

Cowdroy's Manchester Gazette 21 August 1819

'The 16th of August will be dreadfully memorable in the annals of Manchester.'

Procession described— no disorder noted. Saddleworth, Lees & Mossley Union flag: 'It was black, in shape somewhat similar to the ancient Roman Standard, and bore on one side the words "Equal Representation or Death", and on the other, two hands clasped as tho' shaking hands, below which was the word "Love". There was also on the same side the motto, "Taxation without Representation is unjust and tyrannical". Amongst the parties from a distance, we were sorry to see many women and young girls.'

Gives Hunt's speech, which could not possibly be heard by all.

"A considerable disturbance was now observable on the south side of the area which the Meeting occupied. It was caused by the arrival of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry Cavalry at full gallop, and their ranging themselves in front of the houses in Mount-street, in one of which (Mr Buxton's) were the Magistrates. The persons on the outside of the compact crowd which formed the body of the Meeting, had fled with considerable precipitation on the first arrival of the military; several indeed were knocked down and trampled by the horses as they went to their stations. Those who were within reach of his voice, Mr Hunt kept exhorting to 'be firm.' A double cordon of special constables was ranged from Mr Buxton's house down to the Hustings, the orders to whom, were, to leave room between them for two persons to pass abreast so as to maintain a free line of communication. When the Cavalry had formed in Mount street, not five minutes had elapsed before they were addressed by one of their Officers. They replied to his address with loud cheers waving their swords over their heads. The persons on the side of the crowd nearest them now faced about and cheered in return. Previous to this period a strong detachment of infantry had taken post in Dickenson-street, and the alarm created in the meeting by the first appearance of the military has a little subsided, when the word of command was given, and the corps instantly charged up to the Hustings. Numbers of men, women or children were trodden underfoot or sabred. The peace officers had no protection, and probably have suffered in at least an equal proportion to any other class. The scene was truly terrific. In the consternation that ensued, the immense crowds pressing on each other in their flight, rendered escape more difficult, and even swiftness of foot did not always save them from being hewn down. About two minutes after the attack of the Manchester Yeomanry on one side, the Cheshire Yeomanry – a detachment of Dragoons and the 15th Hussars charged on another, thus adding to the dangers and horrors of the scene. Clouds of dust raised by the trampling of the horses frequently obscured nearly the whole Area, and when a sudden breeze of wind momentarily cleared them away, the glittering of the swords brandished in the sun, and the consideration that those against whom they were raised were fellow-countrymen and friends was truly heart-sickening!

We mentioned that on the first attack, a party of the Manchester Yeomanry had dashed up to the Hustings. The persons who occupied them were mostly taken into custody, amongst them Hunt, Johnston, Saxton, Moorhouse, were immediately conveyed to Mr Buxton's house. Mr Hunt refused to surrender to a military force – a Magistrate therefore made his appearance, to whose authority he instantly yielded. As he was led along the files of constables and soldiers to the Magistrates, he was repeatedly and brutally struck by those behind him. An attempt was made to knock off his hat that the blows might fall on his bare head – it did not succeed. He was mounting the steps which lead into Mr Buxton's house, when a half pay Major General, resident here, with a thick stick and the united force of both hands, gave him a blow which almost levelled him to the ground. Under these circumstances,

exposed to the blows of every person within reach and who chose to strike him, it is no wonder that Mr Hunt should cry 'Murder!', and that when he entered the presence of the Magistrates he should display considerable agitation. What passed before the Magistrates we only know from report, and we wish to confine ourselves to facts; suffice it to say, that in a few minutes Mr Hunt and the rest of the party taken along with him, were marched down to the New Bailey, preceded by the Magistrates and guarded by several special constables, and a double line of soldiers. He still remains in custody on what charge we know not. To return – the work of dispersion still continued – the standards were seized in triumph and borne away – the Cavalry galloped upon every one whom they saw, even at a considerable distance from the place of meeting, and into the Quakers' burying-ground. It is however but justice to say that the regular soldiery behaved with coolness and comparative moderation; when the ground was nearly cleared several pieces of horse artillery were paraded over it – some discharges of firearms took place; and after the commencement of the attack, some brickbats were thrown at the Yeomanry, one of whom was struck upon the face, so that he let go the reins, and falling from his horse fractured his skull; on Monday he was thought in great danger, but we understand he is now likely to recover. The number of persons killed and wounded it is impossible to estimate with accuracy, and we much fear it will never be accurately known. The number killed, or whose recovery is impossible, we apprehend however will not be less than 10, and 60 have been brought as patients to the Infirmary, of whom 30 are in-patients. A great number have also been under the private care of Surgeons in town; and many from a distance, who were not very severely wounded, too much alarmed to stay here, have had their wounds dressed by surgeons in their own neighbourhoods. We therefore think there cannot have been fewer than 200 wounded; many conceive there will have been 300, or even more.

When the field was cleared, the Yeomanry formed opposite Mount-street, and after a speech, we believe of *thanks*, from Mr Hay, gave three cheers and waved their swords in token of victory!!! They again cheered at the Police Office, about half past 2 in the afternoon. Parties kept patrolling the streets during the after part of the day and through the night. In the evening the windows of a man named Tate, in Oldham-street, were broken, a person there having imprudently waved one of the captured flags at the people as they passed by. It is reported that a number of the Cheshire Yeomanry were killed by the populace in the neighbourhood of Deansgate, on Monday evening. Whether this be true or not we hope to ascertain before going to press. In the course of Monday afternoon several persons were arrested in addition to those who had been taken into custody upon the Hustings, and among them Knight.

Amongst those killed on Monday, was Mr Ashworth, of the Bull's Head, a special constable. Our present number contains notices of several inquests, in which, incredible as it may seem, the verdicts are '*Accidental Death.*'

We have now concluded our recital of the most melancholy events of this dreadful day. But it will be asked by every one, *whether this attack was legal*, or at least, whether the Riot Act was read previous to the forcible dispersion of the crowd. *We believe it was not.* We have made the most diligent and general inquiries, both among special Constables and spectators, and we have not met with a single individual who knows either *when* or *where* it was read, or, in point of fact, who believes it was read at all. *It certainly was not read under such circumstances as that any considerable proportion of the Meeting were aware of it, or could have the slightest intimation that it was intended to disperse them* BY FORCE.

At present we cannot think upon the subject with sufficient coolness to trust ourselves to the expression of our feelings. But the affair cannot rest where it is...

The night of Monday passed off without further disturbance; but on Tuesday morning, symptoms of riot were displayed near New Cross; and, we believe, one man (a special constable) was killed by the mob. The Military were called out – the

riot act, we understand, read – and the populace fired upon – five or six persons were wounded by the discharge, one of whom is since dead. About ten in the morning, a report was circulated, that the mob had mustered to the number of ten or fifteen thousand: and were marching, armed with pikes and other deadly weapons, upon the town. The report was treated as a falsehood; but, about eleven o'clock, one of the municipal officers came, in a state of the utmost agitation, upon 'Change – ordered the building to be closed – all shops and warehouses to be shut up – and declared the town and neighbourhood *in a state of open rebellion*. The military were called out – cannon planted at the bottom of Oldham-street – (the way the rebels were supposed to be coming) and the utmost consternation was visible on every countenance.”