

Petition of Nathan Broadhurst

House of Commons, *Votes and Proceedings*, 15 May 1821

Transcribed by Alice C. Hebdon

(No. 598)

A Petition of *Nathan Broadhurst*, late of *Manchester*, but now a prisoner in the Castle of *Lancaster*, was presented, and read; setting forth, That the Petitioner was at the Meeting at *Manchester* on the 16th day of August 1819, and which Meeting was publicly called and peaceably assembled, for the purpose of petitioning the House for Parliamentary Reform, upon the principles of Universal Suffrage, Annual Parliaments, and Vote by Ballot; that the Petitioner, conceiving that he was only about to exercise one of those rights which are said to be “handed down from our ancestors unimpaired,” he, the Petitioner, got upon the Hustings when the people present, to the number of one hundred and fifty thousand, or more, proceeded in their legal right to nominate *Henry Hunt*, Esquire (now a prisoner in *Ilchester* Gaol), as Chairman of the Meeting, and who was unanimously called to the Chair, amidst the universal satisfaction of that Meeting; that the Petitioner being upon the Hustings, he had an opportunity to see all around him what passed on the ground where the Meeting was held; that the Petitioner saw with indignation the *Manchester* and *Salford* Yeomanry Cavalry come to the ground where the Meeting was held, and take their station under the Magistrates' window, where they formed in line; that in one minute and a half, or two minutes, the Petitioner saw with terror and alarm the Yeomanry file off to the left, and make a dash into the midst of the throng, cutting their way through the crowd, until they came near to and surrounded the Hustings; that the Petitioner heard *Henry Hunt* ask these should-be Gentlemen Cavalry what they wanted; when one of the Officers answered, “I have a Warrant for you, Mr. Hunt;” to which Mr. Hunt replied, “I will surrender to the Civil Power, but not to the Military;” that the Petitioner, at this moment, beheld Mr. *Joseph Nadin*, the then Deputy Constable of *Manchester*, and two other Constables, come up to the front of the Hustings, and pull off by both his legs a Mr. *Johnson*, now a prisoner in *Lincoln* Gaol; during this time, the Petitioner saw one of the Yeomanry come up to the Hustings, and say to another, [“] There is *Saxton* damn him, run him through;” to which the other answered, “No, I would rather not, I will leave that for you to do;” that the Petitioner saw Mr. *Hunt* surrender himself to the Constables, and went away with them without making any resistance whatsoever, but in his way he was frequently struck by the Constables with their truncheons, and some of the Cavalry cut at his head with their swords; that the Petitioner, in particular, saw one of the trumpeters, of the name of *Meagher* (whom the Petitioner personally knew), lead up the Yeomanry Cavalry; and that, on their entering the crowd, he (the said *Meagher*) was the first that struck a blow; that the Petitioner further saw the aforesaid Trumpeter cutting away without mercy on all who were within his reach; and at the same time the Petitioner heard the said *Meagher* say, when cutting so unmercifully, “Damn you, I'll reform, I'll let you know who I am, to-day;” that the Petitioner further saw the aforesaid Trumpeter cut a woman, as she lay down on the ground, and wound several others, although the people were endeavouring, with all their strength, to press forward, to get off the ground; but still the soldiers kept cutting at and riding upon them in such a brutal manner, as to be impossible for the Petitioner properly to describe; that the Petitioner received a severe blow with the flat side of a sword; whereupon the Petitioner sprung forward from the Hustings to get out of the way; when, at this moment, the aforesaid *Meagher* came up to the Petitioner, and gave him a most severe cut with his sword, which laid the bone bare; at this time, men, women, and children, were strewed on all sides,

crying out with all their might, "Murder;" and thousands were pressing to get out from amongst these savage monsters in human form, without being able to make much way in consequence of the narrow passages through which they had to pass; that the Petitioner to save his life escaped on the heads of the people, who by the violence of the pressure were formed into a solid mass, and the Petitioner was in consequence carried many yards before he could reach the ground; that when the Petitioner regained his footing, he turned himself round, and saw ten or twelve of the *Manchester* Yeomanry and two of the Hussars still cutting at the people; at this moment the Petitioner saw one of the Hussar Officers ride up to his own men, and calling out to them by name, said "Damn you, what do you mean by such work;" and knocked up their swords; then he, the said Officer, rode up to the Yeomanry, and said, "For shame! Gentlemen, what are you about, the people cannot get away;" on this remonstrance they desisted for the moment, but directly that the Officer left them they fell to their inhuman work of butchering again; that the Petitioner made the best way he could to the outside, intending to get a surgeon to have his wound dressed, as it was bleeding very profusely; that on getting into a street leading off the ground, there the Petitioner, with terror and alarm, beheld a Serjeant belonging to the *East India* Company of Artillery then at *Manchester* on the recruiting service, this Serjeant endeavoured to strike at every one that passed him, saying thus, "Damn you, I'll reform you, you'll come again will you?" and every blow this Serjeant struck he used such like expressions; that the Petitioner positively affirms in this his Petition, and also (if required will on oath) that during the whole of the time not the slightest resistance had been shown, nor had any stones been thrown at the soldiers, but on the contrary, the people that could flee, fled in every direction; that the Petitioner has great reason to believe that upwards of twelve persons died in consequence of the cuts and bruises they had received, and that upwards of six hundred were wounded in like manner upon that dreadful and memorable day, the 16th day of August 1819, when the people were thus peaceably and publicly assembled to exercise one of the most valuable and precious rights that an *Englishman* could exercise; that the Petitioner humbly, but earnestly implores the House to take the above deplorable circumstances into their most serious consideration, and for the sake of that religion which we profess, as well as for the sake of humanity, and thereby cause an inquiry to take place, in order to search out those who were the instigators as well as the perpetrators of that most horrible, unchristian, and wicked crime of massacring [sic] people in cool blood (when thus peaceably assembled), in order that they may be brought to the bar of their Country, to answer for their barbarous and blood-thirsty actions upon an unoffending multitude; the Petitioner also prays, that those of his His Majesty's Ministers who so wickedly advised his present Majesty to signify (when "Regent") the Royal Approbation of such dreadful and diabolical proceedings in a Christian Country, may be impeached by the Commons House, and all the Commons of *Great Britain*, and if found guilty, brought to condign punishment for the same; that the Petitioner further prays, that the House will take into further consideration the necessity, as well as the expediency of a Parliamentary Reform in the People's House of Parliament, before that the Nation be irrecoverably ruined, by being eaten up by useless pensioners, sinecurists, and placemen, in laying grievous burdens of taxation, until they become almost too intolerant to bear "by free born *Englishmen*," in a free Country; that the Petitioner, with that humiliation becoming his station in life, submits the above most important subject to the serious and benign consideration of the House, hoping and trusting that the House will grant such relief as the wisdom and benignity of the House shall see fit.