

TS11/1056 Statement of Captain Tench

Transcribed by Sylvia Kölling

TS 11/1056 Capt. C. J. Tench, Wexford, to Henry Hobhouse, Home Office, 2 Jan. 1820.

Wexford January 2nd 1820

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your Letter of the 28th ult^o relative to certain Events that I was witness to at Manchester on the 16th of August last and in reply beg leave to state that notwithstanding any Inconvenience or Expence I may be at I will most willingly attend as an Evidence on the pending Trials, should my presence be thought necessary, and am therefore ready to obey any instructions I may receive from the Solicitor of the Treasury on that Subject.

I have &c.
CJ Tench Capt
[k: p:?] 10th Reg^t Foot

H Hobhouse Esq
Whitehall

TS 11/1056 Henry Hobhouse, Home Office, to George Maule Esq [Treasury Solicitor's Office], 6 Jan. 1820.

Whitehall 6th January 1820.

Sir,

I am directed by Lord Sidmouth to transmit to you the inclosed Copy of a Letter from Captain C.J. Tench, in which he stated his readiness to come forward as an Evidence on the pending Trials, relating to the occurrences at Manchester on the 16th August last, should it be thought necessary to call on him for that purpose.

I am Sir,
Your most obedient humble servant
H. Hobhouse

TS 11/1056 Capt. C. J. Tench, Wexford, to Henry Hobhouse, Home Office, 13 Jan. 1820.

Wexford Jan 13th 1820

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 8th ins^t containing a request that I should transmit you a statement (as far as I was eye-witness) of the occurrences that took place at Manchester on the 16th of August last, in reply to which I shall endeavour to detail, in as concise and clean terms as I am able, the events of that day.

Having been for some weeks previous to the 16th on a visit with Mr Harrison of Cheadle (seven miles from Manchester) I was induced from motives of Curiosity to attend the meeting at

Manchester; and arrived there about 10 o'clock A.M. whilst the people were in the act of assembling. I observed that they marched in regular ranks in the middle of the street, distinct from the casual passengers or spectators in corps distinguished by particular flags bearing the usual emblems and mottoes of reform, such as "Universal Suffrage", "Equal representation or Death" &c. &c. with caps of Liberty, and many of the parties had bands of Music. Those bodies bore evident signs of pre-concerted organisation. They stopped together, kept their places, and obeyed the directions of particular individuals amongst them, who I clearly perceived possessed a power of Superintendence, and I heard the words "Halt" "Quick March" &c. given by some of those persons, who were promptly obeyed: this I particularly observed amongst the Oldham Men. I saw no weapons amongst them, whilst assembling, but sticks, in the possession of one to about every fourth or fifth man. The Rochdale men had more. A short time after 10 o'clock, I approached the assembly, but not wishing to mix with them, and not being able to hear what was said from the Hustings, I retired. But I could perceive, by his actions that some one was addressing the meeting. I also perceived that Flags and Caps of Liberty of the above mentioned description were raised above the Hustings, some held by females.

On my way from the assembly I spied a party of Infantry approaching the meeting they were of the 88th Regiment and I returned with them, and remained close to them, until the meeting was dispersed. This detachment formed in that part of Dickinson Street that has houses only on one side, and in full view of and facing the meeting. They were halted about five minutes before the Manchester Cavalry made their appearance from Moseley Street, which Cavalry might have been seen from the hustings at least one hundred and fifty yards, from the outer extremity of the assembly; they rode directly thro' the crowd and formed in front of the Hustings, followed by the Cheshire Yeomanry and a party of the 15th Hussars. After Halting in this position a few minutes, they commenced the dispersion of the multitude – from the confusion and dust at this point I had not a distinct view of what took place near the hustings being about 200 yards therefrom. I saw the Cavalry drive the mob off the ground, striking them with the flats of their Sabres (but in no instance did I see the edge applied) – the people passed in multitudes near the place where I was.

A circumstance at this time occurred, which I thought it my duty, a few weeks ago to make the subject of a letter to Lord Sidmouth (which letter, no doubt, has been transmitted to you) in consequence of a petition to the House of Commons, from a person who stated he had received a bayonet wound from a soldier of the 88th Regiment. The circumstance I allude to came particularly under my personal observation and was as follows. At the corner of Dickinson street I saw a Manchester Yeomanry trooper (I understand he was Mr Hulme) brought to the ground with his Horse by a stone at a place where there was considerable tumult from the rallying of the dispersed mob, several of whom took shelter behind the wall which surrounds the Quakers' Meeting House near the spot, and thence assailed the Cavalry as they passed. On the trooper's falling he was attacked in the most barbarous manner by both men and women, with stones sticks &c. and must have been inevitably killed had it not been for the instantaneous interference of a few of the detachment of the 88th who were about thirty yards or forty from the spot. The soldiers beat the assassins off with the but ends and barbells of their firelocks, I saw no bayonet wound inflicted, but afterwards heard that one did take place and might have happened amidst the tumult, and resistance, without my seeing it. I was surprised at the forbearance of both Cavalry and Infantry on this occasion. In no other instance did the detachment of the 88th Regiment act or interfere except that for a very short time they prevented the fugitives passing their right flank, towards the spot where the outrage was committing.

I was told by a man immediately after (named Thomas Bradbury – Game Keeper – Saddleworth) that he knew the man who knocked the Yeoman off his horse. I made this known to Mr Trafford one of the magistrates, and I believe the circumstance was investigated, but I did not hear the result, as I left the vicinity of Manchester for Ireland the 22nd of August.

I have also to state that during the dispersion of the meeting, I perceived several women with bundles of bludgeons, distributing them amongst the fugitives. One of those women was detained by the 88th detachment, in whose possession was found sticks with swords or spikes concealed in

them.

I have now recounted, to the best of my recollection, all the events that came within in my personal observation on the 16th of August and have nothing more to add than that I perceived throughout the whole tenor of the conduct of the lower orders of the people of Manchester, both before and after the 16th of August, an unequivocal tendency to insult and disrespect towards well dressed persons, having in several instances experienced it myself.

Any further enquiries you may think proper to make in the events of the 16th August I shall most [personally] attend to.

I have the Honor to be,

Sir,

Your Most Obedient

Humble Servant

C.J. Tench