

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE DAY?

Lesson Two



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To know what happened at St Peter's Field on 16th August 1819
- To understand and reflect upon why this happened

THE PETERLOO MASSACRE



© Polyp Schlunke Poole, Peterloo - Witness to a massacre, 2019

On 16 August 1819, an estimated 60,000 people walked from across Manchester and its surrounding areas to St Peter's Field to protest for the right to vote.

Many walked especially to see the famous Henry Hunt speak on the need for electoral reform.

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WHO WENT?

Case study of four people who went to St Peter's Field:

- **Martha Partington** - a mother of two from Eccles
- **John Lees** - a cotton spinner and Waterloo veteran from Oldham
- **Mary Fildes** - president of the Manchester Female Reform Society
- **Hugh Hornby Birley** - Captain of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry and a leading mill owner of Manchester



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WHO WENT?

Activity: Get into four groups. In each of your groups consider

- Why do you think they went to Peterloo?
- What was their motivation?



MARTHA PARTINGTON

Martha was a mother of two from Eccles.

Being a mother of children in 1819 was very difficult, poverty was on the increase and even bread was too expensive to buy.

There are no pictures of Martha because only wealthy people had their portraits drawn and Martha would have had very little time to sit while she was drawn anyway.



JOHN LEES

John Lees was a 22-year-old cotton spinner and Waterloo veteran from Oldham.

John's father, Robert Lees, was a successful cotton factory owner in Oldham.

Robert Lees reported that John had gone to the demonstration without his consent.

Like Martha, there are no pictures of John because only very wealthy people would have had their portraits drawn.



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MARY FILDES

Mary Fildes was President of the Manchester Female Reform Society which was formed in the summer of 1819.

Many women active in the reform movement of the time dressed distinctively in white cotton as a symbol of their virtue.

A passionate radical, Mary Fildes was one of the main speakers on the platform at Peterloo.



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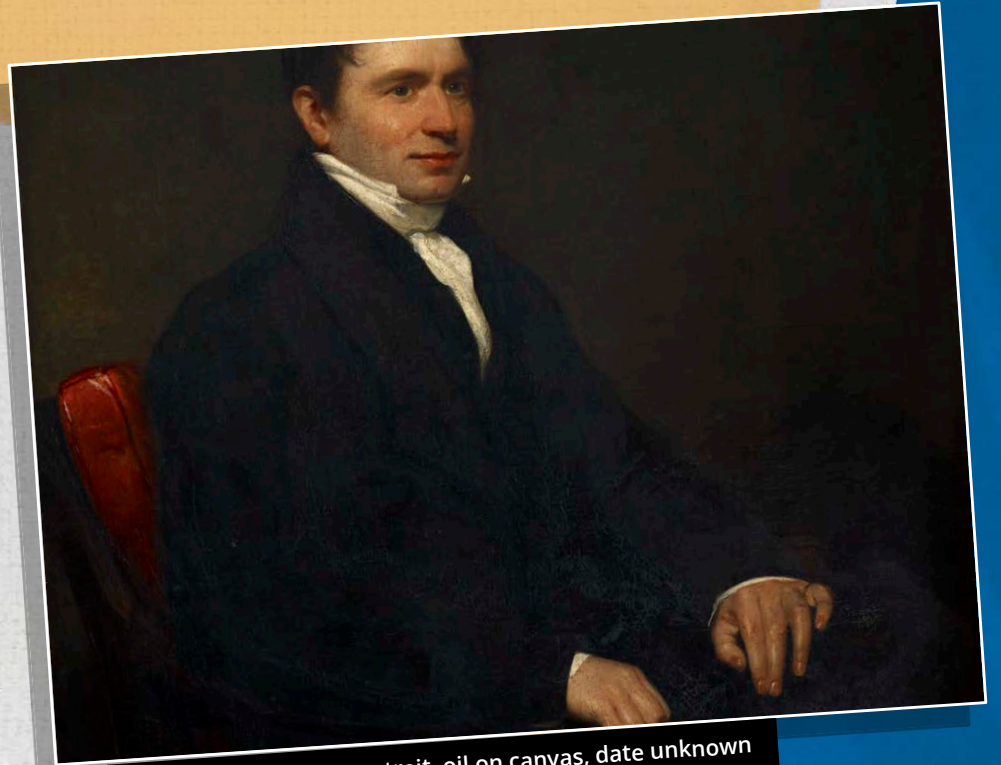
HUGH HORNBY BIRLEY

Hugh Hornby Birley was Captain of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry and a leading mill owner from Manchester.

The Yeomanry were a force of volunteer soldiers working for local government leaders.

This portrait of Hugh Hornby Birley shows off his wealth and power and was made around 1819.

Teacher Notes: This portrait on display at PHM until Feb 2020:
<https://phm.org.uk/exhibitions/disrupt-peterloo-and-protest/>



Hugh Hornby Birley portrait, oil on canvas, date unknown
© People's History Museum

THE JOURNEY



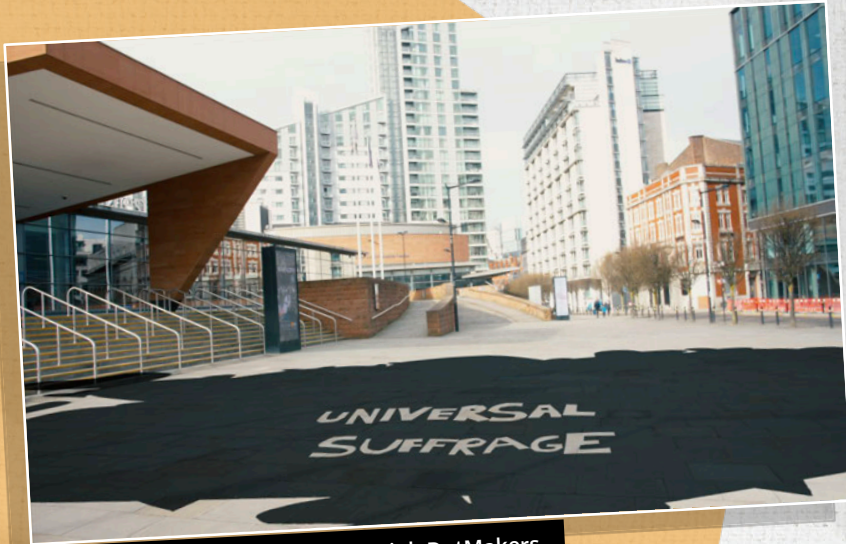
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Men, women and children walked wearing their best clothes, singing songs and carrying banners from towns and villages across and beyond today's Greater Manchester to attend a meeting at St Peter's Field, some walking nearly 30 miles.

Marching was practiced on local moors in the weeks before the meeting to ensure that everybody arrived in an organised manner.

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WHERE WAS ST PETER'S FIELD?



© Peterloo 2019 courtesy of TripleDotMakers

Today St Peter's Field is near to where St Peter's Square is in Manchester.

The speeches would have been just outside Manchester Central.

Activity: Use [google maps](#) to work out how long would it take you to get there from where you live.

Teacher Notes: Click on image for GIF of St Peters Field today.

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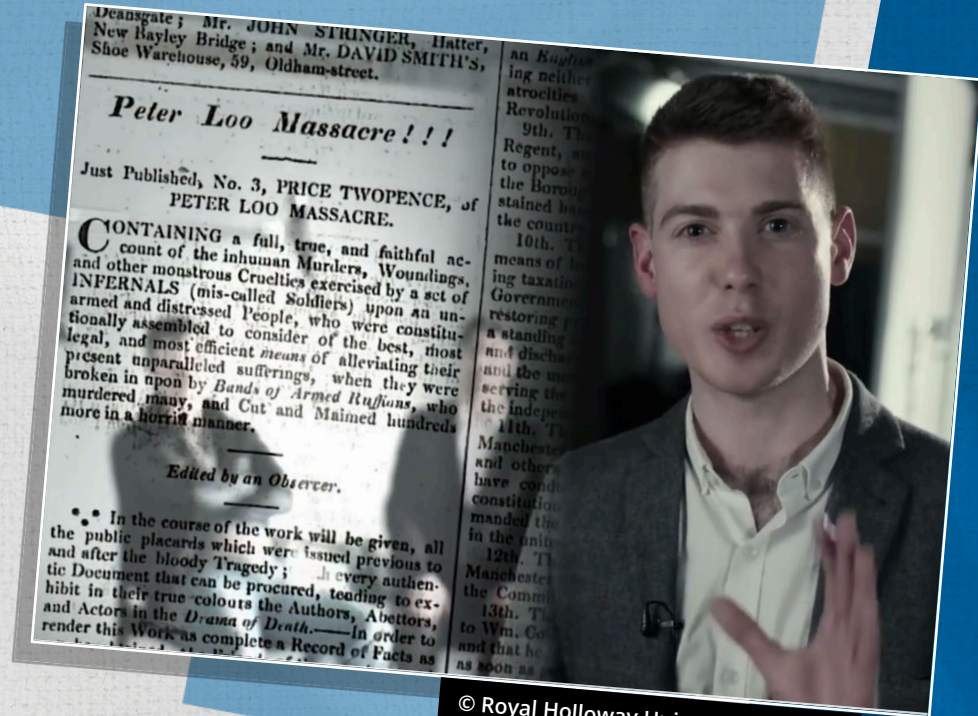
Teacher Notes: Click on the image for a 6 minute video that explains what happened.

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FILM REFLECTION

While you are watching the film consider the following questions:

- How would you have felt at the start of the day?
- How would you have felt when the speeches were taking place?
- How might you have felt when the authorities arrived armed on horseback?
- How would you have felt when you had to then walk home?



Teacher Notes: Optional Kahoot Quiz extension - Play via this link-

<https://create.kahoot.it/share/peterloo-quiz/e4bc8f08-2bcd-48bf-b997-b9e4283a4c84>

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CHRONOLOGICAL ACTIVITY

Using your worksheet put the events of the day into the correct chronological order based upon the video you have just seen.

You can also search the [Peterloo 1819 website](#) to help work out the chronological order.



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WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FOUR PEOPLE?



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MARTHA PARTINGTON

Mother of two from Eccles.

She died, when she fell into a cellar and was crushed by others.



JOHN LEES

Cotton spinner and Waterloo veteran from Oldham.

He died, following being beaten by constables.



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MARY FILDES

President of the Manchester Female Reform Society.

She was injured by constables when she refused to let go of the flag she was carrying.



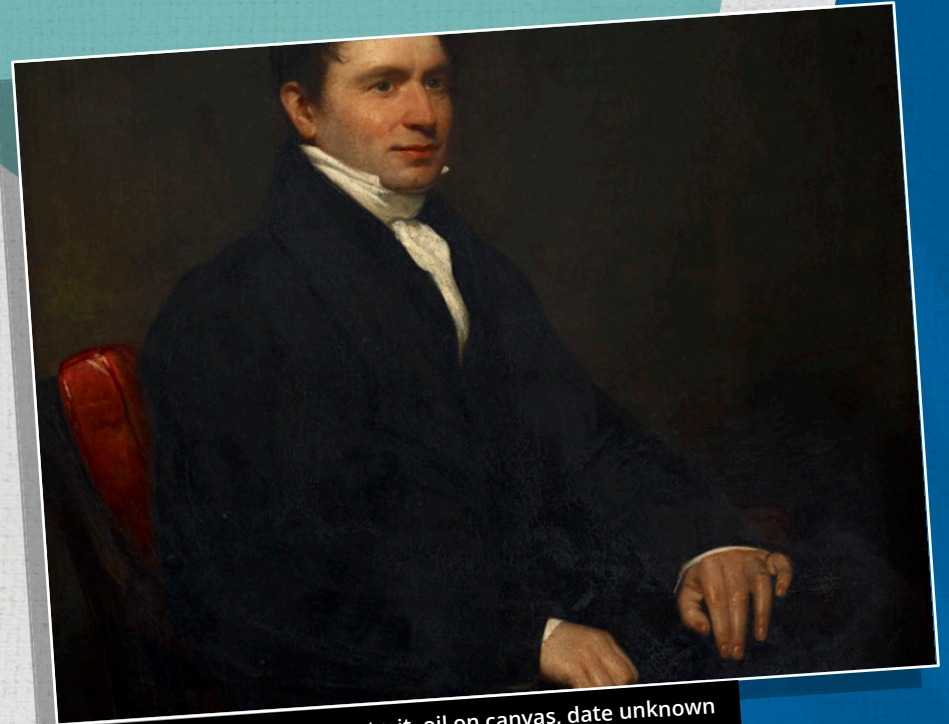
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HUGH HORNBY BIRLEY

Captain of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry and a leading mill owner of Manchester.

After giving the order to charge, he led the soldiers into the crowd and he was personally responsible for many deaths and injuries.

He was tried and acquitted of any wrongdoing after the massacre.



Hugh Hornby Birley portrait, oil on canvas, date unknown
© People's History Museum

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CAN WE EVER KNOW WHAT HAPPENED?

2019 is the 200th anniversary of Peterloo and we still are unsure about exactly how many people died.

We may never know the true number of people who were killed.



CAN WE EVER KNOW WHAT HAPPENED?

New research is ongoing and in this bicentenary year the figure currently agreed by historian Robert Poole and the Peterloo Memorial Campaign is that 18 people died.

New information about what happened at Peterloo is still coming to light today and past errors and recent discoveries mean numbers have changed over the years.



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