

**Name:** Joseph Wrigley

**Occupation:** N/K. (Short time friend of John Lees)

**Home:** Oldham

**Date:** 25 September 1819

**Source:** Lees Inquest 38 – 44

**Summary:** Wrigley was with Lees at St.Peter's-field during the events and witnessed first hand the injuries inflicted on Lees by the military. Himself escaped from the field thanks to an officer.

**Done by:** CW

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JOSEPH WRIGLEY called in by the Constable, sworn, and examined by the CORONER.

Q. Did you know the deceased?  
A. Yes; I had known him about a month before the 16th.  
Q. Did you see him on the 16th?  
A. Yes; I met with him in Oldham.  
Q. Did he seem well at that time?  
A. He seemed in excellent health.  
Q. Where did you see him?  
A. It was at the bottom of the Bent.  
Q. What time was it?  
A. I first saw him about nine o'clock in the morning.  
Q. Did you see him any more on that day?  
A. Yes; I saw him in what is now called Peterloo's field.  
Q. How did he seem then?  
A. He was in good health and spirits then.  
Q. Had you seen him on the road to Manchester?  
A. Yes; several times by mere accident.  
Q. At what time did you see him at St. Peter's-field?  
A. Just before Mr. Hunt came to the field, I saw him near the hustings; we were then both close together, with many women and children among us; there was a great commotion afterwards, which removed us from the hustings.  
Q. Did you make any agreement as to going home together?  
A. Yes; we agreed on the ground, but not before, to come away together.  
Q. Did you see the Cavalry coming in?

A. Not till the shout was made, and then they came riding in among us, and they advanced close up to the hustings.

Q. How long were you on the ground before that?

A. About half an hour.

Q. Did you see the deceased receive any hurt?

A. Yes; I saw him receive a cut on the back of his right arm from a sabre; he was parrying off the blows of one of the military, and another came and cut him; he had his right arm up over his head protecting it with a walking-stick.

Q. Did he attempt to strike with that stick?

A. No; he did not strike, but only parried off the blows.

Q. Where were you when you saw all this?

A. Close to him in the crowd.

Q. If you were in the crowd, how could you distinguish what was done to him?

A. He reclined back, which brought me forward, and I was then thrown down, and hurt myself, so as not to be able to work since.

Q. Then, when you saw him cut, you did not stop to assist him?

A. No, indeed; every one had to look to his own life.

Q. When did you next see him?

A. About eight o'clock; and I asked him to have something, but he refused, and said he would get home and have his wound dressed, as it was very stiff and the blood was running down.

Q. Did he complain of any other wound?

A. He said he had a wound on his back from a truncheon; but I did not see him receive it.

Q. Were there any cuts on his clothes?

A. I saw one on the back of his coat.

Q. Did you see any other wound given?

A. None but what I have before mentioned.

Q. Was there no disturbance before the soldiers came?

A. Not any. Mr. Hunt had only said a few words, and that was to be quiet and peaceable, and the soldiers came in directly.

Q. How long after Mr. Hunt's arrival did that take place?

A. I should think the damage happened about ten or fifteen minutes after; perhaps sooner; but there are persons here who saw the carnage begin, and can tell the time exactly.

Q. Had you not an opportunity of getting away?

A. No, we could not; the crowd was so thick.

Q. Which of the military came up first?

A. The Yeomanry Cavalry came first, and then the 15th Hussars.

Q. Which was it that struck the deceased?

A. They got so confused I cannot tell.

Q. How did you get away?

A. There was an officer who gave me an opportunity of escaping, or I should have been left dead on the field.

Q. Did they strike or cut in coming up to the hustings.

A. I cannot tell.

Q. Was there any way left open for the military to come up?

A. I cannot say whether there was or not; but the people were running in every direction by which they could to get away.

Q. Was there any shouting?

A. There was a shout from the people, and from the military, who were then standing still and waving their swords over their heads. The military then came, as fast as they could make their way through the people, up to the hustings.

Q. Could you see the horses?

A. I could only see their heads when they were in the crowd.

Q. Did you see them cut?

A. Yes; they cut before I could get away.

Q. How far did they make their way through the crowd to get to the hustings?

A. At least 100 yards.

Q. How far were they from you when they began to cut?

A. About a dozen yards.

Q. Could you not have got away quicker?

A. Yes; we might perhaps, but we had no idea that they would cut us.

Q. Did the people make any resistance?

A. Not the least.

Q. At what pace did the horses come in?

A. I don't know.

Q. Did they walk or gallop, or how?

A. I do not know; they might walk or gallop, for what I could see.

Q. Did they cut any one before they came up within twelve yards of you?

A. I cannot tell.

Q. Did they cut any person before they cut John Lees?

A. They cut several more, but whether before the deceased was cut or not, I cannot tell.

Q. At whom did you see them cut besides John Lees?

A. I saw them cutting at the carriage in which there were some women.

Q. Did they cut at you?

A. Yes; they cut through my hat.

Q. Did you see any one cut before John Lees?

A. No; I saw none cut before him, but many afterwards.

Q. Do you know who cut them? whether it was the Yeomanry or the 15th Hussars?

A. No, I do not.

Q. Did you observe whether those who were cutting had beards on their upper lips?

A. No, I did not. But I heard an officer of the 15th say when I was down, "for shame, won't you give the people time to get away. Don't you see them down?"

Q. When you got up, were the soldiers still there?

A. Yes, they were still cutting at the people, and I saw one of their swords broken some inches from the point.

Q. Was it for you that the officer interfered?  
A. No, it was for all the people to get away.  
Q. How many soldiers were there in your view at this time?  
A. From half a dozen to a dozen, but I could not see any great distance.  
Q. In what way did you make your escape?  
A. I ran off behind the officer's horse, and went along with a body of the crowd.  
Q. Did you see any cut while you were getting away?  
A. No, I did not; I did not look behind me.  
Q. Were the soldiers there?  
A. No, they had gone another way.  
Q. Was it a Yeomanry man who cut your hat?  
A. Yes, he thrust the point of his sword through it, but did not strike me; I called to him not to murder me, and he struck no more at me.  
Q. Did they hurt either you or John Lees in going up to the hustings?  
A. No, they did not.  
Q. Was it the persons who went first up to the hustings, or others, who cut John Lees?  
A. I cannot tell.  
Q. Can you say they struck any one in coming up to the hustings?  
A. No; but I saw their swords going in all directions.  
Q. What do you mean by all directions?  
A. I saw them rising up, and falling down.  
Q. At what time was this?  
A. It might be about half past one.  
Q. Had you any previous information that the military were coming?  
A. None at all, till I heard the shout; and then I saw them coming.  
Q. What did you suppose was their object in coming?  
A. We believed they were coming only to arrest the speakers.  
Q. And they did so, didn't they?  
A. Yes, but they were not content with that; if they had been, John Lees would not be now dead, nor should I have been ill so long.  
Q. Why did not the people disperse?  
A. They did not give us time to get away.  
Q. Did you not hear the Riot Act read?  
A. No.  
Q. Nor see any person having a paper in his hand?  
A. No.  
Q. Did you not see any person in coloured clothes come near the crowd?  
A. No; none but those on horseback.  
Q. Did you not hear a Magistrate ordering the meeting to disperse?  
A. No, I did not.

Q. Where were you before Mr. Hunt came?

A. I was on the hustings to have a view of the meeting.

Q. Did you remain there long?

A. No, I was anxious to get away; but I was trampled under the horses before I could escape.

Q. Did the soldiers speak to you, and desire the people to disperse?

A. They desired me to go about my business, and asked me if I would ever come there again; and whenever they struck, they said "Go about your business."

Q. Did they strike at Lees before he was cut?

A. Yes, many times.

Q. Upon your oath, did you never see Lees strike?

A. Upon my oath I never did; he only warded off blows by receiving them on his stick.

Q. Did Lees strike before he was wounded?

A. No, he did not; and I did not see him strike afterwards.

Q. Did you see any one attempt to strike any horse or soldier?

A. No, I did not.

Q. Did you see any thing thrown at them?

A. I did not.

Q. Did you hear any report of a gun or pistol?

A. Not at that time.

Q. Did you never hear John Lees say that he had dismounted one soldier?

A. I never did.

Q. You say two soldiers struck at him; was it the first who struck at him who wounded him?

A. No; he received the blow of the first on his stick.

Q. How did you get from the hustings?

A. I fell off the hustings.

Q. Was Mr. Hunt there when you fell from the hustings?

A. He was on the stage when I fell down.

Q. Did you see him taken into custody?

A. No; I did not.

Q. Did you see any horse or soldier down on the ground?

A. I saw none.

Q. How long was it from the time you fell, till you got off the ground?

A. I think it would not be above ten minutes.

Q. What became of you afterwards?

A. I went to my sister's, where I got myself washed, and had some refreshment.

Q. Had you often seen John Lees before this time?

A. Yes.

Q. Where had you seen him?

A. At a public-house; a news room.

Q. Who keeps the room?

A. Abraham-----, I don't know what you call him. These are questions that I do not think it is proper you should put to me.

Q. I put them to you, Sir, because I am not satisfied you know John Lees.  
A. I can prove that, Sir, by many people.  
Mr. HARMER—(to the Witness)—You have sworn it. That is enough.

The Examination of the Witness resumed by the CORONER.

Q. Do you know how often you saw him before the -16th of August?  
A. I did not keep an account of the several times I saw him, or where it was.  
Q. Have you not seen him at Public Meetings?  
A. I have.  
Q. When was the time you got particularly acquainted with him?  
A. On the 16th of August.  
Q. Did you see him after his death?  
A. Yes, I did.  
Q. Should you have known him then, if you had not been told who he was?  
A. Yes, I should.  
Q. Who fetched you to give evidence here?  
A. Robert Neald.  
Q. How was the deceased dressed on the 16th?  
A. He had a brown coat and trousers.  
Q. What sort of hat had he?  
A. It was none of the best.  
Q. Did you see any thing particular the matter with his hat.  
A. Nothing more than with any-other hat that was much worn.  
Q. Was the crown cut or torn off?  
A. It was not.

The Witness examined by Mr. HARMER.

Q. I think you say, that you were hurt, and are now unwell from the injuries you received on the 16th of August?  
A. Yes, Sir.  
Q. Had you, or had John Lees, to your knowledge, any intention to break the peace, or create any riot or disturbance on that day?  
A. Not at all.  
Q. Was there any disturbance or appearance of riot before the military entered?  
A. Not the least.  
Q. Were there many women and children among the crowd?  
A. Many.  
Q. Did the people appear all in good humour and well disposed?  
A. They did.  
Q. Were there any arms or offensive weapons among them?  
A. Not any that I saw.  
Q. Had *you* any thing of the kind?

A. No; I had the handle of an old umbrella, which served me for a walking-stick.

Q. What did you suppose the people meant by shouting to the soldiers—did it appear to you as if it was to greet them as friends or otherwise?

A. I thought they meant to show that they regarded them as friends; and I understood the soldiers to return it with the same meaning.

Q. How long after the shout was it, before the Cavalry advanced?

A. A few minutes.

Q. Did you endeavour to get away before the soldiers began to cut?

A. No, we did not.

Q. Did you find it impossible for you to get away?

A. It was quite impossible.

Q. You have said you saw nothing thrown at the soldiers—I will ask you, whether, in a crowd so closely pressed together as you were, it would have been in the power of any person to stoop to the ground to get any thing to throw, if they had been so mischievously disposed?

A. No, not even if they had wished it.

Q. Was any attempt made by any person, that you saw, to throw any thing at the military?

A. None whatever.

Q. Was it in the morning, before you went to the meeting, that you noticed the hat of the deceased?

A. Yes.

Q. Was it then, that you observed there was nothing particular the matter with it?

A. Yes.