

HO42 199 fols 41-8. Letters of James Norris, JP, and Edward Clayton, John Moore and Joseph Green, Constables, 18-19 Nov. 1819, on the riots of the evening of 16th August at New Cross.

Transcribed by Sylvia Kölling

Manchester
Nov. 19. 1819.

My Lord

I have now the honour to transmit to your Lordship the remainder of the evidence in support of the Magistrates statement, a summary of the whole evidence & three maps of the Area of Saint Peters field.

I have also enclosed for your Lordship the statements of Messrs Moore Clayton and Green as to the transactions which took place at the New Cross on the evening of the 16th Aug. by which one man lost his life. Those Gentlemen saw more of what passed on that occasion than any other individual I am aware of. I went up to the New Cross but it was some time after the Riot Act had been read &c by Mr Wright. I believe the mob on this occasion were very daring & ungovernable and had assailed the civil & military power seriously before the latter fired.

In answer to a question put by Mr Hulton in his letter rec^d this morning I have to say that I believe neither the 15th Hussars not the Cheshire formed in the Ground before they began to disperse the mob – the mob being at the time I believe engaged with the Manch[este]r Yeom[an]y which latter force was considered in danger – on this how[ever] I will consult the Comm[itt]ee tomorrow & inform your Lordship of the result.

I have the honour to be my Lord
your Lordships faithful & hble Serv^t
J Norris

Lord Vis^t Sidmouth

[The enclosed maps are reproduced in the microfilm but have since been removed to the map cabinet MP1 134.]

[Enclosure 1]

About 7 o'Clock in the Evening of the 16th August a considerable Number of Constables accompanied by a small party of the 15th Hussars left the Police Office with an Intention of closing the Public Houses. Whilst proceeding on this Duty we were informed that there as a disturbance in Oldham Street the Mob being engaged in demolishing the Windows of a Dwelling House. We therefore repaired thither when we found that considerable Destruction had been effected – The [Mob upon?]* our Approach dispersed for the Moment & it was not in our power to detect any person in the Act of throwing Stones though whenever we halted we were assailed with them. This Rabble appearing to increase in Numbers at a Distance from us the Officer commanding stated that his force was too small & therefore Mr Moore the Constable set off for a Re-enforcement & he shortly returned with a party of Infantry. During the Absence of Mr Moore the Cavalry & Constables were insulted by the Mob throwing Stones and at the same Time hooting & hissing but no Injury was done by the Military till these Scenes were repeated after the Arrival of Mr Wright the Magistrate who [...] read the Riot Act.

The undersigned with other Constables remained till the Neighbourhood of New Cross was quiet which was not till late in the Evening.

Edward Clayton

Manchester 18 Nov 1819.

*Words obscured.

[Enclosure 2] About half past seven o'Clock in the evening of the 16th August a report was brought to me that the people were breaking the windows of a shopkeepers of the name of Tait in Oldham Street.

The Boroughreeve and my self, who were then out on duty, proceeded thither with a party of special Constables and a small detachment of the 15th Hussars, by different routes.

On my arrival, I found a very large body of men standing in front of the new cross with a great quantity of paving stones lying before them.

As it was thought imprudent to go near them without a greater force, I was dispatched to state this to the Magistrates.

On my way I met a party of the 88th Regiment & some additional special constables coming to our assistance & I returned with them.

When we came to the new cross we learnt that in my absence the constables and soldiers had been so pelted with stones, that they had determined to separate the solid mass of people before alluded to, and were then engaged in cleaning the streets.

I did not see any violence used on this occasion.

The people manifested the utmost unwillingness to return, & after we had paraded in the neighbourhood nearly an hour, as we were returning from the Ancoats road, we observed a great number of persons again formed on the ground from which they had first been driven.

I then went and repeated this to the Committee of the Magistrates & was accompanied on my return by Mr Wright.

Stones continued to be thrown at the constables and military & every persuasion to the people to disperse being unavailing, the Riot Act was read by Mr Wright, and a few shots were fired down Ancoats Street, Oldham Street and Shudehill.

Even this had little effect as to inducing the mob to retire and the parading of the civil power and the military was renewed & kept up till nearly eleven o'Clock, when the streets having much fewer persons in them, the whole force was withdrawn.

John Moore

Late first Constable of Manchester

Nov 18th 1819.

[Enclosure] I was not at the New Cross when the riot on the evening of the 16th of August commenced, but went in company with some other Special Constables, who were passing my house on their way thither about eight o'Clock. A detachment of Infantry was also passing at the same time. When we got to the New Cross, we found a small party of the 15th Hussars there before us. The body of the mob had then separated. Some of them took their stations so far from the Constables & the Military, as to be able to escape into the narrow side streets whenever they approached, from which they annoyed them with stones. A few of them were seized by the Constables, & I recollect one young man in particular, who denied most confidently that he had been throwing, and dared the Constables to take him into custody, but in whose pockets a brickbat was immediately found. He was a painter, & was taken with others to the New Bailey. The Constables & Military paraded the principal Streets in the neighbourhood for an hour or an hour & a half in conjunction, endeavouring to induce the people to disperse quickly, but appearances continued to grow worse & as night was approaching, the Riot Act was read by Mr Wright, & the Infantry fired. Many of the people stood their ground notwithstanding, & the impression on my mind was that the firing was only blank cartridges, till I heard the next day that three persons had been taken to the Infirmary, who had been wounded. I left the New Cross after it was dark, & the Streets were pretty well cleared.

Jos.] Green

Manchester 18th Nov. 1819