

Name: Robert Wright
Occupation: Hat Manufacturer
Home: Hollingwood
Date: 24th March 1820
Source: *Trial of Henry Hunt* 135-139

Summary: Gives description of meeting at SPF. Knows *Johnson*. Says he was not asked by *Johnson* to attend meeting on the 16th. Says that *Johnson* did not sell any of *Paine's* works. Does not know *Carlile*. 'If I called in upon him, it was only for the purpose of hearing news.'

Done by: RH

Robert Wright examined by *Mr. Hunt*—I live at Hollingwood, about five miles from Manchester, and am a hat manufacturer. I was at Manchester on the 16th of August last. I stood on the main road, and could see all the parties going by. They were perfectly peaceable, I did not see all the divisions; those that I saw were the Oldham, Lees, and Saddleworth party. In their march they seemed to preserve a sort of order. There were women and children amongst them in considerable numbers. I do not recollect seeing any sticks or bludgeons; there might have been some, but I did not: see them. They used no improper language to anyone. I saw the black flag. I rode to Manchester for the purpose of seeing the meeting; was not in any of the processions. I have no connection with the Reformers; *Mr. Duncoff* lives in my neighbourhood; I have some property about there; I saw nothing that could make me uneasy for the safety of it; I am a married man, and have a wife and family; I did not see the parties arrive in St. Peter's Field. The meeting was assembled when I got there It was near one o'clock when I arrived, and I remained until about half an hour before you came; I was on foot; I stood near the line of constables. This was somewhere in the line between the hustings and *Mr. Buxton's* house. I had an opportunity of seeing, they all appeared perfectly peaceable [sic]. I did not see one armed with a long staff shouldered like a musket.

By the Court. – I could see the crowd from where I stood; it was an eminence. If any of the people had sticks, I must have seen them.

By *Mr. Hunt*. - I remained until the military came upon the ground.

By the Court. – You saw the cavalry? – Yes.

Before they advanced did the crowd cheer them? – The crowd had cheered before they came.

Then the crowd was cheering when the military came to *Buxton's* house? – Yes.

Did the military return that cheer? – They did; they gave three cheers.

Did you hear any groaning, hissing, or hooting, when they came up? — I did not, my

Lord.

Did you see anything done by the crowd to resist them in their approach to the hustings? —Nothing whatever.

What distance were you from the hustings?—About forty yards.

Did you hear anything from the hustings encouraging resistance when they came? —I did not.

Any sticks? —None

By *Mr. Hunt* —Up to the moment the military arrived, did you see anything to alarm you for the safety of the town or of your family — Nothing whatever. The people cheered the military on their arrival, and they returned it. It was near the hustings, the first military placed themselves in front of *Mr. Buxton's* house. This caused some alarm amongst the crowd at the outskirts, and I moved nearer the constables. There was nothing said or done to encourage opposition to them. I heard a cry of, "*Be firm*". But I understood this to be in order to allay the fears of the people, and restore confidence. When the soldiers again galloped into the field, there was fresh confusion. I do not remember that anything was then done by you to restore confidence. The cheering of the people produced no alarm in me. I saw the military come into Dickenson Street. I never heard you say. "There are your enemies", pointing to the soldiers, "put them down, and when they are down, keep them down". If such words were spoken I should have heard them. As the Yeomanry advanced to the hustings they passed within a yard of me, I had my eye upon them all the way from *Buxton's* to the hustings. I saw neither stones nor brickbats nor sticks hurled at them.

Mr. Scarlett, in an under tone, made an observation upon this evidence.

Mr. Hunt— The *Learned Counsel* is too fond of making those pertinent remarks to the Jury, particularly when I cannot reply to them.

Mr. Scarlett—Pertinent remarks, Sir?

Mr. Hunt—Impertinent, If you please.

Mr. - Hunt. — I here you saw no stones thrown? —Not any.

Mr. Hunt—Did the people close in upon the cavalry? —When they passed me, I did not see that the people closed in upon them; on the contrary, they endeavoured to make their escape. I heard no fears expressed before their arrival. I never heard any one request the people to make for a constable to go to the hustings in order to execute a warrant.

By the Court—Did you hear it notified in a way to be heard at the hustings, for what purpose the military came? —No. I remained in the line of special constables until I left the field. It was then near one. I did not hear any one express fears.

Cross examined by *Mr. Scarlett* —I thought the soldiers were going to take somebody on the hustings; the constables were near them; I saw them about sixty yards from the hustings so I retreated down, farther. When they came into Dickenson Street; my station was towards Windmill Street; when I turned my face towards the hustings, the constables were on the left hand side; the crowd was very close between me and the hustings; where I stood first, forty yards from them, the crowd was also very great; I got as near as I could, to hear; my family lives five miles from Manchester; I never attended a meeting before that at which *Mr. Hunt* presided; I never was one of the Committee of the Blanketeers; the notice I had of the meeting was in an advertisement in *The Manchester Observer*; I do not take that paper in, nor do I remember where I saw it.

Mr. Hunt submitted that it could be of very little consequence where the witness saw this paper if the defendant was was not connected with those who showed it to him,

Mr. Scarlett said, his object was to connect the place where the witness saw this seditious publication with the defendants. One part of the charge was for conspiring to bring about the meeting by means of such publications, and it was therefore important to the connection, to show the place where the witness, who was not a Reformer, was seen in.

Justice Bayley thought the enquiry could not be pushed so far as to get the names of the owners of the house where the witness saw the paper, unless it was afterwards proved that they were at the meeting, or had acted in concert with the defendants.

Witness resumed. —I cannot say how soon before the meeting it was that I saw the advertisement; I rather think it was in the preceding Saturday paper. There were many names in the requisition. I went merely as a spectator to hear what would be said, I expected *Mr. Hunt* would speak. I did not expect *Mr. Carlile*; I don't know him.

Do you mean to say you had known nothing of *Mr. Carlile's* character?

Mr. Hunt here interposed—Surely it could be nothing to him what character *Mr. Carlile* was.

Justice Bayley —I think ——

Mr. Scarlett— "My Lord, I must insist upon having proper respect paid me. "

Justice Bayley —"I too will insist, that, in future I must not be interrupted. I endeavour to do Justice to both parties; but if proper respect is not paid by everyone to the Court, I must have recourse to the means of enforcing it, which I should be unwilling to do. I think as *Mr. Carlile's* name was put to the question, this inquiry is not very irrelevant. Had you heard or read, that *Carlile* was under prosecution for blasphemy? —I cannot recollect.

You knew that *Carlile* was one of the persons expected there? —I did.

Will you swear you heard nothing of *Carlile's* having been prosecuted? — I have sworn it.

Did you read *The Manchester Observer* of the preceding week? —I can't say I did not see it regularly.

Did you see the account of a meeting in *Smithfield* at which *Mr. Hunt* presided? —I did not see the paper regularly. If I were to see the paper, I don't know that I should recollect it. I was at the meeting in January at which *Mr. Hunt* presided; but I was not at the dinner. I saw the notice for the meeting of the 16th. I was aware that a meeting had been called for the 9th, and I also heard it was put off. I know *Mr. Johnson*, one of the defendants; I have known him about 12 months. I do not, recollect that it was from him that I heard; that the meeting had been put off; I can't say where I first met him. He keeps a shop in Shude Hill, I sometimes go there, but never read half an hour in a newspaper there. I may have taken up a newspaper there, and read a little. I will not swear that I have not read a newspaper which he showed me. If I ever did it was *The Manchester Observer*. I do not recollect that I ever heard him read it

there.

Will you swear to that? — I swear that I do not recollect it.

How often have you been in his shop? —About a dozen times.

How long did you stay? —Sometimes a few minutes and sometimes half an hour.

In that time were you not employed in reading political publications? -- No, I do not recollect. I never spoke to him, of *Cobbett's* arrival. I saw it first in the papers. I have seen *The Manchester Observer* in other places besides *Mr. Johnson's* shop.

On your oath, were you not desired by him to attend the meeting of the 16th? —I think he would ask me if I would attend.

Did he tell you who was to be there? He said *Mr. Hunt* was to be there.

And *Mr. Carlile*? —No, he never spoke of him. All I knew of *Mr. Carlile* I saw in the papers. I never heard that he opened a shop for the sale of *The Republican* and *Paine's* works, but through that medium.

Did you ever read these works? —Never.

Did you not know that the shop was called the *Temple of Reason*? I heard it. I never spoke to *Mr. Johnson* about these works. I never spoke to him of the Resolutions at *Smithfield*. I have no knowledge of them. *Mr. Johnson* told me something of the putting off of the meeting of the 9th. I do not recollect that I was to have attended that meeting, I never was invited there. I live at Hollinwood, I never saw any drilling, but I heard it was going on. I had heard this a month or a fortnight before. I don't recollect when Parliament was prorogued.

Re-examined by *Mr. Hunt*—I have known *Johnson* for the last 12 months, I don't know him so intimately as to visit him as a friend; he never was at my house in my life. I never was at his house in Smedley-lane. His shop is in Shude Hill, one of the public streets in Manchester. If I called in upon him, it was only for the purpose of hearing news. I never saw any of *Paine's* work in his shop; such works are not sold there. *Mr. Johnson* is a brush-maker. Never saw such books there as *Mr. Carlile* sold. I heard of the meeting of the 9th of August, it was a current report. It was also currently reported that the meeting was put off, and that there would be a meeting on the 16th. I would from this report, have attended the meeting, whether I saw *Mr. Johnson* or not. *Mr. Johnson* did, not invite me there in order to take any part in the proceedings. He did not ask me to attend for an illegal purpose.

By the Court. if you expected any riot or tumult there, would you have attended? — Certainly not.

By *Mr. Johnson*. — don't recollect how I became acquainted with you. I know *Mr. Gee*; he took me for the first time, to your shop.

By the Court—Did you ever hear from *Mr. Johnson*, that drilling, was going on? —I never did.

Did you ever hear it mentioned, in his hearing, that it was going on —I do not recollect that I did.

Did you ever hear the nature of it; whether it was confined to marching or to arms? —I heard it was entirely confined to marching; I had no reason to suppose it ever went beyond that.

By the Court for *Mr. Johnson*. — I have never heard *Mr. Johnson* in my life say any thing seditious.