw barrel; I can scarcely call them pocket-pistols; but they were the side-lock pistols, such as police officers carry.

Q. You made yourself very active in collecting information?

A. For my own satisfaction. I was desirous of proving ——

Q. Be so good, sir, as to answer my question?

A. If your question is directed in a way that requires explanation, I trust I may be permitted to give it. Q. Did you see women?

A. A many—a considerable number.

Q. Did you see any children?

A. I cannot charge my memory with having seen one child there might be: that there were young people, from the age of 12 to 18, I can readily believe; I saw many; but an infant I did not see.

Q. You say your brother and you advanced together—was he from London?

A. He was; on a visit to me.

Q. How near was you to the hustings when the Yeomanry surrounded them?

A. When the head of the column arrived, I was in the act of retreating to the rear; and as the Yeomanry advanced, I followed. At the time they surrounded the hustings, I might have been at the distance I stated, not less than twelve yards, and not more than twenty. I conceived that the compact body of the people occupied from eight to ten yards, and I was very near that body.

Q. Did you see the Manchester Yeomanry wound any persons at the hustings?

A. I did not.

Q. Did you see them wound any persons any where?

A. Not in the course of that day.

Q. Did you see them strike any person?

A. I cannot positively state that. In the course of a minute after Hunt was taken away, I was struck down by the officer, on the left flank, and was stunned for half a minute. The first thing I observed when I came to myself was, that the Manchester Yeomanry were at the other side of the field, near the Quakers' meeting-house. That was the first thing I observed; of course, there must have been an interval while I was stunned.

*Re-examined by Mr. Serjeant Hullock.*

Q. You gave one pistol to your brother; was the pistol you reserved fired?

A. Certainly not.

Q. Was your brother's?

A. Certainly not; my brother was never from my side more than three minutes during the course of the day.