

HO42/196 f.36: Account of Thomas Hardman, special constable, Manchester, 7 Oct 1819. No.1 forwarded by Constables of Manchester to Home Office, 7 Oct. 1819.

(Transcribed by Peter Trumper).

On Monday Aug 16th I attended at the Police Office as a special Constable and proceeded with the magistrates and a considerable number of special Constables about 11 o'clock to the ground near St. Peter's Church where the meeting was to be held. At that time very few people had assembled. The Magistrates requested the special constables would form a line from the Hustings to the House where they were assembled, to inform them from time to time what passed upon the Hustings. Soon after the line was formed several parties of Men, accompanied by Women arrived upon the ground, marching in military order some of them with Bands of Music. Several of the men carried sticks in their left hands, similar to the manner in which a Soldier carries a musket. They marched direct to the Hustings and formed round them. The different parties were cheered as they arrived. A person on the hustings addressed them in the following words – "There has been an order given to stand six yards back from the stage, otherwise you will afford your enemies an opportunity to rush in with their Cavalry and all their corruption."

Each party had one or more flags with Inscriptions upon them, several of them had Caps of Liberty, and one had the form of a Pike painted red. The following are some of the Inscriptions. – "No Boroughmongers". "Unite and be free". "Equal representation or Death". "No Corn laws". "Taxation without representation is unjust and Tyrannical." "Annual Parliaments". "Universal Suffrage". "Election by Ballot". "The rights of Man". "Let us die like men and not be sold like slaves". "Liberty is the birthright of Man". "Unity & Strength". "Liberty & fraternity" – and several others which I was not near enough to read.

About half past one Hunt arrived in a Barouch accompanied by several men whom I did not know. On the front of the Barouch sat a female holding a flag. They proceeded to the Hustings and in a short time Hunt appeared on the Hustings. After silence had been obtained he began to address the meeting; at this time I was in the rear of the Hustings and could not distinctly hear what he said. Soon after I observed a commotion amongst the crowd on that side nearest to St. Peter's Church and immediately perceived some of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry Cavalry coming along the street. They formed in front of the House where the Magistrates were assembled. That part of the crowd which was nearest to the Hustings now faced about and gave three cheers, waving their Hats & Sticks in the air, as if in defiance of the Cavalry. The Special Constables & Yeomanry gave their cheers in return & the latter then advanced. At this time I retreated from the situation where I had before placed myself to avoid the pressure of the crowd, and had an opportunity of seeing the Yeomanry Cavalry approach the Husting. I observed that they used the utmost forbearance and I did not see any individual struck by them. After this the confusion became so great that I could not observe what passed at the Hustings.

After assisting the other constables for some time, I proceeded to the House where the magistrates were, and was inform'd that Hunt was in custody and several others.

Soon after the Revd W. R. Hay came to the Door and said that as Hunt was now in the custody of the Law, he requested no insult might be offered to him, and he had promised Hunt to accompany him to the New Bailey to protect him.

Thomas Hardman
Manchester – October 7th 1819