

## **Peterloo**

### **The Diary of James Weatherly (Chethams Library)**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1819 a large meeting takes Place on Saint Peters field where the Freetrade Hall &cc now stands I went that morning to watch them come on the field it was then a large open space from the Quakers Chapel to Windmill Street behind the Theatre. I went and stood on some old trees close to the Quakers meeting house I saw the Whole of them come on the ground it was very throng when Hunt and the other speakers came on the Hustings and M<sup>f</sup> Hunt began to speak Nadin and a long line of Constables came and took Hunt and others prisoners one of the Constables was killd his name was Ashworth he was the Landlord of the Bulls Head Market Place then the Manchester Cavalry came galloping to the Hustings from the Oxford Road End they were led up by Meager an Irishman and Trumpeter to Yeomanry he was the first to begin the assault he was four or five yards in advance of the Others he kept laying on the People right and left with his sword he was like most of the others half Drunk he was a hot Irishman he lived in a room in Queen St Deansgate the room window looks in Queen St opposite the Liquor Vaults he could never get rest in Manchester after this affair he was annoyed in every Place and company in which he went he mostly carried a loaded Pistol with him he would as soon shoot a man as a dog one night there was a mob shouting and hissing at him opposite his window in Queen St he put his head out of the window and showed them a loaded Pistol and swore dreadful Oaths that he would fire on them they began to hiss him and call him Peterloo butcher at last he fired amongst them it was almost a miracle there was no one killed the Ball was not above five feet from the ground the ball went in a window Shutter I believe it was the Shop lately occupied by John Haywood Bookseller the ball must have gone between some of the Peoples Heads and about shoulder height in the Shutter and

scores of People on the Spot I could thrutch my little finger in the hole the ball had made this same Meager was a man of bad character he had to leave Manchester shortly after at this time we had to attend at Lancaster on the trial of T Price when Henry Hunt and others were to be tried for the Illegal meeting in Manchester on the 16th of agust 1819 I recollect one day there was a great many of us waiting until we were called in the Court the room was full all of us standing it was very tiresome for there were no seats I stood close to M<sup>f</sup> Hunt he was a fine looking man tall and Stout well built with fine features and ruddy Complexion wore a white hat brown Coat with gilt buttons Kerseymere breeches and top boots While we were standing there an Officer came Pressing through the Crowd saying make room for Nadin was behind him going in the court Just as Nadin had got close to M<sup>f</sup> Hunt he said there is a D-d stink here it was well known who it was for Hunt said in an Instant yes I have Just began to smell it which made Nadin look rather savage but he went on without saying more which set a many of them laughing this Puts me in mind of those who live in Glass houses should not be the first to fling stones Hunt was a man of ready wit When he was M.P for Preston Hunt was speaking in The house of Commons when the late Sir Robert Peel thought to play a skit on M<sup>f</sup> Hunt Sir Robert said one night in the house Oh M<sup>f</sup> Hunt I understand your father was the last Gentleman in your family yes says Mr Hunt and I understand your father was the first Gentleman in your family

### **False Report**

The morning after the great meeting there were a many flying reports afloat in the Town that there was ten Thousands coming to Manchester from Oldham Middleton Rochdale &c with fire arms Picks Scythes &c during the forenoon the reports kept getting stronger and that the rebels were within a few miles of the Town it made the tradesmen at the Exchange and Shopkeepers and warehouse men on the fidgets about half Past Eleven in the forenoon a man came Galloping on horseback to the Exchange and told them to close and to get in safety for the rebels were near to the town such a bustle in a few minutes with Putting up shutters the stalls of Fish mongers Butchers Greengrocers hardware Stockings Old Books and the Stalls all tumbled in the cellers all was closed in a very short time and the streets as quite as if it had been midnight

all getting into some Place of safety, me and a many more got into M<sup>rs</sup> Fishers the Unicorn top of Smithy Door it was no bad shop for keeping our Spirits up by letting the Spirits down Mrs Fisher and the Servants were glad to keep us in the house for they were almost frightened to Death she would not take Pay for the drink she sent in the room, this was always a Great tory house a many of the Exchange Gents were up Stairs a number of People came in town this day but not armed as had been reported the Town began towards dusk to get throng particularly about Oldham and Ancoats Streets and a disposition to be rough by demolishing the Shops of any of the Yeoman Cavalry the Constables and Military were called out they began to be very harsh with the People if People were standing at their own doors they were insulted by the Authorities and there were several shot that night I knew one man very well that lost a leg his name was Parry a stay maker near Trinity Church Salford