

Petition of Elizabeth Gaunt

House of Commons, Votes and Proceedings, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1821, Appendix 619.

Transcribed by Anne Cooper

No 619

A Petition of Elizabeth Gaunt, of the town of Manchester, in the County of Lancaster, was presented, and read; setting forth, That the Petitioner was one of the spectators at the Meeting held on St. Peter's Plain, in Manchester, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 1819; she was on the ground at the time Mr Hunt ascended the hustings; the Meeting was quiet and peaceable and orderly; she saw the Yeomanry Cavalry without the least provocation, or any manifestation on the part of the people to tumult, furiously charge the Meeting, riding over and cutting them indiscriminately; in the confusion that ensued she got into a hackney coach which was standing on the spot for safety, from which she was forcibly dragged by some of the Special Constables, who beat her violently with their truncheons, after which she was rode down by the Cavalry, covered with blood; she was carried into a House adjacent to the place on which the Meeting was held, where the Magistrates were assembled over their wine, which they appeared to her to have drunk to inebriation; on her asking for a glass of water, they refused it her, accompanying the denial by language too brutal and indecent for her to state to the House; that she was removed by order of the Magistrates to the New Bailey prison, where she was confined in a solitary cell, and suffered to remain a day and a half without any kind of food; on the 18<sup>th</sup> of the same month, she was brought before the Magistrate for examination, and was remanded till the Coroner's Inquest should be taken upon the dead bodies of those who lost their lives at the Meeting; she was brought up a second time for examination, and again remanded on a charge of High Treason; on the eleventh day of confinement, she was finally brought up and discharged, no charge being preferred against her; that during her confinement her husband was not allowed to see her, although he repeatedly applied for that purpose, neither was she allowed to receive from her husband a change of linen, or any kind of food; the gown which she wore at the time of being committed was taken from her person (it being covered with blood) and washed before she was brought up the first time; from the ill treatment which she had received her health was suffering very severely, in consequence of which she requested medical aid, which request was refused, although she was at the time in a state of pregnancy, which subsequently terminated in abortion, nor was her request acceded to till the Clergyman of the prison interceded in her behalf, and on the last day of her imprisonment, a medical gentleman was sent to her; her husband had twice sent down his family surgeon to wait upon her, but he was refused admittance; that notwithstanding she was suffering so severely from ill health, she was dragged many times a day from her cell up a flight of stairs to be exhibited to persons brought for the purpose to find whether any charges could be brought against her, till at length her increased indisposition rendered such a practice dangerous, and persons were then

brought into her cell; she therefore humbly prays, That the House would be pleased to institute such an inquiry into the proceedings which took place on the aforementioned occasion as shall bring to justice the perpetrators of an outrage at which humanity recoils with horror, and which is a foul stain upon our national character.