

OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS
GCSE
A952/22
HISTORY A
(SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT)
Historical Source Investigation
Developments in Crime and
Punishment in Britain, 1200–1945
WEDNESDAY 23 JANUARY 2013: Morning
DURATION: 1 hour 30 minutes
plus your additional time allowance
MODIFIED ENLARGED 24pt

SOURCE BOOKLET

DEVELOPMENTS IN CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN BRITAIN, 1200-1945

WERE THE MANCHESTER MAGISTRATES TO BLAME FOR THE 'PETERLOO' MASSACRE?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 16 August 1819 a demonstration took place at St Peter's Field, Manchester, as part of the campaign for working men to have the right to vote. The main speaker at the meeting was Henry 'Orator' Hunt, a famous campaigner for the reform of Parliament. A huge crowd assembled, perhaps 50 000 people or more. The local magistrates were responsible for maintaining law and order at the meeting. They were worried that the demonstration could lead to violence and the destruction of property. When Hunt arrived they decided to arrest him. The Yeomanry (local part-time soldiers) were sent into the crowd to carry out this order. Violence broke out, with eleven people killed and hundreds injured. These events were soon called the 'Peterloo' massacre.

Were the Manchester magistrates to blame for what happened at St Peter's Field?

SOURCE A

Lord Sidmouth tells me to say it would not be wise to attempt to prevent the meeting by force. Every obstacle should be used to try and prevent the meeting. The warning the magistrates have published will no doubt help. He has no doubt that you will make arrangements for obtaining evidence of what happens, so that anyone breaking the law may be prosecuted. However, even if they should talk of revolution, Lord Sidmouth thinks it would be wiser not to attempt to disperse the mob, unless they commit criminal acts or start to riot.

From a letter to the Manchester magistrates about the proposed meeting at St Peter's Field. It was sent on behalf of Lord Sidmouth, the member of the Government in charge of law and order, 4 August 1819.

SOURCE B

At about eleven o'clock we met in a house from which we could see the whole meeting. We all felt that it looked like an uprising, and could have no justifiable purpose. The crowd would certainly terrify all the King's loyal subjects. While the cavalry was lining up, you could see clear defiance from the reformers amongst the mob. However, the troops were able to do their job and arrest Hunt on the platform. In the meantime the Riot Act was read out, and the mob was completely dispersed, but not without serious and regrettable effects. After the arrests had taken place, one of the Manchester Yeomanry was struck by a brick. He lost control of his horse and fractured his skull when he fell. I am afraid that he has since died. A special constable has been killed, and four women appear to have lost their lives by being crushed by the crowd. These I believe are the only deaths at the meeting. Sword wounds occurred, but I hope none fatal. Several pistols were

fired by the mob. We deeply regret what has happened, but we have the satisfaction of witnessing the very grateful faces of the whole town, who consider themselves saved by our efforts.

***From a letter to Lord Sidmouth,
written on 16 August 1819 by one of the
Manchester magistrates.***

SOURCE C



A MEETING OF THE RADICAL REFORMERS took place on Monday 16 August on St Peter's Field, MANCHESTER. And H. Hunt was present and in a short space of time the Yeomanry of the place came in full gallop upon them when numbers (dreadful to relate) were rode over and several severely cut by their swords, some were killed, and a great number wounded. Together above one hundred thousand were assembled.

Words included below an engraving of events at St Peter's Field. In November 1819 magistrates seized this picture from its owner, and the owner was arrested. The picture shows soldiers forcing their way on horseback through a large crowd towards a platform full of men. Some of the crowd are carrying placards. One is saying, 'Hunt and Liberty'. On the platform are banners including one saying 'Unite and Be Free' and a sign saying 'Order, Order'. A soldier with a sword is on the platform arresting one of the men. At the front of the picture, soldiers are using their swords to hack at people in the crowd. Bodies are lying on the ground and other men and women have been knocked down and are raising their arms to protect themselves.

SOURCE D

It appears by every account that has yet reached us that in the midst of Hunt's speech, within less than twenty minutes of the start of the meeting, the Manchester Yeomanry charged the people, swords in hand, and cut their way to the platform. They made prisoners of Hunt and several of those who surrounded him. They trampled and cut down a number of the people. After throwing some stones and bricks at the cavalry, the people fled in the utmost confusion and dismay. Of the crowd a large portion consisted of women. About 8 to 10 people were killed and about 100 seriously wounded.

Was the meeting an unlawful assembly? We believe not. Was the subject proposed for discussion unlawful? Surely not. Was anything done at this meeting before the Yeomanry attacked, either against the law or in breach of the peace? None of the statements that have so far reached us suggests so.

From 'The Times' newspaper, 19 August 1819. The paper's reporter was on the platform with Hunt at the St Peter's Field meeting and was arrested by mistake.

SOURCE E

You accuse the Yeomanry of cutting at the crowd after Hunt and the others had been taken into custody, and of losing their temper after bricks were thrown at them. There is plenty of evidence to prove that this attack on the troops had begun before the platform was surrounded. The Yeomanry and all the troops employed in dispersing the crowd behaved well. Despite the fury with which they were attacked, and despite the fact that a soldier was knocked unconscious from his horse, to all appearances dead, not more than one death in the crowd was caused by a sword wound.

From a letter written by Captain Hugh Birley to 'The Times' newspaper in response to the account in Source D, August 1819. Birley was the leader of the group of Yeomanry sent to arrest Hunt at 'Peterloo'.

SOURCE F



A cartoon published in September 1819. Its title is 'A Radical Reformer: A Neck or Nothing Man! Dedicated to the Heads of the Nation'. It shows a monster shaped like a guillotine, terrorising Britain's government. A group of men are shown running away. The monster has a red cap on its head. Blood is dripping from a dagger in its one hand and from its other hand. Blood is also dripping from the blade and base of the guillotine. The monster is saying, 'I'm a coming! I'm a coming! I shall have you – though I'm at your heels now,

I'll be at your heads presently.' A Minister who is among the group running away replies, 'By the powers! I don't like the look of him at all!'

[Note: the guillotine was the method used during the French Revolution to execute enemies of the Revolution such as upper-class people by cutting their heads off.]

END OF SOURCE BOOKLET



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