

Name: Simeon Shaw
Occupation: Printer and newspaper reporter
Home: Salford
Date: 29 September 1819
Source: Lees Inquest 106 – 113 (latter part missing), recalled 130-134,
Summary: Saw charge of Yeomanry from Dickenson St, where hemmed in behind 88th infantry, then saw people fleeing and being carried away injured. Recalled for further cross-examination by Mr Ashworth.
Done by: CW

SIMEON SHAW called in, and examined by the CORONER.

Q. What are you, Sir?

A. I am a printer, of Manchester. My residence is in Old Field Road, Salford.

Q. Is that your work? (*pointing out an article in the Morning Chronicle of the 16th of September, to the witness*).*

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know David Wilson?

A. I do not.

Q. Nor William Ashton?

A. I believe I do; and, on recollection, I think I know David Wilson slightly.

The Coroner—Mr. Harmer, have you any evidence to the same effect as this man's?—I think him a partial witness.

Mr. Harmer—I am not acquainted with his evidence: he came here with me this morning in the coach, and in our way, he has been stating what he saw; but as my attention was occupied at the time in reading the cases which I now have with me, to cite to you, if necessary, I have only a very imperfect idea of the facts he narrated to me.

The Witness was now sworn, and further examined by the CORONER.

Q. Did you attend the first sitting of the Inquest at the Duke of York, in this town?

A. I did.

Q. Did you attend the second, on Friday?

A. Yes.

Q. Were you attending here in this room on Saturday last?

A. Yes; but I left the Court when the witnesses were ordered to withdraw.

Q. Did you come in again?

A. Yes; but only to bring in a sandwich to Mr. Harmer.

Q. With whom did you come from Manchester to-day?

A. I came with Mr. Harmer and Mr. Denison, Mr. Finnerty and Mr. Robinson.

Q. Will you tell us what you know respecting the death of John Lees?

A. Am I to state what I know respecting the meeting?

Q. I ask you what you know about John Lees?

A. I did not know him. I saw his body on the day after his death, about half an hour after the Jury had seen it.

Q. What induced you to see him?

A. My motive was curiosity: i did not go to make any particular observation.

The Coroner (*to Mr. Harmer*)—What is this witness to prove; is he to state what he saw at the meeting?

Mr. Harmer—I believe the evidence he is to give, is upon that subject.

Examination of the Witness resumed by the CORONER.

Q. Were you at the meeting, Mr. Shaw, on the 16th of August?

A. Yes.

* This was a certificate of the witness, that the account, as inserted in the *Chronicle*, of what passed with Mr. BATTYE, on the first day of the Inquest, was correct.

Q. How long were you there before Mr. Hunt arrived?

A. About ten minutes after I left the Market-place.

The Coroner—(*addressing a gentleman who was writing in the audience part of the Court*)—Are you a Reporter?

The Reporter—I am, Sir.

The Coroner—For what paper?

The Reporter—You will see by whom I am employed (*handing in a slip of paper*).

The Coroner—Do you promise not to publish the proceedings while they are pending?

The Reporter—I do.

Examination of the Witness resumed by the CORONER.

Q. What did you see in the Market-place?

A. I saw a great number of people, perhaps ten thousand, passing along, with banners.

Q. Where did these people come from?

A. I believe from Royton, Saddleworth, and other places.

Q. What time was this?

A. About a quarter before one o'clock.

Q. Did you notice the inscriptions on the banners?

A. Not particularly; I saw some.

Q. After you had seen this, what then?

A. I went to my business, and returned, on hearing that Mr. Hunt was passing. I saw him in an open carriage.

Q. You saw Mr. Hunt, also, pass through the Market-place?

A. Yes.

Q. Was there any female about the carriage?

A. Yes; there was one on the box with the flag.

Q. Were there no other persons; no other women?

A. There were four persons besides Mr. Hunt in the carriage; but no other female beside the one I have mentioned.

Q. How long was it after the first body passed, before Mr. Hunt came?

A. Perhaps half an hour.

Q. How many accompanied Mr. Hunt?

A. I conceive about fifteen thousand persons.

Q. Go on.

A. I then went to St. Peter's-field, and saw several gentlemen, and heard them

making remarks on the numbers assembled.

Q. Whereabouts were you?

A. I stood near the Quakers' Meeting-house.

Q. What time did Mr. Hunt come?

A. About a quarter past one o'clock he mounted the hustings, and soon afterwards commenced speaking.

Q. Where were you then?

A. Near the house where the Magistrates were looking from. Then I saw an instantaneous movement of the people towards Windmill-street; their attention appeared directed to Dickenson-street.

Q. They were opposite to you, were they?

A. I stood opposite to the Windmill public-house.

Q. Were there any buildings between you and the people?

A. No, Sir; I stood on a line with Booth-street.

Q. I ask you, Sir, did any street intervene between Windmill-hill and Booth-street; between you and the ground. Surely you can tell that

Mr. Harmer—*(to the Coroner)*—Allow me, Sir, to hand a plan of the ground to the witness; it will probably assist him in explaining his situation to you and the Jury.

[The Plan was handed m, and the Witness pointed out where he stood.]

The examination of the Witness resumed by the CORONER.

Q. You say you observed the attention of the people on Windmill-hill directed to Dickenson-street. Do you know what attracted their attention?

A. No, I did not, then; but, as I afterwards found, the 88th regiment were forming into line there; I supposed that to have been the reason of their movement.

Q. What then?

A. I ran towards Dickenson-street, and got behind the infantry. They formed themselves into a crescent, and I was prevented from passing either way.

Q. You could not get away that moment, I suppose; but surely you were not kept there?

A. I could not get away by any exertion; they prevented any one passing.

Q. Was part of the 88th near Cooper-street?

A. Yes; about twenty yards from it.

Q. Was there any thing in front to prevent people from passing?

A. The military had formed into a crescent, so as to prevent people passing down Dickenson-street.

Q. I ask you was there not an opening between Dickenson-street and St. Peter's church?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Then what was to prevent you going that way?

A. I was so hemmed in behind the 88th, that I could not avail myself of that opening.

Q. Was there any obstruction lower down, near the Quakers' Meeting?

A. No, Sir; but I told you I was so situated that I could neither get one way nor the other.

Q. Well, what did you see while you were there?

A. I then saw the Manchester Cavalry gallop by Cooper-street, past the end of Cooper-street.

Q. Are you certain they galloped?

A. I don't know the difference between galloping and trotting; but they went very fast.

Q. Do you mean to say you cannot tell whether a horse trots or gallops?

A. Yes; I never rode a horse fifty miles in all my life; but I know they came at a very great pace.

Q. Which way did they go?

A. They proceeded towards Mr. Buxton's house.

Q. Could you see the house?

A. No; I could only see the pile of buildings; I don't know Mr. Buxton's house particularly; and a part of the cottage intervened, to intercept my sight.

Q. Go on.

A. In about a minute I heard a shout from the multitude assembled below, in front of the Cavalry; and in about a minute afterwards the Cavalry shouted and waved their swords in the air; presently after they had brandished their swords and shouted, I discerned the Cavalry galloping or riding into the multitude, and raised so much dust that I could not see so as to distinguish what followed.

Q. You have not told us what Cavalry they were?

A. They had white facings: they were the Manchester Yeomanry Cavalry.

Q. Did you see any other Cavalry?

A. No; Sir.

Q. Did you see any other Cavalry before the Manchester Yeomanry went upon the ground?

A. No; Sir.

Q. Then you are certain these were the Manchester Yeomanry?

A. Yes; I am positive.

Q. What number were there?

A. I cannot say.

Q. Tell me their numbers as near as you can?

A. I have no idea. I made no calculation. I was merely a spectator.

Q. Did they come on all at once?

A. Yes; Sir.

Q. Did you see any second party?

A. No, Sir, not before they charged from the front of Mr. Buxton's house; afterwards I saw another body of Cavalry form nearly on the same ground the Yeomanry had left.

Q. What became of these?

A. They also rode off among the multitude, but not so quick as the first.

Q. Were they Manchester Cavalry?

A. I don't think they were; they had quite a different dress.

Q. What became of them?

A. They also were hid by the dust after they went among the crowd. I then saw another body of Cavalry arrive on the ground with two field pieces with them; they were quite differently dressed. The people were now running in all directions, pursued by the soldiers; some were running up Mount-street towards Brazen-nose street. I saw some people, men, women, and boys, running to get to that end of Dickenson-street, near the Quakers' meeting. A soldier came suddenly riding along Dickenson-street, to that corner near the Quakers' Meeting-house.

Q. What soldier? one of the Yeomanry Cavalry?

A. Yes, Sir; and in his impetuosity he threw his horse down at the corner of the street.

Q. How did he throw it down?

A. I think the horse made a false step by catching his foot against the curb stone.

Q. Do you know who that soldier was?

A. I heard him called Thomas Barnes.

Q. Did you know him?

A. I did not, in his regimentals.

Q. What became of him afterwards?

A. At the moment he was unhorsed Col. McGregor gave the word to the 88th to charge bayonets to protect him.

Q. What was the reason of that movement? was the man attacked?

A. I saw some people running by; and I heard one person say, "Thomas Barnes is thrown down and killed, and it serves him right."

Q. Did you know that person?

A. No, Sir.

Q. How far were you from the place where he fell?

A. About thirty yards.

Q. What was between you and Barnes?

A. The Infantry formed a crescent, and I was behind them, so that they were between me and Barnes.

Q. Why did Colonel McGregor order his men to charge?

A. To protect the man who had fallen, because the people were exasperated, and brick bats were thrown, I suppose. I also heard Colonel McGregor tell his men to forbear; and not to mind the people but to attend to him. This was in consequence, I suppose, of abusive language being used by the people because they could not pass.

Q. Was Colonel McGregor nearer Barnes than you?

A. Yes.

Q. Was the street full of people between Barnes and you when he fell?

A. No; there were none between Barnes and the Infantry, when he fell; but people were running that way.

Q. How many persons were running that way?

A. Perhaps forty or fifty.

Q. Well, Sir?

A. I heard an exclamation from the people, and Colonel McGregor ordered his men, the 88th, to charge bayonets, and they immediately surrounded the young man.

Q. Did you proceed nearer to Barnes?

A. No, Sir; the military resumed their first position directly afterwards.

Q. What became of the young man?

A. I do not know; but I believe he got upon his horse again afterwards.

Q. What was next?

A. While I remained behind the 88th, I saw Mr. John Hulme, a young man of Mosley-street, carried by on a shutter by four persons, and in about ten minutes after I saw a coach go to the ground. It returned in a short time with some persons in it, whom, I heard, were injured.

Q. Which way did the coach return from the ground?

A. Along Cooper-street.

Q. What next did you see?

A. I did not see any thing further. I went with the 88th off the ground.

Q. Where did you go with them, and what time did you leave?

A. It was between two and three o'clock when the 88th passed by Brasenose-street to their Barracks; the 31st were on the top of Brasenose-street, and one of their officers asked one of the officers of the 88th "whether the enemy were discomfited?" The answer was "their own townsmen have done it."

Q. Is this all you know of the meeting?

A. Yes; it is all I know.

Q. Now tell me how the people that you saw pass, were armed?

A. I saw some with sticks. I only noticed one who had got one shouldered; they were all common walking sticks.

Q. Had they chiefly sticks?

A. Many of them had sticks.

Q. Did you not see that many on the ground had sticks larger than walking sticks?

A. No, Sir; none had sticks thicker than common walking sticks.

Q. Were you very near the hustings?

A. Never nearer than the corner of the Quakers¹ Meeting-house.

Q. Was the ground where you stood covered with people?

A. No; there were a few; perhaps three or four in a group here and there.

Q. Was it nearly vacant?

A. Yes, Sir; the people appeared to be moving towards the hustings, leaving the ground near where I stood nearly vacant, which I suppose was about eighty or a hundred yards from the hustings.

Q. Were the people at the distance of twelve yards from you?

A. There was a space of twenty yards from me towards the hustings, which was only thinly strewed.

Q. And from there you went into Dickenson-street?

A. Yes; while Mr. Hunt was speaking, I went near to Dickenson-street.

Q. Could you see the hustings then?

A. I had barely a view of them; the corner of the Quakers' school intervened.

Q. How far from the hustings were you?

A. About two hundred yards; and I remained there until the meeting dispersed, and all was over.

Q. What brought the soldier, Barnes, into Dickenson-street, judging from what you saw?

A. He was riding to intercept the people coming into Dickenson-street, at the corner, from Bootle-street end.

Q. Did you see any stones or brick-bats thrown at the soldiers?

A. I believe some were thrown at the man who fell from his horse at the time Colonel McGregor ordered his men to charge bayonets; but I did not see any thrown.

Q. Then what makes you believe so?

A. I heard some of the soldiers say so when they returned into line; I have no other reason.

Q. Was it when he was on horseback?

A. No; he fell down; and the people who were running, I believe, caught hold of, and flung what they could at him; but I did not see it.

Q. Was the charge before Barnes fell?

A. No, Sir; they only charged when he fell; they ran to protect him after he was down.

Q. Were their bayonets fixed?

A. Yes.

Q. Did Col. McGregor order the men to advance when Barnes fell, or before?

A. When he fell, Sir.

Q. You said, when the man fell, you saw stones thrown?

A. No, Sir; I never saw stones thrown. I heard the soldiers say the people had thrown stones, or were about to do it.

Q. At whom were they throwing stones?

A. I suppose at the man who was unhorsed. I saw no other object for their vengeance.

Q. Did you see any stick cast?

A. No, Sir; I saw a boy running, afterwards, with a parcel of sticks under his arm, which one of the soldiers of the 88th took away.

Q. Which way was the boy running?

A. Towards Dickenson-street.

Q. Do you know the boy?

A. No, I do not.

Q. You saw the man fall from his horse at that time; did any thing strike him or his horse?

A. No, Sir; my opinion is, it was his own impetuosity, in going against the curb stone.

Q. He was a Cavalry man, you say; what was his name?

A. They said his name was Thomas Barnes.

Q. Did you go to him as near as you could get?

A. I did not; I considered there was danger, and therefore did not move. Indeed, I could not get away. I was surrounded, and could not get either way.

Q. Did you discover whether he was hurt or not, either then or afterwards?

A. I did not.

[Section missing]

Recalled later on 29 September and cross-examined by Mr. ASHWORTH.

Q. Where were you, when you first saw the body of people?

A. I was in the market-place.

Q. From whence did they come?

A. From Saddleworth and Royton.

Q. Did you see any from Middleton?

A. I can't say I did; I do not believe any of them were from Middleton.

Q. In what manner did they come?

A. They were formed into files of five or six.

Q. Did they march in regular line?

A. No; I thought the contrary; very irregularly.

Q. Did they not march like soldiers?

A. No; if soldiers marched in that stile, I think it would be the first time.

Q. What distance is Saddleworth from Manchester?

A. I don't know.

Q. Does Saddleworth constitute any part of Manchester?

A. I don't know that it does; indeed, I feel confident that it does not.

Q. Does it form part of Salford?

A. No; nor of Salford either.

Q. Does Royton belong to the town of Manchester?

A. I don't know.

Q. You don't know whether Royton forms a part of the town of Manchester?

A. No; I don't. If you had asked me what I believe, I should have given a direct negative; but you ask me what I *know* on the subject; now, for all I know, it may form part of the municipality of the town of Manchester; I suppose you mean that, when you speak of town; I wish, however, not to give any direct answer to these questions; I have not made them my study.

Q. Does Oldham belong to the town of Manchester?

A. I believe Oldham is a township of itself.

Q. How long have you lived in Manchester?

A. I was born and educated in Salford.

Q. Have you not heard then, that Manchester and Royton were distinct townships?

A. I never heard any thing about the matter.

Q. What! lived all your life in Salford, and never heard that Royton was a distinct township from Manchester?

A. I beg pardon; I have not lived always there; I lived in Salford till I was sixteen, when I left, and have lived there again for the last thirteen months.

Q. How many standards had this body of fifteen thousand?

A. I cannot tell.

Q. Were there five?

A. I will not, on my oath, say, for I do not know.

Q. Will you swear there were not five?

A. I cannot swear it.

Q. Will you swear there were not ten, nor twenty?

A. I intreat your indulgence; I cannot swear how many there were.

Q. Will you swear there were not forty?

A. I cannot.

Q. You cannot, perhaps, say there were not an hundred: had you your senses about you?

A. I had.

Q. Did you use those senses for purposes of observation?
A. Yes, Sir.
Q. Then, are the Gentlemen of the Jury to understand that you can say there were people standing in fives or sixes, and that you cannot swear there were not ten, fifty, or an hundred standards?
A. The standards were not all in my view at one time.
Q. Did you see any black flag there?
A. I did, Sir.
Q. Did you not consider that, from its being black, it had a portentous nature?
A. It occurred to me, as having a very uncommon appearance.
Q. Do you recollect any inscription upon it?
A. I am not certain as to the precise words; but I do believe the words "Liberty or Death" were on it.
Q. I wish to remind you: do you not think there were "Equal Representation or Death?"
A. I only saw one side, and cannot say.
Q. Do you know the colour of any other flag?
A. I remember one with a figure on it.
Q. What was it?
A. I had not a sufficient view of it to describe.
Q. How long before Mr. Hunt came was it that this body of fifteen thousand passed?
A. About half-an-hour.
Q. Did not any other body come?
A. I returned to my work, and cannot tell.
Q. Then you did not see them?
A. No; I returned to my printing-office, and did not see any others.
Q. I think you said, Mr. Hunt was accompanied by twenty-thousand?
A. By my mode of calculating, I thought there were about that number.
Q. Was he accompanied by any flags?
A. There was a female, on the front of the carriage, carrying a flag.
Q. Did you see what was on that flag?
A. I do not remember.
Q. Do you mean to swear that was the only flag that accompanied Mr. Hunt and that body?
A. No, Sir, I believe I saw two more.
Q. Was the one the lady carried, and those two, the only three you saw?
A. I looked at the people; that was the object of my curiosity, and I do not know whether there were more or not.
Q. How many Caps of Liberty did you see with the fifteen thousand?
A. I cannot swear.
Q. Cannot you say whether there were twenty or not?
A. I believe there were not twenty.
Q. Were there ten, think you?
A. I believe there were not ten.
Q. Peradventure five. Were there five to be found?
A. I did not count, and cannot swear to any number.
Q. How many were there with Mr. Hunt?
A. I do not know.
Q. Did you see any thing which struck you as important with the body with which Mr. Hunt came?
A. I do not remember.
Q. Was there any noise?
A. Yes, Sir; such clapping of hands as I never heard, nor ever expect to hear again in Manchester.
Q. Was that all the noise you heard?

A. No, Sir; they had shouted three times three before.

Q. Did you follow the first body to the ground?

A. No, Sir; I went to my office, and there heard a buzzing that Mr. Hunt was coming, and I went to see him arrive.

Q. Then you went to the station you occupied till the Meeting was dispersed?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. After your first passing Mr. Hunt, how long was it to your going to the ground? We are not nice to minutes.

A. About half-an-hour.

Q. As I understand you, you said that there were but few persons where you stood?

A. I wish not to be misunderstood or confused by such questions, and will explain what I meant by few persons.

Q. No, never mind. Can you say what was going on at the hustings while you were at the distance you describe?

A. No, Sir; I saw the people standing, quiet.

Q. I suppose you had a view of the whole body?

A. Surely so, and the people stood apparently quiet.

Q. Did you see the Yeomanry go up to the hustings?

A. I saw them proceed towards the hustings.

Q. Will you explain? You said they stood some time on the ground; how long was it?

A. Two or three minutes.

Q. In Mount-street?

A. From my situation I cannot say it was precisely Mount-street; they came from Cooper-street, and took their position, previous to action, in front of the house where the Magistrates were.

Q. Did they proceed towards the house where the Magistrates were?

A. I did not know where the Magistrates were.

Q. Can you tell me did they move in columns?

A. Tell me what you mean by column?

Q. How did they move?

A. A man, on a piebald horse, in white clothing, went six or twelve yards before, and the others followed in succession.

Q. Did there appear to be any impediment?

A. Yes, Sir; about half a minute, when they were riding among the people, and then they proceeded on.

Q. How far had they got before the impediment occurred?

A. But a short distance.

Q. Were they among the people when it occurred?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Had stones occasioned that impediment? had they been thrown, do you think you could have seen them?

A. I do not think I could, Sir.

Q. Was there a movement, slower or quicker, after the impediment?

A. I believe it was quicker.

Q. During the whole of the time, before the soldiers came to the quarter where you stood, could you see what was passing?

A. I could not, for the dust.

Q. Then what might occasion any mischief before the Cavalry gentlemen came up to you, you cannot tell?

A. Certainly not.

Q. If I understand you, the soldiers ran to surround the man that fell?

A. Yes; they charged with fixed bayonets.

Q. What do you mean by the word charge?

A. I must refer to my former explanation. They surrounded the man who fell, with their bayonets fixed.

Q. Do you always mean the word charge in this sense?

A. Certainly. When an author, in the first instance, uses a word in a particular sense, he must be considered as using it in the same sense even through five hundred volumes.

Q. Of all things I hate a reasoning metaphysical witness. You say that the opening at the end of Dickenson-street was closed up when he fell?

A. It was, Sir.

Q. You say the soldiers did not let any person pass that way?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Permit me to ask, if I understand you rightly, did you say that at the time the young man fell, the people used abusive language, and the Colonel said to the men, never mind them, attend to me?

A. He did, Sir.

Q. At the time you heard the soldiers say that stones had been thrown, had they returned to their positions?

A. They had, Sir; but I did not see stones thrown. I only heard them say so.

Q. As far as you saw, did the 88th do more than was necessary to keep themselves as a compact body?

A. Nothing, except moving to protect the young man.