

Name: John Shuttleworth
Occupation: Cotton Dealer
Home: Manchester
Date: 27 September 1819
Source: Lees Inquest 80 – 87
Summary: Eye-witness to the peaceful and unarmed nature of the parades approaching St.Peter's-field and close to the violence but does not report any particular instances.
Done by: CW

Mr. JOHN SHUTTLEWORTH called in, sworn, and examined by the CORONER.

Q. Of what trade are you?

A. I am a cotton and twist dealer.

Q. Where do you reside?

A. At Manchester.

Q. What do you know of this business respecting the death of John Lees?

A. On the morning of the 16th, about eleven o'clock, I was at the Exchange, and saw several of the country parties pass there.

Q. From whence did they come?

A. From Lees, Mosley, Royton, and Saddleworth; they were carrying banners, and marching in the best order in which large bodies could proceed, when they had to go any distance.

Q. How many abreast were they?

A. They were two, three, four, and up to seven abreast; and they were linked together, mostly by the arm.

Q. Had they any colours with them?

A. Yes, they had several colours or flags with them.

Q. On seeing this, what did you do?

A. I then went to the ground, and saw a double *cordon* or column of special constables arranged so as to form open lines of communication from Buxton's house into the crowd, towards the hustings.

Q. Did they reach to the hustings?

A. They might; but I will not state it positively; but I can assert that they were within twenty or thirty yards of the hustings. I passed through the constables and stood near to the top of Windmill-street, which, being an elevated situation, commanded a view of the area.

Q. How long did you remain there?

A. Perhaps, better than an hour.

Q. Did you see any other parties come in from the country?

A. Yes, several; they came marching in from several parts, with colours, and on their arrival were received with huzzas and cheers.

Q. Did you continue in the same station all the while?

A. No, when I understood that Mr. Hunt was coming, I moved lower down and approached within ten or fifteen yards of the hustings in front; and continued there till Mr. Hunt arrived. Immediately after his arrival I saw a company of the 88th Foot march into Dickenson-street, and face there. The meeting cheered them. In a few minutes afterwards the Manchester Cavalry rushed into the ground round Cooper's cottage.

Q. Had Mr. Hunt arrived then?

A. Yes, he had. On their entering, the Cavalry were in very great confusion: but in a moment or two they formed opposite to and near the house of Mr. Buxton, where the Magistrates were assembled, and facing the hustings. Conceiving, from their appearance, that they meant to charge, I got into their rear.

Q. What made you think they intended to charge?

A. From the hasty, irregular, and violent manner in which they entered, and the way in which they formed; and also from the manner they brandished their swords over their heads. I would also observe, that as I was standing on a raised mound, within ten yards on their left flank, I perceived sufficient movements of them to satisfy me of their intentions.

Q. What were the movements?

A. Directly the Cavalry came, I observed considerable bustle and confusion, and there was a quick communication by speaking from one to the other.

Q. Where was the bustle you speak of?

A. Among the special constables; particularly those who were close to the Cavalry.

Q. What did you see done by them?

A. Immediately after the Yeomanry had huzza'd, and flourished their swords, the special constables who were between the Yeomanry fell back to make way for them to advance.

Q. What distance were the constables from the hustings when they fell back?

A. I should think fifty yards. Something was then said to them, and then they galloped and went out of line, into file.

Q. In what way did they proceed?

A. They were in great disorder, and from the direction they took, they got amongst some of the special constables, who had not had time to get in their rear. I watched them, until they got to the hustings, and I then turned about, and went off the ground through Mosley-street.

Q. Did you see any other soldiers besides lire Yeomanry Cavalry?

A. Yes; I met some troops, which, I understood, were part of the 15th Hussars, and some of the Cheshire Yeomanry.

Q. Where did you see them?

A. I saw them go into the field by the corner of Mr. Buxton's house.

Q. At what pace were they going?

A. They were going very quickly; I think at a gallop.

Q. Did you see any Magistrates on the ground?

A. I saw several at Mr. Buxton's, house from a little after eleven o'clock, up to the moment of the Yeomanry charging.

Q. Did you see them more than once?

A. Yes; I saw them at intervals passing in and out.

Q. Did you know who they were?

A. Yes; their names are, Mr. Ethelstone, Mr. Norris, a stipendiary Magistrate; Mr. Wright, and Mr. Fletcher, commonly called Colonel Fletcher; there were others whom I know from having seen them at the New Bailey, but I can't swear to their names.

Q. Did you hear them say any thing?

A. No, I did not; I saw them occasionally come out and speak to persons about the doors, who appeared to be special constables.

Q. Did you see Mr. Hay there?

A. I can't swear positively that he was there.

Q. Did you hear the Riot Act read?

A. I certainly did not hear it read, or see any thing like it take place.

Q. Did you hear any direction given by the Magistrates, or the special constables, to disperse the meeting?

A. No, I did not; and I am sure none were given, for if there had been I must have observed them.

Q. When you left the ground where was Mr. Hunt?

A. He was still addressing the people.

Q. How far from the hustings and from Mr. Buxton's house were you then?

A. I was not more than a hundred yards from the stage, and I was about twenty from Mr. Buxton's house.

Q. How long were you altogether on the ground?

A. It was about twelve o'clock when I was standing on the eminence before mentioned, and when the Cavalry rushed into the crowd it was about half-past one; so that I must have been there an hour and a half.

Q. Did you see who came in Mr. Hunt's carriage?

A. I saw Knight and Johnson, but no other person whom I knew.

Q. Did you see any female?

A. Yes; upon the dicky I think there was a woman.

Q. How many people in all did you see in Hunt's carriage?

A. In all, I suppose, there were six or eight; hut I noticed only one woman. I can't say whether there were more or not.

Q. How long was it before Mr. Hunt got from his carriage on the hustings?

A. It might be five or six minutes.

Q. How long after that was it before the Cavalry charged?

A. I cannot state precisely; but I should think not exceeding fifteen minutes.

Q. Had there been any tumult, riot, or disturbance, before the soldiers entered?

A. Not the slightest.

Q. How near to Windmill-street were the hustings erected?

A. About fifteen yards from it.

Q. Were the streets crowded?

A. Windmill-street was very much crowded; particularly the lower end, near to Deansgate.

Q. Was the part where you stood very crowded?

A. It was not so crowded as others, because a large posse of special constables were stationed there, among whom I stood.

Q. How long was it after you left Windmill-street that the Cavalry went into the crowd?

A. It was not more than two or three minutes; I had just time to get behind them, and they instantly made the charge.

Q. What do you call a charge?

A. Galloping among the people with swords drawn, and cutting them.

Q. Then you saw the soldiers cutting?

A. From the manner in which they flourished their swords and let them fall, I have no doubt of it.

Q. How far were you from them?

A. Not perhaps so much as fifty yards.

Q. Did the swords appear to you to have struck people?

A. Yes, they did.

Q. Was there a great tumult and noise?

A. Yes; there was a tremendous uproar. It would have been impossible, as I think, to have heard even the roar of a cannon.

Q. Did you hear any person complain in particular?

A. No; I did not.

Q. What did the noise seem to express?

A. Alarm and surprise from the people in all parts of the meeting.

Q. By whom were the Cavalry led on?

A. By two or three trumpeters.

Q. Did you know either of them?

A. No; the only person I recognised was Mr. Birley.

Q. When did you see him?

A. Immediately before the charge was made.

Q. Do you know what he is?

A. No, I do not; but I believe him to be an officer. ,

Q. Did you know any others of the Yeomen?

A. Yes, many; but did not recognise them so as to be able to speak to their joining in the charge.

Q. Then how did you recognise Mr. Birley?

A. Because I saw him in conversation before Mr. Buxton's house.

Q. Did you hear who gave the command?

A. No; I did not.

Q. How many Yeomen do you suppose there were?

A. I should have thought there were a hundred; but I have been told since there were only sixty.

Q. Were there any more Cavalry came up after they moved from Mr. Buxton's house?

A. No; not while I remained.

Q. How long did they remain before Mr. Buxton's house?

A. They only drew up, got out of facings into file, and then galloped in.

Q. Was any notice or warning given for the crowd to disperse?

A. Not that I heard.

Q. If there had been any notice or warning of any kind, must you have heard it? „

A. I think it hardly possible there should have been any without my hearing it.

Q. Did the soldiers proceed to the hustings at a quick pace?

A. They set off quickly; but appeared to be retarded by the crowd, when they had proceeded some short distance; and on getting nearer to the hustings, there appeared a struggling effort to press forward, because the crowd was so dense there.

Q. Could they proceed to the hustings without the line being broken?

A. No; the line was soon broken after they commenced the charge.

Q. How far from the hustings was the line broken?

A. Perhaps thirty yards; it seemed to have been occasioned by the foremost being stopped by the intensity of the crowd, while those behind, endeavoured to get into the heart of their companions; indeed they seemed a circular mass, rather than a line of soldiers.

Q. Did they get up to the hustings in that confused state?

A. Yes, they did.

Q. Did the constables make way for the Yeomanry?

A. Yes; those who occupied the ground which was not much crowded, opened a way for them; it seemed to be the intention of the Yeomanry to go by the *cordon* of constables, or by the space they had occupied; but when they got into the crowd, they became confused, as I have stated.

Q. Was it possible for any one, who wished to get to the hustings, to have got there?

A. It was very easy for any one to have gone to the hustings between the two cords of constables—(*the witness referred to the plan, and pointed to the situation which this double line of constables occupied*)—I myself saw people walking through this space, up to within two minutes before the charge.

Q. Did you see Mr. Nadin, there among the crowd?

A. I saw him repeatedly on the ground, sometimes outside the crowd, and at other times in the body of the meeting.

Q. Did you see him when the charge was made, as you call it?

A. No, I did not.

Q. Were the Magistrates in or out of the house when the charge was made?

A. I don't know.

Q. What caused the Cavalry to act as they did?

A. God knows; I cannot tell.

Q. Why did they not act sooner or later?

A. The reason they did not charge sooner or later is best known to themselves; I saw no reason for their doing it at all.

Q. You saw no reason?

A. No, I did not.

Q. Did you see constables striking people with their truncheons, or ill using them?

A. No, I did not.

Q. When were the colours taken?

A. I cannot tell; I did not see them taken, and conclude it was not done until after I left the ground.

Q. When did you leave the ground?

A. Not until the hustings were surrounded by the Cavalry.

Q. As the Cavalry approached to the hustings, were there any stones thrown at them?

A. Not one.

Q. Was any stick used or thrown?

A. Not that I saw, nor do I believe any stick was either thrown or used by the people while I was on the ground.

Q. Could you see what was passing at the hustings when the Cavalry got up?

A. No, I was going away at the moment, and my view was intercepted by the dust they raised in making the charge.

Q. Did you hear the report of fire arms?

A. No, I did not.

Q. Were any of the people armed?

A. I saw nothing in the hands of any of the people, except common walking sticks, and it did not appear to me that more than one or two in ten had even a walking stick; indeed the quantity of sticks appeared to me to be few, considering that the men had travelled from the country.

Q. Was there anything unusual in the appearance of the sticks you saw?

A. Nothing.

Q. That is your opinion?

A. It is, Sir; I have observed, weavers and others who come from the country generally have sticks of a similar description.

Q. Do you mean to say on all occasions?

A. No, Sir; I said generally when they travel.

Q. Did you see the ground after it was cleared?

A. I did; and I passed over it in the morning about nine o'clock.

Q. How long after it was cleared, did you see it?

A. As I did not remain to see it cleared, I cannot answer that question; but it was about three o'clock when I next saw it.

Q. And what was the appearance of it then? was it the same as in the morning, or different?

A. At three o'clock the ground had altogether a different appearance; it was then very much trampled, and in some places stained with blood.

Q. Did you not see sticks or stones lying on the ground after it was cleared of the people, which you had not seen in the morning?

A. I saw no stones or sticks lying on the ground; and therefore, in that respect, I observed no difference in the appearance.

Q. How long did you remain on the ground after Mr. Hunt arrived?

A. Only about a quarter of an hour.

The Witness examined by Mr. HARMER.

Q. Are you personally acquainted with Mr. Hunt?

A. No, I am not; never spoke to him, and I had only seen him twice in my life; on one occasion he was speaking at a public meeting in London, and the other was, when he was passing through Manchester.

Q. Had you any thing to do with convening the meeting, or with the arrangements when it took place?

A. Nothing, whatever.

Q. Did you see any females on the ground?

A. Yes, many.

Q. Were they decently dressed?

A. They were.

Q. How did they conduct themselves?

A. Most properly.

Q. Did you observe any tumult, or any disposition to create a riot or break the peace?

A. No; not the slightest.

Q. Did you see any Magistrate or other persons go into, or near to the crowd, and hear him or them with a loud voice proclaim silence?

A. No.

Q. Did you hear the Riot Act read?

A. No.

Q. Could either of these things have taken place, without your observing it?

A. I think it scarcely possible that such a movement could have been made without my observing it.

The Witness re-examined by the CORONER.

Q. Did you see any of the women carry flags?

A. The woman on the dicky of the carriage, I believe, had a colour in her hand.

Q. Did you see her with it?

A. No; but I was told that a female carried a flag in passing the Exchange.

Q. You said the women behaved properly; do you call it proper for women to carry flags?

A. When I said they behaved properly, I meant that they were peaceable and tranquil, but as to their carrying flags, that is another question.

Q. You say they were well dressed, what do you mean by that? were they dressed like respectable people?

A. No; they appeared like country people, who had put on their best clothes for the occasion.

Q. Did you see any of the females with flags on the hustings?

A. I think I saw one female on the hustings holding a little flag.

Q. How long were you on the ground?

A. From half-past eleven, until my leaving the crowd.

Q. Might not the Riot Act be read without your knowing it?

A. I think if it had been read, I must have known it.

Q. At what time did you leave the ground?

A. At about half-past one; directly the Cavalry charged.

Q. At half-past one you left the field?

A. I do not mean to be precise; but about that time: I calculate the time by circumstances. I got home a little before two, to dinner, and I had gone more than a mile in the way I went.

Q. Did you hear any of the populace menacing or threatening?

A. No, on the contrary; whatever conversations I overheard among those who took an interest in the meeting was, an interchange of exhortations to keep peaceable and tranquil; and I was very much struck with many remarks I heard of that kind.

[The Witness withdrew.]