

HO42/198 f. 683. Information of Joseph Fletcher, Blackley.

Transcribed by Claire Robinson.

'Information of Joseph Fletcher of Blackley, Blacksmith, taken upon oath before me one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace in and for the County of Lancaster this ninth day of November 1819

who saith that on the 16th day of August last [he] saw a large mob of people come from Middleton about eleven o'clock in the morning, who had been previously joined at Middleton by large bodies of people who came from Rochdale – they proceeded to the meeting at Manchester in military order with fags flying – one or more caps of liberty and a band of music playing. Some of the mob said to Informant "We are going to the meeting in Manchester, will thou go with us?" Informant answered "I will not." Then James Wolstenholme, a farmer living in the Township of Alkington spoke to this Informant saying "then thou never shall have another job of work from me as long as thou lives" another of the mob said "nor is no damned borough-monger amongst you." Informant saw several persons in the mob that he should know again and thinks he could get their names – he recollects however that Edmund Hall son of John Hall farmer who lives at Roundthorn nr Alkington was there, also Samuel Bamford who acted as Commander in Chief. Informant saw part of the same body of people that passed his smithy in the morning to the meeting at Manchester, return from it a little after three o'clock in the afternoon of the same day Samuel Bamford acting as commander marching on the left side of the front rank – a purple flag was flying in the centre of the people and was one of the same flags that the mob took with them to the meeting in the meeting, the motto upon it was "Liberty or Death" on one side: on the other side was written "No Corn Laws" – the mottoes on two other flags that the mob carried with them to Manchester were – "Universal Suffrage" "Annual Parliaments" – the man who carried the flag on returning from Manchester when he got opposite to Informant's House, called out to Informant's Wife "here's another borough-monger lives here", meaning Informant. When they (the mob) were marching on the Middleton Road some of them said to others of them who were in the rear of the main body commanded by Bamford "the people about Bolton would return the day after, to Manchester with ten thousand arms and pikes and they (meaning themselves) were to get ready armed to join the people from Bolton." Informant stood near James Ogden's watering trough when he heard this conversation. A month before the 16th August Informant was frequently applied to by weavers living at, or near Middleton to make pikes, they, drawing a pattern of a pike with chalk on the Smithy window bottom – On Informant refusing to make them – they said they would go some where else and went away. Informant has frequently met reformers at public Houses in the neighbourhood, and particularly on Saturday evening the thirty first of July last was in company with several pens at James Ogden's who Informant knew to be reformers, when one of them whose name is [blank] said "The Prince Regent is not fit to govern a pig stye." – the whole meeting was talking down the Government of the Country, but Informant does not recollect any particular expressions other than the one about the Prince Regent.

On the 17th of August last and twice since Informant has been requested to make pikes by various persons and in particular by a man who is called "Plant" residing in Blackley. In October last Informant was again applied to, to make pikes by a man who Informant believes lives at or near Middleton.'