

PETERLOO 2019 ANIMATION SCRIPT

We'd marched thirty miles since dawn that morning,
Sunrise was scarlet, but we heeded no warning
Our mood was elated, we'd come to make change
From town and from village, from hamlet and grange –

From Atherton, Chadderton, Ashton and Bolton,
Saddleworth, Middleton, Crompton and Oldham,
From Failsworth, Rochdale, Royton and Urmston
Whitefield, Stretford, Stockport and Irlam

And more alongside, we'd organised, drilled
but never expected to see comrades killed
Unarmed, unruly perhaps but peaceful assembling –
Peaceful! Adjective: calm, comfort, welcoming

But we got the opposite: violence, destruction, disaster -
Designed to remind us who's servant, who's master.
Sixty thousand or more, all gathered together
To demand rights to vote, in fine summer weather

But our mood of excitement became panic and horror
As the cavalry charged, sent by men with no honour,
Hacking with sabres as we ran in pure terror
But couldn't escape, some dived into cellars,

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Some died, trampled by the stampede
Heard someone beneath me scream 'I can't breathe'.
In total eighteen were killed, hundreds were injured,
The field littered with bodies and flags, torn and splintered.

They stripped away humanity, left an empty shell,
Disregarded as a nuisance, we were sent to hell
We begged for mercy but it fell on deaf ears,
Distance too great to bear, nothing left but tears.

Our hearts screamed with passion but our voice went unheard
Our fists weak with anger but our minds undeterred.
We'd walked night and day, our journey was long,
But they fought against right, supported the wrong.

After the massacre they feared mass rebellion,
Restricted our rights to stop us from telling 'em
The thing about tyranny we know to be true -
It's doomed not to last cos we're many, they're few.

Someone once said to make change you must be it,
And though many of us did not get to see it
Change did evolve from what we underwent -
Our movement sparked Chartists, and birthed Suffragettes,

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Forged Unions, brought Welfare and National Health
And curbed the corruption of those with great wealth
But the price of freedom is to keep constant vigil
Civil rights don't reside with elected officials

We have to maintain them, guard and protect
And extend them to those who don't have them yet
The story continues, each age a new chapter -
Me Too, Time's Up, Occupy, Black Lives Matter

It doesn't take judges to send in the cavalry
For some to experience police brutality
and many face daily discrimination
That's why we're still fighting for representation -

We'll fight using knowledge against misinformation,
Fight with what's missed out from our education,
Fight with the tools of each new generation,
Fight with civility against brutalisation.