

The Reputational Power of English Reform Crowds 1816 – 1848

Dave Steele

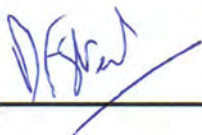
Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of History
at the University of Warwick
January 2023

Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Mentions of work I have published during the course of my research is of minor significance and has been cited in the footnotes.

I declare that the research and writing of the thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted to this or any other University for a degree.



Dave Steele

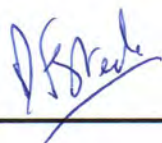
18 January 2023

Covid-19 impact statement

The Covid 19 pandemic had a minor impact on my research in so far as it prevented me making in-person follow-up visits to archives. However, I had already taken copious copies of primary documents. I also took advantage of the National Archives scheme to allow increased downloads of digitised documents. So, while the pandemic may have altered the timing and trajectory of my work, I don't think was detrimental overall.

Fortuitously, just before lockdown, I attended a presentation on the Digital Humanities by Chris Houghton, Head of Academic Partnerships at Gale which alerted me to how I could apply *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* to my work. While Warwick didn't have a subscription, Gale provided me with a trial account for GDSL which I used to conduct a text mining exercise on newspapers allowing me to compare the impact of a range of meetings with key events of my period. I also lobbied Academic Support at Warwick Library to get a subscription to GDSL which they now have.

It is also possible that the enhanced contact with researchers from other institutions via Teams and Zoom may have helped me to develop my theories, in particular with relation to my chapters on the somatic and emotional aspects of reform crowds.



Dave Steele

18 January 2023

Abstract

The historiography of reform crowds is dominated by references to excessive attendance numbers. This is the case in both primary and secondary sources. Through three case-studies across the period, this thesis challenges such claims and asks why historians have seldom looked at the evidence, leading them rarely to question crowd size. By combining theories of crowd densities with evidence of on-the-ground area at these meeting sites, the thesis scrutinises the feasibility of crowds reaching massive numbers and considers whether the political power of reform crowds was dependent on magnitude.

Drawing on sources as diverse as Home Office papers, digital maps and early photographic evidence, the research indicates that, while discrete crowds were often significantly smaller than previously thought, the combined effect of the so called ‘mass platform’ was to project an impression of ‘reputational power’ disproportionate to its numerical magnitude. This power was manifested and multiplied via newspapers to such an extent that the crowd was simultaneously fêted by the people and feared by the state; the people emboldened to make increasingly robust demands; the state repeatedly provoked into misguided and disproportionate shows of force and punitive legislation. It will be argued that the linking of magnitude to political power was a two-way process, leading people to exaggerate crowd numbers post-event on the basis of perceived power. This thesis seeks to decouple magnitude from power.

Invoking methodology from the emotional turn, crowd theory, haptics and proxemics, along with a consideration of the physicality of the crowd experience, this work is inevitably an interdisciplinary undertaking. After examining the power dialectics both within the reform movement and with the state, the thesis will conclude by arguing that, rather than discrete crowd events, it was the reputational power of the wider and long term ‘metaphorical’ crowd which was so feared by the state and which was ultimately (albeit retrospectively) successful in widening the franchise.

Acknowledgements

My first thanks must go to my dad, Philip Steele who, like me, came to academia late in life. It was his early death which propelled me to university study sooner rather than later. I know he would have been proud of my first-class honours degree (particularly as I didn't attend university on leaving school) and would have been delighted that I have progressed to post graduate research.

The concept for this thesis grew out of a mandatory masters essay on quantitative history which was unpopular with my contemporaries, most of whom chose to work with unwieldy cumbersome datasets. I took a different approach, selecting a single figure, 60,000, the reputed attendance at the notorious Peterloo meeting in 1819. I concluded that this figure could not be substantiated. Sarah Richardson marked the essay and suggested it would make a good subject for doctoral research. Hence the project was born. Thank you, Sarah, and thank you also for your encouragement and professional support as my PhD supervisor.

I would also like to thank Katrina Navickas and the late Malcom Chase who both encouraged me to present my tentative early findings as conference papers, a process which paid dividends in connecting me with a network of helpful and informative scholars who, while not all agreeing with my interpretation, nevertheless provided unstinting advice and encouragement enabling me to progress and widen the project. Among these are Matt Roberts, Fabrice Bensimon, Robert Poole, and others too numerous to mention. You know who you are.

Thanks must also go to the members of the University of Warwick History department, both the administrative staff who have changed personnel several times and the academic staff including, but not limited to, Mark Philp, Mark Knights and David Anderson. It has also been inspiring and enjoyable to participate in the lively community of Warwick postgraduate students who provide mutual support both in the form of seminars, work-in-progress sessions and conferences, again too numerous to mention individually but including Pierre Botcherby, David Fletcher and Amy Galvin-Elliot.

Inevitably, during a project as long as this, I have met a number of postgraduate researchers from other institutions including, among others, Vic Clarke, Joe Cozens, Joe Stanley, Caitlin Kitchener and Susan Thomas who all helped in different ways. Most of all it has been fun to spend time together. Independent researchers John Townley and Mark Crail have offered advice and encouragement, as have Richard Galpin of the Kennington Chartist Project and short story writer the late Uschi Gatward, with whom I worked on a chapter in the collaborative book *Resist Stories of Uprising*.¹

I have enjoyed discussing my work with my good friends Nick Clark, Nick Young, Steve Edwards, as well as Tim Taylor who introduced me to the concept of the dichotomy of protest. Thanks to my proof-readers Fabrice Bensimon, Vic Clarke, and Elizabeth Smith.

Finally, I want to thank my mum Janet, son Danny and daughter Catherine for their encouragement and most of all my wife Judy who not only brought her proof-reading skills to bear in advising corrections but has also had to endure me banging on about this for the past six years.

¹ *Resist – Stories of Uprising* (Manchester, 2019), pp. 181-201.

Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Figures.....	x
Tables	xii
Abbreviations.....	xiii

Chapters

1. Prolegomena The enigmatic crowd.....	1
The contagious crowd	8
The moral crowd	9
Agency	11
The performative crowd.....	12
The platform.....	14
The demonstrative crowd.....	17
The reported crowd	20
The emotive crowd.....	20
The body of the crowd	21
The powerful crowd	22
2. Setting the scene Post-war crisis: Spa Fields.....	27
The silenced crowd	28
The anticipated crowd	31
The renegade faction	32
Hunt's 'wretched sophistry'	34
The state is 'out of tune'	35
The subjugated crowd	38
3. Crowd theory, science and methodology	40
Des Foules	41
The contagious crowd	42
The fickle crowd.....	43
Masse und Macht	44

The existential crowd	45
The chimeric crowd.....	46
The worthy crowd	47
The mis-construed crowd.....	49
Crowd science	51
The dangerous crowd	52
Density	53
The Fruin model.....	54
Grid technique.....	55
The body ellipse	56
Risk	59
Proxemic zones	60
Clustering	62
The social crowd	64
Area calculation	65
Charting newspaper reports.....	67
Penetration of the press	69
4. The quantified crowd	72
Peterloo 19 August 1819	76
Rushcart Procession	79
Crush Injuries	86
The ‘Sandpit Meetings’ Newhall Hill, Birmingham, 1817 – 1833	91
Grand Midland demonstration	100
Chartist meeting, Kennington Common 10 April 1848	101
Biscuits, spirits and salt pork	103
Capitulation	109
A contentious performance	110
Principally mechanics, all peaceful.....	113
The surveilled crowd?	116
The irregular crowd.....	119
The absentee crowd.....	122
Conclusion – the hyperbolic crowd.....	125
The itinerant crowd	126
Fear of the mob	127

Fuzzy magnitude perception	131
Projection of power	132
5. The communicative crowd Reporting, representation, perception	134
The notified crowd	135
The reported crowd	140
News penetration – following the paper trail.....	143
The perceived crowd	145
The radical press	148
The loyalist press.....	152
The infiltrated crowd?	154
Verbal communication	158
A sudden and spontaneous meeting	159
The memorialised crowd.....	161
Cross generational legitimacy	163
The imagined crowd.....	165
Rinsings of Tom Paine in ditch-water	167
‘We’ve been clemmed long enough’	169
Songs of the crowd.....	171
If you want reform, don’t hang out to the last.....	172
No physical force shall stand guard at our door.....	173
The depicted crowd	174
God bless the women	175
Who’s who of radical politics	178
Pug noses for ever	181
Not even a baker’s cart has been pillaged.....	181
All that is solid melts into air	183
Conclusion – The fascinating and fascinated crowd.....	185
6. Emotions, affects and atmospheres – The expectation of crowds	188
Crisis in subjectivity.....	189
Henry Hunt at Spa Fields 1817	193
The ‘atmosphere’ of the crowd.....	193
Yeomanry attack Peterloo reform meeting 1819.....	196
‘The ruthless state is slain by the maiden Hope’	196

Oh! Spare my father	198
Cold Bath Fields, London, 1833	201
Police attack on reform meeting	201
Birmingham Bullring 1839	203
Police assault on Chartist meeting	203
Chartist meeting Kennington Common, 1848	205
‘The sentiments that actuate us all’	205
Charles Kingsley’s Alton Locke (published 1850)	212
Confusion, solidarity, disorder Imagined rural hardship/incendiarism in the 1830s	212
George Eliot’s Felix Holt – The Radical (published 1866).....	215
Imagined election riot circa 1832 Anger, Disorder, Bravery	215
Wild chaotic desires and impulses	216
Conclusion – ‘Feeling Political’	218
7. The body of the crowd Corporeal/somatic experience	222
The belly, the bladder, and the bowel.....	223
The belly.....	224
A cup of prime ale	225
Acoustics	226
Every man hold his tongue.....	229
Gladstone’s shouters.....	229
Calling to order	232
The bladder.....	233
Party	235
Escalation and disorder	236
Fatigue and inclement weather.....	237
Conclusion – The physical crowd	239
8. The reputational power of the crowd	240
Soft versus hard power.....	249
The anticipated crowd.....	251
Proxy power	252
Conceded power.....	255
Internal dialectics - agency/leadership/class	257
The gendered crowd.....	259

Assert the dignity and equality of the sex	261
Working-class power.....	265
Middle-class power	266
Conclusion – The persistent crowd	267
9. Conclusion – The metaphorical crowd	270
Enhanced power	272
Legacy of the reform and Chartist movements	275
The expectant crowd	277
The metaphorical crowd.....	278
Engagement.....	281
Further research.....	282
Reputational power	284
Appendix 1. Timeline of key events.....	286
Appendix 2. Provenance of the Daguerreotypes.....	287
Appendix 3. Density Control	293
Bibliography.....	295

Figures

1:1 Detail from 3rd Spa Fields Meeting, George Cruikshank	12
1:2 Term Frequency Chart for the term ‘Reform Meeting’	23
1:3 Chartist Meeting at Basin Stones, Todmorden, 1842, Alfred Bayes	25
2:1 Spa Fields in 1790s Painting by Charles Matthews, 1857.....	30
2:2 Clerkenwell and its Environs, 1805, James Tyner.....	30
2:3 Annotation from: 3rd Spa Fields Meeting, George Cruikshank	35
2:4 William Hone’s Spa Fields Broadsheets, 1816-17.....	36
3:1 John Thelwall addressing a 1795 reform crowd at Copenhagen Fields	50
3:2 [l] Crowd density averaged three ppsm at People’s Vote March 19 October 2019	53
3:2 [r] Reform meeting Smithfield, 21 July 1819.....	53
3:3 Tennis Court Density Avatars	55
3:4 The body ellipse.....	56
3:5 Density of five people per square metre	56
3:6 Density of four people per square metre illustrating the effect of girth	57
3:7 Chartist meeting at Kennington Common, Daguerreotype by William Kilburn	58
3:8 Crowd Density Calculation	59
3:9 Crowding on rush hour underground train.....	61
3:10 Edward Hall’s Proxemic Zones.	62
3:11 Uneven crowd density at Kennington in 1848.....	63
3:12 Crowd of two ppsm approaching Hall’s ‘Intimate Zone’	63
3:13 Contemporary calculation of attendance at Kersal Moor on Sept 24 1838.....	65
3:14 Uneven clustering of political crowd, 1832.....	66
3:15 Search of British Library Newspapers for a range of orderly meetings.	68
4:1 ‘A view of St Peters Plain Manchester on the 16 August 1819, T Whaite	80
4:2 Plan of Peterloo prepared for 1819 Enquiry.	82
4:3 Peterloo Site area 16,000 m2 Calcmeps®.	82
4:4 Processions to Peterloo from epicentres of support.....	83
4:5 Plan of Peterloo Crowd by Rev. Stanley.....	85
4:6 CGI reconstruction for Peterloo Witness Project.....	85
4:7 Published claims for Peterloo crowd size.....	88
4:8 Crowd Size Calculator for Peterloo.....	90
4:9 Panoramic montage of the site looking north during redevelopment in 2001.....	92

4:10 The Gathering of the Unions on Newhall Hill, May 1832.	95
4:11 Newhall Hills, Colmore Map c.1820.	96
4:12 Map of 1834 Land Sale	96
4:13 1834 Land Sale Document.....	96
4:14 Area Calculation of Newhall Hill.	96
4:15 Original Daguerreotypes by William Kilburn	101
4:16 Military Provisioning Documents for 10 April 1848.	104
4:17 Order listing squadrons of soldiers to be stationed at key locations.....	105
4:18 Order for 7379 Truncheons.	106
4:19 The Bank of England in a state of defence. Illustrated London News	107
4:20 Area Calculation of Kennington Common 1848	112
4:21 Possible camera locations for Kilburn’s Daguerreotypes.....	117
4:22 Visualisations of perspective frame superimposed on map.	118
4:23 Panoramic sectional grid used to count the Kennington crowd.....	119
4:24 Engraving based on the daguerreotype.....	120
4:25 Protest against Iraq War Hyde Park, London 15 February 2003.	120
4:26 Suggested visualisation of uneven density distribution of crowds.....	126
5:1 Notice warning against infiltration at torchlit Chartist Meeting	134
5:2 Newspaper reproduction of street notice announcing second Spa Fields Meeting	136
5:3 Government poster banning Kennington Chartist Meeting 10 April 1848.....	137
5:4 Poster announcing Kennington Chartist Meeting 10 April 1848..	139
5:5 BPU report of Newhall Hill Reform Meeting 3 October 1831.....	148
5:6 Home Office Surveillance: Dialogue between a town and a country Chartist.	155
5:7 1848 Special Constable’s Truncheon decorated as souvenir.	161
5:8 Jug awarded to Mudford Yeomanry Cavalry, 1831	161
5:9 Jug depicting female victim of Peterloo, 1819.	161
5:10 Peterloo Handkerchief by John Slack, Calico Printer	162
5:11 Medal marking the inauguration of the BPU.....	163
5:12 Satirical Coronation Token for William IV.....	164
5:13 ‘Reform Among Females’, John Lewis Marks (August 1819).....	174
5:14 ‘The Belle Alliance,’ George Cruikshank, August 1819.....	176
5:15 ‘The Meeting of the Birmingham Political Union’, Benjamin Haydon	178
5:16 Subscription list for ‘The Meeting of the Birmingham Political Union’	179
5:17 Chartist Procession, John Leech, Punch, 29 April, 1848.....	180
5:18 The meeting on Kennington Common - ILN Engraving.....	183
5:19 Composite transposed image of daguerreotypes with ILN engraving.....	184

6:1 Robert Plutchik’s wheel of emotions	190
6:2 Third Spa Fields Meeting 10 February 1817, George Cruikshank	193
6:3 Details from: The Massacre of Peterloo, John. Lewis Marks	198
6:4 Calthorpe Street Riot, Cold Bath Fields 13 May 1833.....	201
6:5 Police attack Chartists at Birmingham Bull Ring, 4 July 1839, Richard Doyle.....	203
6:6 Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common, 10 April 1848.....	206
7:1 [l] Food and drink for sale at 1795 Reform meeting	225
7:1 [r] Picnic basket at 1832 meeting in Birmingham.	225
7:2 Hunt-ing the Bull, George Cruikshank, British Museum	236
8:1 Reports of selected mass platform meetings and other significant events.....	242
8:2 Reports of selected mass platform meetings.	243
8:3 Reports of mass platform meetings compared with other major events.	244
8:4 Reports of mass platform meetings versus riots..	245
8:5 Reform petition clauses printed in full in the Tory press	246
8:6 James Wroe, Peter-loo Massacre, August 1819.....	251
8:7 Detail of Gathering of the Unions’ on Newhall Hill, May 1832.	260
8:8 Susannah Inge.....	262
9:1 Manhood Suffrage Riots In Hyde Park, 1866, Nathan Hughes	276
A1.1 Timeline of key events	286
A2.1 Daguerreotypes by William Kilburn of Kennington Common 10 April 1848.....	287
A2.2 Prince Albert, Coloured Miniature by William Kilburn, 1848	290
A2.3 Queen Victoria’s handwritten caption on the reverse of RCIN 2932482	291
A3.1 Calcmaps© calculation of area occupied by Hyde Park crowd	293
A3.2 Aerial photo of 2005 Live8 concert in Hyde Park	294
Tables	
4.1 Attendance reported at Birmingham Reform meetings 1817-1838	98
4.2 Kennington Crowd Calculations	122
5.1 Political medals, coins and tokens	165

Abbreviations

BL – British Library

BM – British Museum

BPU – Birmingham Political Union

BRO – Birmingham Record Office

ILN – Illustrated London News

LWMA – London Working Men's Association

NCA – National Charter Association

NCSU – National Complete Suffrage Union

TNA – The National Archives

ODNB - Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

ppsm – People per square metre

1. Prolegomena

The enigmatic crowd



This quote originates from what most historians would expect to be a trustworthy and reliable source, yet it makes an uncorroborated claim. The attendance of the 1819 reform meeting is confidently stated on the Twitter feed of the National Archives (TNA) to have been 60,000 people. The video on their associated Peterloo website page goes further. Dr George Hay, at the time TNA Head of Military records, said the crowd was, ‘Potentially more than 60,000 people.’² Hay is in good company – this figure has been accepted unquestioningly by most historians ever since it was first reported by *The Times* just two days after the massacre (see chapter four).³ To be fair, these assertions were made in good faith – there was no intent by Hay to mislead, but, coming from TNA, an organisation which we may expect to stick to facts, it reinforces the point about how close historians can come to disseminating what we would now term ‘fake news’.

Compare the certitude of the TNA statement with the controversy surrounding attendance at present day outdoor political meetings. In January 2017, Sean Spicer, Donald Trump’s Press Secretary claimed that journalists had edited photographs to undermine Trump’s claim that his inauguration crowd was the largest ever, while in August 2016, police estimates of crowd size at a Jeremy Corbyn rally in Liverpool contradicted those of organisers by a factor of three.⁴ If authorities, police, and the press cannot agree on attendance at present-day demonstrations with the benefit of

¹ The National Archives Twitter feed 16 August 2018, <https://twitter.com/uknatarchives/status/1030061825868660741> (accessed 3 April 2020).

² <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/unboxing-the-archive/st-peters-field/> (accessed 3 April 2020).

³ *The Times*, 18 August 1819.

⁴ *The Guardian*, 22 January 2017, *The Guardian*, 7 August 2016.

CCTV, drone footage and crowd sampling algorithms, how can historians confidently state the size of a crowd 200 years ago?⁵

Even revered historians such as E. P. Thompson made uncorroborated excessive claims for attendance at orderly reform gatherings.⁶ This thesis seeks to corroborate or challenge such claims. Expanding on this I will investigate why historians have rarely challenged attendance figures at reform meetings, limiting their discourse to the relative merits of different reports and the political bias they might reveal. They have seldom looked closely at the actual evidence by testing the feasibility of crowds reaching massive numbers at different locations by considering travel distance or local population numbers, or by calculating venue capacity by combining ground plans with crowd densities or extrapolating the implications of tight densities.

I will suggest that repeating unsubstantiated claims about excessive attendance puts the focus too heavily on attendance and argue that political crowds were much more about power than raw numbers. To understand this, it is necessary to step back and look at the macro-history of the power dynamics between the reform crowd and the state. The argument of my thesis is that the reputational power of reform crowds was a far more important measure of impact than crude numbers.

These campaigns have been described as a ‘mass’ platform, but the ‘mass’ was disparate and dispersed and in this lay its true strength.⁷ The state could not comprehend the potential

⁵ Ali Al-Sheary and Ali Almagbile, ‘Crowd Monitoring System Using Unmanned Aerial Vehicle’, *Journal of Civil Engineering and Architecture*, 11 (2017), p. 12; Zhao, Zhen et al., ‘Active Crowd Counting with Limited Supervision’, *ArXiv*, abs/2007.06334 (2020), p. 14.

⁶ E.P.Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1968), p. 748.

⁷ John Belchem, ‘Radicalism as a ‘Platform’: Agitation in the Periods 1816-1821 and 1848-1851 – With Special Reference to the Leadership of Henry Hunt and Feargus O’Connor’ (PhD thesis - University of Sussex, 1974), p. 7; Henry Jephson, *The Platform, its Rise and Progress* (London, 1892), pp. xx and 4.

influence of the platform. Focusing on the numbers attending individual meetings gave the lie to the notion that magnitude equaled strength and therefore conversely that low attendance implied political insignificance. It will be argued that crowds at individual events were often numerically smaller than claimed but, rather than detracting from their power, it strengthened it because, as it will be shown, the ‘political pandemonium’ which surrounded multiple events (often preceding or anticipating them) amplified their political significance out of proportion to the events themselves. In other words, the mass platform of the successive reform campaigns frequently punched way above its weight which leads to my secondary research question: Was the political power of reform crowds dependent on magnitude?⁸

One might ask why this thesis is concerned with numbers at all. The answer is simple – to set the record straight and move away from a preoccupation with figures which is speculative, tending to obscure the mechanisms and dynamics of the politics of power. This research is necessary to contest the uncorroborated overstatement of reform crowd attendance by historians of reform movements. As well as Peterloo, many other examples can be found. Attendance at the Great Chartist meeting on Kennington Common on 10 April 1848 was estimated by David Goodway to be 170,000, while Malcom Chase argued the crowd was 150,000.⁹ This figure has not changed since Robert Gammage recorded the crowd as 150-170,000 in the first history of the Chartist movement written in 1854.¹⁰ Much of this work relied on newspaper reports rather than other evidence and, as already stated, such figures are inevitably speculative so a considered re-visitation of this debate is overdue. The quantitative exercise in chapter four suggests that a figure nearer 25,000 is more likely for Kennington and, while Chase was encouraging of this

⁸ The ‘mass platform’ was a term coined by Jephson to describe the emulation of the ritual of the election hustings to attain a degree of political participation; Jephson, *The Platform*, p. xx.

⁹ David Goodway, *London Chartism – 1838-1848* (Cambridge, 1982) p.137; Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester, 2007) p.302.

¹⁰ R. G. Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854* (London, 1969), p. 314.

research, Goodway has disputed it.¹¹ The fact that reopening this debate has caused controversy underlines the need for more work. Some historians are now rethinking their figures. On Peterloo, for example, this research has influenced Robert Poole to revise down his estimate of the crowd figure from 60,000 to around 40,000 (see p. 83).¹²

One historian who has written on the issue of attendance figures is Joseph Hamburger. His work on re-assessing the crowd size at the Birmingham meetings of the early 1830s was innovative and involved a re-examination of evidence of ground area and potential crowd density to make an informed estimation of the low and high figures.¹³ In this way he established a range within which the crowd size was likely to fit. But Hamburger was working without the benefit of computers. What is required is an evidence-based quantitative investigation into the feasibility of excessive numbers in which site capacity can be calculated and compared with reported claims of attendance. By considering a series of case studies, this research will apply quantitative, digital techniques to produce an updated version of Hamburger's evidence-based technique.

The selection of the case studies requires some explanation as there were hundreds of meetings across the 32 years covered by this thesis.¹⁴ Two pieces of data are required to calculate the capacity of any site – area and density, so this exercise can only be carried out when the crowd occupied a finite space. This rules out sites with undefined boundaries. Many other examples of potentially overstated reform meeting crowds can be found during the research period from 1816-1848, but few meet the criteria of occupying a finite measurable area. This includes

¹¹ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/history/events/2018/jun/Chartism-day-2018> (accessed 3 April 2020); Video of David Goodway's talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjdGUghJimM> (accessed 3 April 2020).

¹² Robert Poole, *Peterloo - The English Uprising* (Oxford, 2019), p 363.

¹³ Joseph Hamburger, *James Mill and the Art of Revolution* (London, 1963), pp. 132-6.

¹⁴ Katrina Navickas, *Old database of political meetings, 1776-1848* (2019), <https://historyofpublicspace.uk/political-meetings-mapper-2/old-database-of-political-meetings-1776-1848/> (accessed 31 March 2023); Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain 1758-1834* (Harvard, 2005), p. 88.

many of the large northern moors meetings, although Kersal Moor is briefly discussed in chapter three. I am also focusing on orderly meetings rather than riots and meetings which were pre-announced which rules out spontaneous gatherings. I also wanted to look at meetings which were widely reported as having very large attendance. This rules out smaller meetings. So the case studies were chosen to fit tight criteria and also because they span the timescale of this study and provide a north-south geographical spread across the country.

Other issues are those of timing and mobility. Meetings often lasted for several hours during which time attendees may have come and gone, so total attendance figures may have exceeded site capacity taken as a snapshot at a fixed moment in time. However while this may have allowed for some fluctuation in numbers it is unlikely that this was significant in terms of the excessive claims often made. There is also the issue of the ‘fuzzy boundary’. There is no question that crowds often spilled out into the surrounding streets, sometimes out of choice and at other times because they were prevented from entering the area by physical or human barriers but again this is unlikely to have affected figures by more than a low percentage. It is also possible that some of the peripheral crowd may have had ambiguous status as observers rather than participants (see chapter nine).

On the point of mobility, the case studies all feature static crowds. This is partly for practical reasons as though, while not impossible, quantifying a moving crowd is problematic, but also because orderly crowds were largely static apart from arriving and dispersing and the inevitable comings and goings particularly during longer events (see chapter seven).¹⁵ While there is some discussion of disorderly crowds in chapters 5-7, as well as the reaction of orderly crowds to

¹⁵ The numbers in moving crowds or procession can be calculated if the average width of the streets as well as the total length of the march start to finish is known along with the area of the assembly and finish areas.

external violence, this thesis focuses on the mass platform, which was of essence a self-restrained, non-violent political movement. This is not to say the factor of processions has not been taken into account. The entrance of processions was sometimes part of the ritual, on occasion even announcing arrivals with bugle calls.¹⁶ It has been generally assumed that the bulk of processions had arrived by the time estimates of attendance were made but clearly there had to be an element of guesswork which is really one of the points of this thesis.

The difficulty of agreeing on start and finish times and whether a meeting was in full flow at the time of making an attendance claim is why I have opted to calculate capacity for each site followed by a more nuanced discussion taking other factors into account. I am also careful not to make new attendance claims, rather I suggest that, for example, attendance at a particular site was ‘unlikely to have exceeded x thousand’ or that we ‘should be thinking in terms of the lower, rather than the higher tens or even hundreds of thousands.

Peterloo will comprise the first case study as it perfectly fits the main criteria of being on a finite site.¹⁷ It was also very brief so once Hunt arrived, there was little opportunity for a peripatetic crowd. The second case study comprises reform meetings held at Newhall Hill Birmingham over a 16-year period from 1817 to 1833 which although many lasted several hours were notable for restraint and order and also the cordial relationship between reformers and municipal authorities. The third case study focuses on the 1848 Kennington meeting which again was brief but which uniquely provides the opportunity for a head-count.¹⁸ At all three sites it is possible to measure the area available for crowd occupation, but to calculate capacity some assumptions must be made regarding crowd density. These case studies will be revisited several times in later chapters to consider non-quantitative aspects of reform crowds.

¹⁶ BRO LF 76.11, Point 15.

¹⁷ Poole, *Peterloo*, p. 280.

¹⁸ Birmingham Record Office (BRO) 64654; BRO 64660.

One of my ‘primary’ sources will be newspaper reports but, in one sense they are a secondary rather than a primary source as the reports were mostly written by observers rather than participants. In many cases reports were constructed after the event by writers not present or copied from other newspapers. As Mark Harrison has said, accounts tended to be highly partial so we have to be aware that our information has been distorted through the journalistic lens.¹⁹ Other sources include Home Office papers which are also problematic as this time the lens was the state’s viewpoint. I will also incorporate crowd theory with digital mapping techniques. This work will also have an interdisciplinary element in that psychological and sociological theory will be applied to help understand the way reform crowds might have operated, and crowd science and modelling will be used for the quantitative calculations. I will also cite literary works, not as primary evidence, but as tools to help to understand how authors and readers expected crowds to behave.

If 60,000 people were present at Peterloo, and the field was evenly peopled, the density would have been four people per square metre (ppsm), but at this density, movement would have been difficult, sitting impossible and exit challenging.²⁰ Toilet breaks would have been problematic and time consuming and critically, the movement of horses would have been constrained and the passage of police and special constables on foot would have been inhibited (Figure 3:14). Even the exchange of information would have become challenging. The crowd, as at most meetings, would have been uneven across the field. The problem comes in arriving at a feasible average density.

¹⁹ Mark Harrison, *Crowds and History: Mass Phenomena in English Towns, 1790-1835* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 39.

²⁰ G. Keith Still, ‘Crowd Dynamics’, (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, July 2000), p. 42.

Fortunately, much work has been done on modern crowds so chapter three works through some of these theories to arrive at an acceptable working density. I will cite the work of crowd scientist Keith Still to suggest that densities of over two people per square metre for longer meetings are unlikely.²¹ This chapter will also deal with the issues of people's feelings about personal space and the science of proxemics, as expounded by Edward Hall, and build on the modelling techniques used for crowd control to set out the methodology of the quantitative exercises in chapter three.²²

The contagious crowd

The debate on political crowds has been dominated by two schools, firstly the authoritarian theories of the late nineteenth-century French school including Gabriel Tarde, Hippolyte Taine and Gustave Le Bon which perceived any gathering as potentially riotous; and more recently the Marxist school of E. P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé.²³ The latter, while departing from authoritarian theories, nevertheless still invoked the language of riot. Neither of these models directly addresses the pre-planned mass platform events of interest to this research. While acknowledging the ever-present background of, and, on occasion escalation to riot, this work concerns the orderly event. The paternalistic theories of Le Bon et. al. are only relevant for providing background to the possible mindset of nineteenth-century governments in formulating their public order policy. They were primarily influenced by criminology, sociology and psychology and are discussed along with the work of twentieth-century sociologists, such as Jap Van Ginneken, Mark Granovetter and Stephen Reicher, who have put up a strong case refuting the over-simplified and predominantly atavistic earlier theorists.²⁴ I will contest the authoritarian nature

²¹ Ibid, p. 108.

²² Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York, 1969), pp. 116-20.

²³ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York, 2017), pp. 44-5; George Rudé, *The Crowd in History* (London, 2005), p. 217; Hippolyte Taine, *The French Revolution* Vol. 1, translated by John Durand (Indianapolis, 2002), p. 30.

²⁴ Jaap van Ginneken. *Crowds, Psychology, and Politics, 1871-1899* (Cambridge, 1992) p. 41; Mark Granovetter, 'Threshold Models of Collective Behavior', *American Journal of Sociology*, 83 (1978), pp. 1423-4; Stephen

of much early crowd theory, citing sociologist Elias Canetti's egalitarian idea of crowds.²⁵ John McClelland draws an interesting parallel between the concurrency of the work of Louis Pasteur on the teeming life of bacteria with authoritarian crowd theories.²⁶

The moral crowd

Thompson tended to reify the crowd and conflated the terms 'crowds' and 'riot' which makes his work problematic.²⁷ We need to distinguish between the orderly crowd and riotous crowd. One might expect that his celebrated article 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century' would have contemplated orderly crowds, but it was predominantly a discourse on the Assize of Bread system.²⁸ Although Thompson's 'legitimising notion' could be detected in many eighteenth century crowd actions, it does not apply in the same sense to the orderly reform crowds which concern this thesis.²⁹ Thompson conceded that, 'the breakthrough of the new political economy of the free market was also the breakdown of the old moral economy of provision.'³⁰ Although this notion of popular legitimacy can be applied to reform crowds, particularly where there is overlap between reform and hardship, it has little relevance to orderly crowds as they did not consider the need to 'legitimise' actions which were peaceful and, in their own view, already legal (see Appendix 1 for correlation between bread price and waves of reform meetings).

Reicher, 'The Psychology of Crowd Dynamics', in M. Brewer and M Hewstone (eds), *Self and Social Identity*, (Oxford, 2004), p. 232-5.

²⁵ Elias Canetti, *Masse und Macht - Crowds and power - trans. Carol Stewart* (Harmondsworth, 1973) pp. 2-4; John McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob – from Plato to Canetti* (London, 1989), p 302, 325.

²⁶ McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob*, pp. 293-4.

²⁷ Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture, and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), p. 16.

²⁸ The Assize of Bread was a system for fixing weight, price and composition of bread loaves in eighteenth century British markets. Thompson argued that, where the Assize was deemed to have been incorrectly applied, or that bakers and traders were flouting it, then the riotous crowd would assume a sense of moral legitimacy in taking the law into their own hands in price fixing actions; E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), p. 80.

²⁹ Thompson, 'Moral Economy', p. 78.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 136.

Rudé also downplayed orderly meetings and conflated crowds with riot.³¹ While his work focussed on eighteenth-century revolutionary France he also looked at the Wilkite Riots and his remarks about the English mass platform are pertinent.³² In his chapter *Motives and Beliefs*, he stressed the problem of separating economic motives of protesters from deep social grievance, so like Thompson, he was arguing for continuity from subsistence rioting.³³ Where the mix of the crowd was ambiguous (that is, not 100 per cent peaceful), Rudé noted the difficulty of distinguishing between militant activists and the passive majority and crucially refuted Le Bon's cynical view of crowds as composed of mainly of criminals and the destitute, arguing that the status of many rioters were 'men and young lads of settled abode and occupation' drawn from the ranks of small shopkeepers, artisans, and journeymen.³⁴ This resonates with the case studies of Newhall Hill in the early 1830s and Kennington Common in 1848 (chapter four) as well as Spa Fields in 1816-17 discussed in a short preamble (chapter two).

It is the dynamics of the pre-planned open-air meetings of the mass platform which concern this research. Thompson saw a gradual transition in which the eighteenth century food rioter anticipated the 'self-conscious radical crowd; the leaven of dissent and of political education was at work, giving to the people a predisposition to turn out in defence of popular liberties, in defiance of authority, and in movements of social protest, in which the underlying conflict of poor against rich . . . is clearly visible.'³⁵ I suggest that the platform phenomenon was rooted in extra-parliamentary agitation in the late eighteenth century but, as John Belchem said, it took charismatic leaders such Henry Hunt and Feargus O'Connor, who we will meet

³¹ Rudé, *Crowd in History in History*, p. 8.

³² *Ibid*, p. 57.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 217.

³⁴ Note on the gender composition of crowds: Although Rudé referred to 'men and lads', he did elsewhere identify women as active participants in eighteenth century political crowds, notably in the French context. Le Bon, on the other hand made no reference to female participation; Rudé, *Crowd in History*, pp. 199, 211.

³⁵ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1968), p. 75.

later in this chapter, ‘to transform popular libertarianism into mass political action.’³⁶ As well as being inspiring, these gentleman-leaders were often contentious and exposed fault lines between middle- and working-class factions of the reform movement.

Agency

The issue of leadership, though significant, is less important to this research than it was to Thompson and Belchem. This dissertation is more interested in the agency of individual actors within the crowd. Thompson’s chapter ‘Demagogues and Martyrs’ prioritised leadership as the key driver of the mass platform by linking traditional notions of deference to the elevation of aristocratic or gentlemanly individuals to positions of leadership.³⁷ However, this research is concerned with the crowd as a whole. In Henry Hunt, Thompson detected the juxtaposition of both ‘the qualities and, simultaneously, defects of the demagogue.’ He also remarked on the tendency of leaders to self-proclaim – e.g. Hunt’s epithet ‘Saint Henry of Ilchester, and Feargus O’Connor’s sobriquet ‘Lion of Freedom.’³⁸ Orators like Hunt, Cobbett and Wooler, he said, were ‘adept at pitching their rhetoric just on the right side of treason.’³⁹ It will be argued in chapters four and nine that, rather than being a uniting force, the gentleman-figurehead was frequently divisive and self-defeating, causing rifts between the working- and middle-class factions within the reform movement. In the case of Kennington, this schism developed into a full-blown split in the democratic movement. McClelland challenged the Thompsonian theory of the ascendancy of leaders and demagogues, preferring to characterise crowd actors as having ‘freedom from commands’ but conceded that forces of power hated a vacuum and wanted leaders to scapegoat, blame or negotiate with.⁴⁰ The state could not arrest the whole

³⁶ John Belchem, ‘Radicalism’, p. 3.

³⁷ Thompson, *Making*, p. 682.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 683.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 685; Thomas Wooler (1786–1853), publisher of *Black Dwarf*, see James Epstein, ODNB entry 13 May 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29952> (accessed 15 March 2022).

⁴⁰ McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob*, pp. 297-8.

crowd – the leaderless crowd was in many ways the most powerful – it could disperse and regroup.⁴¹ This paradox is further explored in chapter eight.

The performative crowd

As Charles Tilly has noted, ritual and display were of prime significance, more so perhaps, than attendance figures.⁴² It was often the pageant and theatre of events which caught the attention of the newspapers and therefore which affected the perception of non-participants. Thompson agreed, noting the ‘ritualistic character’ of the open-air meeting, in which the speaker ‘moved through declamations and rhetorical questions, playing for the expected tumultuous responses.’⁴³ This can be seen in the oratorical performances of Henry Hunt so colourfully described in printed broadsides and illustrated in satirical prints, notably those of George Cruikshank (Figure 1:1). This is further explored in chapter five.



Figure 1:1 Detail from: *The Spa Fields Orator Hunt-ing for Popularity to Do-good!!*
George Cruikshank, 1817, British Museum Print No. 1868,0808.8361

Notwithstanding the limitations of Rudé’s work when applied to orderly crowds, he did have some pertinent points to make about the dynamics of the crowd events which often originated from small beginnings and built slowly to a climax and conclusion. He argued that, ‘the crowd

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 333.

⁴² Charles Tilly, *Contentious performances* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 4.

⁴³ Thompson, *Making*, p. 689.

may be diverted from its intended peaceful purpose by the arrival or occurrence of something unexpected.’⁴⁴ He also noted that restrained protest alarmed the authorities almost as much as acts of violence and acknowledged that often, when a meeting which began with peaceful intent became violent, the aggression was much more likely to originate from those in authority not the crowd.⁴⁵ It is important to recognise the presence of doubt and uncertainty within the crowd - ‘the nuance of the tussle between moral and physical force’ as Thompson called it – few radicals, reformers or Chartists he said, ‘came down firmly on one side of the argument’.⁴⁶ This sub-surface ambiguity of political crowds will be discussed more fully in chapters six and seven along with their often capricious nature.⁴⁷ These chapters also investigate the emotional and somatic aspect of reform crowds.

Historians have often attempted to draw sweeping conclusions about success or failure of reform meetings, but this is problematic, as defining success is subjective at best and often cannot be detected until decades later. I agree with Rudé that the importance of crowds should be measured, not in terms of their immediate success or failure but as marking an important stage in the historical process and I return to this theme in the concluding chapter.⁴⁸ Like Nicholas Rogers, I have located crowd actions in ‘the same continuum as other forms of collective behaviour, as an aspect of power struggles between and within organised groups in society’.⁴⁹ It is these power struggles which concern this thesis.

Although there was a relentless debate in the newspapers on the issue of the use of violence, we see repeated examples of self-restraint on the part of radical crowds throughout the period. It

⁴⁴ Rudé, *Crowd in History*, p. 242.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 253, 239, 256.

⁴⁶ Thompson, *Making*, pp. 683-5.

⁴⁷ Rudé, *Crowd in History*, p. 252.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 268.

⁴⁹ Rogers, *Crowds, Culture, and Politics*, p. 6.

has been argued that a reciprocal relationship existed between ‘plebs and the powerful’ which ensured that a ‘protocol of riot’ was honoured by both sides.⁵⁰ John Bohstedt portrayed rioters as ‘pragmatic, not revolutionary’ and Michael Davis agreed, noting that outdoor meetings were, ‘paragons of how radicals could seek to harness the power of crowds.’⁵¹ However, the recurrent self-restraint of radical crowds could itself be considered threatening and viewed with suspicion in the ‘alarmist imaginings of conservatives’, which may go some way to explaining the violent response to the peaceful Manchester crowd in 1819.⁵² Davis’s subheading ‘reformers, no rioters’ was taken from a 1794 London Corresponding Society (LCS) pamphlet calling for restraint and attempting to refute repeated misrepresentations. The LCS’s abhorrence of ‘Tumult and Violence’, was built into their articles of 1792 stating that, ‘Reform not Anarchy, Reason, Firmness, and Unanimity are the only Arms they themselves will employ, or persuade their Fellow-Citizens to exert against Abuse of Power’.⁵³ So if a presumption of nonviolence was built into the principles of the 1790s Jacobin movement, it is not surprising to see it re-emerge when reform campaigns resurfaced in 1816.

The platform

This reflects the view of amateur researcher and retired civil servant, Henry Jephson, who wrote the first history of the mass platform.⁵⁴ Jephson’s was a far-reaching study which traced the birth of the platform to the election hustings in which people had a model, albeit an imperfect one, of ‘how they might attain participation in political authority’.⁵⁵ He identified the platform as early as 1814 in the emerging campaigns against the Corn Laws and the prolongation of taxation

⁵⁰ John Bohstedt: *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales 1790-1810* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), p. 202, 222.

⁵¹ Michael T. Davis, ‘Reformers No Rioters: British Radicalism and Mob Identity in the 1790s’ in Michael T. Davis (ed.), *Crowd Actions in Britain and France from the Middle Ages to the Modern World* (Basingstoke, 2015), p.156.

⁵² Davis, ‘Reformers No Rioters’, p.156.

⁵³ For more on the London Corresponding Society, see chapter two; Davis, ‘Reformers No Rioters’, p.157.

⁵⁴ Jephson, *The Platform*, p. 296.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 18.

beyond the Napoleonic war.⁵⁶ He picked it up again in 1816 with the technique of combining the platform with petitioning invoked by gentleman reformers Cartwright, Burdett and Hunt.⁵⁷ In John Belchem's extensive study of the post-war mass platform, he located Henry Hunt's damascene conversion to radicalism in his disillusionment with the 'Ministry of all the Talents' of 1806-7 and specifically the apostasy, as he saw it, of the Foxite Whigs.⁵⁸ Drawing on Hunt's memoirs, Belchem identified a county meeting in Wells on 16 March 1811 as the instigation of Hunt's national campaign of reform meetings and petitioning, noting 'his mastery of the emotive rhetoric of popular constitutionalism and libertarian history'.⁵⁹ This embryonic phase of the reform movement will be picked up in chapter two.

The combination of mass platform meetings with petitioning was a recurring feature throughout the period. The Spa Fields meetings were specifically staged by Hunt to engage with all stages of the petitioning process from the conception to execution and this was a recurring pattern right up to 1848.⁶⁰ Crowds were encouraged not only to participate in the composition of petitions but also to return to their regions and gather signatures before returning to collate them into what often became huge bales of scrolls requiring horse-drawn wagons to transport them.⁶¹ Critically crowds were encouraged to provide verbal validation that petitions were truly representative and in this may lie one clue as to why organisers wanted to cite large attendances. The Newhall Hill meetings of the 1830s repeatedly announced petitioning as the main meeting aim on their notices and reports.⁶² And at the end of the period the entire point of contention between organisers and the government/police

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 276.

⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 289-90.

⁵⁸ John Belchem, *'Orator' Hunt – Henry Hunt and English Working-Class Radicalism* (Oxford, 1998), p.25.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.33.

⁶⁰ *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 16 November 1816.

⁶¹ Claims for Chartist petitions in 1839, 1841, 1842 and 1848 all exceeded one million signatures, <https://www.chartistancestors.co.uk/chartist-petitions-full>

⁶² Birmingham Record Office (BRO) 64660, 64661, 64668.

revolved around the rights for a large procession to accompany the petition wagon to Parliament – rights ultimately denied.⁶³

In his PhD thesis, Belchem cited Jephson, suggesting the platform was born in post-Napoleonic Britain to protest at ‘the violations and corruptions that have been forced by a cruel aristocracy into the glorious Constitution’, which was ‘won by the valour, and cemented with the blood of our ancestors.’⁶⁴ Belchem’s dissertation traced the origins of O’Connor’s mass platform of the 1840s to that of Hunt’s in the post-war years but I disagree with his pronouncement of ‘the final failure of the mass platform.’⁶⁵ Gauging success or failure is problematic at best. One has to take the long view – the success of the reform campaign was arguably deferred until 1928 when all men and women over 21 finally achieved the vote. This theme is picked up in chapters eight and nine.

Jephson also connected the ‘platform’ with the mass outdoor meetings of early dissenting Evangelist speakers such as George Whitefield and John Wesley.⁶⁶ Maartje Janse also recognised the importance of religion: ‘Modern mass politics were fundamentally shaped by religious practices and techniques.’⁶⁷ Robert Wearmouth also identified parallels between religious class meetings and what he termed ‘Radical Class meetings’, linking the 1819 campaigns of the Rev. Harrison in Stockport and the later Chartist Camp Meetings to the Wesleyan tradition.⁶⁸ While Wearmouth stressed the associational nature of the meetings, Katrina Navickas identified the importance of place, noting that ‘as Chartists, Socialists and other oppositional political groups

⁶³ R. G. Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854* (London, 1969), pp. 314-5.

⁶⁴ Belchem, ‘Radicalism’, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.470.

⁶⁶ Jephson, *The Platform*, pp. 4-5, 12.

⁶⁷ Maartje Janse, ‘Association is a Mighty Engine – Mass Organization and the Machine Metaphor, 1825–1840’, in H. te Velde, M. Janse (eds), *Organizing Democracy* (Leiden, 2017) p, 24.

⁶⁸ Robert Wearmouth, *Some Working-Class Movements of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1948), p. 31.

found it increasingly difficult to find suitable meeting sites in town centres, they looked beyond urban boundaries to more rural areas.’⁶⁹ She observed that ‘the camp meeting on the moors ... became a classic feature of the repertoire of protest.’⁷⁰ Navickas’s ‘spatial turn’ model recognised the political and collective symbolic significance of certain locations, notably Hunslett Moor, Kersal Moor and Blackstone Edge, which were adopted as sites of regular protest. Navickas’s work concerned northern rural locations, while Christina Parolin, another scholar of the spatial turn, stressed the significance of indoor locations as sites of political discourse in indoor urban locations, specifically in London.⁷¹ Parolin identified the *Crown and Anchor* in the Strand and the Blackfriars *Rotunda* as favoured rallying points for ‘London’s plebeian radicals.’⁷² Chapters four and nine expand this pattern of collective significance for radical activity to outdoor urban sites in other cities as well as London.

The demonstrative crowd

As well as questioning extravagant claims for attendance numbers, this thesis will recognise the importance of ritual and spectacle in the mass platform. Charles Tilly noted that, by the 1830s, the ‘open meeting had become a kind of demonstration - indoor or outdoor - a coordinated way of publicising support for a particular claim on holders of power’.⁷³ The use of the term ‘demonstration’ to signify a political meeting was first coined in the 1830s. Conservative Journal, *The Britannia*, used it in May 1839 as a derogatory term to criticise Whiggish activities, and the OED defines it as: ‘A public march or rally expressing an opinion about a political or other issue; *esp.* one in protest against or support of something.’⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place 1789-1848* (Manchester, 2016), p. 224.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 224.

⁷¹ Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces - Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790–c. 1845* (Canberra, 2010), pp. 2-4.

⁷² Ibid, p. 180.

⁷³ Charles Tilly, ‘Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758-1834’, *Social Science History*, 17 (1993), p. 261.

⁷⁴ <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/49841?redirectedFrom=demonstration#eid> (accessed 3 April 2020); *Spirit of the Metropolitan Conservative Press: being a selection of the best leading articles from the London Conservative journals, during the year 1839* Volume 1 (London, 1840), p. 421.

However, I have tracked it to the previous August when the Birmingham Political Union held a rally at the new venue of Holloway Head (Newhall Hill was by this time redeveloped).

Their report called it the ‘Grand Midland Demonstration at Birmingham, 6 August 1838.’⁷⁵

Tilly’s work was most concerned with contentious demonstrations which he defined as those in which ‘a number of people outside of the government gathered in a publicly accessible place and made claims on at least one person outside their own number, claims which if realised would affect the interests of their object’.⁷⁶ Though obvious, this is rarely clearly stated and will form a working definition for this thesis. However, to restrict it to mass platform events, it requires qualifying as: ‘orderly’ ‘publicised’ and ‘mediated’. Tilly elaborated that contention usually fell within three categories: reactive (defending threatened rights); proactive (claiming rights not yet enjoyed); challenging (to a constituted system) which are characterised by feelings of Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment (what Wouters and Walgrave have entitled ‘WUNCness’).⁷⁷ All of these terms apply to my research.

I also need to define the crowd more generally and will use Mark Harrison’s as a working definition: ‘A crowd is a large group of people assembled outdoors in sufficient proximity to be able to influence each other’s behaviour and to be identifiable as an assembly by contemporaries’.⁷⁸ This research focuses on orderly, planned, static political crowds as opposed to spontaneous, mobile or even riotous ones. Crowds which had some other purpose such as state funerals and public executions are also discounted. Election crowds are excluded, though arguably they may have provided a model upon which the mass platform took inspiration (see

⁷⁵ BRO L/p/35/3; 64677.

⁷⁶ Tilly, ‘Contentious Repertoires’, p. 270.

⁷⁷ Tilly, *Contentious Performances*, p. 122; Wouters, Ruud and Walgrave, Stefaan. *What makes protest powerful? Reintroducing and elaborating Charles Tilly’s WUNC concept*. (Working Paper 2017), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313179891> (accessed 17 November 2019).

⁷⁸ Harrison, *Crowds and History*, p. 37.

chapter four). When looking at mass meetings, Harrison separated the purposes of the meeting from those of the crowd attending it.⁷⁹ This is more than a minor point of semantics. Chapter two discusses this and anticipates the main case studies by looking at the birth of the reform movement during the post-war years with reference to the Spa Fields meetings of the winter of 1816-17. While in most circumstances the interests of the leaderships and participants coincided, in the case of the second Spa Fields meeting, a renegade faction broke away and ran riot across London, departing from the published aim of the meeting which had been couched in the language of restraint and distancing the organisers from the ‘Disorderly, ill-informed people at the first meeting who attacked property’.⁸⁰

Chapter four forms the bulk of the quantitative exercise consisting of case studies of Peterloo, Newhall Hill and Kennington Common. Digital mapping techniques will be invoked to ascertain the ground area of each site and combined with arguments from chapter three regarding feasible crowd densities to arrive at a hypothetical working capacity for each site. This will be compared with other evidence including population census figures for each locality as well as walking distances and times for neighbouring settlements from where incoming processions may have commenced. In the case of Kennington, an in-depth analysis of the photographic evidence in the form of a daguerreotype will also be conducted, a medium which had not been available at the times of the earlier case studies. Building on the theory that attendance was lower than previously thought, I will probe why actors and observers alike may have over- rather than under-estimated numbers and conclude the chapter by looking beyond the findings to ask why, if events were not numerically massive, how did they project such an impression of political power?

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.33.

⁸⁰ (See chapter two for detailed account). Spa Fields 2 December Notice, The National Archives (TNA) TS_11-200-1.

The reported crowd

Even though meetings were not numerically massive, they loomed large in the public consciousness and most people learned about events through newspapers, either by reading them or hearing them read aloud in the public sphere.⁸¹ Chapter five examines this process along with other aspects of communication such as handbills, satirical prints, literature, song and word-of mouth. As well as the practicalities of announcements and reportage, this chapter will also consider how these events entered collective memory via re-enactment, commemoration, and material culture. In the case of Kennington, it will be debated whether the ground-breaking daguerreotype represented an early example of surveillance, innovative journalism on the part of *The Illustrated London News (ILN)* or was an entrepreneurial bid for royal patronage on the part of the photographer, William Kilburn.⁸²

The emotive crowd

An often-neglected aspect of political crowd studies is that of experience. What did it feel like to experience these events at first hand and how did this vary between participants and spectators (if it is possible to distinguish between them)? Chapter six revisits the crowd from the point of view of the emotional turn. Historians from this emerging sub-discipline regard the history of emotions as central to the study of the crowd, asking not whether ‘emotions matter’ but rather ‘do they ever not matter?’⁸³ This chapter will also expand emotions to incorporate affects, applying Illan rua Wall’s notion of the ‘atmosphere’ of a crowd.⁸⁴ I will also build on the issue of individual agency with the crowd by applying James Vernon’s

⁸¹ A. Aspinall, ‘The Circulation of Newspapers in the Early Nineteenth Century’, *The Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946), p.30.

⁸² William Kilburn, *Daguerreotype 1848*, Royal Collection Trust: RCIN 2932484.

⁸³ Deborah Gould, ‘Concluding Thoughts – Emotions in Protest Movements in Europe since 1917’, *Contemporary European History*, 23 (2014), p. 639.

⁸⁴ Illan rua Wall, *Law And Disorder – Sovereignty, Protest, Atmosphere* (New York, 2021), p. 124.

postmodern deconstruction of the mass platform.⁸⁵ However, we are entering a problematic field as sources are often elusive, subjective, and selective.

The body of the crowd

Chapter seven moves from the mind to the body and considers the somatic crowd. There must have been basic practicalities of attending these events, especially at a distance from home – issues of sustenance and endurance and the simple fact of audibility and visibility. This chapter investigates, amongst other factors, whether, acoustics, terrain, timing, weather and the very human issues of hunger, thirst and comfort affected attendees' attendance or stamina to endure long and possibly remote meetings.

We know the state's response was often disproportionate and swingeing, so reform crowds must have been successful in generating an appearance of resilience and power to those in government. Chapter eight attempts to determine how this worked and whether it can be measured. Charles Tilly was a pioneer of data mining but, working in the 1980s, computing power was limited so he used teams of volunteers and research students to assemble his data set. This chapter will revisit his work using the increased computing power now available combined with the new abundance of digitised records, particularly newspapers. Text mining techniques will be applied to measure the significance in news terms of a range of orderly meetings by comparing them with each other and also with riots and other events of national importance (for methodology, see chapter three).

⁸⁵ James Vernon, *Politics and the People - A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815-1867* (Cambridge 1993), p. 335.

The powerful crowd

Having established that crowd size was often exaggerated in newspaper reports and hence frequently amplified the impression of power, chapter eight also investigates the multifaceted issues of crowd power by unpacking the way in which reform crowds frequently punched above their weight. The problematic issues of gender and women's politics are also discussed. Women were conspicuous by their scarcity in the imagery and history of reform crowds, but this transparency often masked the power they frequently wielded, often hiding in plain sight. The chapter will probe this paradox as well as examining the complex class dialectics running through crowd actions. Class is an issue on which I depart from Thompson who tended to view the class struggle in binary terms. I identify more closely with Nicholas Rogers's triangular model of crowds which recognises the significance of the role of the middle-class in championing plebeian demands.⁸⁶ In this context I will also cite Paul Pickering's *Past and Present* article 'Class without Words' in which he suggests that a language of unspoken dialogue and local dialect enabled leaders such as O'Connor to build a rapport with audiences.⁸⁷ I will also apply Maartje Janse's metaphor of power juxtaposition implicit in the newly arrived steam engine, by suggesting that the mass platform simultaneously wielded and released pent-up political energy.⁸⁸ John McClelland's concept of the 'sanity of crowds and the madness of power' will also inform the discussion of the paradox of power in the final chapter.

A search of the *British Library Newspapers* and *The Times* archive for the term 'Reform Meeting' produces peaks at all three of the years of interest to this thesis, 1819, 1832 and 1848 (see Term Frequency Chart, Figure 1:2). While this type of search is rather a blunt instrument and the actual figures produced should be taken with a degree of caution, it is a useful

⁸⁶ Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture, and Politics*, p. 276.

⁸⁷ Paul Pickering, 'Class without Words: Symbolic Communication in the Chartist Movement,' *Past and Present*, 112 (1986), p. 150.

⁸⁸ Janse, 'Association is a Mighty Engine', p. 23.

indication of long-term trends.⁸⁹ It demonstrates that rather than distinct bursts of political activity, meetings came in a series of surges.

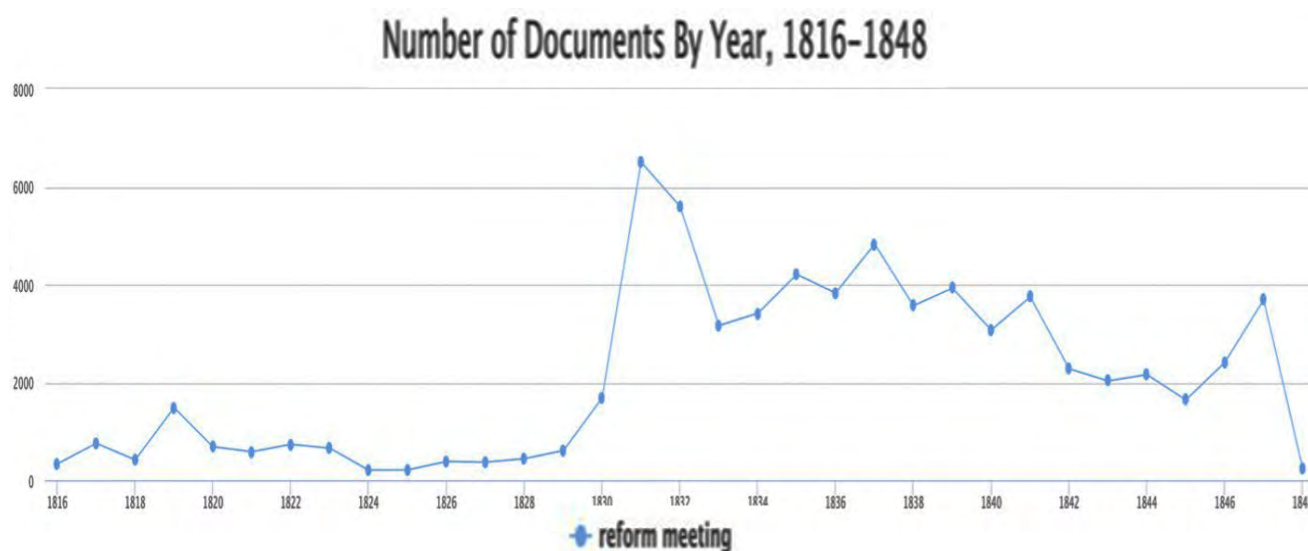


Figure 1:2 Term Frequency Chart of British Library Newspapers and The Times Archive for the term 'Reform Meeting'.

I detect six such 'waves' which are reflected in *Appendix 1 – Timeline of key events*. The first wave can be seen in the post-war push by Hunt and the Spenceans which surfaced as the Spa Fields meetings of 1816-17, followed closely by the second wave seen in the nationwide radical mobilisation championed by Hunt in a series of meetings in the summer of 1819 culminating in Smithfield in July and Peterloo in August.⁹⁰ After a relatively calm period, activity ramped up in the early 1830s as seen in the third wave of Thomas Attwood's BPU reform crisis meetings of 1831-33 at Newhall Hill and Beardsworth's Repository. The remaining waves were dominated by the influence of O'Connor and the Chartists in the shape of the fourth wave, centred on the launch of the six-point charter and the first Chartist Petition

⁸⁹ See chapter eight for a fuller discussion of enhanced techniques for the data analysis of trends in newspaper reports.

⁹⁰ The brief period separating these first two waves was marked by the swingeing anti-combination legislation of 1817 which included the suspension of Habeas Corpus. 1818 however, was not without activity. This is explored in chapter two; Seditious Meetings Bill (Hansard, 14 March 1817), Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill (Hansard, 24 June 1817).

in 1838-9 with the fifth wave represented by the 1842 petition, northern moors candlelit processions and associated industrial unrest. The sixth and final wave came with the 1848 revival, and final petition arguably triggered by the European revolutions of 1848 and culminating in the Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common on 10 April. The ‘waves’ concept is useful in that it demonstrates the continuity and interconnectedness of the reform campaigns rather than seeing Chartist meetings as a distinct phenomenon unconnected to earlier events. The graphic chart in Appendix One also helps to demonstrate the external forces and key trigger events acting on reformers, responsible for the timing if not the ideological and strategy of the reform campaigns.

Finally, we need to add a few caveats and acknowledge that these case studies, though hugely significant, are by no means the whole story. What they have in common is that they were all part of proactive, strategic political campaigns centred around the issue of electoral reform. They were pre-announced, static, orderly urban reform meetings held within a fixed time frame and within fenced or at least definable, measurable areas. This rules out peripatetic, spontaneous, or riotous assemblies and also contrasts with the majority of reform meetings many of which, as Katrina Navickas has argued, occurred in open northern rural settings.⁹¹ The unfenced nature of Kersal Moor is why meetings at that site are excluded from this exercise. Other locations in this category could have included Hunslett Moor, Blackstone Edge, Hartshead Moor (Peep Green), or Skircoat Moor, all of which Navickas has described as being ‘integral to the symbolism of political and social agitation’ during that period in Lancashire and Yorkshire.⁹² The convivial atmosphere of such ‘camp’ meetings is perfectly captured in the painting used on the cover of Malcolm Chase’s 2007, *Chartism, A New History* (Figure 1:3).

⁹¹ Katrina Navickas, ‘Moors, Fields, and Popular Protest in South Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1800–1848’, *Northern History*, 46 (2009), p. 98.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 97-9.

For the purposes of quantitative analysis, they are unsuitable, as participants could have numbered anything from a few hundred as in this example to tens of thousands.



Figure 1:3 Alfred Bayes - Chartist Meeting at Basin Stones, Todmorden, 1842.⁹³

Before concluding this chapter, it is worth noting a few background influences on the reform movement during the short 32-year period covered by this thesis. The first is to note that UK population increased by 69 per cent during this period so it is reasonable to infer that English population did at least the same.⁹⁴ Assuming that most of this increase was urban, and with frequent downturns in production the manufacturing sector with consequent periods of unemployment, it is not surprising that people were angry. Secondly it is worth considering the fluctuations in the price of bread, tracked in the chart in Appendix one from lows of around 7d coinciding with hiatuses in meeting frequency, to highs of 11d shadowing almost exactly peaks in political activity.⁹⁵ So people were also hungry, especially around the waves of meetings.

To conclude, like all political crowds, reform crowds were about power. Michael Braddick described early modern plebeian power struggles as ‘negotiating power.’ Perhaps we could

⁹³ Although Bayes was local to Todmorden and may have been present at meetings at Basin Stones, it is unlikely this was painted from life as he was aged 10 in 1842, Simon Cooke, *The life of Alfred Walter Bayes (1831-1909)*. <https://victorianweb.org/art/illustration/bayes/biography.html>; Calderdale Museums Service, © bridgemanimages.com

⁹⁴ <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/population?time=1816..1848&country=~GBR>

⁹⁵ Ronald Sheppard and Edward Newton, *The Story of Bread* (London, 1957), p. 168.

employ Braddick's notion to understand the dynamics of crowd power in our period.⁹⁶ Rather than focussing on meetings as discrete we need to look at the wider 'grids of power.' The nineteenth-century struggle for the vote amounted to a drawn-out negotiation of power between the forces of the state and the middle and labouring classes of England. People came together to demand power, to become empowered and to share power. In order to achieve this, it was enough for crowds to appear powerful even if they were not physically numerous. This is the nub of my argument. In reform crowds, power was as much an objective as it was a means. It was both a strategy and a tactic. It was simultaneously pre-planned and spontaneous – tangible while also elusive.

Reform crowds had the power to provoke the state to suppress them, empower individuals to call for political change and shock onlookers. By cementing their reputation, the mass platform exerted 'soft' power while the state wielded 'hard' power. While some historians have argued that 1848, the final year of my research period, represented the capitulation of the reform movement and even its failure, political success was deferred.⁹⁷ I will suggest that, considering the ultimate achievement of universal suffrage for men and women 80 years later, 1848 should be considered as representing a milestone on the road to that success.⁹⁸ I conclude by arguing that ultimately the triumph of the soft power of the crowd over the hard power of the state was a matter of the building of reputation. This was achieved by the dogged persistence, tenacity and perseverance of generation after generation of reformers. This thesis will seek to determine the mechanism by which this reputational power of reform crowds was built.

⁹⁶ Michael Braddick and John Walter, 'Grids of power: order, hierarchy and subordination in early modern society', in Braddick and Walter (eds) *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society. Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp7-8.

⁹⁷ D. J. Rowe, 'The Failure of London Chartism', *Historical Journal*, 11 (1968), pp. 485-6; John Belchem, '1848: 'Feargus O'Connor and the Collapse of the Mass Platform', in James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (eds), *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-60* (London, 1982), pp. 303-4.

⁹⁸ Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act, 1928, Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/PU/1/1928/18and19G5c12.

2. Setting the scene

Post-war crisis: Spa Fields

*'Shall men, who once conquer'd at famed Trafalgar,
Begin at Spa Fields then to wage civil war?
Shall the glory of Englishmen ever be stain'd
Shall Spa Fields lose all that Waterloo gained?*
Hannah More, 1816/17.¹

Before commencing the case studies, a consideration of the origins of the phenomena of the mass platform is required. The above epigraph sets the scene. The quote is taken from a broadside pamphlet penned by retired anti-radical Hannah More, who had been persuaded to add her voice to the controversy surrounding the 1816-17 meetings at Spa Fields, Islington, at which Henry Hunt had effectively launched the mass platform. This short chapter describes the build-up to the political tensions which gave rise to the events which comprise my main case studies in chapter four. I will examine the genesis of the reputational power of the mass platform movement during the post-war years in relation to Spa Fields. But to locate the roots of this strategy we must go further back.

The first major study of the mass platform was undertaken by Henry Jephson in 1892.² Jephson traced the appropriation of the hustings as a non-electoral political tool to the Wilkeite controversy surrounding the publication and subsequent banning of the *North Briton Issue 45*. However it was arguably the London Corresponding Society's (LCS) mass rallies of the summer and autumn of 1795 which marked the take-off of the phenomenon.³ The LCS was a loose alliance between gentlemen reformers, including John Thewall and John Gale Jones, and London artisans such as Francis Place and Thomas Hardy who, perhaps inspired by the French

¹ Hannah More, 'An address to the meeting at Spa Fields', (Pub: R Gilbert), *Cheap Repository Tracts, Suited to the Present Times* (London, 1819), pp. 155-6.

² Henry Jephson, *The Platform, its Rise and Progress* (London, 1892), p. 33.

³ *The North Briton*, Issue No 45, 23 April 1763.

Revolution, organised outdoor meetings commencing in 1793.⁴ The adoption of the mass platform as a tool of reform politics can be identified at two mass LCS meetings at Copenhagen Fields in October and November 1795 at which Thelwall and Gale Jones re-purposed the techniques of the hustings to their political cause.⁵ Prior to this the planned use of outdoor meetings to address large crowds was probably the preserve of the aspiring MP in the form of the election hustings. This is not to suggest that outdoor political speeches were novel – examples can be found throughout the medieval and early modern periods, but these were commonly reactive and often connected to violent rioting. Jephson's use of the word 'Platform' describes orderly pre-announced meetings which formed part of pro-active political campaigns.⁶

The silenced crowd

Following the mid-1790s clampdown on combination in the form of the Gagging Acts, the reform mantle was taken up by MP Sir Francis Burdett who frequently avoided public controversy and later clashing publicly with Henry Hunt.⁷ Veteran gentleman campaigner Major John Cartwright's Hampden Clubs moved in to fill the void but meetings tended to be small and indoors to keep within the law.⁸ Moving forward to the period commencing 1816, which concerns this thesis, it is Hunt to whom we need to turn to see the technique of the mass platform honed as a serious tool of political protest. John Belchem traced Hunt's dalliance with the mass platform back to political battles with local dignitaries in county meetings in his home region of Wiltshire, and power struggles with the Mayors of Bath and Bristol of which

⁴ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1968), pp. 19-22; ONDB, 2004.

⁵ Mrs. Cecil Thelwall, *The Life of John Thelwall, Volume 1* (London, 1837), pp. 376 and 400.

⁶ Jephson, *The Platform*, pp. 4-6.

⁷ J. R. Dinwiddy, 'Sir Francis Burdett and Burdettite Radicalism', *History*, 65 (1980), pp. 19-20; Henry Hunt, *Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq.* Volume 3, p. 26.

⁸ Thompson, *Making*, p. 92; Steve Poole, 'Gillray, Cruikshank and Thelwall - Visual Satire, Physiognomy and the Jacobin Body', *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, (Bristol, 2011). p. 14.

he was a freeholder.⁹ Frustrated by being blocked from holding meetings to promote Cartwright's reform petitions and Hampden Clubs in Bristol, he moved his venue a short distance from the city centre to the outdoor location Brandon Hill.¹⁰ Perhaps he was inspired to appropriate the Tillyesque performance theatre of the hustings by his experience as an (unsuccessful) candidate for Bristol at the General Elections of 1807 and 1812.¹¹ Hunt's performances at the three Spa Fields meetings of the winter of 1816-17 are arguably where he earned the accolade of 'Orator Hunt'.

Coming just a year after Waterloo, the Spa Fields meetings represented part of 'the prolonged post-war contest between governors and governed'.¹² The employment market was already flooded with large numbers of demobilised troops and a series of poor harvests following the previous year's eruption of Mount Tambora which ejected atmospheric dust worldwide resulting in food shortages and high prices.¹³

Like Brandon Hill, Spa Fields was an uncontested public open space outside metropolitan jurisdiction. As Katrina Navickas has argued, the availability of public space was vital as people were increasingly being denied access to traditional meeting places in urban centres.¹⁴ Spa Fields may have been just far enough from the City to have felt a 'safe neutral space' to stage a protest. As can be seen from Figs. 2.1 and 2.2, the location was large and unbounded and therefore there was plenty of space for large crowds to gather in front of the Merlin's Cave pub at the top of the

⁹ John Belchem, 'Radicalism as a Platform: Agitation in the Periods 1816-1821 and 1848-1851 – With Special Reference to the Leadership of Henry Hunt and Feargus O'Connor' (PhD thesis - University of Sussex, 1974), pp. 12-14.

¹⁰ *Morning Post*, 31 December 1816, Steve Poole, 'Till our Liberties be Secure': Popular Sovereignty and Public Space in Bristol, 1780-1850', *Urban History*, 26 (1999), p.44.

¹¹ <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/hunt-henry-1773-1835> (accessed 15 March 2022).

¹² R.J.White, *Waterloo to Peterloo* (London, 1968), p. 16.

¹³ Nicholas Klingaman and William Klingaman, *The Year Without Summer: 1816 and the Volcano That Darkened the World and Changed History* (New York, 2013), pp. 40-42; White, *Waterloo to Peterloo*, p. 187.

¹⁴ Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place 1789-1848* (Manchester, 2016), pp. 2-3.

hill from which Hunt addressed the crowd. The first meeting was held on 15 November to agree a reform petition to the Prince Regent from the ‘Distressed Inhabitants of the Metropolis’.¹⁵ According to a London paper this meeting attracted just 5,000-6,000 people.¹⁶



Figure 2:1 Spa Fields in 1790s Painting by Charles Matthews, 1857



Figure 2:2 Clerkenwell and its Environs, 1805, James Tyner

Attendance at the 2 December meeting, which was arguably the largest of the three meetings, was estimated by some newspapers at 20,000.¹⁷ These figures are within the capacity of this

¹⁵ Journal of the House of Commons 1817, Volume 72, p. 102. (Accessed via Google Books, 23 August 2017).

¹⁶ *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 16 November 1816.

¹⁷ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 5 December 1816.

site and the final meeting on 10 February attracted fewer – reportedly a little over 5,000 according to the next day's *Morning Chronicle*.¹⁸

But despite having relatively modest reported attendances, these first two meetings were far from trivial in terms of impact, which anticipates one of the points of this thesis – that meetings did not have to be numerically large in order to be politically significant. The press showed a great interest with 2.56 per cent of reports in the two weeks following the 15 November meeting and 5.51 per cent for same period after the 2 December event (Figure 8:1).¹⁹ This demonstrates the success of the mass platform in terms of its capacity to generate news. Each of the five London papers was thought to be read by 30 people, and the 50 or so regional weeklies were read aloud in alehouses across the land.²⁰ The potential reach of newspaper references to Spa Fields could have amounted to hundreds of thousands nationally which was remarkable for three meetings of moderate attendance.

The anticipated crowd

It was not only post-event that these crowds had impact. Anticipation of political power was also common as in the case of the November event. The Police Intelligence Column of a London newspaper reported that morning:

‘The magistrates of this Office waited yesterday on the Secretary of State, to take his advice as to the proper steps to be taken for the prevention of riot or disturbance at the

¹⁸ *Morning Chronicle*, 11 February 1817.

¹⁹ For methodology, see chapter eight; britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

²⁰ A. Aspinall, ‘The Circulation of Newspapers in the Early Nineteenth Century’, *The Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946), p.30.

Meeting, advertised to be held this day in Spa-fields. The High Constable afterwards waited on the Magistrates for instructions. All constables have orders to attend.'²¹

This is significant because it points to hesitation and uncertainty on the part of the state about how to deal with the emerging phenomenon of the mass platform. The meeting was orderly except for a mob of young boys who, when the meeting broke up, went on a looting spree in the Strand, St. Giles and Drury Lane liberating food from bakers, butchers and fishmongers. The Times reported that: 'we believe this is the whole of the outrages which have been committed. Nine o' clock all was quiet'.²² It was a common occurrence for gangs of youths to run amok after meetings had broken up.

The renegade faction

The December meeting was commandeered by a group of activists intent on a major insurrection. Arthur Thistlewood and James Watson of the Society of Spencean Philanthropists (later of the Cato Street Conspiracy) had been planning an uprising but were persuaded by a more pragmatic contingent to use the cover of a public meeting to garner support.²³ Several potential speakers were canvassed, including Sir Francis Burdett, William Cobbett, and Major John Cartwright, but only Hunt accepted and, even then, with reservation.²⁴ He was careful to place some distance between the reasoned principles of the fledgling reform movement and, as Cobbett saw it, this upstart, volatile 'Spencean project'.²⁵ On Cobbett's advice he chose his language carefully to stay within the law (see pp. 145-6).

²¹ *Morning Post*, 15 November 1816.

²² *The Times*, 16 November 1816.

²³ Thomas Spence was a maverick radical from Tynesdie active in London from 1788. Upon his death in 1814, the Society of Spencean Philanthropists continued his political work. His legacy has been compromised by the appropriation of his name by an insurgent wing including Thistlewood and Watson; Malcolm Chase, *The People's Farm - English Radical Agrarianism 1775-1840* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 19-20.

²⁴ Arthur Calder-Marshall, 'Spa Fields Riots, 1816', *History Today*, 21 (1971), pp. 409-11; Henry Hunt, *Memoirs of Henry Hunt Esq. - Volume 3* (London, 1822), pp. 328-30.

²⁵ Chase, *The People's Farm*, p. 95.

The 2 December meeting was ostensibly called to resolve a programme of reform but was in reality a cover for Thistlewood's rising. The meeting notice looks innocent enough, entitled: 'Four Millions in Distress while half a million live in splendid luxury'²⁶ It began with a patriotic appeal invoking the language of Trafalgar: 'England Expects every Man to do his Duty...' continuing by denouncing the riotous boys who besmirched the reputation of the previous meeting as 'Disorderly, ill-informed people', but ended by promising: 'the distress will be relieved'. The true purpose of the December meeting, of which Hunt was ignorant, was an attempted coup. When Hunt arrived at the appointed time of 1pm, Watson had already set up a wagon from which his son had harangued the crowd: 'If they will not give us what we want, shall we not take it?'²⁷ In the ensuing riot the breakaway group of around 200 rampaged across London robbing gun shops, shooting and looting. One person was killed and another wounded. The disorder lasted into the night until troops finally regained control of the city. As Iain McCalman has noted, this type of schism in which rival groups vie for domination of the narrative is not unusual in reform crowds.²⁸ It has to be acknowledged that the greater press reach of the December meeting could be due to the associated rioting rather than Hunt's meeting.

After the mob had left the field, the Orator went ahead with the meeting peacefully as planned but this was largely ignored by the press: 'The city of London has not for many years exhibited such a scene of outrage and tumult as that which took place yesterday'.²⁹ Despite condemning the insurgency, Hunt was implicated in reports: 'It would seem, indeed, from everything which has transpired, that a system had been organised by Hunt and his followers to raise the

²⁶ See chapter five, Spa Fields 2 December Notice, TNA TS_11-200-1;

²⁷ Chase, *The People's Farm*, p. 99.

²⁸ Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld - Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Oxford 1998), p. 106.

²⁹ *The Times*, 3 December 1816.

standard of insurrection, at least, if not of rebellion'. The cheap repository publishers joined-in, hectoring: 'Shall Spa Fields lose all that Waterloo gained?'³⁰ This time the state's response was more decisive in response to the law-breaking from the renegade group. A strategy for responding to the mass platform was emerging, but, on further analysis, the insurrection had a more menacing backstory. Spencean George Cannon had unwittingly disclosed intelligence to government spy John Castle, who had been embedded in planning meetings for the December event.³¹ However, this proved the undoing of the prosecution against the plot leaders the following summer when all were acquitted after Castle was found to have committed perjury.³²

Hunt's 'wretched sophistry'

The third and final meeting on 10 February went off without incident with attendance reported at around 5,000 (see Fig: 6.3, p. 190).³³ This could have been higher had the *Times* not erroneously advertised the meeting for the previous Monday causing many to distrust the validity of the date of the genuine meeting.³⁴ The press disagreed about the propriety of the crowd with one paper claiming the attendees were 'poor creatures misled by Hunt's wretched sophistry' who spent most of the day throwing turf, shoes and even dead cats at each other.³⁵ A paper of a different political persuasion however reported that: 'a decent sense of decorum prevailed and nothing can tend more to produce sympathy for the sufferings of this class of society'.³⁶ After the insurgency associated with the December meeting, the authorities were not taking any chances:

³⁰ J. Evans and Son., *An address to the Meeting at Spa-Fields* (London, 1816) <http://diglib.amphilsoc.org/islandora/object/text/per cent3A135877#page/1/mode/1up> (accessed 30 August 2017).

³¹ McCalman, *Radical underworld*, p. 110.

³² W. Lewis Printer and Publisher, *High Treason – The Trials at the Bar of Arthur Thistlewood, James Watson, Thomas Preston and John Hooper* (Clerkenwell, 1817), p. 303.

³³ *Morning Chronicle*, 11 February 1817.

³⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, 3 February 1817; *Morning Chronicle*, 11 February 1817.

³⁵ *Morning Post*, 11 February 1817.

³⁶ *Morning Chronicle*, 11 February 1817.

‘An immense number of Magistrates rode constantly among the people, and Mr Stafford, the Chief Clerk at Bow-street, with a phalanx of police officers paraded in the vicinity of the ground. Several divisions of cavalry were stationed in the City-road, and a very strong party of them was drawn up at the top of Gray’s-inn-lane, with swords drawn, and provided with their full accoutrements. There was not, however, the least appearance of a military force where the Meeting was assembled.’³⁷

The state is ‘out of tune’

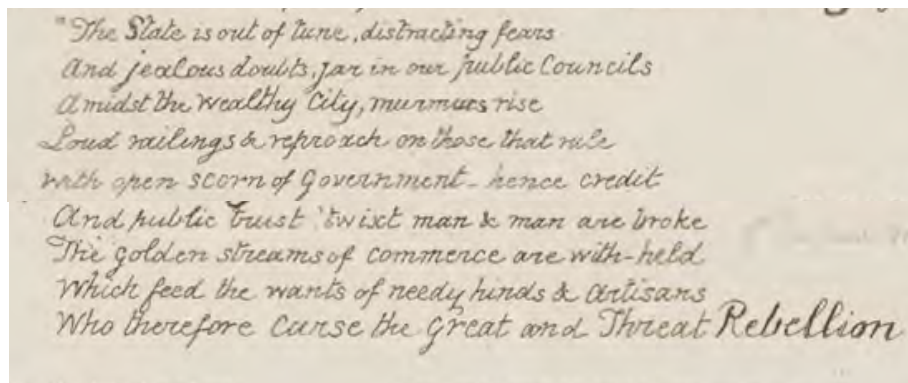


Figure 2:3 Annotation from: 3rd Spa Fields Meeting, George Cruikshank – British Museum Print No. 1868,0808.8361

The significance again was in the news penetration of the meeting which, despite having a reported attendance of just 5,000, attracted this time 7.5 per cent of newspaper reports, an even greater number than the first two events.³⁸ It is notable that, while prepared for trouble, the military commanders had the presence of mind to keep armed troops at a discrete distance from the meeting. The emerging tactics employed by the state of military preparedness combined with the surveillance and entrapment of radicals by agents provocateurs demonstrates the state’s growing unease about the threat posed by even an anticipated crowd in the post-war years. This was not lost on satirical artists like George Cruikshank who produced a print of the third

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ For methodology, see chapter eight; *Morning Chronicle*, 11 February 1817.

meeting.³⁹ Below the print he scrawled: ‘The State is out of tune’ (Figure 2:3). This serves to illustrate the sense of general hubbub and included among the crowd a chimney-sweep, apple-woman and pickpockets.



Figure 2:4 William Hone's Spa Fields Broadsheets, 1816-17.⁴⁰

Radical publisher William Hone hurried out three broadsheet souvenir newspapers which, while purporting to be impartial reports culled from other newspapers, were solidly pro-Hunt (Figure 2:4). They simultaneously chastised the rioters while praising Hunt's appeals for calm and order.⁴¹ Although most of the broadsheets were lifted from other newspapers the following were almost certainly Hone's words:

‘...[Hunt] recommended patience and perseverance, he saved London from being deluged with blood, by restraining the passions of men pinched with

³⁹ Discussion and reproduction of the print in chapter six (Figure 6:2).

⁴⁰ G.18983.(7.); BL G.18983.(8.); Goldsmith's Library.

⁴¹ *The Riots in London - Hone's Full and Authentic Account* (December 1816), British Library G.18983.(7.).

hunger, and goaded by distress – he has thus done the country a great and lasting service, and for this the Corruptionists cannot forgive him while he lives’⁴²

This polemic demonstrates that many Londoners would have been appraised of the orderly intent of Hunt. This restraint would not have been lost on the state surveillance networks who presumably regularly monitored the radical press but presumably they took their cues from elsewhere. Interest in the meetings was not confined to the radical press. As discussed earlier, populist writer and moralist Hannah More had been enticed out of retirement to add her hectoring invective to the furore surrounding the Spa Fields meetings:

‘I did not think to turn ballad-monger in my old age. But the strong and urgent representations I have had from the highest quarters of the very alarming temper of the times, and the spirit of revolution which shows itself more or less in all manufacturing towns, has led me to undertake as a duty a task I should gladly have avoided.’⁴³

Yet again this underlines the furore surrounding these modestly attended meetings. Despite attracting relatively small crowds, the three Spa Fields meetings were extremely successful, both in terms of the perception of power generated via the newspapers, and by provoking a severe backlash from the state by triggering punitive legislation. There is no doubt that the government considered them a threat. In the Parliamentary debates on the 1817 Seditious Meetings and Habeas Corpus Suspension Bills, Spa Fields was repeatedly mentioned. Both Bills were carried by a substantial majority despite several MPs arguing that existing legislation was sufficient to deal with the threat (if any) posed by meetings such as Spa Fields.⁴⁴

⁴² *The Meeting in Spa Fields - Hone's authentic and correct account* (December 1816), British Library.

⁴³ See chapter five, p. 144; David Stoker, ‘The later years of the Cheap Repository’, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 111 (2017), pp. 317-44.

⁴⁴ Seditious Meetings Bill (Hansard, 14 March 1817), Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill (Hansard, 24 June 1817).

That the state was determined to control, disperse or discourage political crowds is not in dispute. What is missing from much of the historiography is an analysis of why. Given that the December meeting escalated into riots when the leadership lost control, perhaps the government had some justification, but in the majority of cases the evidence was to the contrary. It is tempting to suggest that the orderly meeting was such a novel phenomenon that those responsible for keeping order were simply unable to distinguish it from the disorderly riot. Perhaps it indicates fears of contagion later taken up later in the crowd psychology theories of Le Bon.⁴⁵ There was certainly a paranoia surrounding crowds which arguably triggered an obsession with keeping order to avoid losing control later.

The subjugated crowd

The combined effect of the Seditious Meetings and Habeas Corpus Suspension Acts was to effectively suppress the mass platform for much of 1817 and 1818, an exception being a meeting held at Newhall Hill, Birmingham on 26 February 1818 held (unusually on a Thursday) in direct contravention of the Seditious Meetings Act. This was extraordinary due to its purpose of assembling the magistrates, gentry, clergy and other inhabitants of Birmingham, to ‘express their abhorrence of the Act suspending the Habeas Corpus Act: and the conviction that the power thereby vested in the hands of his Majesty’s Ministers, has been grossly abused’.⁴⁶ The claimed attendance of 10-12,000, despite inclement weather, was entirely feasible and within the capacity of the site (see chapter four). A report survives in the Birmingham Record Office which gives extraordinary insight into the cordial relationship between the local reform campaigners, led again by George Edmonds, and the local magistracy.⁴⁷ In other towns and cities, it is arguable that a meeting of this nature would have been declared illegal, but the

⁴⁵ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd - A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York, 2017), p. 52; Mark Harrison, *Crowds and History – mass phenomena in English towns, 1790-1835* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 313.

⁴⁶ BRO L/p/35/3 64255

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Birmingham magistrates appear to have acquiesced, with Chief Constable Payne actually defending the meeting against disruption: 'If any person behaved himself improperly, he would take care that he was immediately taken into custody'. There was an attempt to disrupt the meeting almost as soon as it got underway by a group which the report colourfully portrays as a bunch of 'mountebanks with drums and painted faces.'⁴⁸ The assistance of the police was never called upon however, as the 'scaramouch dancers' were soon driven away by the polite ridicule of the 'well informed Gentlemen of the town and neighbourhood' to '...express their abhorrence of the Act suspending the Habeus Corpus Act [sic]: and the conviction that the power thereby vested in the hands of his Majesty's Ministers, has been grossly abused'. The rest of the meeting went off without incident as reported in the local and national press.⁴⁹ Other significant, albeit non-orderly, events of 1817 included the arguably unwise and unsuccessful Blanketeers March and Pentrich Rising of March and June respectively.⁵⁰

This brief chapter has set the scene for the maturation of the mass platform into a serious political tool of the reform movement. As well as documenting the evolution of the strategy from modest beginnings I have also demonstrated that the power generated by even the most modest of reform meetings extended far beyond that implied by their attendance in numerical terms. In this way the reputational power of the reform movement was forged. This introduces one of the arguments of this thesis: that meetings did not have to be numerically large in order to be politically significant. The Spa Fields meetings mark the origin of the reputational power of reform crowds.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Habeus Corpus was reinstated on 10 March 1818, paving the way for the revival of the mass platform in 1819 and the spate of meetings culminating in August at Peterloo which will constitute my first case study in chapter four; Jacqueline Riding, *Peterloo – The story of the Manchester Massacre* (London, 2018), p. 134; *Morning Chronicle*, 9 March 1818, *Worcester Journal*, 5 March 1818;.

⁵⁰ Thompson, *Making*, pp. 723-4; Poole, *Peterloo*, pp. 121-7.

⁵¹ A discussion of the emotions portrayed in Cruikshank's engraving is explored in chapter six.

3. Crowd theory, science and methodology

*The closed crowd renounces growth [...]
The boundary prevents disorderly increase,
but it also makes it more difficult for the crowd
to disperse and so postpones its dissolution.
In this way the crowd sacrifices its chance of growth,
but gains in staying power.*
Elias Canetti¹

We now turn to crowd theory – inevitably a cross-disciplinary exercise. Early work on crowds was done in the nineteenth century by psychologists in continental Europe and critiqued in the late twentieth century by sociologists who began to question the authoritarian and simplistic assumptions of nineteenth century contagion theorists who interpreted the reputation of crowd power in entirely negative terms. One such critic was the social philosopher Elias Canetti who took a Linnaean approach to crowd classification in his 1960 book, *Masse und Macht* (Crowds and Power), distinguishing between open crowds and the closed crowds to which he was referring in the above epigraph.² The notion of containment is central to this thesis and will be explored in this chapter along with the work of crowd theorists, psychologists and sociologists, who tend to focus more on positive aspects of crowd membership such as social identity, empowerment and cohesion. In other words, crowds are now seen as social phenomena rather than as a political threat or public order problem. It is significant that until recently, and regardless of the discipline, most crowd theory originated from academics based on continental Europe. Scholars from France Italy and Germany dominated the debate, perhaps due to the European experience of (often violent) crowds compared to the relatively tame British experience. The reputational power of political crowds was contentious from the start. As well as setting out my methodology, this chapter will seek to unpick this controversy.

¹ Elias Canetti, *Masse und Macht - Crowds and power* - trans. Carol Stewart (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 20.

² Ibid, pp. 2-4.

Des Foules

Gustave Le Bon is generally acknowledged as the founder of crowd theory. His 1895 magnum opus, *Psychologie des Foules* (Transl: *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*), sought to deny agency to the individual, assigning it instead to the whole crowd.³ However, contrary to assumptions in much of today's historiography, crowd theory did not begin with Le Bon.⁴ His work was informed by earlier arguments notably those of Gabriel Tarde and Hippolyte Taine, both French conservative scholars who formed part of a school which sought to explain and understand the series of revolutions France had experienced over the preceding hundred years.⁵ Taine's polemic in particular portrayed the 1789 revolution as the product of a mindless mob.⁶ Le Bon advanced this perception of the crowd as a threat into a full-blown theory, which stood unchallenged for much of the twentieth century. Robert Nye, writing in the introduction to a recent translation of *Foules*, traced Le Bon's characterisation of crowds in criminal terms to the work of lawyer/sociologist Scipio Sighele.⁷ I detect a link between Le Bon's *de-individuation* theories with the Galtonesque eugenics theories synonymous with the period. This attitude persisted into the twentieth century. For example, much of Tarde and Le Bon's theory was echoed in a dismissive 1920 essay by Sigmund Freud in which he asserted that in crowds, individualism is sacrificed to the 'impulsive, changeable and irritable' demands of the group, reminiscent of 'primitive peoples and children'.⁸ As late as 1952 psychologist Professor Lionel Penrose was still talking about the 'Psychopathology' of groups.⁹

³ Gustave Le Bon, *The crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York, 2017), p. 44.

⁴ Stephen Reicher, 'The Psychology of Crowd Dynamics', in M. Brewer and M Hewstone (eds), *Self and Social Identity* (Oxford, 2004), p. 232-5.

⁵ Gabriel Tarde, *Les Crimes des Foules* (Paris, 1892), pp. 353-386; Hippolyte Taine, *The French Revolution*, Vol III, p 151.

⁶ Taine, *French Revolution*, Vol 1, p. 152.

⁷ Robert Nye, Introduction to translation of Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd - A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York, 2017), p. 10.

⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (Transl. James Strachey, 1922)

<https://archive.org/details/cu31924032306320/page/n27> (accessed 14 January 2020).

⁹ Lionel Penrose, *On the objective study of crowd behaviour* (London, 1952), p. 3.

The contagious crowd

The lower classes were thought to be predisposed to suggestion, particularly when abandoning their individuality to the lawless disorder of the mob. Le Bon thought that the individual substituted *conscious* with *unconscious* activity upon joining a crowd of mentally inferior masses determined to ‘destroy society’ in a form of primitive communism.¹⁰ Another aspect of Le Bon’s theories was the concept of *contagion*, which suggested that, once established, a mob can infect and subvert society towards revolution. Le Bon contested that crowds possessed a ‘group mind’ with characteristics distinct from those of the individuals within it. His frequent references to the French Revolution provide a clue to the influence of Galton, Taine and Tarde on his condescending and racist attitude towards crowds – the sects, castes and social classes comprising his ‘homogeneous psychological crowds’.¹¹

While Le Bon’s model may have spoken to the perceived threat of all-out revolution on mainland Europe, his analysis does not chime with the orderly English reform crowds which concern this thesis but it is still of interest in tracing the antecedents of current crowd theory. Hierarchical crowd theory was questioned as early as 1926 by psychologist Theodor Geiger who focussed on the crowd as a social group with a unique form of collective identity.

Anticipating the work of Stephen Reicher 80 years later, Geiger invoked the concept of *Gemeinschaft* (community) to describe the ‘we’ of the group as a positive rather than negative force.¹² Historians were also beginning to take an interest in the mechanics of crowd power. Georges Lefebvre also acknowledged agency within political crowds recognising that crowd participants followed their ‘own agenda during the French Revolution, a set of goals related,

¹⁰ Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 76.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 3.

¹² Christian Borch, ‘Crowds and Pathos: Theodor Geiger on Revolutionary Action’, *Acta Sociologica*, 49 (2006), pp. 5–18.

but not tied, to those of leaders of that event. Notably, the members of the crowd did not lose their individuality even as members of the crowd'.¹³

Despite Geiger's challenge, however, Le Bon's theories remained influential. The concept of the 'normless' individual within the crowd was further developed by cultural historians Turner and Killian in the 1970s into their *emergent norm* theory which suggests that:

'As the behaviour of an increasing number of crowd members reflects the emergent definition of their situation, it becomes increasingly difficult for the individual to cling to a conflicting conception. [...] emergent norm theory helps to explain the breakdown of usual norms of reciprocity.'¹⁴

The fickle crowd

Although a distinct development since Le Bon, this theory still leaves crowd members with no individual agency. George Rudé agreed:

'The fickleness or 'mobility' of the crowd is, of course, a shibboleth that has become sanctified by constant repetition: the very word 'mob' is derived from the Latin *mobile vulgar*, and it is not surprising that the possessing classes, wherever they were unable to control its energies, should have looked on the crowd as a fickle monster.'¹⁵

This notion of the crowd as capricious is totally at odds with the reform crowds which comprise our case studies with the exception of the second Spa Fields meeting which was hi-jacked by an

¹³ Jeffry Kaplow (ed), *New Perspectives on the French Revolution* (Trans: Ranum and Wagoner (New York, 1965), pp. 173-90; Georges Lefebvre, *Foules Révolutionnaires* (Paris, 1954).

¹⁴ Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, *Collective Behaviour* (London, 1972), p. 95.

¹⁵ George Rudé, *The Crowd in History* (London, 2005), p. 252.

insurrectionary renegade faction (see chapter two).¹⁶ On the whole, reform crowds from 1816-1848 were the model of restraint and reason and not at all volatile.

Masse und Macht

Elias Canetti's 1960 *Masse und Macht* (Crowds and Power) provided a more functional approach to crowd classification.¹⁷ Canetti distinguished between natural or open crowds, as opposed to closed or contained crowds, suggesting that the 'urge to grow is the supreme attribute of the crowd'.¹⁸ It is Canetti's closed crowds which concern this thesis and it was this type of crowd to which he was referring in the epigraph to this chapter. The idea of containment has direct relevance to my case studies – in particular Newhall Hill and Peterloo, where there was a clearly defined perimeter – and thus contributes to methods of quantifying the size of crowds. The other important aspect of Canetti's work was his phenomenological perspective, considering crowds from the internal viewpoint of a crowd member rather than Le Bon's external interpretation. Specifically, he focussed on the aspects of personal space and bodily contact – again of relevance when considering optimum crowd density and therefore, in a confined area, capacity. He looked at the natural human fear of being touched but speculated that in a crowd this can reverse – the individual could become oblivious to human contact with fear diminishing as the crush got greater (see methodology section below).¹⁹ Canetti also suggested that there comes a point of *discharge* when individuals within the crowd surrender their individuality. This acknowledgment of the natural human flight response echoes an issue of significance at Peterloo where the panic arguably led to many of the crush injuries.²⁰

¹⁶ See chapter six, also Malcolm Chase, *The People's Farm - English Radical Agrarianism 1775-1840* (Oxford, 1988), p. 99; W. Lewis Printer and Publisher, *High Treason – The Trials at the Bar of Arthur Thistlewood, James Watson, Thomas Preston and John Hooper* (Clerkenwell, 1817).

¹⁷ Canetti, *Crowds and power*, pp. 2-4.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 16-17.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 15.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 29 and 60.

Robert Ezra Park's sociological work *The Crowd and the Public* reads like a piece of 1960s sociological theory. It originated as his 1904 University of Strasbourg doctoral dissertation *Masse un Publikum*. The English language translation did not appear until 1972 accompanied with notes by US scholars Henry Elsner Jr. and Donald Levine. While one could challenge Park's view of the 'crowd' and the 'public' as two distinct and separate entities, there are aspects of the way Park's work is translated that are useful.²¹ Writing just a few years after Le Bon's *Foules*, Park floated, probably for the first time, the concept of collective behaviour, rescuing crowd theory from the authoritative condescension of Le Bon. Park also challenged the jurisdicative angle taken by criminologist Scipio Sighele in his 1891 work *La Folla Delinquenta* (*The Delinquent Crowd*).²²

The existential crowd

In the latter twentieth century a tranche of existentialist and postmodern philosophers took turns to variously lionise and deride the crowd. In 2012, Danish sociologist Christian Borch sought to challenge earlier nihilistic narratives. In his book, *The Politics of Crowds: An Alternative History of Sociology*, Borch questioned what he called the 'politics of contempt'.²³ He was critical of sociologists and philosophers such as Durkheim, Simmel and Baudrillard, deriding the latter's 'ironic' view of crowds. Borch approached the subject from the point of view of political and philosophical sociology, reassigning agency to the individual, citing Michel Maffesoli's 1996 'neo-tribes' concept (see below).²⁴ Borch's work frequently arbitrated between the 'antagonism between crowds and individuality which ... guided much classical crowd theory... and which has been challenged by collective behaviour scholars.'²⁵ He acknowledged the 'Janus-faced

²¹ Robert Ezra Park, *The crowd and the public, and other essays* (Chicago, 1987), p. 55.

²² Scipio Sighele, *The Criminal Crowd and Other Writings on Mass Society* (Toronto, 2018).

²³ Christian Borch, *The Politics of Crowds - An Alternative History of Sociology* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 279.

²⁴ Michel Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (London, 1996), p.76.

²⁵ Borch, *The Politics of Crowds*, p. 264.

nature of crowds' – the simultaneously inward- and outward-observing aspect of many political crowds. Arguably reform crowds were often as much about internal morale-boosting as they were about presenting a public display. Thomas Attwood, on accepting the appointment of chair of the mass meeting at Newhall Hill on Oct 3 1831 to petition parliament for reform, said that 'It gave him great pleasure to witness the countless thousands which there presented themselves, developing the moral energies of a great nation'.²⁶

The chimeric crowd

The work of Jaap van Ginneken focussed on Europe in the closing decades of the nineteenth century and as such is of little direct relevance to this thesis. Van Ginneken's analysis of Tarde's earlier work on the chimerical nature of crowds and also their frequent irresistible 'pull' on spectators is however of relevance when considering the ambiguous nature of membership (participant or observer?).²⁷ Another scholar of interest is Mark Granovetter, whose 1978 article, 'Threshold Models of Collective Behaviour' subscribes to the collective theory, in which the decisions and actions of the crowd are arrived at through intelligent consensus. Participants may be inspired by leaders and influenced by each other, but still retain their own logical and rational and purposeful, rather than mindless and random, individuality.²⁸ This challenges some sociological and political crowd theory which can be patronising to the individual and robs agency from crowd members. What is unique to Granovetter's work is the concept of the 'threshold'. He said that an individual's threshold for joining a riot is 'the proportion of the group he would have to see join before he would do so.'²⁹ While this thesis is not concerned specifically with riots, the transition from orderly crowd to riot, and in this

²⁶ BRO L/p/35/3, 64660.

²⁷ Jaap van Ginneken. *Crowds, psychology, and politics, 1871-1899* (Cambridge, 1992) p. 189.

²⁸ Mark Granovetter, 'Threshold Models of Collective Behavior', *American Journal of Sociology*, 83 (1978), pp. 1420-43.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 1422.

context Granovetter's model, will be useful as a measure of the number or proportion of others who must make one decision before a given actor does so. An example of this situation occurred following Feargus O'Connor's capitulation at Kennington on 10 April 1848 when action by a crowd member triggered disagreement between Chartist leaders on the platform.³⁰

The worthy crowd

Another model of identity which may be helpful is that of the tribe. Michel Maffesoli has invoked the French term 'puissance' to describe the shared sense of common identity in political crowds.³¹ Literally translated 'puissance' means simply 'power' but Maffesoli was conveying something stronger here, stressing the idea of collective power as opposed to institutional power (pouvoir). This concept of collectivism is also present in Stephen Reicher's work. Referring to the 1981 Brixton riots, Reicher identified three key factors in the collective action of crowds: identity (through a shared narrative), illegitimacy (of 'the system') and empowerment (through collective demonstration).³² Collective action has variously been described as Hommerie (Montaigne), Gemeinde (Weber) and more bluntly, Mutual Indignancy (Durkheim). What is missing from all of these is Charles Tilly's essential ingredient of worthiness.³³ Tilly combined this with accord, magnitude and allegiance to produce his 'WUNC' acronym: Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment. Wouters and Walgrave have elaborated on this in their 2017 journal article about the legitimacy and power of crowds: 'The idea is simple: the more protest events have a high turnout (numbers), gather an apparently unified (unity) and dignified (worthiness) crowd that really cares about the issue (commitment), the higher the chance they produce a wanted

³⁰ See chapter eight, p. 254; *Leeds Mercury*, 15 April 1848;

³¹ Michel Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes-The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (London, 1996). p.24.

³² Stephen Reicher, 'The New Cross Fire and the Brixton Riots' in Ra Page (ed.) *Protest – Stories of Resistance* (Manchester, 2017), p. 301.

³³ Charles Tilly, *Contentious performances* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 122.

outcome.’³⁴ A good example of this is Lord John Russell’s October 1831 acknowledgement of the part played by Thomas Attwood’s Newhall Hill meetings in coming close to persuading the House of Lords to ratify the second Reform Bill passed by the house of commons the previous month’ (see chapter four).³⁵

Peter Sloterdijk and Stephen Reicher have both addressed the issue of agency within the crowd. Sloterdijk’s essay, *Die Verachtung der Massen: Versuch über Kulturkämpfe in der modernen Gesellschaft* (The contempt of the masses: an attempt at cultural struggles in modern society), distinguishes between vertical (hierarchical) communication within the crowd in favour of horizontal communication, positing instead a form of radical egalitarianism.³⁶ Reicher’s ‘social identity’ crowd theory builds on the work of Maffesoli, Granovetter and Canetti by challenging the ‘contagion’ concept of the crowd as a site of de-individuation, bringing to bear a more nuanced view of inter-group dynamics.³⁷ While few contemporary accounts of this intra-crowd communication exist it can be approached through literature. In his imagined autobiography of politicised London tailor Alton Locke, Charles Kingsley gave us a glimpse of the spontaneity which may have attended the mass platform of the 1840s. In his eponymous novel Kingsley’s hero Locke, loosely based on Chartist poet, Thomas Cooper, sought to de-escalate a tense situation by appealing for restraint from a rowdy crowd intent on violence against property:

³⁴ Wouters, Ruud and Walgrave, Stefaan. *What makes protest powerful? Reintroducing and elaborating Charles Tilly’s WUNC concept*. (Working Paper 2017), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313179891> (accessed 17 November 2019).

³⁵ Hansard 5-20 October 1831 (London, 1832) p. 604.

³⁶ Peter Sloterdijk, *Die Verachtung der Massen: Versuch über Kulturkämpfe in der modernen Gesellschaft* (Berlin, 2000), p. 21.

³⁷ Stephen Reicher, ‘The Psychology of Crowd Dynamics’, in Michael Hogg and R. Scott Tindale (eds), *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (Cambridge, 2001). p. 194.

‘A confused murmur arose, and a movement in the crowd. ... I assured them of the sympathy of the London working men, made a comment on their own speeches – which the reader ought to be able to make for himself – and told them that I had come to entreat their assistance towards obtaining such a parliamentary representation as would secure them their rights’.³⁸

Discussions surrounding these issues of crowd legitimacy and power surfaced regularly during the reform period. Whether we choose to call it *hommerie*, *gemeinde* or *worthiness*, there is little doubt that crowds felt collectively empowered to come together to voice claims regarding their access to participative democracy. It is also clear that the state felt so threatened by this collective *WUNCness* that it applied every technique in its arsenal to attempt to quash the mass platform, including legislation, censorship, litigation, and sometimes military power. However, worthiness is impossible to suppress, and it just kept regenerating like a hydra.

The mis-construed crowd

Ultimately the crowd continues to be an elusive concept. Academics still cannot agree on a definition of a crowd.³⁹ While much crowd theory does not speak directly to my research (as it tends to address the ‘problem’ of riotous rather than orderly crowds which were unproblematic rarely requiring any form of control or management), it boils down to perception. Some of the more judgemental and controlling theories provide a way of measuring or gauging the mainly misplaced opinion of ministers of the state. The authoritarian theories of Tarde, Taine and Le Bon help to understand the mindset of nineteenth century governments who regularly misconstrued the orderly nature of the mass platform as potentially riotous and to be nipped in

³⁸ See chapter six, Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke* (London, 1905), pp. 332-3, Richard Menke, ‘Cultural Capital and the Scene of Rioting: Male Working-Class Authorship in ‘Alton Locke’’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 28 (2000), pp. 87-108.

³⁹ J. S. McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob - From Plato to Canetti* (Abingdon, 2011), p. 327.

the bud before it could flower, seed and spread. Canetti's ideas about flight speak to events like Peterloo, and Granovetter's threshold model helps to explain events such as Spa Fields, where an orderly meeting mutated into a riot. Tilly's concept of worthiness and Reicher's work on sociability echoed the depiction of crowds we see portrayed in satirical prints such as James Gillray's print of an early reform crowd at Copenhagen fields in 1795, in which we are party to a series of vignettes or sub-narratives of interpersonal conviviality frequently found in representations of reform crowds (Figure 3:1).⁴⁰ Reicher suggested that crowd psychology is a constant challenge: 'Crowds are the elephant man of the social sciences. They are viewed as something strange, something pathological, something monstrous. At the same time, they are viewed with awe and with fascination. However, above all, they are considered to be something apart'.⁴¹ I agree with Reicher, and it is this aspect of awe which I emphasise, though I would go further, expanding the concept in chapter eight to a consideration of the way what I am now terming the 'reputational power' of crowds precedes them.



Figure 3:1 John Thelwall addressing a reform crowd at Copenhagen Fields, 26 October 1795, James Gillray.⁴²

⁴⁰ See discussion of print and meeting in chapter six, pp. 192-4.

⁴¹ Reicher, 'The Psychology of Crowd Dynamics', p. 182.

⁴² British Museum, J,3.86.

Crowd science

Having reflected on political crowds from a sociological standpoint, I will now consider them from the perspective of crowd modelling. With the rise of the early modern European city, people may have congregated in crowds more frequently and in greater numbers.⁴³ While large non-political gatherings could have been previously limited to public events such as feasts, fairs and occasions of national importance such as coronations and state funerals, the eighteenth century saw the rise of the public execution.⁴⁴ It is arguable that, until the advent of league football in the 1880s, the execution was the most frequent non-political motivation for the coming together of people in large numbers at pre-arranged times.⁴⁵ These events may have prompted the need for some form of crowd control.⁴⁶ Whereas formerly the behaviour of the crowd may have been relatively predictable, if not in numbers, at least in terms of times of congregation and dispersal, in the case of executions the magnitude, timing and behaviour of the crowd was probably not.

Political crowds proved a greater challenge. Riots excepted, the election crowd may have tested the ability of authorities to maintain public order.⁴⁷ However, this study is not primarily concerned with riots, as they were unplanned and unpredictable. The advent of the mass platform was different – campaigners, government and magistrates all engaged in advance planning. Organisers planned location, timings, and order to achieve maximum effect for their cause, with restraint often being considered the most powerful political tool, and authorities preparing to contain or subjugate what they often anticipated as a potential riotous mob.

⁴³ Ian Munro, *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London – The City and Its Double* (Basingstoke, 2005) pp. 4-5.

⁴⁴ Vic Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1869* (Oxford, 1994), p. 9.

⁴⁵ Brian King, *A Potted History of Association Football in England*, <https://bkthisandthat.org.uk/a-potted-history-of-association-football-in-england> (accessed 12 August 2022).

⁴⁶ Steven Wilf, 'Imagining Justice: Aesthetics and Public Executions in Late Eighteenth-century England', *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities*, 5 (1993), p. 54.

⁴⁷ K. Theodore Hoppen, 'Grammars of Electoral Violence in Nineteenth-century England and Ireland', *English Historical Review*, 109 (1994), p. 606.

The dangerous crowd

In order to understand the discipline of crowd science it is worth pausing to consider how it developed. As shown above, crowd ‘science’ in nineteenth century was non-existent beyond the stringent policies proposed by Tarde et al. The twentieth century gradually saw the introduction of police tactics for non-violent and non-interventionist means of crowd control via containment, but it took a series of major non-political crowd disasters before the dangers of containment itself became apparent. These include the 1943 Bethnal Green tube station disaster in which 173 people died in a stampede caused by a woman slipping during an initially orderly ingress into an underground air-raid shelter via a blacked-out staircase, the 1971 Ibrox Park tragedy when 66 fans died of compressive asphyxia in a spectator crush at the Glasgow football stadium, and the infamous, and still contentious, Hillsborough Stadium Disaster of 1989 in which 96 Liverpool supporters were crushed in what appears to have been an avoidable crowd containment incident.⁴⁸ Internationally there were worse disasters including the Hajj pilgrimage at Mecca in 1990 where over 1000 people were crushed in a crowd incident and a further 750 in a similar incident in 2015.⁴⁹ These disasters brought into focus the need to pre-plan for crowd events but also arguably provided the stimulus to develop the discipline of crowd science to which I now turn to aid this study.

The data required to assess safety risks posed to twentieth-century crowds consists of numbers, density and ease of movement.⁵⁰ As most of the crowds in this study are static, mobility can be discounted, so to estimate the likely attendance of the nineteenth century mass platform we need just two figures – area and potential density. For the locations used as case

⁴⁸ *Illustrated London News* (13 March 1943) p. 288; *Bethnal Green's Ordeal*, alondoninheritance.com (accessed 16 August 2020); *The Report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel* (London, Stationery Office HC 581. Sept 2012, p. 193.

⁴⁹ *The Guardian*, 24 September 2015.

⁵⁰ Juliane Adrian, Martyn Amos et al., ‘A Glossary for Research on Human Crowd Dynamics’ *Collective Dynamics*, 4 (2019), pp. 3-8.

studies in this dissertation, area is not contentious as all three, Kennington, Peterloo and Newhall Hill had clearly defined boundaries. A simple mapping tool can be used to calculate the area at the times of the events.⁵¹ Density however presents a problem and will remain somewhat speculative.



Figure 3:2 [l] Crowd density averaged three ppsm at People's Vote March 19 October 2019
[r] Reform meeting Smithfield, 21 July 1819.⁵²

Density

Measuring the density of modern crowds is relatively straightforward using overhead cameras and CCTV footage. At the People's Vote March in London on 23 March 2019, organisers claimed an attendance of one million people but Professor Keith Still of Manchester Metropolitan University was sceptical, 'Based on the visuals from the helicopter image, it's between 312,000 and 400,000 people,' he said.⁵³ This assumes a density of between two and four people per square metre (ppsm) along the whole length of the march and the final assembly point for speeches in Parliament Square. At a follow-up event later that year an aerial shot shows the crowd in the square varying from one ppsm to four ppsm and averaging out at

⁵¹ <https://bit.ly/calcmaph-newhallhill> (accessed 3 April 2020).

⁵² <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/oct/19/peoples-vote-march-hailed-as-one-of-greatest-protest-marches-in-british-history> (accessed 15 March 2022); London Metropolitan Archives.

⁵³ <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/brexit-march-peoples-vote-crowd-size> (accessed 15 March 2022).

around three ppsm (Figure 3:2). When juxtaposed alongside a print of the Smithfield reform meeting of 200 years earlier one can detect a comparable crowd density.

The Fruin model

Keith Still is an expert in crowd science and advises event organisers worldwide on crowd safety issues. He is now advisor to the UK Cabinet and also provider of mandatory event-monitoring training for police. He argued, in his Warwick PhD thesis, that once you ‘move above the critical density of more than one person per square metre... there is the potential for overcrowding and personal injury.’⁵⁴ Much crowd science, including that of Still, is based on the work of John Fruin who coined the rather misleading term ‘level of service’ to indicate the relative comfort and safety of different crowd densities.⁵⁵ However, as it has become the industry standard, it will be used, as it provides an independent yardstick for crowd density world-wide. Although he was mainly concerned with moving crowds, Fruin’s work on queuing is the most pertinent to the static crowds in this research. He stated that, for ‘occupancies’ in waiting areas, densities of 0.5 ppsm allow free movement. Above one ppsm, Fruin, like Still, observes that movement is somewhat restricted and is on an ‘excuse me’ basis. This equates to his Level of Service (LOS) D. At two ppsm, LOS E, standing is still possible without touching others, but movement is restricted which, he said, is ‘about the occupancy level that you see in most normal waiting situations.’⁵⁶ At approximately three ppsm, ‘involuntary touching and brushing against others will occur, a psychological threshold that should generally be avoided in most public situations,’ and at LOS F – densities greater than four ppsm, ‘potentially dangerous crowd forces and psychological stresses may begin to develop.’ This indicator will be critical in assessing potentially dense reform crowds in chapter three.

⁵⁴ G. Keith Still, ‘Crowd Dynamics’, (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, July 2000), p. 1.

⁵⁵ John J. Fruin, *Designing for Pedestrians - A Level-of-Service Concept* (New York, 1970), p. 7.

⁵⁶ John J. Fruin, ‘Crowd dynamics and auditorium management’ in *Auditorium News* (May 1984) quoted by Keith Still <https://www.gkstill.com/Support/crowd-flow/fruin/Fruin3.html> (accessed 1 March 2022); Fruin’s units of people per square foot have been converted to ppsm.



Figure 3:3 Keith Still, *Tennis Court Density Avatars* ⁵⁷

Grid technique

Keith Still worked on the basis that densities of more than one person per square metre present a degree of risk, defining the discipline of crowd dynamics as ‘the study of the how and where crowds form and move above the critical density of more than one person per square metre’, broadening this later to include crowd modelling, monitoring and management. ⁵⁸ He modelled crowds using avatars superimposed on ‘tennis court’ grids to visualise crowds at different densities (Figure 3:3). This grid technique was pioneered by Prof. Herbert Jacobs’s 1967 observation of anti-Vietnam war crowds from the vantage point of his office tower at the University of California, Berkeley.⁵⁹ Using the plaza’s ready-made grid to count them square by square, he observed an ‘arm’s length’ density of around one ppsm rising to two at stress points (exits or police containment).

⁵⁷ Keith Still, *Crowd Safety and Crowd Risk Analysis* (Manchester, 2011), pp. 3-5, <http://www.gkstill.com/Support/crowd-density/CrowdDensity-1.html> (accessed 15 March 2022).

⁵⁸ Still, *Crowd Dynamics*, p. 1.

⁵⁹ *Time*, 7 April 1967, <https://web.archive.org/web/20081014061512/http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,843533,00.html> (accessed 17 January 2022).

Still's tennis court grids serve to demonstrate that four ppsm is very tight and, while at certain parts of a meeting, around the hustings for example, people may huddle up this close, human nature dictates that, where space permits people tend to maintain an arm's-length distance except in close family or friendship groups.

The body ellipse

Using data from Stephen Pheasant's work on 'Bodyspace', Still calculates that the average British male inhabits 0.2 sqm of ground space.⁶⁰ This is based on each person occupying a 'body ellipse' into which another person cannot enter (Figure 3:4).



Figure 3:4 0.2m² body ellipse

Assuming everyone packs tightly together, this means in theory five people could fit into a square metre (Figure 3:5). People's natural aversion to proximity, however, prevents this happening except in the most extreme circumstances. How comfortable people are in crowds depends on each participant's perception of, and sensitivity towards personal space.

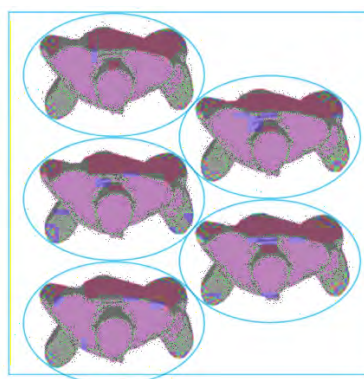


Figure 3:5 Five people per square metre

⁶⁰ G. Keith Still, *Introduction to Crowd Science* (Boca Raton, 2019), p. 34; Stephen Pheasant, *Bodyspace- Anthropometry, Ergonomics and the Design of Work* (Boca Raton, 2006), p. 244.

Some allowance should be made for anthropomorphic changes in the population as people are larger than they were in our period so effectively girth has an impact on density (Figure 3:6). The mean Body Mass Index (BMI) of British males aged 26-30 was 21.91 in 1819 compared with 24.93 in 1979.⁶¹ This suggests that around 15 per cent more people could have squeezed into any given area in the early nineteenth century than they would now. If an average density for today's political crowds is assumed to be two ppsm, arguably 2.3 ppsm should be allowed for the era of the reform mass platform.



Figure 3:6 Four people per square metre illustrating the effect of girth, Illust. Technical-Scientific Advisory Board.⁶²

To be confident in applying this to nineteenth century crowds the Kennington Daguerreotype can be analysed to corroborate density. I applied the grid technique to William Kilburn's image of the 1848 Chartist meeting (Figure 3:7). A three-metre perspective grid was superimposed in order to sample crowd density at different distances from the hustings and there were found to be an around twenty people per square in the densest areas falling to around ten at the periphery. As each square covers an area of 9m², this gives a density of between 1.1 and 2.2 people per square metre (ppsm) making an average density of 1.6 ppsm which corroborates Jacobs's arms' length theory as well as the more scientific methods applied by Still and Hall.

⁶¹ Roderick Floud, *Height, Weight and Body Mass of the British Population since 1820* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), p.36.

⁶² Dirk Oberhagemann, *Static and Dynamic Crowd Densities at Major Public Events* (Altenberg, 2012), p. 10.

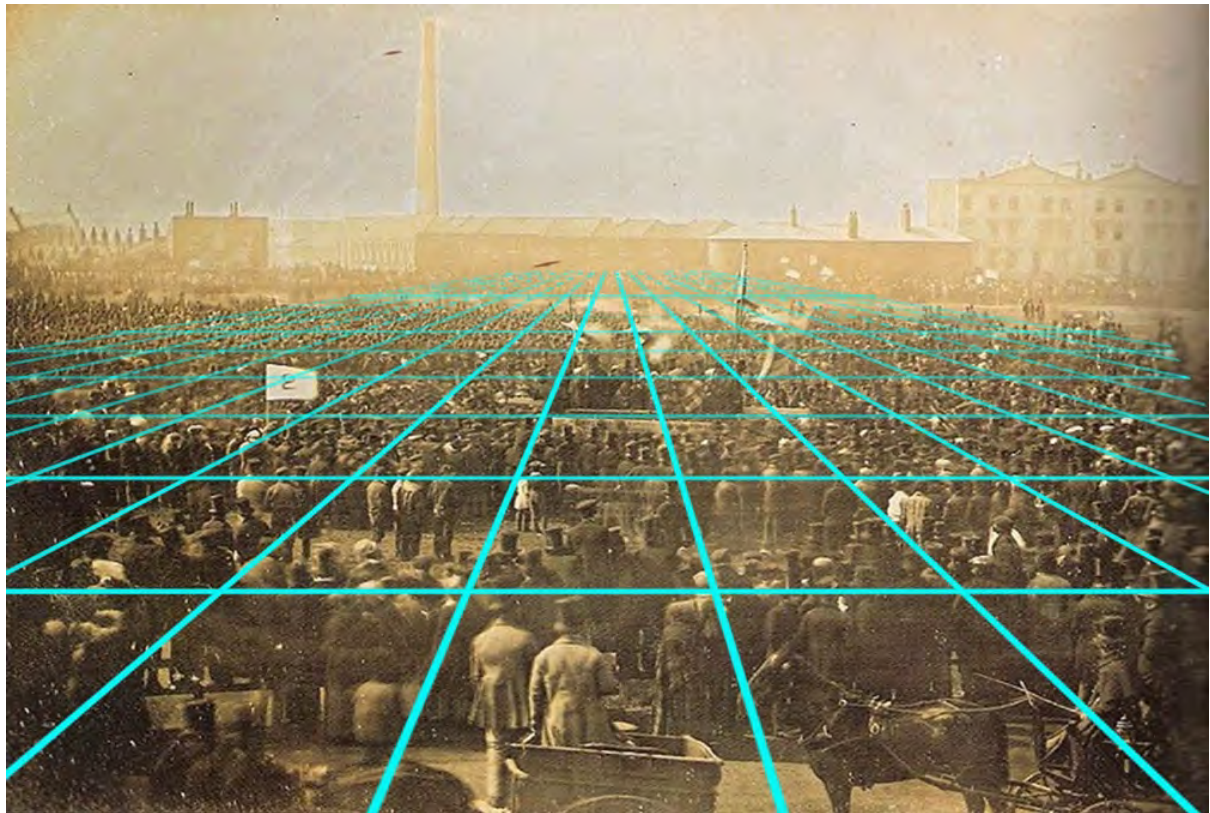


Figure 3:7 Chartist meeting at Kennington Common 10 April 1848, Daguerreotype by William Kilburn.⁶³

It is not, however, sufficient to simply calculate how many people will fit into a given amount of space. There are two additional factors we need to consider – density distribution and proxemics – people’s attitude toward their personal space. First density – a brief glance at the Kennington image shows that density was far from even – many gaps exist and there was clustering around the platforms which correlates with observations of modern crowds. Keith Still has said, ‘when an area such as a pen, front of stage or station platform is filling to capacity there is little room for the individual to manoeuvre to lower density. In those environments people compete for space.’⁶⁴ This critical issue of uneven density distribution is found in all my case studies evidenced by eyewitness accounts at Peterloo and Newhall and photographic evidence from

⁶³ William Kilburn, Daguerreotype 1848, Royal Collection Trust: RCIN 2932484.

⁶⁴ Still, *Crowd Safety*, pp. 16-17.

Kennington. The capacity of any contained event falls markedly when one considers the many gaps in the crowd as well as the way density rises towards the platform.

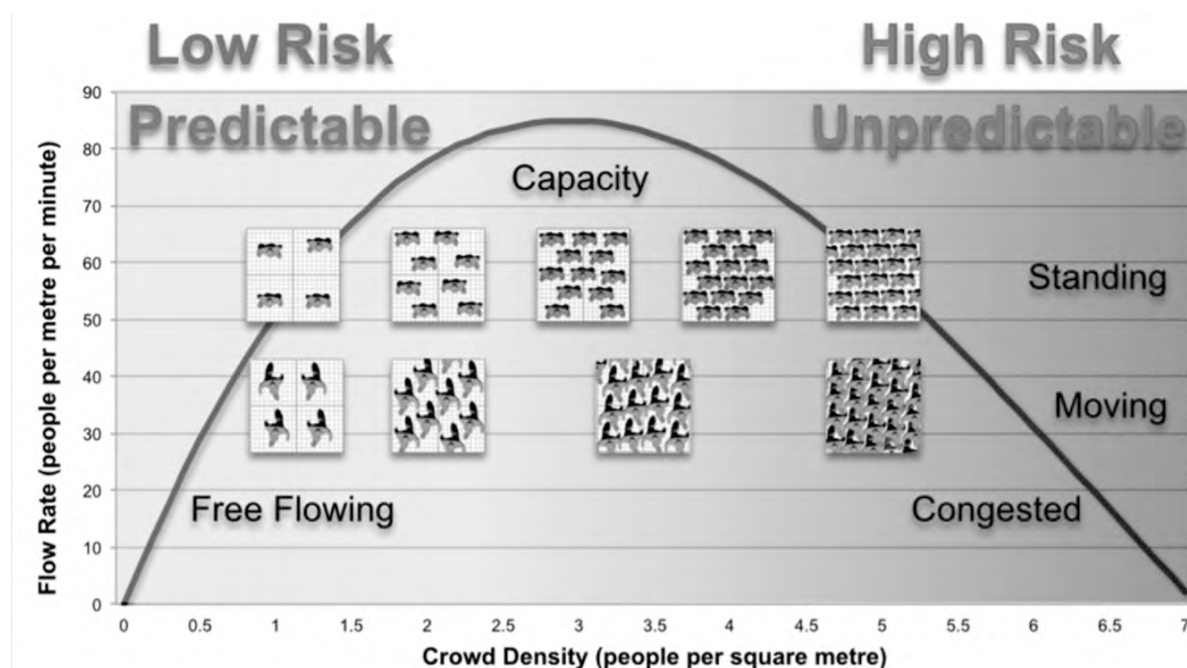


Figure 3:8 Crowd Density Calculation Crowd Safety and Crowd Risk Analysis, Prof. Dr. G. Keith Still.⁶⁵

Risk

Still also challenges the notion that crowds flow like fluids, a frequent assumption which also denies agency to individual actors with the crowd. Figure 3:8 demonstrates graphically the increased unpredictability and risk posed by, and to, crowds in which densities exceed two ppsm. Organisers were well aware of the dangers of tight crowds. The Orders for a Birmingham meeting during the reform crisis stated: ‘In order to prevent accidents and disagreements, all persons attending the meeting, are strictly urged and enjoined to avoid pressing and crowding upon each other’.⁶⁶ We can go further and suggest that risk can be heightened when an ostensibly peaceful ‘safe crowd’ of that density is placed under duress by external forces such as the militia charge at Peterloo. Under these circumstances individual

⁶⁵ Closing screen of risk analysis video, <https://www.gkstill.com/Support/crowd-density/CrowdDensity-1.html> (accessed 15 March 2022).

⁶⁶ BRO LF 76.11, Point 13.

choice is limited and people are forced into a small restricted and increasingly dangerous space. This could explain the high degree of crush injuries in the Peterloo casualty lists.⁶⁷

Proxemic zones

Secondly, we need to consider people's attitude toward their personal space and for this we have to turn to haptics, the study of interpersonal touch and, proxemics the study of attitudes towards interpersonal space.⁶⁸ The Covid-19 pandemic has drawn novel attention to the way in which people maintain 'social distance.'⁶⁹ This has brought an increased or hypersensitive 'proximity aversion'. Edward Hall developed the discipline of proxemics in the 1960s to help understand the way humans perceive and respond to the personal space around their bodies and how they create unconscious layers or bubbles into which intimate friends are admitted but strangers are excluded. Hall argued that human perceptions of space 'are moulded and patterned by culture' suggesting that 'differing cultural frameworks for defining and organising space are internalised in people at an unconscious level' and that 'both the personal spaces that people try to maintain around their bodies as well as the macro-level sensibilities shape cultural expectations about personal space.'⁷⁰

Neuroscientists recognise the process whereby people regulate the distance maintained between themselves and others during social interaction. Violation of personal space activates a nervous response in the brain.⁷¹ Even on a crowded rush hour train people try to maintain social distance

⁶⁷ Michael Bush, *The Casualties of Peterloo* (Lancaster, 2005), p 3.

⁶⁸ The OED defines Haptics as 'Tactile and kinaesthetic sensation; touch, esp. as a means of nonverbal communication'. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/385304?rskey=wgCsLx&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> (accessed 15 March 2022).

⁶⁹ Julia Katila, Yumei Gan, Marjorie Goodwin, 'Interaction rituals and 'social distancing': New haptic trajectories and touching from a distance in the time of COVID-19', *Discourse Studies*, 22 (2020), pp. 418–40.

⁷⁰ Nina Brown, *Edward T. Hall : Proxemic Theory* (Santa Barbara, 1966) <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4774h1rm> (accessed 5 August 2022).

⁷¹ Daniel Kennedy, Jan Gläscher, J Michael Tyszka and Ralph Adolphs, 'Personal Space Regulation by the Human Amygdala', *Nature Neuroscience*, 12 (2009), pp. 1226–7.

and avoid physical contact. The commuters in Figure 3:9, for example, are not physically touching, despite being packed at around four to five ppsm. This also demonstrates how the presence of bags and clothing can increase distance. Many of the illustrations of reform crowds show personal items such as picnic equipment and banners – these all took up space.



Figure 3:9 Crowding on rush hour underground train.

Hall proposed a system of ‘proxemic zones’ to classify different types of interpersonal space (Figure 3:10).⁷² He suggested that anything closer than 50cm enters the intimate zone into which people usually only admit close family and sexual partners, next comes the personal zone of 1m where friends are welcome. This is followed by the social zone of up to 4m where interaction with trusted strangers is tolerated and finally, outside of that comes the public zone where people might encounter strangers.⁷³

Hall defines personal space as ‘a small protective sphere or bubble that an organism maintains between itself and others.’⁷⁴ It has been suggested that violation of this space activates an

⁷² Proxemics is the ‘study or interpretation of physical proximity between people in various situations; the ways in which people interact spatially, esp. in maintaining a certain amount of space between themselves and others’ (OED) <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/153555?redirectedFrom=proxemics#eid> (accessed 15 March 2022).

⁷³ Edward T Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York, 1969), pp. 116-20.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 119.

enzymic response in the amygdala region of the brain, potentially triggering fear, anxiety and fight or flight behaviours as well as defensive responses such as asocial behaviour and hostility.⁷⁵

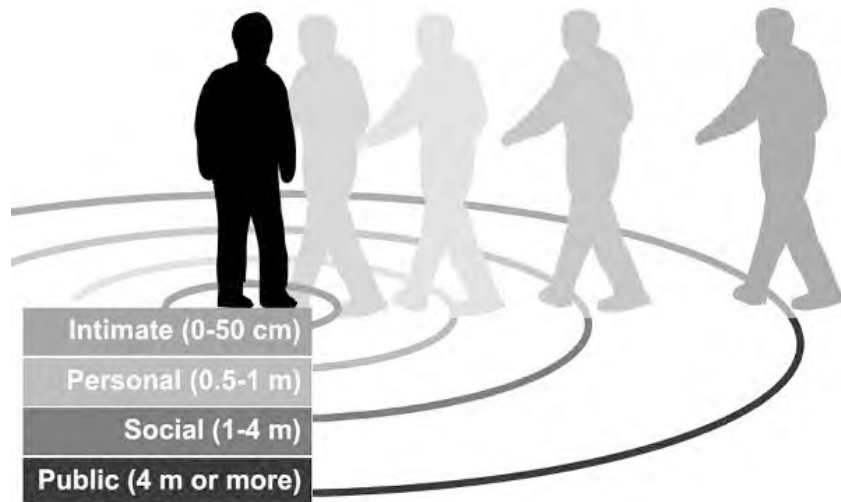


Figure 3:10 Edward Hall's Proxemic Zones.

Clustering

One may speculate that political crowds consist of multiple zones in which people stand very close to family members in the intimate zone and quite close to friends in the personal zone but maintain distance from other like-minded 'trusted strangers' in the Social Zone. This would result in crowds being made up of multiple clusters of zoned groups separated by gaps. Even larger gaps would then be observed between total strangers or potential adversaries such as special constables or counter demonstrators. This is corroborated by modern crowd photographs and is equally true for most types of crowds included sporting events, religious pilgrimages, and music festivals as well as political demonstrations such as Figure 3:2 above. It is no surprise to find similar patterns of uneven density in the image of the 1848 Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common (Figure 3:11).

⁷⁵ Ahreum Maeng, Robin Tanner and Dilip Soman, 'Conservative When Crowded: Social Crowding and Consumer Choice' *Journal of Marketing Research*, 50, (2013), pp. 739-52.



Figure 3:11 Uneven crowd density at Kennington in 1848.

The Kennington crowd varies between a density of zero to four ppsm with an average of around two ppsm. However, despite the many gaps, there are also groups which seem to disregard Hall's proxemic zones, even approaching four to five ppsm. According to Hall, people in crowds of two ppsm would be on the cusp of the intimate/personal zones so perhaps another factor comes into play specific to political crowds (Figure 3:12). This could relate to sociability and is further explored in chapter six.

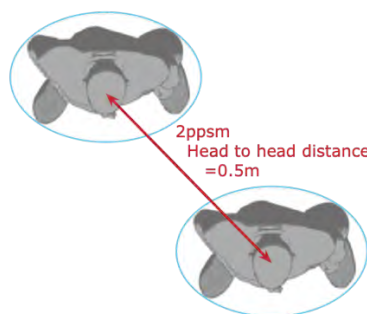


Figure 3:12 Even a crowd of two ppsm approaches Hall's 'Intimate Zone'.

The social crowd

Hopkins, Reicher, et al. refer to political crowds as ‘Demonstrative crowds’ and have coined the term ‘collective self-realisation’ (CSR) to describe the phenomena of political demonstrators in crowds assuming a temporary social identity sometimes distinct from their normal affiliation.⁷⁶ Invoking Durkheim’s evocative term, ‘effervescence’, they suggest that collective emotion could ‘overwhelm crowd members and alter their forms of thought, and level of relationality and CSR.’ The suggestion is that CSR temporarily overrides each individual’s aversion to strangers entering their personal proxemic zone. While this approaches Le Bon’s contagion theory, the sense of shared social identity suggested by Hopkins, Reicher, et al. is an entirely positive concept contrasting with the negative connotations of Le Bon. CSR is a ‘cognitive transformation in which people adopt a common frame of reference based on collective norms and values.’⁷⁷ Not all sociologists share Reicher’s positive take on collective behaviour. Clark McPhail, for example, suggested that people are ‘transformed by the madding crowd, lose control over their own behaviour, and engage in behaviours quite different from those in which they ordinarily engage’.⁷⁸ McPhail argued that the short-lived nature of gatherings does not allow time for these networks, affiliations, and feelings to be established.⁷⁹ I disagree. Relationship networks within reform crowds could have built up over the course of several events as well as at smaller meetings and it is possible that a sense of political camaraderie or solidarity could have developed to the point in which crowd actors admitted former strangers into their inner proxemic zones.

⁷⁶ Nick Hopkins, Stephen Reicher, Sammyh Khan, Shruti Tewari, Narayanan Srinivasan and Clifford Stevenson ‘Explaining Effervescence - Investigating the Relationship between Shared Social Identity and Positive Experience in Crowds’, *Cognition and Emotion*, 30 (2016), pp. 20-32; Alexander E. Berlonghi, ‘Understanding and planning for different spectator Crowds’, *Safety Science*, 18 (1995), pp. 239-47; Rodolfo Favaretto, Soraia Musse and Angelo Costa, *Emotion, Personality and Cultural Aspects in Crowds – Towards a Geometrical Mind* (Porto Alegre, 2019), p.15.

⁷⁷ Hopkins, Reicher, et al. ‘Explaining Effervescence’, pp. 20-32.

⁷⁸ Clark McPhail, *The Myth of the Madding Crowd* (Abingdon, 2017), p. 66.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

Area calculation

The quantitative aspect of this research rests on assumptions about the density of reform crowds in the period. To determine the capacity of any crowd venue, a simple calculation can be made of area times density.⁸⁰ So at Peterloo for example, assuming the full crowd occupied an area no greater than 16,000sm., the crowd would need to have had an average density of around four people per square metre (ppsm) in order to have reached the attendance of 60,000 people as first reported in *The Times* two days later.⁸¹ While not impossible, this exceeds what is today considered the ‘safe’ capacity of the former St. Peter’s Square.⁸² That does not mean that the crowd could not have approached 60,000. If it did, however, this may have contributed to the high number of crush injuries.

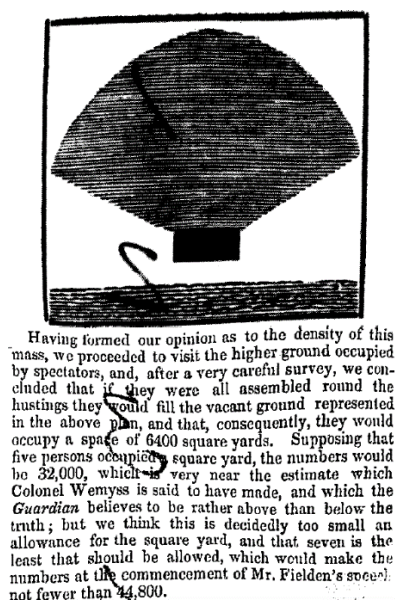


Figure 3:13 Contemporary calculation of attendance at Kersal Moor on Sept 24 1838.⁸³

My technique is not novel. Occasionally attempts were made to calculate, rather than guess, the concentration of people at meetings. For example, *The Manchester Times* of 29 September

⁸⁰ For all of the case studies I have used Calcmaps®, a simple digital mapping tool which calculates area from vector selection of a defined area on digital mapping services such as Google and Bing; <https://www.calcmaps.com/map-area> (accessed 17 November 2019).

⁸¹ *The Times*, 18 August 1819.

⁸² Still, *Crowd Dynamics*, p. 1.

⁸³ *Manchester Times*, 29 September 1838.

1838 set out a detailed calculation, querying claims of other newspapers that 300,000 people had attended the reform meeting at Kersal Moor the previous Monday (Figure 3:13).⁸⁴ Their method of multiplying area times density is very similar to mine. In this case they accept a density of between five and seven people per square yard, equivalent to six to eight ppsm, which as argued below, is not only unlikely but is almost impossible. The *Morning Advertiser's* earlier claim of 300,000 people in 5350sm would be equivalent to a density of 56 ppsm is obviously absurd as each person would occupy a ground space of just 14 x 14 cm. These reports cannot be taken as evidence on their own without corroboration.



Figure 3:14 Uneven clustering of political crowd. Detail from Henry Harris, 'The Gathering of the Unions', 1832.

I suggest that the cluster-like distribution observed in the Kennington daguerreotype and artistic renditions of crowds such as the Newhall Hill event portrayed in Figure 3:14 not only mirrors that seen in modern political crowds, but also fits with modern theories of crowd observation and management as well as proxemic theories about people's attitude to others entering or approaching their interpersonal space – a natural aversion towards admitting non acquaintances

⁸⁴ Ibid.

into the intimate and personal zones of less than one metre. I suggest that, even allowing for a slightly closer grouping allowed by the smaller body ellipse occupied by people 200 years ago, average densities of two ppsm were the norm. Although people can be observed ‘bunched-together’ at densities of approaching four to five ppsm near the hustings, this is off-set by the voids between cluster groups caused either by affinity groups maintaining distance from other groups, by avoiding obstacles and boggy ground or simply falling off towards the periphery. As Fruin and Still have observed, at four ppsm, movement becomes constrained and even approaches danger, sitting becomes impossible and exit difficult.⁸⁵ Toilet breaks would have been difficult and time consuming and critically in the case of Peterloo, the movement of horses would have been constrained and the passage of police and special constables on foot would have been inhibited. Even the exchange of information would have become problematic as handwritten messages were used to communicate. Having observed this to be the case using the photographic evidence of Kennington and combining this with the theory and eyewitness and newspaper reports of other meetings, I propose to accept an average crowd density for reform crowds 1816-1848 of two ppsm. This will form the basis of the in-depth analysis of my three case studies by applying the crowd science methodologies of Fruin and Still as well as mapping techniques which I have devised.

Charting newspaper reports

As well as probing venue capacity and attendance numbers, this thesis is concerned with determining the reputational power of reform crowds. As discussed in chapter one, newspaper reports can be used as a measure of the impact of the mass platform both pre, and post meeting. To this end I applied text mining techniques to assess the ‘newsworthiness’ of orderly meetings by comparing them across the research period. Initially a series of searches

⁸⁵ Fruin, *Designing for Pedestrians*, p. 7.

of British Library Newspapers was carried out for the fourteen days immediately following a selection of orderly meetings (Figure 3:15). The initial results for the Spa Fields meetings were encouraging, with 25 reports in the two weeks following the 15 November meeting and 44 reports for same period after the 2 December event.⁸⁶

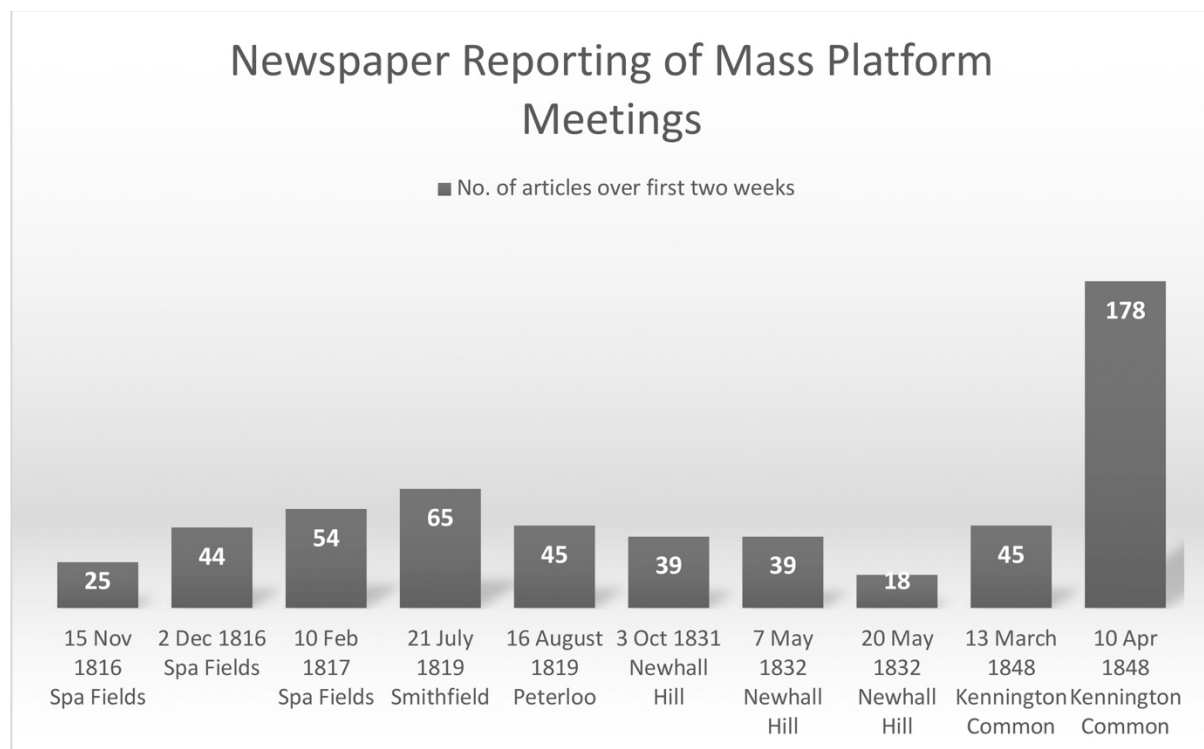


Figure 3:15 Search of British Library Newspapers for a range of orderly meetings.

The abundance of reports for the second meeting could be due to additional interest generated by the ensuing riot compared with the relative order of the first. Alternatively searches for the November event may have still been picking up interest from the earlier one. Timing may also have played a part as the first meeting was held on a Friday which was unusual for reform meetings, whereas Monday, the day of the second meeting, while nominally a working day, was seen by many as a day off.⁸⁷ For newspaper reporting this was significant. Although both

⁸⁶ Gale Digital Scholar Lab. search criteria: Entire Document (Spa Fields) LIMITS: Archive (British Library Newspapers) And Module (British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900) And Document Type ('Article') And Publication Date (Date Range) (accessed 06 February 2020).

⁸⁷ A. Reid, 'The Decline of Saint Monday 1766-1876', *Past and Present*, 71 (1976), pp. 96-8.

meetings were reported in the following day's London *Morning Chronicle*, the first meeting failed to make the regional Saturday weeklies until the following week. The second meeting was held on a Monday, gaining the attention not only of the London dailies but also the regional Saturday weeklies on two consecutive Saturdays. The February meeting built on this trend.

Looking further across the chart however, there appear to be some startling results seeming to indicate a disproportionate number of press reports for the 1848 Kennington meeting than for the earlier case studies. In this way I learned my first salutary lesson in data mining – not to believe the first results but to look behind the figures. A simple comparison of the press impact of the two events is problematic. What is required is much larger sampling of newspaper reports of meetings over a longer period, but this creates a second problem. The number and frequency of publications increases over the research period, so a more subtle measurement of comparison is required.

Penetration of the press

Big data searches have become the favoured tool of many historians, but they come with a caveat. Melodee Beals has said, 'large-scale interrogations of multiple digital corpora have been required to effectively map wider trends,' but she cautions, 'the noise associated with big-data analysis makes applying wider textual trends to specific compositional practices problematic'.⁸⁸ To resolve the problem of increasing publications and circulation across the 32 year research period, I consulted Yann Ryan of the British Library who said: 'the volume of reports increases – the volume of data increases pretty much exponentially throughout the entire century, so I would definitely advise controlling for this in some way.'⁸⁹ He suggested

⁸⁸ Melodee Beals, 'Close Readings of Big Data: Triangulating Patterns of Textual Reappearance and Attribution in the Caledonian Mercury, 1820–40', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 51 (2018), p. 617.

⁸⁹ Email from Yann Ryan, Curator of Newspaper Data, British Library, 28 October 2019.

introducing a control by matching each two-week search for the search term of, say, 'Spa Fields' with a parallel search for the number of articles containing the letter 'a'. In this way it becomes possible to determine the total number of articles in a range of newspapers published during that fortnight in any given archive and therefore calculate the percentage of articles which carried each search term. I modified this technique slightly to use 'the' as control, thereby removing the possibility of random OCR errors on 'a' confounding the search.

To arrive at the optimum search term required a degree of experimentation as it does not necessarily correspond to the name of the meeting.⁹⁰ In some papers such as the following week's *Aberdeen Journal* the 'Spa Fields' search returned a report solely referring to the arrests associated with the riot rather than to the meeting on Monday 10th.⁹¹ This highlights a methodological problem where a search term is ambiguous. This is more of a problem where events occur in quick succession as was the case with the three Spa Fields meetings. While it is tempting to assume that the meeting-by-meeting increase in reports was due to increased press and public interest, one has to be aware that 'noise' from an earlier meeting may be affecting results for a later one. Care also needs to be taken to check a random sample of events. For example, a control check of a sample of the results for 'Smithfield' in July 1819 revealed up to ten per cent referred to cattle prices at the meat market and, in one case, a boxing match.

The tool of choice selected was Gale Digital Scholar Lab as it offers expert functions for advanced searching, storing, cleaning and analysing datasets. By dividing the total number articles in that fortnight's corpus (determined by the search term 'the') by the number of hits returned by the

⁹⁰ Some prior research was undertaken to determine the most relevant search terms. For example, a search for 'St Peter's Field's in August 1819 produced few results, as did 'Peterloo', even adjusting the start point to 29 August following the first report of Wroe's *Peter=loo* pamphlet in *The Globe* of 28 August so the more popular term 'Manchester meeting' was used instead. Some searches were repeated to allow for variables such as Newhall Hill/New Hall Hill or Spa Fields/Spafields.

⁹¹ *Aberdeen Journal*, 19 February 1817.

search term for each meeting it was possible to calculate the percentage of articles relating to each event. This invites a comparison of the relative penetration of news of mass meetings with other events so, for example, while the total number articles in the fortnight after the second Spa Fields meeting in 1816 was just 44, compared to 178 for the corresponding period following the Kennington Common meeting 32 years later, the percentage of reports is comparable at 5.5 and 4.6 per cent respectively and can be plotted graphically (see chapter eight).

To conclude, this thesis favours the egalitarian crowd theory models of Canetti, Maffesoli and McClelland and the sociological models of Borch, Granovetter, and Reicher, rather than the nineteenth-century 'mob' school of Le Bon, Taine, and Tarde. From a methodological point of view, I will proceed on the basis that orderly crowds rarely exceeded an average density of two ppsm.⁹² Combined with area calculations, this density will be applied in a quantitative exercise in the next chapter to demonstrate that at the contained sites of my case studies, reform crowds were unlikely to have approached the high attendance figures often claimed. The text mining exercise in chapter eight will be used to demonstrate that despite these, as I argue, smaller attendances, the reputational power of political crowds continued to be viewed in quantitative terms and was reiterated and amplified by newspaper reports, so crowds did not have to be statistically large in order to be politically substantial. Their power was augmented by their perceived reputation.

⁹² Although 'clustering' meant that this could reach four or more ppsm around entrances, exits, hustings and stress points.

4. The quantified crowd

*'The events of yesterday will bring down upon the name of Hunt, and his accomplices, the deep and lasting execrations of many a sorrowing family [...] having daringly invited the attendance of a mass of people, which, as it respects yesterday's muster, may with much reason, be computed at 100,000 individuals'*¹

Manchester Mercury, 17 August 1819.

This quote comes from the first report of the Manchester meeting now known as Peterloo, not only apportioned the blame for the atrocity squarely on Hunt but also set the bar for enumerating the crowd. As with other reform meetings, once recorded, the excessive crowd estimate was rarely questioned and has persisted till today. In his magnum opus, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Edward Thompson referred, without evidence, to the 'sixty or a hundred thousand who assembled on St Peter's Fields' but he is not alone.² Historians often interpret crowd numbers too literally, persisting in repeating unfeasibly large crowd attendance figures in the face of evidence to the contrary. Thompson persisted in placing the Peterloo crowd at 100,000 and David Goodway gave a figure of 170,000 for the crowd at the Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common 29 years later.³ The Manchester meeting of August 1819 will constitute the first case study with reform meetings held at Newhall Hill in Birmingham from 1818, and in particular during the reform crisis of 1832-33, making up the second.⁴ The 1848 Kennington gathering will represent the final case-study.⁵

This chapter will cite mathematician Keith Still's work on crowd density to argue that the Peterloo crowd was below 40,000 and that the capacity of the Newhall Hill site was about

¹ *Manchester Mercury*, 17 August 1819.

² E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1968), p. 748.

³ David Goodway, *London Chartism – 1838-1848* (Cambridge, 1982) p.137.

⁴ Carlos Flick, *The Birmingham Political Union and the Movements for Reform in Britain 1830-1839* (Folkestone, 1978), pp. 78-81.

⁵ Robert Poole, *Peterloo – The English Uprising* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 293-295.

37,000. In the case of Kennington I will also combine photographic evidence to suggest that attendance was unlikely to have been greater than 25,000.⁶ Not only does this research challenge recent scholarly work, it will also suggest that attendance at these three sites was significantly less than anticipated both by state and the reformers themselves. In the case of Kennington, archival sources will be used to demonstrate that, in the days leading up to 10 April, it was widely predicted that was it going to be a monster meeting, and not only by the press and the Chartists. The government was so alarmed that it instigated the largest-ever martial lock-down of the capital.⁷

Quantitative and qualitative historical methods may seem mutually incompatible but as social scientist Charles Tilly has argued, there is a ‘middle ground where logical rigour meets the nuances of human interaction’.⁸ In this chapter the quantitative and qualitative methodologies will sit side-by-side to help understand the political dialectic. Having established an average working density of two ppsm using crowd theory, this chapter will put it into practice by applying digital mapping techniques combined with the theories outlined in chapter three to the case studies at different locations and taken over a time period of nearly 30 years, to conduct a thorough quantitative analysis of what the likely size of the crowds might have been at these sites.

The mismatch between anticipated and reported crowd size was not uncommon at reform meetings so three examples will be scrutinised. In the Kennington example arguments about the success or failure of the rally soon emerged, hinging mainly on the size of crowd, and have been largely unresolved by historians, many of whom have perpetuated a discourse

⁶ G. Keith Still, ‘Crowd Dynamics’, (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, July 2000), p. 7.

⁷ TNA, HO45/2410.

⁸ Charles Tilly, *Contentious Performances* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 5.

around the theme of attendance numbers.⁹ This thesis examines the paradox that, while police and the media cannot agree on twenty-first century crowd sizes, historians confidently reiterate attendance figures from events in the past. Once an attendance figure was assigned to a crowd, numbers remained stubbornly unquestioned and, if anything, become exaggerated with time. The quantitative aspect impact is vital, but the assumption has been that, if the attendance was small, the events were not significant. This has been used by some to argue that, in the spring of 1848 low attendance at Kennington effectively signalled the end of Chartism.¹⁰ While it will be argued that attendance figures were even lower than previously accepted, an excessive preoccupation with numbers can act to mask the underlying political significance.

The crowd historian usually has little evidence to work with when it comes to calculating attendance. Numbers are often cited without substantiation.¹¹ This persists into the twenty-first century even though crowd scientists now have aerial and CCTV surveillance footage at their disposal.¹² The tendency then and now is for the first recorded figures to persist and become accepted as fact. Thus, when looking at nineteenth century political crowds, figures in the tens or even hundreds of thousands are casually reiterated as fact without verification.¹³ Attendances recorded in contemporary newspapers are often unquestioningly repeated by historians. In most cases crowds gathered in uncontrolled public open spaces. These were often commons with no fixed perimeter so a stated crowd size of, say 200,000 cannot easily be challenged. All we have to go on in those cases is logic and reason. For a large moorland

⁹ *The Times*, 11 April 1848, *Northern Star*, 15 April 1848; Goodway, *London Chartism*, pp.135-139; Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: a New History* (Manchester, 2007) p.302.

¹⁰ Christiane Eisenberg, 'Variations in Socialism: The Rise of a Political Labour Movement in Britain and Germany', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 8 (1997), p, 134.

¹¹ R. J. White, *Waterloo to Peterloo* (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 189.

¹² 'One Million Protesters demand Second Referendum as Boris Johnson loses Key Vote', *The Independent*, 19 October 2019.

¹³ R G Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854* (London, 1969), p. 314; Chase, *Chartism*, pp. 32-3.

gathering, for example, reasonable estimates of the limits of attendance can be made by looking at the size of the local population, the distances people may have been prepared to walk at the time of day the event was held and for how long their bodily needs could be met.

The case studies have been selected to represent crowds from all stages of this research period – 29 years separate Kennington from Peterloo – which will enable me to compare and contrast the crowds. Crucially they were all held in finite urban spaces: areas bounded by streets and buildings. The ground areas can be calculated which means that, by making some informed assumptions about the crowd densities, an estimate can be made about the theoretical capacities of each venue. In the cases of Peterloo and Newhall Hill, eyewitness accounts are also invoked along with population estimates and distances travelled. With Kennington, however, we are even more fortunate. As well as the measurable finite area of the common, we also have police estimates of the crowds at four different starting points and from timed reports on the common. Finally, and most crucially, we have photographic evidence. William Kilburn's celebrated pair of daguerreotypes arguably represent the first photographic record of a political crowd.¹⁴ So the main research question for this chapter is, 'Can we use digital techniques to quantify the crowds at these three events and, if so, what conclusions can be drawn from the findings?' A secondary question is: 'Can we extrapolate these estimates to other, less clearly defined events?' The implications of these findings on the way crowd power can be understood will be discussed in chapter eight.

¹⁴ Royal Collection Trust: RCIN 2932484, RCIN 2932482.

Peterloo 19 August 1819

*'Ye are many - they are few'*¹⁵

When Shelley concluded the *Mask of Anarchy* with these words, he captured the nation's mood of shock about the Peterloo Massacre on 16 August 1819, but he also expressed the power of the crowd in terms of numerical magnitude. By the time of publication in 1832, ten years after Shelley's death, the public were familiar with the narrative of the massacre. Within days of the event, perhaps in the desire to emphasise that shock, local and national newspapers had published estimated crowd figures for the gathering. Reports reached the *London Times* on 19 August when it reported that 80,000 people had been present.¹⁶ On the same day the Scottish *Caledonian Mercury* claimed a figure of 70,000 while the *Derby Mercury* asserted that no less than 100,000 attended, a figure also claimed in a pamphlet by Mr Innes, a Manchester printer.¹⁷ But, without the ability to observe from the air and photograph the crowd, nobody could possibly have known whether Peterloo comprised 10,000 or 100,000 participants. As with Kennington 29 years later, these figures have remained unquestioned by historians with R J White, Donald Read and Joyce Marlow opting for 60,000, E. P. Thompson up to 100,000 but Michael Bush more recently suggesting a more cautious 50,000.¹⁸ As with Kennington, quantitative tests will be applied to see if these claims can be corroborated. This data will be combined to produce charts showing crowd densities implied by contemporary reports and scholarly work. Finally, population data for the areas from which the crowd was drawn was used to see how the various claims stand up to scrutiny.

¹⁵ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Masque of Anarchy* (London, 1832), p. 47.

¹⁶ *The Times*, 19 August 1819.

¹⁷ *Caledonian Mercury*, 19 August 1819; *Derby Mercury*, 19 August 1819; C. A. Glyde, *The Centenary of the Massacre of British Workers – Peterloo, Manchester, Monday, 16 August, 1819*, (Bradford, 1919), p. 12.

¹⁸ Donald Read, *Peterloo – The Massacre and its Background* (Manchester, 1973), p. 139; Joyce Marlow, *The Peterloo Massacre* (London, 1970), p. 129; Thompson, *Making*, p. 748; Michael Bush, *The Casualties of Peterloo* (Lancaster, 2005), p. 48; White, *Waterloo to Peterloo* (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 189.

As outlined in chapter two, and coming just four years after Waterloo, the Manchester meeting marked the culmination of ‘the prolonged post-war contest between governors and governed’.¹⁹ Post-war unemployment remained high due to demobilised troops and harvest failures following the 1815 eruption of Mount Tambora but swingeing legislation following the Spa Fields meetings effectively put a temporary lid on the mass platform (see p. 36).²⁰ Habeas Corpus was reinstated on 10 March 1818 and the Seditious Meetings Act expired on 24 July of that year paving the way for the revival of the mass platform.

We can detect the genesis of the second wave in some little known but critical meetings during 1818. As well as the extraordinary Newhall Hill meeting of February which flouted the combination legislation, further meetings were held at Spa Fields (4 May) and Palace Yard (7 September) which marked in the words of John Belchem ‘the real beginning of the great radical mobilisation of 1819’.²¹

1819 began with Henry Hunt addressing a moderate crowd at St Peters Fields, Manchester on 18 January, followed by a spate of summer meetings including Oldham on 7 June, Blackburn on 5 July, Hunslet Moor, Leeds on 14 June and Newhall Hill, Birmingham on 12 July.²² Speakers at the Birmingham meeting included George Edmonds, veteran reformer, Major Cartwright, and publisher Thomas Wooler. This meeting provocatively proposed the return of Sir Charles Wolseley as ‘Legislatorial

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 16.

²⁰ Nicholas Klingaman and William Klingaman, *The Year Without Summer: 1816 and the Volcano That Darkened the World and Changed History* (New York, 2013), pp. 40-2; White, *Waterloo to Peterloo*, p. 187; Seditious Meetings Bill (Hansard, 14 March 1817), Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill (Hansard, 24 June 1817)

²¹ John Belchem, *'Orator' Hunt – Henry Hunt and English Working-Class Radicalism* (Oxford, 1998) pp. 85-6.

²² John Knight, *A full and particular report of the proceedings of the public meeting held in Manchester on Monday the 18th of January 1819* (Manchester, 1819), pp. 4-5; Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place 1789-1848* (Manchester, 2016), p. 80.

Attorney for Birmingham' an act for which the speakers were later imprisoned (see fuller discussion on p. 89).²³ Of these preliminary meetings, the one at Smithfield in London on 21 July was particularly effective, attracting three times as many newspaper reports as Newhall Hill despite reported attendance being considerably similar (see comparative charts in chapter eight).²⁴ Reports of attendance at Smithfield vary considerably, with that evening's newspaper, *The Globe*, reporting the crowd to be a modest 3,000-4,000, but their reporter had left the meeting at 1.30pm to file his copy.²⁵ Their full report the following day estimated the crowd by 4pm to have reached 50,000.²⁶ John Belchem remains non-committal at a loose 10,000-80,000.²⁷ A Calcmaps[®] area calculation gives the area occupied by the former Smithfield Market on today's Google maps as 12,124m² which gives the venue a capacity of 18,000 at 1.5ppsm or 24,000 at 2ppsm so it is arguable that the higher claims can be ruled out.²⁸ This means that, at a likely attendance of no more than 25,000, this event punched way above its weight in terms of impact in the print media. Several reports praised the self-discipline displayed by the crowd, particularly in their restrained and orderly response to the provocative public arrest of Rev. Harrison at 2pm, attributed to Henry Hunt's authoritative control of the crowd: 'Mr Hunt so earnestly and successfully entreated the people to preserve order, that no opposition was made to the arrest, nor was the slightest mark of disrespect shown to the officers'.²⁹ The dominance of Smithfield in the newspapers over reports of provincial meetings serves to demonstrate the London-centric nature of the regency press (see p. 239).

²³ *Saunders's News-Letter, and Daily Advertiser*, 19 July 1819.

²⁴ Reports of attendance for both meetings peaked at 50,000; *Hull Packet*, 20 July 1819; *Globe*, 22 July 1819.

²⁵ *Globe*, 21 July 1819.

²⁶ *Globe*, 22 July 1819.

²⁷ John Belchem, 'Orator' Hunt – *Henry Hunt and English Working-Class Radicalism* (Oxford, 1998) p. 102.

²⁸ <https://www.calcmaps.com/map-area> (accessed 18 January 2022).

²⁹ *Globe*, 22 July 1819.

Rushcart Procession

When the, by now seasoned, Orator Hunt took his campaign to the industrial north, it marked a coming-together of the local subsistence concerns of factory workers with the more ideological aims of the national reform movement.³⁰ Magistrates were nervous after the recent foiled Blanketeers March and Pentrich Rising.³¹ Recent gatherings at St Peters Fields as well as reports of Hunt addressing reform crowds across the country must have been uppermost in their minds when they commissioned a regiment of local yeomanry commanded by cotton mill owners. The meeting, originally set for 2 August had to be re-scheduled twice when it was declared illegal because of its stated aim of ‘electing a Person to represent [the Inhabitants of Manchester] in Parliament’.³²

Redrafting to the less provocative: ‘considering the propriety of adopting the most legal and effectual means of obtaining a reform’, left magistrates with no choice but to allow the meeting to go ahead on 16 August. Hunt implored people to bring no weapons and local reform unions readied themselves with disciplined drilling on the moors and, according to radical Middleton weaver, Samuel Bamford, the day began in a celebratory atmosphere of a seasonal ‘Rushcart’ procession.³³

There is no need to describe the day’s events in detail as they are well documented elsewhere.³⁴ Suffice it to say that before the meeting got fully underway magistrates, fearing a riot, ordered the yeomanry to arrest Hunt which they did with sabres drawn and, in the process of dispersing the crowd, some 654 people were injured of which 18

³⁰ Bread prices were at a high of 10.9d for a 4lb loaf (see Appendix 1).

³¹ Thompson, *Making*, pp. 723-4; Poole, *Peterloo*, pp. 121-7.

³² Read, *Peterloo*, pp. 113-7.

³³ Robert Poole, ‘The March to Peterloo: Politics and Festivity in Late Georgian England’, *Past and Present*, 192 (2006) p. 109.

³⁴ Poole, *Peterloo*, pp. 295-300; ³⁴ Jacqueline Riding, *Peterloo – The Story of the Manchester Massacre* (London, 2018), p. 265-75; White, *Waterloo to Peterloo*, pp. 193-5.

died.³⁵ Graphic accounts of injuries earned the event the title ‘Peter Loo’ in an ironic juxtaposition of the patriotic glory of Waterloo against the bloody shame of 16 August (see p. 247). Quantitative data survives for Peterloo in the form of three casualty lists. One was compiled by reform lawyer Charles Pearson, a second by radical journalist James Wroe and finally one by the *Metropolitan and Central Relief Committee to enable fair and proportionate dispensation of relief to those injured*.³⁶ The latter makes sobering reading, bring the full extent of how the massacre touched the individual lives of the victims and their dependants. This is just one of hundreds:

Booth, William, Aged 45 and a Carder with three children. Severe sabre-cut on the left side of his head to the skull, left knee hurt. Two weeks disabled. Was knocked down and trampled on. Is now a prisoner for debt.³⁷



Figure 4:1 ‘A view of St Peters Plain Manchester on the Memorable 16 August 1819 Representing the Forcible Dispersion of the People by the yeomanry Cavalry and T Whaite, advertised for sale in Manchester Observer 22 October 1819.’³⁸

³⁵ Bush, *Casualties*, p 44.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

³⁷ *The Report of the Metropolitan and Central Committee Appointed for the Relief of Manchester Sufferers* (London, 1820).

³⁸ Glyde, *Centenary of the Massacre of British Workers*, p. 5.

These lists cannot answer the crucial question of how many people were present in the square, but they do help to pinpoint the local towns of origin of the processions (Figure 4:4). This in turn helps to quantify the population of the area from which the crowd was drawn and gives an indication of the gender balance within the crowd. As with Kennington, the meeting took place in a public square surrounded by buildings (Figure 4:1).³⁹ As such it provides a measurable, finite area – easily measured using digital mapping techniques which again enables us to quantify the crowd. First we need to make some assumptions regarding density. Applying the photographic evidence of the 1848 crowd as discussed in chapter three, a working density of two ppsm for Peterloo will be used.⁴⁰

When it comes to area, we have firm evidence in the form of a ground plan prepared for the 1819 enquiry into the injuries (Figure 4:2).⁴¹ This can be compared with satellite images of today's streets around the former St Peter's Square to estimate the area occupied by the crowd. The square was bounded by present day Mount Street, Windmill Street and Bootle Street /Peter Street forming an uneven triangle available for the crowd to occupy. Calcmaps[®] was used to calculate the area (Figure 4:3). This produced an area of just under 16,000 m² available for occupation by the crowd.

³⁹ Riding, *Peterloo*, p. 223.

⁴⁰ See Kennington case study below and chapter two.

⁴¹ Glyde, *Centenary of the Massacre of British Workers*, p. 3.

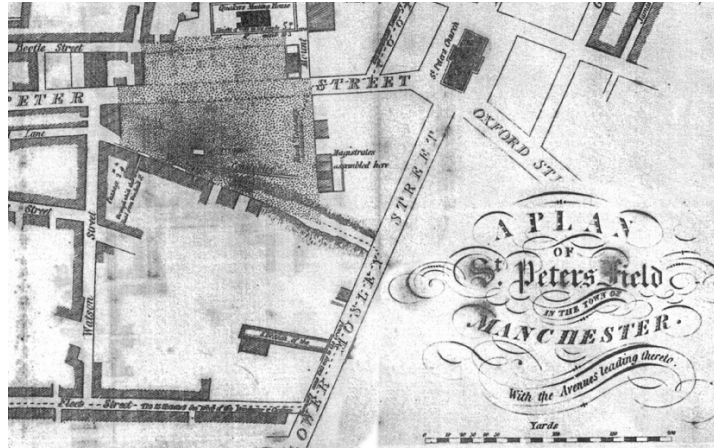


Figure 4:2 Plan of Peterloo prepared for 1819 Enquiry.⁴²

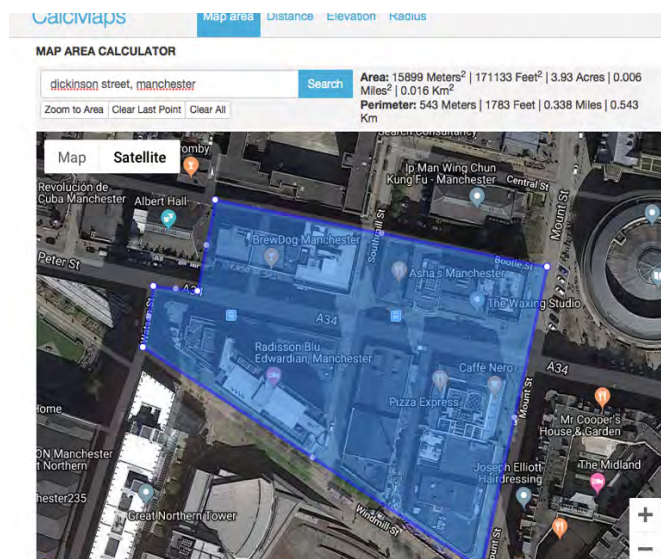


Figure 4:3 Site occupied 16,000 m2 Calcmaps®.⁴³

Assuming an average density of two ppsm, this equates to around 32,000 people. While the most commonly accepted crowd size of 60,000 was theoretically feasible, the average density would have to have been four ppsm meaning that, allowing for variation, peak density would have approached an unlikely six ppsm, so the larger claims of 100,000 upwards cannot be substantiated. If we assume a density of 1.6 ppsm as in the Kennington image, we arrive at a figure of around 25,000 which falls well short of any of the published estimates, both contemporary and in the historical record.

⁴² Ibid., p. 3.

⁴³ <https://www.calcmaps.com/map-area> (accessed 18 January 2022).

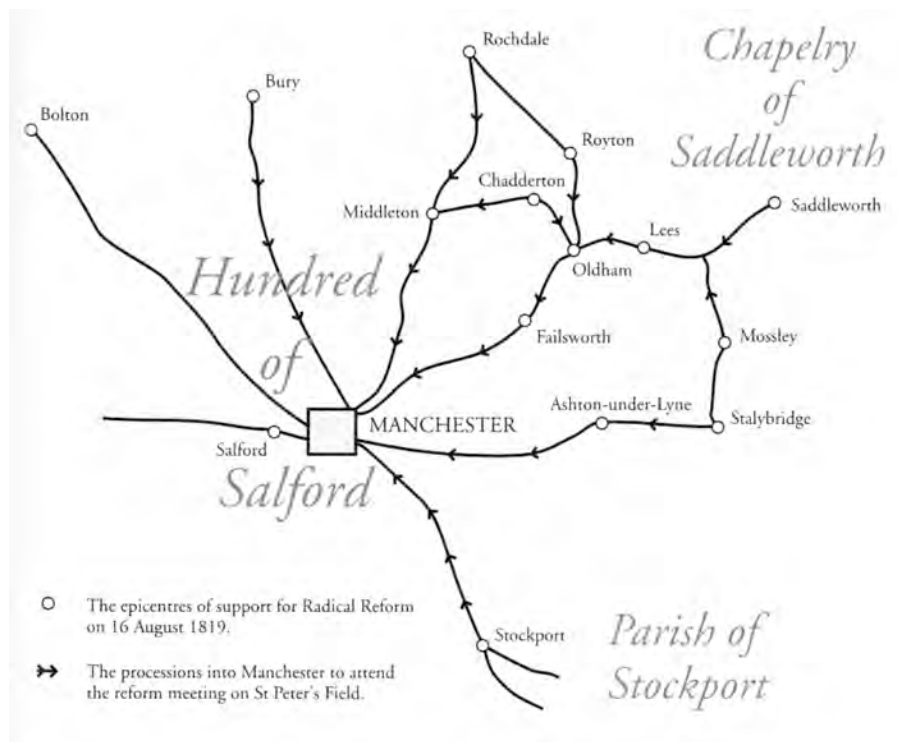


Figure 4:4 Processions to Peterloo from epicentres of support. © Michael Bush.⁴⁴

Another way of corroborating attendance is by examining population data. As seen on Michael Bush's 'epicentres of support map' (Figure 4:4), the crowd was drawn from reform groups as far afield as Bolton to the north-west, Rochdale to the north, Stockport to the south and Saddleworth to the east, a 15-mile walk which probably took around five hours.⁴⁵

Although no figures exist for 1819 there was a census in 1821 and from this the population of the wider region from which the crowd was drawn can be set at around 534,000.⁴⁶

However, as Bush states, half the population was female and a further 39 per cent were children which leaves a cohort of just 198,000 males over 15. While the casualty lists show that women and children were present, Bush calculates that only one in eight were women.⁴⁷ Of the 198,000 possible males, many were old or infirm. Others may

⁴⁴ Bush, *Casualties*, p 17.

⁴⁵ Bush, *Casualties*, p 17.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 48.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 31.

have been clerical workers (unlikely to attend), tradesmen (unable to attend) and some present in other capacities such as the yeomanry so, as Malcolm and Walter Bee stated in their 1989 local history essay, ‘an assembly of 60,000 becomes wholly untenable’.⁴⁸ Bush is more comfortable with a figure of 50,000 but arguably a figure of 35,000 based on Jacobs’ ‘tight’ density may not be an unreasonable deduction. The reasoning is that, even allowing for a crowd comprising 5,000 women and children (Bush’s 1-in-8), the remaining 30,000 males would have represented 15 per cent of the available male population of the area which is still an impressive turnout considering everybody walked there and that 16 August was a Monday and, in theory at least a working day, despite the persistence of the practice of taking it as an unofficial holiday.⁴⁹

It is also important to look at representations of the crowd. One of the earliest prints, published by J. Evans of Smithfield on 27 August shows a crowd of around 4,000 including troops while the famous ‘Peterloo handkerchief’ depicts around 2,000 people (Figure 5:10).⁵⁰ While it is not suggested that this is evidence, it does nevertheless indicate the difficulty of illustrating a large crowd. Arguably more reliable is an impartial eyewitness account by the Rev. Edward Stanley (Rector of Alderley, Cheshire, later Bishop of Norwich) who was in a room in a Mr Buxton’s house, above that commandeered by magistrates on Mount Street overlooking St Peter’s Field on the day. He described the crowd from his elevated vantage point:

‘A vast concourse of people, in a close and compact mass, surrounded the hustings and constables, pressing upon each other apparently with a view to be as near the speakers as possible. They were, generally speaking, bare headed, probably

⁴⁸ Malcolm and Walter Bee, ‘The Casualties of Peterloo’, *Manchester Region History Review*, 3 (1989), p. 47. <http://www.mcrh.mmu.ac.uk/pubs/pdf/mrhr_03i_bee_bee.pdf> (accessed 16 January 2011).

⁴⁹ A. Reid, ‘The Decline of Saint Monday 1766-1876’, *Past and Present*, 71 (1976), pp. 96-8.

⁵⁰ TNA 7.MPI1-134, Radical-Reformers-St-Peters-Place-Manchester-1819; ‘Peterloo Handkerchief by John Slack’, Calico Printer, Manchester, 1819 BM 233975001.

for the purpose of giving those behind them a better view. Between the outside of this mob and the sides of the area the space was comparatively unoccupied; stragglers were indeed numerous, but not so as to amount to anything like a crowd, or to create interruption to foot passengers. Round the edges of the square more compact masses of people were assembled, the greater part of whom appeared to be spectators.’⁵¹

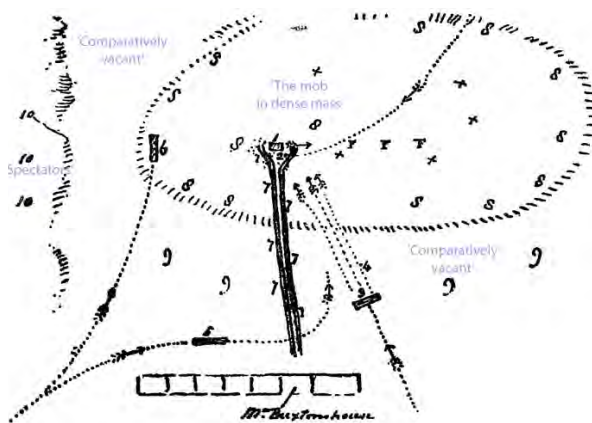


Figure 4:5 Plan of Peterloo Crowd by Rev. Stanley.⁵²



Figure 4:6 CGI reconstruction for Peterloo Witness Project.⁵³

This confirms the uneven density of the crowd, often seen at modern political demonstrations (Figure 4:25). Stanley not only describes unoccupied areas but also the separation from those at the edge of the square considering themselves ‘spectators’ and ‘participants’ nearer the hustings. Even more helpfully the Reverend provided a plan (Figure 4:5). His account was written and published in 1819 and used as evidence in a subsequent trial in 1822 during which he corroborated his report under oath.⁵⁴ This uneven density distribution described by Stanley is consistent with modern observations and corroborates the concept of the volatile and shifting uneven crowd (see chapter two).

⁵¹ F. A. Bruton (ed.), *Three Accounts of Peterloo*, (Manchester, 1921), p. 12.

⁵² Ibid, p. 8; BL MS 30142.

⁵³ <http://peterloowitness1819.weebly.com> (accessed 3 April 2020).

⁵⁴ Sir John McDonnell, *Political State Trials Vol I 1819-1822* (London, 1888), pp. 1126-35.

Stanley's impression of a tightly packed crowd near the hustings encircled by a relatively loose one is reflected by modern representations. Computer game coder Neil Millington has crafted a computer animation of the day using *3dsmax* software (Figure 4:6) for the *Peterloo Witness Project*.⁵⁵ When asked about the number of avatars used to portray the crowd, Millington conceded that, 'It is not 60,000 avatars, I used several different, individual scenes to create the animation.'⁵⁶ On inspection there are no more than 15,000 avatars in the reconstruction. While neither of these can be cited as proof, they nevertheless suggest that there may have been significantly fewer than 60,000 people in St Peter's square. Endeavours to film reconstructions have required fewer actors. Questioned for this thesis about the number of extras required to film the crowd scenes for his recent *Peterloo* film, director Mike Leigh revealed that just 300 were used.⁵⁷ CGI techniques were used to multiply the crowd, but on analysis, Leigh's film shows a crowd of around 10,000.

Crush Injuries

There are a few caveats. The fact that around 30 per cent of casualties resulted from crushing by the crowd or trampling by horse rather than from sabre or gunshot wounds indicates a partial similarity with the 1989 Hillsborough Stadium disaster in which injuries occurred when the crowd was driven into a confined area.⁵⁸ It is entirely possible that, even allowing for an average density of two ppsm, the yeomanry charge forced people towards the wall of the Friends Meeting House, compressing the crowd to what we now know to be dangerous densities of four or even six ppsm – hence the high preponderance of crush

⁵⁵ <https://vimeo.com/156157535> (accessed 3 April 2020); <http://peterloowitness1819.weebly.com> (accessed 3 April 2020).

⁵⁶ Email exchange with Neil Millington, 5 April 2019.

⁵⁷ Q and A after *Guardian* preview screening at the Barbican, 30 October 2018.

⁵⁸ Bush, *Casualties*, p. 3.

injuries. Secondly, it has been assumed that the full extent of the crowd was contained within the square at the moment of intervention. At many gatherings the crowd cannot fit within the confined area, which raises the possibility that a larger crowd could have been dispersed throughout the surrounding streets. Timing is also an issue – although it was reported that many arrived hours early, it is also possible that some contingents were still arriving when the atrocity took place, potentially contributing to scale of the disaster by blocking the exits to the square. After all it would have represented a five-hour march for some of the far-flung contingents such as the Saddleworth procession. Finally, it may not be correct to assume that all the violence occurred in one burst. There is evidence that a violent running battle persisted into the evening.⁵⁹

It is important to compare these calculations with published claims for the Peterloo crowd size both in terms of contemporary reports and the historical record (Figure 4:7). The disparity between the accepted figures and these findings is significant. It is easy to see why contemporary reports could claim high figures. It could have been in the interests of the rally organisers and participants to claim high attendance to give credence to their cause. This may explain Hunt and Bamford's extravagant claims. Paradoxically, it could also have been in the interest of the magistrates and yeomanry to claim high numbers to justify the use of excess force and the subsequent repression.⁶⁰ It is also possible that newspaper proprietors might have been tempted to err on the higher side to add sensationalism to boost sales. It is, however, surprising that historians such as E.P. Thompson have persisted in perpetuating this inaccuracy. After all, their work appears thorough in most other respects. It may not have occurred to them to run area

⁵⁹ Marlow, *Peterloo Massacre*, p. 148; Poole, *Peterloo*, pp. 333-5.

⁶⁰ Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain 1758-1834* (Harvard, 2005), p. 254.

or density calculations, but they could have easily run this same simple exercise which would have demonstrated that a crowd of 100,000 would have represented over half of the males over 15 in the area and as such is not tenable. Perhaps they simply did not check- either were not inclined or did not have the tools. Ultimately it may have been easier to accept the figures rather than check them. Not with the intention to deceive but perhaps they felt accepting the larger figure made their point more strongly. But not all historians are so unquestioning. In 2005, Michael Bush acknowledged that it is hard to justify a figure of more than 50,000.⁶¹

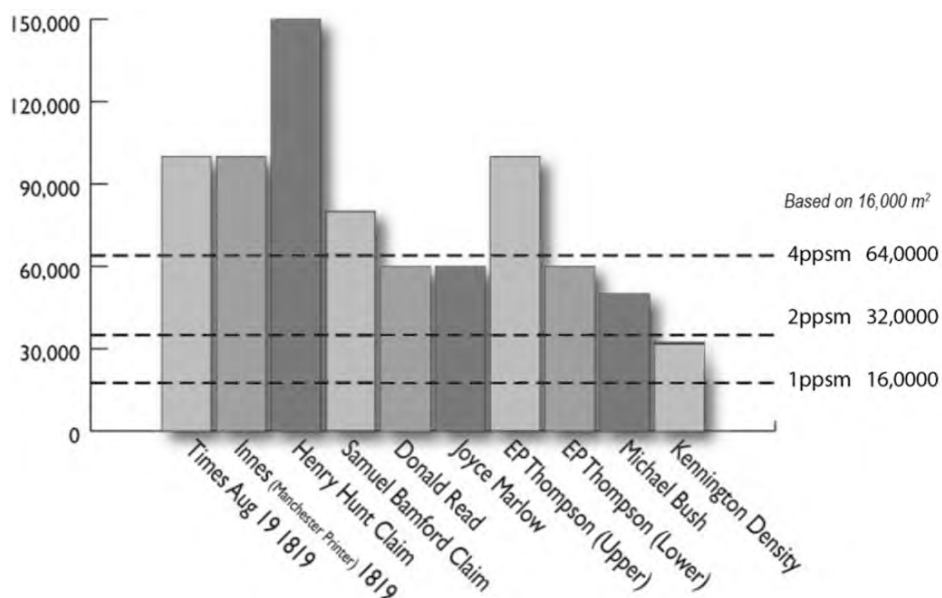


Figure 4:7 Published claims for Peterloo crowd size.⁶²

My proposal for a reconsideration of the crowd at around 32,000 is already engaging with other Peterloo historians. Robert Poole cited my research in *Peterloo - The English Uprising*, revising down his previous crowd figure to around 40,000.⁶³ On the bicentenary of the massacre, an article featuring these findings was published in *BBC History Extra* to which Poole commented,

⁶¹ Bush, *Casualties*, p. 49.

⁶² Henry Hunt, *Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq.* (London, 1822), p. 613; Samuel Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (London, 1967 - Orig. pub. 1844), p. 151; Thompson, *Making*, p. 748; Read, *Peterloo*, p. 139; Marlow, *Peterloo Massacre*, p. 129; Bush, *Casualties*, p. 48.

⁶³ Poole, *Peterloo*, p. 363.

[The latest] research is ingenious and sound, but – as Steele notes – a lot depends on contemporary descriptions of how dense the crowd was. There were some wild claims at the time, on both sides, and Steele’s research is within the academic target zone. Whatever the case, it was far and away the biggest political meeting ever held in Manchester – which is why it so alarmed the authorities.⁶⁴

Jacqueline Riding, historical consultant for the film *Peterloo*, was also asked to comment: ‘Eye-witness accounts certainly varied regarding the scale of the [Peterloo] crowd’ said Riding, author of *Peterloo: The Story of the Manchester Massacre*.

William Hulton, chairman of magistrates, thought it was 50,000. The poet and radical Samuel Bamford guessed at 80,000, while Henry Hunt [the leading speaker of the reformists] declared in his memoirs (published a year after) that it was 180–200,000. While contemporary reports of crowd numbers vary, it is generally agreed that the Peterloo crowd was exceptional for the date and, more importantly, location.⁶⁵

The same can be said of [Steele’s] latest suggested figure, according to Riding, ‘Indeed 32,000 is still a sizeable gathering,’ she said, ‘if we consider that Manchester’s total population at the time was calculated at around 100,000.’

⁶⁴ Robert Poole, quoted in, Rachel Dinning, ‘A ‘more shocking’ massacre? How we might have overestimated the Peterloo crowds’, *BBC History Extra* 8 August 2019 <https://www.historyextra.com/period/georgian/peterloo-massacre-numbers-deaths-injuries-how-many-people-bicentenary-anniversary/> (accessed 18 January 2022).

⁶⁵ Jacqueline Riding, quoted in, Dinning, ‘A ‘more shocking’ massacre?’, 8 August 2019.

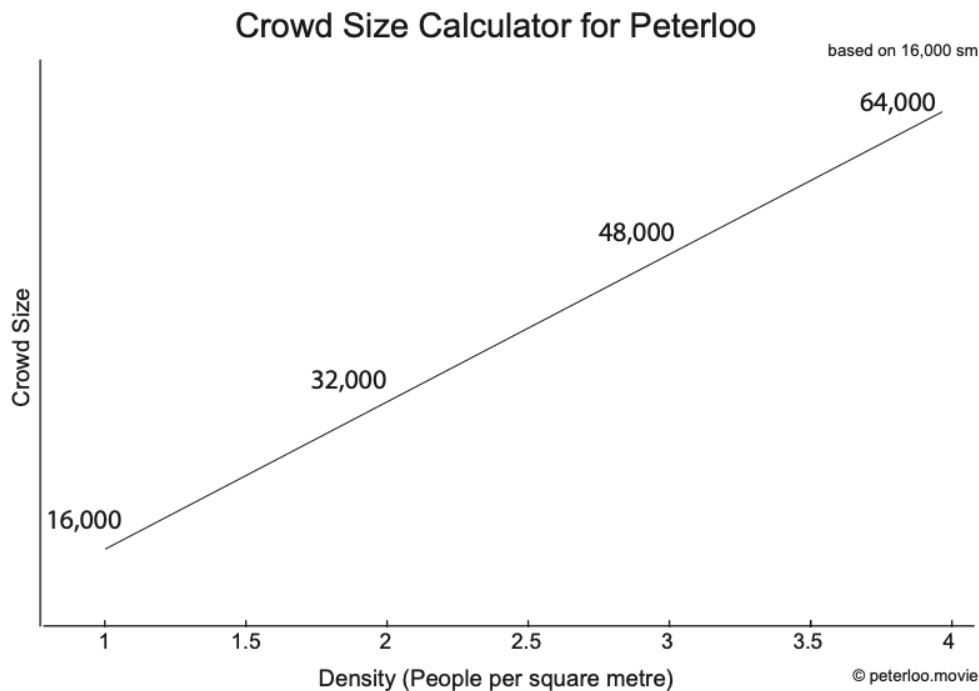


Figure 4:8 Crowd Size Calculator for Peterloo.

The crowd calculator (Figure 4:8) demonstrates what the crowd might have been at different densities. If the crowd density was as packed as four people per square metre (as on a rush hour tube train, for example), then attendance could possibly have reached 64,000 but a more modest average density of two ppsm produces an attendance of around 32,000, significantly less than previous estimates (see p. 55).⁶⁶ These conclusions carry a note of caution. I do not claim to have definitively solved the quantitative questions regarding the Peterloo crowd, but I suggest we should be thinking more in terms of the low tens, rather than the high tens, of thousands and that the question remains open. This lower attendance does not reduce the gravity of the massacre. Quite the reverse, as the percentage of killed and injured doubles with this smaller crowd.

⁶⁶ [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/cy/request/307547/response/749619/attach/html/3/Rolling per cent20Stock per cent20Data per cent20Sheet per cent20for per cent202009 per cent20Victoria per cent20Line per cent20Stock.pdf.html](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/cy/request/307547/response/749619/attach/html/3/Rolling%20per%20Stock%20Data%20Sheet%20for%202009%20Victoria%20Line%20Stock.pdf.html) (accessed 18 January 2022).

The spectre of Peterloo endured in collective memory, initially cemented by a series of commemorative events held in the following months including Leeds, Hunslett Moor; Birmingham, Newhall Hill; Newcastle, Town Moor and London, Smithfield.⁶⁷ Following this initial spate of meetings, the punitive, so called, ‘Six Acts’ were rushed-through parliament. These were designed to clamp down on drilling and the possession of arms, as well as on communication via the *Blasphemous and Seditious Libels and Newspaper and Stamp Duties* acts which made it harder for radical publishers to reach a wide readership.⁶⁸ Crucially for the mass platform, meetings of more than 50 people were outlawed, resulting in a relative lull in reform meetings for several years. This did not prevent large crowds assembling during the Queen Caroline crisis of 1820 when radicals including William Cobbett briefly appropriated her case to the reform cause. The persecution of Caroline by the king acted as a metaphor for the oppression of the people by the state.⁶⁹ Ironically though, by falsely raising hopes, the Caroline agitation may have set back the radical cause by several years.⁷⁰ These crowds, as well as those which spontaneously turned out to view her funeral cortege the following year, would make an interesting addition to this research, but space does not permit more than this passing reference.

The ‘Sandpit Meetings’ Newhall Hill, Birmingham, 1817 – 1833

*‘Let The British Lion’s Awful Roar
Bid tyrants tremble as before’⁷¹*

‘The British Lion’s Awful Roar’ is taken from the chorus of a song by Edward Mead celebrating the gathering of the Unions on Newhall Hill.⁷² It is not clear to which meeting he was referring as, of the meeting sites considered for this thesis, Newhall Hill in Birmingham

⁶⁷ Belchem, *Orator Hunt*, pp. 127-8; *Morning Chronicle*, 26 August 1819; The memorialisation and martyrology of Peterloo is explored further in chapter five.

⁶⁸ Thompson, *Making*, p. 768.

⁶⁹ Anna Clark, *Scandal : the sexual politics of the British constitution* (Princeton, 2004), p. 181.

⁷⁰ Malcolm Chase, *1820 – Disorder and stability in the United Kingdom* (Manchester, 2013), p. 213.

⁷¹ *Gathering of the Unions*, Song by Edward P Mead, BRO LF76.11_A

⁷² BRO L/F/76/11.

is perhaps the most ubiquitous, but it was probably one of several held at the location during the reform Crisis of the early 1830s. No less than 11 meetings have been identified at the site between 1817 and 1833. The location was ideal due to its proximity to the centre of Birmingham, within walking distance of the many metal workshops in the town. The site was a disused used rock-sand quarry on the Newhall estate owned by the wealthy Colmore family. The quarrying excavations had created a perfect amphitheatre, ideal for open air meetings but it was bisected by ‘Miss Caroline’s Canal’, a private branch of the Birmingham and Fazeley navigation commissioned in 1809 by Caroline Colmore to facilitate the transportation of the sandstone blocks to building sites around the Midlands.⁷³



*Figure 4:9 Panoramic montage of the site looking north during redevelopment in 2001.
The cliff face of the sandpit is visible, and the Graham Street flats are top right.
© 24/2/01 Bob Miles.⁷⁴*

The value of this site as a case study is the wealth of reports from meetings spanning a period of 15 years. The frequency of meetings at Newhall Hill allows for a more thorough investigation of the attendance figures than the other case studies and, as it was finite and enclosed like

⁷³ <https://jewelleryquarter.net/tours/hidden-jewellery-quarter/miss-carolines-canal/> (accessed 28 March 2019).

⁷⁴ <http://www.jquarter.org.uk/webdisk/walk8.htm> (accessed 28 March 2019).

Kennington and Peterloo, it lends itself to calculating capacity. The area is now heavily developed but, for a brief period in 2001, local photographer Bob Miles was able to get access to the exposed cliff face which helps us visualise the site as it may have looked in the early nineteenth century (Figure 4:9). A section of the cliff is still visible behind the Sovereign Court car park.

The earliest gatherings recorded at the site were part of the wave of post-war reform meetings (which included those held at Spa Fields in London by Henry Hunt). The first on 22 January 1817 to launch the Birmingham Hampden Club was addressed by George Edmonds, the politically ambitious son of a dissenting minister.⁷⁵ A further meeting took place on 26 February 1818 at which the police, rather than breaking up the meeting, were there to protect participants from ‘vagabond mountebanks’ disrupting proceedings.⁷⁶ It was the 1819 meetings which placed Newhall Hill firmly on the radical map.⁷⁷ As we have seen one was held at the ‘sandpit’ on 12 July as one of the loosely co-ordinated events that summer culminating with Peterloo on 16 August.⁷⁸ The Birmingham event was addressed by Edmonds, accompanied by veteran reformer, Major Cartwright, radical publisher Thomas Wooler and pawnbroker Charles Maddocks. This meeting was contentious as it took the form of a mock election to elect (in his absence) Sir Charles Wolseley as ‘Legislatorial Attorney and Representative’ for the inhabitants of the heretofore unrepresented metropolis of Birmingham’.⁷⁹ Edmonds and four others were later imprisoned for this act of temerity. A fuller discussion of the event from the perspective of power politics can be found in chapter eight, but what concerns us here are the numbers. Reports of attendance varied

⁷⁵ George Edmonds, *A Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham: Being a Vindication of the Conduct of the Writer, at the Late Meeting at the Shakespeare 11 February 1817: with Animadversions upon the Proceedings of the Locked up Meeting, at the Prison, in Moor-Street, on the following day* (Birmingham, 1817) BL L01017091925

⁷⁶ See chapter two; BRO L/p/35/3; 64255.

⁷⁷ *Morning Post*, 15 July 1819.

⁷⁸ Katrina Navickas, *Protest*, p. 80.

⁷⁹ *Saunders’s News-Letter, and Daily Advertiser*, 19 July 1819.

wildly between the, perhaps overstated, *Hull Packet*'s 50,000 and the *Staffordshire Advertiser*'s more judicious 15,000, 'among whom a great proportion were women'.⁸⁰

A further meeting was held at the site in September that year in solidarity with the victims of Peterloo but, after the second wave there was a relative lull in reform meetings during the 1820s due in no small part to the swingeing legislation known as the six acts (see p. 86). Activity restarted in the city on 22 June 1827 when a meeting was called in the public committee rooms of the town hall to support MP Charles Tennyson's 'East Retford Disfranchisement Bill' which, if passed, would have returned two MPs for Birmingham instead of the much less populated rotten borough of East Retford.⁸¹ Attendance was so numerous that the meeting had to be adjourned to the nearby indoor horse exercise building owned by racehorse trainer John Beardsworth.⁸² The event, which was addressed by banker Thomas Attwood and manufacturer Joshua Scholefield (both later to become Birmingham's first MPs), was the first of many held at this spacious indoor venue, establishing it as a site of radical importance in Birmingham.⁸³ Further meetings were held at Beardsworths Repository over the following eighteen months but the BPU membership soon outgrew its capacity and meetings returned outdoors for a mass gathering at Newhall Hill on 3 October 1831 with the stated aim of 'petitioning the House of Lords to pass the Reform Bill'.⁸⁴ This meeting, which

⁸⁰ *Hull Packet*, 20 July 1819; *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 17 July 1819.

⁸¹ House of Commons Debate, 11 June 1827, Hansard Vol 17 cc1200-17.

⁸² *Morning Herald*, 25 June 1827.

⁸³ According to David Moss the glass-roofed central gallery measured some 324 x 150 ft which would make the area around 4500 m² with a capacity of around 9000 at two ppsm. Attendances of 12 -15000 were frequently claimed in newspaper reports and the venue was crammed to capacity when banker, Attwood launched the Birmingham Political Union (BPU) there on 25 January 1830. One report said that, 'the mass of spectators was so immense that hundreds were compelled to retire in consequence of not being able to get sufficiently near to hear proceedings' while the *Birmingham Journal* claimed it was the largest indoor meeting 'ever convened in this kingdom,' estimating attendance at 20,000. This is unlikely as people would have been dangerously packed at 4.5 ppsm. This event was reported to have lasted for seven hours therefore it can be assumed a crowd of around half that size. Nevertheless an indoor crowd of 9,000-10,000 attending a daytime political meeting is still a powerful indication of the strength of feelings as it would have amounted to 15 per cent of the male population of Birmingham; David Moss, *Thomas Attwood – The Biography of a Radical* (Montreal, 1990), p. 333; *The News (London)*, 31 January 1830; *Birmingham Journal*, 30 January 1830; Still, 'Crowd Dynamics', p. 42;

⁸⁴ BRO 64654; BRO 64660.

heralded the third wave of reform meetings, claimed record attendance of 150,000 which, if true, would have approached the entire population of Birmingham including women, children and the old and infirm.⁸⁵ While we know that processions converged on the site from across the midlands, the figure was unlikely to have exceeded 40,000 for reasons explained below. Three meetings were held at Newhall Hill during the 1832 constitutional crisis triggered by the refusal of the Lords to ratify the Bill passed earlier in the commons and the following year, the ‘Days of May’ were notable for the fact that, rather than opposing the government, these protests were orchestrated in support of the Whig administration, and against the Bishops, Lords and Duke of Wellington.⁸⁶

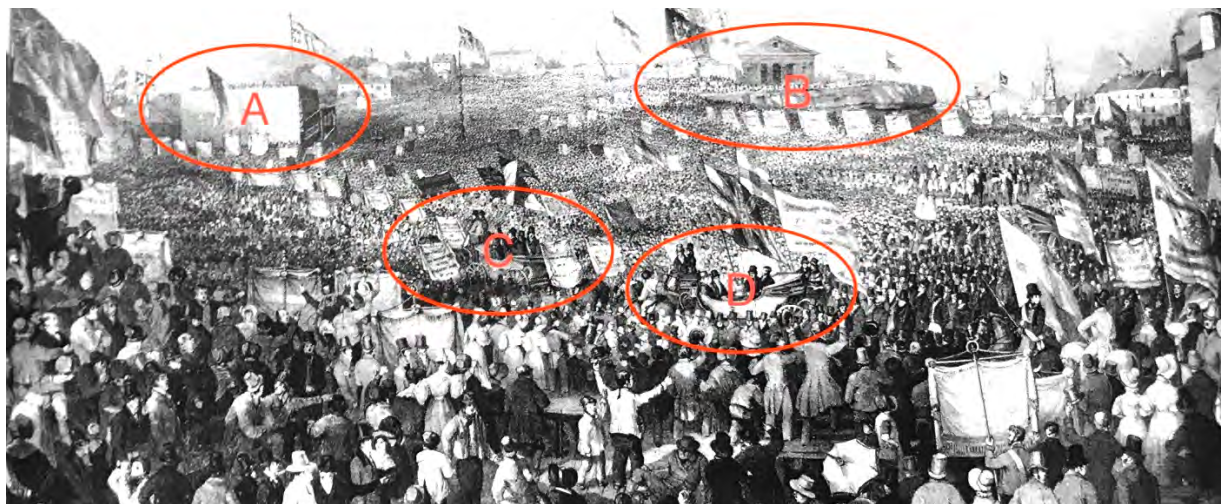


Figure 4:10 *The Gathering of the Unions on Newhall Hill, May 1832.*⁸⁷

The sense of occasion and pageantry present at reform meetings is perfectly captured in Henry Harris’s composite engraving which comprised elements from sketches he made at successive May meetings (Figure 4:10). One assumes that the platform erected at ‘A’ was for the speakers as there are two carriages ‘C’ and ‘D’ making their way towards it through the

⁸⁵ 147,000 (1831 census) histpop.org; https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10104180/cube/TOT_POP (accessed 3 April 2020).

⁸⁶ BRO 64662.

⁸⁷ *The Gathering of the Unions’ on Newhall Hill, May 1832*, Henry Harris, Pub. G. Hullmandel, TUC Library Collections, London Metropolitan University.

crowd, but it may equally have been a viewing platform. The image appears to look north as it shows the distinctive column-fronted Andrew's Meeting Hall above the rock face 'B' but some artistic licence has been used as St. Pauls Church shown top right should be out of the frame. Unlike Kennington or Peterloo, the site is not level, rising gradually, again limiting capacity, and the advantage gained by the natural amphitheatre appears to be lost by positioning the stage on the higher ground to the west of the site.⁸⁸ We can tell this meeting is about to commence by the arrival of the speakers, but the site is shown as tightly packed – and, while nothing can be inferred from this, a rough head count shows a crowd of around 13,000 – 15,000 which is below my calculation of the site capacity (see p. 93.).



Figure 4:11 'Newhall Hills in Birmingham belonging to Miss Colmore and let to William James Esq' c.1820.⁹⁰



Figure 4:12 Map of 1834 Land Sale.⁸⁹



Figure 4:13 1834 Land Sale Document.

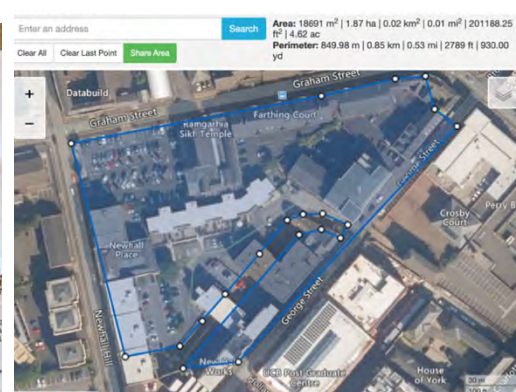


Figure 4:14 Area Calculation of Newhall Hill.⁹¹

⁸⁸ We cannot be sure if all meetings followed this layout.

⁸⁹ BRO 256362 DV123.

⁹⁰ John Townley, *Iron Room Blog*, Archives and Collections @ the Library of Birmingham <https://theironroom.wordpress.com/2020/11/23/the-lost-arm-of-william-james/> (accessed 18 January 2022).

⁹¹ <https://www.calcmaps.com/map-area/> (accessed 18 January 2022).

As with the other case studies, in order to challenge or corroborate attendance figures we first need to establish the area of the site. In a report of the meeting of 12 July 1819 this was recorded as being around 12 acres while in the report for 20 May 1883, the *Morning Post* gave the dimensions of 120 x 65 yds, presumably meaning a triangle of 120 x 65 x 65 yds.⁹² This is impossibly small, but fortunately an 1820 lease and an 1834 legal document of sale provide more clues to the size (Figures 4.10 – 4.12). The triangular site was enclosed on three sides by Frederick Street, George Street and Graham Street – all still visible today (with Lower Frederick Street now renamed Newhall Hill).

The 1834 map helpfully lists numbered lot areas which total 2,676 sq. yds. for the seven lots on Frederick Street and 3,106 sq. yds. for the six lots on George Street. Extrapolating this across the whole area gives a total area for the Newhall Hill site of 23,558 sq. yds. or 19,697m². (Figures 4.10, 4.11). Both the 1820 and 1834 plans show the canal spur bisecting the lower end of the site so that area can be excluded from the Calcmeps® calculation (Figure 4.13). This gives an area of 18,691m², which roughly corroborates the nineteenth century surveys and makes the site only slightly larger than Peterloo but significantly smaller than Kennington. This suggests that the Newhall Hill crowd capacity could have been around 28,000 at a density of 1.5 ppsm, rising to little over 37,000 if it was two ppsm.⁹³ This means that, accepting the 50,000 claim for July 1819 as only a slight overestimation, we can accept the attendance reports for all meetings up to and including 1831.⁹⁴

⁹² *Morning Post*, 15 July 1819.

⁹³ <https://www.calcmeps.com/map-area/> (accessed 18 January 2022).

⁹⁴ After 1831, claims become increasingly extravagant, with each meeting, as we have seen, striving to ‘out-do’ the previous one in terms of magnitude. This is despite available space at the site, if anything, diminishing, as building plots around the edge are developed and a section marked off for King Edward VI School; John Townley, *Iron Room Blog*, <https://theironroom.wordpress.com/2020/11/23/the-lost-arm-of-william-james> (accessed 18 January 2022).

Date	Claimed Attendance	Venue
22 Jan 1817	6-7,000	Newhall Hill
11 Feb 1817	15,000	Newhall Hill
26 Feb 1818	10-12,000	Newhall Hill
12 July 1819	50,000	Newhall Hill
23 Sept 1819	'Innumerable multitudes' ⁹⁵	Newhall Hill
May 1827	'numerous and highly respectable' ⁹⁶	Beardsworth's Repository
May 1829	5,000	Beardsworth's Repository
25 Jan 1830	12-15,000	Beardsworth's Repository
26 July 1830	'crowded to excess' ⁹⁷	Beardsworth's Repository
7 March 1831	15,000	Beardsworth's Repository
2 May 1831	15-20,000 ⁹⁸	Beardsworth's Repository
3 Oct 1831	15,000	Newhall Hill
7 May 1832	150,000	Newhall Hill
10 May 1832	100,000	Newhall Hill
14 May 1832	200,000 ⁹⁹	Newhall Hill
20 May 1833	230,000	Newhall Hill
6 Aug 1838	200,000	Holloway Head

Table 4.1 Attendance reported at Birmingham Reform meetings 1817-1838

Sources unless otherwise stated: Meeting reports and Birmingham Journal, Birmingham Record Office.

Newhall Hill meetings frequently claimed colossal turnouts, the highest being 230,000 for the final meeting recorded there on 20 May 1833 (see Table 4.1). This was the 'Great public meeting of the inhabitants of Birmingham and its neighbourhood held at Newhall Hill, on Monday May 20, 1833, convened by the council of the political union, For the purpose of petitioning his Majesty to dismiss his Ministers'. This was the first meeting to be held after the uncontested return of Attwood and Scholefield as members for the newly created constituency of Birmingham.¹⁰⁰ Although only five months had elapsed since the post-reform election of December 1832, that was long enough for disappointment and disillusionment to have set in. Attwood had used his maiden speech to criticise the Whigs' repressive policies in Ireland expressing his support for Daniel O'Connell, a course of action which alienated support in the House and drew censure from *The Times* who dubbed

⁹⁵ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 29 September 1819.

⁹⁶ *Morning Herald*, 25 June, 1827.

⁹⁷ *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 31 July 1830.

⁹⁸ *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 4 May 1831.

⁹⁹ J. Langford, *A Century of Birmingham Life* Vol. 2, (Birmingham, 1868), p. 614.

¹⁰⁰ Moss, *Thomas Attwood*, p. 236.

him the ‘Brummagem Hampden’¹⁰¹ However, the way the BPU calculated attendance was fanciful. Their official report, largely reprinted from the Birmingham Journal, stated:

‘This was the largest meeting ever held in Birmingham. It certainly exceeded in number the great one held on the 7th of May last year, by perhaps twenty or thirty thousand persons, and displayed in banners and the general accessories of such assemblages at least a proportionate increase. Calculating thus by comparison, it will follow that if there were 150,000 present at the meeting referred to, as was at the time supposed by some persons, there will have been at this 170,000 or 180,000; or if, as others supposed, there were 200,000, then the number, at this may be estimated at 220,000 or 230,000. However, though it is probable that 200,000 persons may, altogether, have attended at former meetings on Newhall-hill, yet it is not likely that so many were ever at one time assembled on the ground together; whilst at the one we are now reporting, we should think this number was very nearly, if not fully, approached. It must be evident that in speaking of numbers so immense, it cannot be intended to imply that even the fifth part of 200,000 persons could, at one and the same time, get sufficiently near the hustings to hear the several speeches that were addressed to the meeting.’¹⁰²

The logic is flawed. Their starting point was the assumption that the reported attendance on 7 May 1832, whether 150,000 or 200,000, was fact. To this they added the additional 30,000 they estimated at this meeting, thus arriving at the implausible 200,000 or 230,000. Although they conceded that at previous meetings participants

¹⁰¹ HC Deb 11 February 1833 vol 15 cc538-50, *The Times*, 18 May 1833.

¹⁰² BRO 64668.

came and went during the day, this time they claimed people stayed, albeit acknowledging that most of them would not have heard the speeches. The claim is clearly mendacious as it exceeds the Birmingham population of 147,000 (1831 census) by 80,000.¹⁰³ Even allowing for reported processions arriving from surrounding towns of Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton, further afield: Warwick, Stratford on Avon, Tewkesbury, Nuneaton, Kenilworth, Leamington, and even from as far as Derby, and Nottingham, it is hard to imagine that the crowd was swelled by more than a few thousand as most of the processions would have had to walk for four to six hours and, in the case of Nottingham, 18 hours.¹⁰⁴ *The Times* more cautiously estimated the crowd at 70,000-80,000 but even this is doubtful as the site was bisected by a canal, as well abutting a sheer cliff, and, in addition to these physical obstacles, and unlike Kennington or Peterloo, stalls and hawkers' pitches were reported which would also have reduced space available for participants and spectators (Figure 4:10).¹⁰⁵

Grand Midland demonstration

As well as supporting electoral reform, the BPU continued to hold meetings at Newhall Hill in support of the Irish Reform Bill, against the Corn-laws, and in solidarity with 'The wretched condition of Poland' but when Attwood launched the Birmingham Chartist movement in August 1838, the venue was moved one mile south to the larger Holloway Head site. The 'Grand Midland Demonstration' which marked the start of the fourth wave of reform meetings, was one of the first times the word 'demonstration' was used to describe a political protest (see p. 15.).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ [http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/PageBrowser?path=Browse/Census per cent20\(by per cent20date\)/1831/Great per cent20Britain&active=yes&mno=11&docstate=expandnew&docseq=3900&display=sections&display=tables&display=page&titles&pageseq=first-nonblank](http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/PageBrowser?path=Browse/Census%20by%20date/1831/Great%20Britain&active=yes&mno=11&docstate=expandnew&docseq=3900&display=sections&display=tables&display=page&titles&pageseq=first-nonblank) (accessed 18 January 2022).

¹⁰⁴ BRO 64668.

¹⁰⁵ *The Times*, 21 May 1833.

¹⁰⁶ BRO 64665; BRO 64666; This section first appeared in a Twitter thread with the hashtag #heritageofprotest: https://twitter.com/history_dave/status/1265615057007902722 (accessed 18 January 2022).

Not all Newhall Hill assemblies claimed colossal turnouts. Only modest claims were made for attendance at the meetings in 1817-18 as well the first few reform meetings of the 1830s (Table 4.1). Nonetheless the calculations in this case study have shown that the excessive attendance claims of 100,000-200,000 cannot be substantiated and, as with the other case studies, we should be looking at crowds in the lower tens of thousands.

Chartist meeting, Kennington Common 10 April 1848



RCIN 2932482

RCIN 2932484

Figure 4:15 Original Daguerreotypes by William Kilburn of the Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common 10 April 1848, Royal Collection Trust.¹⁰⁷

My final case study considers the so-called ‘Great Chartist Meeting’ on Kennington Common on 10 April 1848 (Figure 4:15), which marked the sixth and final wave of reform meetings and is considered both the zenith and the nadir of Chartism. In this case we have photographic evidence to support assumptions made about crowd density in the earlier case studies (see p. 56 and Appendix 2).

In the spring of 1848, the British Government appeared to be preparing to subjugate a violent revolution. 1848 was the year of revolutions across Europe. By April there had been risings in

¹⁰⁷ Royal Collection Trust: RCIN 2932484, RCIN 2932482.

the German, Austrian and Italian states and in February the French monarchy had been overthrown in favour of the Second Republic.¹⁰⁸ Before the year was out, there were revolutions in countries we now know as Belgium, Poland, Romania, Hungary and the Ukraine. In Britain not only the government, but also the Chartist leadership were unprepared. Plans were expedited to bring the launch of a petition forward to 10 April. Meetings were planned across the country including one proposed by social reformer Charles Cochrane to be held in the newly constructed Trafalgar Square on 6 March.¹⁰⁹ Cochrane was reluctant to proceed when mass meetings were banned within one mile of the Houses of Parliament but maverick publisher George Reynolds stepped in and went ahead with the meeting. Later that night there was disorder and looting which the newspapers blamed on the Chartists.¹¹⁰ It was more likely, as David Goodway suggested, that this was youthful exuberance as crowds were a magnet for pickpockets and opportunists and youths accounted for two thirds of the arrests.¹¹¹ To circumvent the government orders, Reynolds moved the next meeting south of the river to Kennington Common on 13 March.¹¹² This led to more rioting in Camberwell, but the decision to relocate south of the river would have far-reaching consequences the following month when the location for the ‘monster gathering’ on 10 April was also announced as Kennington Common. The plan was to use the common as a rallying point from which to march en-masse to Westminster to present the reputedly five million signature petition to Parliament.

Notices were posted around the capital announcing the event which, in addition to the six points of Chartism also demanded a ‘fair days wages for fair day’s work’ and freedom from political serfdom.¹¹³ The slogan ‘Peace and Order is our Motto’ must have fallen on deaf ears

¹⁰⁸ Chase, *Chartism*, p. 294.

¹⁰⁹ Goodway, *London Chartism*, p. 111.

¹¹⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, 7 March 1848.

¹¹¹ Goodway, *London Chartism*, pp.114-116.

¹¹² Chase, *Chartism*, p.297.

¹¹³ People's History Museum.

as the government went ahead with preparations to repel an armed uprising.¹¹⁴ Seizing on uncorroborated reports predicting excessive numbers and violence surrounding the meeting, the government prepared to suppress a violent insurgent uprising in the capital. Scurrilous letters were published in the London press expressing fears about disruption to businesses when the procession passed.¹¹⁵ Chartist leaders replied, affirming peaceful intentions.¹¹⁶ Another *Times* correspondent implored the government to ‘subdue all attempts at tumult’. Elsewhere in that edition rumours of foreign agitation were given voice, echoing popular fears of collaboration with radical groups across the channel during that ‘Year of Revolution’.¹¹⁷ Whether the state was responding to gathered intelligence or mere rumour-mongering, they invoked an obscure Carolean Act to justify banning the meeting and the Police issued posters cautioning supporters not to attend (see p. 133).¹¹⁸ Plans were made to summon unprecedented military force which amounted to defence of the capital from a sustained attack.

Biscuits, spirits and salt pork

In the National Archives there is a box marked simply ‘Chartist Riots 1848’. Presumably if the events were being recorded as ‘riots’ when the home office papers were later archived, they probably were considered so at the time. However, as will be demonstrated, 10 April 1848 was anything but a riot. As the daguerreotype shows, the Kennington meeting appears restrained and orderly (Figure 4:15). The archive lists the numbers of troops and police to be stationed in strategic locations on 10 April along with requisitioning for food rations in the form of ‘Biscuits, Spirits and Salt Pork’ (Figure 4:16).¹¹⁹ On 8 April, just two days before the event, Lord Fitzroy Somerset, acting on orders from Wellington specified:

¹¹⁴ Poster in James Klugmann Collection, Marx Memorial Library, Clerkenwell.

¹¹⁵ See chapter five, p. 114; *The Times*, 1 April 1848.

¹¹⁶ *The Times*, 4 April 1848; <https://www.Chartistancestors.co.uk/john-arnott-1799-1868/> (accessed 3 April 2020).

¹¹⁷ *The Times*, 6 April 1848.

¹¹⁸ 1661: 13 Charles 2 s.2, c.5: Tumultuous Petitioning Act; HO45/2410/262.

¹¹⁹ Twice-baked ‘Hardtack’ Biscuits (bread substitute).

Memorandum of supplies of provisions and spirits deposited at the under mentioned places in reserve for the use of the troops:

Admiralty Horse Guards

Ten Days supply of Salt Pork, Biscuit and Spirits for 5,000 men - say 50,000 rations

Bank of England

Ten Days supply of Salt Pork, Biscuit and Spirits for 200 men - say 2,000 rations

Tower - 9,000 rations being Fifteen Day's supply of for 600 men ready to be moved at the shortest notice to The Post Office (in the City) and other strategic locations.¹²⁰

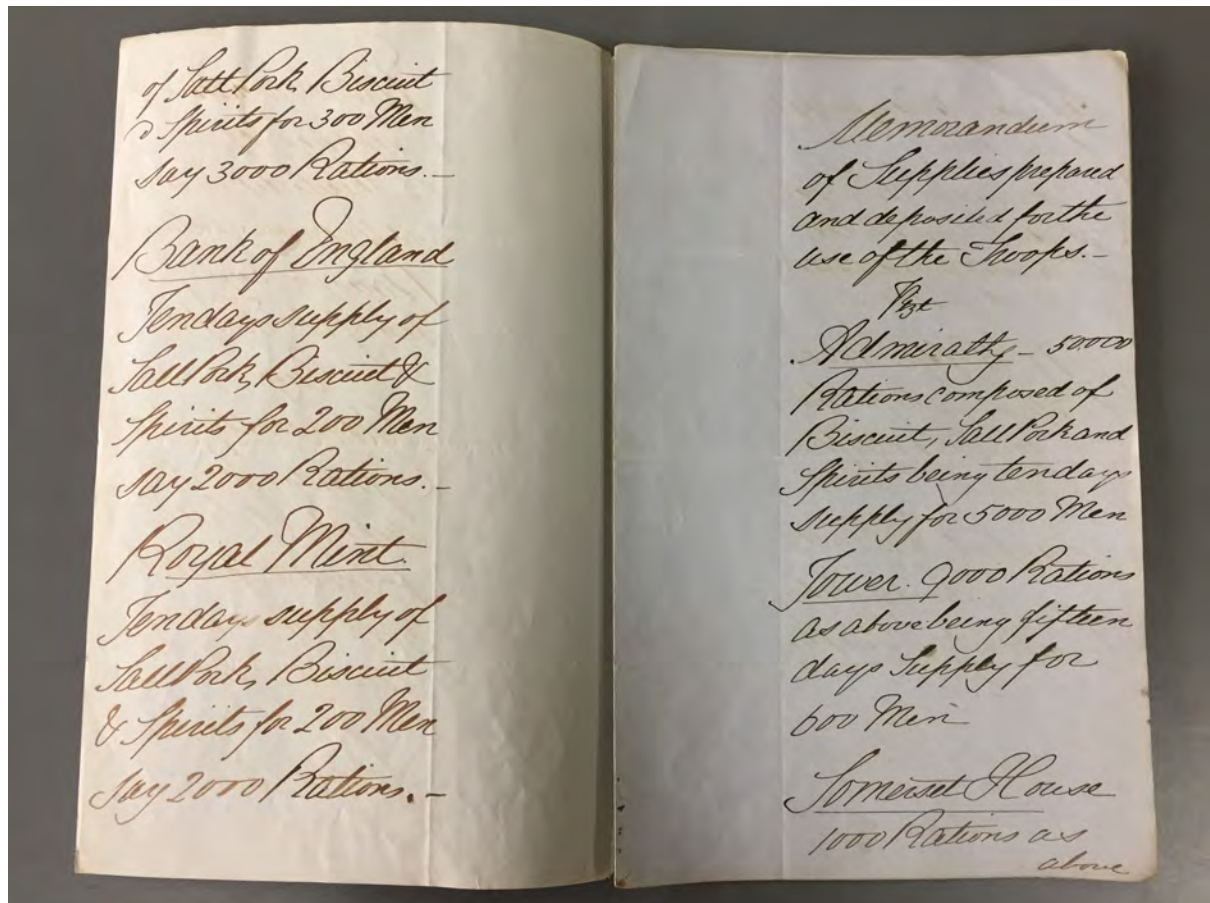


Figure 4:16 Military Provisioning Documents for 10 April 1848.¹²¹

The document went on to list other defended strategic locations which indicate planning for a mobilisation of 8,000 troops for 10-15 days. This amounted to the largest lockdown the capital has ever seen. They were preparing for a serious insurrection. Correspondence

¹²⁰ TNA WO/30/111.

¹²¹ Ibid.

between Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, and military commanders Fitzroy Somerset, and the Duke of Wellington continued over the weekend of 8-9 April.

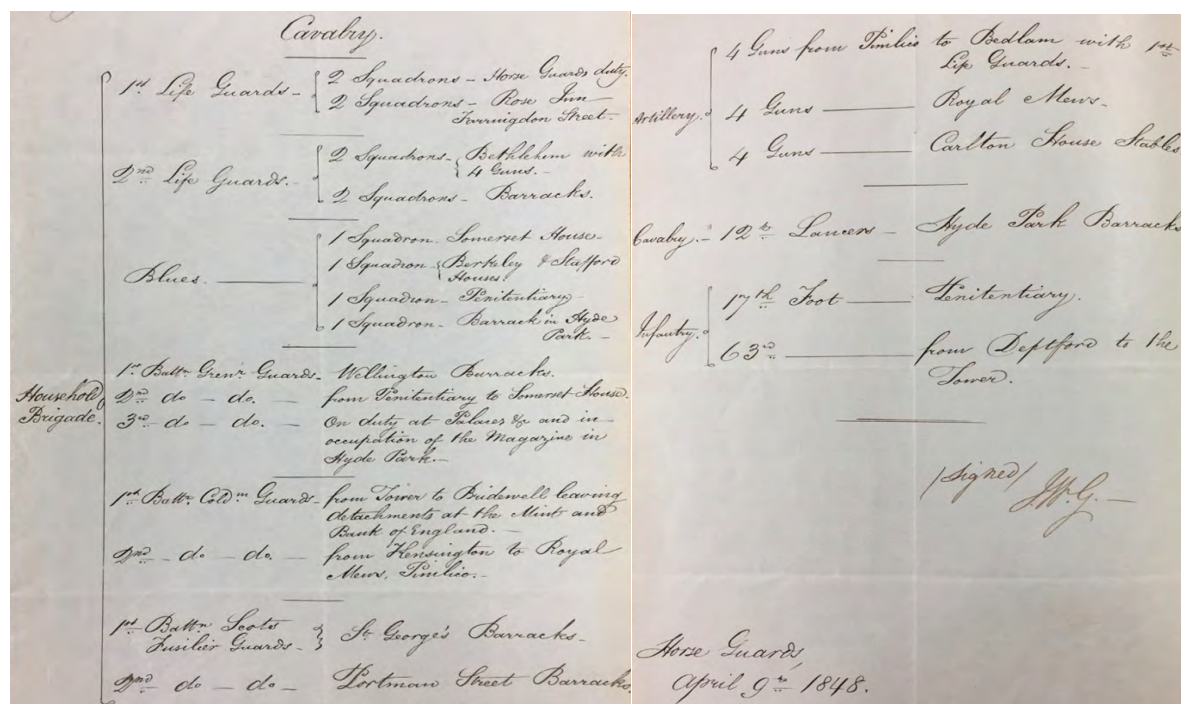


Figure 4:17 Order listing squadrons of Foot soldiers, Cavalry and Artillery to be stationed at key locations.¹²²

An order detailing the deployment of soldiers even lists 12 batteries of heavy artillery (Figure 4:17). In addition to troops, 4000 police were taken off general duties and redeployed to various locations in the centre of the capital – 600 at Palace Yard, 700 at Trafalgar Square and 500 at Vauxhall Livery Stables. The strategy was to allow processions to cross the river on the way to the rally but prevent them crossing back by blockading the bridges – 200 police were stationed on Vauxhall Bridge, 500 on Westminster Bridge, 50 on Hungerford Bridge, 500 on Waterloo Bridge and 400 on Blackfriars Bridge, 40 of which would be mounted. In addition, the plan was to stop wherries and river taxis ferrying people across the river with seven Thames Police boats enforcing this. In addition, up to 70,000 Special Constables were hurriedly

¹²² TNA WO/30.

A graphic portrayal of the nervous state of the government can be seen in an engraving published by *Illustrated London News* (*ILN*) detailing sandbags on the parapet wall of the Bank of England to provide cover for the military encampment on the roof. Special constables can also be seen parading at ground level (Figure 4:19). The symbolism of the statue of Wellington dominating the centre of the picture would not have been lost on the *ILN* readership who would no doubt have been aware of Wellington's role as titular head of the army.

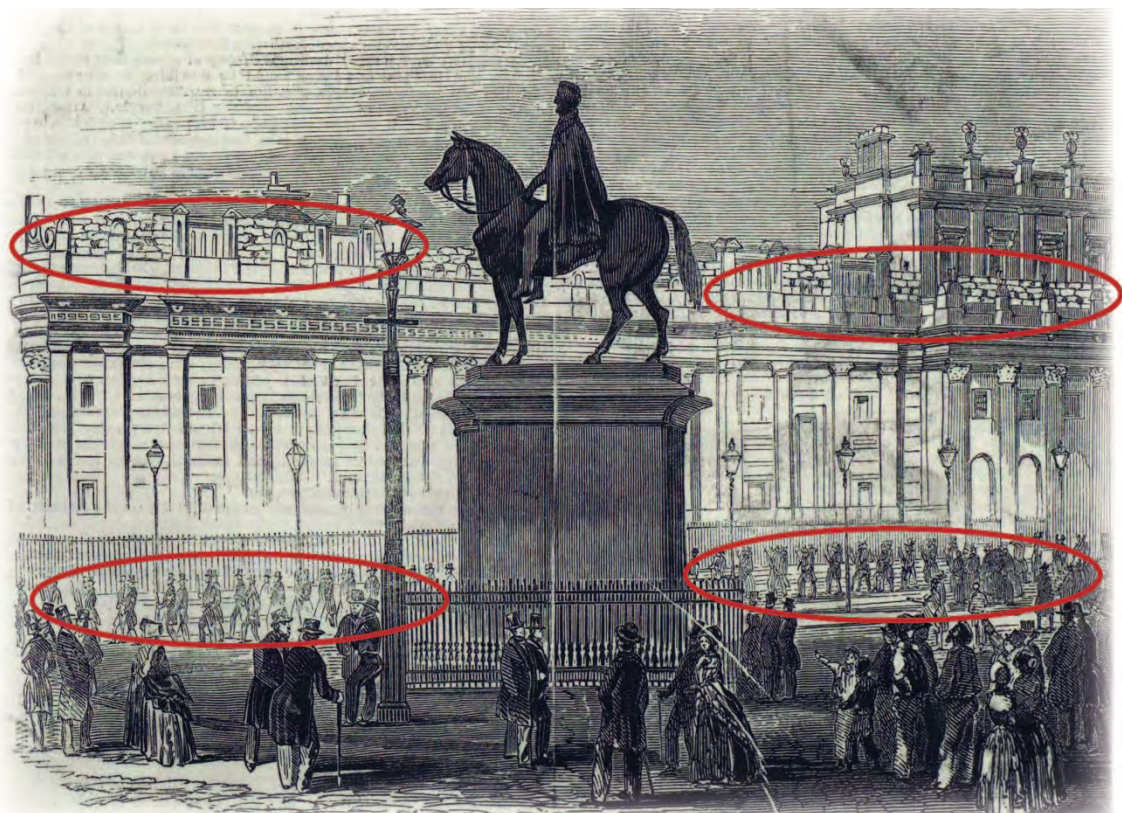


Figure 4:19 *Illustrated London News*, captioned 'The Bank of England in a state of defence.'¹²⁷

What is striking is the last-minute nature of the planning. A frenzy of correspondence was conducted at the highest level over the weekend of the eighth and ninth of April including this letter dated 8 April from Wellington to Prince Albert, presumably in response to the

¹²⁷ *Illustrated London News*, 15 April 1848.

latter's concerns for the security of heavy artillery on 10 April, but politely asking him to keep his nose out of government business:

'It appears that the building in which the Guns are kept is substantial, and might, and would be defended against any Mob, by the Men of the Company who it appears are anxious to be entrusted to defend their own property, including the guns!' Considering that these Guns have thus been kept in security upon former occasions of the disturbance of the Peace of the Tower by Mobs, it appears to the Duke to be best to leave well as it is.¹²⁸

The language is revealing anticipating the views of Tarde, Taine and Le Bon, the words 'Mob' and 'Mobs' are both capitalised, indicating a trepidation of the power of political crowds (see chapter three). The phrase 'former occasions of the disturbance of the Peace' also indicates that violence had already been experienced and, despite repeated written assurances to the contrary from the Chartist Convention, was now anticipated on 10 April on a scale that meant that even the heaviest artillery may be over-run. No doubt the Prince Consort was chagrined at being evacuated, along with the rest of the royal family, to the Isle of Wight, which may also explain why it might have been he who commissioned royal photographer William Kilburn to go along and record the event for posterity (see Appendix 2). It was feared that even the Solent would not be wide enough to guarantee the safety of the monarchy as evidenced by an entry in Foreign Secretary Palmerston's diary.¹²⁹ The paranoia was palpable – even the recently formed Electric Telegraph Company was requisitioned to facilitate communication with regiments in the provinces¹³⁰

¹²⁸ TNA, MEPO 2/63

¹²⁹ Chase, *Chartism*, p.300.

¹³⁰ TNA, HO45/2410/1

In the face of the anticipated military and police show of force, the Chartist leadership were far from unanimous on whether to proceed. After an unsuccessful deputation to the home office on 8 April, Julian Harney recommended cancelling the meeting in favour of a small delegation to present the petition.¹³¹

Capitulation

On 10 April four processions and a separate march of Irish Confederates converged on Kennington from across the capital.¹³² The Chartist leaders commenced with a Convention meeting at their John Street headquarters in Fitzrovia at which they were still divided about whether to obey police directions not to march on parliament (only two days earlier they had considered a proposal to relocate the meeting to Copenhagen Fields).¹³³ They left the meeting at 10.10am and collected the baled petition en-route.¹³⁴ Once on the common, Chartist leader Feargus O'Connor was summoned to a meeting with the police commissioner Richard Mayne who told him that the procession would not be allowed to accompany the petition to Parliament. O'Connor then had the task of breaking the news to the crowd. This provoked objections from among the committee including the black Chartist leader William Cuffay who thought they should defy the order and confront the police, but then it started raining heavily and the meeting broke up (see chapter eight, p. 255). A small contingent was allowed to take the petition to Westminster in a horse-drawn taxi and the day ended in disappointment and despair.

¹³¹ *Northern Star*, 2 February 1850.

¹³² *The Times*, 11 April 1848.

¹³³ *The Atlas*, 8 April 1848.

¹³⁴ *Illustrated London News*, 15 April 1848.

A contentious performance

As with most crowd events, the attendance on 10 April 1848 was contentious at the time and is still contentious today. Whether from the point of view of the Chartist organisers, the government, police and military, the impassioned attendee, the casual spectator or newspaper reader, the significance of the event was judged by interpretations of the crowd size. This was equally as true of the anticipated attendance as it was of that reported in newspapers. The arguments on both sides hinged around this issue. The Chartist cause was presumed to be enhanced by petition signatories numbering several millions as well as a large attendance numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Feargus O'Connor's newspaper, the *Northern Star* anticipated the petition of 'five millions of signatures' would be 'convayed [sic] to the house, supported by a procession of 500,000 persons', and as has been shown, the government responded with an unprecedented military and police presence.¹³⁵ The newspapers added to the general panic on the grounds of similarly large predictions with the leader in Saturday's *Atlas* anticipating an attendance of 200,000 expected to 'excite much anxiety in the peaceful and well-disposed' but rendered more alarming by their suggestion of 'the avowed intention of many of the leaders to proceed to the extremities if their wishes were not complied with'.¹³⁶ While there is no doubt that some Chartist leaders, including Philip McGrath and Ernest Jones predicted a turnout of 200, -250,000 on 10 April, I have not been able to find evidence of threats of violence.

The post-mortem analysis also revolved around this issue with O'Connor persisting in claims of up to 400,000 while some London newspapers reported attendance as low as 10-20,000:

¹³⁵ Goodway, *London Chartism*, p. 72; *Northern Star*, 1 April 1848.

¹³⁶ *The Atlas*, 8 April 1848.

‘We were told that 200,000 men were to march through London and take up their station on the new Runnymede. Every attempt was made to procure that number...What was the result? If our readers are not accustomed to estimate numbers standing or in motion, they will hardly believe what we have taken the utmost pains to ascertain and know to be true. The sum of all the processions that closed the bridges towards Kennington-common yesterday was not more than seven thousand. We doubt whether more than three thousand are added from south of the Thames. At the crisis of the meeting, the total number on the Common, including the most incurious and indifferent of the spectators and bystanders, was not 20,000’.¹³⁷

O’Connor claimed outside interference in the reporting, suggesting that the newspapers which reported low attendance had been ‘requested to put down the meeting on the 10th at fifteen thousand’.¹³⁸ He does not indicate the source of this supposed tampering with the news.

The attendance is no less significant in the historiographical debate. Huge importance has been invested in the numbers by historians on all sides of this debate to substantiate arguments surrounding not only the significance of 10 April and 1848 in general but also in evaluating the relative success or failure of Chartism itself. In 1854, the first historian of Chartism, Robert Gammage recorded 150-170,00 and this has been largely upheld, most recently by Malcolm Chase reiterating 150,000 in 2007.¹³⁹ Inevitably the figures cited are speculative, so a re-visitation of this discussion is long overdue. As with the first two case studies I will recalculate the crowd using evidence-based techniques.

¹³⁷ *The Times*, 11 April 1848; Chase, *Chartism* p. 314.

¹³⁸ Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement*, p. 314; Chase, *Chartism*, p. 322.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

Determining the area is straightforward as the common was fenced. A calculation can be made of the theoretical capacity by multiplying area by density. In 1854, in what was essentially a political act to discourage political meetings and illicit liaisons, Kennington Common was re-laid out as public gardens. The area of Kennington Park today can be calculated using a Google maps area calculator to be 86,502m².¹⁴⁰ However, a comparison with Greenwood's 1830s map shows the common was smaller before its enclosure as a municipal park. Calcmaps® gives the area as just 57,000m² (Figure 4:20). To calculate the capacity it is necessary to make some assumptions about crowd density and this is where matters become a little more complicated. In chapter three, Edward Hall's proxemics theory was combined with Keith Still's *Crowd Safety and Risk* analysis to argue that crowds rarely exceed two people per square metre (ppsm) unless under duress.¹⁴¹

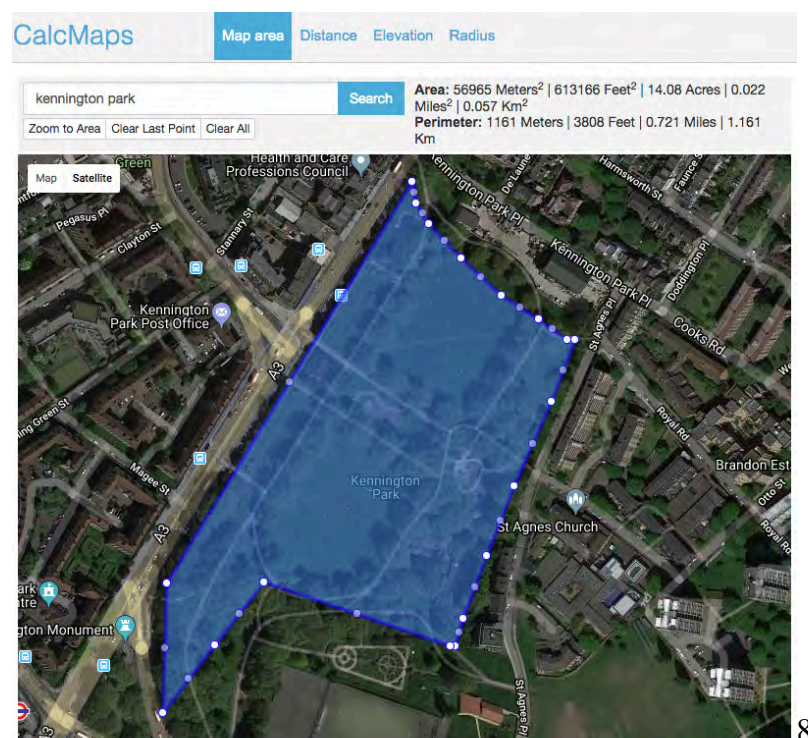


Figure 4:20 Area Calculation of Kennington Common at the time of the event.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.calcmaps.com/map-area> (accessed 18 January 2022).

¹⁴¹ Edward T Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York, 1969), pp. 116-20; Prof. Dr. G. Keith Still, *Crowd Safety and Crowd Risk Analysis*, pp. 16-17. <http://www.gkstill.com/Support/crowd-density/CrowdDensity-1.html>, (accessed 18 January 2022).

¹⁴² [https://www.calcmaps.com/map-area/Kennington per cent20park/](https://www.calcmaps.com/map-area/Kennington%20per%20cent20park/) (accessed 18 January 2022).

Kilburn's daguerreotype shows that, despite the many gaps, there are also groups which seem to disregard Hall's proxemic zones (see chapter three), even approaching two to three ppsm (Figure 4:15). At this density people would have encroached into what Hall has termed the intimate/personal zones which are usually reserved for close friends and family, so perhaps political crowds represent a special case. Hopkins, Reicher, et al. use the term 'collective self-realisation' (CSR) to describe this behaviour in political crowds in which normal perceptions of personal space are temporarily disregarded.¹⁴³

However, even accepting an average density as low as 1.6 ppsm, the theoretical capacity of Kennington Common was still around 85,500 people.¹⁴⁴

Kennington Crowd Density

(near hustings) 20 people per 9m² grid square = 2.2 ppsm

(at periphery) 10 per square = 1.1 ppsm

= Average of 1.6 ppsm

Kennington Common Capacity

57,000m² x 1.6 ppsm = 85,500 people

So, while the common could not accommodate the state's worst-case scenario of 250,000, the crowd could theoretically have exceeded the 20,000 reported in the next morning's *Times*. To understand this disparity, we need to look in more detail at the evidence we have for the crowd that day.

Principally mechanics, all peaceful

Firstly, we have contemporary reports. These real-time police memos from the day of the gathering help to gauge the crowd as estimated on the ground:

¹⁴³ Nick Hopkins, Stephen Reicher, Sammyh Khan, Shruti Tewari, Narayanan Srinivasan and Clifford Stevenson, 'Explaining Effervescence - Investigating the Relationship between Shared Social Identity and Positive Experience in Crowds', *Cognition and Emotion*, 30 (2016), p. 29.

¹⁴⁴ *Time*, 7 April 1967.

9am: Report from Stepney Green: About 2000 assembled on Stepney Green - no appearance of their being armed

10am: Report from Russell Square: The procession is moving from Russell Square - around 10,000 - principally mechanics, all peaceful

11.15am: Report from Balls Livery Stables (headquarters near Kennington Common) ‘The procession is now filing on to the common . . . but not the slightest appearance of arms or bludgeons. They have formed from 7 to 8 deep and at the time the procession arrived there were then present on the common above 5,000 persons and the approaches crowded with spectators’¹⁴⁵

While these estimates cannot be taken as precise (it is impossible to count a crowd without the benefit of an elevated vantage point), it is reasonable to believe them to be of roughly the right order – measured in the tens rather than hundreds of thousands. It looks likely that by 11.15 am there were between 5,000-10,000 people on the common.¹⁴⁶ This is still significantly short of Goodway’s 150,000 or even the theoretical capacity of the common of 85,500. Local population data does not help as, unlike the other case studies of Birmingham and Manchester, the London population could indeed have supported an exceptionally massive crowd at Kennington so we have to look elsewhere for verification.

A hot and brilliant sun shone forth

Uniquely for the nineteenth century crowd historian, William Kilburn’s daguerreotypes represent concrete evidence of attendance numbers.¹⁴⁷ Surprisingly, despite being in the public domain since being discovered in the Royal Collection in 1977, no record can be found of an

¹⁴⁵ TNA, HO45/2410.

¹⁴⁶ It is also significant that the commanding officers were independently reporting no signs of weapons or violence.

¹⁴⁷ Royal Collection Trust: RCIN 2932484, RCIN 2932482.

attempt to count the people in the photographs, so the next section will attempt a head-count of the crowd in the daguerreotypes.¹⁴⁸ There are potential pitfalls with this technique – the twentieth-century adage ‘the camera never lies’ has been largely discounted since the advent of tight cropping and image manipulation but we also have to be cautious about reading too much into the uncropped daguerreotype. What is not included in the frame is just as important as what is. The position of the camera and therefore the extent and depth of the image is unknown, so it is not clear how much of the crowd/common are out of shot. Secondly it only captures the crowd at a single unknown point in time and may not be representative of attendance later in the event, but these are not insurmountable problems.

Regarding timing, although it had rained heavily on the evening of the 9th and would again from around 2pm on the 10th, ‘a hot and brilliant sun shone forth’ during the meeting itself.¹⁴⁹ Neither of the daguerreotypes show rain so it can be assumed the image was taken before 2pm when it is also reported that the site had cleared. Shadows from chimneys falling on the roofs of buildings on the horizon show strong sun from the south – compatible with a 30° angle of sun at midday on the vernal equinox on 25 March at 51° latitude. As this event occurred just 17 days later, the daguerreotypes were probably taken between 11.30am and 12.30pm.¹⁵⁰ The other clue to the timing is that the horse-drawn ‘cars’ carrying convention members, O’Connor, Doyle, McGrath, Jones, Wheeler and Harney have arrived and are in shot. The cars left the convention meeting held at the Literary and Scientific Institution, Fitzroy Square at 10am, stopping at the National Land Company’s office in Holborn to collect the petition. From there they proceeded via Farringdon across Blackfriars Bridge to the common. Google maps shows this as a six-mile journey taking around 2 hours on foot

¹⁴⁸ Helen Rappaport, *Queen Victoria: A Biographical Companion* (Oxford, 2003), p. 293.

¹⁴⁹ *Illustrated London News* 312, 15 April 1848, p. 241.

¹⁵⁰ <http://suncalc.net/#/51.4835,-0.1088,17/1848.04.10/12:00> (accessed 18 January 2022).

today. Although it may have been quicker by horse-drawn ‘car’, the crowded streets would have impeded progress, so this suggests a timing of 11.30-12.30 for the image. Andrew Messner agrees, ‘if one of the speaking platforms [...] is the specially fitted out leaders’ car, Kilburn exposed the images between about 11.30am and 1pm.’¹⁵¹ Although people are still arriving, the evidence points towards a large proportion of the crowd having already arrived on site (as indicated from the 11.15 police report).

The surveilled crowd?

Regarding the other point of contention, the position of the camera, there is no question that it was located in an elevated position with a superb vantage point above the crowd. This is the preferred elevation used by crowd scientists when estimating modern crowd size today. One might assume that the camera was located on a platform within the common and just a small section of the crowd is visible, the remainder being out of shot. It can now be demonstrated that a large section of the common (up to fifty percent) is in shot and that a first or second floor window of a building outside the common was more likely. Possible locations were probably one of the terraces on the western side of Kennington Road looking east – Watkins Italian Warehouse is a possibility, but Horn’s Tavern is considered the main candidate.¹⁵² It would have suited Kilburn’s requirements, as the daguerreotype process was a messy one, necessitating pre-exposure wet plate sensitisation and post-exposure development involving some fairly noxious chemicals.¹⁵³ An upstairs room in a public house could have provided adequate darkroom facilities as well as being a superb vantage point from which to expose his plates. The Horns Tavern was requisitioned by

¹⁵¹ Andrew Messner, *William Kilburn’s 1848 Chartist Daguerreotypes*, (Sydney, 2021), para. 14. <https://andrewmessner.net/2018/01/10/chartism-10-april-1848-kennington-common-william-kilburn/#Why-Did-Kilburn-Photograph-the-Chartists>

¹⁵² Ibid; Jo Briggs, *Novelty Fair: British Visual Culture between Chartism and the Great Exhibition* (Manchester 2016), p. 48.

¹⁵³ Gabriele Chiesa, Paolo Gosio, *Daguerreotype Hallmarks* (Brescia, 2020), p. 27.

Commissioner Mayne for use as his Police headquarters on 10 April, so presumably the publican would have been equally happy to take payment from Kilburn.¹⁵⁴ However, as Briggs observes, a location further south is also possible.¹⁵⁵ The two visualisations in Figure 4:22 serve to illustrate the problem. The angle from the Horn's Tavern is slightly wrong. Historian, John Townley has suggested a viewpoint further south on Harleyford Place.¹⁵⁶ A first or second floor window in Watkin's Italian Warehouse on the other side of Westminster Road is an equally strong contender (Figure 4:21).



Figure 4:21 Possible camera locations in Horns Tavern and Watkins' Italian Warehouse 1842 Engraving
Image Courtesy of Mark Crail, Kennington Chartist Project, Ref: KCP0015/ENG/1842.

Whichever location was used, the camera's field of view can be projected. The buildings on the horizon can be matched to a street map indicating that almost the entire east side of the common is visible (Figure 4:22).¹⁵⁷ The central location of Farmers' Oil of Vitriol Factory chimney confirms this. In the foreground of the daguerreotype, horse-drawn carriages are

¹⁵⁴ This issue of provenance and commissioning of the Daguerreotypes is fully discussed in chapter five pp. 179-81; <http://www.kenningtonChartistproject.org/2018/06/04/the-horns-tavern/> (accessed 18 January 2022).

¹⁵⁵ Briggs, *Novelty Fair*, p. 59.

¹⁵⁶ Email conversation 20 April 2021.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

visible on the road and behind them spectators are pressed against the railings of the common. A similar bunching of spectators can be seen gathered along the road in the distance. Processions can be seen arriving from the east (possibly the Peckham Fields contingent).¹⁵⁸ So it can be assumed the entire east-west depth of the common is visible confirming that a large percentage of the common is in shot.

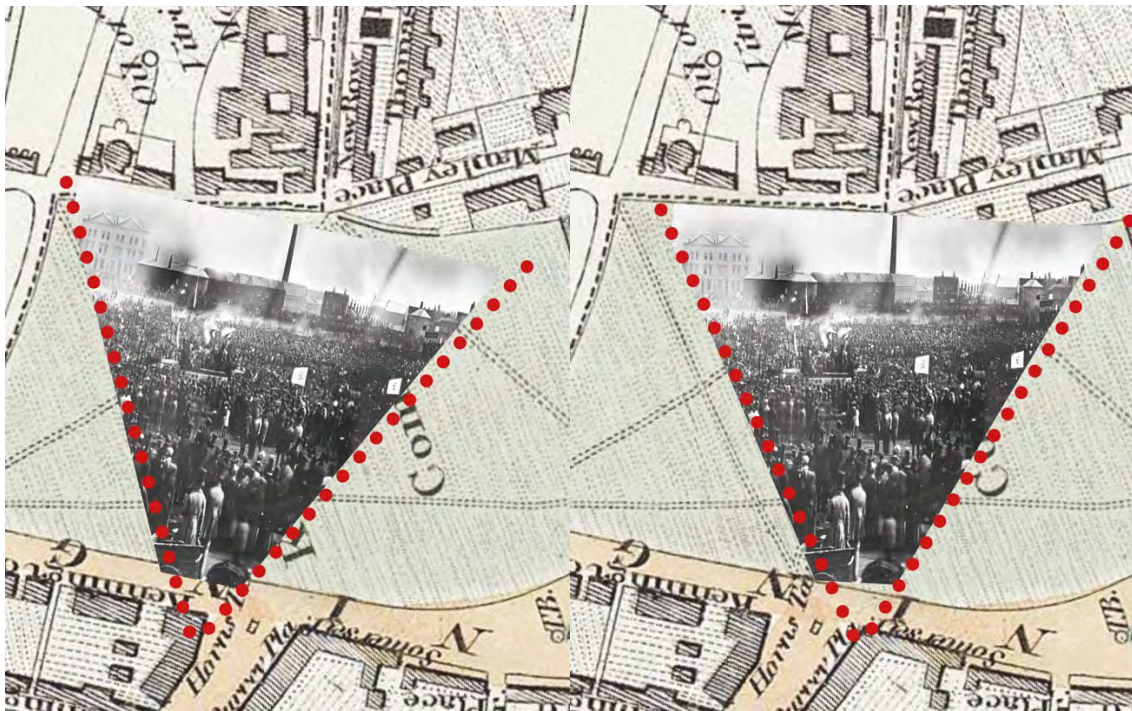


Figure 4:22 Visualisations of perspective frame superimposed on map.¹⁵⁹

To make counting easier, the two daguerreotypes were first transposed to match the horizon then converted to grayscale images in photoshop and combined into a single widescreen panoramic shot over which a squared grid was placed.

¹⁵⁸ *Northern Star*, 15 April 1848.

¹⁵⁹ Greenwood's 1830 map of London <https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/ids:8982548> (accessed 18 January 2022).

Figure 4:23 shows the results with denser squares near the car on the right. When added together a staggeringly small total of just 3,445 people were captured by the camera. This is counter-intuitive considering attendance anticipated in the hundreds of thousands by organisers and authorities alike. If this is correct then the Chartists were outnumbered several times over by the 8,000 troops, 4,000 police and numerous special constables. It also falls well short of the 85,500 theoretical capacity of the common. This discrepancy can be partially explained.



Figure 4:23 Panoramic sectional grid used to count the Kennington crowd.

The irregular crowd

Firstly, it is apparent from the projections of the image on the map that only around 40 percent of the common was captured in Kilburn's images. Secondly, as discussed in chapter two, the crowd density is far from even. This is clear from Kilburn's images and is even more starkly portrayed in an artist's impression of the event published five days later in the *Illustrated London News* (Figure 4:24).¹⁶⁰ Large areas of the common are shown as vacant

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 239.

which is not uncommon even in demonstrations today such as the crowd attending the 2003 rally against the Iraq War in Hyde Park (Figure 4:25).

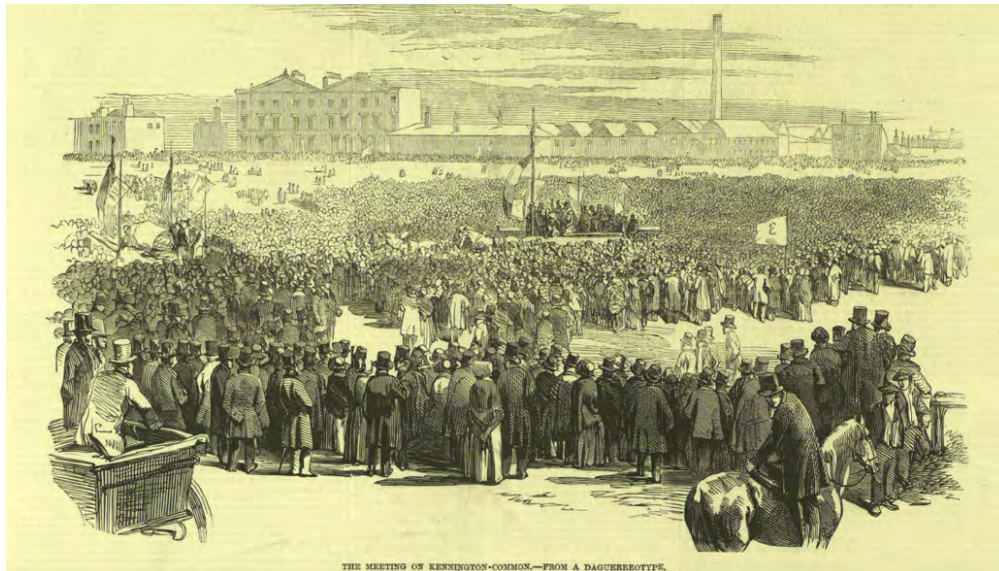


Figure 4:24 Engraving based on the daguerreotype.¹⁶¹



Figure 4:25 Protest against Iraq War Hyde Park, London 15 February 2003, © Reuters.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ *Illustrated London News*, 15 April 1848.

¹⁶² <https://www.reuters.com/news/picture/protesters-pack-belarus-capital-in-rally-idUSRTX7Q0P7> (accessed 18 January 2022).

Just as the 2003 crowd aggregated around the speakers' stage and video screen to the south, in 1848 there was obvious clustering around the speakers' 'cars', presumably in order to stand any chance of hearing what was being said. The largely unoccupied area to the north-east of the common corresponds to an earlier pond which was presumably filled in at some point but is still badly drained today as was apparent at the 170th anniversary commemorative event in 2018. It can be assumed that this decrease in density was even more marked towards the edges of the common. The average density for the whole common could have been as low as 0.5 ppsm which would reduce the expected capacity to just 25,500. The other striking point from the 2003 image is that, in order to view or estimate a crowd measured in the high tens- or hundreds- of thousands an aerial observation point is required. Kilburn did not have this advantage.

25,000 still exceeds the counted crowd by a factor of five, so more work is required to narrow this discrepancy (Table 4.2). An allowance can be made for a miscount by doubling the visible number at 12.30pm to 7000. A further 3500 can be added to allow for people on the common outside the field of view. It is reasonable to assume that another 3500 people arrived after Kilburn exposed his plates. A supplementary allowance of 3500 could be made to cover curious spectators such as the French composer Hector Berlioz who may have refrained from entering the common for fear of being caught up in any affray, and tentative supporters such as pre-Raphaelite brotherhood artists John Millais and William Holman Hunt who had joined the procession from Russell Square but who observed proceedings from outside the railings presumably to avoid being identified as Chartists.¹⁶³ A further 2,500 could be added to account for people observing the event from upstairs windows bringing the total to 20,000 –

¹⁶³ Goodway, *London Chartism*, p.140; Hector Berlioz (Trans. Ernest Newman), *The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz* (New York, 1966) p. 17.

within reasonable range of the theoretical capacity of 25,000, but despite these adjustments, the total is well short of the more extravagant claims of O'Connor and the presumption of many historians as well as being significantly below the theoretical site capacity of 85,500 at 1.6 ppsm. More work is required on this point as the numbers in the daguerreotype are even lower than suggested by these new density projections. I cannot fully account for this discrepancy. I wonder if a greater area of the common is out of shot than I estimated or totally devoid of people. Alternatively, the average density may have been lower than I allowed.

Calculation/estimate	
Visible crowd within the common around midday	7000
Estimated crowd outside the field of view	3500
Arrived later (say by 1pm peak)	3500
Spectators observing from outside railings	3500
Spectators observing from buildings around the common	2500
Total	20000

Table 4.2 Kennington Crowd Calculations

The absentee crowd

This raises several questions. Firstly, if these findings are correct, why did more people not attend? After all, an attendance of hundreds of thousands was anticipated by Chartists and government alike, so the question remains as to where everyone was on that significant day.¹⁶⁴ Secondly why, in the face of contradictory evidence, did some organisers and press persist in claiming unfeasibly large attendance numbers? Finally, why, once the daguerreotypes had come to light, these claims were not questioned by historians?

¹⁶⁴ *The Atlas*, 8 April 1848.

On the question of the small attendance, many people would have been at work as by 1848, for most people, Monday had become a regular working day and others may have been signed up as special constables.¹⁶⁵ It has already been established that there was a wide social mix among the 80,000 who signed up. While it is agreed that a large proportion were middle-class volunteers, there is no doubt that several thousands were working men impressed into the task by their employers.¹⁶⁶ Even if accepting a proportion as low as 25 per cent, that would have meant that potentially 20,000 attendees were prevented from attending and no doubt rumours would have spread. People whose friends or family had been forcibly signed up may have stayed away out of fear of confrontation with neighbours or workmates or simply have been scared off by the climate of fear generated by the scaremongering stories in the newspapers and the obvious emergency-footing of the police and troops.¹⁶⁷ This could have had a deterrent effect on attendance. Others may have approached from the north but arrived too late to cross the bridges. Once the main processions had passed, the bridges were effectively sealed off and river traffic stopped. It is tempting to liken this to modern police ‘kettling’ techniques but on a city-wide scale. This worked in two ways – although designed to prevent the Chartists accompanying the petition from the common to Parliament with a huge potentially unruly procession, it would undoubtedly have prevented late-comers walking to the site from north of the river. Others approaching from the south may have been stopped by the general hubbub in the surrounding streets. It is worth considering the possibility that, for each attendee, there may have been many others who were prevented from attending so the metaphorical crowd was greater than the numerical one (see chapter nine). This plea for the extension of the interpretation of crowd power to encompass those not

¹⁶⁵ Reid, ‘Decline of Saint Monday’, pp. 96-8.

¹⁶⁶ Goodway, *London Chartism*, p.132.

¹⁶⁷ *London Mercury*, 8 April 1848; *Patriot*, 10 April 1848.

physically present was made by Bronterre O'Brien.¹⁶⁸ As John Plotz has argued 'crowd deeds serve as a sort of collective speech'.¹⁶⁹

On the second question of why some persisted in reporting the crowd as massive, motives may have varied. Perhaps the state needed to justify, post-event, the huge expenditure they had made – they could hardly admit that the military mobilisation had been unnecessary. Arguably the Chartist leadership, O'Connor in particular, wanted to save face after their obvious failure to deliver the petition en-masse – this could have been done by positioning the event as a massive show of force – as he said in his justification speech, 'as I have always told you, Chartism, when struck down by *tyranny*, rises only to march onwards with renewed *strength*'.¹⁷⁰

Finally, on the issue of why, with the exception of Raphael Samuel who has cited the daguerreotypes as evidence of low turnout, most historians have persisted in repeating these unsubstantiated claims, I can only speculate that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is easier to accept published figures than to challenge or question them.¹⁷¹ Suzannah Lipscomb has suggested that to avoid this, historians should 'triangulate' by actively seeking evidence which might undermine, as well as corroborate, their hypotheses. She entreats us to adhere to a code of professional practice to avoid perpetuating errors by going back to the original sources *ad fontes* rather than relying on the secondary assertions of erstwhile historiographers.¹⁷² This research goes some way to applying this approach.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in Plotz, p. 128.

¹⁶⁹ John Plotz, *The Crowd – British Literature and public politics* (Berkeley, 2000), p. 128.

¹⁷⁰ *Northern Star*, 15 April 1848.

¹⁷¹ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London, 2012), p. 332.

¹⁷² Suzannah Lipscomb, 'A Code of Conduct for Historians', *History Today* 64 (2014), <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/code-conduct-historians> (accessed 2 December 2021).

Conclusion – the hyperbolic crowd

Despite differences between the three case studies in terms of location, date and outcome, what they have in common is a finite area which has made estimating attendance feasible. Evidence in the form of maps and ground plans have been applied to calculate the area available for the crowds to occupy and combined with reasoned assumptions regarding density to arrive at a potential capacity for each venue. This, together with census evidence of local population and journey times and distance of incoming processions, has enabled me to make informed estimates of attendance figures for Peterloo and Newhall Hill. In the case of Kennington, photographic evidence enabled a more forensic-style investigative analysis of the crowd at a single point during the day. The Newhall Hill crowds were probably the largest, at up to around 40,000, while Peterloo was arguably around 35,000, and Kennington, despite having the largest available space, perhaps around 25,000 (see pp. 77, 93).¹⁷³

Of the three sites, Kennington Common covered the largest area at 57,000 m² compared with just 16,000 m² for Peterloo and a little over 18,000 m² for Newhall Hill. However, as we have seen, St Peter's Fields and Kennington Common were level while the Birmingham site inclined 10 m across the site, was bounded by a cliff, bisected by a canal and some meetings boasted vendor's stalls – all reducing the available space for participants and spectators (see p.93). The main factor determining numbers at all three sites was the tendency for people to aggregate in clusters around focus points such as entry and exit points, speakers' platforms, or other points of interest such as spontaneous outbursts from participants or hecklers. This clustering was often matched by corresponding areas of low or even zero density as seen on the Kennington image and Rev. Stanley's plan of Peterloo. Some tentative suggestions for

¹⁷³ The 1848 Kennington meeting is discussed from the viewpoint of the history of emotions in chapter six.

density distributions are drafted visually in Figure 4:26. Although speculative, they are based on aerial photographs of modern political crowds.¹⁷⁴

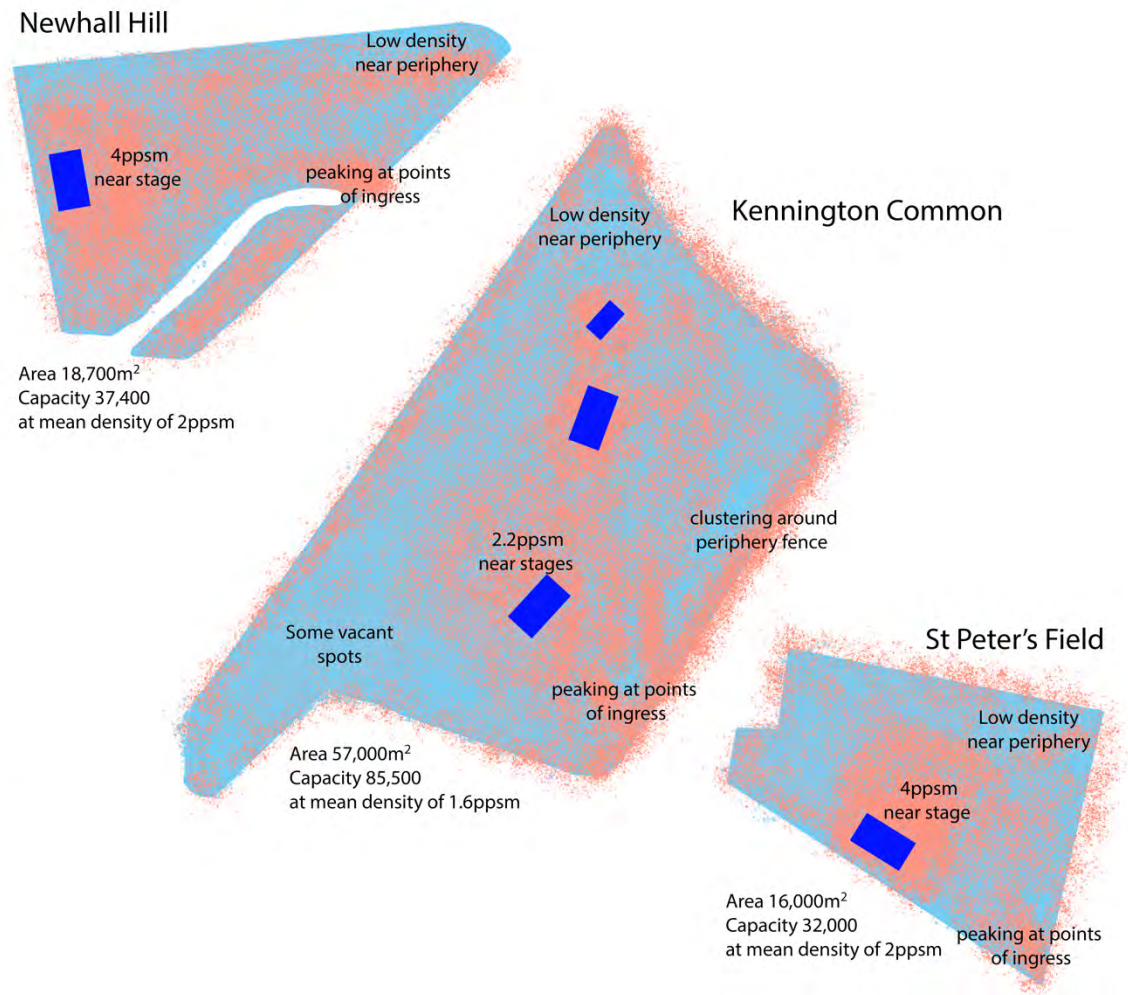


Figure 4:26 Suggested visualisation of uneven density distribution of crowds.

The itinerant crowd

We can accept that crowds were far from static and that these events were volatile, with people coming and going, and numbers expanding and dwindling at different times during the day. The Peterloo crowd may have slowly risen during the two-to-three-hour build-up to

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/several-hundred-thousand-people-gather-in-hyde-park-to-news-photo/1798662>; <https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/a7121/the-curious-science-of-counting-a-crowd>; <https://www.reuters.com/news/picture/protesters-pack-belarus-capital-in-rally-idUSRTX7Q0P7> (accessed 18 January 2022).

the arrival of Hunt, peaking at around 35,000 just before the yeomanry charge while the Kennington crowd could have built steadily over the three hours it took for the processions to arrive towards a 25,000 peak, most out of the field of view of Kilburn's camera (see p. 114). The Newhall Hill meetings could have been far more capricious and unpredictable as many are reported as lasting for six-to-seven hours, so crowds could have been as low as 20,000 for much of the time rising to peaks as great as 40,000 at key points.

Fear of the mob

Regarding Peterloo, while this proposed figure may appear to downplay the significance of the event, on the contrary, 32,000 represents a seriously large and powerful crowd. It is arguable that a smaller total figure represents a higher percentage of casualties. As a proportion of a 60,000 crowd, 654 injured represents around one percent, but if just 32,000 were present then this doubles to a two per cent chance of being injured, a truly shocking statistic, particularly considering the reformers' policy of non-violence, Hunt having implored people to bring no weapons.¹⁷⁵

At Peterloo and Kennington, while numerically the crowd posed little threat, the anticipation of excessive numbers combined with power of their argument was perceived as a threat to elite power. The fear of the Le Bon-styled unruly mob arguably triggered the magisterial blunder at Peterloo unleashing the undisciplined and unruly yeomanry with catastrophic consequences.¹⁷⁶ The reputation established by preceding reform meetings may have contributed to the reckless decision of the magistrates to deploy the yeomanry. At Kennington, it resulted in the mistaken deployment of an unprecedented show of military force, later discovered to have been completely unnecessary. The Birmingham

¹⁷⁵ Thompson, *Making*, p. 752.

¹⁷⁶ Poole, *Peterloo*, p. 293.

events were quite different owing largely to the more cordial relationship between the BPU leadership and the local government.¹⁷⁷ The Newhall Hill crowd, though probably larger than Manchester or London, was perceived as less militant by the Birmingham authorities than their assumed-to-be more confrontational counterparts were by the agents of the state in London and Manchester. This could have had been due to the less threatening nature of the craft-based journeymen of the metal workshops compared with embryonically unionised Manchester factory workforce, but it could also have been because of the more astute, banker-led direction of the BPU's leader Thomas Attwood and his colleagues.¹⁷⁸ Ultimately there was an element of shared interest and therefore better communication between the Birmingham financier-radicals, the municipal magistracy and embryonic police force, while in Manchester it was a clash of the conflicting interests of the cotton masters and their more wage-based workforce limiting opportunities for dialogue.¹⁷⁹ The other difference between 1819 and the early 1830s was that, though both movements centered around electoral reform, the earlier campaigns were arguably more driven by post-war financial hardship and sheer hunger, whereas, by the time of the reform crisis, the arguments had coalesced around more ideological themes. Birmingham was already emerging as different case from Manchester as early as 1819. Though Edmond's July meeting ostensibly had similar aims as the following month's notorious clash at St. Peter's Fields, the Birmingham magistracy stopped short of military intervention, preferring to wait until after the meeting had dispersed to arrest the leaders rather than provocatively breaking up the meeting at the start they did in Manchester.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Flick, *Birmingham Political Union*, pp. 58-60.

¹⁷⁸ Flick, *Birmingham Political Union*, p. 88.

¹⁷⁹ Elizabeth Gaskell develops these themes in *Mary Barton* and *North and South* – see chapter five, pp. 160-1.

¹⁸⁰ Susan Thomas, 'George Edmonds and the development of Birmingham radicalism', (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2020), p. 112.

By 1848 the situation had changed yet again. What was seen by many as the betrayal of the Reform Act had led to the more nationally co-ordinated Chartist campaigns, and ten years of fruitless petitioning had spawned frustrated crowds led by a divided leadership culminating in the Kennington meeting.¹⁸¹ However, despite the anticipation by Chartists of record breaking crowds and, by the state, of violent insurgency, this quantitative exercise has provided solid evidence to support the argument for an attendance on 10 April of under 25,000. On first sight this theory appears to downplay the significance of the Great Chartist Meeting, but, like Peterloo, it does the opposite. To all parties including organisers, participants, observers, commentators and the government, the crowd was viewed as seriously powerful to the extent that everyone tended to overplay the actual numbers. What this suggests is that the reputational power of the crowd was greater than the actual attendance would imply. Rather than representing a weakness, a relatively small number of Chartists were perceived by the government to represent a serious and imminent threat. The quantitative questions surrounding the Great Chartist gathering of 1848 revolve around problems of perception – on people's innate tendency to overestimate crowd size and desire to believe in the superlative. Perhaps, just as now, crowds were smaller in reality than in people's perception.

I am not arguing that attendance at all meetings was exaggerated. Many made only modest claims for attendance despite having large urban working populations to draw from. At the height of the anti-Chartist backlash in the summer of 1848 a meeting at Bishop Bonners fields (now Victoria Park) on 17 June was attended by several hundred police and almost no Chartists.¹⁸² Henry Hunt's three embryonic Spa Fields reform meetings in the winter of 1816-17, discussed in chapter two, were reported as having unexceptional attendance. *The Times*

¹⁸¹ Chase, *Chartism*, p.290; Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement*, p. 288 and 293-4.

¹⁸² *Illustrated London News*, 17 June 1848.

reported a crowd of just 5,000 at the meeting of 15 November, rising to 10,000 at the 2 December event which was notoriously hijacked by a riotous contingent.¹⁸³ Even radical publisher William Hone was cautious in claiming merely ‘many thousands’ and the final meeting on 10 February was reported by the whiggish *Morning Chronicle* as having an attendance of around 5,000.¹⁸⁴ Yet these apparently small meetings had a huge reach in terms of newspaper reporting and triggered punitive legislation in the form of the Seditious Meetings Bill (14 March 1817) and the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill (24 June 1817), Spa Fields being cited four times in each debate. The combined effect of this punitive legislation was to effectively suppress the mass platform for the following two years.¹⁸⁵ So, to reiterate, it is clearly not all about numbers – these case studies represent pre-announced, orderly urban reform meetings held within a fixed time frame and within fenced or definable, areas. These findings may imply that other gatherings were smaller than we think – the earlier monster gatherings on the moors may also have been overestimated, but that is speculative. Kennington is different because of the overwhelming abundance of documentation and the visual evidence in the form of Kilburn’s daguerreotypes.

This chapter has thrown up questions about identity – the necessity to distinguish between participant and spectator. It is also necessary to see what was going on in the surrounding streets – perhaps extending the limits of the events beyond their apparent boundaries. These and other issues surrounding reporting, representation, emotions, and the body will be addressed in the next few chapters, followed by an attempt in chapters eight and nine to address the question of reputational crowd power. The polemics of Taine and Le Bon sought to denigrate the political crowd as a mindless mob (see chapter three). Taine attributed no

¹⁸³ *The Times*, 16 November 1816; *The Times*, 3 December 1816.

¹⁸⁴ *The Meeting in Spa Fields - Hone’s authentic and correct account* (December 1816), British Library; *Morning Chronicle*, 11 February 1817.

¹⁸⁵ Seditious Meetings Bill (Hansard, 14 March 1817), Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill (Hansard, 24 June 1817).

greater acumen to the crowd than mere jacquerie or spontaneous anarchy, while Le Bon thought that the individual surrendered individuality to the mob, substituting *conscious* with *unconscious* activity upon joining a crowd of mentally inferior masses determined to ‘destroy society’ in a form of primitive communism.¹⁸⁶ The following chapters will attempt to locate the agency of the individual within the crowd.

Fuzzy magnitude perception

If it is correct that people tended to overestimate crowd size, the question remains why this is the case. There are three explanations. Firstly, it may be that humans are not socially programmed to conceive of crowds of larger than a few hundred. When confronted with gatherings exceeding around a thousand, the tendency may be to perceive indeterminate magnitude. Mathematician, Robert Munafo, has suggested that human perception of large numbers may be imprecise, with no thought or calculation necessary. This ‘fuzzy magnitude perception’, as he terms it, might mean that when confronted with a crowd of say, 10,000, people might guess anywhere up to 30-50,000.¹⁸⁷ This may increase at larger numbers, so conceptualising 100,000 becomes almost impossible. When striving to assign a numerical value, our brains arbitrarily grasp any seemly immense number. It no longer matters whether the crowd was 10,000 or 100,000. Everything over 10,000 is simply gigantic. This would explain the misreading of reform crowds and therefore the misreporting and only became a problem when it was recorded in print. At this point it may have clashed with other interpretations and therefore became contentious. Secondly, and this was more relevant before helicopters, drone technology and CCTV surveillance, it was seldom practicable to make accurate observations. As a crowd member this was impossible and as an observer

¹⁸⁶ Taine, *French Revolution*, Vol 1, p 122; Le Bon, *The Crowd*, p. 49.

¹⁸⁷ Robert P. Munafo, *Large Numbers at MROB*, (March 2020), <http://www.mrob.com/pub/math/largenum.html#class1> (accessed 18 January 2022).

getting a vantage point from which to view the entire crowd was rarely possible. Participants or members of the crowd may have interpreted this perceived sense of power as physical magnitude, thereby emboldening and endorsing their cause, whereas external observers may have construed this magnitude as a threat. In both cases people may have assigned a numerical value to this perception of power. In other words, a feedback loop of perception and exaggeration ensued along the lines of: numbers = power = larger numbers and so on.

Projection of power

This digital exercise has come closer than before to quantifying the crowd at these sites, although with some provisos. While it has been conclusively established that crowds could not have come near the superlative claims often made, there is still a margin of uncertainty about suggested capacities. What I can say now, with some degree of confidence, is that attendances were numbered in the lower tens of thousands at the three sites and not in the higher tens- or even hundreds- of thousands as some historians have continued to claim. To answer the secondary question about extrapolating these estimates to other, less clearly defined, events more caution is required. While the calculations at these sites have suggested that protagonists and detractors alike, as well as newspaper reports, tended to over-estimate rather than under-estimate crowd size, and that this may have applied at many of the other mass gatherings which claimed superlative attendance, this cannot be ratified without hard evidence. However, on the final question ‘Did meetings have to be numerically massive in order to be politically significant?’, I can answer with a resounding, no, the meetings at Manchester, Kennington and Newhall Hill all had far-reaching influence and consequences, despite their, arguably modest numerical attendance.

The point of this research, however, is not simply about attendance numbers per se. It is necessary to look beyond the findings. A more nuanced interpretation of why crowd power was perceived in numeric terms and how this affected power negotiations surrounding the struggle for the franchise which played out over the long nineteenth century is required. Chapter eight will consider this drawn-out tussle between the soft power of the crowd and the hard power of the state.

Finally, I argue that, while discreet events may not have been as numerically massive as thought, their power was enhanced by the building of serious reputational political power. The point is that these events were powerful despite their, arguably, smaller numbers. The political power of the reform movements meeting at these sites was perceived as massive even if the numbers were not. This reputational power even extended to the anticipation of these events which were simultaneously fêted and feared in advance depending one's point of view. By enhancing their reputational political power, reform crowds punched way above their weight.

5. The communicative crowd

Reporting, representation, perception

*Beware of Spies! [...]
Don't hold your meeting this Evening,
as you value the cause of Universal Suffrage.
I seriously advise you for your own good.¹*

This notice dissuading would-be attendees of an early Chartist meeting in Lancashire was unusual in that a Chartist leader was discouraging attendance (Figure 5:1). Manchester District Chartist Marshal, Reginald Richardson had good reason, knowing that his members would be walking into a trap. Richardson was no stranger to reform meetings, having witnessed the Peterloo massacre as an eleven-year-old boy so he could have been astute about the threat posed by infiltrators.² With no time to communicate the warning via a notice in the newspaper, he had no choice but to hastily have a handbill printed to be distributed and presumably pasted up around local towns.

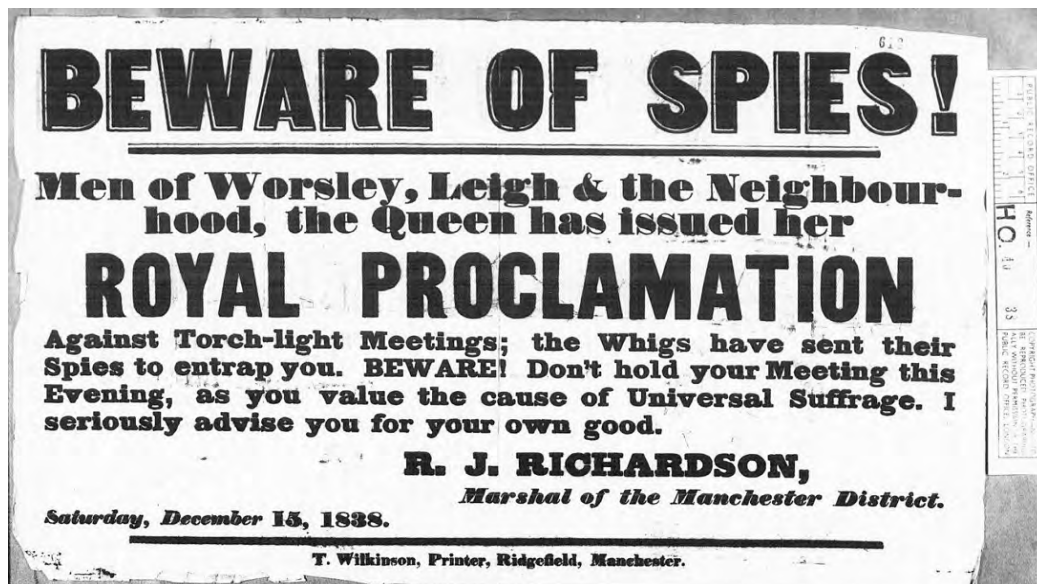


Figure 5:1 Notice warning against infiltration at torchlit Chartist Meeting 15 December 1838.³

¹ TNA HO 40 38 4.

² Paul A. Pickering, *Chartism and the Chartists in Manchester and Salford* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 202-3.

³ TNA HO 40 38 4.

This chapter seeks to investigate how the reputational power of the mass platform was communicated, and this example serves to highlight one of the many levels on which communication operated in relation to reform crowds – notification and information sharing, others being discussion, reportage, memorialisation, satire and the making of claims and demands. Having established that the attendance of many reform meetings was unlikely to have corresponded with the extravagant claims made in newspapers, it is undeniable that these assertions were believed, repeated, and exaggerated. This chapter will examine how this hyperbolic process was propagated in the press, popular literature, song and graphic representation, and will address via a series of vignettes, the questions of how participants received advance notification of events, how the wider public heard about them afterwards. Crucially I will discuss how the state perceived the crowds’ reputation by monitoring these communications and responding to them.

The notified crowd

Figure 5:2 shows a notice which appeared on handbills and placards ‘stuck up and delivered about the streets’ across London to announce the second of three meetings at Spa Fields, Islington in late 1816 (see chapter two).⁴ It was re-printed in newspapers and a transcribed handwritten copy appears in Home Office papers, perhaps indicating that it fell within the state’s category of potentially seditious material. It is an example of multi-level communication, acting as a report of the first meeting and an announcement of the second while simultaneously making political points and arguing for social change. There was a veiled threat of insurgency implied if demands were not addressed. The Spa Fields notice is an example of how participants received advance notification of events. While the Tory *Courier*’s associated story sought to demean and discredit the organisers, describing them as

⁴ *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 26 November 1816.

‘self-styled Patriots’ and their language as ‘deceptive and inflammatory’, by reprinting the placard, they actually gave free advance publicity to the event.

ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN TO DO HIS DUTY.
 The Meeting in Spa-Fields takes place on Monday, Dec. 2, 1816, to receive the Answer of the Petition to the Prince Regent, determined upon at the last Meeting held in the same place, and for other important considerations.

THE PRESENT STATE OF GREAT BRITAIN.
 Four Millions in Distress!!!
 Four Millions Embarrassed!!!
 One Million-and-half fear Distress!!!
 Half-a Million live in splendid Luxury!!!
 Our Brothers in IRELAND are in a worse state, the Climax of Misery is complete, it can go no farther.
 Death would now be a relief to Millions, Arrogance, Folly, and Crimes, have brought Affairs to this Crisis.
 Firmness and Integrity can only save the Country!!!
 After the last Meeting some disorderly People were guilty of attacking the Property of Individuals; they were ill-informed of the object of the Meeting, it was not to plunder Persons suffering in these calamitous times in common with others: the Day will soon arrive when the Distresses will be relieved.

THE NATIONS WRONGS MUST BE REDRESSED.
JOHN DYALL, Chairman.
THOMAS PRESTON, Secretary.

Figure 5:2 Newspaper reproduction of street notice announcing second Spa Fields Meeting 2 December 1816.⁵

The notice appealed to patriotic zeal, borrowing from the language of Trafalgar: ‘England Expects every Man to do his Duty,’ while calling for restraint, thereby distancing the organisers from a breakaway group who had run amok attacking property after the first meeting. It concluded with a message of incitement in the implied threat that the ‘Day will soon arrive when the distress will be relieved’.⁶ As discussed more fully in chapter two, this hinted at the true purpose of the December meeting, an attempted coup, a purpose of which the speaker, Henry Hunt was ignorant. The November Spa Fields meeting had been called to agree a reform petition to the Prince Regent from the ‘Distressed Inhabitants of the Metropolis’.⁷ The fact that it was widely reprinted indicated the news value of notices and the

⁵ *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 26 November 1816.

⁶ My emphasis.

⁷ *Journal of the House of Commons* 1817, Volume 72, p. 102.

government surveillance demonstrates that this type of handbill could form part of a dossier of intelligence to be used to incriminate individuals and perhaps later be used in evidence.

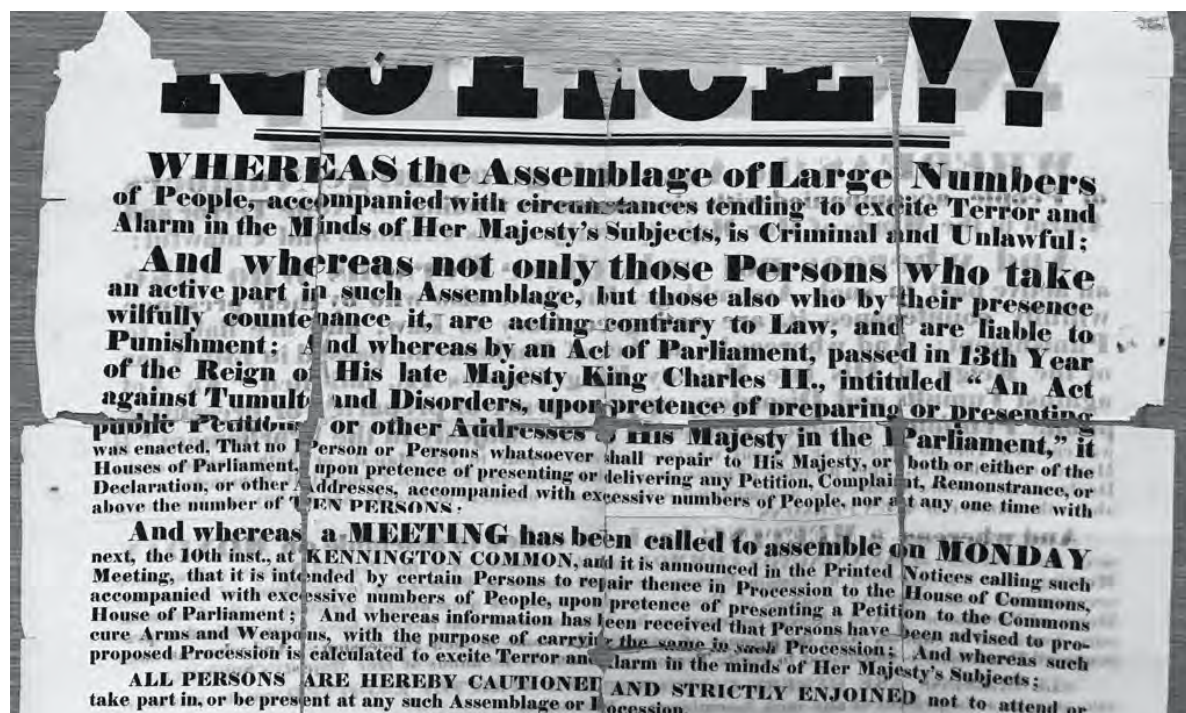


Figure 5:3 Government poster banning Kennington Chartist Meeting 10 April 1848.⁸

Printed announcements were also used to discourage attendance, such as on occasions where the state or local magistrates sought to ban meetings. Printed bills were pasted up in the vicinity of meeting venues and these often surface in archives, such as the notice signed by Richard Mayne of the Metropolitan police which enjoined people ‘not to attend or take part in, or be present at’ the great Chartist meeting on Kennington Common on 10 April 1848 (Figure 5:3).⁹ Without recourse to active combination or unlawful assemblies acts, the state fell back on an obscure 1661 act, ‘against Tumults and Disorders upon p[re]tence of p[re]paring or p[re]sented publick Petic[i]ons or other Addresses to His Majesty or the

⁸ TNA HO45/2410/262.

⁹ See chapter four; TNA HO45/2410/262.

Parliament' which had been on the statute books since the early years of the restoration.¹⁰

Although their primary concern was to prohibit the procession accompanying the petition to parliament, the government seized on largely unfounded rumours of anticipated violent insurgence to legitimise banning the meeting.

General Secretary of the London Charter Association John Arnott sought to counter this in a poster distancing the organisers from any potential violence implied by stating that the press had 'misrepresented and vilified us and our intentions' (Figure 5:4).¹¹ He was referring to a series of pseudonymous letters which appeared in the London newspapers such as one on 30 March signed simply 'Common Sense' which claimed that the 10 April Chartist procession would number 100,000 to 300,000 people and that the 'tumultuous proceedings,' would result in loss of business to shopkeepers along the route.¹² Arnott repudiated this in a reply stating that it was the 'firm determination of the committee that the demonstration shall be a peaceable, orderly, and moral display of the unenfranchised toiling masses.'¹³ The goading continued and on 6 April, *The Times* published a letter from 'A thinking Man of Peace' who claimed to have obtained a copy of the petition in Leather Lane and hoped that 'the government will be able to subdue all attempts at tumult'. As John Saville has said, 'It was common, right through this disturbed year, for British writers and politicians to draw political lessons from the events on the Continent of Europe' (see chapter four).¹⁴ These public exchanges of communication in newspapers and pasted up on city streets sought to create panic and heightened fears of large violent crowds. One wonders if the state and police were responding to gathered intelligence or merely to rumour-mongering.

¹⁰ 1661: 13 Charles 2 s.2, c.5: Tumultuous Petitioning Act.

¹¹ People's History Museum.

¹² *The Times*, 1 April 1848.

¹³ *The Times*, 4 April 1848, <https://www.Chartistancestors.co.uk/john-arnott-1799-1868/> (accessed 17 November 2019).

¹⁴ John Saville, *1848 – The British State and the Chartist movement* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 77.

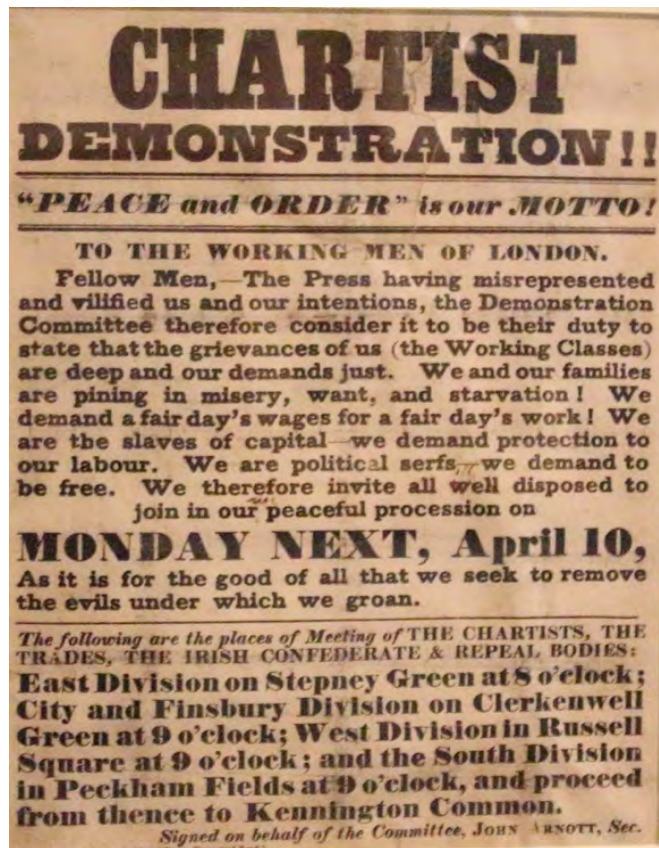


Figure 5:4 Poster announcing Kennington Chartist Meeting 10 April 1848.¹⁵

The notice called for a peaceful protest from the 'working men of London' and, like the Spa Fields notice of 32 years earlier, the wording of the notice went beyond reform, by-passing the six points of the Charter to highlight economic hardship, 'We and our families are pining in misery, want, and starvation! We demand a fair day's wages for a fair day's work!' We are the slaves of capital – we demand protection to our labour. We are political serfs – we demand to be free'.¹⁶ In this way printed notices served to enhance the reputation of reform crowds in advance of events.

¹⁵ People's History Museum.

¹⁶ Poster announcing Kennington Chartist Meeting 10 April 1848. (Figure 5:4).¹⁶

The reported crowd

With all the generated expectation, whether triumphant or fearful, it can be assumed that the wider public were hungry for post-event news. While in the provinces they may have had to wait until the regional weeklies came out, in London there was no shortage of up-to-date news with some dailies running to several editions, so that meetings were frequently reported in the evening editions on the day of the event. A reform meeting at Smithfield on 21 July 1819, for example, was reported in that evening's edition of *The Globe*.¹⁷ As well as committing two-and-a-half columns to the early stages of the Smithfield meeting, the 21 July edition of the radical newspaper dedicated the rest of page two to the Hunslet Moor meetings near Leeds earlier that week, taking reform politics to 25 per cent of that day's edition. The following day's coverage increased to more than half of the paper's four pages with an extended piece about Smithfield and brief reports of meetings in Leicester and Nottingham. The accounts are liberally peppered with extracts from resolutions, petitions and correspondence as well as verbatim reports of the speeches, so anyone not in attendance could have gained as much, if not more information as those present in person, who may have struggled to hear the orators' speeches (see chapter seven).

The Smithfield meeting comprised an unlikely combination of speakers. Joining Hunt on the platform were Thomas Preston and Arthur Thistlewood, both of whom had been tried for high treason for their part in fomenting the riot associated with the aforementioned second Spa Fields meeting. Although the case against them collapsed after the discrediting of government witness and spy John Castle, it is surprising that Hunt agreed to their presence at Smithfield. Also in attendance was the veteran artisan spokesman and freshly radicalised shipwright John Gast who was quoted by *The Globe* as championing the 'intellectual

¹⁷ *The Globe*, 21 July 1819.

possessions of the great mass of the people; he thought they were capable of appreciating the difference between a good and a bad government'.¹⁸ In this way the newspapers were able to convey to their readers not merely the narrative but also a sense of the political discourse present at meetings thereby boosting the reputation of the crowd.

Rival publications were not averse to conducting a public war of words on their pages over issues of ideology, opinion, and sometimes, facts. *The Sun* associated the leaders of a Leeds meeting with the 'nest of traitors in London', while *The Globe* countered that the meeting, 'which the Ministerial Journals arrayed in so many terrors, we are happy to say, was conducted and concluded... peaceably... This must prove a great disappointment to the plot-mongers and sedition fanciers, who would conjure up obstacle to the progress of reform.'¹⁹ *The Globe* disagreed with the previous Friday's *Morning Herald* which, along with several other papers, alleged that, after the conclusion of the Hunslet Moor meeting, delegates and leaders would take the mail coach from Leeds to participate in Wednesday's London meeting, a point refuted strongly by *The Globe* as, 'only a part of a system which seems to have been formed by the alarmists to give these Meetings a more formidable character than belongs to them'.²⁰ The same page also countered reports in the *Times* challenging the accuracy of Monday's *Globe* report about public dialogue between the Lord Mayor of London and the government about the possible invoking of civil powers should the Smithfield meeting have turned riotous.²¹

¹⁸ Magistrates took this opportunity to make a very public arrest of Harrison following a 'seditious speech he had made at a Reform meeting at Sandy Brow, Stockport on 28 June; *The Globe*, 21 July 1819; Iorwerth Prothero, *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth Century London: John Gast and His Times* (Folkestone, 1979), pp.111-115.

¹⁹ *The Sun*, 21 July 1819, *The Globe*, 21 July 1819.

²⁰ *Morning Herald*, 16 July 1819, *The Globe*, 21 July 1819.

²¹ *The Globe*, 19 July 1819, *The Times*, 20 July 1819, *The Globe*, 21 July 1819.

Just like today's press, nineteenth-century newspapers were far from passive or disinterested parties. They often engaged with, and perhaps even sought to influence the outcome of events, but accurately discerning their political allegiance is difficult as political parties themselves were still fluid.²² Melodee Beals has argued, 'For all their worth, however, a scrupulous historian would not dream of taking the editors of newspapers at their given word. Bias, intentional and unintentional, stated, unstated and hidden, exists to some degree in all accounts of the past and present.'²³

Mitchell's UK Newspaper Press Directory of 1847 struggled to assign party allegiance to newspapers. Of the London morning papers, *The Morning Chronicle* was confidently listed as 'Whig, Ministerial', *The Morning Post* as 'Tory, High Church, Protectionist' and the *The Times* as 'Church Of England, Free-Trade', while *The Morning Advertiser* was more loosely described as 'supporting free trade and the abolition of capital punishment.'²⁴ *The Morning Herald*, on the other hand was said to be loyal to the 'Country Party, Protectionist, Protestant' despite the term 'Country Party' being by this point out of general use. The evening papers were even more confusing with *The Express* representing 'Liberal, Free Trade Movement Party, *The Sun*, 'Liberal, Free-Trade, Voluntaryism in Religion' and *The Standard*, 'Country Party, Protectionist, Protestant'. As we have seen, *The Globe*, despite being listed by Mitchell as, 'Whig, Advocate of Free Trade and Free Church' does appear to have been a sustained supporter of political reform.

²² David Cecil, *Melbourne* (Bungay, 1955), pp. 71-4.

²³ M. H. Beals, and Lisa Lavender, *Historical Insights: Focus on Research – Newspapers* (Warwick, 2011), p. 6.

²⁴ C. Mitchell, *The Newspaper Press Directory* (London, 1847), pp. 63-74.

News penetration – following the paper trail

The regional weeklies were predictably more loyal to establishment parties with the exception of the radical press, which while clearly partisan, often carried regular domestic and international news reports and court notes. News reports were often lifted word-for-word from the London dailies, and meetings which occurred out of London were often only reported in provincial papers after the news had first reached London. This process could take several days as the London publications first had to travel, usually by mail coach, before they could be copied and republished in the regional weeklies. In the case of a crowd event outside London this process was extended as the first instance of publication may have been a local newspaper, in some cases a weekly, before making its way to London, and then in turn travelling outwards again to the peripheries.

So, considering Birmingham as an example, the assembly held on Monday 12 July at Newhall Hill which, like Smithfield, was part of the pre-Peterloo reform-push during the summer of 1819 will provide a good example. Unfortunately, no copies of the *Birmingham Chronicle*, *Birmingham Journal* or *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* have survived for that week. The London *Globe*, discussed above, managed a brief paragraph on the Wednesday with a full report including resolutions the following day.²⁵ Given that the meeting concluded in the afternoon, it is unlikely to have made the Birmingham papers until the Tuesday evening or even Wednesday morning, and as the mail coach took 12 -15 hours to get from Birmingham to London, it is not surprising that it was Thursday before most London papers printed full reports.²⁶ Thursday also heralded reports from other London papers including *The Times* which reprinted a largely unbiased factual account from 'a Birmingham evening paper'. *The Morning Post* listed the

²⁵ *The Globe*, 14 July 1819, *The Globe*, 15 July 1819.

²⁶ Leigh Shaw-Taylor and Xuesheng You (CAMPOP), *The Development of the Railway Network in Britain 1825-1911*, (Cambridge 2015), p. 4.

meeting under a general heading of ‘Seditious Meetings’.²⁷ *The Morning Chronicle* restricted itself to a brief, largely complimentary report, following up with a supportive opinion piece two days later in which the paper threw its weight behind the principle of representation for disenfranchised industrial cities, stating that it was with ‘the most unfeigned joy that we hailed the announcement from Lord John Russell... of an intention to bring forward ... a measure for restoring the principle of the Constitution to a state of healthful activity.’²⁸

Moving to the provincial press, *The Times*’s report was reproduced word-for-word in the weekly *Hull Packet* on Tuesday 20th so presumably a copy had arrived by mail coach from London or a copy of the unidentified ‘Birmingham evening paper’ from which the Times had lifted it.²⁹ Later that week *The Derby Mercury* reprinted *Aris*’s lengthy report of 19 July which described the proceedings as ‘farcical’. The report, which was compiled by the newspaper’s reporter present at Newhall Hill, continued by pouring scorn and ridicule on proceedings by describing the organisers, including George Edmonds, as ‘self-styled reformers’, who have ‘threatened the inhabitants with an assemblage of the populace, for the purposes of taking the work of reform into their own hands’.³⁰ Despite Mitchell describing *Aris*’s *Gazette* as politically ‘Neutral’, the piece concludes that they, ‘have the most confident reliance upon the good principles and conduct of the working population of Birmingham...’ not to be ‘...tempted to stray far from that track which prudence... teaches them is the safest course to pursue’.³¹

Continuing the trail, the *Morning Post*’s report was reprinted in the *Leeds Mercury* (17 July) and news reached as far as Edinburgh the same day in the form of a verbatim copy of the

²⁷ It was not unusual for newspapers to mix opinion and news.

²⁸ *The Times*, 15 July 1819, *Morning Post*, 15 July 1819, *Morning Chronicle*, 15 July 1819, *Morning Chronicle*, 17 July 1819.

²⁹ *Hull Packet*, 20 July 1819.

³⁰ *The Derby Mercury*, 22 July 1819.

³¹ Mitchell, *Newspaper Press Directory*, p. 154.

Chronicle's story, and Dublin just seven days after the meeting, in a detailed account of resolutions passed at Birmingham.³² Surprisingly the news took longer to arrive in the English peripheries than it did to reach Scotland and Ireland, when reports were reprinted in Exeter (22 July), and Liverpool (23 July), and Cornwall (24 July).

The perceived crowd

The point is that, while the variously reported attendance of upwards of 50,000 at Newhall Hill may not be credible, there is little doubt that hundreds of thousands of people across the nation would have had the opportunity to hear and believe them within a fortnight via news reports. In the early part of the century, it is argued that 13 million newspapers were in circulation across some 500 titles.³³ If we expand the readership to include the potential passive, oral audience, it may have extended to many more. Historians have calculated that by the late eighteenth century, 'public reading of newspapers had become commonplace. Taverns, barbers shops and coffee houses...were all part of a complex network of outlets for newspapers and informal discussion groups which gathered to read and to exchange opinion on their reading matter'.³⁴ Martin Conboy has suggested that the journalistic style was deliberately rhetorical to enrich the impact when read aloud to group audiences.³⁵ Whether or not the reports were factually correct, or treated to a partial political slant, the fact remains that the perception of the majority of people across Great Britain, whether supportive or opposed to reform, was received through the lens of the newspapers. Even if, as has been shown, the Newhall Hill crowd could not have exceeded 37,000, most people probably believed the 50,000-figure published in most newspapers (see chapter four). The same may have applied to other 'facts' or bias put on the reporting, so the perception of the event was

³² *Caledonian Mercury*, 17 July 1819, *Saunders's News Letter and Daily Advertiser*, 19 July 1819.

³³ Beals, and Lavender, *Historical Insights*, p. 18.

³⁴ Martin Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers – Socio-Historical Perspectives* (London, 2010), p. 51.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 51.

the driver of public opinion rather than the facts as we may now re-assess them. Added together, this means the reputation of reform crowds was considerable and far-reaching and, when we include the potential oral audience, extended right across the social classes.³⁶

This perceived reputation also extended to the highest levels of government as inferred from parliamentary debates which were in turn widely reported in the newspapers. An example was the Lords debates in October 1831 on whether to pass the Reform Bill which had just passed a final division in the Commons.³⁷ The noble Lords' deliberations centred around not only the issues of reform, but also reflected and built on the public mood. There were repeated references, not only to petitions received both for and against reform, but also to the numerous mass platform meetings held to formally endorse and ratify those petitions. On the first day of the debate a Newhall Hill meeting was held by Thomas Attwood's recently established Birmingham Political Union (BPU) to promote one such petition. In the two weeks following the meeting, no less than 50 newspaper reports contained references either to the 'Birmingham Meeting' or 'Newhall Hill' but most of these refer to the meeting indirectly by quoting mentions of the meeting in the Lords debates – an example of just how seriously some of their Lordships viewed the threat posed by even the most orderly reform crowds, with one peer vocalising fears of revolution posed by the Birmingham reformers.³⁸ On 5 October just two days after Attwood's Birmingham meeting, Lord Wharncliffe, a Tory peer from Sheffield, another potential site of further resistance with its own Political Union, addressed the house:

³⁶ Ibid, p. 56.

³⁷ Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London, 1973), pp. 243-5.

³⁸ <https://0-go-gale-com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/ps/paginate.do?tabID=Newspapers&lm=TY%7E%22Article%22%7E%7EDB%7EBNCN+Or+TTDA%7E%7EDA%7E118311004+-+118311018&searchResultsType=SingleTab&qt=OOE%7E%22newhall+hill%22%7EOr%7E%7EOOE%7Ebir+mingham+meeting&searchId=R2&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm¤tPosition=21&userGroupName=warwick&inPS=true&sort=Relevance&prodId=GDCS> (accessed 24 August 2022).

‘Why, if what he had to read was a correct account of the proceedings at the Birmingham Meeting, the revolution was already in progress. That Meeting, which was attended by 150,000 persons, was addressed by a Mr. Haynes, whose language, as reported for the Meeting; for it appeared they were not contented with Newspaper reports; it was published in a Paper having a medal or device of the Political Union as a frontispiece (Figure 5:5); and if that language did not convey intimidations and threats of physical force to coerce their Lordships he did not know what constituted a threat’.³⁹

This is significant on several levels. Firstly, detailed printed reports had reached London in time for the debate including the BPU’s extensive report (Figure 5:5), secondly the 150,000 attendance was believed and repeated, and finally, the language of the orderly meeting was considered by Wharncliffe not merely seditious but actually revolutionary, perhaps reflecting Wharncliffe’s concerns about militancy among the metal and cutlery trades workers in Sheffield.⁴⁰

That day’s Hansard report corroborates the *Chronicle*’s story, albeit in slightly less colourful language, recording Wharncliffe’s assertion that the speeches of the platform orators amounted to threatening physical violence towards the Lords, and on the issue of the crowd size, Wharncliffe repeated the 150,000 figure no less than seven times, with it reiterated by other Lords later in the debate.⁴¹ These secondary conversations about meetings acted to amplify and extend the range of reporting as most of the subsequent reporting quoted

³⁹ *Morning Post*, 6 October 1831.

⁴⁰ Wharncliffe was not entirely opposed to Reform, just the insurgency which might ensue if Industrial Boroughs such as Sheffield did not achieve representation hence his support of the *Grampound Disfranchisement Bill* <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26731#odnb-9780198614128-e-26731-div1-d1860104e375> (accessed 17 November 2019); For industrial unrest in Sheffield, see John Baxter, ‘The origins of the social war in South Yorkshire – A study of capitalist evolution and labour class realisation in one industrial region c.1750-1855’ (PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 1976), pp. 327-39.

⁴¹ Hansard Volume 7: Lords Chamber debate, 5 October 1831.

Wharnccliffe extensively, including 500 miles away in the *Fife Herald*.⁴² Together they underline the reputational power of orderly reform meetings.

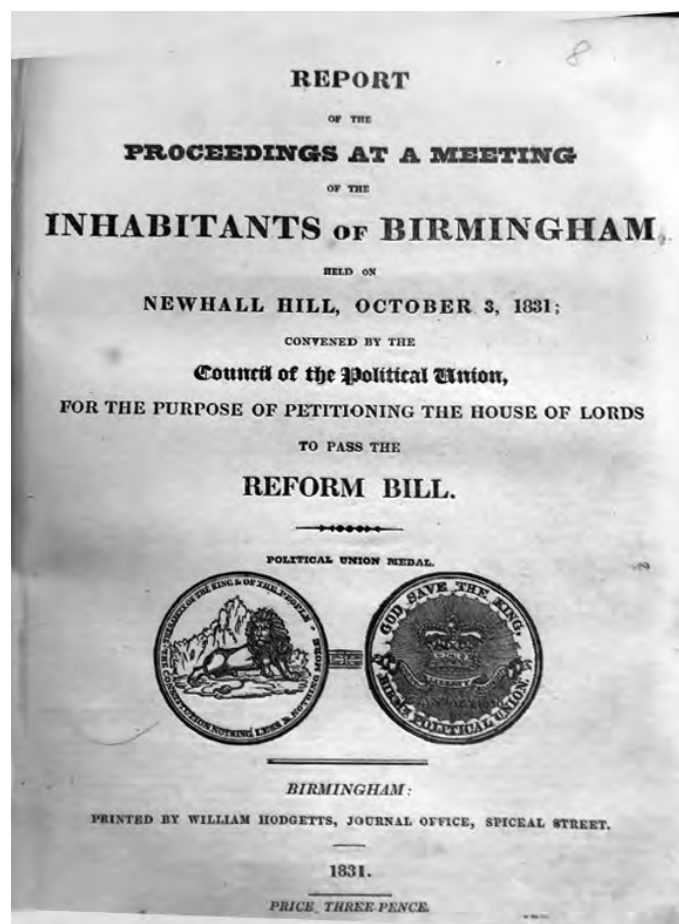


Figure 5:5 BPU report of Newhall Hill Reform Meeting 3 October 1831.⁴³

The radical press

In addition to the regular newspapers were a succession of radical publications ranging from Bronterre O'Brien's short-lived *Southern Star* (26 issues in 1840), to rival Feargus O'Connor's *Northern Star* which boasted 755 issues over fifteen years from 1837-1852.⁴⁴ Via the pages of their various publications, many reform leaders sought to make their mark

⁴² *Fife Herald*, 13 October 1831.

⁴³ BRO L/p/35/3, 64660.

⁴⁴ For more information see... <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/southern-star> (accessed 17 November 2019); <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/northern-star-and-leeds-general-advertiser> (accessed 17 November 2019); James Epstein, *The Lion of Freedom – Feargus O'Connor and the Chartist Movement, 1832-1842* (London, 1982), p. 79.

on public opinion through a mixture of news and opinion. Other publications in this vein include Henry Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian* (230 issues 1831-1835), James Morrison's Trades Union oriented *Pioneer*, and Henry Vincent's *Western Vindicator* (published in 1839 as a four-page unstamped weekly) which was considered so seditious that a copy was filed in home office correspondence concerning disturbances.⁴⁵ Vincent continued writing for the *Vindicator* from his Monmouth prison cell with a stand-in editor managing the logistical side of publishing.⁴⁶ Tom Scriven argues that 'owing to the reading conventions of the working-class (public readings) the *Vindicator*'s circulation of 3,400 copies likely meant that it was read by around 60,000 people.⁴⁷

These titles often carried colourful mottos beneath their mastheads including: 'The day of our redemption draweth nigh' (*The Pioneer*), 'A bold uncompromising advocate of the people' (*Western Vindicator*) and 'Published in defiance of 'Law' to try the power of 'Right' against 'might.'" (*Poor Man's Guardian*). So many leading reformers launched publications that those who did not are conspicuous. Despite publishing treatises, journals and memoirs, neither Thomas Attwood, William Lovett or perhaps more surprisingly, Henry Hunt, published regular newspapers. The most celebrated publisher in this genre of course was William Cobbett, whose long-lived *Political Register* (1740 issues 1802-1836) included, as well as news reports, polemics on subjects ranging from the evils of paper money to military corruption and even a tirade against potatoes which he called the 'lazy root'.⁴⁸ His tireless reporting of, and commenting on, reform meetings provides a wealthy source for the historian of crowds as well as being an indicator of the way radical communication worked. Even

⁴⁵ TNA HO44/32.

⁴⁶ <https://Chartistfiction.hosting.nyu.edu/collections/show/29> (accessed 17 November 2019).

⁴⁷ Thomas Scriven, 'Activism and the Everyday: The Practices of Radical Working-Class Politics, 1830-1842' (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2012), p. 23.

⁴⁸ Michael Durey, 'William Cobbett, Military Corruption and London Radicalism in the Early 1790s', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 131 (1987), p. 348; *Political Register*, 13 October 1832.

more interesting for this chapter is Cobbett's regular publishing of correspondence with other reformers such as Sir Francis Burdett, whose help he enlisted, through the pages of the *Political Register*, to exert influence within Parliament to help relieve 'the distresses of the country, and on the measures to be adopted to prevent confusion and devastation'.⁴⁹ While remaining respectful and polite, Cobbett was goading Burdett by commencing his open letter with: 'What does Sir Francis say? What does Sir Francis mean to do? What is Sir Francis about?' and, after a rambling diatribe ranging from the merits of a standing army to economic hardship among agricultural labourers, he concluded with the plea, 'I beseech you, therefore, Sir, to step forward to assist and to protect us. I am quite certain that the country will be responsive to your voice. ... The people concur with you in opinion; they are impatient to hear your propositions distinctly laid before Parliament; and they are ready to assist you by every lawful means at their command.'⁵⁰

Cobbett's correspondence with Henry Hunt around the time of the Spa Fields meetings is even more illuminating, giving us additional insight into the back-story to Hunt agreeing to speak at the meeting mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. Cobbett dedicated no less than 30 pages to an open letter to Henry Hunt in which he not only set out to distance himself and Hunt from any implications (in the *The Times*, *The Sun*, and *The Courier*) of their being involved in the insurgent Spencean plot at the second meeting, but also that he (Cobbett) had warned Hunt about Preston and Watson's plot several months earlier.⁵¹ Reading between the lines of Cobbett's bombastic 'I told you so' style, one can detect genuine concern for the naivety of the relatively novice reformer, Hunt, 'You, conscious of your honourable motives, and listening only to your courage, have always been deaf to the intreaties of those who

⁴⁹ *Political Register*, 10 August 1816.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 14 December 1816, pp.737-68.

cautioned you against the danger of spies and false-witnesses.’⁵² The importance of these public conversations feeding into the national consciousness not only of political crowds, but also of the plotting and intrigue surrounding them, cannot be understated. Cobbett’s effective audience could have significantly exceeded 100,000 as circulation of *The Register* at this time was 40-50,000, a figure Arthur Aspinall thinks surpassed any other newspaper many times over, and each copy ‘served for scores of auditors.’⁵³ According to radical poet, turned Tory, Robert Southey, the *Register* was read aloud to ‘scores of country folk at a public house’ and Lord Liverpool, Leader of the upper house in 1817, warned, ‘repressive laws would be altogether nugatory so long as papers like Cobbett’s *Register* and *Hone’s Register* were ‘read aloud in every ale-house’ and wherever soldiers met together’.⁵⁴ Cobbett employed a popular touch by addressing the nation about the possible duplicity of government spies, ‘What must the people in the country think of all of this? What a mass of absurdities and contradictions! What madness it all appears to be!’⁵⁵

I suggest the readership of radical publications such as the *Northern Star*, the *Register* and the *Poor Man’s Guardian* should be considered as an extension of the physical reform crowd.

While there was obviously a degree of overlap, I suggest this wider audience swelled the crowd beyond its modest physical presence to a seemingly massive metaphorical crowd (see chapter nine). These newspapers acted as a megaphone which amplified and projected the power of the mass platform and I argue it was this perceived wider crowd which so alarmed the state.

⁵² Ibid, p. 741.

⁵³ A. Aspinall, ‘The Circulation of Newspapers in the Early Nineteenth Century’, *The Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946), p. 39; C. D. Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, Vol. 2; (London, 1868), p. 298.

⁵⁴ Charles Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, Vol 2, p. 298, quoted in Aspinall, ‘Circulation of Newspapers’, p. 38.

⁵⁵ *Register*, p. 748.

The loyalist press

As well as the radical press I must also consider the loyalist press and cheap repository tracts.

It was not unusual for a loyalist backlash to come in the form of what William Hone called ‘anti-Cobbetting’. In his *Reformists Register*, the London political satirist referred to the editor of one such publication, *The Romsey Register*, ‘Brother’ Jackson, as a ‘quill grinder’ and his publication as ‘trash’ which working men would not be enticed to buy, even at the knock down price of three half pence (Cobbett’s and Hone’s *Registers* sold for twopence).⁵⁶

As discussed in chapter four, cheap repository tract writer, Hannah More, despite having been inactive for the past decade, entered the 1816 Spa Fields riots debate, asking:

Shou’d the freedom to vote be extended to all,
Wou’d it make our trade rise, or the price of bread fall?...
What would annual parliaments add to our quiet?
Would idleness, drunkenness, check the wild riot?⁵⁷

In another tract from this series, *Fair Words and Foul Meanings*, she bemoaned the appropriating of reform from religious (good in More’s view) to political reform (bad) and entreated her reader to ‘forget for a while the foul doctrines of Spence and hear my appeal to your sober good sense’. She thought that the introduction of annual parliaments would lead to ‘saturnalia and moral corruption’ which shows just how alarmed Tory supporters were about the implications of reform, especially in the light of the newly emerging mass platform. In the

⁵⁶ *The Reformists' register – and weekly commentary*, 12 April 1817, p. 370.

⁵⁷ See chapter two; Hannah More, *Fair Words and Foul Meanings* (Pub: R Gilbert), *Cheap Repository Tracts, Suited to the Present Times* (London, 1819), pp. 140-3.

tract, *An address to the meeting at Spa Fields*, More asked, ‘Shall Spa Fields lose all that Waterloo gained?’ (see chapter two).⁵⁸

This obsession with radical crowds by the loyalist press is yet another example of the penetration of crowd power. More’s publishers, John Marshall and John Evans, must have taken the threat of crowds seriously to invest so heavily to repudiate them as it was no cheap matter to print these tracts, which were sold at a loss with the deficit made up by subscriptions from More’s supporters.⁵⁹ More appropriated the distribution techniques of the very chapbooks she often sought to counter.⁶⁰ Kevin Gilmartin argues that sales of the Cheap Repository ran to four million tracts by 1808, and ten million by 1824 – figures which greatly exceeded that achieved by Cobbett.⁶¹ So ironically, the loyalist press could have done more than the radical press to raise awareness of reform crowds.

The populist backlash recurred in response to the Chartist ‘scare’ of 1838-9. After the burst of radical activity in the shape of hundreds of reform meetings which followed the adoption of Lovells ‘people’s Charter’, the establishment of the National Convention, and the shock to the elite of the Newcastle and Birmingham Riots, essayist Thomas Carlyle hastily dashed off his reactionary treatise, *Chartism*.⁶² While acknowledging the deprived condition of the working-classes (anticipating the work of Engels), Carlyle’s assessment of the Chartist crowd was essentially a negative one (anticipating Le Bon et al). He was writing without the knowledge of the failed Newport Rising which occurred while he was putting pen to paper.

⁵⁸ Hannah More, *An address to the meeting at Spa Fields*, (Pub: R Gilbert), *Cheap Repository Tracts, Suited to the Present Times* (London, 1819), pp. 155-6.

⁵⁹ David Stoker, ‘John Marshall, John Evans, and the Cheap Repository Tracts, 1793–1800’, *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 107 (2013), pp. 93 and 115; Stoker, ‘Cheap Repository Tracts’, p. 99.

⁶⁰ Susan Pedersen, ‘Hannah More meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks, and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth-century England’, *Journal of British Studies*, 25, 1 (1986), p. 88.

⁶¹ Kevin Gilmartin, ‘Study to Be Quiet: Hannah More and the Invention of Conservative Culture in Britain’, *English Literary History (ELH)*, 70 (2003), p. 511.

⁶² Thomas Carlyle *Chartism* (New York, 1840), p. 1.

As John Plotz has said, Carlyle's notion of the mass platform was 'not an affirmation of, but a threat to the representational ideal of parliamentarianism'.⁶³ Carlyle was not convinced that the pressing issues of the day could be left to the whim of the 'Collective Folly of the Nation'.⁶⁴ His hypothesis robbed crowd members of agency rather than acknowledging it.

The infiltrated crowd?

The historian is rarely privileged to be witness to recorded conversation, but buried in a box in the National Archives are a series of reported conversations recorded around the time of the Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common in April 1848. Whether these conversations actually occurred or were fabricated by inventive government spies trying to justify their remuneration is debatable but, even if they are the work of a creative mind, their existence in the home office 'disturbances' file indicates what the government and their agents might have imagined was being said in grassroots Chartist 'cells'.

The first, entitled 'Dialogue between a town and a country Chartist', commences with a question from Chartist Tom: 'Well do you think that the soldiers would have fired upon us?' His colleague Charles is heard to answer, 'Of course I do' (Figure 5:6). After a prolonged discussion in which they acknowledge that soldiers swear allegiance to the throne and constitution and that therefore if those are deemed to be threatened, they would defend them even if the threat was from 'within', Charles says, 'Depend upon it, there is not a soldier in the British Army who would not shed the last drop of his blood in defence of the crown of our beloved Queen Victoria'. Tom then calls his loyalty to the Chartist cause into question, 'Then you are no Chartist, Don't you know we are now against Thrones and Altars?' Charles

⁶³ John Plotz, *The Crowd – British Literature and public politics* (Berkeley, 2000), p. 150.

⁶⁴ Carlyle *Chartism*, p. 6.

retorts, 'Yes I am a Chartist; but I am no republican. The abolition of the monarchy or the dethronement of the Queen is not one of the six points of the Charter!'

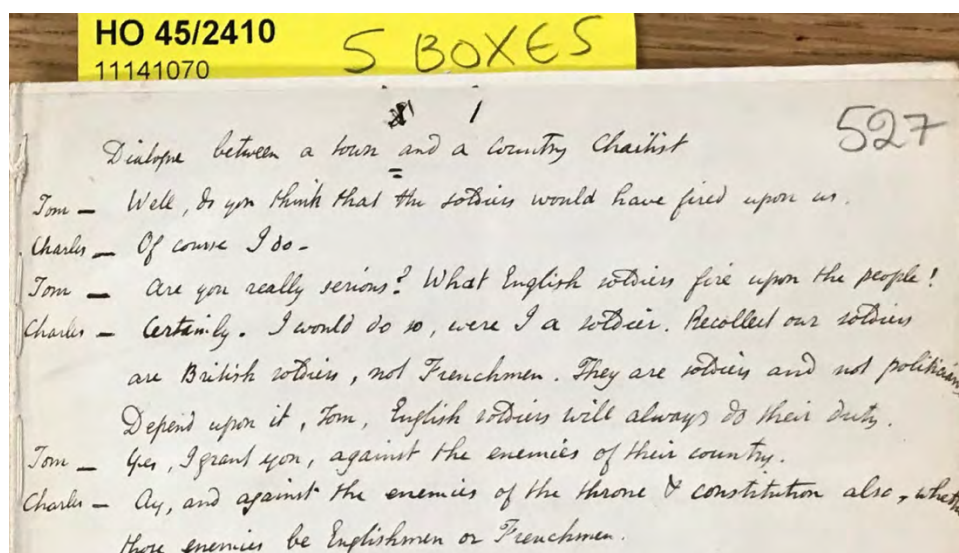


Figure 5.6 Home Office Surveillance: Dialogue between a town and a country Chartist.⁶⁵

The discussion proceeds to imply that the National Convention had adopted policies to 'defy the Parliament, to overthrow the Government and to set aside the will of Kings and Queens' ascribing this move to Irish Convention member Charles McCarthy, described in the document as a 'staunch Chartist and delegate, prepared to destroy anything and everything'. This hints at the likely purpose of the document – to build a dossier of 'evidence' to be used in a possible future case against McCarthy and almost certainly originates in his 'physical force' speech to the Chartist Convention on 4 April.⁶⁶ The same applies to the next accusation against William Cuffay, describing him as the 'Gallant Little Tailor, Cuffay' and attributing to him the charge that he had said he would not be, 'so very ungallant as to kill the young lady upon the throne, but he cared not a jot how soon the crown was knocked from off her head and trampled in the dust'. This was a serious charge which, if subsequently used in

⁶⁵ TNA HO45/2410/527

⁶⁶ John Saville, 1848, p. 103.

evidence against Cuffay at his ‘Orange Tree Conspiracy’ trial later that summer, could have been instrumental in his being transported (see chapter eight).⁶⁷ O’Connor’s 10 April capitulation appears to have provoked Cuffay to switch from a presumption of moral to physical force which arguably led him and others to lower their guard against infiltration, resulting in his notorious August arrests at the Orange Tree in Bloomsbury and the Angel in Southwark, later resulting in Cuffay’s transportation.⁶⁸

The next document purports to be ‘A conversation between two Chartists which was overheard in a public house near Drury Lane theatre on the evening of Monday 10 April’.⁶⁹ Chartists Mr Anderson and Mr Stokes, who had paid £3 to travel 200 miles by train from Sheffield to attend the Kennington Meeting, are heard bemoaning the capitulation of the Chartist leadership in the face of state proclamations against processing with the petition to parliament. ‘Bold little tailor, Cuffay’ is again singled out as the hero of the day. Referring to O’Connor and the 49 National Convention Delegates as ‘vile braggadocio cowards’, Anderson and Stokes are heard naming and shaming those delegates who, only days earlier, had been blustering about cutting, ‘soldiers throats and crushing them like toads... to make England a republic.’ McCarthy is again named as a ringleader along with Hull Chartist, James Grassby and London herbal practitioner, John Skelton.⁷⁰ If these statements were ever proved, they could have provided damning evidence of treason against the named individuals but despite extensive searches, I cannot locate examples of extremist threats in reports of Convention meetings. On the contrary, on 11 April, Skelton reaffirmed the policy of moral,

⁶⁷ TNA TS11/141.

⁶⁸ Dave Steele, ‘Afterword: Peaceably if we May - The Great Chartist Meeting, 1848’, in *Resist – Stories of Uprising* (Manchester, 2019), p. 195.

⁶⁹ TNA HO45/2410/531-532.

⁷⁰ For information on James Grassby see: <https://www.Chartistancestors.co.uk/james-grassby> (accessed 17 November 2019); R G Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854* (London, 1969), p. 299; Alison Denham, ‘Herbal Medicine in Nineteenth Century England: the Career of John Skelton’ (Unpublished MA Dissertation, York 2013).

rather than physical force by proposing a resolution, ‘That this meeting highly approve of the policy of the Convention in preserving the peace and preventing a collision with the constitutional authorities, and thereby preventing an enormous expenditure of human blood, the shedding of which would have answered no good end, but would have made widows sigh and orphans mourn the loss of husband and father.’⁷¹ So, unless the alleged treasonable statements were made off the record, it can be assumed they were falsely attributed to Anderson and Stokes, if they ever existed.

The next document, ‘A dialogue between two Birmingham Chartists’, continues in the same vein, with one of the protagonists, a Mr Atfield, suggesting O’Connor should be ‘shot as being a coward and a traitor to the ‘peoples charter’’. The rest of the conversation with his colleague Mr Good, is spent trying to calculate in their view how many of the 30,000 (their estimate) on Kennington Common that day were genuine Chartists (17,000), how many were pickpockets, thieves and curious ‘idles’ (13,000), how many of the remaining Chartists came from London (12,000) and how many from the regions (5,000).⁷² One wonders what was the point of this rough calculation if it was not intended for later publication in a report.

What is notable about these ‘conversations’ is that they have all been transcribed in the same (legible) handwriting which, unlike most surveillance documents, are a pleasure to read and easy to decode. The next one is between a ‘Cabman and a Gentleman’s Footman’, the cabman bemoaning these ‘troublesome times’ which were bad for his business. The footman retorts that the Chartists are a ‘pack of brawling bullies’ and the cabman thinks they should be ‘whipped and jibbeted (sic) as rebels to Queen and Country’.⁷³ The final document is

⁷¹ Report of John Street meeting 11 April *Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser*, 15 April 1848.

⁷² TNA HO45/2410/533-536.

⁷³ Ibid, 536-537.

plainly a work of fiction as it purports to be an intimate conversation between man and wife, John and Mary, in which the husband concludes he will from this moment ‘forswear Chartism and all its lurking abominations.’⁷⁴ Even the most determined surveillance agent could not have claimed to be party to a private domestic exchange.

This calls into question what these documents collectively represent. Their presence in the ‘Chartist Riots’ dossier in the Home Office papers means that someone thought they were worth filing but that could have been an over-enthusiastic clerk rather than a policy-maker. For the historian though, they represent a measure of the types of conversations thought to be happening among the wider Chartist membership in 1848 and add to the cacophony of colloquy on the subject of reform crowds gripping the country, yet again providing a measure of the seriousness with which the state viewed the powerful reputation of the wider crowd.

Verbal communication

Word of mouth must have played a significant part not only in advance of meetings but also as a form of news distribution. This will have to remain largely speculative, but it is worth briefly looking at a couple of examples where this must have played a role.

On 21 April, 1834 a large demonstration was held in London to protest against the sentences of transportation imposed on the Tolpuddle Martyrs. The assembly point was Copenhagen Fields near present-day Kings Cross and the procession wended its way slowly to terminate at Kennington Common. Though not a reform meeting, this was nonetheless a significant event in radical history and it was reported that 50 to 100,000 people attended, a figure which, if reports of the length of the column are correct, is entirely feasible. When the six

⁷⁴ Ibid, 539-540.

‘Dorchester Labourers’ were arraigned for appropriating an oath-taking procedure as part of the entry ritual to their Union to preserve incomes, the national outcry was unprecedented. Within days of sentencing, petitions were launched which soon totalled 200,000 signatures and utopian socialist, Robert Owen’s *Grand National Consolidated Trade Union* organised the procession to present them to Home Secretary Lord Melbourne to convey to the King. Owen was engaged in last minute meetings on the Saturday, two days before the event, to appraise Melbourne of the peaceful intentions of the rally.⁷⁵ The public and Union members had little notice as there was no listing in the Saturday edition of Owen’s publication *The Crisis* and the Union’s weekly newspaper *The Pioneer* only had a single column inch announcement.⁷⁶ The event was briefly mentioned in the Saturday and Sunday editions of a few London newspapers but I have not found any other posters or notices.⁷⁷ Although Melbourne refused to receive the petitioners, the rally went off peacefully and was reported as well attended so we must assume that word-of-mouth played a significant part in informing people of the location and timing.⁷⁸

A sudden and spontaneous meeting

The same also applied to an emergency BPU meeting during the reform crisis two years earlier. Despite having held a mass meeting at Newhall Hill on Monday 7 May to urge the Lords to pass the Reform Bill, the pace of the crisis had moved so quickly that by Wednesday 9 May, Grey’s Whig government had fallen and the King asked Wellington to form a Tory administration (see chapter eight). This was reported in that day’s London *Evening Standard* but news did not reach Birmingham until early on Thursday 10 May.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Walter Citrine, Stafford Cripps, Arthur Henderson, Prof Harold Laski, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The Story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs: Centenary Commemoration* (TUC Dorchester, 1934), p. 65.

⁷⁶ *The Crisis*, 19 July 1834, in *The Crisis, Volumes 1-4* (London, 1834) p. 117; *The Pioneer*, 19 April 1834.

⁷⁷ *Bell's New Weekly Messenger*, 20 April 1834, *Morning Chronicle*, 19 April 1834, *London Evening Standard*, 21 April 1834.

⁷⁸ *London Evening Standard*, 21 April 1834; Cecil, *Melbourne*, p. 219.

⁷⁹ *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 14 May 1832, *Evening Standard*, 9 May 1832.

Thomas Attwood and colleagues announced a ‘Sudden and spontaneous meeting of the reformers of Birmingham and its vicinity’ to be held the same day.⁸⁰ Attwood’s son, George de Bosco Attwood recalled later:

‘The Council met immediately at their rooms in Gt. Charles St. The space allotted to the audience was crammed, and an immense crowd assembled in the streets demanding an immediate adjournment to Newhall Hill. The demand was complied with, and, as if by magic, the same ground which had been occupied on Monday was again covered, though this time only by residents in the town. Symbols of anger and desperation everywhere met the eye. The flags and trophies which had been borne in triumph on the Monday again made their appearance, but either covered in black drapery or furled and reversed.’⁸¹

The only way of communicating the announcement of the move outdoors would have been word-of-mouth, but, despite the short notice, attendance at the 3pm meeting was reported as 100,000.⁸² Even reducing this to the calculated site capacity (see chapter four) this still leaves 30,000 which is significant as it represents 20 per cent of the city’s population summoned at short notice on a working day.

In both the case of the Dorchester Labourers’ and the Birmingham reformers’ meetings, we have to assume that verbal communication was the primary method of summoning large crowds at short notice as there is no evidence of, and too little time for, the usual printed notices in newspapers and pasted on walls.

⁸⁰ BRO 64662.

⁸¹ C. M. Wakefield, *Life of Thomas Attwood* (London, 1885), pp. 193-4.

⁸² *Evening Mail*, 11 May 1832, Wakefield, *Life of Attwood*, p. 207.

The memorialised crowd



Figure 5:7 1848 Special Constable's Truncheon decorated as souvenir.⁸³

The material culture of commemoration is another form of communication, albeit working over a longer period. It arguably performed a slow-burn function as the objects concerned resided in people's pockets or adorned walls and mantelpieces, raising public consciousness of reform issues. Many of these were household objects issued by reformers or their supporters or enterprising individuals looking to make a profit from public curiosity surrounding reform, but some were created as awards for service to constables or troops for keeping public order. In the latter category were the truncheons issued to the allegedly 70,000 special constables enlisted to keep the peace in the capital on the occasion of the Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common on 10 April 1848 (see Figure 5:7 and chapter four).⁸⁴



Figure 5:8 Jug awarded to Mudford Yeomanry Cavalry for suppressing Blandford Forum Riot, 1831.⁸⁵



Figure 5:9 Jug depicting female victim of Peterloo based on 'Manchester Heroes' George Cruikshank, 1819.⁸⁶

⁸³ <https://gmic.co.uk/topic/49084-rare-sc-truncheon-1848/> (accessed 25 August 2022).

⁸⁴ <https://postalheritage.wordpress.com/tag/great-Chartist-meeting/> (accessed 17 November 2019).

⁸⁵ Riot jug: 'Presented By The Inhabitants of Yeovil and it's vicinity in testimony of their approval of the conduct of the Mudford Troop Of yeomanry Cavalry during the Riots in that Town in 1831. To Mr Wm Marden'. Community Heritage Access Centre (CHAC).

⁸⁶ <http://www.unitedcollections.net/peterloo-commemorative-pottery.html> (accessed 17 November 2019).

These objects also came in the form of drinking vessels such as the ‘Riot Jug’ awarded to members of the Mudford Yeomanry Cavalry for ‘their manly and forbearing character’ in dispersing a 1831 reform crowd in Blandford Forum at which the worst injury was self-inflicted as a yeomanry volunteer shot himself in the leg (Figure 5:8).⁸⁷ The same cannot be said about the Peterloo Jug issued to protest against, rather than to celebrate, yeomanry crowd control (Figure 5:9). This depicts a female victim of the 1819 massacre being sabred by a mounted militia man. The image is loosely based on George Cruikshank’s *Manchester Heroes* but the transfer artist has added poignancy with the added detail of her still defiantly holding her ‘Liberty or Death’ banner.⁸⁸



Figure 5:10 Peterloo Handkerchief by John Slack, Calico Printer, Manchester, 1819.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Leonard Baker, ‘Spaces, Places, Custom and Protest in Rural Somerset and Dorset, c. 1780-1867’, (PhD thesis University of Bristol 2021), p. 154; <https://barricades.ac.uk/items/show/2> (accessed 17 November 2019).

⁸⁸ George Cruikshank, BM 177507001.

⁸⁹ Peterloo Handkerchief by John Slack, Calico Printer, Manchester, 1819 BM 233975001.

The material culture of Peterloo is a matter of research in its own right, with objects of commemoration probably produced in many hundreds and these may have been present in many humble households.⁹⁰ This frenzy of merchandising arguably fed into what Joe Cozens has termed the ‘Martyrology of Peterloo.’⁹¹ John Slack’s Peterloo handkerchief is one of the best known of these objects and, while it is not known how many of these were produced, it can be assumed thousands were carried in pockets or displayed on walls (Figure 5:10).

Cross generational legitimacy



Figure 5:11 Medal marking the inauguration of the Birmingham Political Union on 25 January 1830.⁹²

These objects may have forged a subliminal material continuity linking the post-war reform campaigns of Hunt, through the reform crisis campaigns by political unions, to what ultimately became Chartism in the late 1830s. Matthew Roberts argues that radicals invoked this ‘pantheonism’ to claim a powerful cross-generational endorsement, or legitimacy for their cause.⁹³ He suggests that the walls of Chartist homes ‘might be adorned with portraits of their radical

⁹⁰ Terry Wyke, ‘Remembering the Manchester Massacre’, in Poole (ed.), *Return to Peterloo* (Manchester, 2014), pp. 111-3.

⁹¹ Joseph Cozens, ‘The Making of the Peterloo Martyrs, 1819 to the Present’, in Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn (eds), *Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland - From Peterloo to the Present* (Basingstoke, 2018), p. 39.

⁹² Birmingham Political Union Medal, 1830, Author’s private collection.

⁹³ Matthew Roberts, *Chartism, Commemoration and the Cult of the Radical Hero* (Abingdon, 2020), p. 206.

heroes – past and present.’⁹⁴ This tradition also translated to the issue of medals and tokens, including some of Peterloo, and also struck to celebrate the inauguration of organisations such as that of the Birmingham Political Union on 25 January 1830 (Figure 5:11).

This example was a medal, drilled to attach a ribbon to enable it to be worn on social occasions. Others were issued as tokens of exchange to be used when currency was in short supply, thus entering public circulation and carried in the pockets of both supporters and critics of reform. This is evidenced by the many abrasions and wear on the examples which have survived such as the example in Figure 5:12 of a token minted as a satirical take on the coronation of William IV in the autumn of 1831, which came within weeks of the crisis surrounding the failed second reform Bill. The inscription sarcastically attributes the new King as saying ‘By trampling on liberty I lost the reins’. Hundreds have survived, including alternative versions which feature Lord Grey instead of the King, anticipating the anti-climax and ultimate betrayal of represented by the Reform Bill, a betrayal foreseen by Henry Hunt who steadfastly refused to support it.⁹⁵ We can assume these were struck in the thousands (see table 5.1).



Figure 5:12 Satirical Coronation Token for William IV, ‘By trampling on liberty I lost the reins.’⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 19.

⁹⁵ John Belchem, *‘Orator’ Hunt – Henry Hunt and English working-class radicalism* (Oxford, 1998), p. 223.

⁹⁶ Satirical Coronation Token for William IV, ‘By trampling on liberty I lost the reins.’ Author’s collection.

1788 Centenary of 1688 Glorious Revolution	1832 Reform Bill Electrotpe Uniface Medal
1790 Howard - Debtors in Gaol	1831 William IV Trampling on Liberty
1794 Thomas Spence - state prisoner	1831 Reform Bill Token - Unity - Rights
1794 Hardy Trial	1832 Earl Grey Reform Bill Medal
1794 Horne Tooke Trial	1832 Joshua Scholefield Elected MP
1794 John Howard Prison Reformer	1832 Grey, Brougham & Russell Reform
1795 London Corresponding Society	1832 Grey et al Friends of People Reform
1795 Daniel Eaton - Printer to the People	1832 Reform Bill Medal
1810 Sir Francis Burdett Token	1837 Cumberland Jack
1821 Caroline Queen Consort Death Token	1841 Feargus O'Connor 1841 medal
1830 Earl Grey - Trampling on Liberty	1842 Victoria - No Income Tax, No Peel
1831 National Political Union	1846 Robert Peel Free Trade
1830 Birmingham Political Union	1846 Anti Corn Law League Medal / Token
1830 Sheffield Political Union Medal	1847 Daniel O'Connell Liberator of Ireland

Table 5.1, Sample of many political medals, coins and tokens in circulation⁹⁷

Coins, tokens and memorabilia constituted a material culture of commemoration which contributed to the sub-conscious political awareness of the population. Because of their enduring physical nature, they extended the reputation of reform issues across generations.

The imagined crowd

Further evidence of the penetration of this reputation can also be detected in literature. John Polt has argued that 'literature records features of the era's crowds that no other historical source can supply'.⁹⁸ Dickens, writing during the early years of Chartism, imagined what might happen if crowd actions were left unchecked. His novel *Barnaby Rudge*, though set 50 years earlier during the anti-Catholic Gordon riots, arguably hints at Dickens's anxieties about what he saw as the potential menace posed by Chartist crowds. This fear was endemic. Malcolm Chase has asserted that during the summer of 1839 Britain came close to violent revolution.⁹⁹ He cites evidence of Chartists arming up and down the country and, while in most areas this amounted to no more than bluff and bluster, in one chilling case it escalated to full blown insurgency. On the

⁹⁷ Author's private collection.

⁹⁸ Plotz, *The Crowd*, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 106-9.

night of 3-4 November 1839 around 22 Chartists were killed and 50 injured when troops fired on an armed crowd which had surrounded the Westgate Hotel in Newport, South Wales.¹⁰⁰

Dickens started writing *Gabriel Vardon, The Locksmith of London*, the novel which would eventually emerge as *Barnaby Rudge*, in 1839, so it is feasible that he had Newport in mind when he wrote of the allure of joining a crowd even when the participant was unaware of the politics. When the title character, young simpleton Barnaby, still in the care of his mother, was invited by Gordon's steward Gashford to join a crowd to petition against Catholic Emancipation he said, 'A crowd indeed! Do you hear that mother! Mother, that's a brave crowd he talks of. Come!' 'Not to join it!' cried his mother. 'Yes, yes,' he answered, plucking at her sleeve. 'Why not? Come!' 'You don't know,' she urged, 'what mischief they may do, where they may lead you, what their meaning is. Dear Barnaby, for my sake—'.¹⁰¹ The innocent young man subsequently became a protagonist in the riots despite having no understanding of the issues or arguments. This exchange hints at popular fears of what we would now term the 'radicalisation' of young people. Mark Willis argued that Dickens was broadly supportive of the objectives of Chartism but conflicted about their methods.¹⁰² By 1841 when the novel was serialised in the periodical *Master Humphrey's Clock*, Chartism was in abeyance, with several leaders including O'Connor, Vincent and Lovett in prison, but the issue of reform was still in the vanguard and the perceived threat of the uncontrolled crowd had not receded. This portrayal by Dickens of the fickle nature of crowds must have resonated with his readership which may have exceeded 100,000:¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 116.

¹⁰¹ Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge* (Ware, 1998), p. 376.

¹⁰² Mark Willis, 'Charles Dickens and Fictions of the Crowd', *Dickens Quarterly*, 23 (2006), pp. 93-4.

¹⁰³ E. D. H. Johnson, *Charles Dickens: An Introduction to His Novels* (New York, 1969), accessed via <https://victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/edh/3.html> (accessed 3 August 2021).

‘A mob is usually a creature of very mysterious existence, particularly in a large city. Where it comes from or whither it goes, few men can tell. Assembling and dispersing with equal suddenness, it is as difficult to follow to its various sources as the sea itself; nor does the parallel stop here, for the ocean is not more fickle and uncertain, more terrible when roused, more unreasonable, or more cruel.’¹⁰⁴

Rinsings of Tom Paine in ditch-water

Dickens was not the only writer to capture this mood. In George Eliot’s first novel, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, she imagined the prelude to industrial unrest in the fictitious Midlands town of Shepperton, based presumably on Chilvers Coton, near Nuneaton where she grew up. Writing in 1855 about the early 1830s, Mary Ann Evans (alias George Eliot) described the ‘rustic stupidity furnished by farm labourers’, the miners’ ‘obstreperous animalism’, and the weavers’ ‘acid Radicalism and Dissent’. She continued by maligning the colliers, who ‘passed their time in doing nothing but swilling ale’ which was ‘like rinsings of Tom Paine in ditch-water’.¹⁰⁵ Though Eliot did not attract the mass appeal enjoyed by Dickens, her narrator (expressing views which were not necessarily her own) nevertheless encapsulated attitudes towards the plight of the working-classes and the fertile ground to which the seed of reform movement could have appealed. Later in the novel she described a crowd scene in which a

‘state of excitement which is understood to announce a ‘demonstration’ on the part of the British public [...] and the afflux of remote townsmen increasing, there was soon so large a crowd that it was time for...the knot of beer-drinkers at the Bear and Ragged

¹⁰⁴ Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 406.

¹⁰⁵ George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (Oxford, 1909), pp. 24-5.

Staff, to issue forth and ... make the assemblage distinctly conscious of the common sentiment that had drawn them together.’¹⁰⁶

This connection with inebriation and crowds, endemic in literature, and particularly in the public mind, addresses the fears of the crowd running amok – fuelling a more negative reputation of crowds.

The technique of setting of plots in earlier times of political unrest was regularly used by authors to provide hindsight and distance, but was arguably a smokecreen for commenting on current issues. Charlotte Brontë’s 1848 novel *Shirley* revolved around Luddite disturbances 40 years earlier during the Napoleonic War. The heroine Caroline Henstone and the eponymous Shirley witnessed shots fired during an altercation at the Mill owned by Shirley’s love interest, industrialist Robert Moore, who had angered workers by taking the opportunity of a wartime lull in production to modernise and automate his mill. The power struggles in the novel could be seen to mirror the power struggles of the revolutionary year of 1848 in which Brontë was writing.¹⁰⁷ In Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* we are treated to a snippet of an exchange regarding the importance of staying within the law during a strike in the fictitious northern mill town of Milton:

‘And above all there was to be no going again the law of the land. Folk would go with them if they saw them striving and starving wi’ dumb patience; but if there was once any noise o’ fighting and struggling—even wi’ knobsticks—all was up, as they know by th’ experience of many, and many a time before. They would try

¹⁰⁶ Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, p. 273.

¹⁰⁷ Patrick Collier ‘The Lawless by Force. the Peaceable by Kindness: Strategies of Social Control in Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley* and the *Leeds Mercury*,’ *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 32 (1999), p.294.

and get speech o' th' knobsticks, and coax 'em, and reason wi' 'em, and m'appen warn 'em off; but whatever came, the Committee charged all members o' th' Union to lie down and die, if need were, without striking a blow; and then they reckoned they were sure o' carrying th' public with them.'¹⁰⁸

Through the words of their characters, Brontë and Gaskell were voicing popular fears of the potential for violence lurking in political crowds.

'We've been clemmed long enough' ¹⁰⁹

Though Gaskell was writing in 1853, probably with the recent 'Ten Per Cent and No Surrender' Lancashire textile strikes in mind, she would nonetheless have been aware of the soul-searching which occupied the Chartist movement in the run up to the largely cancelled 'Sacred month' of August 1839.¹¹⁰ In *Mary Barton* (1848), Gaskell was undoubtedly referring to the 1839 Chartist petition when she described preparations for a London trip by the father of the eponymous Mary. John Barton, appointed to represent Manchester in presenting the petition to Parliament was entreated by a neighbour to, 'Tell 'em our minds; how we're thinking we've been clemmed long enough, and we donnot see whatten good they'n been doing, if they can't give us what we're all crying for sin' the day we were born.'¹¹¹ Like Eliot, Gaskell's position was equivocal – at times empathising with struggling factory workers and at other times judging them. She could be interpreted as lobbying mill owners for better wages, hours and working conditions or warning them what would happen if they did not make some concessions. In the case of *Mary Barton*, Gaskell's work was lauded by

¹⁰⁸ Knobsticks: Blacklegs; Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*, (Ware, 1994), p. 197.

¹⁰⁹ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton* (London, 1996), p 87.

¹¹⁰ The sacred month was a proposed form of general strike proposed for August 1839 but eventually abandoned; H. I. Dutton, J. E. King, *Ten Per Cent and No Surrender: The Preston Strike, 1853-1854* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 28; Chase, *Chartism*, pp. 86-7, 97-9.

¹¹¹ Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, p 87.

real life radicals such as Samuel Bamford who said he had known hundreds of John Bartons, while simultaneously provoking the ire of several Manchester Cotton Masters who felt it ‘vilified the masters and glorified the workers’.¹¹²

Whatever the personal views of authors such as Eliot, Dickens or Gaskell, it is undeniable that the penetration of their work across all sections of society would have enhanced the powerful reputation of reform crowds. Through their novels, working-class politics and industrial relations remained a live subject. While often writing about earlier times, they managed to evoke a sense of the continuity of working-class struggle. Whereas the plots, characters and dialogue were fictitious, they held up a mirror to real-life people having conversations that could have been taking place across the country during the period covered by this thesis. Dickens perfectly sums up the apprehension which may have been felt by much of the population surrounding even orderly mass meetings which, despite the protestations of organisers to the contrary, were often considered potential tinder-boxes for riot and insurgency. His fears are revealed in this extract from *Barnaby Rudge*:

‘from the moment of their first outbreak at Westminster, every symptom of order or preconcerted arrangement among them vanished. When they divided into parties and ran to different quarters of the town, it was on the spontaneous suggestion of the moment ... The contagion spread like a dread fever: an infectious madness, as yet not near its height, seized on new victims every hour, and society began to tremble at their ravings.’¹¹³

¹¹² Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell – A Habit of Stories* (London, 1993), p, 214.

¹¹³ Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 414.

Songs of the crowd

As well as the 'Emotional Turn' in crowd history, the politics of sound is also an emerging trope. People often heard about political events through songs and ballads. These were frequently printed in the radical press and presumably sung in alehouses and political clubs. One publication which celebrated this oral tradition, and in particular contributed to the martyrology of Peterloo, was the *Medusa* which printed the uncompromising *Triumph of Liberty* as a robust response just five weeks after the atrocity:

*Soon shall freedom some their rights regain
Soon shall Europe join the hallowed strain
For liberty freedom equal rights and laws
Together we stand to fight for this noble cause
And call for justice for the brave and the true
Who were slain for their rights on the field of Peterloo.*¹¹⁴

As well as in the London press, this was rapidly reproduced by northern printers such as J. Harkness of Church Street, Preston. Five versions of this ballad are listed in the Bodleian Library's collection of Broadside Ballads in addition to many others about Peterloo which must have contributed to general awareness of the massacre.¹¹⁵ Alison Morgan suggested that, 'Poems and songs have a longstanding tradition within English vernacular culture as a swiftly produced and widely disseminated method of information, commemoration and protest.'¹¹⁶ These sometimes invoked sophisticated arguments such as James Willan's appeal to the yeomanry to 'cease to be controlled' and impartially 'read th' old Major's Plan' in his ballad *To the Yeomanry, Sp*cial Con*bl's, andc on Peter's Field*.¹¹⁷ This was a reference to the long standing commitment to reform by Major John Cartwright, whose ex-military credentials were presumably cited as having greater appeal to convert the views of the

¹¹⁴ Anon, Published by Thomas Davison in *The Medusa, or, Penny Politician*, Volume 1 - Feb 1819 to Jan 1820, (London 1820), p. 255, Sound File: *The Road to Peterloo* Sung by Pete Coe, Laura Smythe, Brain Peters <https://soundcloud.com/user-271771928> (accessed 17 November 2019).

¹¹⁵ *Broadside Ballads from the Bodleian Libraries*, <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/search/?query=peterloo> (accessed 17 November 2019).

¹¹⁶ Alison Morgan, *Ballads and Songs of Peterloo* (Manchester, 2018), p. 27.

¹¹⁷ *Manchester Observer*, 28 August 1819 quoted in Morgan, *Ballads and songs*, p. 206.

(misguided?) military volunteer. Morgan identified at least 14 songs specifically composed to honour the dead and injured in the wake of Peterloo, including these lines from *The Plains of Saint Peter* sung to the tune of the Scottish love song *Jessie the Flower of Dunblane*:

*Oh! Britons, can you, in the moments of reason,
Sit languid, and see your poor countryman's fate?
Will your blood never warm to resist the foul treason,
But calmly submit to be slaves of the great?*¹¹⁸

If you want reform, don't hang out to the last

The centrality of music and song in the radical milieu cannot be overstressed. As well as the marching bands and trumpet announcements described in chapter seven, ballads and songs, frequently specifically written for events and often adopting well-known folk tunes, provided a unifying sense of solidarity and occasion to meetings. Broadside ballads were often sold to the crowd by hawkers.¹¹⁹

The composing of political song was not the sole domain of the literate. Michael Sanders has highlighted the output of *Charlestown Poet* John Stafford who, despite being illiterate, wrote several Chartist songs including the uplifting *Radical Juvenile Song* in which Stafford castigated the hypocrisy of the middle-classes. In the line, *No physical force shall stand guard at our door*, the song calls out the middle classes who, while criticising the implicit physical force backing up the Chartist policy of moral force, often supported the hard power of the state in putting down Chartist meetings. Of the middle-classes, he said, 'They are full of delusion and trample the poor,' and 'There is not one out of fifty that will give you their vote'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ *Manchester Observer*, 6 November 1819, quoted in Morgan, *Ballads and Songs*, p. 133.

¹¹⁹ Morgan, *Ballads and Songs*, p. 27.

¹²⁰ A full discussion of the work of John Stafford is available in an online lecture by Mike Sanders as part of the 2021 Manchester City of Literature Project, 'Festival of Libraries.' The songs are performed by broadside balladeer, Jennifer Reid <https://youtu.be/ABeDYz2tyxs?t=1202> (accessed 22 April, 2022); Song lyrics [John-Stafford-poems-2 - Piston, Pen and Press https://www.pistonpenandpress.org/2020/04/John-Stafford-poems-2 - Piston, Pen and Press https://www.pistonpenandpress.org/2020/04/John-Stafford-poems-2 - Piston, Pen and Press](https://www.pistonpenandpress.org/2020/04/John-Stafford-poems-2-Piston-Pen-and-Press) (accessed 22 April, 2022).

Broadside balladeer, Jennifer Reid has revived some of these and performs them live including Stafford's rousing *Rights and Liberty* which encapsulates the urgency of the reform issue:

*Come all you working people of every class,
If you want reform, don't hang out to the last,
For if you do they'll remember you by th' mass,
If ever there comes a revolution,
For there's Cobbett and Sherwin, and Black Dwarf also,
Cochrane and Cartwright, and Hunt we well know,
Those are the best friends that are now going on,
Likewise the speakers in every town,
That enlightens the people, which way must be done,
Rights and liberty we want in our nation.¹²¹*

No physical force shall stand guard at our door

Throughout this research period, song had the power to invite emotional empathy. The historian David Kennerley has suggested that, after the Chartist-inspired general strike of 1842 and 'haunted by the sounds of the crowds that had seized control of the streets and mills', Manchester industrialists and civil leaders sought to reconstruct the region's 'sonic identity' by encouraging workers to attend singing classes.¹²² This attempt at 'sonic social control' rebounded on the middle-class musical philanthropists and culminated in an imaginative appropriation of their new learned choral skills for political ends – far from abandoning their street sound in favour of the 'disciplined, harmonious sound of the singing class,' participants reworked the songs they had learned into Chartist anthems and chants, contributing to the cacophony of communication emphasising the powerful reputation of reform crowds.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²² David Kennerley, 'The Lancashire and Cheshire Working Men's Singing Classes and the Sounds of Chartism' Conference Paper at *Sound and Sense in Britain, 1770-1840*, 12-13 May, 2017, Columbia University. <https://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/soundandsense/abstracts/> (accessed 17 November 2019).

The depicted crowd



Figure 5:13 'Reform Among Females', John Lewis Marks (August 1819).¹²³

On 5 July 1819, the newly formed Blackburn Female Reform Society presented a cap of liberty to the male chairman of a reform meeting along with an address which he read from the platform:

‘We have come forward with the avowed determination, of instilling into the minds of our fathers, husbands, brothers and sympathising females a deep rooted abhorrence of tyranny.

We therefore earnestly entreat you and every man in England, in the most solemn manner, to come forward and join the general union, that by a

¹²³ John Lewis Marks, 'Reform Among Females' (Aug 1819), British Museum 1508954001.

determined and constitutional resistance to our oppressors, the people may obtain annual parliament, universal suffrage and election by ballot, which alone can save us from lingering misery and premature death.’¹²⁴

While this polite and modest address was dismissed by the *Morning Post*, as ‘confined entirely to the wives of the most dissatisfied people of the lower orders’, London cartoonists had a field day, portraying the Blackburn meeting as exclusively female in the most insulting and degrading way.¹²⁵

John Lewis Marks published a satirical print laced with sexual innuendo and phallic imagery (Figure 5:13). The speaker is depicted holding a scroll entitled: ‘Female— Resolutions for pushing things forward’, while saying: ‘(Dear Sisters) I feel great pleasure, in holding this thing ‘um-bob in my hand, as we see our Sweethearts, and Husbands, are such fumblers at the main thing, we must of course take the thing, in our own hands’. A male heckler shouts: ‘Come home and get Dinner ready you Old Baggage I’ll Reform you’. By today’s standards it was insulting and offensive but presumably sold well as it has survived in the British Museum collection.

God bless the women

George Cruikshank, more sympathetic to the radical cause, produced a print of the same event entitled ‘The Belle Alliance’ which depicted a stage invasion of women wearing breeches, bonnets rouge and tricolour cockades which appeared to trivialise and downplay their serious intent (Figure 5:14). Cruikshank was more subtle than Marks. On closer inspection, the speech bubbles reveal a more nuanced interpretation of the significance of the womens’ action. A mother holds her red hatted baby aloft crying ‘We swear to instil into the

¹²⁴ *Morning Herald*, 14 July 1819.

¹²⁵ *Morning Post*, 8 July 1819.

[illegible]

Shouts of encouragement are heard from male crowd members such as, ‘God bless the Women!; Bless the whole of them; and Huzza! Petticoat government for ever,’ and ‘Oh! my eyes this is a glorious sight!—Huzza— and / think it is high time some of the Ladies should think about reform.’¹²⁷ The speaker John Knight smiles as he welcomes the female delegation to the platform. Cruikshank’s source was almost certainly Thomas Wooler’s *Black Dwarf* as he quotes from it,

¹²⁶ George Cruikshank, *The Belle Alliance* (August 1819), British Museum 177501001.

- 176 -

tongue ; in fact, imagination can only do justice to this interesting scene. Could the Cannibal Castlereagh have witnessed this Noble expression of public sentiment, he must have had a heart of brass if it had not struck him Dead to the ground'¹²⁸

However, while such prints provide a rich source for the historian and may have been an opinion influencer for contemporaries who happened to see them, we should be cautious in overestimating their penetration. Priced at around one shilling each, possibly more if hand coloured, ownership would have been limited to a discerning middle-class market with disposable income, as labourers' wages amounted to little more than 14 shillings per week.¹²⁹ In addition, according to Eirwen Nicholson, print runs rarely exceeded 500 and this is borne out by the hand written serial numbers on such prints.¹³⁰ The only opportunity for working Londoners to see them would have been when they were displayed in print shop windows around St. Pauls Yard and Fleet Street such as Mrs Humphrey's print shop in St. James Street, and in provincial towns they were even more exclusive.¹³¹ These prints also serve to underline the received narrative that reform crowds were predominantly male in composition. Although women were tolerated and even welcomed, it was only in small numbers and more often as platform guests alongside male speakers. The unspoken understanding was that they should look pretty and keep quiet - definitely not make speeches or organise their own protests. The reality was that, as time progressed, women did find ways of exerting their opinions and expressing themselves from the platform.¹³²

¹²⁸ *Black Dwarf*, 14 July 1819.

¹²⁹ Peter Lindert and Jeffrey Williamson, 'The English Workers' Living Standards During the Industrial Revolution – A New Look, *Economic History Review* XXXVI, 1 (1983), p. 4.

¹³⁰ Eirwen Nicholson, 'Consumers and Spectators: The Public of the Political Print in eighteenth-century England', *History*, 81. 261 (1996), p. 9.

¹³¹ Cindy McCreery, 'Satiric images of Fox, Pitt and George III: the East India Bill crisis 1783–84', *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*, 9:2, (1993), p. 164.
<https://theprintshopwindow.wordpress.com/2014/07/29/printsellers-on-the-periphery-the-provincial-trade-in-satirical-prints-1783-1815/> (accessed 17 November 2019).

¹³² For more on female participation see chapter eight, pp. 257-62; *The gendered crowd*, p. 262; Ruth Mather, 'These Lancashire women are witches in politics': Female reform societies and the theatre of radicalism, 1819 -

Who's who of radical politics

The same applies to paintings such as that of Benjamin Haydon who referenced his idealised impression of Attwood's three Newhall Hill meetings of May 1832 from a sketch made after the events (Figure 5:15). The painting now hangs in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and is incorrectly titled as the meeting of 7 May. The painting depicts the Rev. Hugh Hutton opening the meeting with a prayer which indicates this was actually the third meeting on 16 May, championing the reinstatement of Lord Grey's Whig administration which signalled the way forward to gaining assent in the Lords.¹³³ Haydon had written to Attwood and Hutton after reading about the Newhall Hill meetings in the newspapers and even had the audacity to ask for Grey's patronage.¹³⁴ This was declined but Haydon was subsequently invited by Grey to paint the Reform Banquet at the Guildhall on 11 July.¹³⁵



Figure 5:15 'The Meeting of the Birmingham Political Union', Oil on Canvas, Benjamin Haydon.
Inset: Chalk on paper study.¹³⁶

1820' in Robert Poole (Ed.), *Return to Peterloo*, Manchester Region History Review ; 23 (2012), pp 50-51 and 63.

¹³³ *Northern Whig*, 21 May 1832.

¹³⁴ Benjamin Robert Haydon, *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter* (New York, 1853), p. 131.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 135.

¹³⁶ Benjamin Haydon, *The Meeting of the Birmingham Political Union*, Birmingham Museums Trust 1937P370; Benjamin Haydon, *Chalk sketch for 'The Meeting of the Birmingham Political Union'*, in P. J. Barlow, 'Benjamin Robert Haydon and the Radicals', *The Burlington Magazine*, 99, 654 (1957), p. 312.

The subscription list amounts to a who's who of radical politics in Birmingham including, not only future MPs Attwood and Scholefield, but also members of their families (Figure 5.16). Other notable inclusions were BPU members Joseph Parkes, George Edmunds, and George Muntz (incorrectly spelled Mantz) and Thomas Salt and his son. Perhaps even more significant was the patronage of the Duke of Bedford, father of future prime minister Lord John Russell.¹³⁷ This shows yet again the separation of the middle-class leaders from working-class reformers, as subscriptions cost one guinea. The list underlines what the 1832 Reform Act really was – a bid for access to power by

the middle-classes. Again, though this image helps historians to add context to the printed reports, it is unlikely that more than a few people ever saw this painting at the time. An engraving of Henry Harris's *The Gathering of the Unions* may have had a wider audience but, as McCreery and Nicholson have suggested, such prints would have been limited to a few hundred copies (see Figure 4:10).¹³⁸

HAYDON'S GRAND PICTURE of the SUBLIME SCENE
 at NEW-HALL HILL, when the Rev. Hugh Hutton returned thanks to God for the safety of the country and the success of Reform, and the mighty multitude uncovered in awe and gratitude. To be painted by subscription of One Guinea each from 500 Reformers—the names of the subscribers to be painted on the back—each subscriber to be entitled to a print in mezzotinto; and the Picture to be presented to the Town of Birmingham by the Trustees.

The genius of the Greeks was inspired by idolatry—that of the Italians by Catholicism—the British people are neither Idolatrous or Superstitious, but essentially political. Here is a subject adapted to their feelings, when all the actors are living, combining portrait with fact, and fact with poetry.

Mr. Haydon has made sketches of Mr. Attwood and all the leading men, which are pronounced decided likenesses, he has all his materials ready, having drawn the ground, standards, &c, and he calls earnestly on all the Reformers in the three Kingdoms to support him at once; as, if he be supported with spirit, it will be the foundation of the only system of subject likely to elicit the genius of the country in high arts, being adapted to its habits. It is the most interesting and the most extraordinary subject in history.

TRUSTEES.
 T. Attwood, Esq.—J. Parkes, Esq.—Joshua Scholefield, Esq.

BANKERS.
 BIRMINGHAM.—Messrs. Attwood and Co.—Messrs. Rottons and Scholefield.
 LONDON.—Messrs. Spooner and Co., Gracechurch-street.—Messrs. Hanbury and Co., Lombard-street.

SUBSCRIBERS.

BIRMINGHAM.					
T. Attwood, Esq.	£1	1	W. G. Lewis	-	£1 1
Jos. Scholefield, Esq.	-	1 1	Robert Perry	-	1 1
J. Parkes, Esq.	-	1 1	Joseph Hansom	-	1 1
Rev. H. Hutton	-	1 1	Samuel Haycock	-	1 1
M. P. Haynes	-	1 1	Thomas Lumby	-	1 1
C. Fiddian, Esq.	-	1 1	James Drake	-	1 1
J. Allen	-	1 1	B. Parsons	-	1 1
T. Tyndall	-	1 1	William Blyth	-	1 1
T. Holland	-	1 1	George Attwood	-	1 1
John Horton	-	1 1	John Traies	-	1 1
T. Eyre Lee, Esq.	-	1 1	Benjamin Adams	-	1 1
Edward Corn, Esq.	-	1 1	John Wilnot	-	1 1
Thomas Clutton Salt	-	1 1	Thomas Creswick, Esq.	-	1 1
W. Jennings	-	1 1	N. Eames	-	1 1
W. Boulbee	-	1 1	F. Hawkins	-	1 1
J. Winfield	-	1 1	J. W. Evans	-	1 1
C. C. Scholefield	-	1 1	C. Roberts	-	1 1
Rev. T. M. M'Donnell	-	1 1	Dyer, Esq.	-	1 1
Rev. Dr. Wade, D.D.	-	1 1	T. Clark	-	1 1
G. F. Mantz	-	1 1	LONDON.		
A. Salt, Junr.	-	1 1	Duke of Bedford	-	1 1
T. Green	-	1 1	Joseph Hume, Esq.	-	1 1
B. Woolfield	-	1 1	T. Hearsey, Esq.	-	1 1
John Betts	-	1 1	Edward Smith	-	1 1
Thomas Johnston	-	1 1	WOLVERHAMPTON.		
George Edmonds	-	1 1	James Bradshaw	-	1 1
William Pare	-	1 1	CORK.		
William Trow	-	1 1	John Osborne, Esq.	-	1 1
John Pierce	-	1 1	BRIDGEWATER.		
John Giles	-	1 1	James Haviland, Esq.	-	1 1
G. De B. Attwood	-	1 1	Mrs. Haviland	-	1 1
George Wright	-	1 1	Miss H. Haviland	-	1 1
R. R. Judd	-	1 1	NEW YORK (AMERICA.)		
Mark Perkins	-	1 1	Thomas, Esq.	-	1 1
Benjamin Hadley	-	1 1			

Figure 5:16 Benjamin Haydon's subscription list for 'The Meeting of the Birmingham Political Union'.

¹³⁷ *The Examiner*, 24 June 1832.

¹³⁸ *The Gathering of the Unions* on Newhall Hill, May 1832, Henry Harris, Pub. G. Hullmandel, TUC Library Collections, London Metropolitan University

THE CHARTIST PROCESSION ACCORDING TO THE SIGNATURES OF THE PETITION.

It is a very remarkable fact connected with the late Chartist Petition, that the parties who appear to have contributed the largest amount of signatures were not forthcoming to back the document on the day of its presentation. Our artist, in his beautiful simplicity following the pictorial practice of the present day, has drawn from his own imagination the exact representation of the passing of the procession; and, in order to place our periodical quite on a par with our illustrated contemporaries, he has introduced almost as many characters that never were engaged in the ceremony, as are usually to be found in the views of passing events that are drawn expressly by "artists on the spot"—which spot, by the way, is always that convenient spot, their own lodgings—for the illuminated journals.

The Chartist Procession, with which we this day present our readers, is in accordance with the view we should be justified in taking of it, if the signatures to the Petition were *bona fide*, and comprised of the actual autographs of the illustrious personages whose names were found appended to the document in conjunction with those of the heroic P'OXOXES, FLATNOSES, and other great nasal organs of Chartist opinion that seemed desirous of being heard in favour of the six pints, or three quarts, as our friend CUFFEY has ingeniously designated his favourite measures. Had the petition been anything but a hoax, HER MAJESTY would have been at an early hour wending her way towards Kennington Common with seventeen DUKES OF WELLINGTON at her side, and SIR R. PEEL would have been conspicuous in the van that was bearing the monster document.

Perhaps, after all, the two Premiers—ex and present—have as much interest as the CUFFEYS the REYNOLDSSES, and the M'GRATHS in one

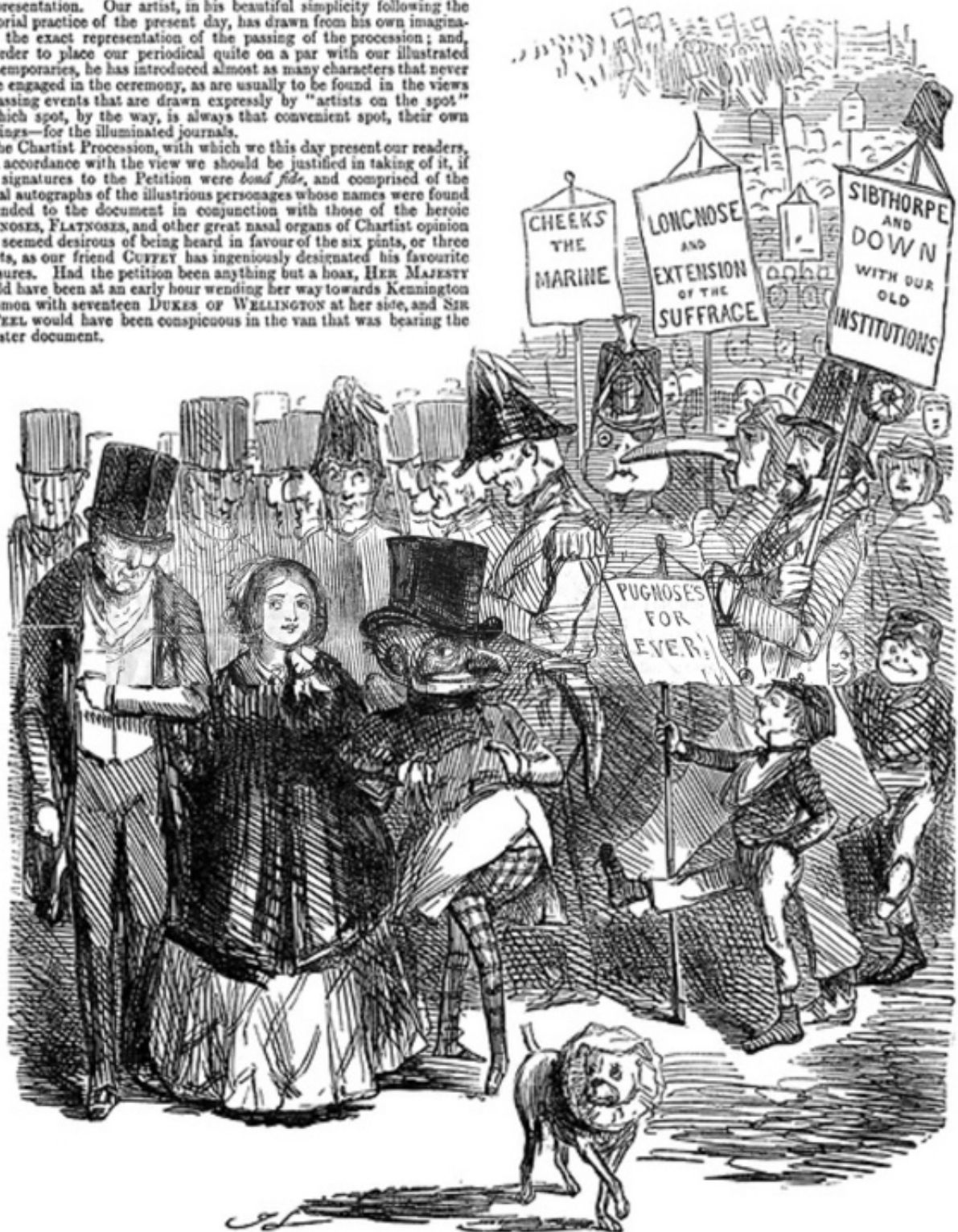


Figure 5:17 Chartist Procession, John Leech, *Punch*, 29 April, 1848¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Chartist Procession, John Leech, *Punch*, 29 April 1848.

Pug noses for ever

By the end of the period, printing technology had advanced to allow the reproduction of images in illustrated magazines such as *Punch*, established by Henry Mayhew and associates in 1841, and *The Illustrated London News (ILN)* by Herbert Ingram the following year.¹⁴⁰ In April 1848, the month of the Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common, both publications were competing to cover Chartist events unfolding in London, although with contrasting styles and politics. While *Punch* had a humorous and sardonic take on events, *ILN* pursued more of a reportage style. *Punch*'s readership of around 30,000 had to wait till 29 April to see illustrator John Leech's cartoon featuring Queen Victoria, arm-in-arm with Wellington and Peel, processing to Parliament in support of the monster petition (Figure 5:17).¹⁴¹ Accompanying them were various 'long noses' and 'pug noses' in an allusion to reports describing the petition's many fraudulent or farcical signatories, thereby discrediting the petition and questioning its legitimacy and magnitude.¹⁴² *Punch* had been scooped by *ILN*, whose 80,000 readers had, a week earlier, been treated to a much more extensive and less derisory report in a special illustrated edition rushed out just five days after the event (see chapter four).¹⁴³

Not even a baker's cart has been pillaged

The Illustrated London News edition of Saturday 15 April allocated two-and-a half pages of close-set text on small folio paper (what we would now call tabloid), as well as two pages of illustrations. The tone of the reporting was surprisingly even-handed, starting with, 'The

¹⁴⁰ M. H. Spielmann, *The History of Punch* (London, 1895), p. 11; Patrick Leary, *A Brief History of the Illustrated London News* (Cengage Learning, 2011), p. 2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁴² Chase, *Chartism*, p. 312.

¹⁴³ 80,000 is a conservative estimate of readership as some enterprising newsmen lent copies of some publications out at a penny an hour; Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader - A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago, 1998), p. 323.; Patrick Leary records *ILN* circulation at 66,000 in 1842 rising to 130,000 in 1852 – Leary, *Brief History*, pp. 4-5; https://www.iln.org.uk/iln_years/historyofiln.htm (accessed 17 November 2019).

Chartists have had their demonstration. London has been startled from its propriety' and continued by praising O'Connor's restraint, 'Mr. Feargus O'Connor has shown that quality which was as good as valour in Sir John Falstaff, and which was still better than valour in him – discretion'.¹⁴⁴ It went on to applaud the matching self-discipline shown by the military, 'The great Duke has lain in ambush, and has not shown his dragoons,' and continues, 'The mountain has laboured, the mouse has been born. The Chartist petition for the six points has been peaceably received. The alarm has subsided. Not even a baker's cart has been pillaged', contrasting this with the devastation and violence of the Gordon Riots of nearly 70 years earlier. The report was not without its criticisms of both Chartists and government but arguably would have provided a counter to the aggressive and mocking tone adopted by much of the Tory press, typified by the *Standard*, whose Tuesday report said, 'As a display of strength, as a menace to a government and to the quiet inhabitants of a great city, the whole affair was a downright and almost ludicrous failure.'¹⁴⁵ Together with coverage in the daily papers, the graphic nature of these high circulation illustrated journals must have been a major source of opinion formation in relation to the Chartist crowd. Their potent combination of illustration and text again helped to cement the reputational power of reform crowds.

The *ILN* illustrations comprised street scenes of armed troops guarding the bank of England and the progression of the crowd towards Kennington as well as a portrait of O'Connor and an artist's impression of the John Street convention meeting which launched the day's proceedings (see chapter four). There was also an engraving of the crowd on the common captioned 'from a daguerreotype' (Figure 5:18).¹⁴⁶ Presenting the scene in the form of a

¹⁴⁴ *The Illustrated London News*, 15 April 1848.

¹⁴⁵ *The Standard*. 11 April 1848.

¹⁴⁶ The reproduction of photographs did not become technically available until 1880, so until then, editors had to be creative in their use of images. From the outset in 1843, Ingram had pioneered the technique of publishing wood engravings in *ILN* using daguerreotypes as a reference, the process being only four years old at the time. By 1848 the publication drew on a pool of prominent engravers including John Orrin Smith and James Linton.

diorama, the *ILN* invited the reader to step back and view the Kennington event from afar as if watching a performance. As such it must have exerted a huge influence in shaping public opinion about the success or failure of the Kennington event, the petition, and ultimately the legacy of Chartism itself.

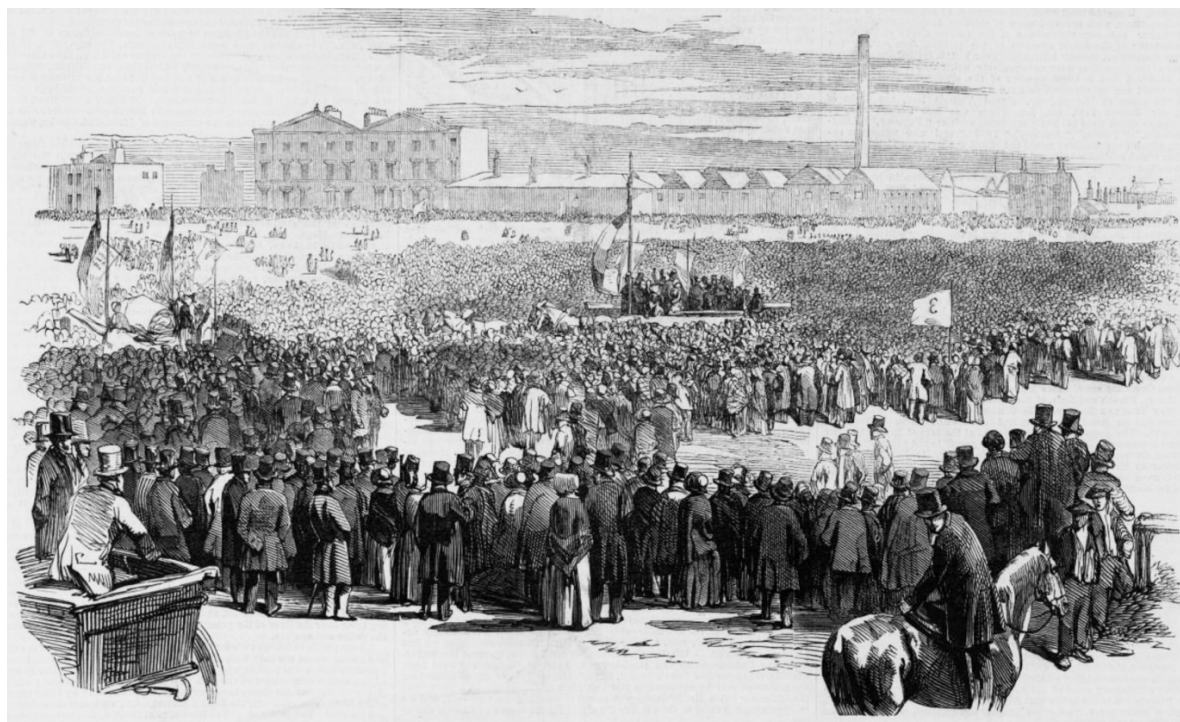


Figure 5:18 The meeting on Kennington Common - From a Daguerreotype¹⁴⁷

All that is solid melts into air

We could interpret the daguerreotypes as a form of reportage by the *ILN*.¹⁴⁸ The reference image used by the engraver has not survived but it can be assumed that this third photograph showed an

The artist of the Kennington image may be Linton but is not credited and the illustration could have been a collaborative effort involving several artists as, for one man to turn around this image in just five days from the tiny 11 x 15 cm daguerreotype image, would have presented quite a challenge (also see Appendix two); *Prints and Photographs: An Illustrated Guide Portfolio 2: Pictorial Journalism* (Library of Congress, 2027). <https://www.loc.gov/rr/print/guide/port-2.html> (accessed 25 August 2021); Mason Jackson, *The Pictorial Press - Its Origin and Progress* (London, 1885), p. 395; Peter Sealy, 'After a Photograph, before Photography (takes command)', *The Journal of Architecture*, 21 (2016), p. 931; Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present Day* (New York, 1949), p. 18; Gabriele Chiesa, Paolo Gosio, *Daguerreotype Hallmarks* (Brescia, 2020), p. 41; Francis Smith, *Radical artisan, William James Linton, 1812-97* (Manchester, 1973), p. 64.

¹⁴⁷ *ILN*, 15 April 1848.

¹⁴⁸ Jo Briggs, *Novelty Fair* (Manchester, 2016), pp. 48-9.

area to the left of the common. There has been discussion among historians about this missing third image – there may be other discarded or test plates. The engraving shows the ‘van’ on which the petition bale can be seen, but the stage which the speakers used is not shown (Figure 5:18). In addition, the spectator in the pony-cart is shown in a different position which indicates a different exposure time – earlier or later, as the common is more sparsely populated than shown in the surviving daguerreotypes. There may have been some creative interpretation of the third daguerreotype so it cannot be assumed to be completely accurate, but the three images can now be put together to get a full panorama of the meeting (Figure 5:19). Crucially this gives us a panorama of the full 400m extent of the eastern side of the common completing the match to the horizon on Christopher and James Greenwood’s 1830 map of London (chapter four).¹⁴⁹



Figure 5:19 Composite transposed image of the two daguerreotypes together with the ILN engraving

Jo Briggs and John Tagg have queried not only the provenance but also the opacity of these images. Tagg has questioned the realist notion of the camera as an instrument of evidence and Briggs, borrowing Engel’s phrase from *The Communist Manifesto*, written that year, asked if

¹⁴⁹ <https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/ids:8982548> (accessed 17 November 2019).

‘All that is solid melts into air?’¹⁵⁰ I would argue that, whether these images represent an example of entrepreneurial reportage, surveillance or collectable material culture in the form of Royal memento, they have provided historians with a rich source from which to interpret the event. Paradoxically they have been cited as evidence to portray the event both as a success and conversely as a failure, or that it was large or small. Jo Briggs sums up the Chartist’s dilemma as post-event the press represented Chartists as simultaneously: ‘threatening and defeated.’¹⁵¹



Figure 5.20 Speaker on platform.

Before concluding, a moment of indulgence. Zooming in it is possible to discern a top-hatted male standing at the front of the stage facing the crowd and possibly even speaking, but who was he? (Figure 5.20). Perhaps we can speculate that the meeting was about to start or, controversially, had already started. We know that reform meetings, like many crowd events today, were slow to start and involved ‘warm up’ speakers making announcements before the committee and orators address the crowd. Perhaps this individual was one such person, or even O’Connor himself. For a fuller discussion of the provenance of the daguerreotypes, see Appendix two.

Conclusion – The fascinating and fascinated crowd

While chapter four argues that hyperbolic reports of crowd size at reform meetings were frequent, amounting to a nineteenth century version of what we would now call ‘fake news’, this chapter has shown how information proliferated through the media channels of the time.

¹⁵⁰ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation - Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 64. .Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto* (Chicago 1949), p.12; Briggs, *Novelty fair*, p. 36.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 40.

Until the advent of mass circulation illustrated magazines such as *Punch* and *ILN*, graphic illustrations of political crowds were the preserve of the socio-political caricaturist but the relative high cost and low circulation of their prints meant that they were rarely seen by the general population and their penetration was relatively low. The printed word, on the other hand, had a huge impact with many daily newspapers having circulations of up to 60,000.¹⁵² Using stamp returns, Arthur Aspinall calculated that the number of newspapers sold in Great Britain rose during this period from 24 million in 1821 to nearly 55 million in 1841.¹⁵³ If we add the passive and oral audience, this means that a large percentage of the population would have had the opportunity to be informed about the unfolding narrative of the reform movement and in particular crowd actions hundreds of miles away from where they lived.¹⁵⁴ Whether this information was accurate or biased, it would have been hard for people to be unaware or not to have formed some form of impression or opinion of political events. In this way the reputational power of reform crowds was constructed. The negative as well as positive reputation of reform crowds was disseminated and amplified through these channels.

While the flow of information was often tightly controlled, hierarchical and vertical, and it was not always clear whose power interests were represented, communication within the crowd was often horizontal, live and dynamic. This was extended through popular literature and song and visually communicated on the streets in the form of printed notices and via the symbolism of banners, flags and ritual, sometimes borrowed from the radical tradition of the past. It has been shown how participants received notification in advance of events and how the state sought to counter these with their own admonitions as well as considering

¹⁵² Oliver Woods and James Bishop, *The Story of The Times* (London, 1983), p. 55.

¹⁵³ A. Aspinall, 'The Circulation of Newspapers in the Early Nineteenth Century', *The Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946); Beals, and Lavender, *Historical Insights*, p. 18.

¹⁵⁴ Martin Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers – Socio-Historical Perspectives* (London, 2010), p. 51.

correspondence between radicals and how the government sought to intercept these communications and respond to them. Observation and surveillance often informed policy and, on the ground, snap decisions occasionally led to culpable tragedies such as Peterloo and Newport. Reports of spies, infiltrators, informants and agent provocateurs abounded, leading to mistrust between radicals and occasional bizarre allegations such as the unlikely suggestion that William Cobbett himself may have been an informant around the time of the Cato Street conspiracy of 1820.¹⁵⁵

The dividing line between perception and reality was fragile and diaphanous but considered together, this communication amounted to a cacophony of interest and captivity. The radical crowd was informed, reported, rumoured, exaggerated, lionised scorned and commemorated. It was often misreported, misunderstood, mistrusted and misinterpreted, but it was never ignored. Whether they cheered them or feared them, people were fascinated by crowds. Their reputation preceded them.

¹⁵⁵ John Gardner, 'William Cobbett the Spy', *Romanticism*, 18 (2012), p. 30.

6. Emotions, affects and atmospheres – The expectation of crowds

'Oh! stay that lifted blade that brandish'd darts a crimson [sic] gleam.

Oh! Spare my father.'

Dialogue in Peterloo engraving¹

The pain voiced by a child on the field of Peterloo in this quoted speech bubble in John Lewis Marks's engraving *The Massacre of Peterloo!* appeals to the emotions of any viewer. Though imagined, it demonstrates the power of emotion in any history of political crowds. A tranche of historians subscribe to a new 'emotional turn' asking if 'emotional regimes' affect political actions.² This emerging discipline already has its own professional association and journal.³ This chapter will apply some of these theories to evaluate the emotional element of first-person attendance at reform meetings. On the grander scale I will also posit that the reputational power of reform crowds was intrinsically intertwined with emotions and that, at a decision-making level, not only the reform leadership but also state actors were swayed more by emotional instinct than by rational thinking.

Emotions are subjective and selective and as such are problematic. The emotional responses of crowd participants and observers, as well as those attempting to control or suppress events such as state officials, are inaccessible and contentious but most observers can perhaps agree that emotions ran high before, during and after mass platform events. This is challenging as evidence for emotions is elusive. What survives is in the form of reportage, correspondence, memoir, and literature – all problematic as primary sources, so to achieve this without speculation is difficult. First, we need to be clear about the status of the individual

¹ Details from print: *The Massacre of Peterloo!* By John Lewis Marks, Printmaker, (Bishopsgate, 1819).

² Deborah Gould, 'Concluding Thoughts – Emotions in Protest Movements in Europe since 1917', *Contemporary European History*, 23 (2014), p. 643.

³ *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*, 4 Vols (2017-2020).

experiencing emotions – whether they were protagonists, observers such as government officials or politicians or independent witnesses. Secondly, we need to ensure that as historians we maintain objectivity. As Jan Plamper cautioned, historians are emotional beings too and the goal of remaining dispassionate commentators may be unattainable.⁴ For example, E. P. Thompson's over quoted adage, 'the enormous condescension of posterity' is an emotionally loaded phrase. Thompson's self-appointed mission was to 'rescue' poor artisan's and labourer's reputations from (presumably other) patronising historians (not Thompson).⁵ However, rescue as well as condescension are emotional terms and historians have traditionally held back from emotions, usually taking a more objective approach.⁶ So the challenge is where to look for evidence while bringing academic rigour to bear on this elusive aspect of human nature.

Crisis in subjectivity

The first problem encountered by the historian attempting to engage with this new sub-discipline is one of definition, and this is especially relevant to the crowd historian. Early attempts by psychologists to locate the neurological seat of emotions placed them in the motor and sensory areas of the brain cortex, but qualified them as pertaining to pain and pleasure and presenting an outward manifestation in terms of facial expression or body language.⁷ The OED defines emotions as: 'an agitation of mind; an excited mental state' and gives as examples: 'any strong mental or instinctive feeling, as pleasure, grief, hope, fear, etc., deriving especially from one's circumstances, mood, or relationship with others.'⁸ It clarifies emotions as 'strong feelings, passion; instincts as distinguished from reasoning or

⁴ Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions - An Introduction* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 290-1.

⁵ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), p. 12.

⁶ Italics are used in this chapter identify emotions.

⁷ William James 'What is an Emotion?', *Mind*, 9 (1884), pp. 188-205.

⁸ <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/61249?rskey=AFt1f3&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> (accessed 3 April 2020).

knowledge.’ Early usage can be traced to the late sixteenth/early seventeenth century often associated with political unrest. Passion was commonly used interchangeably with emotion such as in this report referring to Henry Hunt’s Smithfield meeting of July 1819, ‘there seems no need to apprehend that their passions will break out into overt acts of violence’.⁹ William Reddy argued that emotions, whether pleasant or unpleasant, are a form of unconscious cognition and further cautions that just as the language of the past requires sensitive interpretation, so too do the emotions of the past: ‘...the language of past emotions is strange to us today, and we must struggle to understand it’.¹⁰ This modern crisis in subjectivity forces us to return to the eternally vexed question central to the relation between words and things – whether phenomena can exist before the words to describe them.¹¹

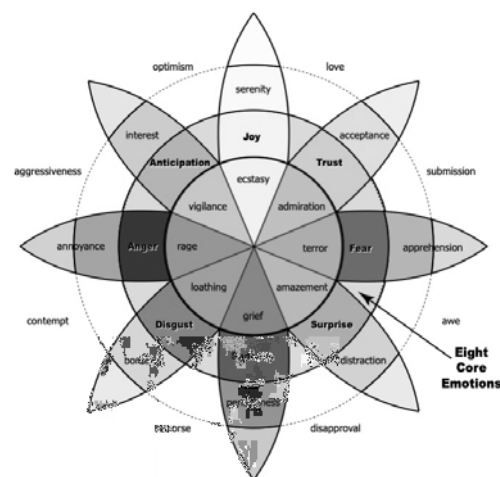


Figure 6:1 Robert Plutchik’s wheel of emotions.¹²

Establishing a consensus on what constitutes an emotion is contentious. A web search of reputable sources returns variously seven, ten or twelve basic emotions.¹³ The most

⁹ *Drakard's Stamford News*, 30 July 1819.

¹⁰ William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling - A framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 17-18, 175 and 315.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 143.

¹² Robert Plutchik, ‘The Nature of Emotions - Human emotions have Deep Evolutionary Roots, a Fact that may explain their Complexity and Provide Tools for Clinical Practice’, *American Scientist*, 89 (2001), p. 349.

¹³ Alan S. Cowen et. al., ‘The Primacy of Categories in the Recognition of 12 Emotions in Speech Prosody across Two Cultures’, *Nature Human Behaviour*, 3 (2019), p. 369; Carroll E. Izard, ‘Basic Emotions, Natural Kinds, Emotion Schemas, and a New Paradigm’, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2 (2007), pp. 263-4.

frequently occurring in these lists are the ‘anchor’ emotions of anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, and trust, other emotions being mostly variants of these eight key categories, but the emotive language used in nineteenth-century sources reveals a more nuanced tranche of subconscious affects than the variations in Figure 6:1 which are too restrictive and simplistic.¹⁴ It is necessary to move beyond the strict definition of emotions to include wider tropes such as feelings, sentiments, reactions, passions, excitements and sensations. How do we drill down into the minds of crowd actors of two hundred years ago to probe their feelings? Reddy’s concept of extralinguistic ‘thought material’ may help with this.¹⁵ Considering the mood of a crowd may be more helpful than trying to pin-down individual emotions. Deborah Gould went beyond emotions to encompass wider ‘affects’ and Paul Ekman extended the model to encompass ‘moods and emotional states.’¹⁶ However, it is not only involuntary emotions which affect the human experience of being in a crowd. Conscious sentiments and calculated thoughts such as ambition, goal-seeking, opportunism, retribution and retaliation could be added as well as a raft of additional responses, experiences, and foibles such as fallibility, vulnerability and remorse which make up the human condition.

I propose to encompass a wider range of affects and emotions, but in doing this I have to be mindful of semantics. Just as the word ‘emotions’ carried a different meaning in the nineteenth century, so too did many of the affects this chapter is seeking to interpret and categorise. It is necessary to look to emotive language in the written and printed sources as well as the depiction of expressive gestures and facial expressions in the graphic sources. Via a series of vignettes, I will

¹⁴ Robert Plutchik highlighted them as ‘anchor’ emotions in his graphic ‘wheel of emotions; Robert Plutchik, Henry Kellerman, *Theories of Emotion* (New York 1980), p. 353.

¹⁵ Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, p. 87,

¹⁶ Deborah B. Gould *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago, 2009), pp. 22 and 49; Paul Ekman, ‘Basic Emotions’ in Tim Dalgleish and Mick Power (eds) *Handbook of Cognition and Emotion* (Chichester, 2000), p. 48.

identify instances of emotive language to include not only conscious emotions such as anger, fear and surprise, but also more subtle unconscious feelings, affects, or goal-seeking aspirations such as cowardice, guilt or despair.

But how do we read emotions from the scant evidence available in contemporary sources? Is it even possible to read them impartially? Are images evidence for example? Can we take at face value the narratives of emotion in newspaper reports and memoir? How do political emotions differ from personal ones and finally, with particular relevance to the crowds considered in this thesis, can collective emotions be said to exist?

Archival evidence of emotions in crowds is elusive, although it may appear in sources such as court reports, parliamentary exchanges, and speeches. In this chapter, newspaper reports will be used – second-hand accounts in the form of reported conversation and even the reporters' own accounts often contain nuggets of subjective expression. While objectivity is usually the aim of historians, subjectivity itself is the source of interest to the historian of emotions. Satirical prints are also a valuable source of emotional evidence which again, while often partial in their portrayal of facial expression and reported speech, nevertheless may hint at the views or bias of the artist. While many prints may have employed stock iconography, their importance in the field of the history of emotions is not so much the emotions portrayed, rather their context and, more importantly, what they tell us about the publisher's relationship with his perceived target readership. So I suggest that partiality itself is a resource whichever side it is coming from – supportive of reform or against it. Finally, I turn to literature as a source, citing George Eliot's

novel *Felix Holt* and Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke*, both of which were arguably inspired by both authors' first-hand experience of crowd violence.¹⁷

By considering these vignettes, this chapter will concentrate on involuntary and conscious emotions to probe to the human experience of the mass platform. To examine a wider range of emotions, some examples depart from the theme of static orderly reform crowds, extending to acts of spontaneous violent insurgence including election riots. I'm seeking to discover how it felt to be an individual in a crowd.

Henry Hunt at Spa Fields 1817

The 'atmosphere' of the crowd



Figure 6:2 Third Spa Fields Meeting 10 February 1817, George Cruikshank.¹⁸

George Cruikshank's 1817 hand-coloured etching (Figure 6:2) of Henry Hunt's third and final meeting at Spa Fields captures the way, as Illan rua Wall has suggested, the 'affect conditions of

¹⁷ John Walter-Cross, *George Eliot's Life, as Related in Her Letters and Journals* (Cambridge, 1885), p. 28; Frances Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley – His Letters and Memories of his Life* (New York 1899), pp. 271-2.

¹⁸ *British Museum Print No. 1868,0808.8361*

the crowd' conditions the 'atmosphere'.¹⁹ The Orator leans from an upstairs window of the Merlin's Cave Inn waving a tricolour hat while trumpeting his latest anti-sinecurist and reform petition. Cruikshank was a master of satire and, as well as the sense of mayhem invoked by the caricatures of participants, the print emphasises emotion context in the form of speech bubbles which are used to lampoon the crowd and Hunt himself. The self-aggrandising character of Hunt is not lost on Cruikshank who described 'Blythe Harry Hunt's' speech in highly charged emotional terms as 'tedious, bombastic, and blunt' (see chapter two).

We could also interpret emotions as a driver as well as an indicator of events. The multi-layered role of emotions and affects in Hunt's post-war mass platform mirrored the fervour of the French Revolution of 25 years earlier, albeit in a more orderly and reasoned form. William Reddy has identified an 'emotional revolution of the past', concurrent with the rise the Jacobin politics on both sides of the English Channel which he terms the 'cult of sensibility' – a loosely organised set of impulses that played a role in cultural currents as diverse as Methodism, antislavery agitation, the French Revolution and the birth of Romanticism'.²⁰ As the mass platform matured I suggest this 'emotional revolution' progressively augmented the reputation of reform crowds.

In the inebriated hubbub of Cruikshank's Spa Fields crowd we see the powerful emotion of political defiance counterposed with opportunism in the form of street hawkers seen plying their wares in the shape of a ragged apple-woman and a chimney sweep begging for free fruit.²¹ In the same vein, pickpockets are active in the foreground – a character left-of-centre is seen extracting

¹⁹ Illan rua Wall, *Law And Disorder – Sovereignty, Protest, Atmosphere* (New York, 2021), p. 124.

²⁰ Reddy, *Navigation of feeling*, p. 143.

²¹ Karen Larsdatter has likened the marginal positioning of chimney sweeps in satirical prints to their marginal position in society; also see Fig. 3.1 - Gillray's 1795 print, <http://www.larsdatter.com/18c/chimney-sweeps.html> (accessed 8 October 2020).

the wallet of the man next to him while he distracts him.²² If the perception of sound can be considered an affect, we can almost hear the deafening shouts inscribed above the crowd of ‘Huzza, Huzza, Hunt forever.’ The Orator has to compete with these accolades to express a mock sympathy for the previous week’s attack on the Prince Regent as well as his appeal for redress for the boy, Do-good (Sic) recently imprisoned for interfering with anti-Hunt election bills in Bristol (Dugood is perched on the lamp-bracket close to Hunt).²³ The rivalry in the form of a ragged preacher yelling: ‘Reform the Church!’ is perhaps Cruikshank’s way of shoehorning enigmatic radical naval commander Thomas Cochrane into the print despite possibly being imprisoned at the time (the precise dates are unclear).²⁴

The print demonstrates emotion on many levels. Cruikshank’s portrayal of the passion of the crowd echoes Paul Ekman’s notion of ‘moods and emotional states’ – from Hunt displaying his rationality and plausibility through body language and the crowd near the tavern encouraging him (and conversely heckling), the crying barefoot toddler presumably dragged along by her father, to the belligerence of John Bull (bottom left) masquerading as a constable, a symbol of state control or surveillance.²⁵ We do not know if Cruikshank attended the meeting to make preliminary sketches or whether he referenced second-hand reports, possibly from Hone. He may have reproduced caricatures from earlier engravings or even stock iconography but, whether the emotions and affects depicted in this parody were accurate misses the point – what matters is that Hone and Cruikshank sought to invoke portrayals of emotions in their own idiosyncratic way to influence public opinion about this political crowd by embellishing emotive facial expression

²² Pickpockets were thought to be regular frequenters of political crowds (see p 98 and 153; Peter Andersson, ‘Bustling, crowding, and pushing - pickpockets and the nineteenth century street crowd’, *Urban History*, 41 (2014), p. 294

²³ Henry Hunt, *Memoirs written in His Majesty’s Jail at Ilchester* (London, 1822), pp. 436-9; House of Lords Hansard, Volume 35 Column 170, 3 February 1817).

²⁴ As suggested by Robert Poole in conversation; Andrew Lambert, ODNB entry: Cochrane, Thomas, tenth earl of Dundonald (1775–1860) (2004).

²⁵ Ekman, ‘Basic Emotions’, p. 48.

and gesture. In this way the reputational power of the mass platform was manipulated by the portrayal of emotions which as Reddy said, ‘were deemed to be as important as reason in the foundation of states and the conduct of politics.’²⁶

Yeomanry attack Peterloo reform meeting 1819 **‘The ruthless state is slain by the maiden Hope’**²⁷

Peterloo highlights the contrast between the emotional restraint of the Thompsonian self-legitimising crowd and the state endorsed emotional violence of the yeomanry.²⁸ An appropriate source for investigating this at a crowd level are memoirs. These are problematic as, though ostensibly private, journals and diaries were often written with a view to later publication. The prison diaries of Henry Hunt and Feargus O’Connor fall into this category, as does Samuel Bamford’s *Passages in the Life of a Radical* which is a partial and self-serving memoir of his life written with a view to enhancing his legacy. The views of the 55-year-old author were by no means the views of the 30-year-old firebrand radical weaver who led the Middleton procession to Peterloo. By 1848 he had moved so far from his earlier radicalism that he signed up as a special constable to keep order at the Kennington Common Chartist meeting of 10 April 1848.²⁹ Bamford’s involvement in Peterloo featured in Mike Leigh’s 2018 *Peterloo* film, which probed the subtle inconsistencies and flaws of human nature which may have permeated reform crowds. However, while Leigh’s film addressed the nuanced nature of the contentious gathering through the gritty pragmatism of Manchester campaigners and the idealism and arrogance of Hunt, reading eyewitness accounts is much more shocking.³⁰

²⁶ Reddy, *Navigation of feeling*, p. 143; For more on Spa Fields, see chapter two.

²⁷ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Masque of Anarchy* (London, 1832).

²⁸ E. P. Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century’, *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), p. 78.

²⁹ Tim Hilton, Preface in Samuel Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (London, 1967), p. 5.

³⁰ Leigh consulted an expert panel of historians including Jacqueline Riding, John Belchem, Katrina Navickas, Nathan Bend and Robert Poole.

Samuel Bamford's wife Jemima was a bystander when the yeomanry attacked on 16 August 1819, having withdrawn from the crowd to avoid the crush, heat and dust. Her description employed emotive language: 'The meeting was all in tumult; there were dreadful cries; the soldiers kept riding amongst the people and striking with their swords. I became faint, and turning from the door, I went unobserved down some steps into a cellared passage; and hoping to escape from the horrid noise, and to be concealed, I crept into a vault, and sat down, faint and terrified on some firewood.'³¹ At this point she did not know if Sam had been injured or killed so it is not surprising that she found the exclamations coming from outside her refuge, 'so distressing, that I put my fingers in my ears to prevent my hearing more; and on removing them, I understood that a young man had just been brought past, wounded'. There is no ambiguity about the strength of feelings in this extract – predictably Jemima's language is drawn from the core emotions of fear, disgust, sadness and surprise.

The subtext of the piece also speaks to the gender politics of the reform movement. Jemima's subordinate position to her husband in the political melange of radical Manchester was apparent in her relegation in his memoirs to a secondary role. While, as Catherine Hall said, 'There was a great deal that was new in the political, economic and cultural relations within which traditional notions of sexual difference were being articulated,' the new political movements of the nineteenth century often resulted in the increasing marginalisation of women.³² Samuel was not disapproving of the new trend for asserting the 'right, and the propriety also, of females who were present at such assemblages [reform meetings], voting by show of hand'.³³ However, he could not help being dismissive of the value of their vote

³¹ Bamford, *Passages*, pp. 162-3.

³² Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 164.

³³ Bamford, *Passages*, p. 123.

noting that ‘they raised their hands amid much laughter when the resolution was put’. In this way, while ostensibly welcomed, women were often undermined.³⁴

Oh! Spare my father

The profusion of illustrations, engravings and printed ephemera which were published after Peterloo to satisfy the public’s emotional appetite, whether out of genuine concern for the plight of the injured or morbid curiosity, portrayed human emotion in all its forms. In his 1819 print, ‘The Massacre of Peterloo!: Or a specimen of English liberty’ presumably hurriedly rushed out that autumn, the graphic satirist John Lewis Marks used speech bubbles to stress the emotions so obvious in the faces of his characters (Figure 6:3). Here we see the shocking moment when the alcohol-fuelled yeomanry were let loose ostensibly to officially control and close the meeting but arguably given license to settle local quarrels with impunity. The image can’t fail to have influenced the notoriety of the event by juxtaposing the ruthless angry passions of the yeomanry with the shock and fear of the crowd.



Figure 6:3 Details from: *The Massacre of Peterloo! or a specimen of English liberty.*
Published 1819 by John Lewis Marks, Printmaker, Bishopsgate.³⁵

³⁴ For a fuller discussion of the gendered crowd, see chapter eight, p. 259; Hall, *White, Male and Middle-class*, p. 134.

³⁵ Library of Congress, <https://lccn.loc.gov/2009632742> (accessed 17 November 2019).

In the left detail a top-hatted gentleman pleads to a mounted Hussar, ‘Oh! stay that lifted blade that brandish’d darts a crimson [sic] gleam. Oh! Spare my father.’ Sadly, it was too late as, before he could complete his words, the older man to his left was run through with a sword. On the right a special constable cried, ‘What a glorious day. This is our Waterloo,’ while angrily wielding his mace or truncheon to beat a young father while his children looked on and his wife was trodden underfoot. Marks was London-based so is unlikely to have witnessed the event, presumably taking his reference from newspaper reports or other prints. This does not invalidate it as a source of emotional history as it helps gauge the public mood. Entrepreneurial print makers like Marks were fulfilling a demand and playing to the perception and affective mood of the public. The graphic format is so much better at conveying the emotional physicality of violence which must have invoked a compassionate response. Monique Scheer described these very public expressions as ‘emotional practices’: ‘Other people’s bodies are implicated in practice because viewing them induces feelings. These effects are stored in the habitus, which provides socially anchored responses to others’.³⁶

Emotional practices were also a tool of the writer. It was presumably after seeing reports and prints from England that the exiled poet Percy Shelly wrote the emotive elegy *The Masque of Anarchy*. In a central quatrain, *Anarchy* – here representing the ruthless state, is slain by the maiden Hope:

And the prostrate multitude
Looked - and ankle-deep in blood,
Hope, that maiden most serene,
Was walking with a quiet mien:

³⁶ Monique Scheer, ‘Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and is that what makes them have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion’, *History and Theory*, 51 (2012), p. 211.

And *Anarchy*, the ghastly birth,
Lay dead earth upon the earth;
The Horse of Death tameless as wind
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind
To dust the murderers thronged behind.³⁷

Submitted for publication in 'The Examiner', but withheld by friend and editor James Leigh Hunt, the poem was not published until 1832, ten years after Shelley's death. In the preface, Leigh Hunt defended his prevarication out of respect for the poet, pleading that 'that the public at large had not become sufficiently discerning to do justice to the sincerity and kind-heartedness of the spirit that walked in this flaming robe of verse'.³⁸ The editor claimed that his potential readers would have been too emotionally gullible at the time, going so far as to suggest that they would have believed 'a hundred-fold in his (Shelley's) anger, to what they would in his good intention; and this made me fear that the common enemy would take advantage of the mistake to do them both a disservice'.

The public's 'emotional gullibility' (in Leigh Hunt's view) points towards the highly charged emotive nature surrounding any type of comment on the Manchester Massacre. Leigh Hunt's reluctance to publish may have been more indicative of his fear of government litigation in the form of a libel trial such as that successfully defended by satirical London publisher William Hone two years earlier in 1817. Perhaps we can attribute the affect of self-preservation to Leigh Hunt as he would have been weighing up the pros and cons of publication around the time the government was deliberating on the *Blasphemous and Seditious Libels and Newspaper* act.³⁹ Emotions and pragmatism often went hand-in-hand.

³⁷ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Masque of Anarchy* (London, 1832).

³⁸ James Leigh Hunt, *Preface to The Masque of Anarchy* (London, 1832), pp. v-vi.

³⁹ Thompson, *Making*, p. 768; William Hone, *The Three Trials of William Hone, for Publishing Three Parodies* (London, 1817).

The emotional legacy of Peterloo was far-reaching and continues today. Even the quantitative debate surrounding attendance is informed by people's different readings of reputational power, arguably emotional rather than rational. It is difficult to discount emotions when discussing this event as historians and it was impossible at the time – evident by the memorialisation and martyrology of Peterloo which ensured the legacy of the event in the radical tradition. This underlines my key point – that crowd power was and is a highly charged emotive issue.

Cold Bath Fields, London, 1833 Police attack on reform meeting



In May in the following year the unfortunate Calthorpe Street affair took place. This had its origin in a public meeting called by the Union of the Working Classes on the Calthorpe Estate, Cold Bath Fields, for taking preparatory steps respecting the calling of a National Convention. The proceedings, however, had no sooner commenced than the police made a **furious onslaught** upon the assembled multitude, knocking down, indiscriminately, men, women, and children, great numbers of them being very dangerously wounded. In the affray a policeman, of the name of Robert Cully, lost his life, he being stabbed by a person whom he had struck with his truncheon. On the inquest held on him, the following verdict was returned by the jury: 'We find a verdict of Justifiable Homicide on these grounds – That no Riot Act was read, nor any proclamation advising the people to disperse; that the Government did not take proper precautions to prevent the meeting from assembling; and that the conduct of the police was **ferocious, brutal, and unprovoked** by the people; and we, moreover, express our **anxious** hope that the Government will in future take better precautions to prevent the recurrence of such **disgraceful** transactions in the metropolis.' A person of the name of George Fursey was subsequently tried at the Old Bailey, charged with the stabbing of a policeman of the name of Brook at this meeting, with intent of doing him some grievous bodily harm. He was also acquitted by the jury, **amid great applause** from the people assembled.

Figure 6:4 Calthorpe Street Riot, Cold Bath Fields 13 May 1833.⁴⁰

Depictions of emotional responses to violence can be found in the form of body language, gesture, attire, posture and facial expression in graphic illustrations in the form of satirical prints and engravings. Comparing the emotion in John Prater's illustration of an 1833 riot with William Lovett's recollection of the same event demonstrates how much better the graphic illustration gets to the heart of the feeling of the protagonists (Figure 6:4). Like Peterloo, the meeting was billed as orderly and the violence did not originate from the crowd but from the

⁴⁰ An engraving of the Coldbath Field Riots by J. Prater (Mary Evans Picture Library 10121783); William Lovett, *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett* (London, 1876), p. 67.

police. Lovett was writing 40 or more years after the Cold Bath Fields event in which policeman Robert Culley was killed and two other PCs stabbed, so his recollections may have become clouded with time. Lovett did not attend the meeting, despite having been enticed by a police informer, so his information was probably gleaned from newspapers or word of mouth reports.⁴¹ The emotion in his report is categoric – the police onslaught was furious, ferocious, brutal and unprovoked.⁴² He does not attribute guilt to the attackers though he may have felt a later verdict of justifiable homicide exonerated them.

The Prater illustration captures the moment of the assault on Culley and gives a strong impression of the hubbub and confusion attendant on such occasions. As well as beholding the facial expressions of anger and surprise of the crowd, the viewer is invited to enter the frame as an eyewitness to share in the feelings of the event at the instant when the police broke up the otherwise peaceful meeting with a show of violence having omitted to first read the riot act. Hats are tossed in the air and truncheons are raised during the attack which lasted only a matter of minutes.⁴³ William Reddy has suggested that ‘every act of crowd violence was probably, an emanation of the human heart.’⁴⁴ Whether the killers of Culley felt remorse is another matter.

Like Bamford’s memoir, Lovett’s was written decades later so could not have had any effect at the time but newspapers vied to interpret reputational power in opposing emotional appeals, with the *Poor Man’s Guardian* describing the event as an, ‘indiscriminate attack upon unoffending casual spectators at the meeting’, who were ‘dragged down by the brutal bludgeon-men, and mercilessly beaten even as they lay bleeding on the pavement’, while the *London Packet and New Lloyd’s Evening Post* employed emotional tropes to put the opposing point of view, ‘they who put the

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 83-4.

⁴² In this chapter, underlining is used to highlight emotions and affects.

⁴³ *Morning Chronicle*, 14 May 1833.

⁴⁴ Reddy, *Navigation of feeling*, p. 181.

Political Unions in motion two years ago are, before God and man, *greater criminals* than the murderers of poor Culley – as worthy of the cord as the assassin or assassins of Cold Bath Fields.⁴⁵

Birmingham Bullring 1839

Police assault on Chartist meeting



Figure 6:5 Police attack Chartists at Birmingham Bull Ring, 4 July 1839, Richard Doyle (unpublished sketch).⁴⁶

In 2015, historian Ian Haywood, discovered in the US Library of Congress, an unpublished graphic illustration of an early Chartist rally being broken up by the police (Figure 6:5).⁴⁷ On 14 June 1839, just a year after the London Working Men's Association drew up the document which formed the basis of the six point People's Charter, the first Chartist petition

⁴⁵ *Poor Man's Guardian*, 18 May 1833; *London Packet and New Lloyd's Evening Post*, 17 May 1833

⁴⁶ <https://romanticillustrationnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/doyle20bull20ring20newspage.jpg?w=388&h=234> (accessed 3 April 2020).

⁴⁷ Ian Haywood said: 'If Doyle's image had been published it would have been the first visual representation of a Chartist demonstration and a significant blow for Prime Minister Lord Melbourne's attempts to break up the movement. Doyle's was a precocious talent, and this could have made his name several years before he joined the staff of *Punch* and worked for Dickens. From a historical perspective, this image is immensely valuable as it fills a gap in our knowledge of how ordinary people perceived the 'threat' of Chartism and also the vindictiveness of the state. It also confirms the dramatic significance of this event, the first major Chartist riot, which hardened resolve on both sides'; Romantic Illustration Network, <http://bit.ly/doyle-bullring> (accessed 17 November 2019); <https://Chartist-ancestors.blogspot.com/2015/12/early-Chartist-cartoon-found-in-us.html> (accessed 3 April 2020).

was literally laughed out of the house after sympathetic MPs Thomas Attwood and John Fielden had, ‘with a theatrical flourish, rolled the giant cylinder into the commons chamber.’⁴⁸ The events of 4 July 1839 were the culmination of six weeks of meetings at the city’s Bullring addressed by leading Chartists, including journeyman jeweller John Fussell of the Birmingham Political Union (BPU).⁴⁹ In an example of what Andrea Scarantino has termed emotional ‘speech acts’, Fussell’s oratory became increasingly frustrated and angry as time went on, leading to his arrest in May on a charge of incitement to violence.⁵⁰

Malcolm Chase thought that violence where it occurred was ‘small scale and incidental rather than calculated and strategic’ but secondary rioting and state violence was another matter.⁵¹ As with the previous two vignettes of Peterloo and Cold Bath Fields, the reformers’ intention was for an orderly meeting and the violence, when it came, was provoked by the police and not the reformers. The passions of Fussell’s ‘speech acts’ may indeed have enhanced the reputational power of the Birmingham crowd. The city’s police had lost control of nightly secondary rioting in the city centre. In response, Home Secretary Lord John Russell dispatched 60 Metropolitan police officers by train from London, possibly one of the first uses of the rail network for this type of operation, the Met. having been in existence for just ten years.⁵²

The teenage Richard Doyle presumably happened on the event and made a quick sketch showing supporters being strong-armed by the Police. Doyle, who later went on to design the cover for

⁴⁸ <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/Chartists/case-study/the-right-to-vote/the-Chartists-and-birmingham/1839-petition/> (accessed 3 April 2020); Chase, *Chartism*, pp. 7 and 79.

⁴⁹ Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester, 2007), p. 76

⁵⁰ Trygve Tholfsen, ‘The Chartist Crisis in Birmingham,’ *International Review of Social History*, 3 (1958), p. 469; Andrea Scarantino, ‘Emotional Expressions as Speech Act Analogs’ *Philosophy of Science*, 85 (2018), pp. 1038–53.

⁵¹ Chase, *Chartism*, pp. 78, 95–6.

⁵² *The Times*, 6 July 1839; David Cecil, *Melbourne* (Bungay, 1955), p. 344.

Punch magazine and also illustrated Dickens's novels, captured police brutality against unarmed protestors, accentuating the power of the forces of law and order by depicting them as giants wading into to the demonstration, kicking, scattering and grabbing Chartists by the handful, depicting emotions of fear, anger, despair and retaliation as well as the *cynicism* of the aloof Magistrates observing from a safe distance. The emotional as well as physical vulnerability of crowd members is accentuated by portraying them as Lilliputian compared to the gigantic Police. The innocent naivety of the young Richard Doyle's sketch comes close to unbiased reportage and cannot help but invite compassion and empathy from the viewer. In this case, the sketch was never intended for publication and there was no appropriation of earlier work or stock iconography. This very physical depiction of crowd affects presents an almost Foucauldian *mêlée* in an ongoing struggle between bodily impulses, feelings, behaviours and affects.⁵³ It is also an example of what we might call social power dialectics – as Häberlen and Spinney have suggested, 'even the seemingly most intimate and natural spheres, that of emotions and bodily feelings, are shaped by social power relations'.⁵⁴

Chartist meeting Kennington Common, 1848 **'The sentiments that actuate us all' ⁵⁵**

Figure 6:6 is a digitally enhanced re-coloured version of William Kilburn's daguerreotype of the Great Chartist gathering on Kennington Common on 10 April 1848 (see chapters three, four and Appendix two). The overwhelming impression in this image is of the widely accepted core emotion of anticipation. At first sight little appears to be happening but that is an often-neglected feature of crowd events: for every minute of activity, there were arguably ten minutes of inactivity. This stasis could at times be classed as boredom, but boredom may

⁵³ Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982), pp. 783-4.

⁵⁴ Joachim Häberlen and Russell Spinney, 'Introduction to Emotions in Protest Movements in Europe since 1917', *Contemporary European History*, 23 (2014), pp. 494-5.

⁵⁵ Feargus O'Connor, Capitulation speech, 10 April, 1848 as reported in the *Northern Star*, 15 April 1848.

be too strong a word and arguably not an emotional term, rather a state of mind, and one which is impossible to measure from an image. As Jan Plamper cautioned, as historians we have to be alert to our own emotional fallibility and not read any more into images than the evidence shows.⁵⁶ It may be better to interpret this as part of the wider state of ‘expectation’ present throughout the 32 years of reform meetings and one which progressively enhanced the emotional reputation of the power of the crowd.



Figure 6:6 Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common, 10 April 1848.⁵⁷

With few exceptions everyone is looking away from the camera, which indicates the meeting may have commenced. On zooming in, we find that not everyone is engrossed in proceedings (right pull-out). In the foreground, one top-hatted gentleman is looking away from the crowd and towards the camera. Perhaps he can see Kilburn operating his equipment across the road –

⁵⁶ Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions - An Introduction* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 290-1.

⁵⁷ Based on daguerreotype by William Kilburn. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II Digitally enhanced and coloured by Dave Steele.

it would have been a very unusual sight. Next to him indifference can be detected in the form of an old, hooded lady captured purposefully walking past and seemingly oblivious of the historic events happening right next to her on the common. Whether indifference is an emotion is a moot point, but it is certainly a state of mind and the apathy or unawareness of a large proportion of the population to political events is often overlooked.

In the left pull-out a pair of young boys can be seen and a group of four teenagers to their right who may have been opportunists. As described above, pickpockets were portrayed in satirical prints of Spa Fields and Copenhagen Fields – these could be an early photographic representation of a similar faction. Referring to this daguerreotype, Fabrice Bensimon said: ‘Here and there we can see children whose presence is controversial. The newspapers mentioned the “crowds of thieves and vagabonds” present and were indignant that “the boys represent a large part of the staff present” – arguably an emotional trope intended to provoke feelings of distrust in the reader.’⁵⁸ The Chartists were wary of pickpockets as, from the point of view of the authorities, the street urchins provided a way of the discrediting their cause. The presence of children was arguably symbolic of the familial nature of their commitment.’⁵⁹ Bensimon identified the presence of children as ambiguous – simultaneously suspected of being there to steal while at the same time giving creditability to the inclusivity of the Chartists cause. The self-proclaimed Tory weekly *John Bull* (For God, The Sovereign and the People) declared that half of the crowd was ‘composed of mendicants, pickpockets, and other worthy denizens of the ‘back slums’ of London.’⁶⁰ But whichever is the truth, the attendance of young boys in the crowd invites an emotional response from the viewer – perhaps sympathy, suspicion, or solidarity – and, regardless of what drew them to the event,

⁵⁸ *The Examiner*, 15 April 1848, *Weekly Chronicle*, 15 April 1848.

⁵⁹ Fabrice Bensimon, ‘Londres, 10 Avril 1848 – Les Chartistes Dans L’oeil Du Daguerreotypiste, *Parlement[s]*, *Revue d’histoire politique*, 33 (2021), p. 92.

⁶⁰ *John Bull*, vol. XXVIII, no. 1,427, 15 April 1848.

the emotional experience these youngsters felt as crowd participants may have inspired them to become politically active adults.

Looking at the image as a whole, emotion cannot be detected from facial expression (as mentioned above) as the crowd is almost exclusively looking away from the camera. This in itself implies anticipation if the meeting has not started, or concentration if it has. Arguably the emotional state of the expectant crowd on that damp Kennington morning best fits Rua Wall's 'atmospheric' model.⁶¹ Just like satirical prints, the daguerreotype is able to convey the emotion of expectation present in the crowd.

An exchange between a crowd member and some of the speakers provides direct evidence of crowd agency and points to what we might call the cordiality of crowds. Barbara Rosenwein has coined the term 'emotional communities' which she defines as 'groups which share the same or similar norms and values about emotional behaviour and even about themselves' (see chapter eight, p. 260).⁶² This sociability was not always positive. Sociologists studying modern social movements have identified shame, pride, indignation and joy as those emotions most relevant to political crowds, suggesting that these are sub-conscious sensed affects related to 'moral intuitions, felt obligations and rights'.⁶³ Arguably these feelings could have been as powerful to participants of reform meetings as they are in today's social movements.

It is tempting to project our own sense of this being a monumental occasion, but we have to maintain impartiality. It was certainly the case that newspapers had built-up the event in the

⁶¹ Rua Wall, *Law And Disorder*, p. 124.

⁶² *Leeds Mercury*, 15 April 1848; Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Anger, The Conflicted History of an Emotion* (Haven, 2020), p. 3.

⁶³ Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, 'The Return of the Repressed: the Fall and Rise of Emotions in Social Movement Theory', *Mobilisation: An International Journal*, 5 (2000), p. 79.

minds of the public, so people were expecting insurgence on the part of the crowd and a military response from the government. The previous Saturday's *Sheffield Independent* reported that the anticipated demonstration on the tenth 'has become a subject of real alarm, and of no little preparation. The papers give but a faint idea of the state of the public mind as to the apprehended consequences of this display: and direct appeals had been made to the Government to suppress it by force if necessary.'⁶⁴ The Police Intelligence Column of the *Morning Post* of Wednesday 5 April warned that 'Those thieves who may calculate on getting up a sham riot on Monday next, at the 'demonstration' on Kennington Common, will find themselves in the wrong box.'⁶⁵ This was arguably an appeal not to the thieves but to the emotional side of the wider readership to discredit the politics of the event. Illan Wall has coined the term 'psycho-affective public order' to describe the way the state coerces people's emotions by publicising the threat of force in advance of political crowd events.⁶⁶ The military preparation detailed in chapter four leaves no doubt of the perceived threat to public safety (and their own political security) which the government predicted for the forthcoming meeting.⁶⁷ Certainly not the capitulation reported in many papers after the event.⁶⁸

Evidence of emotions and affects can also be found in the spoken word. Political speeches were often recorded verbatim in the newspapers and, while it might be unusual to cite an audio file in doctoral research, I was fortunate to attend a re-enactment of Feargus O'Connor's capitulation speech, in which he implored the Kennington crowd to disperse. He used all his oratorical skills as well as political acuity to deliver what must have been the hardest speech of his career. While suffering early signs of mental and physical illness O'Connor sought to reposition his apparent surrender as a victory. O'Connor's conflicted

⁶⁴ *Sheffield Independent* 8 April 1848.

⁶⁵ *Morning Post*, 5 April 1848.

⁶⁶ Rua Wall, *Law And Disorder*, p. 92.

⁶⁷ TNA WO/30/111.

⁶⁸ *The Times*, 11 April 1848.

emotions in the rendition by actor Tom Collins of the Kennington Chartist project are palpable.⁶⁹ Here is the transcript of the speech:

‘In yonder car(riage) (*pointing to the vehicle which carried the Petition*) go with you the voices of 5,700,000 of your countrymen. They, I, and the whole world, look to you for good and orderly and citizen-like conduct on this occasion. (*Cheers*) In my place in the house, I told the Ministers that they need not be afraid of my counsels, and that they need apprehend no folly on your part. Well, they have not, though they threatened us, interfered with this meeting on Kennington Common. (*Cheers*). That is one great and glorious step achieved, and, as I have always told you, Chartism, when struck down by tyranny, *rises* only to march onwards with renewed strength.’⁷⁰

As with Hone and Cruikshank’s graphic portrayal of emotions at Spa Fields 30 years earlier, so too the language of the *Northern Star* projected the emotional tone of O’Connor’s speech to those not present on the common. The highlighted emotions conveyed to readers not just O’Connor’s emotions but also the passionate response the *Star*’s editors wanted to provoke in its readership. O’Connor’s impassioned multi-dimensional speech acts are examples of what Lauwers, Marionneau and Hoegaerts have described as ‘political oratory beyond eloquence.’⁷¹ The report continued with an explanation to the crowd of his apparent climb-down and his reasoning that to

⁶⁹ Sound File: http://www.kenningtonChartistproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/AUDIO_TomCollins_Feargus_OConnor.mp3 (accessed 3 April 2020); Actor Tom Collins died in April 2019 – Obituary here: <http://www.kenningtonChartistproject.org/2019/05/08/tom-collins/> (accessed 3 April 2020).

⁷⁰ *Northern Star*, 15 April 1848; my italics.

⁷¹ Karen Lauwers, Ludovic Marionneau and Josephine Hoegaerts, ‘Introduction: Oratory and Representation in the Long Nineteenth Century’, *European Review of History*, 29 (2022), pp. 736-7;

have proceeded with the procession to Westminster would have invited a massacre by the military. In a final highly charged emotional appeal, he implored them to understand that he had no choice:

We, at least, have had our meeting. (*Cheer*). The government have taken possession of all the bridges. You know that I have all my life been a man of courage, of firmness, and of resolution; but how should I rest in my bed this night if I were conscious that there were widows awake mourning for husbands slain? (*Hear, Hear*). How should I feel if I thought that by any act of mine I had jeopardised the lives of thousands, and thus paralysed our cause? (*Hear, Hear*).

By positioning his capitulation as an act of public safety, O'Connor was seeking the crowd's endorsement for his capitulation. His invocation of intensely emotional language is another example of Scarantino's emotional speech acts.⁷² He continued:

'How, I ask, would you feel if you were conscious that you were parties to my death? What would be our trouble and our sorrow, how great would be our *loss*! These are the sentiments that actuate us all, and, as The Convention have received an intimation that the police will not let the procession pass the bridges, where they guard the ground.'⁷³

This vignette has underlined the role of oratory in rousing crowd emotions. There is little doubt of the central part its subsequent reporting played in transmitting this emotional reputation to the wider public and actors for the state.

⁷² Scarantino, 'Emotional Expressions', pp. 1038–53.

⁷³ *Northern Star*, 15 April 1848.

Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke* (published 1850)
Confusion, solidarity, disorder Imagined rural hardship/incendiarism in the 1830s

We can also detect emotional attitudes towards crowds in contemporary literature. The final two vignettes are located chronologically in their years of publication rather than the time of the narrative's setting. Including fictional accounts alongside factual case studies is a useful tool as arguably they tell us more of the emotional attitudes conveyed by their authors at the time than they do about the fictional events they narrate. They also present accounts of disorderly crowds contrasting with the orderly crowds of the previous five vignettes. In this extract from Charles Kingsley's 1850 novel, *Alton Locke*, the eponymous Locke, a young, freshly-politicised London tailor had ventured out of the city to attend a rural outdoor meeting at which speaker after speaker had complained of poverty, high rent and unscrupulous landlords. They were working up to engaging in an act of Thompsonian 'taxation populaire' by raiding a farmer's grain store and torching his ricks when Locke intervened.⁷⁴

'I felt that now or never was the time to speak. If once the spirit of mad aimless riot broke loose, I had not only no chance of a hearing, but every likelihood of being implicated in deeds which I abhorred; and I sprung on the stone and entreated a few minutes' attention.'⁷⁵

Via this dialogue Kingsley captured the emotionally charged disposition of the crowd – further examples of Ekman's notion of 'moods and emotional states' and Wall's concept of 'atmospheres'.⁷⁶ Locke continued: 'I explained the idea of the Charter and begged for their

⁷⁴ E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century' *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), p. 112.

⁷⁵ Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke* (London, 1905), p. 332.

⁷⁶ Ekman, 'Basic Emotions', p. 48; Illan rua Wall, 'The Law of Crowds', *Legal Studies*, 36 (2016), p. 408.

help in carrying it out. To all which they answered surlily, that they did not know anything about politics--that what they wanted was bread.'⁷⁷ Locke's language was loaded with affect. This passage helps us to envisage how the spirit of political solidarity might have played out between urban and rural labourers. The young tailor used his newly honed oratorical skills to steer the power and anger of the crowd away from destructive action, towards rational reform politics, entreating the crowd to behave with an orderly, rational and restrained pragmatism. His audience, however, were deaf to reason:

'I had no time to finish. The murmur swelled into a roar for 'Bread! Bread!' My hearers had taken me at my word. I had raised the spirit; could I command him, now he was abroad?

'Go to Jennings's farm!'

'No! he ain't no corn, he sold un' all last week.'

'There's plenty at the Hall farm! Rouse out the old steward!'

And, amid yells and execrations, the whole mass poured down the hill, sweeping me away with them. ... I went on, prepared to see the worst; following, as a flag of distress, a mouldy crust, brandished on the point of a pitchfork.⁷⁸

Imagined exchanges such as this demonstrate the moral dilemma which Chartist leaders may have faced when appealing to frustrated crowds. While we are rarely party to real-life calls for restraint, novels like this enable us to eavesdrop on an imagined encounter between reason and lawlessness. The novelist can sometimes give us a glimpse into the emotionally-charged debate surrounding the legality of radical action.

⁷⁷ Kingsley, *Alton Locke*, pp. 332-3.

⁷⁸ Kingsley, *Alton Locke*, pp. 334-5..

Kingsley had experienced a riot at first hand – in his case the Bristol Riots of 1831. Years later his pupil, John Martineau, described Kingsley's reflections on how the event had politicised his younger self. The emotions were intense:

'rapidly pacing up and down the room, and, with glowing, saddened face, as though the sight were still before his eyes - the brave, patient soldiers sitting hour after hour motionless on their horses, the blood streaming from wounds on their heads and faces, waiting for the order which the miserable, terrified mayor had not courage to give; the savage, brutal, hideous mob of inhuman wretches plundering, destroying, burning; casks of spirits broken open and set flowing in the streets, the wretched creatures drinking it on their knees from the gutter, till the flame from a burning house caught the stream, ran down it with a horrible rushing sound, and, in one dreadful moment, the prostrate drunkards had become a row of blackened corpses.'⁷⁹

The language in this passage was dominated by the powerful key emotions of sadness and fear, the memory of which had clearly remained with Kingsley throughout his life.⁸⁰ The older Kingsley's was a qualified radicalism, conditional on adherence to religious principles. The novel concluded with the now imprisoned Alton turning to God rather than the Chartists to deliver 'Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood.' This vignette has served to accentuate the difference between the gradual build-up of emotions within orderly reform crowds and the spontaneous 'surge' of emotions experienced by Kingsley's' fictional riotous crowd. One

⁷⁹ Frances Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley – His Letters and Memories of his Life* (New York 1899), pp. 271-2.

⁸⁰ The Bristol riots were only partially about reform, being also rooted in disquiet over local taxation. Despite the radical local MP's support for reform, when the House of Lords rejected the Reform Bill in October 1831, local officials provoked rather than quelled angry crowds resulting in three days of rioting with the resulting loss of life; Mark Harrison, *Crowds and History - Mass Phenomena in English Towns, 1790-1835* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 289-95.

assumes that the readership would have been left in no doubt about the tension and emotional power of emotions within the crowd.

**George Eliot's *Felix Holt – The Radical* (published 1866)
Imagined election riot circa 1832 Anger, Disorder, Bravery**

George Eliot's *Felix Holt* provides another literary source for revealing emotional mindsets surrounding political crowds. She wrote the novel the year before the Second Reform Act of 1867 but set it 35 years earlier just before the First Reform Act of 1832. Like Kingsley, Eliot's *Felix Holt* plot was almost certainly grounded in fact - Mary Ann Evans (alias George Eliot) was aged 13 at the time of the 1832 Election during which there was a riot in her hometown of Nuneaton. Even if she did not witness it in person, she would certainly have been affected as her father's employer Col. Newdigate was injured while 'discharging his magisterial duties'.⁸¹ Although recounted 30 years after the event, with Evans's position hardly impartial, her account is personal and not, as so often the case, presented through the lens of the press or a subsequent trial.

In her novel she described an election riot in the fictional Midlands town of Treby Magna in which anti-hero and radical, Felix Holt became embroiled in the accidental murder of a constable who had intervened after the crowd seized a Whig publican named Spratt. Felix led the crowd away from the town centre in a vain attempt to diffuse the situation:

'Felix was perfectly conscious that he was in the midst of a tangled business.

But he had chiefly before his imagination the horrors that might come if the mass around him were not diverted from any further attacks'⁸²

⁸¹ John Walter-Cross, *George Eliot's Life, as Related in Her Letters and Journals* (Cambridge, 1885), p. 28.

⁸² George Eliot, *Felix Holt: the Radical* (Harmondsworth, 1997), p. 427.

Wild chaotic desires and impulses

The narrative captured the hero's emotional response in terms of his horror of the tense situation in which he found himself as well as his perception of the dangerous emotions of the crowd around him – wild chaotic desires and impulses. This illustrates the multi-layered ambiguity in a riot: ambiguity of action (was Holt inciting violence or calling for restraint?) and ambiguity of identity – the problem of disentangling roles of protagonists in riot (who was the rioter and who the peacemaker?). In this, albeit fictional, account, Evans vocalised the emotional crowd experiences of surprise, expressed as confusion, and anger in the form of aggression, which she presumably witnessed or experienced in the real-life Nuneaton riot. She also described affects of shame and bravery and went on to capture the wider aspects of riot – the sense of haste, contradiction, nuance, paradox and ambiguity which are so often missing from printed sources. In this way Eliot was able to capture the emotional ambiguity presumably present, but rarely expressed, in reports of political crowds. The sense of confusion and the far-reaching consequences of split-second decisions made under pressure are palpable:

‘Felix had rapid senses and quick thoughts; he discerned the situation; he chose between two evils... ‘Don’t touch him!’ said Felix. ‘Let him go. Here, bring Spratt, and follow me.’

Though Holt was appealing for restraint, however, his motives were misinterpreted as inciting rather than preventing further violence. While the reader is party to his innocence, Holt ended-up being charged with manslaughter. In the real-life riot which the young Evans witnessed, a protagonist or bystander was killed. Writing as Felix Holt in ‘Address to a Working Man’ in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* she said:

‘After the Reform Bill of 1832 I was in an election riot, which showed me clearly, on a small scale, what public disorder must always be; and I have never forgotten that the riot was brought about chiefly by the agency of dishonest men who professed to be on the people’s side’⁸³

In this emotionally charged piece, Evans was clearly aware that riots were often triggered by renegades, agent-provocateurs, or rival parties. Her use of the first person in this passage was ambiguous. Though speaking as Holt, she was also expressing her own emotions, fearful of reform and of power getting into the hands of the lower classes by lecturing working men who were just about to get the vote:

‘The danger hanging over change is great, just in proportion as it tends to produce such disorder by giving any large number of ignorant men, whose notions of what is good are of a low and brutal sort, the belief that they have got power into their hands, and may do pretty much as they like.’⁸⁴

This hints at the equivocal position of Eliot – simultaneously championing the role of Holt, while also warning of the pitfalls of a widened franchise. Scholars have categorised hers an ‘an empty radicalism.’⁸⁵ However, in vocalising these concerns she may have been representative of many middle-class electors’ emotional anxieties about the way the vote would be used (or misused) by the enlarged franchise after the Second Reform Act of 1867.⁸⁶

⁸³ George Eliot, ‘Address to Working men by Felix Holt’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 103 (1868), p. 6.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁸⁵ Evan Horowitz, ‘George Eliot: The Conservative’, *Victorian Studies*, 49 (2006), pp. 7-32, 27.

⁸⁶ <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/from-the-parliamentary-collections/collections-reform-acts/great-reform-act111/> (accessed 3 April 2020).

In this way, both via Eliot's novels and her articles the public may have been emotionally influenced in their perception of the reform movement.⁸⁷

Like Kingsley, the author's personal experience influenced her literary works which we can assume manipulated received emotions about crowds in her readership. Both Locke's dialogue and Kingsley's 1832 recollections highlight the supercharged nature of emotions surrounding crowd actions and, in the case of Eliot, give an, albeit fictional, insight into the volatile emotions of election crowds around the time of the first reform bill. Though fictional the wide readership of such novels may have retrospectively served to enhance the emotional power of the reputation of reform crowds.

Conclusion – 'Feeling Political'

This chapter has engaged with the emotional history of reform crowds through the lens of memoir, newspapers, graphic prints and literature. The hopes, fears and pain of crowd members come to us through the eyes and ears of first-hand witnesses two centuries ago who reported or recorded them for those not present, to be informed, shocked and entertained. Though we have to read these accounts with a mind to their partiality, this still leaves historians with an abundant corpus from which to engage with emotions in crowds. Everything about reform crowds was emotional. Both the planning of events by reform leaders as well as decisions by state actors to legislate, control or subjugate them may have been based on an emotional rather than a factual reading of events.

While these vignettes show examples of the largely restrained emotions in the orderly crowds discussed elsewhere in this thesis, they also include some examples where emotions ran higher

⁸⁷ For Eliot's comments on political crowds also see p. 163.

in disorderly crowds or those in which peaceful crowds were subjected to sudden physical attack. In these cases, as well as the fictional accounts of unruly crowds, there is undeniably a heightened sense of uncontrolled reactive emotion. Whether it is possible to distinguish between the emotions in crowds of different densities is a difficult question. While there is little doubt that the emotions of the loose (two ppsm) crowds I have identified in my case studies tended to be rather less powerful than those when the crowd became unwillingly constrained or compressed to say, four ppsm, it is hard to say whether the heightened emotions related to increased density itself or fear of the yeomanry or police causing the crush.

Was the interpretation of the power of political crowds in numerical terms itself an emotional process? I suggest that emotions bore heavily on people's tendency to exaggerate crowd size (see Munafo's 'fuzzy magnitude perception' in chapter four).⁸⁸ The passionate belief in the power posed by the crowd led them to interpret this in superlative numbers. From the ideological divide between the reformers and the state, the stark contrast in life experience between the rich and poor, to the conscience-driven debates on the possible use of violence, the sheer passion of the crowd experience and the jealousy with which the elite defended their right to rule, every issue was shot-through with emotion. Ute Frevert's recent work on the emotions inherent in German political crowds echoes this:

'Feeling political...is an experience that can be traced back to street politics in the first half of the nineteenth century. [...] People felt in their bones ... that they were acting as opposed to watching, listening, and following instructions'. These new 'repertoires of contention confronted the

⁸⁸ Robert P. Munafo, *Large Numbers at MROB*, (March 2020), <http://www.mrob.com/pub/math/largenum.html#class1> (accessed 18 January 2022).

authorities with participatory claims voiced by large numbers of citizens...privileged collective bodily movement rather than individual speech, rendering them emotionally dynamic and lively, as much for bystanders and spectators (including the police) as for those participating. In this way, 'feeling political' could 'engender a sense of self-confidence and self-determination that filled participants with pride and optimism'.⁸⁹

The overwhelming impression which comes through both printed sources and graphic imagery is one of the highly charged atmosphere and mood of reform crowds, suggesting the collective nature of crowd emotions. Mutually shared emotions are 'manifestations of widely shared feelings, as group interests and aims are pursued. As Gavin Sullivan has suggested 'the resulting emotions are qualitatively different from individual or private emotions because they are the result of acting and feeling together as a group'.⁹⁰ While superficially similar to Le Bon's notions of the group mind, collective emotions are now considered by sociologists as an expression of co-operation and collaboration rather than as a 'contagion' spreading dissent and insurgency.⁹¹ The juxtaposition of the fearing and fêting of reform crowds had a major emotional component. This contributed to the reputational power of crowds, whether viewed from the perspective of supporter or denigrator.

⁸⁹ Ute Frevert, 'Feeling Political in Demonstrations: Street Politics in Germany, 1832–2018', in Ute Frevert and Kerstin Pahl (eds), *Feeling Political - Emotions and Institutions since 1789* (Cham, 2022), pp. 363–4.

⁹⁰ Gavin Sullivan, 'Collective emotions', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 9 (2015), p. 383.

⁹¹ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd - A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York, 2017), p. 89; Nick Hopkins, Stephen Reicher, Sammyh Khan, Shruti Tewari, Narayanan Srinivasan and Clifford Stevenson 'Explaining Effervescence - Investigating the Relationship between Shared Social Identity and Positive Experience in Crowds', *Cognition and Emotion*, 30 (2016), p. 22.

In the wider context of this thesis and stepping back from the emotional component of discreet events, I would argue that reputation itself was highly emotional. As William Reddy argued, emotions were as much drivers of political events of this period as they were indicators.⁹² To go further, it is impossible to separate the emotional from the rational in both the strategy and tactics of the mass platform and the often-disproportionate response of the state and magistracy. The reputational power of reform crowds was intrinsically emotional.

⁹² Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, p. 155-6.

7. The body of the crowd Corporeal/somatic experience

*'The movement of the immense assembly
resembled the waves of the mighty ocean;
and the hustings gradually surrendered to the majesty of the people'*

John Knight.¹

This dramatic scene occurred towards the close of Henry Hunt's first public speech at St Peter's Fields, Manchester, seven months before the notorious massacre. At this meeting, on a crisp January day, the sheer physical force of the crowd destabilised the hustings which was probably a ramshackle affair of hurriedly drawn-up wagons. This incident speaks directly to what would today be considered safety issues as envisaged by the work of Fruin and Still (see chapter two).² John Fruin's concept of 'level of service' (LOS) is an indicator of comfort and safety at a range of crowd densities. The pressure of the Manchester crowd around the hustings on 18 January 1819 would have been at Fruin's LOS F – representing a density greater than four ppsm at which 'potentially dangerous crowd forces and psychological stresses may begin to develop'.³ The Orator paused the meeting to check there were no injuries,

'Mr Hunt's anxious solicitude for the safety of his friends was indescribable; and the instant that no serious injury had happened to the people. He exclaimed 'All's well! no one hurt! Thank God!!' Fifty thousand cheers, spontaneously burst from the delighted throng and continued without intermission for several minutes.'⁴

¹ John Knight, *A Full and Particular Report of the Proceedings of the Public Meeting held in Manchester on Monday the 18th of January 1819* (Manchester, 1819), p. 11.

² G. Keith Still, 'Crowd Dynamics', (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, July 2000), p. 1.

³ John J. Fruin, *Designing for Pedestrians - A Level-of-Service Concept* (New York, 1970), p. 7.

⁴ Knight, *A Full and Particular Report*, pp. 11-12.

This scene serves to illustrate the physical aspect of the mass platform both in terms of audible volume, spectacle and the feeling of sheer physical power generated by a body of people.

The belly, the bladder, and the bowel

Chapter three discussed attitudes towards personal space described by Edward Hall as a series of cultural bubbles or ‘proxemic zones’ into which friends and acquaintances may be invited and others excluded, while chapter six considered unconscious emotions and affects.⁵

I now turn to the physical nature of corporeal and somatic needs which must have played an important role in the timing, location and duration of mass platform events. Basic bodily requirements of sustenance and other issues of personal comfort may have determined how long people could endure outdoor meetings. The anticipation of fatigue may have affected how far individuals were prepared to walk to gatherings, and if at a great distance from home, their decision to attend. The practical needs of the belly, the bladder, and the bowel – the simple aspect of being thirsty or needing the toilet – could easily have curtailed their attendance. The urgency of fatigue, hunger or even pain may have driven them home.

While some aspects of this chapter are addressed by scholars, secondary literature on the somatic crowd proves elusive. Paul Pickering and Katrina Navickas have written about the ceremonial aspect of marching bands and Robert Poole has stressed the military parallels of drilling to drums and brass instruments but there is little on crowd visibility, and I have found nothing on the urgency of the bladder.⁶

⁵ Nina Brown, *Edward T. Hall, Proxemic Theory* (Santa Barbara, 1966) <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4774h1rm> (accessed 5 August 2022).

⁶ Paul A. Pickering, *Chartism and the Chartists in Manchester and Salford* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 161; Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place 1789-1848* (Manchester, 2016), p.36; Robert Poole, *Peterloo-The English Uprising* (Oxford, 2019), p 234-235.

This is important because it had a direct impact on attendance figures and the lived experience of participation. In turn this is likely to have influenced the way crowd actions were reported and therefore how the majority of people including local magistracy, military, police and government perceived them and accordingly informed their policy and strategy. This chapter will address a range of physical and mental feelings to probe the bodily experience of the mass platform. It will be argued that the physical aspects of accessibility, visibility and acoustics all influenced people's decisions whether to attend meetings and that the pressing aspects of hunger, comfort and fatigue of the somatic crowd influenced the timing and location of meetings. On the question of attendance at distant, lengthy meetings, this chapter will determine whether attitudes were shaped by people's anticipation of bodily discomfort and attitudes towards personal space. To what extent were somatic factors influential in determining attendance at reform meetings?

The belly

In Mike Leigh's film *Peterloo*, Maxine Peake's character Nellie is shown sharing food with strangers in the crowd who had walked for several hours across the moors to be at the meeting for the 1pm start.⁷ The scene is fictional but serves to help envisage token acts of generosity at reform meetings where participants had to travel long distances to attend and, not surprisingly, people took food with them in anticipation of a long day. For example, in a composite print of May 1832 Newhall Hill meetings (Figure 7:1), a picnic basket is visible in the foreground. Sustenance or the lack of it may have also played a part in determining people's resolve to attend or endure long meetings far from home. This need for refreshment is underlined by the presence of entrepreneurs setting up food stalls which frequently featured in satirical prints such as Gillray's Copenhagen Fields print of 1794. (Figure 7:1) In 1817,

⁷ Mike Leigh, *Peterloo* (Thin Man Films, 2 November 2018).

William Hone reported that the third Spa Fields meeting ‘had the appearance of a fair, covered with people and stalls for the sale of fruit and gingerbread et cetera.’⁸ This was evidenced by Cruikshank’s print above (p. 191).⁹ It is arguable that, just as with other aspects of the mass platform, the conviviality of eating and drinking which often accompanied outdoor meetings was appropriated from the ritual of the election hustings.¹⁰



Figure 7.1 Details from larger prints:
*Food and drink for sale at 1795 Reform meeting.*¹¹ *Picnic basket at 1832 meeting in Birmingham.*¹²

A cup of prime ale

We can speculate that people’s fortitude may have been tested when meetings were held on moors or fields out of town, or when long marches were required for outlying processions to walk to town meetings. Samuel Bamford recalled that, on the march to Peterloo, his Middleton contingent stopped half-way for liquid refreshment, ‘At Harperhey, we halted, whilst the band and those who thought proper, refreshed with a cup of prime ale from Sam Ogden’s tap.’¹³ Having left Middleton around 9am, this was likely to have been around

⁸ *The meeting in spa fields - Hone’s authentic and correct account of the proceedings on Monday December the 2nd 1816*, British Library G.18983.

⁹ British Museum Print No. 1868,0808.8361.

¹⁰ Frank O’Gorman, ‘Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: ‘The Social Meaning of Elections in England 1780-1860, *Past and Present*, 135 (1992), p. 100.

¹¹ Detail from print of *John Thelwall addressing a reform crowd at Copenhagen Fields, 26 October 1795*, James Gillray, British Museum, J3.86.

¹² *The Gathering of the Unions on Newhall Hill, May 1832*, Henry Harris, Pub. G. Hullmandel, TUC Library Collections, London Metropolitan University.

¹³ Bamford, *Passages*, p. 148.

11am. Bamford's thirst was only partially quenched as, just two hours later, when Hunt was about to commence his speech, Sam proposed leaving the meeting at this critical point to visit another alehouse.¹⁴ The young weaver never made it as, just at that point, the yeomanry entered the field. By mid-afternoon Bamford was back at Harperhey drinking again.¹⁵

If the weather was favourable, meetings sometimes doubled-up as feasts such as Blackstone Edge in June 1848, at which Katrina Navickas described a festival-like atmosphere: 'the people distributed themselves over the ground and began to eat their dinners, thereby presenting the aspect of a huge picnic party rather than of a meeting having a political object'.¹⁶ It was no coincidence that August was chosen for the notorious 1819 Manchester meeting because, as Robert Poole has noted, it was the traditional time for rushcart processions, from which the Peterloo processions arguably drew much of their ritual and symbolism.¹⁷ Although the Middleton August wakes were occasion for 'guzzling and demoralisation', the association between food and drink, and festivity whether for inebriation or sustenance, was inextricably tied into what became the traditions of radical protest.¹⁸

Acoustics

Bad weather affected people's ability to see and hear speakers, but audibility and visibility were also problems on even the clearest of days. As Paul Pickering has noted, hearing was a problem at early Chartist meetings at Kersal Moor, Manchester in September 1838 and Peep Green,

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 151.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 154.

¹⁶ *Northern Star*, 17 June 1848, quoted in Katrina Navickas, 'Moors, Fields, and Popular Protest in South Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1800–1848', *Northern History*, 46:1, p. 108.

¹⁷ Rushcart ceremonies were annual Rogationtide processions around mainly rural parishes bearing rushes and terminating at the parish church where the rushes would be deposited; Robert Poole, 'Samuel Bamford and Middleton Rushbearing', *Manchester Region History Review*, 8 (1994), p. 14.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 21.

Leeds in May 1839 where ‘less than ten per cent of the crowd were able to hear’.¹⁹ As I described in chapter four, on 20 May 1833, a crowd of allegedly 200,000 squeezed into the disused quarry at Newhall Hill, Birmingham to express their dissatisfaction at the lack of progress of Grey’s government, recently returned with a large majority in the first election after the Reform Act. Speaker after speaker, including Chairman George Muntz, bemoaned the failure of the Whig administration to address poverty and hardship. Muntz struggled to make himself heard as did his BPU colleague Thomas Attwood who had made little headway as recently elected Independent Radical MP for the newly created Birmingham Constituency.²⁰ The official BPU report of the rally acknowledged the acoustic problems at large meetings but was unperturbed insisting that, ‘It cannot be intended to imply that even the fifth part of 200,000 persons could, at one and the same time, get sufficiently near the hustings to hear the several speeches that were addressed to the meeting.’²¹ What was most important at political meetings was the shared camaraderie of a mass of like-minded people coming together in an act of collective political solidarity. Clearly an, albeit small, proportion of attendees, heard enough to recount it later as did the newspaper reporters, so how were acoustic problems overcome?

After attending Tom Collins’s 2018 rendition of Feargus O’Connor’s Kennington speech, Paul Harman was intrigued how speakers like O’Connor could so effectively communicate with thousands of people.²² Writing in *Chartism Magazine*, he came up with three suggestions. Firstly, ‘get the audience as close as possible.’ A natural amphitheatre (such as that at Newhall

¹⁹ Paul A. Pickering ‘Class without Words: Symbolic Communication in the Chartist Movement’ *Past and Present*, 112 (1986), p. 153-4.

²⁰ D. J. Moss, ‘A Study in Failure: Thomas Attwood, M. P. for Birmingham, 1832-1839’, *The Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), pp. 561-2.

²¹ BRO 64668.

²² See chapter six, p. 200; Kennington Chartist Project 170th Anniversary Event, Sound File: http://www.kenningtonChartistproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/AUDIO_TomCollins_FeargusOConnor.mp3 (accessed 3 April 2020); Actor Tom Collins died in April 2019 – Obituary: <http://www.kenningtonChartistproject.org/2019/05/08/tom-collins/> (accessed 3 April 2020).

Hill) aided acoustic projection so vocal sounds were received equally.²³ The appropriation of an acting style also helped project across huge spaces. Harman thought that body language played an important part, with bold gestures used for emphasis and careful choice of vocabulary. ‘The open ‘o’ vowels carry well in commands such as, ‘Go on!’ and the concept ‘conquer’ is repeated to aid its capture by the ear. ‘Peoples Charter’ would be understood by all from the first shrill syllable.’²⁴ Secondly, a solid background for the orator, such as raised platform and wooden surfaces to bounce the voice off gave flexibility for a more nuanced delivery (the adoption of ‘cars’ for platforms at Kennington bears this out although backdrops are not apparent in Kilburn’s daguerreotype).²⁵ Harman wrote: ‘Standing high above the crowd on a wooden carriage which may have given extra resonance and a clear view for the audience – a vital part of hearing is seeing the body language – gives us clues as to how such ‘monster meetings’ may have worked.’²⁶ ‘Thirdly, do not make people stand for a long time in an open field with the sun in their eyes listening to complex ideas while a stiff wind is blowing your voice back at you’. Reform speakers, almost without exception, were apparently oblivious to this principle – orators were thought to have droned on interminably and newspaper reports bear this out.²⁷ However, Harman’s first two points resonate with reports of meetings of the period. Spectacle was as important as sound, and Chartist leaders, in keeping with the early modern tradition, frequently augmented their oratory with visual props such as banners, gestures and iconography such as red caps of liberty.²⁸

²³ My parenthesis.

²⁴ Paul Harman, ‘Feargus O’Connor at Kennington Common, 9 June 1818’, *Chartism Magazine Autumn 2018*, <http://theChartists.org/15-paul-harmon-8.html> (accessed 1 March 2022).

²⁵ My parentheses – ‘Cars’ are here used to describe open decked carriages or wagons function as raised platforms for speakers and doubling-up as viewing areas for invited guests.

²⁶ Harman, ‘O’Connor at Kennington 9 June 1818’.

²⁷ *The Times*, 21 May 1833.

²⁸ Paul A. Pickering, *Chartism and the Chartists*, p. 166

Every man hold his tongue

Speakers were keenly aware of the problem of acoustics in open air meetings. Henry Hunt, for example, commenced his speech at the second Spa Fields Meeting in December, 1816 by calling for quiet: 'Englishmen, fellow countrymen, in the first place I request silence to be kept for the short time I am going to speak, and the best way to procure that silence is for every man to hold his tongue and no one to call 'silence.'²⁹ At the final meeting in February again he pleaded with the crowd: 'let me remind you of the old saying don't any of you call silence and then I shall be heard'.³⁰ At some meetings the call for silence itself was part of the ritual. At a Birmingham reform meeting of May 1832, the orders of the meeting clearly stated: 'When the chairman requires silence the bugle of the union will sound, when every person present is requested to be silent, and to attend to any directions which the chairman may think it proper to give.'³¹ The cacophony itself was often appropriated by speakers to their advantage. James Vernon has noted that skilful orators frequently talked over applause and encouraged dialogue and pushing back at hecklers by peppering an animated supporting cast among the crowd. This choreography of rival groups in crowds provided a chant and counter-chant which, together with the elevated position of the speaker, animated gestures actions and the use of props (colourful banners etc) enabled hardened speakers such as the 'old Chartist' William Chadwick to mesmerise audiences even into his old age.³²

Gladstone's shouters

It is possible that an informal system may have operated to enable people further from the stage to get a sense of what was being said. Organisers may have even conscripted

²⁹ 'The meeting in Spa Fields' Hone's authentic and correct account of the proceedings on Monday December the 2nd 1816, British Library G.18983.

³⁰ Jackson's Oxford Journal, 15 February 1817.

³¹ BRO LF 76.11, Point 15.

³² James Vernon, *Politics and the People - A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815-1867* (Cambridge 1993), p. 117-23.

strategically placed individuals whose role was to relay the orator's words. Peter Osborne has described 'Shouters' who were stationed at outlying vantage points by William Gladstone during his Midlothian campaign of 1878–80. 'Their job was to absorb Gladstone's thunderous message... and pass it as best they could to those beyond direct hearing range.'³³ Osborne thought that at larger events these could have worked in teams relaying in several turns the speech to the furthest spectators. It is possible that this system may have been in place during the earlier reform campaigns and as Harman said: 'Those at the front would later retell their favourite details of the speech to friends and fellow activists back home. That is why big meetings work; they generate an emotional sense of ownership of the project.'³⁴

As discussed in chapter five, as well as hearing about reform meetings from friends who had been present, non-attendees would have become aware of these speeches from newspaper reports. It is difficult to establish if the long speeches which were regularly printed in newspapers were verbatim reports taken down on the day by reporters or a form of early leaking or press-release given to the editors. If reporters were at work, it is not impossible that they could have recorded speeches accurately, perhaps by working in teams or even employing an early form of shorthand such as the Gurney or Taylor systems already in use.³⁵

Another audible feature was the sound of the crowd itself. Donna Michelle Taylor has identified the act of collective 'groaning' in early Chartist crowds, which she sees as, 'an yet overlooked phenomenon, ... which appears to have been a prevalent expression of disapprobation in Birmingham.'³⁶ Crowd participation in the form of cheering was a regular

³³ Peter Osborne, *Rise of Political Lying* (London, 2005), p. 251.

³⁴ Paul Harman, 'Feargus O'Connor at Kennington Common' 9 June 2018', *Chartism Magazine Autumn 2018*, <http://theChartists.org/magazine-15-index.html> (accessed 3 April 2020).
<http://theChartists.org/15-paul-harmon-8.html> (accessed 3 April 2020).

³⁵ John Westby-Gibson, *The Bibliography of Shorthand* (London, 1887). p. 216.

³⁶ Donna Michelle Taylor, 'To the Bull Ring! Politics, Protest and Policing in Birmingham during the Early

feature of newspaper reports of the period. At a Nottingham meeting against the new Poor Law in 1839, for example, Richard Oastler's speech was punctuated no less than 15 times with shouts of the word 'Cheers' from the crowd. The *Champion* report also includes four 'Loud Cheers', seven 'Hear Hears', eight 'Laughters' as well as various crowd rejoinders to the speech including 'They never shall' to Oastler's warning that police could be used to put down the crowd, and, 'We are armed, we are, we are' in response to his suggestion that they should.³⁷ This, call and response ritual, was a common form of almost pantomime theatrical performance in political crowds with the best orators able to draw the crowd out and whip them up into a frenzy. At times the noise must have been deafening. When Hunt was conveyed by carriage to speak at the January 1819 Manchester meeting, the crowd 'rapturously cheered him' with 'huzzahing as he passed along.'³⁸ This was before the meeting began; when the carriage bearing the Orator and his hosts, local reformers Knight, Thacker and Sexton entered the 'far famed ground', shouts of applause 'like peals of thunder rent the air which continued with little interruption until he ascended the hustings when they became louder and louder'.³⁹

On occasion, songs were specially written, such as the Birmingham Political Union's anthem 'The Gathering of the Union' composed for the BPU and listed in the meeting agenda: 'the chorus of the 'Gathering of the Unions' will be sung by the meeting led by the Birmingham Chorus Singers and the Band.

*We raise the watchword liberty,
We will, we will, we will be free.*⁴⁰

Chartist Period', (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013), p. 33.

³⁷ *Champion*, 7 April 1839.

³⁸ See opening quote and John Knight, *A Full and Particular Report of the Proceedings of the Public Meeting Held in Manchester on Monday the 18th of January, 1819* (Manchester, 1819), p. 4.

³⁹ Knight, *A full and particular report*, p. 4.

⁴⁰ BRO LF 76.11.

As well as giving a sense of formal structure and discipline, these songs served a dual purpose of adding to pageantry of the events.

Calling to order

While it was acknowledged that not everyone would be able to hear, every attempt was made to aid visibility. Newhall Hill was an ideal venue due to its proximity to the centre of Birmingham and, as a former quarry, formed a perfect arena with the elevation rising gradually from the hustings at the lowest part of the site, aiding visibility (Figure 4:10).⁴¹ After the site became unavailable, meetings moved to an expanse of waste ground earmarked for development a mile away at Holloway Head.⁴² The new site was chosen, like Newhall Hill, for its sloping aspect, enabling visibility from all points. The BPU report of the ‘Grand Midland Demonstration of 6 August 1838 described it as:

‘almost semi-circular, and the slope itself presents a theatre almost as regular as if it had been formed by the hand of art. The hustings were placed at the edge of the road boundary at a point equi-distant from the two extremities and in this way it occupied the precise centre of the entire field of vision and of hearing. A happier spot for a public meeting could no-where be found, the speakers being, from every point of the vast area, plainly seen, and their voices from the nature of the ground, being heard with a very great distinctness, and by the greatest possible number.’⁴³

⁴¹ See chapter four; <https://jewelleryquarter.net/tours/hidden-jewellery-quarter/miss-carolines-canal/> (accessed 25 March 2019).

⁴² The report refers to convenient ‘arrangements for the press’ around the hustings including temporary platforms, some of which were private arrangements. By ‘press’ they were not referring to news reporters but rather to the anticipated pressure of the crowd. These platforms were not secondary hustings but rather viewing platforms erected by private, possibly entrepreneurial, individuals; See chapter four, p. 92.

⁴³ Official report of the Grand Midland Demonstration at Birmingham 6 August 1838, BRO 64677

Bugles were used to call meetings to order or to signify a pause in the proceedings.

Trumpeters were stationed on the hustings to announce when silence was required, an acknowledgement of the constant problem of crowd noise.

The bladder

A major deterrent for women attending long meetings, especially at great distances from home, may have been practicalities of the bladder. The simple fact of needing to micturate or evacuate may have prompted attendees, male and female alike, to leave a meeting at a critical point or before it finished. One assumes that women found obtaining privacy more problematic than men, but this remains speculative as the personal nature of the subject means that evidence does not survive in archives, or personal accounts. Then as now, people were not inclined to record their toilet habits. We can imagine that this must have been a problem as meetings could last for several hours. Attempts were made to curtail the duration of speeches. The Orders for the 7 May BPU meeting during the reform crisis stated: ‘In order to bring the proceedings to an early close, and allow time for the distant friends of the Cause to retire to their respective homes, the speakers are particularly requested to condense their observations as much as may be in their power, and if possible, to confine themselves within the limits of one quarter of an hour’.⁴⁴

Whether individuals returned to meetings after a comfort break must have depended on how far they had to venture to gain the required privacy, and it can be assumed that this might have been further for women than men. From the mid-century there were instances of men’s public urinals being installed in cities, albeit rather makeshift.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ BRO LF 76.11, Point 12.

⁴⁵ Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Kensington, 1858, https://wellcomelibrary.org/moh/report/b19824002/7#?m=0andcv=7andc=0ands=0andz=-1.6975_per_cent2C-0.0634_per_cent2C4.0103_per_cent2C2.0291 (accessed 3 April 2020); Urine Deflectors of Fleet Street: <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/urine-deflectors-of-fleet-street> (accessed 3 April 2020).

Just four years after the 1848 Kennington meeting, the need to provide toilets at crowded events was acknowledged by the provision of 200 temporary conveniences for the use of London crowds at the public funeral of the Duke of Wellington in 1852.⁴⁶ We can speculate that unofficial events such as reform meetings would have had no such provision, leaving the comfort of both sexes unprovided-for and women in particular presumably limiting their fluid intake or choosing not to attend. The same comfort issues may have applied to election crowds, albeit to a lesser extent as hustings were usually located in a county town and close to public houses which presumably had rudimentary facilities in the form of straw urinals. Again, little work has been done on this and one assumes facilities for women were almost non-existent.

Historians of sanitation have established that middle-class women often went prepared for such eventualities by equipping themselves with a bourdaloue.⁴⁷ These varied from ornate porcelain items to more portable metal and even leather devices.⁴⁸ However, even the use of this item of personal convenience may have necessitated a finding a degree of privacy not attainable in the middle of a noisy and chaotic crowd. Perhaps this is why, when women attended events, they often went in groups of other women possibly to provide joint privacy or as guests of speakers on the platform or wagon, thereby minimizing the time spent at the event and enabling a speedy exit. Presumably bourdaloues were beyond the means of working and poor women who had little choice but to search out a private corner when they needed to relieve themselves.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ M. D. R. Leys and R. J. Mitchell, *A History of London Life* (London, 1958), quoted in: Barbara Penner, 'A World of Unmentionable Suffering: Women's Public Conveniences in Victorian London', *Journal of Design History*, 14 (2001), p. 37; The same year a campaign by the Ladies Sanitary Association secured the first permanent ladies public toilets at 51 Bedford Street, The Strand; Sue Cavanagh, Vron Ware, 'Less Convenient for Women', *Built Environment*, 16 (1990), p. 281; Sarah McCabe, *The Provision of Underground Public Conveniences in London with Reference to Gender Differentials, 1850s-1980s* (IHR, London, 2012), p. 17

⁴⁷ <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O162128/bourdaloue-kocx-adrianus/bourdaloue-adrianus-kocx> (accessed 3 April 2020).

⁴⁸ <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5825725> (accessed 3 April 2020).

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/q3z8q8qp> (accessed 3 April 2020).

⁴⁹ <http://victorian-era.org/georgian-era-facts/georgian-era-toilets.html> (accessed 3 April 2020).

The problem may have been less severe at rural meetings than those in cities. The appropriation of public space used for sporting events such as the Kersal Moor racecourse may have diminished this problem – the meeting of 24 September 1838 was actually timed to coincide with a race day.⁵⁰ The anticipation of these problems may even have influenced decisions whether to attend in the first place and this in turn may have influenced organisers' choice of timing and location. Arguably this may have been a contributing factor to the predominance of men at reform meetings.

Party

Writing about anti-capitalist crowds during the 'Occupy' movement of 2012, Jodi Dean emphasised the importance of party.⁵¹ The festive nature of crowds was nothing new.

E. P. Thompson has referred to the celebratory tradition of political crowds dating back to early modern protests of the belly.⁵² This playful aspect sometimes arose out of boredom as at the third Spa Fields meeting of 10 February 1817. It seems that, perhaps in anticipation of a re-run of the riotous events associated with the December meeting, the crowd assembled early and were at a loose end for several hours before Hunt was due to speak.

The Tory newspaper, the *Morning Post* reported that the crowd's intention was to, 'make the proceedings of the day as ridiculous as those of the 2nd of December were atrocious.'⁵³ At first the waiting crowd amused themselves by hurling turf, shoes, dead fowl and cats into the air and, when they tired of that, an over-drove ox was enticed into the crowd and ran amok causing people to scatter. This could be a nineteenth century equivalent of 'fake news' as the

⁵⁰ *Sheffield Independent*, 6 October 1838, Katrina Navickas, 'Moors, Fields, and Popular Protest', p. 109.

⁵¹ Jodi Dean, *Crowds and Party* (Brooklyn, 2016).

⁵² E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), pp. 126-7.

⁵³ *Morning Post*, 11 February 1817.

Whig *Morning Chronicle* of the same day did not mention these shenanigans.⁵⁴ Perhaps the *Morning Post* was borrowing from a satirical print, published the previous week, entitled ‘Hunt-ing the Bull’ which portrayed Hunt, Cobbett Cartwright and Cochrane goading a bull (symbolising John Bull) while various missiles including dead animals were hurled overhead (Figure 7:2).⁵⁵ This whole episode of misrule, if it happened at all, is reminiscent of what Frank O’Gorman has dubbed the ‘mummery of extravagant social posturing.’⁵⁶



Figure 7:2 Hunt-ing the Bull, George Cruikshank, British Museum 1868,0808.8357.

Escalation and disorder

Escalation sometimes occurred when outsiders appropriated events for revelry such as in May 1832 when the Bristol Political Union sold 6,000 tickets for two and six a head to a public dinner on Brandon Hill to mark the passing of the Reform Act. The event descended into a disorderly farce when a crowd of 14,000 gate crashers invaded the area, danced on tables and appropriated a

⁵⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, 11 February 1817.

⁵⁵ https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-8357 (accessed 3 April 2020).

⁵⁶ Frank O’Gorman, ‘Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England 1780-1860, *Past and Present*, 135 (1992), p. 109.

wagon full of puddings. An evening firework display went ahead as planned but a tradesman was stabbed, and the proceedings ended in chaos when thieves rampaged through the crowd stealing hats and shoes.⁵⁷ Events like this demonstrate the fine line between celebration and full-blown riot. On some occasions licentious behaviour did escalate to insurgence, as at the second Spa Fields meeting, while elsewhere it was the forces of loyalism and reaction who hi-jacked proceedings, as at Henry Vincent's West Country Chartist meeting at Devizes on 22 March 1839.⁵⁸ A peaceful meeting of some 5,000 Chartists was attacked by a mob of 'three hundred Tories, composed of drunken farmers, lawyers' clerks and parsons.' The rioters, led by under-sheriff Tugwell, backed up with special constables, shouted loyalist slogans including 'Corn Laws for ever', 'Church and State', 'No Dissenters', 'No Bloody Whigs and Radicals', 'Down with Vincent' and 'Three cheers for the Queen.'⁵⁹ A bizarre aspect of the incident was that the rioters were supporting Sir Frances Burdett who 25 years earlier had been lionised by reformers but who had recently crossed the floor of the house and was now the incumbent local Tory MP.⁶⁰ More often high spirits manifested as forms of non-violent celebration such as the festival-like atmosphere noted by Katrina Navickas at remote rural Chartist camp meetings.⁶¹ Arguably these variations on the sometime festive nature of the crowd were bodily expressions of Dean's 'party' concept.

Fatigue and inclement weather

Despite the problems of belly, bladder and bowel, people often did walk very long distances to attend meetings. The BPU report of the reform crisis meeting at Newhall Hill on 20 May 1833

⁵⁷ Steve Poole, 'Till our Liberties be Secure - Popular Sovereignty and Public Space in Bristol, 1780-1850', *Urban History*, 26 (1999), p. 50.

⁵⁸ TNA HO44-32 *Western Vindicator*, 13 April 1839.

⁵⁹ *Operative*, 31 March 1839.

⁶⁰ Marc Baer, *Burdett, Sir Francis, fifth baronet (1770-1844)*, ODNB <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-3962> (accessed 3 April 2020).

⁶¹ *Northern Star*, 17 June 1848, quoted in Katrina Navickas, 'Moors, Fields, and Popular Protest', p. 108

records that people came not only from the Birmingham satellite municipalities of Wolverhampton, Walsall, and Dudley but also more distant Midlands towns such as Coventry, Nuneaton and Warwick. It even claims that some processions marched all the way from Derby and Nottingham: ‘In one word we must say that the meeting was a congregation of people from all the places agricultural as well as manufacturing within 30 or 40 miles of Birmingham.’⁶² This march would have taken some 20 hours to complete, longer if an overnight stop was made en-route. Short notice did not appear to deter long distance attendance – a BPU meeting of 10 May 1833 attracted deputations from as far as Worcester and Warwick, despite being called with just 24 hours notice.⁶³ On 3 October 1831 a BPU meeting was delayed awaiting the arrival of the Staffordshire Unions and, at the celebrated meeting of 7 May the previous year, Thomas Atwood's speech was constantly interrupted by bugles and trumpets announcing the late arrival on the field of union processions from as far afield as Stafford, Shropshire and Warwickshire: ‘as the different bodies of friends enter upon the ground the trumpet of the union will sound, the superintendent will announce their approach, and the meeting will receive them with three times three, in token of respect and esteem for the public spirit and patriotism which they exhibit.’⁶⁴ Inclement weather could have an instant impact on meeting duration as at Kersal Moor in September 1838 when, despite the weather holding off for most of the day, the heavens opened before the resolutions could be concluded: ‘Mr Fletcher rose to move the 4th resolution while it was pouring in torrents,’ and later when MP John Fielden had concluded his speech he ‘prorogued the meeting and the people who had stood in the heavy rain, males and females, dispersed quietly and in as good order as if they had come from church.’⁶⁵ Those staunch individuals who, despite the rain, persevered with the Kersal Moor meeting

⁶² *BPU Report of public meeting at Newhall Hill Monday May 20 1833 to petition His Majesty to dismiss his ministers*, BRO/64668.

⁶³ See chapter five, p. 150; BRO/64662.

⁶⁴ BRO LF 76.11, BRO 64660.

⁶⁵ *Northern Liberator*, 29 September 1838.

could not hear because the orators' words were overwhelmed out not only by the noise of the storm by also by the bands playing the home march tune before the meeting had concluded.⁶⁶ Perhaps they were caught by the call of the bladder (see above).

Conclusion – The physical crowd

This chapter has demonstrated that somatic factors were influential in determining attendance at reform meetings. I have engaged with a gamut of bodily experience of the mass platform, from hearing and seeing, to personal comfort, fatigue, and hunger and, not only did these somatic elements affect participants' ability to see and hear, but may also have influenced their decision whether to attend and how long to remain at meetings. Despite organisers' best efforts to maximise audibility and visibility by limiting duration, calling for silence by bugle call, imaginative arena design and the appropriation of natural amphitheatres for venues, bodily comfort, or the anticipation of the lack of it, may have been a major contributing factor to the predominance of men at reform meetings. What the positive facets of pageantry, ritual, and participatory theatrics attempted to bring to meetings, the corporeal and somatic aspects of the crowd often countered. However, these bodily experiences were limited to those who attended in person and despite perhaps deterring significant female attendance, did not stifle the wider reputation of the mass platform.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

8. The reputational power of the crowd

'I beg to acknowledge, with heartfelt gratitude, the undeserved honour done me by 150,000 of my countrymen. Our prospects are now obscured for a moment, and I trust only for a moment. It is impossible that the whisper of faction should prevail against the voice of a nation'

Lord John Russell, 12 October 1831¹

This extract from Lord Russell's 1831 speech to the House of Commons, bemoaning the refusal of the Lords to pass the Reform Bill the previous Friday, indicates his belief in crowd power. He was referring to the meeting held at Newhall Hill earlier that month by the Birmingham Political Union for: 'the purpose of petitioning the House of Lords to pass the Reform Bill'.² He could have cited the petitions sent by that meeting, one to the Lords to pass the bill (which had passed in the Commons that August) and the other to the King to create sufficient Peers to carry the Whig Bill in the Lords, but he chose instead to acknowledge the crowd itself as the 'voice of a nation' and hoped that the Lords defeat was just a temporary hurdle on the road to reform. Russell's assertion of 150,000 attendance indicates his likely source of information was newspapers. This was a classic example of the 'reputational power' of reform crowds.³ If a government minister could echo these numbers in the house, it can be inferred that the general public also believed extravagant attendance claims.⁴ The fact that the site had a maximum capacity of just 37,000 was irrelevant. The reporting of the spectacle dominated the narrative to such an extent that the actual attendance numbers ceased to matter, and the reputational power of the crowd projected beyond the crowd to the wider public.

¹ *Hansard*, 5-20 October 1831 (London, 1832), p. 604

² Newhall Hill meeting of 3 October BRO L/p/35/3 64660.t

³ *Worcester Journal*, 6 October 1831.

⁴ William Cobbett dismissed the figure as a 'gross exaggeration which nobody believed', *Annual Register for the Year 1831* (London, 1832), p. 281; Joseph Hamburger, *James Mill and the Art of Revolution* (London, 1963), pp. 132-4; David Moss, *Thomas Attwood: The Biography of a Radical* (Montreal, 1990), p. 201.

My research findings present a paradox. If mass platform meetings in this period were frequently lower in attendance than previously thought, why were they perceived to be large both by contemporaries and later by historians? The results of my case studies contradict the way in which crowd power was understood by the press and public and rebuffed by the government. This chapter scrutinises this incongruity and suggests that, despite the mismatch between perception and reality, reform crowds were extremely successful in projecting political power. I will suggest that this ‘reputational power’ was the critical ingredient which empowered reformers while simultaneously unnerving their detractors. I will use a novel digital technique to interrogate newspaper archives to compare the news penetration of selected meetings including my case studies and plot these against other key events and more violent insurgency. The results will be presented graphically followed by a consideration of the dynamics of the struggle between the soft power of the crowd and the hard power of the state. The chapter also considers the multi-level nature of political power struggles both external – between reformers and the agents of the state – but also internal – the tensions surrounding class and gender within the movement. Finally, I will argue for the tenacity of orderly reform crowds – that while not appearing to achieve their goals at the time, the sheer dogged persistence of generation after generation of reformers ultimately realised success, albeit 70 years after my final case study in 1848.

Gauging impact from newspaper reports

Comparing searches of numbers of reports for events thirty years apart is imprecise and can create a false impression of greater press interest towards the end of the period. This is because the number and frequency of publications increases over the research period, so a more subtle measurement of comparison is required. A more subtle approach is required so, as discussed in chapter three, the objective is to determine the percentage occurrence of

references to any particular meeting in a range of newspaper articles, in this case the British Library Newspapers in the two weeks following the first report of a series of events (Figure 8:1).

Title of Event	Date of Event	Date from*	Date to*	Search Term	No of articles	Control search 'the'	% of articles containing search term
Spa Fields	Nov 15 1816	11/16/1816	11/30/1816	spa fields	25	976	2.56%
Spa Fields	Dec 2 1816	12/03/1816	12/17/1816	spa fields	44	799	5.51%
Spa Fields	Feb 10 1817	02/11/1817	02/24/1817	spa fields	54	714	7.56%
Smithfield	July 21 1819	07/22/1819	08/04/1819	Smithfield	65	841	7.73%
Peterloo	Aug 16 1819	08/17/1819	08/30/1819	Manchester Meeting	45	843	5.34%
Caroline Funeral	Aug 14, 1821	08/15/1821	08/28/1821	Caroline Funeral	28	820	3.41%
Death of King George IV	June 26 1830	06/27/1830	07/10/1830	Death of King	80	1621	4.94%
Newhall Hill	Oct 3 1831	10/04/1831	10/17/1831	Birmingham Union	39	1465	2.66%
Nottingham Riots	Oct 10 1831	10/11/1831	10/24/1831	Nottingham Riot	24	1702	1.41%
Bristol Riots	Oct 29 1831	10/30/1831	11/11/1831	Bristol Riot	86	1524	5.64%
Newhall Hill	May 7 1832	05/08/1832	05/21/1832	Birmingham Union	39	1495	2.61%
Passing of Reform Bill	June 1832	06/01/1832	06/14/1832	Passing of Reform Bill	65	1543	4.21%
ColdBath Fields Riots	May 13 1833	05/14/1833	05/27/1833	ColdBath Fields	80	1981	4.04%
Newhall Hill	May 20 1833	05/21/1833	06/03/1833	Birmingham Union	18	2083	0.86%
Bullring Riots	July 4 1839	07/05/1839	07/18/1839	Birmingham Riot	76	2714	2.80%
Newport Rising	Nov 4 1839	11/05/1839	11/18/1839	Chartist Newport	88	2756	3.19%
Trafalgar Square	March 6 1848	03/07/1848	03/20/1848	Trafalgar Square	136	3772	3.61%
Kennington Common	March 13 1848	03/14/1848	03/27/1848	Kennington Common	45	3786	1.19%
Kennington Common	Apr 10 1848	04/11/1848	04/24/1848	Kennington Common	178	3876	4.59%
Death of Wellington	Sept 14 1852	09/15/1852	09/28/1852	Death of Wellington	215	4332	4.96%

* Gale requires US date format

Orderly Reform Meetings in Bold Type

Figure 8:1 Reports of selected mass platform meetings and other significant events. Gale Digital Scholar Lab.

These can now be plotted graphically (Figure 8:2). The chart indicates relatively greater newspaper interest in reform at the start rather than at the end of this period. This is counterintuitive as one might expect a peak around the time of the Great Reform Act or during the Chartist period. The other important contrast is the relative number of reports of the Smithfield meeting of July 1819 compared with Peterloo one month later. This was despite the peaceful nature of Smithfield compared to the violence inflicted on the Manchester crowd by the yeomanry. I established in chapter four that the meeting was probably slightly smaller than Peterloo so why did it feature so prominently in the press?⁵ The answer may lie in the London-centric nature of newspaper reporting. All of the London events up to 1848 dominate these charts with 1830s Newhall Hill meetings in Birmingham

⁵ *Globe*, 21 July 1819; *Globe*, 22 July 1819; For a full analysis of the Smithfield meeting, see, pp. 73 and 136.

having relatively fewer reports. This is despite their coinciding with the constitutional crisis surrounding the 1832 Great Reform Act.

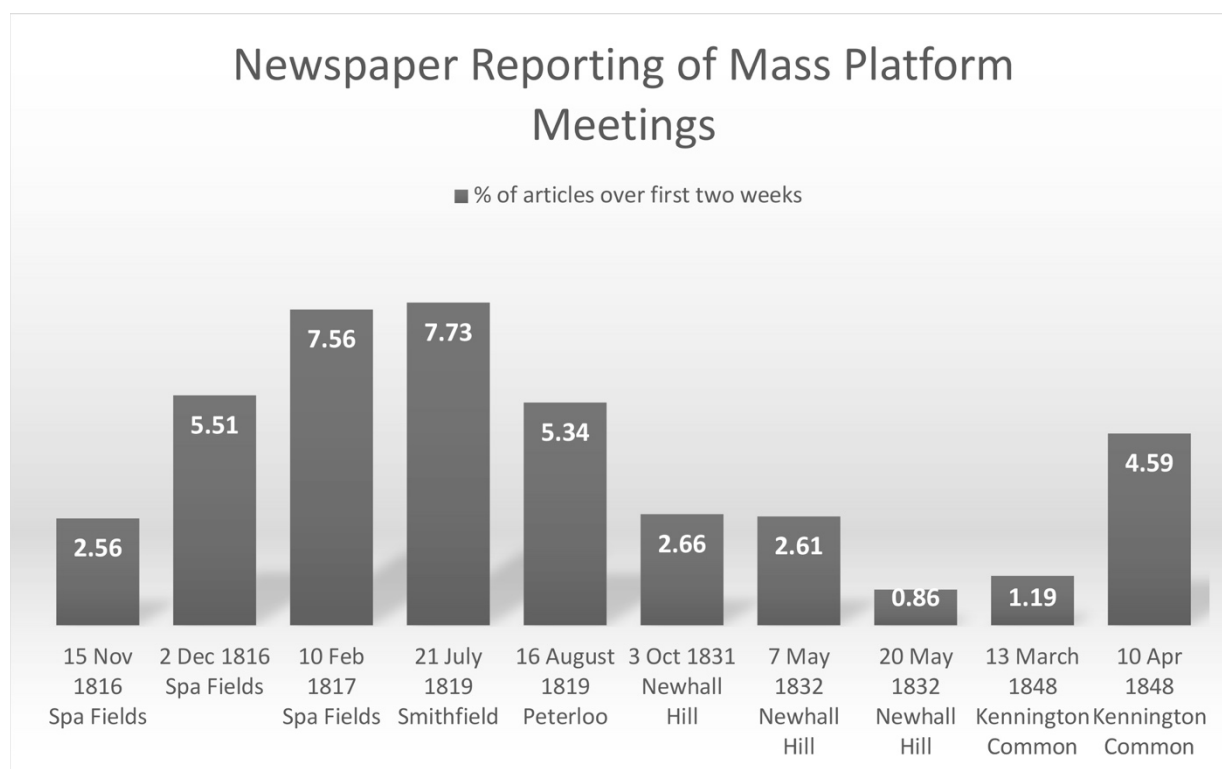


Figure 8:2 Percentage occurrence of reports of selected mass platform meetings. Source: Gale Digital Scholar Lab.

To put these results into a greater context, some additional searches were introduced to see how they compared with the reporting of other events of national significance. Figure 8.4 adds four non-reform events which one might expect to have featured highly in the newspapers. It is not surprising that death of the Duke of Wellington in 1852 was mentioned in 215 out of a possible 4332 articles. At nearly five per cent this slightly exceeds reports of the Great Chartist Meeting just four years earlier, an event at which the Duke played a significant, if merely advisory, role. However, it only just exceeds them, demonstrating just how important the April 1848 event was viewed. Likewise, the deaths of Princess Caroline and King George were significant in reporting terms, though attracting 3.41 and 4.94 percent, they do not feature as highly as the preceding reform meetings, with reports of Smithfield and

Peterloo both exceeding those of the significant royal deaths, underlining again the relative newsworthiness of reform meetings. The passing of the Great Reform Act in June 1832 features highly, but still less than the reform meetings in the years after the Napoleonic Wars. This is a conundrum which requires further research beyond the scope of this thesis.

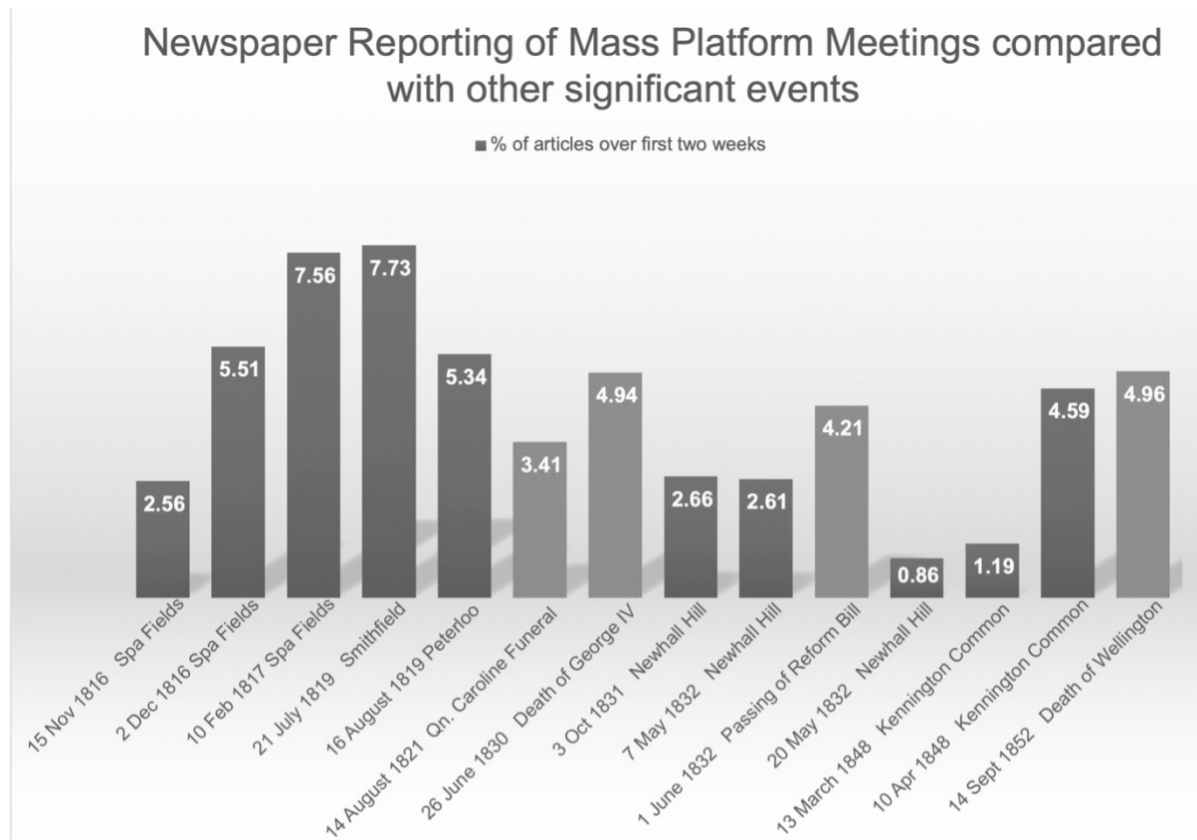


Figure 8:3 Percentage occurrence of reports of mass platform meetings compared with other major events.
Source: Gale Digital Scholar Lab.

Next we turn to the reporting of insurgency. Figure 8:4 plots five notorious riots of the 1830s against orderly meetings of the time. It is not surprising that the Bristol riots of late October 1831 feature so heavily as the death toll has been measured in hundreds rather than tens, most of whom, as Steve Poole has said, ‘were killed by direct and merciless military intervention.’⁶ The

⁶ Although these riots were ostensibly about reform, they were rooted in anxiety about local taxation stoked by Tory agitator J M Gutch in *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal*. Despite widespread support for radical Bristol MPs James Baillie and Edward Protheroe’s reform stance, when the House of Lords rejected the Reform Bill in October 1831, local officials Sir Charles Wetherall and Charles Pinney provoked rather than quelled angry crowds resulting in three days of rioting with the resulting loss of life; Steve Poole, and Nicholas Rogers, *Bristol*

Nottingham reform riot of the same month only made it into less than 1.5 per cent of reports despite the castle being razed to the ground, but in that case there was no loss of life.⁷

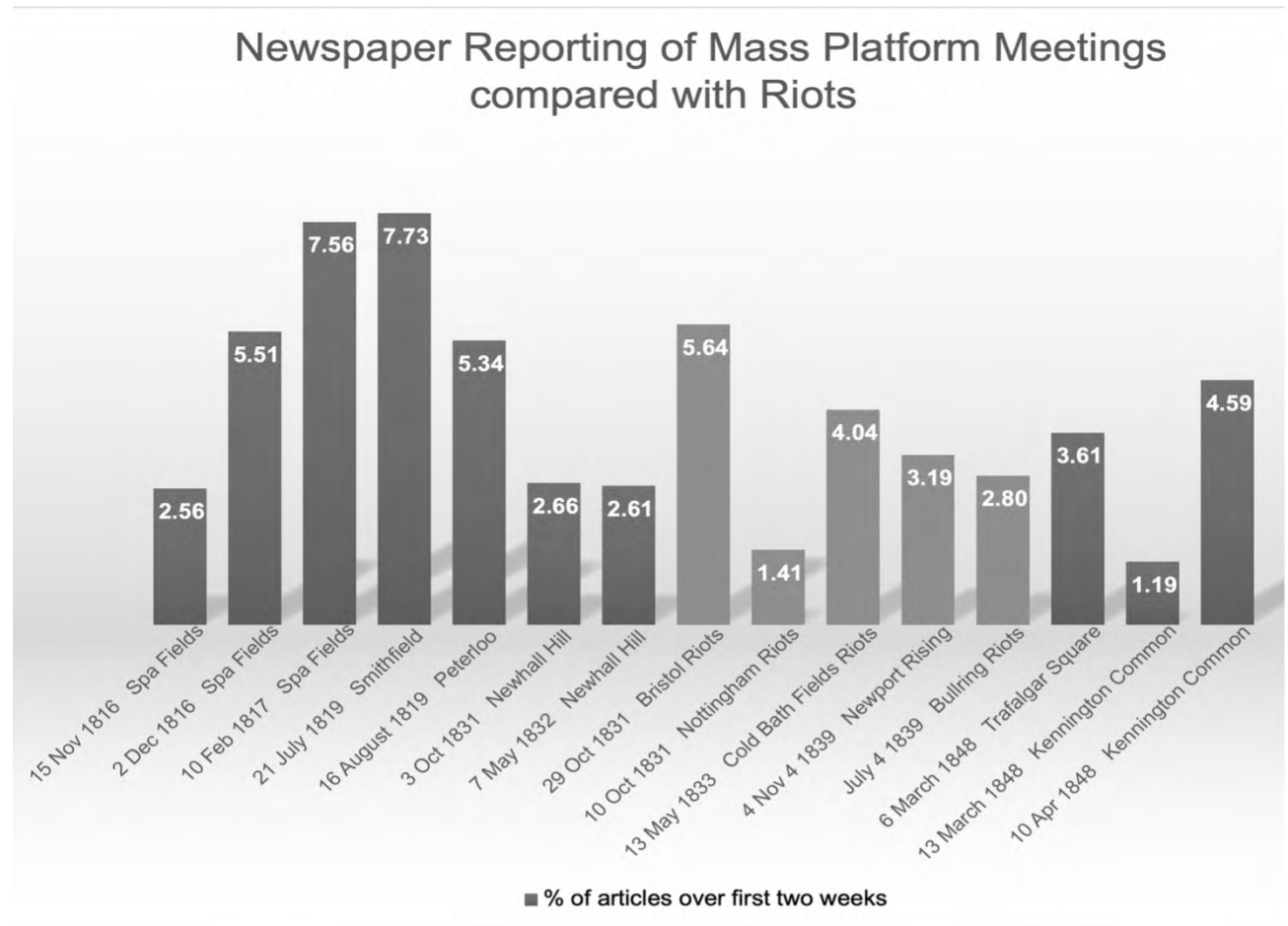


Figure 8:4 Percentage occurrence of reports of mass platform meetings versus Riots. Source: Gale Digital Scholar Lab.

The Cold Bath Fields riots of two years later were also widely reported, perhaps because they resulted in the first killing of a policeman on the streets of the capital, but this could be another example of the London press being more interested in local events.⁸ Moving into the Chartist period, the Newport Rising of 1839 and the Bull Ring riots in Birmingham of the same year attracted considerable interest, the former doubtless due to the 10 or 20 deaths and

from *Below: Law, Authority and Protest in a Georgian City* (Suffolk, 2017), p. 325; William Henry Somerton, *A Narrative of the Bristol Riots, on the 29th, 30th, and 31st of October 1831* (Bristol, 1831), pp. 15-16; Mark Harrison, *Crowds and History – mass phenomena in English towns, 1790-1835* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 289-95.

⁷ John Beckett, 'The Nottingham Reform Bill Riots of 1831', *Parliamentary History*, 24, S1 (2008), p. 137.

⁸ Clive Bloom, *Violent London* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 193.

the latter to the large numbers of injuries.⁹ Neither of these disorderly events of the early Chartist period came close to attracting the level of attention ascribed to the orderly gatherings in London in 1848 or the earlier ones in 1816/17.¹⁰

So, with the exception of Bristol, this chart suggests that orderly meetings attracted more newspaper interest than insurgent events. This could be due to the scope for verbatim reporting of speeches at orderly events. Reporters were often present, having received advance notice of planned events whereas riots, by their very nature, were spontaneous. For example, the day after the third Spa Fields meeting of 10 February 1817 the *Morning Chronicle*, a paper not known for its support of the reform cause, printed a full report of the proceedings and included the resolutions and even the parts where Henry Hunt was critical of the *Chronicle*. After his usual attack on the editors of all newspapers, and especially *The Chronicle*, Hunt concluded by moving the resolutions in Figure 8:5.

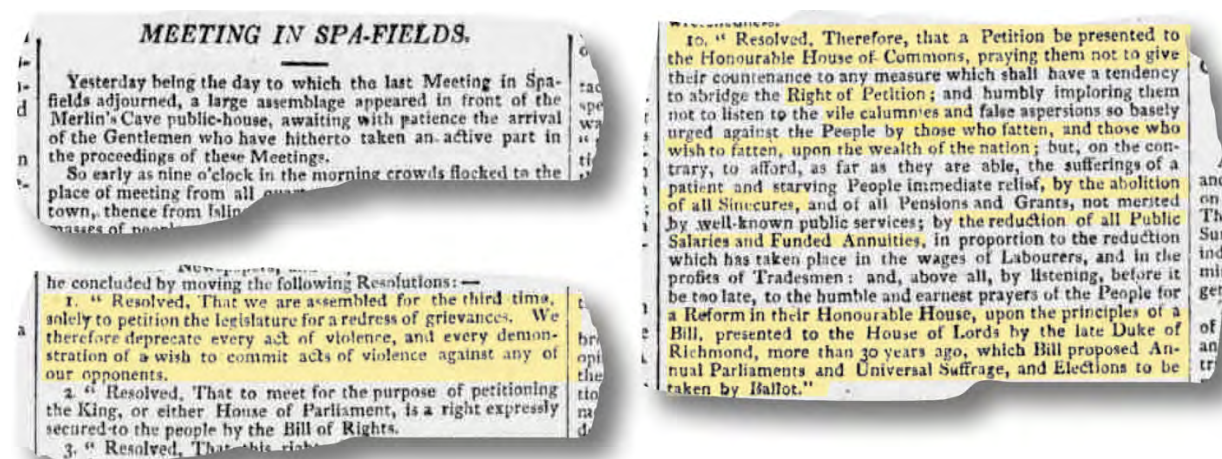


Figure 8:5 Reform petition clauses printed in full in the Tory press¹¹

⁹ David Jones, *The Last Rising – The Newport Insurrection of 1839* (Oxford, 1989), p. 155; Michael Weaver, 'The Birmingham Bull Ring Riots of 1839: Variations on a Theme of Class Conflict', *Social Science Quarterly*, 78 (1997), p. 143; William Lovett, *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett* (London, 1876), pp. 179-180.

¹⁰ Although there was some rioting after the Trafalgar Square event of 6 March 1848, it was after the meeting had dispersed and consisted mainly of unruly youths looting – see David Goodway, *London Chartism – 1838-1848* (Cambridge, 1982), p.137, Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: a New History* (Manchester, 2007) p.111.

¹¹ *Morning Chronicle*, 11 February 1817.

This was significant in four ways. Firstly, it was addressed to the House of Commons rather than the Monarch, as November's unsuccessful petition had been. Secondly it reasserted the right of petition, specifically attacking corruption in public office in the form of sinecures and pensions. Thirdly it demanded a reduction of state salaries and annuities in proportion to the wage reduction already experienced by labourers, and profits of tradesmen, and finally it succinctly stated the case for reform, invoking a 1782 Lords Bill proposing Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage and Elections to be taken by Ballot, anticipating three of the Chartists demands by nearly 60 years.¹²

This demonstrates the way in which mass platform events projected their message to non-participants even via the most unlikely sources – in this case the mouthpiece of their opponents. Just as at today's demonstrations, the impact on the wider public and government was more pertinent than the effect on those present in person and this is evidenced by reports in newspapers like the *Morning Chronicle*. This example shows how even the Tory press were prepared to publish verbatim reports of speeches and, in this case, detailed resolutions. By the regional Saturday editions, news had spread as far as Edinburgh with the *Caledonian Mercury* carrying a detailed report of Tuesday's debate on the petition in the House of Lords.¹³ The *Leeds Mercury*, *The York Herald* and *Jacksons Oxford Journal* also carried reports of Monday's meeting with the latter dedicating 30 per cent of their front page to the story reporting sections of Hunt's abjuration of his involvement in the insurrection associated with the December meeting:

‘He denied that himself and his party had ever propagated the Spencean plan; and insisted that they had in view the sole object of petitioning for reform. [...] We must

¹² Hansard, Parliamentary and Municipal Elections Bill—(No 117), 10 June 1872, Volume 211, [https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/1872-06-10/debates/74c88ecc-de21-4b2b-b58f-7b9e107ec6e8/ParliamentaryAndMunicipalElectionsBill—\(No117\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/1872-06-10/debates/74c88ecc-de21-4b2b-b58f-7b9e107ec6e8/ParliamentaryAndMunicipalElectionsBill—(No117)) (accessed 14 April 2020).

¹³ *Caledonian Mercury*, 15 February 1817.

have a speedy sacrifice from every quarter, to relieve the thousands of poor creatures who, having fought and bled in the service of the country, are now wandering about the streets of the Metropolis without a covering or a home. [Loud applause.],¹⁴

As this text mining exercise has demonstrated, newspaper reports rapidly penetrated mass consciousness, regularly matching percentages of reports of other events of national importance. While remaining cautious about the potential for errors in this type of data trawl, these results demonstrate just how successful the mass platform was in reputational terms and in its capacity to generate news. Every copy of the five London papers was thought to be read by 30 people, and the 50 or so regional weeklies were read aloud in coffee- and ale-houses across Britain.¹⁵ So the theoretical reach of the 123 press references to the three Spa Fields meetings thrown up by my searches could be measured in thousands – quite impressive for three meetings of moderate attendance. Despite their modest size, their influence was far ranging. This ‘pebble in a pond’ effect meant that for every person present at a reform meeting it can be conjectured that many hundreds more may have heard reports and formed their own view. This exercise could be criticised for omissions such as newspapers not included in the archive sweep, but by concentrating on proportions of reports rather than numbers it remains robust. While this technique applies a blunt instrument to text mining, it is the same blunt instrument applied throughout the research period.

¹⁴ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 15 February 1817. This report appeared next to a full column account of the coincidental arrest on 9 February of Watson and Preston on charges relating to the riot following the December meeting.

¹⁵ A. Aspinall, ‘The Circulation of Newspapers in the Early Nineteenth Century’ *The Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946), p. 30.

Soft versus hard power

The battle for reform can be viewed as a classic power struggle – the soft power of the crowd confronting the hard power of the state. ‘Hard power’ is taken to mean coercive and violent, contrasting with the reasoned persuasion of ‘soft power’.¹⁶ In this period I suggest crowd power was manifest in the projection of radicalism via spectacle rather than magnitude. Charles Tilly described political crowds in theatrical terms but his ‘contentious performances’ could be considered in wider terms – experienced by the members of the public at second hand via newspaper reports and satirical prints which acted like a megaphone to project the message of solidarity and hope contained in the words of the orators.¹⁷

That the state viewed the mass platform as a threat is not in dispute. Its use of hard power is evidenced by the extraordinary lengths to which successive governments went to suppress and subjugate the reform movement. As discussed in chapter four, the Newhall Hill meeting of 12 July 1819 is an example of this disproportionate use of power. The gathering was called by local teacher George Edmonds to elect a ‘legislatorial attorney and representative for the inhabitants of Birmingham’.¹⁸ Although magistrates allowed it to proceed unhindered, the speakers were later arraigned on a charge of ‘electing Sir Charles Wolseley Representative for Birmingham in Parliament’.¹⁹ Wolseley himself was not indicted, presumably because he did not attend, but in the event this was immaterial as, by the time of the indictment of ‘the Birmingham four’, he had himself been summonsed along with fellow reformer Joseph Harrison, for ‘wickedly and maliciously devising and intending to incite tumult and insurrection’ at a meeting on 28 June 1819 at Sandy Brow, Stockport.²⁰ The Birmingham

¹⁶ <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/84122?redirectedFrom=hard+power#eid69704699>

¹⁷ Charles Tilly, *Contentious performances* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 5-7.

¹⁸ *Saunders's News-Letter, and Daily Advertiser*, 19 July 1819.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 13 August 1819.

²⁰ ONDB, <https://0-doi-org.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/29850>

defendants were found guilty in August 1820, but had to wait a further 12 months for sentencing. Edmonds, Wooler and Maddocks received prison sentences and Major Cartwright, perhaps in respect of his age, a £100 fine. Such indictments demonstrate the disproportionate projection of state power.

What was most significant about the impact of the July 1819 Newhall Hill event, however, was its probable influence over the Manchester magistrates' fateful decisions the following month at Peterloo. The implied threat to the established order of the Birmingham reformers having the temerity to elect their own representative could have been interpreted in the eyes of Westminster politicians as a direct threat to the established hierarchical order of government. At the forefront of their minds may have been the 'Convention Nationale' of the French Revolution 30 years earlier, with all that implied. Susan Thomas argues that the re-scheduling of the Manchester reform meeting from 9 to 16 August was directly connected to a consideration by Manchester magistrates of recent events at the Birmingham 'sandpit'.²¹ However, while the Midlands magistrates had a cordial relationship with the, mainly craft-based, artisans of Birmingham, their Manchester counterparts, with a more hostile attitude towards factory loom workers, took a harsher stance. They declared the first meeting proposal illegal because of its stated aim of the 'electing a Person to represent [the Inhabitants of Manchester] in Parliament', then, with no choice but to allow the rescheduled meeting to go ahead on 16 August with its less provocatively worded aim of: 'considering the propriety of adopting the most legal and effectual means of obtaining a reform', calling in the yeomanry with disastrous consequences.²² So, despite the likelihood that the 12 July event at Newhall Hill could not have come close to 50,000 attendees, the event nevertheless had far-

²¹ Susan Thomas, 'George Edmonds and the development of Birmingham radicalism', (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2020), p. 113.

²² Donald Read, *Peterloo – The Massacre and its Background* (Manchester, 1973), pp. 113-7; *Morning Post*, 9 August 1819 (reprinted from *The Manchester Observer*, 4 August 1819).

reaching consequences. Together, the series of meetings in the summer of 1819, culminating at Peterloo, must have thrown down a serious gauntlet to the state.²³

The anticipated crowd

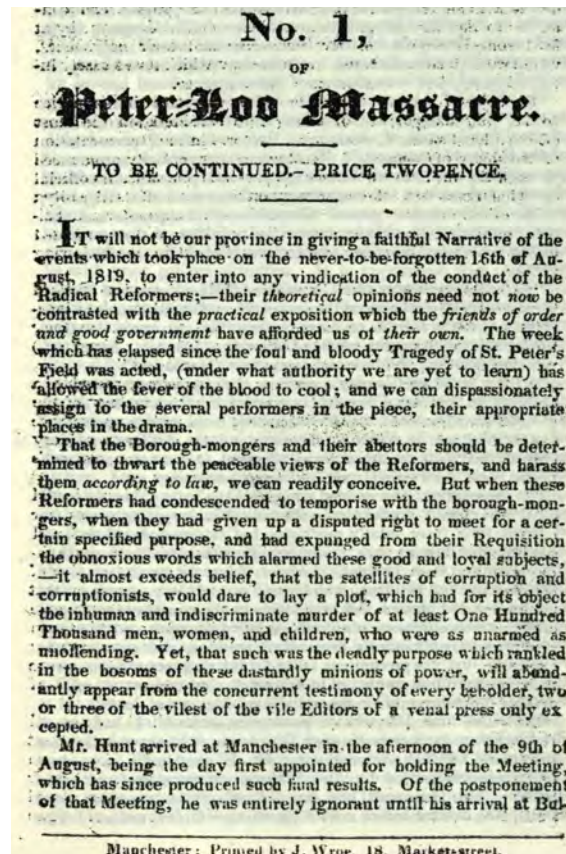


Figure 8:6 James Wroe, *Peterloo Massacre*, August 1819.

While I have argued that the Peterloo crowd was smaller than accepted, there is little disagreement about its news impact. But reports were initially slow to propagate. The first newspaper to refer to the tragedy as ‘Peterloo’ was the following week’s *Globe*.¹ James Wroe’s pamphlet, *The Peterloo massacre, containing a faithful narrative of the events which preceded, accompanied, and followed the fatal sixteenth of August 1819* was already widely in circulation (Figure 8:6).

²³ Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place 1789-1848* (Manchester, 2016), p. 80; *Saunders’s News-Letter, and Daily Advertiser*, 19 July 1819; *Hull Packet*, 20 July 1819; *Globe*, 22 July 1819; *Globe*, 21 July 1819.

As discussed in chapter four, the argument for a smaller Peterloo crowd does not diminish the scale of the atrocity – quite the opposite. If attendance was as low as 32,000 then the 600 known injured expressed as a percentage of attendees doubles from the previously accepted one to two per cent – a far worse massacre than previously thought. 32,000 still represents a seriously large crowd.²⁴ In today's terms it would equate to a crowd fifty per cent larger than the capacity of the London O2 Arena, marching into a city the size of present-day Cambridge.²⁵

As I have argued, it was this enhanced perception of magnitude which encouraged the more excessive claims. People genuinely perceived these events as massive and in terms of state power, the government believed that radical crowds posed an imminent and powerful threat as evidenced by the effort and expenditure which they applied to subjugate them. Time after time the state met reason with might. Moderate, pre-planned protests were treated as potential battles even when, as at Peterloo, organisers had gone out of their way to appraise ministers and the magistracy not only of practical details of timing, location and routes but also of their peaceful intentions.²⁶ Peterloo was an example of the 'anticipation of power'. Again the reputation of the crowd heralded it.

Proxy power

Returning to the question of power dialectics, Peterloo can also be read in terms of the exercise of proxy power by the state – the delegation of power from the centre to the periphery. Arguably all the state wanted was the arrest of Hunt. As already explained, he had been careful to distance himself from illegality, refusing to speak on platforms where the

²⁴ Jacqueline Riding, quoted in, Rachel Dinning, 'A 'more shocking' massacre? How we might have overestimated the Peterloo crowds'.

BBC History Extra 8 August 2019 <https://www.historyextra.com/period/georgian/peterloo-massacre-numbers-deaths-injuries-how-many-people-bicentenary-anniversary/> (accessed 18 January 2022).

²⁵ Capacity 20,000, <https://www.londontheatre.co.uk/theatres/the-o2-arena>

²⁶ John Belchem, *'Orator' Hunt – Henry Hunt and English Working-Class Radicalism* (Oxford, 1998), p.106.

election of bogus MPs was proposed. The exercise of proxy power was often deliberately ambiguous, allowing ministers to later claim incorruptibility. Just five days before the second intended date of the meeting, the government position was unequivocally against dispersing the meeting. Parliamentary-under-Secretary Henry Hobhouse, writing to Manchester magistrate James Norris, set out the Home Secretary's advice,

'Lord Sidmouth having further considered the question which was the subject of yesterday's letter, desires me to say that reflection convinces him the more strongly of the inexpediency of attempting forcibly to prevent the meeting on Monday. Every discouragement and obstacle should be thrown in its way, and the advertisement from the magistrates will no doubt have a salutary effect in this respect.'²⁷

This contradicted an earlier coded hint that in extreme cases magistrates could be indemnified against bringing martial force to bear against the crowd. In that letter Hobhouse had advised Norris to keep 'this delicate subject as much as possible to yourself'. Robert Poole sees this as the magistrates' 'get out of gaol card'.²⁸ Intentional or not, this sent mixed messages from the government about the legality of the proposed meeting, leaving the final decision to the discretion of the magistrates present on the day. Poole also thinks that confusion was enhanced by the absence of northern military commander Sir John Byng who opted to attend a race meeting in York instead of commanding his troops in Manchester. Arguably he would have exerted a restraining influence had he opted to attend.²⁹ However, if the aim was solely to arrest Hunt, and the government was arguing for restraint, either the message did not get through to the Manchester magistracy or they acted with reckless disregard for the

²⁷ TNA HO 41/4 f.434.

²⁸ Robert Poole, *Peterloo-The English Uprising* (Oxford, 2019), p 252; Hobhouse to Norris, 26 July 1819: TNA HO79/3.

²⁹ Poole, *Peterloo*, pp. 258-9.

consequences. The evidence suggests, however, that they thought they were acting with impunity, while the complexity of the Home Office correspondence implies they were actively seeking a confrontation with the crowd.

Even if the government were not openly giving the Manchester magistracy authority for a violent dispersal, their ambiguity gave licence by default and a royal proclamation of 30 July would have added further confusion.³⁰ This drawn-out correspondence between centre and periphery regarding the legality of the plan to break up the event points towards collusion to carry it out. It is arguable that if there was to be showdown with the reform movement that summer, it suited the state for Manchester to be the venue. It would not have shown them in good light for a violent assault on a crowd to have happened in London (at Smithfield, perhaps), or even in Birmingham. The Leeds and Stockport meetings had gone off peacefully and Manchester's peculiarly medieval system of local government combined with its distance from London meant that central government could look the other way while the deed was done.³¹

In the days immediately following the massacre, ambiguity continued to dominate, with Sidmouth refusing to allow publication of his conveyance of the crown's appreciation of the 'prompt decisive and efficient measures' taken by the magistrates on 16 August assigning the comment instead solely to the Prince Regent.³² Every possible interpretation of Peterloo indicates the dialectics of a national issue played out at a local level – proxy power gone horribly wrong. As I have demonstrated, the reputational power of the crowd frequently preceded it. Peterloo was an example of this 'anticipation of power'. The state regularly deployed military force on an unprecedented scale (albeit after the incompetence of Peterloo, held in reserve or concealed from

³⁰ Annual Register 1819 (Hansard (London, 1820), pp123-124.

³¹ Poole, *Peterloo*, pp. 30-31.

³² HO 41/4 f.496 quoted in Jacqueline Riding, *Peterloo – The Story of the Manchester Massacre* (London, 2018), p. 300.

public view). Crowd members and organisers were left in little doubt that it would be used if considered necessary and, as the century progressed, the increasing use of special constables can be detected in tens of thousands, and later professional police as City forces emerged – another sign that the state feared the power of the crowd.

Conceded power

As already discussed, the anticipation of crowd power came to a head at the Great Chartist Meeting at Kennington in 1848 with the unprecedented show of, albeit concealed, military force. To understand the clash between state power and the mass platform that year, we have to consider the mismatch between the perception and the reality of the Chartist threat. Not only had the newspapers whipped-up the public into a frenzy of anticipation but we must assume that they also influenced the actions of government ministers.³³ The meeting was expected to be one of the largest ever held in London and 10 April was a make-or-break attempt to get the six points of the charter debated in parliament by making a spectacle of presenting the petition at Westminster. The extreme state response poses the conundrum of why it would go to such lengths to subjugate a peaceful crowd. It cannot have been simply the anticipation of record attendance that the government feared. While some historians have argued events across the channel that year had increased fears of all-out revolution, I have found little evidence before 10 April of plans for a general rising and only then largely fabricated.³⁴ However, while cognisant that a physical confrontation with a violently insurgent crowd was unlikely, the state nonetheless persisted in the ultimately unnecessary physical display of hard power, so it can be assumed that it was radical

³³ *The Times*, 6 April 1848.

³⁴ See pp. 150-54): Dossier of dubious ‘surveillance’ discovered in the Home Office Archives containing five bizarre overheard ‘conversations’, ‘These are clearly trumped up or faked evidence all in the same handwriting from government spies with a creative and vivid imaginations. Their presence in government files indicate there were considered as potential providing incriminating evidence against named individuals; TNA HO45/2410/531-532; John Saville, *1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 76; Chase, *Chartism*, p. 298.

ideology itself they feared. The power struggle between people and state was a moral one. The political elite were unready to concede on issues of participation and suffrage.

A crucial shift which occurred after the 10 April meeting was the ultimate prioritising of physical over moral force, a debate which the Chartists had agonised over since their formation in 1838. While it may be tempting to interpret this as the final vindication of those arguing for physical force, arguably, just as the debate over this issue had always been more nuanced than a simple either/or choice, so too in the summer of 1848 the deliberations hinged around issues of frustration and pragmatism. This ‘dichotomy of protest’ has become a recurring theme in protest movements ever since. Events in Europe had instilled a new sense of urgency into British radical politics and renewed the long-running and soul-searching debate among Chartists whether to use moral or physical force. It looked like the time was fast coming where a shift of policy would have to come from the prevailing ‘peaceably if we may’ to a new exigent ‘forcibly if we must’.³⁵ This arguably triggered the confrontation with the state centred around the ‘Orange Tree Conspiracy’ later that summer in which William Cuffay and others were arrested on what some have suggested were trumped up charges which culminated in Cuffay’s trial and transportation (see p. 152).³⁶ While many have presented 1848 as the ultimate capitulation of Chartism, I argue that rather than representing a failure, the events of 1848 demonstrate just how successful the Chartists were in terms of the projection of power. This is evidenced by the ultimate achievement of five of the six points in the *Representation of the People Act 1918*.³⁷

³⁵ D. G. Wright, *Popular Radicalism: The Working-class Experience 1780-1880* (New York, 2013), p.112.

³⁶ TNA TS11/141; Dave Steele, ‘Afterword: Peaceably if we May - The Great Chartist Meeting, 1848’, in *Resist – Stories of Uprising* (Manchester, 2019), p. 195; Chase, *Chartism*, pp.309-10.

³⁷ The sixth point, Annual Parliaments, has never made it onto the statute books and most women had to wait ten years for the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act 1928 <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/acts/representation-of-the-people-act-1918> (accessed 28 April 2022).

Internal dialectics - agency/leadership/class

John Belchem argued that charismatic leaders such as Hunt and O'Connor transformed 'popular libertarianism into mass political action' (see chapter one). Paul Pickering has suggested that a hidden language of unspoken dialogue and dialect enabled such leaders to build a rapport with audiences, but E. P. Thompson's positioning of them as *demagogues* points to their frequent tendency to rhetorically present issues calculated to appeal to base desires and prejudices of ordinary people.³⁸ It could be argued that O'Connor and Hunt deliberately exploited traditional notions of deference towards their gentlemanly status. This sometimes rebounded on their cause as evidenced by rifts between the working-class and middle-class factions within the reform movement, such as the very public disputes between Cobbett and Attwood, or later, O'Connor and Lovett/O'Connell.³⁹ So this rabble-rousing firebrand style of populist leadership, rather than being a uniting force, was frequently divisive and self-defeating, arguably causing, ultimately, in the case of Kennington, a full-blown schism in the reform movement.⁴⁰

However, this thesis is more concerned with the agency of individual actors than the demagogic gentlemen figurehead. John Plotz has argued that more attention should be paid to voices from below where crowd members give instructions to their leaders, and James Vernon has re-interpreted

³⁸ Paul Pickering, 'Class without Words: Symbolic Communication in the Chartist Movement', *Past and Present*, 112 (Aug. 1986), p. 150; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), p. 660.

³⁹ A spate of bank failures inspired Birmingham banker Thomas Attwood to campaign for the Bank of England to issue low denomination banknotes. Cobbett also demanded government action, but wanted debts cancelled and saw paper money as 'the greatest instrument of mischief that had ever existed.' In a public debate between the two men in August 1832, Attwood carried the vote 10:1 [BRO 64667]; Protestant Landowner, Feargus O'Connor was constantly protective of his position as leader of the Chartist movement and had several public rifts, notably with fellow Irish Landowner Daniel O'Connell and breakaway Chartist groups such as Joseph Sturge's Complete Suffrage Union and William Lovell's Knowledge Chartism, which O'Connor's *Northern Star* newspaper dubbed 'The New Move' and labelled Lovell 'traitor to the cause of Chartism.' It may be significant that Lovell and Sturge were from working-class backgrounds and that O'Connell was a Catholic or it could have just offended O'Connor's sense of hubris. *Caledonian Mercury*, 6 September 1832; Lovett, *Life Struggles*, pp. 207-8; James Epstein, *The Lion of Freedom – Feargus O'Connor and the Chartist Movement, 1832-1842* (London, 1982), pp. 48-51.

⁴⁰ John Saville, *Ernest Jones – Chartist* (Norwich, 1952), p. 37.

the impact of popular constitutionalism: ‘the strength of these narratives of England’s libertarian constitution was their ability to endow their subjects with a sense of agency, by making their fractured decentred identities seemingly stable and coherent ... in this sense the melodramatic constitutional narratives of nineteenth century English politics were about empowering people by creating order out of chaos, by imaging them as stable, coherent acting subjects.’⁴¹

While voices from the crowd are rarely heard, we are fortunate to have a newspaper report of a heated exchange between an ordinary crowd member and the leadership of the mass platform. At the end of the 1848 Kennington meeting a crowd member spoke up loudly ‘deprecating the dispersion of the meeting’, and, in contravention of O’Connor’s advice, ‘recommended the procession going with the petition until they met the military’.⁴² This provides direct evidence of agency. Contrary to Le Bon’s pliable crowd, blindly following their leaders’ instructions, here we have an autonomous individual not afraid to challenge a decision with which he plainly disagreed.⁴³ A Mr Spur ‘...got up in the wagon, and some very violent altercation took place between him and the other members of the Convention, while the terms traitor, coward, and braggadocio, were liberally bandied about.’ Emotions had run so high that they escalated to what amounted to a fist fight on the stage. Convention members Jones, Clarke and Doyle quickly rallied round O’Connor pleading for understanding of the pragmatic nature of their submission. Ernest Jones said that, despite being a physical force Chartist, he ‘deprecated an attempt at collision with the authorities when they were so unprepared for it.’ Clarke and Doyle backed him up, threatening to arrest Spur themselves. The Convention was far from unanimous on this point as member William Cuffay sided with Spur calling the whole Convention ‘a cowardly set of humbugs’ and

⁴¹ John Plotz, *The Crowd – British Literature and public politics* (Berkeley, 2000), p. 147; *Politics and the People - A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815-1867* (Cambridge 1993), p. 335.

⁴² *Leeds Mercury*, 15 April 1848.

⁴³ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd - A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York, 2017), p. 73.

vowing to have nothing more to do with them (although he did attend the following morning's session) suggesting that there would be 'time enough to be afraid of the military when they met them face to face'. The conversation came to an abrupt conclusion when the wagon was driven off leaving the crowd to disperse. This example speaks to McClelland and Canetti's egalitarian notion of crowds.⁴⁴ McClelland challenged the Thompsonian prioritising of leaders and demagogues, preferring to portray crowd actors such as Spur as having 'freedom from commands'.⁴⁵

The gendered crowd

On first sight there appears to have been a scarcity of women at mass platform events but, as Nicolas Rogers has asserted, the abundance of gender-neutral collective terms such as mob, rabble, populace or 'canaille' employed by newspapers makes it difficult to determine as gender mix of reform crowds. Rogers thought it was, 'likely that women's political activism was more substantial than the historical record would have us believe'.⁴⁶ The 1819 Blackburn meeting, discussed in chapter five, at which women mounted the stage to have a statement read aloud, was an example, as evidenced by the derogatory tone of Marks's and Cruikshank's satirical prints (Figs. 5.11 and 5.12). Radical women's political participation in the mass platform was more nuanced than these crude prints imply. Internal power struggles were to be found in the complex gender politics of the reform movement as evidenced by Jemima Bamford's subordinate position to her husband Sam.⁴⁷ Catherine Hall has

⁴⁴ Canetti saw crowds as autonomous, optimistic, utopian, and forward looking (see chapter three); Elias Canetti, *Masse und Macht - Crowds and power - trans. Carol Stewart* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 2-4; John McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob – from Plato to Canetti* (London, 1989), p 302, 325.

⁴⁵ McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob*, pp. 297-8.

⁴⁶ Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture, and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 223-5.

⁴⁷ Samuel Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (London, 1967 - Orig. pub. 1844), p. 123.

emphasised this political marginalisation of women, ‘Many meetings were seen as occasions for male conviviality and women were excluded informally if not formally.’⁴⁸



Figure 8:7 Detail of *Gathering of the Unions' on Newhall Hill, May 1832*.⁴⁹

Henry Harris's 1833 engraving shows the presence of women at the Newhall Hill reform meeting, easily distinguished by their white dresses (Figure 8:7). It shows a proportion of around ten per cent women in the crowd which is corroborated by illustrations of other events such as Peterloo. However even when reports acknowledged the presence of women, it was often used to downplay the political significance of the event such as this description of one of the reform crisis meetings: 'The great proportion of women present showed that it was looked upon as a sort of holiday business.'⁵⁰ Occasionally larger numbers were recorded such as at an Edinburgh meeting the previous month which was claimed an attendance of 10-15,000 women out of a crowd of 60,000.⁵¹ 25 per cent women and children, while not

⁴⁸ Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 160.

⁴⁹ *The Gathering of the Unions' on Newhall Hill, May 1832*, Henry Harris, Pub. G. Hullmandel, TUC Library Collections, London Metropolitan University.

⁵⁰ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 25 May 1833.

⁵¹ *Morning Chronicle*, 30 April 1832.

unachievable, does seem excessive considering the constraints observed in chapter seven. At the Midlands launch of the Chartist movement in August 1838 women were again in evidence: ‘Several ladies were induced by motives of strong curiosity or something better to trust themselves amidst the pressure of the hustings and some of them were perceived lingering there until the end of the meeting and crowds of well-dressed females lined the rising ground in the rear from which an admiral view of the field could be commanded’.⁵²

Assert the dignity and equality of the sex

Reports of women at indoor meetings were more numerous. In the run up to Peterloo, Samuel Bamford, despite noting that many of his males colleagues were, ‘nothing but dissentient’ sponsored the principle of women voting by show of hand at reform meetings (see p. 203).⁵³ 19 years later Thomas Salt claimed that an indoor BPU audience he addressed on 2 April 1838 comprised no less than 12,000 women. If true, the women appear to have been denied agency as the reports do not mention women addressing the meeting, Salt having claimed that role for himself.⁵⁴ It was not only electoral reform which motivated women to engage with politics. Women were politically active in the home, community and neighbourhood on a range of national, as well as local issues. The same year, at a meeting organised by women in Elland to ‘petition her majesty to cause a repeal of the poor-law amendment act, chair Mrs Susan Fearnley exhorted ‘females present’ to take the matter ‘into their own hands’ to ‘assert the dignity and equality of the sex’ and hoped that the fact that the ‘chief magistrate in the realm was a woman’ may strengthen the case of their petition.⁵⁵

⁵² BRO 64677.

⁵³ Bamford, *Passages*, p. 123.

⁵⁴ *Northern Star*, 5 May 1838, *Brighton Patriot*, 24 April 1838.

⁵⁵ *Preston Chronicle*, 24 February 1838.



Figure 8:8 Susannah Inge.⁵⁶

Women were arguably more successful when they could control the space in which they were operating, enabling them to be more assertive and able to retain autonomy. Sarah Richardson has said, ‘Women have often been written out of the established political histories of nineteenth-century Britain. [...] It requires a re-reading of the sometimes-confined worlds in which women of this period enacted their own political projects.’⁵⁷ One such woman was Susannah Inge, secretary of the *City of London Female Chartist Association*. Mark Crail of *Chartist Ancestors Website* enrolled the help of a descendant of Inge to discover that, ‘for the best part of two years, Susanna Inge was a Chartist sensation – an outspoken young woman, confident to take to the public stage or to the written word to argue the case for Chartism and for women’s right to a voice in politics’ (Figure 8:8).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Sarah Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women* (New York, 2013), p. 193.

⁵⁸ <https://www.Chartistancestors.co.uk/susanna-inge-1820-1902> (accessed 3 April 2020).

She was unafraid to speak her mind in the male dominated Chartist press and wrote: ‘as civilisation advances man becomes more inclined to place woman on an equality with himself, and though excluded from everything connected with public life, her condition is considerably improved,’ elaborating that women should ‘assist those men who will, nay, who do, place women in equality with themselves in gaining their rights, and yours will be gained also’.⁵⁹ When the inaugural 1842 meeting of the association was interrupted by male members challenging the womens’ rights to have their own organisation fellow Chartist Mary Ann Walker came to her defence and rounded on one of the hecklers, a Mr Cohen. The women won out with enthusiastic applause from the audience including from many men.

While Inge, Walker, and Fearnley were probably of working-class background, more records survive of political women from the middle-classes such as the uncompromisingly forthright writer Eliza Sharples. In the pages of her radical newspaper, *Isis*, and also through public speaking, she made several bids to garner support for her common law husband Richard Carlile languishing in jail, as well as espousing the case for reform.⁶⁰ It may have also been Sharples who inspired 150 Birmingham women to write to Carlile’s *Gauntlet* newspaper in a plea to be taken seriously in the world of politics because of men’s negligence and because the interests of both sexes were ‘inseparably connected’. Possibly representing a wing of Attwood’s BPU, they warned men not to underestimate their power, stating simply, ‘None but a novice can doubt our ingenuity, and none but a fool would set our power at nought.’⁶¹

⁵⁹ *Northern Star*, 2 July 1842.

⁶⁰ Helen Rogers, *Poetesses and Politicians: Gender, Knowledge and Power in Radical Culture, 1830-1870* (PhD thesis - University of York, 1974), p. 51.

⁶¹ *Gauntlet*, 25 August 1833, reprinted in Ruth Frow and Edmund Frow, *Political Women 1800-1850* (London, 1989), p. 51.

As early as 1835, Margracia Loudon argued for universal suffrage in her treatise, 'Philanthropic Economy', suggesting that politics and philanthropy were a 'legitimate interest for the gentler portion of the human race'.⁶² Sarah Richardson suggested that Loudon's contribution to political discourse, 'enriched and informed debate on state policy, and developed strategies for women to take an active role in public affairs'.⁶³ Other issues on which middle-class women campaigned included abolitionism and the Anti-Corn Law League.

The sociability which brought middle-class women together politically also applied to the working-classes. Ruth and Edmund Frow have called this the new moral world.⁶⁴ The Frows identified scores of working-class moral and equitable unions and societies of industrious females. David Jones and Vic Clarke identify conviviality as a form of activism, including social activities like tea parties, theatrical and musical entertainment as well as boat and rail trips.⁶⁵ As we have seen women's participation in reform politics was not always opaque. Although women were noticeable by their absence in meaningful numbers from outdoor meetings their presence can be detected where they had more control and autonomy over the space in which they operated, namely in indoor meetings. This may also have something to do with issues of bodily comfort discussed in chapter seven. What is difficult for the historian of radical women is the scarcity of women in the archives and in the case of working-class activists, their almost complete absence. This is compounded by the fact that, until recently, the historiography has been mainly male, effectively making men the gatekeepers of gendered knowledge.

⁶² Margracia Loudon, *Philanthropic Economy* (London, 1835), pp. 58-9.

⁶³ Richardson, *Political Worlds*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ Ruth Frow and Edmund Frow, *Political Women 1800-1850* (London, 1989), p. 101.

⁶⁵ David Jones, 'Women and Chartism', *History*, 68 (1983), p. 11; Vic Clarke, 'Reading and Writing the *'Northern Star'*, 1837-1848 (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2020), pp. 117-8.

While we must dig deep to find them, radical women were active behind the scenes both in supporting their radical husbands and through sociability networks and were perhaps more comfortable attending shorter indoor, sometimes women-only meetings where they may have had more control over autonomy and personal comfort. Though women did attend mass outdoor meetings it was usually in much smaller numbers than men but, as we know, that was all to change in the latter half of the century. While the presence of women in reform crowds was often latent, it was nonetheless ever-present.

Working-class power

Class was also a divisive issue and may ultimately have been a factor in low working-class attendance at Kennington in 1848. I suggest that, of the allegedly 70,000 special constables, a significant proportion may have been labourers who would otherwise have attended the meeting. The focus has been on middle-class constables with David Goodway arguing that the greater percentage were middle-class.⁶⁶ However Metropolitan Police archives indicate a wider cohort of labourers, many workers conscripted against their will.⁶⁷ Railway official R McConnell wrote to his MP on 7 April suggesting that all employees at the Wolverton main junction of the London and North Western Railway should be mandated to serve as specials because, as he put it, ‘there is some plan of attack being made on railways next Monday’.⁶⁸ Workers who refused to cooperate were summarily dismissed, presumably because of their Chartist sympathies.⁶⁹ Discharged railway worker, Patrick Murtuagh wrote to Henry Booth, Chairman of LNWR in July of that year appealing to be reinstated following just such a

⁶⁶ Goodway, *London Chartism*, p. 74; Contrary to popular opinion, Charles Dickens was not among the 1848 Special Constables ; ‘I have not been special constable-ing, myself, today. Thinking there was rather an epidemic in that wise abroad, I walked out and looked at the preparations, without any luggage of staff, warrant or affidavit.’ Dickens to Bulwer Lytton 10/04/1848 <https://twitter.com/DickensFellowHQ> (accessed 10 April 2021).

⁶⁷ TNA, MEPO 2/65.

⁶⁸ TNA, RAIL 1008/100.

⁶⁹ TNA, MEPO 2/63.

dismissal.⁷⁰ Impressment of workers went even further in the London docks where the coal-whippers were not only required to sign up as special constables, but were also to be paid for their services in lieu of a day's wages.⁷¹ Arguably the mass conscription of workers to these roles could have had the effect of significantly reducing turnout on the day, not only by preventing those signed-up from attending, but also exacerbating the climate of fear which may have deterred others from attending. While Goodway's argument for a high percentage of middle-class volunteers is a useful interpretation, it only goes part of the way to explaining the wider social mix of the specials.

Middle-class power

The Birmingham 'Days of May' protests were orchestrated in a level-headed and rational way by a freshly empowered middle-class led by astute leaders such as Thomas Attwood. Many commentators attributed the eventual passage of the bill to the persuasive power of the Birmingham crowd:

'To this body, more than to any other, is confessedly due the triumph (such as it was) of the Reform Bill. Its well-ordered proceedings, extended organisation, and immense assemblages of people, at critical periods of its progress, that rendered the measure irresistible'

Destructive, 9 March 1833.⁷²

As discussed in chapter four, unlike other campaigns, the Birmingham 'Days of May' events were notable for the fact that, the crowd was supporting rather than opposing the government

⁷⁰ TNA, RAIL 1008/100.

⁷¹ Saville, 1848, p.115.

⁷² Quoted in Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1963), p.897.

(see p. 90).⁷³ These orderly meetings contrasted with the riotous response in cities such as Nottingham and Bristol, which, as discussed above, experienced the most serious rioting seen in England since the Gordon riots of 1780.⁷⁴ Attwood distanced the Birmingham events from these outbreaks not only by appealing for calm and order but also by suggesting the formation of local ‘guards’ to defend property threatened by rioting. In contrast with other reformers, Attwood was no radical, having more in common with ‘Ultra-Tories’, his interest in reform arguably prompted by his banker’s desire to increase the supply of paper money and his view that a reformed parliament would be necessary in order to enact such legislation.⁷⁵ Restraint was also the order of the day at a reform crisis meeting on 21 March 1832 at which 10,000 members of the National Union of Working-classes in Finsbury Park, London were urged ‘not to carry sticks, or staves, or weapons of any kind; neither are they to wear cockades or ribbons’.⁷⁶ To discourage escalation to riot at the end of the meeting they were also encouraged at 4pm to ‘break up into ‘classes’’. ⁷⁷ This shows advanced forward-thinking on the part of organisers.

Conclusion – The persistent crowd

Mass platform meetings are still perceived as large for two reasons. Firstly, for those events which were reported as small such as the Spa Fields meetings which each claimed less than 10,000, newspaper coverage generated such an impression of power that this could have been interpreted numerically. In other words, if a meeting felt powerful, it was assumed to be numerically large. Arguably this ‘power = magnitude’ predisposition persisted as the events progressed beyond collective memory into the history books where they remained largely unquestioned until now. Secondly because, once an event had been assigned an attendance

⁷³ Wellington failed to form a government prompting William IV to invite Grey to re-form his administration after just two days Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London, 1973), p. 304.

⁷⁴ Thompson, *Making*, p. 896.

⁷⁵ See p. 253 f45; Carlos Flick, *The Birmingham Political Union and the movements for reform in Britain, 1830-1839* (Folkestone, 1978), p.18.

⁷⁶ Robert Wearmouth, *Some Working-Class Movements of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1948), p. 31.

⁷⁷ *True Sun*, 16 March 1832.

figure, it tended to stick. No-one had the tools or perspective to estimate attendance on the ground, so there were no means to challenge the figures.

What is not in dispute is the forcefulness of state repression, and ultimately subjugation, of reform crowds. What is hard to discern is why. Perhaps the government, witnessing wave after wave of violent revolutions across Europe, feared similar insurgency in Britain. However, the evidence was just not there. With a few isolated exceptions such as the Newport Rising, the British reform movement was principally moderate and nonviolent. Perhaps the state could simply not distinguish the orderly gathering from the spontaneous riot.

In conclusion, though not as large as previously thought in numerical terms, the reform crowd made its power felt in many other ways. The crowd had power to provoke (the state to suppress), empower (individuals to call for political change) and shock (onlookers to be in awe). This power also manifested itself in displays of theatrical pageant (as Tilly has described), flattery (by amplifying the hubris of orators) and apparent intimidation (a mass of people can seem threatening even when nonviolent). The 'N' in Tilly's 'WUNC' acronym stands for numbers. I suggest that reform crowds' reputation for worthiness, unity and commitment more than compensated for their limitation in numbers.⁷⁸

Finally, as this chapter has demonstrated, the power of the reform crowd was most apparent in its ability to project 'reputational power'. This reputation was often interpreted and vocalised in terms of physical magnitude, so attendances were frequently exaggerated sometimes by up to a factor of ten.⁷⁹ The negotiation of power in England in

⁷⁸ Charles Tilly, *Contentious performances*, p. 122.

⁷⁹ One of the first reports of the Kennington Crowd on 10 April 1848 was the evening edition of that day's *Sun* which put the crowd at 150,000, *Sun*, 10 April 1848

the post-revolutionary war period played out like Eric Hobsbawm's 'dialectical dance'.⁸⁰

Not a revolution in conventional terms perhaps, but the sheer steadfast resolve of reform crowds did eventually project their unique form of reputational power to win the vote.

The ongoing conversation between the reform crowd and the state is a classic example of Habermas's 'public sphere' – individuals collectively coming together to articulate the needs of society with the state.⁸¹

Though it must have rarely seemed like it at the time, ultimately the soft power of the crowd finally triumphed over the hard power of the state. As with many protest movements, success was deferred by several generations – in this case, universal suffrage was finally achieved in Britain in 1928 when every man and woman over the age of 21 finally secured the vote regardless of status, income or property.⁸² Paul Foot agreed that, despite being 'blithely ignored by official historians', Chartism, 'branded on the history of the century an indelible memory as frightening to the rulers as it was exciting to the ruled'.⁸³

If my argument for modest attendance is correct, then we need to rethink how we define power and impact. It is a mistake to measure the power of reform crowds solely in quantitative terms. Magnitude in attendance numbers does not necessarily have to be the sole measure of power. Crowds did not have to be numerically large in order to be politically significant. On the contrary, the reputation of reform crowds was powerful despite their, as I now argue, moderate attendance.

⁸⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution – 1789-1848* (New York, 1962), p. 84.

⁸¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere : An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), p. 176.

⁸² Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act, 1928, Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/PU/1/1928/18and19G5c12

⁸³ Paul Foot, *The Vote – How it was won and how it was undermined* (London, 2005), p. 115.

9. Conclusion – The metaphorical crowd

*Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.¹*

While Thomas Gray was not anticipating reform politics, or even tangible crowds, this quote nevertheless encapsulates the contrast between the frenzy of the ‘madding’ (riotous) crowd and the cool patience of the orderly crowds which form my subject matter. It is this ‘noiseless tenor’ which characterised the long-suffering tenacity of the mass platform. Successive cohorts of electoral reformers endured everything from censorship, harassment, surveillance, and imprisonment to brutal physical assaults by a state determined not to concede or relinquish the merest hint of participation in electoral politics to the working man and woman. The fact that reform meetings were championed by generations of reformers and continue to be cited by historians attests to their enduring political power.

This concluding chapter will argue that we should locate the reform crowd in a wider context than discreet temporal incidents. I will suggest that the crowd fêted by the people and feared by the state should be expanded to encompass a broader, ‘metaphorical crowd’ whose reputation habitually preceded it. As well as the legacy of the reform movement, I will discuss the engagement of this research and its pertinence towards today’s political crowds as well as highlighting opportunities for further research.

¹ Thomas Gray, *Elegy in an English Country Churchyard* – Stanza 19 orig. Pub 1751 (Oxford, 1927), p. 9.

First I will consider external triggers which may have prompted crowd action. Looking at the timeline in Appendix one, it is striking how closely successive waves of meetings mirror highs in the price of bread. While these meetings were ostensibly about extending the franchise, one must acknowledge a strong subsistence motivation for people to take to open air meetings. It is also apparent how dominated the period was by Tory administrations. In practical terms it appeared to make little difference in terms of the shows of physical power wheeled out by the state against the crowd. Both Melbourne's and Russell's Whig administrations came down equally as hard on the Chartists as Liverpool's Tory government had on the Peterloo crowd. It was arguably only the fact that Gray's policy was in favour of reform and therefore broadly supported by the crowds during the brief Whig interlude of the reform crisis year that made his administration relatively lenient.

It is also notable how little changed over this 32-year period in terms of policy, strategy, or tactics of reformers. Despite the nearly 70 per cent rise in population, much of it urban, there was little to distinguish the mass platform in 1848 from that of 1816.² Even the tendency to look towards enlightened gentleman reformers such as Hunt, Attwood and O'Connor, to provide leadership was a constant. Although Hunt was steadfast and unfaltering in his insistence on holding out for total male suffrage to the point of blunt refusal to support any part of the Reform Bill, his Achilles heel was his failure to fully distance himself from the Spencean revolutionary element which (arguably wrongly) compromised his position in the eyes of the state and the Tory press, and one assumes, by implication, in the mind of the wider public. All three men exhibited a degree of hubris which in O'Connor's case grew to the point of holding back the development of Chartism by blocking many capable and politically astute potential leaders from getting a foot

² <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/population?time=1816..1848&country=~GBR>

on the ladder, William Lovett being a case in point.³ Aspiring working-class trailblazers like Philip McGrath and John Collins were stymied at every turn.⁴ It was only during the summer months of 1848 that aspiring working-class activists including William Cuffay and John Fussell became so frustrated with the failure of the gentleman leaders like O'Connor to follow-through with their promises of shows of meaningful political strength that they dispensed with moral, and considered the use rather than the mere threat of physical, force.⁵ At the same time, we can detect the growing influence of the middle-class leaders such as Peter McDouall and Ernest Jones, who took up the mantle when O'Connor's health declined.⁶

Enhanced power

This thesis has demonstrated that at three reform meeting sites, contrary to the historical record, attendance could not have approached the excessive numbers claimed. Yet the meetings at Manchester, Kennington and Newhall Hill had far-reaching influence and consequences, especially considering the reduced attendance numbers now established.

These meetings loomed large in popular perception to such an extent that successive administrations sought to subjugate the reform, and later Chartist movements, through censorship, legislation, litigation, and violence or the threat of violence. The mass platform wielded power significantly disproportionate to that which could be expected from numbers alone. It was this projected power which held such a fascination in the public consciousness and drove the paranoia of the state. While the argument about attendance at reform events has not been definitively settled, it can be argued that there has never been enough evidence to

³ William Lovett, *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett* (London, 1876), pp. 132-4.

⁴ Stephen Roberts and Dorothy Thompson, *Images of Chartism* (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 82; <https://www.Chartistcollins.com/timeline.html>

⁵ R G Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854* (London, 1969), p. 335; Roberts and Thompson, *Images of Chartism*, p. 83.

⁶ Roberts and Thompson, *Images of Chartism*, p. 43; John Saville, *Ernest Jones – Chartist* (Norwich, 1952), pp. 38-40;

endorse the claims made in contemporary accounts or by historians for excessive attendances. These research findings make the case for more modest reckonings for attendances at Peterloo in August 1819, Newhall Hill in 1833 or Kennington in 1848.⁷ This is not to suggest that all meetings claimed massive attendance. Many were reported as small at the time or were undefinable due to being unfenced. Where this was the case, however, it supports the point that numerical magnitude was not necessary to create a perception of power – the three Spa Fields meetings had lasting impact despite being small (see chapter two). In other locations colossal crowds were theoretically feasible, a case in point being Kersal Moor where the racecourse boasted fifteen acres which could indeed have accommodated crowds of over 100,000 at 2ppsm.⁸ What makes such attendances unlikely is the timing of events and the populations in the epicentres from which potential attendees were drawn.

While, in order to establish the case for smaller crowds, chapters three and four were grounded in the rigorous empirical methodologies of observation and evidence, later chapters applied more abstract concepts inherent in the ‘emotional turn’. To provide explanations for why people expressed crowd power in numerical terms, I turned to the post-modern sub-discipline of the history of emotions, an area fraught with partiality usually anathema to historians. It is impossible to engage with the dynamics of reform crowds without applying these methodologies which have suggested that emotions influenced people’s propensity to interpret their power in superlative numbers. It has also been argued that somatic considerations such as personal comfort, fatigue, and hunger also had a bearing on attendance, with corporeal factors such as attendees’ ability to see and hear influencing their endurance, particularly at lengthy meetings or those held far from home or in bad weather.

⁷ Jacqueline Riding, *Peterloo – The Story of the Manchester Massacre* (London, 2018), p. 247; Conrad Gill, *History of Birmingham Vol I* (Oxford, 1952), pp. 207-9; Lindsey German and John Rees, *A People’s History of London* (London, 2012), p. 111.

⁸ Though not the 300,000 claimed by many sources; *The Sun*, 25 September, 1838.

The tendency by historians to express crowd power in purely numerical terms persists, but a strong case has been made against the logic of this. While crowd attendance was often lower than previously accepted, this did not impede their effectiveness in alarming the elite.

Endeavours to ‘put down’ orderly crowd power by threats of violence, or draconian legislation, frequently anticipated meeting dates, attesting to the strength of this reputational political power.

There are however two caveats. Although the quantitative exercise in chapter four has comprehensively challenged excessive claims made for attendance at the orderly reform gatherings at Peterloo, Newhall Hill, and Kennington, on actual figures more caution is required.⁹ There is a margin of uncertainty surrounding attendances, but, while it is not possible to be precise about crowd sizes, I argue that attendances at all three sites were closer to the lower tens of thousands rather than the higher tens- or even hundreds- of thousands frequently claimed.

I am also cautious about applying these estimates to other events. While calculations for the three case-studies suggest that newspapers tended to over- rather than under- state crowd size, it is speculative whether this occurred elsewhere. By considering sites such as Spa Fields and Smithfield, where the crowd was reported as small, it has been established that political power and influence was not dependent upon numerical magnitude. Therefore it can be tentatively postulated that other (unfenced) meetings claiming excessive attendance also wielded political influence beyond that implied by their physical size. Many northern rural meetings fit into this category.¹⁰ More work is required but, either way, it has been established that it was not necessary for meetings to be massive in order to be politically significant.

⁹ Robert Poole, *Peterloo – The English Uprising* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 293-295; Carlos Flick, *The Birmingham Political Union and the Movements for Reform in Britain 1830-1839* (Folkestone, 1978), pp. 78-81.

¹⁰ Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place 1789-1848* (Manchester, 2016), pp. 244-6.

However, as indicated in chapter eight, what was clear to all, whether actors, spectators, supporters or denigrators, was that crowds appeared powerful. This was evidenced by the frequency of newspaper reports and the determination of the state to deter and suppress them, and without the vocabulary to describe and quantify ‘political power’ they resorted to interpreting this power in terms of numerical magnitude. It is testament to this acuity to power that successive administrations, Tory and Whig alike, sought to limit, contain, or repel it through swingeing legislation and the use or threat of arrest and military force. Reform crowds were undoubtedly successful in creating an impression of power. Whether the state was afraid of the aims or means of the mass platform is not clear, but it repeatedly misconstrued orderly protest as a front for, or prelude to, violent insurgency or even all-out revolution. Mark Harrison has termed this process ‘extra-politicisation’, the susceptibility of political crowds to external commentators ascribing to them incorrect motives or objectives.¹¹ This often enhanced their power.

Legacy of the reform and Chartist movements

In the months and years following O’Connor’s capitulation at Kennington the mantle was picked up by Julian Harney and Ernest Jones.¹² Both had a brief dalliance with Marx and Engels which turned sour after political differences.¹³ Public meetings continued which, it could be argued, had some influence on the partial widening of the franchise in 1867, although rioting the previous year may also have contributed (Figure 9:1).¹⁴ The third reform act of 1884 and the following year’s *Redistribution of Seats Act* arguably had more to do with

¹¹ Mark Harrison, *Crowds and History – mass phenomena in English towns, 1790-1835* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 318.

¹² O’Connor had succumbed to mental illness and died in 1855.

¹³ Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 337-329; Ernest Jones, *Labour and Capital*, Lecture, November 1867, in John Saville, *Ernest Jones*, pp. 227-30.

¹⁴ Representation of the People Act 1867 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/30-31/102/contents/enacted> (accessed 2 August 2022)

the intra-parliamentary manoeuvrings of Gladstonian Liberalism than the extra-parliamentary politics of the crowd.¹⁵



Figure 9:1 Manhood Suffrage Riots In Hyde Park, 1866, Nathan Hughes. pixels.com

Regarding the legacy of Chartist ideology, there is an ongoing debate. At a public lecture at St Marks Church, Kennington to commemorate the 170th anniversary of the 1848 great Chartist meeting, the historian Malcom Chase was challenged by a Marxist audience member for having suggested that the legacy of the Chartists could be found in late nineteenth-century liberalism rather than more militant forms of revolutionary socialism.¹⁶ This underlines the difficulty of pinning down the trajectory of political ideologies.¹⁷ Dorothy Thompson identified this appropriation of a past cause as ‘marxist teleology’.¹⁸ I suggest that Chartist ideas can be found across a broad swathe of the liberal left. Chase was trying to condense

¹⁵ Matthew Roberts, ‘Resisting “Arithmocracy”: Parliament, Community, and the Third Reform Act’, *Journal of British Studies*, 50, (2011), pp. 389-91.

¹⁶ Malcolm Chase Talk, April 28 2018, *Kennington and 1848, Year of Revolution*, Kennington Chartist Project Archive Ref: KCP0012/AUD/2018 <http://www.kenningtonChartistproject.org> (accessed 29 July 2022)

¹⁷ Rob Sewell, *Chartist Revolution* (London, 2020), p. 360.

¹⁸ Dorothy Thompson, *The Dignity of Chartism* (London, 2015), p. 194.

Chartist legacy into practical achievements rather than nebulous theories, defining Chartism as an ‘epoch defining movement which moved society closer to the recognition of a profound truth that our essential humanity and dignity are protected and preserved only when government answers not merely to the propertied and wealthy people but to all people’.¹⁹ Margot Finn has also identified strands of Chartism in the later Gladstonian liberalism that the ‘Old Chartist’, William Chadwick felt able to give his name to.²⁰

The expectant crowd

The overwhelming feeling running through the period was one of anticipation, specifically, expectation of wider access to participatory democracy. This applied equally to all sides of the confrontation, but the opposing expectations of the people and the state clashed head on. The reform crowd’s dilemma was one of means. They knew the vote would not be willingly conceded by the state but agonised over whether it would have to be taken by force or by the patient, but persistent, power of the crowd.²¹ On the state’s side, the anticipation was of imminent insurrection. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, each crowd event was predicted by the state to mutate into a full-blown riot. Successive administrations were so focussed on defending the elite’s right to unfettered power that they repeatedly misinterpreted modest claims for participatory entitlement as revolutionary attempts to gain absolute power.²² This is what led to the extended stand-off between the soft power of the crowd and the hard power of the state.

¹⁹ Malcolm Chase Talk, 2018.

²⁰ Margot C. Finn, *After Chartism : Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 312 and 322; Stephen Roberts and Dorothy Thompson, *Images of Chartism* (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 104.

²¹ Ernest Jones, *On Moral and Physical Force*, Speech at John St. Literary Institute, 1 April 1848, in Saville, *Ernest Jones*, pp. 97-9.

²² Lord Wharncliffe Speech to the Lords 5 October 1831 reported in *Morning Post*, 6 October 1831.

The metaphorical crowd

If crowds were about power, not numbers, then where should we be looking for the location of this power? What was it the state feared the most from these crowds? If it was not the threat of physical insurgency, it may have been the steadfast and sound rationality of the ideology of reformers and later Chartists which posed such a threat – in other words, the non-physical aspects of the crowd. They were not afraid of a single crowd but of the relentless surge of wave after wave resurfacing. The crowd feared by the state transcended individual events. We should be looking at political crowds as much more than just a series of individual events. Rather we need to reconsider these crowds in a more amorphous or metaphorical context.

Rather than considering radical reform crowds discretely, they should be seen as encompassing the wider political consciousness of the working-classes. This ‘metaphorical crowd’ could be seen as transcending time, spanning not only the 32 years covered by this thesis, but the 148 years which separate the Earl of Richmond’s 1780 attempt to introduce a Reform Bill to parliament and the Equal Franchise Act of 1928 in which women finally achieved the same voting rights as men.²³ Locating the crowd beyond individual events liberates us from the constraints of a narrow discourse about numbers. By the ‘metaphorical crowd’ I mean the perceived power represented by the sum of all the reform crowd actions and events in my period. These events could be interpreted as the physical manifestation of a much greater symbolic crowd – each event being just the tip of an iceberg. The dawning political consciousness and aspirations of an astute, literate and politically empowered nation of working people became a flood, and like a tidal wave, nothing could stop it. This, I argue, is what social polemicists such as Le Bon and Tarde feared when they portrayed the political

²³ Richmond’s unsuccessful 1780 bill, possibly inspired by his membership of Major Cartwright’s Society for Constitutional Information, included plans for annual parliaments, manhood suffrage and equally populous electoral districts; William C. Lowe, *Lennox, Charles, (1735–1806), third duke of Richmond* (ODNB Entry, 2013); H. T. Dickinson, *Society for Constitutional Information* (ODNB Entry, 2007).

crowd in such a virus-like negative light, but just as viruses mutate into new variants, the newly radicalised public simply regrouped in different forms and with different leaders.

The state could put-down individual events with shows of violence such as Peterloo, or repeatedly arrest and imprison the leaders. They could enact repressive legislation such as gagging or Seditious Meetings Acts but ultimately they could not stem the flow of ideas and the demand for participation in democracy. The reform movements could be temporarily halted but no amount of repressive legislation could bring about permanent subjugation. To some extent this was what Gray's Whig administration realised in the early 1830s but their 'boil lancing' solution in the form of the 1832 Reform Act was in the long term pyrrhic, as when it was realised what a limited extension of the franchise it represented, and the small number of new constituencies created, it further increased demands for suffrage, heralding the birth of Chartism in 1838.

Why was the state so reluctant to concede even the smallest points of power? It can now be understood why the state saw this wider crowd as such a threat as, while individual event crowds posed little challenge to authority, the ideas and perceived power of the combined 'metaphorical' crowd became oppressively threatening and intimidating. The elite perceived in the many-headed hydra an antithetical symbol of disorder and resistance, a powerful threat to the building of state, empire, and capitalism.²⁴ But there was no meaningful dialogue between the opposing sides due to their contradictory agendas. While reformers were seeking the right to the vote in order to improve basic subsistence and what we would now call standards of living, the state was looking to protect wealth and capital. This was a battle of

²⁴ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra - Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000), p. 2.

property versus rights. In this lies the clue as to why the first and second reform acts both sought to link voting rights to property.

Although these campaigns were thought unsuccessful at the time, they can be considered ultimately successful if we are prepared to measure success retrospectively. In 1867, the franchise was approximately doubled to two million men, and in 1884, within the living memory of many former Chartists, the vote was extended to the majority of adult males.²⁵ The following year the *Redistribution of Seats Act* addressed a further charter point by re-drawing constituency boundaries to create mainly single member equal electoral districts. In 1918, five of the six points of the charter were achieved when all men over the age of 21 and some women were enfranchised and finally, in 1928, universal suffrage was achieved when women under 30 achieved the vote.²⁶ Arguably these milestones on the road towards a participatory democracy exemplify the ultimate vindication of the reputational power of reform crowds and the tenacity of successive generations of reformers such as Ernest Jones who said:

'Freedom comes not of herself

You must go and seek her

There is no time to rest,

till you have found her

*Expect nothing but from your own actions!'*²⁷

²⁵ Representation of the People Act 1867 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/30-31/102/contents/enacted> Third Reform Act 1884 <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/one-man-one-vote/> (accessed 3 August 2022); Redistribution of Seats Act 1885 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1885/may/05/committee-first-night#S3V0297P0_18850505_HOC_200 (accessed 3 August 2022).

²⁶ The sixth point, Annual Parliaments, have never made it onto the statute books; Representation of the People Act 1918 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1918/64/contents/enacted> (accessed 3 August 2022); Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act 1928 <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/case-study-the-right-to-vote/the-right-to-vote/birmingham-and-the-equal-franchise/1928-equal-franchise-act/> (accessed 3 August 2022).

²⁷ Ernest Jones, *The Charter and no surrender*, Speech in St Pancras, 13 October 1846, in Saville, *Ernest Jones*, p. 90.

Engagement

The issues covered in this thesis resonate strongly today. In 2019 I was asked to comment on the claimed attendance of one million at the Peoples Vote March in London on 23 March of that year. Initially, using aerial footage, I applied my formula of two ppsm to the area occupied by people over the entire route of the march including the marshalling point in Hyde Park and the audience surrounding the platform for the final speeches in Parliament Square. I came up with a figure of around 450,000 but was cautious not to publish it in my article, majoring instead on the wider point that attendance figures play a much smaller part in the impact of mass protest than the impression of the power they symbolise.²⁸ Focusing on attendance misses the point. The fact that a debate surrounds the ‘one million’ figure confirms that reputational power is still a live issue for political crowds. Keith Still was not so reticent in publishing his calculations in which he placed attendance rather lower than mine at between 312,000 and 400,000.²⁹ This example attests to the continuing relevance of this research for attendance at political meetings today. Many other examples exist, the most notorious being Donald Trump’s claim of 1.5 million attendees at his inauguration despite some experts putting it as low as 250,000.³⁰

Initial reception of my research results presented in conference papers has been largely (though not always) favourable with some historians, while not perhaps concurring with my figures, nevertheless citing them and leading others to revisit and revise down attendance estimates for reform crowds in the light of this work (see p. 83).³¹

²⁸ Dave Steele, ‘People’s Vote march: when it comes to crowds, history shows it’s not all about size’, *The Conversation*, 27 March 2019 <https://theconversation.com/peoples-vote-march-when-it-comes-to-crowds-history-shows-its-not-all-about-size-114329>;

²⁹ *The i*, 27 March 2019; <https://fullfact.org/europe/peoples-vote-march-count/>

³⁰ *The Guardian*, 22 January 2017.

³¹ Robert Poole, *Peterloo*, p 363; Fabrice Bensimon, ‘Londres, 10 Avril 1848 – Les Chartistes Dans L’oeil Du Daguerriotypiste, *Parlement[s]*, *Revue d’histoire politique*, 33 (2021), pp. 85-6.

Further research...

Lack of space has prevented consideration of several important aspects of the mass platform in regions outside London, Manchester and Birmingham, in particular the open-air meetings and candle lit processions of the north of England as well as the situation in Scotland Ireland and Wales. These are pertinent to the development of the mass platform, especially regarding the complex relationship binding the popular as well as state politics of Ireland and the mainland. Apart from brief mentions of black Chartist William Cuffay, issues of race and empire have not been addressed though they must have had a bearing on both the politics of the reform question and specifically the crowd actions which concern this thesis. Activists William Davidson, Robert Wedderburn, both born out of illicit liaisons between powerful white men and black Jamaican women, would make a thought-provoking topic for further research.³²

Gender issues have only briefly been considered, specifically the participation (or lack of it) by women. Loyalist crowds have only been fleetingly touched upon but that is because, by their very nature, they tended to be reactive and disorderly, contrasting with the proactive orderly crowds which concern this thesis. The non-inclusion of all these issues has not been because they are considered unimportant, quite the reverse. But they are well covered by other historians and their inclusion would not add to the quantitative and power issues relating to reform crowds which comprise the nub of this research.

While this thesis has moved the debate forward regarding quantification issues as well as highlighting the reputational nature of crowd power, the research poses questions as well as answering them. Although the focus has been on orderly crowds, there is no question that the

³² Iorwerth Prothero, *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth Century London: John Gast and His Times* (Folkestone, 1979), p.123 and 360.

potential for escalation to riot, violence and insurgency was ever-present. This was briefly touched on in the section on the second Spa Fields meeting in chapter two, but that was an isolated incident. There is work to be done on the dynamics of transition or escalation as well as the mechanics of restraint and how this was regularly managed sensitively and skilfully by the leadership of the mass platform from Henry Hunt through to Feargus O'Connor. The ambiguous or dynamic status of crowd membership also requires research. It was not always possible to reliably distinguish between participant and observer because people often became drawn in after they initially attended events as impartial spectators.

There is also the potential for further work on peripatetic as well as disorderly crowds such as those involved in the Newport Rising of 1839 and the Preston Plug Strike of 1842.³³ In both cases the crowd was mobile, armed and intent on insurgency although historians disagree to what extent violence was intended rather than merely threatened. Either way both incidents resulted in armed attacks from militia resulting in many fatalities. This early Chartist period represents a vacuum in my research and a hard look at the crowd dynamics of the period would not go amiss.

Another area which is largely unresolved is the question of moral versus physical force which was a crucial issue from the start of Chartism.³⁴ In a September 1838 speech to the London launch of the charter at New Palace Yard, Feargus O'Connor declared that, 'a union would arise [from which] a moral power would be created, sufficient to establish the rights of the poor man; but if this failed, then let every man raise his arm in defence of that which his judgement told him was justice'.³⁵ While there were protagonists on both sides of the debate, this went largely

³³ Ian Hearn, *From: Riot!: Civil Insurrection From Peterloo to the Present Day*, (London, 2006), p. 100; Chase, *Chartism*, pp. 115-6.

³⁴ Though often attributed to O'Connor, it is not clear if the slogan, 'Peaceably if we can, Forcibly if we must' were his words.

³⁵ *Evening Standard*, 18 September 1838; Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement*, pp. 51-3.

unresolved even in the heady days of 1848 when O'Connor, often considered a physical force Chartist, reneged when put to the test. It was never clear if 'forcefully if we must' was a serious threat or merely a hint of what may come.³⁶ Dorothy Thompson thought that the matter was 'defused' after the death sentences on the 'Newport Three', Frost, Williams and Jones were commuted to transportation.³⁷ This, she thought, was the turning point where the presumption was for moral rather than physical force. Or perhaps projecting ambiguity on the issue or having an anonymous 'radical flank' suited the Chartists. Herbert Haines coined the term 'Radical Flank Effect' to describe the phenomena whereby the campaigns of moderate or orderly political groups can benefit from the existence of unconnected parallel militant campaigns.³⁸ This has been seen frequently in the twentieth century in the US civil rights movement in the 1960s as well as arguably in the post-colonial break up of India and is today being considered with much soul searching among some XR activists including Andreas Malm in his recent book *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*.³⁹ Perhaps it is time for a scholarly revisitation of this dilemma as faced by Chartists. The debate goes on...

Reputational power

So, to conclude, the key to understanding the power of reform crowds, is in their reputation. Where evidence exists, I have made the case for smaller reform crowds but have stopped short of extrapolating this to unfenced meetings. But, despite their moderate size in physical terms, reform crowds punched above their weight in terms of political power and I argue that this should be understood in terms of 'reputational power'. The perception of the power of political

³⁶ Paul Pickering, 'Peaceably if we can, Forcibly if we must - Political Violence and Insurrection in Early-Victorian Britain', in Michael Davis, Brett Bowden (eds) *Terror: From Tyrannicide to Terrorism in Europe, 1605-2005* (Queensland, 2008), p. 131.

³⁷ Thompson, *Dignity of Chartism*, p. 10; Chase, *Chartism*, pp. 115-6.

³⁸ Herbert H. Haines, 'Radical Flank Effects', in David Snow (Ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements* (Oxford, 2013), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/9780470674871.wbespm174>

³⁹ Andreas Malm, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline - Learning to Fight in a World on Fire* (London, 2021), p. 62.

crowds by both the wider public and the state was essentially a gut feeling or emotional response.

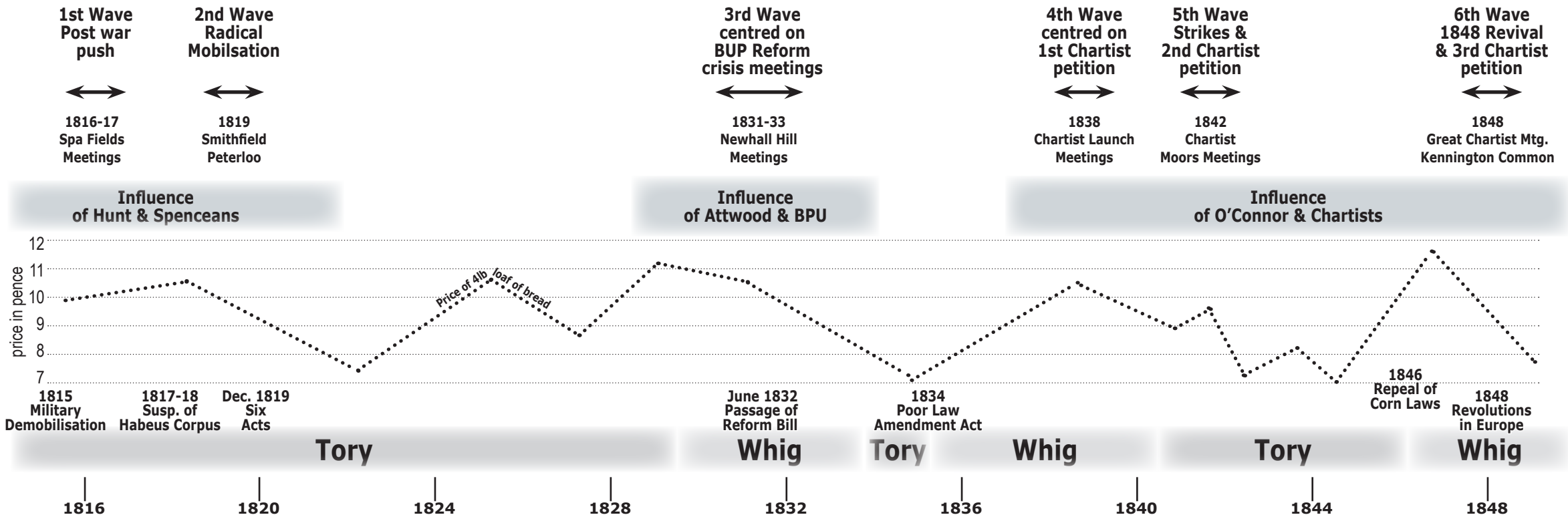
Finally, I suggest that, while individual crowd events may have been smaller than thought, their power was enhanced by their formidable political reputation. Crowds were powerful despite their, arguably, smaller numbers. I'm arguing for the decoupling of magnitude from power. Whether the numbers were true or false, reputation trumped numbers. The reputation of reform crowds transcended individual events and it also sometimes transcended the truth. But just as today it was the story rather than the truth which mattered. If enough people believed there were 60,000 at Peterloo and continued to believe it, that became the truth. And by the time of the build-up to the 1848 Kennington Meeting, the perceived reputation of the Chartists preceded them.

Anticipating the late nineteenth-century 'mob' school of Le Bon, Taine, and Tarde, there was an irrational fear of collective power. Crowds felt dangerous even when they weren't.

What the state feared so much was not those present in person at events but rather those who weren't – the potential pent-up power of all those supporters who couldn't attend.

It is this 'latency' I am terming 'reputational power'. The argument of this thesis is that this reputational power was far more significant than mere numbers. Whether viewed from the perspective of supporter or denigrator, it was the reputational power of reform crowds which triggered their paradoxical simultaneous fearing and fêting.

Appendix 1 – Timeline of key events



Source of bread prices: Ronald Sheppard and Edward Newton, *The Story of Bread* (London, 1957), p. 168.

Appendix 2 – Provenance of Kilburn’s daguerreotypes



Figure A2.1 Original Daguerreotypes by William Kilburn of the Chartist Crowd at Kennington Common 10 April 1848, Royal Collection Trust: RCIN 2932484, RCIN 2932482.⁴⁰

William Kilburn, the photographer of the 1848 Kennington daguerreotypes, had presumably obtained a commercial licence for daguerreotype portraiture soon after the process was introduced to Britain from France in the early 1840s.⁴¹ The commercially ambitious Kilburn had established a portraiture business in a Regent Street studio which he advertised regularly in the London papers in 1847-48, claiming that his hand-coloured miniatures were ‘an improvement upon daguerreotype portraits’.⁴² An 1847 report of the proceedings of the Graphic Society in the *Athenaeum* praised his work as ‘producing colour with all the delicacy and gradation essential to the reproduction of flesh’ and, recommending a visit to his studio said that he, ‘appears to be the only person who has entered into the process with spirit and intelligence’.⁴³

Several observations can be made from the original un-transposed images. Firstly, they both bear traces of blue pigmentation in the sky, an example of Kilburn’s hand tinting technique

⁴⁰ Royal Collection Trust: RCIN 2932484, RCIN 2932482.

⁴¹ John Hannavy, *Encyclopedia of nineteenth-century photography, Volume 1* (New York, 2005), p. 138.

⁴² *Athenaeum*, 20 February 1847; Chiesa and Gosio, *Daguerreotype Hallmarks*, p. 87; Frances Dimond and Roger Taylor, *Crown and Camera. The Royal Family and Photography 1842-1910* (Harmondsworth, 1987), p. 217.

⁴³ *Athenaeum*, 20 March 1847.

which, despite his claim of originality was a technique used by many portrait photographers.⁴⁴ However it is rare to see it used to enhance outdoor scenes which were in themselves still relatively unusual subjects. What is also remarkable is the penetration of the images in terms of depth, with the factory chimney situated some 300m from the camera and the panorama a full 400m edge to edge (see chapter three).

Secondly it is possible to detect a delay between the two exposures as people have clearly changed position, in some cases by several yards, which confirms that the crowd was not dense as free movement is restricted in crowds denser than 3ppsm.⁴⁵ This is not surprising as, unless Kilburn had two cameras, the wet chemical nature of the daguerreotype process would have meant that he would have had to remove and process the first plate before preparing and exposing the second. This must have taken several minutes as image RCIN 2932482 shows two rows of spectators against the fence to the common and a single gentleman riding a horse along Queens Place in the foreground while, by the time image 2932484 was exposed, he has moved out of shot to be replaced by a gentleman's horse-drawn Stanhope or Phaeton as well as a commercial pony-cart holding a standing spectator. Both of these vehicles are now stationary and the crowd along the fence has become three deep. This confirms the dynamic nature of the crowd. The other observation is that, despite exposure times having been reduced from the three to 15 minutes of Louis Daguerre's pioneering images to a more practical one to 30 seconds subject to available light, some blurring of moving objects such as flags, banners and people can be seen in the pictures.⁴⁶ On the digitised images it is possible to zoom right in to count the crowd (chapter two) but also to see stunning details of individuals including those on the 'vans' or stages.

⁴⁴ Chiesa and Gosio, *Daguerreotype Hallmarks*, p. 28.

⁴⁵ Keith Still, *Crowd Dynamics* PhD Thesis University of Warwick, (July 2000), p. 37.

⁴⁶ Chiesa and Gosio, *Daguerreotype Hallmarks*, p. 28; <https://www.loc.gov/collections/daguerreotypes/articles-and-essays/the-daguerreotype-medium/>

Despite the fact that the crowd on the ground is almost entirely male, several women can be seen standing on the stage behind the number two flag who, as Fabrice Bensimon has suggested, may be guests of speakers, ‘Sur la plateforme centrale, elles sont au moins six femmes, dont une qui nous fait face. Rien ne laisse penser qu’elles aient parlé, et sans doute sont-elles les épouses ou les filles d’orateurs.’⁴⁷ It is even possible to see that these women, like 99 per cent of the crowd on the common, are looking away from the camera towards the other platform behind flag number three (see chapter seven).

There has been much discussion about whether these images represent the earliest examples of photographs of a crowd. Daguerreotypes of military drilling can certainly be found as early as 1841 as well as of barricades during the June Days uprising in Paris later in 1848.⁴⁸ However this is nit-picking – for our purposes they certainly represent the first surviving photograph of a British political crowd and the only one of a Chartist crowd. In any case they present a unique opportunity to study a 19th century crowd using an evidence-based approach.

There is also an on-going debate among historians about whether the photographs were commissioned by Albert himself as a memento, by the *Illustrated London News (ILN)* as a reference for their woodcut or even by the government as a form of surveillance – the forerunner of police use of CCTV perhaps? Regarding the latter, we know that Commissioner Richard Mayne had requisitioned the Horn’s Tavern to be centre of police operations on 10 April, so it is reasonable to speculate that the police also commissioned Kilburn.⁴⁹ John Tagg

⁴⁷ Fabrice Bensimon, ‘Londres, 10 Avril 1848 : Les Chartistes Dans L’oeil Du Daguerreotypiste, *Parlement[s]*, *Revue d’histoire politique* 33 (2021), p. 95.

⁴⁸ Andrew Messner, *William Kilburn’s 1848 Chartist Daguerreotypes*, (Sydney, 2018), para. 19 <https://andrewmessner.net/2018/01/10/chartism-10-april-1848-kennington-common-william-kilburn/#Why-Did-Kilburn-Photograph-the-Chartists> ; Olivier Ihl, ‘Dans l’oeil du daguerreotype - La rue du Faubourg-du-Temple, Juin 1848’, *Études photographiques*, 34 (2016) pp. 3-5.

⁴⁹ *London Evening Standard*, 10 April 1848.

has argued that Kilburn's daguerreotypes are an early example of mass surveillance, suggesting that photography and policing developed in parallel and that the police were quick to appropriate this new technology as a Foucauldian tool of state power, control and observation.⁵⁰ In this way the images may be a form of Benthamite Panopticon.⁵¹ While this is not impossible, there is no record of either Kilburn or the daguerreotypes among the extensive Metropolitan Police archives. It is also worth noting that, while today it is possible to zoom in to a digitised scan, at the time there was no way of duplicating or enlarging them other than with a magnifying glass. In terms of surveillance the images would have had limited value as, almost without exception, the crowd is looking away from the camera – all that can be seen is people's backs. Identification of individuals would have been impossible and, as, as Andrew Messner has pointed out, the technology was untested.⁵²



Figure A2.2 Prince Albert, Coloured Miniature by William Kilburn, 1848.

With such a lucrative business and with presumably high rents for his strategically placed commercial premises, it is pertinent to ask why Kilburn would give up a day's work to undertake a task as commercially uncertain as photographing an outdoor political crowd (see chapter four). By April 1848 he was claiming royal patronage in advertisements, having come to the attention of Prince Albert at a meeting of the Society of Arts who subsequently commissioned him for a sitting to produce one of his coloured miniatures (Figure A2.2).⁵³ It is tempting to consider the Kennington images as also having been a royal commission, but it is worth considering the provenance of Kilburn's daguerreotypes and what else they may signify.

⁵⁰ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation, Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke, 1988) pp. 64-7.

⁵¹ Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, p. 87.

⁵² Messner, *Kilburn's Daguerreotypes*, paras. 15-16.

⁵³ <https://www.rct.uk/collection/2932487/prince-albert-1819-1861> (accessed 17 November 2019); *Morning Post*, 29 April 1848.

The originals of Kilburn's plates now reside in the Royal Collection, located in the Round Tower at Windsor Castle (Figure A2.1). A visit to the archive proved rewarding, as the daguerreotypes are beautiful objects – only about 4" x 3" and detail can be seen which does not translate to digitised copies. Although handling was not permitted, Alessandro Nasini, Curator of Photographs, turned them over to reveal the inscription on the back: 'Great Chartist Meeting at Kennington Common 10 April 1848 - Taken from nature.' Nasini identified the handwriting as that of Queen Victoria. (Figure A2.3). Accompanying them is a souvenir copy of a printed thank-you letter from the Home Secretary to special constables dated 12 April on the back of which Albert pasted two hitherto unknown duplicates of the daguerreotypes made by the calotype salt print process. It is inscribed this time by Albert: 'Photograph View taken of the Kennington Meeting by Mr Kilburn.' The wording indicates a familiarity between the Prince and Kilburn.

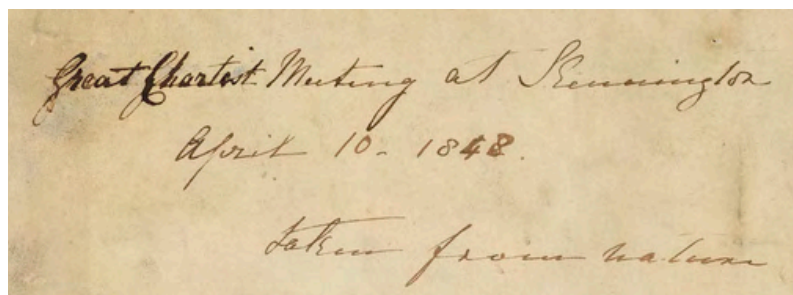


Figure A2.3 Queen Victoria's handwritten caption on the reverse of RCIN 2932482.⁵⁴

These royal inscriptions confirm the close personal interest taken in the event by the royal family, indicating that the interest and communication about political crowds went to the very top of British Society. Their fascination may have been triggered by their evacuation to the Isle of Wight for their own safety during the crisis, rendering them unable to continue following events at close quarters, so it is quite possible that they wanted a visual record of

⁵⁴ <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/1/collection/2932482/the-Chartist-meeting-on-kennington-common-10-april-1848> (accessed 17 November 2019).

the event. In the run-up to the crisis the Prince Consort had attempted to interfere by offering unwelcome advice to Wellington on the siting of batteries of artillery in the capital (see chapter four, p. 104).⁵⁵ After the crisis had subsided, Albert became sympathetic to workers' rights and electoral reform, addressing (against the wishes of the Prime Minister) that year's annual meeting of the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes. He was subsequently appointed its president and may have had a hand in the later decision to relocate his pioneering model of improved working-class housing from the Great Exhibition site to the newly opened Kennington Park where it still stands as the Prince Consort's Model Lodge.⁵⁶

So, regarding the question of whether the *ILN* commissioned Kilburn, as we have seen, riding the wave of enthusiasm for daguerreotypes portraiture, Kilburn commanded high fees from elite clients including the royal family.⁵⁷ It is possible that he was merely following an interest or experimenting with outdoor techniques, but as a successful businessman it is reasonable to assume that he was paid to be there rather than merely pursuing an entrepreneurial whim. If this was the case, someone must have issued the commission. Ruling out the police, this leaves Prince Albert, the *ILN* or both. While it is not impossible that these were obtained later, it seems most likely that Albert was the source of the commission and that Kilburn also made additional profit by selling one plate to the *Illustrated London News*. If the daguerreotypes were not a commission, Kilburn probably either sold them to Albert and Victoria soon after the event, or presented them as a gift – an incentive perhaps to secure future royal patronage for portrait sittings. Indeed Kilburn went on to receive royal commissions until at least 1852.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ TNA, MEPO 2/63.

⁵⁶ *Evening Mail*, 19 May 1848, Dave Steele, 'How Many were in the Crowd', in *Kennington 1848 – Another Look* (Kennington, 2019), p. 11.

⁵⁷ Francis Dimond and Roger Taylor, *Crown and Camera* (Harmondsworth, 1987), p. 217.

⁵⁸ <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/7/collection/2932491/queen-victoria-with-the-princess-royal-the-prince-of-wales-princess-alice> (accessed 17 November 2019).

Appendix 3 Density Control

To validate the crowd densities assumed in the case studies a recent event with known attendance can be used as a control. Modern political crowds are not suitable as attendance is often contentious. Neither are most outdoor music events as they often feature multiple stages for which data is not individually available. A suitable example presents itself however – the 2005 Live8 concert in Hyde Park, London, which sold 150,000 standing tickets and had a single stage. The audience area was 109764m² which means that the average crowd density was just under 1.4 ppsm (Figure: A3.1).

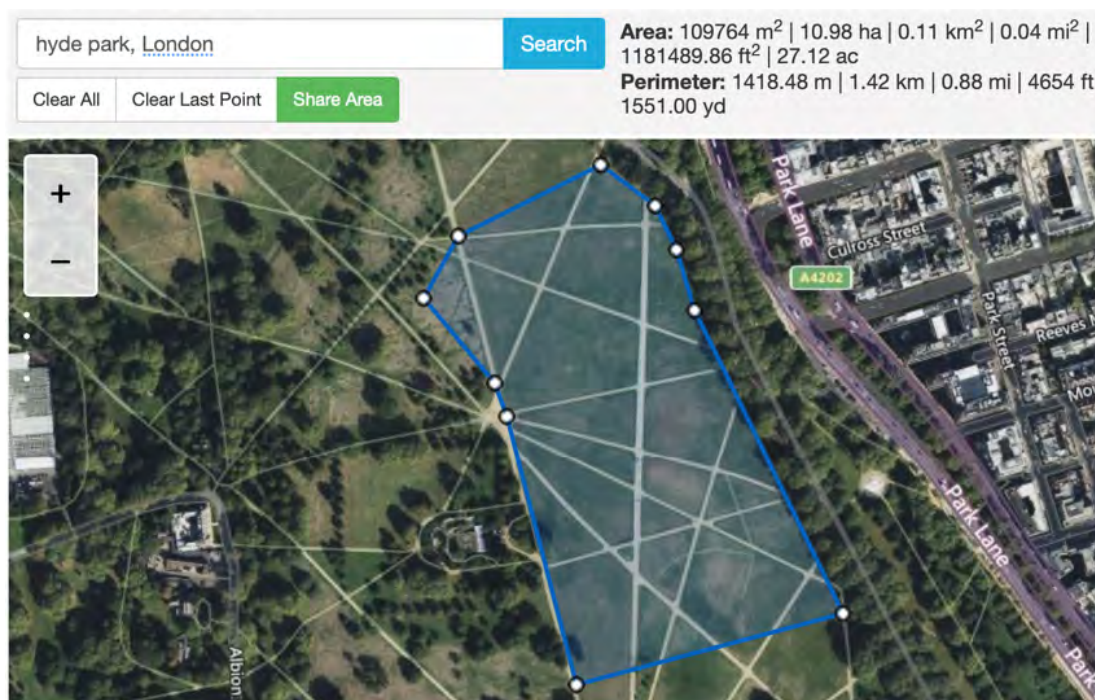


Figure A3.1 Calcmaps© calculation of area occupied by crowd of 150,000⁵⁹

Aerial footage confirms that density increased around the stages to presumably as high as three ppsm and viewing screens and fell off at the periphery to almost zero (Figure: A3.2). It is not unreasonable to speculate that nineteenth-century crowds followed a similar pattern corroborating my average density estimates of 1.5-2 ppsm.

⁵⁹ <https://www.calcmaps.com>



Figure A3.2 Aerial photo of 2005 Live8 concert in Hyde Park ©Alamy.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-live-8-concert-hyde-park-108518955.html>

Bibliography

Primary sources

Books

Anon. (A gentleman of the Bar) *High Treason - The Trials at the Bar of Arthur Thistlewood, James Watson, Thomas Preston and John Hooper* (Clerkenwell, 1817).

Bamford, Samuel, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (Orig. pub. 1844) (London, 1967).

Edmonds, George, *A Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham: Being a Vindication of the Conduct of the Writer, at the Late Meeting at the Shakespeare* (Birmingham, 1817).

Eliot, George, 'Address to Working men by Felix Holt', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (Edinburgh, 1868).

Haydon, Benjamin Robert, *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter* (New York, 1853)

Hone, William, *Report of the Metropolitan and Central Committee, Appointed for the Relief of the Manchester Sufferers* (London, 1820).

Hone, William, *Riots in London - Hone's Full and Authentic Account* (December 1816), British Library G.18983.(7.)

Hone, William, *The Three Trials of William Hone, for Publishing Three Parodies* (London, 1817).

Hunt, Henry, *Memoirs Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq. (3 vols.) written in His Majesty's Jail at Ilchester* (London, 1822).

Knight, John, *A Full and Particular Report of the Proceedings of the Public Meeting Held in Manchester on Monday the 18th of January, 1819* (Manchester, 1819).

Loudon, Margracia, *Philanthropic Economy* (London, 1835).

Lovett, William, *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett* (Orig. pub. 1876) (London, 1967).

MacDonnell, Sir John, *Political State Trials Vol. I 1819-1822* (London, 1888).

Mitchell, C., *The Newspaper Press Directory* (London, 1847).

More, Hannah, *Cheap Repository Tracts, Suited to the Present Times* (London, 1819).

Saville, John, *Ernest Jones - Chartist* (Norwich, 1952).

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, *The Masque of Anarchy* (London, 1832).

Somerton, William Henry, *A Narrative of the Bristol Riots, on the 29th, 30th, and 31st of October 1831* (Bristol, 1831).

Newspapers and Periodicals

London

Atlas.
Bell's Weekly Messenger.
Evening Standard.
Examiner.
Globe.
Illustrated London News.
John Bull.
Mail.
Mercury.
Morning Chronicle.
Morning Herald.
Morning Post.
News.
Northern Star. (From Nov. 1844).
Punch.
Sun.
Times.

Regional

Aberdeen Journal.
Aris Birmingham Gazette.
Birmingham Journal.
Caledonian Mercury.
Cheltenham Chronicle.
Courier and Evening Gazette.
Derby Mercury.
Felix Farley's Bristol Journal.
Fife Herald.
Hull Packet.
Jackson's Oxford Journal.
Leeds Mercury.
Manchester Mercury.
Manchester Observer.
Manchester Times.
Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser. (1837 - 1844)
Northern Whig.
Preston Chronicle.
Saunders's News-Letter and Daily Advertiser.
Sheffield Independent.
Staffordshire Advertiser.
Worcester Journal.

Radical

Black Dwarf.
Champion.
Crisis.
North Briton.
Northern Liberator.
Operative.
Pioneer.
Political Register.
Western Vindicator.

Archives consulted:

Birmingham Record Office

64654, Proceedings of First Annual Meeting of BPU, 26 July 1830.
64660, Proceedings of Newhall Hill BPU Meeting, 3 October 1831.
64662, Proceedings of Newhall Hill BPU Meeting, 10 May 1832.
64668, Proceedings of Newhall Hill BPU Meeting, 20 May 1833.
64677, Proceedings of Debate between Attwood, Jones and Cobbett, 28-29 August 1832.
DV123.256362, Newhall Hill Land Sale Documents, 1834

The National Archives

HO/41/4 f.434, Lord Sidmouth - Manchester Magistrates Correspondence, 4 August 1819.
HO/44-32, Copy of Western Vindicator in Home Office Papers
HO/45/2410/531-6, Home Office Papers concerning Kennington Meeting, April 1848.
MEPO 2/63, Metropolitan Police Conscription of Pensioners as Special Constables, April 1848.
MEPO 2/65, Agreement by Philip McGrath to curtail Petition route, 8-10 April 1848.
RAIL 1008/100, Conscription of Railway workers as Special Constables, April 1848.
TS11/141, Evidence concerning Orange Tree Plot, August 1848.
WO/30, Papers concerning Military Preparation for Kennington Meeting, April 1848.
WO340/111, Papers concerning recruitment of Special Constables, April 1848.

Parliamentary Records

Journal of the House of Commons 1817, Volume 72.

Seditious Meetings Bill (Hansard, 14 March 1817),
Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill (Hansard, 24 June 1817)

Hansard

House of Lords Debate 3 February 1817, Hansard, Vol. 35, col.170.
House of Commons Debate, 11 June 1827, Hansard Vol. 17, col.1200-17.
House of Lords Debate, 5 October 1831. Hansard Vol. 7.

Parliamentary Archives,

Parliamentary and Municipal Elections Bill 10 June 1872, Vol. 117.
Representation of the People Act 1867
Redistribution of Seats Act 1885
Representation of the People Act 1918
Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act, 1928, L/PO/PU/1/1928/18and19G5c12.

Online sources - Primary

Bodleian Libraries Broadside Ballads.
<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/search/?query=peterloo> (accessed 17 November 2019).

British Newspaper Archive .
<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk> (accessed 22 December 2019).

Gale Digital Scholar Lab.
<https://www.gale.com/intl/primary-sources/digital-scholar-lab> (accessed 22 December 2019).

Population Data from Histpop.org
www.histpop.org

Population Data from Vision of Britain
https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10104180/cube/TOT_POP (accessed 3 April 2020).

Romantic Illustration Network.
<http://bit.ly/doyle-bullring> (accessed 17 November 2019).

Special Constable's Truncheon,
<https://barricades.ac.uk/items/show/9> (accessed 3 April 2020).

Online sources – Secondary

Bethnal Green's Ordeal - Crowd crush at Bethnal Green Underground station, 3 March 1943.
<https://alondoninheritance.com/thebombedcity/bethnal-greens-ordeal-and-the-underground-shelter-disaster> (accessed 22 December 2019).

CalcMaps© Area Mapping Tool.
<https://www.calcmaps.com>

Chartism Magazine .
<http://thechartists.org/magazine.html> (accessed 22 December 2019).

Crail, Mark, Chartist Ancestors Website.
<https://www.Chartistancestors.co.uk> (accessed 17 November 2019).

Internet Archive.
<https://archive.org> (accessed 22 December 2019).

Kennington Chartist Project.
<http://www.kenningtonChartistproject.org> (accessed 29 July 2022).

King, Brian, A Potted History of Association Football in England.
<https://bkthisandthat.org.uk/a-potted-history-of-association-football-in-england> (accessed 12 August 2022).

Larsdatter, Karen, Chimney Sweeps.
<http://www.larsdatter.com/18c/chimney-sweeps.html> (accessed 8 October 2020).

Messner Andrew, William Kilburn's 1848 Chartist Daguerreotypes.
<https://andrewmessner.net/2018/01/10/chartism-10-april-1848-kennington-common-william-kilburn/#Why-Did-Kilburn-Photograph-the-Chartists> (accessed 22 December 2019).

Munafo, Robert, Perceiving Large Numbers.
<http://www.mrob.com/pub/math/largenum.html#class1> (accessed 2 March 2022).

Piston, Pen and Press - John Stafford Songs and Poems.
<https://www.pistonpenandpress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2020/04/John-Stafford-poems-2.docx> (accessed 22 April, 2022).

Public Urinals - Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Kensington, 1858,
[https://wellcomelibrary.org/moh/report/b19824002/7#?m=0andcv=7andc=0ands=0andz=-1.6975 per cent2C-0.0634 per cent2C4.0103 per cent2C2.0291](https://wellcomelibrary.org/moh/report/b19824002/7#?m=0andcv=7andc=0ands=0andz=-1.6975%20per%20cent2C-0.0634%20per%20cent2C4.0103%20per%20cent2C2.0291) (accessed 3 April 2020).

Rachel Dinning, 'A 'more shocking' massacre? How we might have overestimated the Peterloo crowds' *BBC History Extra*, 8 August, 2019.
<https://www.historyextra.com/period/georgian/peterloo-massacre-numbers-deaths-injuries-how-many-people-bicentenary-anniversary/> (accessed 22 December 2019).

Reid, Jennifer, Broadside Balladeer.
<https://youtu.be/ABeDYz2tyxs?t=1202> (accessed 22 April, 2022).

Steele, Dave, 'People's Vote march - when it comes to crowds, history shows it's not all about size'. *The Conversation*, March 2019
<https://theconversation.com/peoples-vote-march-when-it-comes-to-crowds-history-shows-its-not-all-about-size-114329> (accessed 22 December 2019).

Steele, Dave, Research profile.
<http://warwick.ac.uk/davesteele>

Still, Keith, Crowd Safety and Crowd Risk Analysis.
<http://www.gkstill.com/Support/crowd-density/CrowdDensity-1.html> (accessed 15 March 2022).

Townley, John, The lost arm of William James - Detail about the controversy over the mining and transport history of the Newhall Site.
<https://theironroom.wordpress.com/2020/11/23/the-lost-arm-of-william-james> (accessed 18 January 2022).

PhD Theses Consulted

Baker, Leonard, 'Spaces, Places, Custom and Protest in Rural Somerset and Dorset, c. 1780-1867', (PhD thesis University of Bristol 2021).

Baxter, John, 'The origins of the social war in South Yorkshire – A study of capitalist evolution and labour class realisation in one industrial region c.1750-1855' (PhD thesis University of Sheffield 1976).

Belchem, John, 'Radicalism as a 'Platform': Agitation in the Periods 1816-1821 and 1848-1851 – With Special Reference to the Leadership of Henry Hunt and Feargus O'Connor' (PhD thesis University of Sussex 1974).

Clarke, Vic, 'Reading and Writing the 'Northern Star', 1837-1848 (PhD thesis University of Leeds 2020).

Denham, Alison, 'Herbal Medicine in Nineteenth Century England: the Career of John Skelton' (Unpublished MA Dissertation York 2013).

Rogers, Helen, 'Poetesses and Politicians: Gender, Knowledge and Power in Radical Culture, 1830-1870' (PhD thesis University of York 1974).

Scriven, Thomas, 'Activism and the Everyday: The Practices of Radical Working-Class Politics, 1830-1842' (PhD thesis University of Manchester, 2012).

Still, Keith, G., 'Crowd Dynamics', (PhD thesis University of Warwick July 2000).

Taylor, Donna, 'To the Bull Ring! Politics, Protest and Policing in Birmingham during the Early Chartist Period', (PhD thesis University of Birmingham 2013).

Thomas, Susan, 'George Edmonds and the development of Birmingham radicalism', (PhD thesis University of Birmingham 2020).

Books

Altick, Richard D., *The English Common Reader - A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago, 1998).

Beals, H. M. and Lavender, Lisa, *Historical Insights - Focus on Research - Newspapers* (Warwick, 2011).

Belchem, John, '1848 - 'Feargus O'Connor and the Collapse of the Mass Platform', in James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (eds), *The Chartist Experience - Studies in Working-Class radicalism and Culture, 1830-60* (London, 1982).

Belchem, John, *'Orator' Hunt - Henry Hunt and English Working-Class Radicalism* (Oxford, 1998).

Berlioz, Hector, *The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz* (New York, 1966).

Bloom, Clive, *Violent London* (Basingstoke, 2010) .

Bohstedt, John, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales 1790-1810* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983).

Borch, Christian, *The Politics of Crowds - An Alternative History of Sociology* (Cambridge, 2012).

Braddick, Michael and John Walter, 'Grids of power - order, hierarchy and subordination in early modern society', in Braddick and Walter (eds) *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society. Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001).

Briggs, Jo, *Novelty Fair - British Visual Culture between Chartism and the Great Exhibition* (Manchester 2016).

Brock, Michael, *The Great Reform Act* (London, 1973).

Brown, Nina, *Edward T. Hall - Proxemic Theory* (Santa Barbara, 1966).

Bruton, A. F., (ed.), *Three Accounts of Peterloo*, (Manchester, 1921).

Bush, Michael, *The Casualties of Peterloo* (Lancaster, 2005).

Canetti, Elias, *Masse und Macht - Crowds and power* (Trans. Carol Stewart) (Harmondsworth, 1973).

Cecil, David, *Melbourne* (Bungay, 1955).

Chase, Malcolm, *Chartism - a New History* (Manchester, 2007).

Chase, Malcolm, *The People's Farm - English Radical Agrarianism 1775-1840*, (Oxford, 1988).

Chase, Malcolm, *1820 - Disorder and stability in the United Kingdom* (Manchester, 2013).

Chiesa, Gabriele and Gosio, Paolo, *Daguerreotype Hallmarks* (Brescia, 2020).

Citrine, Walter, Stafford Cripps, Arthur Henderson, Prof Harold Laski, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The Story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs - Centenary Commemoration* (TUC Dorchester, 1934).

Conboy, Martin, *The Language of Newspapers - Socio-Historical Perspectives*, (London, 2010).

Cozens, Joseph, 'The Making of the Peterloo Martyrs, 1819 to the Present', in Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn (eds), *Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland - From Peterloo to the Present* (Basingstoke, 2018).

Davis, Michael, 'Reformers No Rioters - British Radicalism and Mob Identity in the 1790s' in Michael T. Davis (ed.), *Crowd Actions in Britain and France from the Middle Ages to the Modern World* (Basingstoke, 2015).

Dean, Jodi, *Crowds and Party* (Brooklyn, 2016).

Dent, R. K., *The Making of Birmingham, Vol. II* (London, 1973).

Dickens, Charles, *Barnaby Rudge* (Ware, 1998).

Dimond, Francis and Roger Taylor, *Crown and Camera* (Harmondsworth, 1987).

Dutton, H. I. and King, J. E., *Ten Per Cent and No Surrender - The Preston Strike, 1853-1854* (Cambridge, 1981).

Ekman, Paul, 'Basic Emotions' in Tim Dalgleish and Mick Power (eds), *Handbook of Cognition and Emotion* (Chichester, 2000).

Eliot, George, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (Oxford, 1909).

Eliot, George, *Felix Holt - the Radical* (Harmondsworth, 1997).

Favaretto, Rodolfo, Soraia Musse and Angelo Costa, *Emotion, Personality and Cultural Aspects in Crowds - Towards a Geometrical Mind* (Porto Alegre, 2019).

Flick, Carlos, *The Birmingham Political Union and the Movements for Reform in Britain 1830-1839* (Folkestone, 1978).

Floud, Roderick, *Height, Weight and Body Mass of the British Population since 1820* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).

Freud, Sigmund, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (Transl. James Strachey, Vienna, 1922).

Frow, Ruth and Edmund Frow, *Political Women 1800-1850* (London, 1989)

Fruin, John, *Designing for Pedestrians - A Level-of-Service Concept* (New York, 1970).

Gammage, G. R., *History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854* (London, 1969)

Gaskell, Elizabeth, *North and South*, (Ware, 1994).

- Gaskell, Elizabeth, *Mary Barton* (London, 1996).
- Gatrell, Vic, *The Hanging Tree - Execution and the English People 1770-1869* (Oxford, 1994).
- George, Mary, Dorothy, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in The British Museum Vol. IX, 1811-1819*, (London, 1949).
- German, Lindsey and Rees, John, *A People's History of London* (London, 2012).
- Gill, Conrad, *History of Birmingham Vol. I* (Oxford, 1952).
- Ginneken., Jaap, van, *Crowds, Psychology and Politics, 1871-1899* (Cambridge, 1992).
- Glyde, C. A., *The Centenary of the Massacre of British Workers - Peterloo, Manchester, Monday, 16 August, 1819*, (Bradford, 1919).
- Goodway, David, *London Chartism - 1838-1848* (Cambridge, 1982).
- Gould, Deborah B., *Moving Politics - Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago, 2009).
- Gray, Thomas, *Elegy in an English Country Churchyard* (Orig. pub. 1751) (Oxford, 1927).
- Hall, Edward, T, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York, 1969).
- Hall, Catherine, *White, Male and Middle Class - Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, 2007).
- Hamburger, Joseph, *James Mill and the Art of Revolution* (London, 1963).
- Harrison, Mark, *Crowds and History - Mass Phenomena in English Towns, 1790-1835* (Cambridge, 1988).
- Hernon, Ian, *Riot! - Civil Insurrection From Peterloo to the Present Day*, (London, 2006).
- Hilton, Tim, *Preface in Samuel Bamford, Passages in the Life of a Radical* (London, 1967).
- Hobsbawm, Eric, *The Age of Revolution - 1789-1848* (New York, 1962).
- Jackson, Mason, *The Pictorial Press - Its Origin and Progress* (London, 1885).
- Janse, Maartje, 'Association is a Mighty Engine - Mass Organization and the Machine Metaphor, 1825-1840', in H. te Velde, M. Janse (eds), *Organizing Democracy* (Leiden, 2017).
- Jephson, Henry, *The Platform, its Rise and Progress* (London, 1892).
- Johnson, E. D. H., *Charles Dickens - An Introduction to His Novels* (New York, 1969).
- Jones, David, *The Last Rising - The Newport Insurrection of 1839* (Oxford, 1989).

- Kaplow, Jeffry, (ed), *New Perspectives on the French Revolution* (New York, 1965).
- Kingsley, Frances, *Charles Kingsley - His Letters and Memories of his Life*, (New York 1899).
- Kingsley, Charles, *Alton Locke* (London, 1905).
- Klingaman, Nicholas and William Klingaman, *The Year without Summer - 1816 and the Volcano that Darkened the World and changed History* (New York, 2013).
- Langford, J. A., *A Century of Birmingham Life* (Birmingham, 1868).
- Le Bon, Gustave, *The Crowd - A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York, 2017).
- Leary, Patrick, *A Brief History of the Illustrated London News* (Cengage Learning, 2011).
- Lefebvre, Georges, *Foules Révolutionnaires* (Paris, 1954).
- Linebaugh, Peter and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra - Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000).
- Maffesoli, Michel, *The Time of the Tribes - The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (London, 1996).
- Malm, Andreas, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline - Learning to Fight in a World on Fire* (London, 2021).
- Margot, Finn, *After Chartism - Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874* (Cambridge, 1993).
- Marlow, Joyce, *The Peterloo Massacre* (London, 1970).
- Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich, *Communist Manifesto* (Orig. pub. 1848) (Chicago 1949).
- McCabe, Sarah, *The Provision of Underground Public Conveniences in London with Reference to Gender Differentials, 1850s-1980s* (IHR, London, 2012).
- McCalman, Iain, *Radical Underworld - Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Oxford 1998).
- McClelland, John, *The Crowd and the Mob - from Plato to Canetti* (London, 1989).
- McPhail, Clark, *The Myth of the Madding Crowd* (Abingdon, 2017).
- Mitchell, R. J. and Leys, D. M., *A History of London Life* (London, 1958).
- Morgan, Alison, *Ballads and Songs of Peterloo* (Manchester, 2018).
- Moss, David Thomas Attwood - *The Biography of a Radical* (Montreal, 1990).
- Munro, Ian, *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London - The City and Its Double* (Basingstoke, 2005).

- Navickas, Katrina, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place 1789-1848* (Manchester, 2016).
- Newhall, Beaumont, *The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present Day* (New York, 1949).
- Nye, Robert, *Introduction to Le Bon, The Crowd - A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York, 2017).
- Oberhagemann, Dirk, *Static and Dynamic Crowd Densities at Major Public Events* (Altenberg, 2012).
- Osborne, Peter, *Rise of Political Lying* (London, 2005).
- Park, Robert Ezra, *The Crowd and the Public and other Essays* (Chicago, 1987).
- Parolin, Christina, *Radical Spaces - Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790-c. 1845* (Canberra, 2010).
- Peters, Ellen *Innumeracy in the Wild - Misunderstanding and Misusing Numbers* (Oxford, 2020).
- Pheasant, Stephen, *Bodyspace - Anthropometry, Ergonomics and the Design of Work* (Boca Raton, 2006).
- Pickering, Paul, *Chartism and the Chartists in Manchester and Salford* (Basingstoke, 1995).
- Pickering, Paul, 'Peaceably if we can, Forcibly if we must - Political Violence and Insurrection in Early-Victorian Britain', in Michael Davis, Brett Bowden (eds) *Terror - From Tyrannicide to Terrorism in Europe, 1605-2005* (Queensland, 2008).
- Plamper, Jan, *The History of Emotions - An Introduction* (Oxford, 2015).
- Plotz, John, *The Crowd - British Literature and Public Politics* (Berkeley, 2000).
- Plutchik, Robert, and Kellerman, Henry, *Theories of Emotion* (New York 1980).
- Poole, Robert, *Peterloo - The English Uprising* (Oxford, 2019).
- Poole, Steve and Nicholas Rogers, *Bristol from Below - Law, Authority and Protest in a Georgian City* (Suffolk, 2017).
- Prothero, Iorwerth, *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth Century London - John Gast and His Times* (Folkestone, 1979).
- Rappaport, Helen, *Queen Victoria - A Biographical Companion* (Oxford, 2003).
- Read, Donald, *Peterloo - The Massacre and its Background* (Manchester, 1973).
- Reddy, William M., *The Navigation of Feeling - A framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2004).

- Reicher, Stephen, 'The New Cross Fire and the Brixton Riots' in Ra Page (ed.) *Protest - Stories of Resistance* (Manchester, 2017).
- Reicher, Stephen, 'The Psychology of Crowd Dynamics', in M. Brewer and M Hewstone (eds), *Self and Social Identity* (Oxford, 2004).
- Richardson, Sarah, *The Political Worlds of Women* (New York, 2013).
- Riding, Jacqueline, *Peterloo - The story of the Manchester Massacre* (London, 2018).
- Roberts, Matthew, *Chartism, Commemoration and the Cult of the Radical Hero* (Abingdon, 2020).
- Rogers, Nicholas, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford, 1998).
- Rosenwein, Barbara, *Anger, The Conflicted History of an Emotion* (Haven, 2020).
- Rudé, George, *The Crowd in History* (London, 2005).
- Samuel, Raphael *Theatres of Memory* (London, 2012).
- Saville, John, *1848 - The British State and the Chartist movement* (Cambridge, 1987).
- Sewell, Rob, *Chartist Revolution* (London, 2020).
- Shaw-Taylor, Leigh and Xuesheng You (CAMPOP), *The Development of the Railway Network in Britain 1825-1911* (Cambridge 2015).
- Sheppard, Ronald, and Newton, Edward *The Story of Bread* (London, 1957).
- Sighele, Scipio, *The Criminal Crowd and Other Writings on Mass Society* (Toronto, 2018).
- Sloterdijk, Peter, *Die Verachtung der Massen - Versuch über Kulturkämpfe in der modernen Gesellschaft* (Berlin, 2000).
- Smelser, Neil, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (London, 1962).
- Spielmann, H. M., *The History of Punch* (London, 1895).
- Steele, Dave, 'Afterword - Peaceably if we May - The Great Chartist Meeting, 1848', in *Resist - Stories of Uprising* (Manchester, 2019).
- Roberts, Stephen and Thompson, Dorothy, *Images of Chartism* (Woodbridge, 1998).
- Still, Keith. G., *Introduction to Crowd Science* (Boca Raton, 2019).
- Tagg, John, *The Burden of Representation - Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke, 1988).
- Taine, Hippolyte, *The French Revolution, Vol. I* Transl. John Durrand, (Indianapolis, 2002).
- Tarde, Gabriel, *Les Crimes des Foules* (Paris, 1892).

- Thelwall, Mrs Cecil, *The Life of John Thelwall, Vol. 1* (London, 1837),
- Thompson, E.P., *Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1980).
- Thompson, Dorothy, *The Dignity of Chartism* (London, 2015).
- Tilly, Charles, *Contentious performances* (Cambridge, 2008).
- Tilly, Charles, *Popular Contention in Great Britain 1758-1834* (Harvard, 2005).
- Turner, Ralph and Killian, Lewis, *Collective Behaviour* (London, 1972).
- Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell - A Habit of Stories* (London, 1993).
- Vernon, James, *Politics and the People - A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815-1867* (Cambridge 1993).
- Wakefield, M. C., *Life of Thomas Attwood* (London, 1885).
- Wall, Illan rua, *Law And Disorder - Sovereignty, Protest, Atmosphere* (New York, 2021).
- Walter-Cross, John, *George Eliot's Life, as Related in Her Letters and Journals* (Cambridge, 1885).
- Wearmouth, Robert, *Some Working-Class Movements of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1948).
- Westby-Gibson, John, *The Bibliography of Shorthand* (London, 1887).
- White, R.J., *Waterloo to Peterloo* (London, 1968).
- Woods, Oliver and James Bishop, *The Story of The Times* (London, 1983).
- Wright, G. D., *Popular Radicalism - The Working Class Experience 1780-1880* (New York, 2013).
- Yonge, Charles, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, (London, 1868).
- Stephens, W. B. (Ed). *Victoria County History of Warwickshire* (Oxford, 1964).

Journal Articles

Al-Sheary and Almagbile, Ali, 'Crowd Monitoring System Using Unmanned Aerial Vehicle', *Journal of Civil Engineering and Architecture*, 11 (2017), pp. 1014-24.

Andersson, Peter, 'Bustling, crowding and pushing - pickpockets and the nineteenth century street crowd', *Urban History*, 41 (2014), pp. 291-310.

Aspinall, A., 'The Circulation of Newspapers in the Early Nineteenth Century', *The Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946), pp. 29-43.

Barlow, P. J., 'Benjamin Robert Haydon and the Radicals', *The Burlington Magazine*, 99, 654 (1957), pp. 311-4.

Beals, Melodee, 'Close Readings of Big Data - Triangulating Patterns of Textual Reappearance and Attribution in the Caledonian Mercury, 1820-40', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 51 (2018), pp. 616-39.

Beckett, John, 'The Nottingham Reform Bill Riots of 1831', *Parliamentary History*, 24, (2008), pp. 114-38.

Bee, Malcolm and Walter, 'The Casualties of Peterloo', *Manchester Region History Review*, 3 (1989), pp. 1-112.

Bensimon, Fabrice, 'Londres, 10 Avril 1848 - Les Chartistes Dans L'oeil Du Daguerriotypiste, Parlement[s]', *Revue d'histoire politique*, 33 (2021), pp. 17-100.

Berlonghi, Alexander E., 'Understanding and planning for different spectator Crowds', *Safety Science*, 18 (1995), pp. 239-47.

Bode, Amos et al., 'A Glossary for Research on Human Crowd Dynamics', *Collective Dynamics*, 4 (2019), pp. 1-13.

Borch, Christian, 'Crowds and Pathos - Theodor Geiger on Revolutionary Action', *Acta Sociologica*, 49 (2006), pp. 5-18.

Calder-Marshall, Arthur, 'Spa Fields Riots, 1816', *History Today*, 21 (1971), pp. 407-15.

Cavanagh, Sue and Ware, Vron, 'Less Convenient for Women', *Built Environment*, 16 (1990), pp. 279-87.

Collier, Patrick, 'The Lawless by Force. the Peaceable by Kindness - Strategies of Social Control in Charlotte Brontë's Shirley and the Leeds Mercury', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 32 (1999), pp. 279-98.

Cowen, Alan, et. al., 'The Primacy of Categories in the Recognition of 12 Emotions in Speech Prosody across Two Cultures', *Nature Human Behaviour*, 3 (2019), pp. 369-84.

Dinwiddy, J. R., 'Sir Francis Burdett and Burdettite Radicalism', *History*, 65 (1980), pp. 17-31.

- Durey, Michael, 'William Cobbett, Military Corruption and London Radicalism in the Early 1790s', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 131 (1987), pp.348-66.
- Eisenberg, Christiane, 'Variations in socialism - The rise of a Political Labour Movement in Britain and Germany', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 8 (1997), pp. 124-38.
- Foucault, Michel, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982), pp. 777-95.
- Gardner, John, 'William Cobbett the Spy', *Romantism*, 18 (2012), pp. 30-40.
- Gilmartin, Kevin, 'Study to Be Quiet - Hannah More and the Invention of Conservative Culture in Britain', *English Literary History*, 70 (2003), pp. 493-540.
- Goodwin, Jeff, Jasper, James and Polletta, Francesca, 'The Return of the Repressed - the Fall and Rise of Emotions in Social Movement Theory', *Mobilization - An International Journal*, 5 (2000), pp. 65-83.
- Gould, Deborah, 'Concluding Thoughts - Emotions in Protest Movements in Europe since 1917', *Contemporary European History*, 23 (2014), pp. 639-44.
- Granovetter, Mark, 'Threshold Models of Collective Behavior', *American Journal of Sociology*, 83 (1978), pp. 1420-43.
- Häberlen, Joachim and Spinney, Russell, 'Introduction to Emotions in Protest Movements in Europe since 1917', *Contemporary European History*, 23 (2014), pp. 489-503.
- Hopkins, Reicher, et al., 'Explaining Effervescence - Investigating the Relationship between Shared Social Identity and Positive Experience in Crowds', *Cognition and Emotion*, 30 (2016). pp. 20-32.
- Hoppen, Theodore K., 'Grammars of Electoral Violence in Nineteenth-century England and Ireland', *English Historical Review*, 109 (1994), pp. 597-620.
- Horowitz, Evan, 'George Eliot - The Conservative', *Victorian Studies*, 49 (2006), pp. 7-32.
- Izard, Carroll E., 'Basic Emotions, Natural Kinds, Emotion Schemas and a New Paradigm', *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2 (2007), pp. 260-80.
- James, William, 'What is an Emotion?', *Mind*, 9 (1884), pp. 188-205.
- Jones, David, 'Women and Chartism', *History*, 68 (1983), pp. 1-21.
- Katila, Julia, Yumei Gan, Marjorie Goodwin, 'Interaction rituals and 'social distancing' - New haptic trajectories and touching from a distance in the time of COVID-19', *Discourse Studies*, 22 (2020), pp. 418-40.
- Kennedy, Daniel, Jan Gläscher, J Michael Tyszka and Ralph Adolphs, 'Personal Space Regulation by the Human Amygdala', *Nature Neuroscience*, 12 (2009), pp. 1226-7.
- Lauwers, Karen, Marionneau, Ludovic and Hoegaerts Josephine, 'Introduction: oratory and representation in the long nineteenth century', *European Review of History*, 29 (2022), pp. 733-857.

Lindert, Peter and Jeffrey Williamson, 'The English Workers Living Standards During the Industrial Revolution - A New Look', *Economic History Review*, 36 (1983), pp. 1-25.

Maeng, Ahreum, et al., 'Conservative When Crowded - Social Crowding and Consumer Choice' *Journal of Marketing Research*, 50, (2013), pp. 739-52.

McCreery, Cindy, 'Satiric images of Fox, Pitt and George III - the East India Bill crisis 1783-84', *Word and Image - A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*, 9:2, (1993), pp. 163-85.

Menke, Richard, 'Cultural Capital and the Scene of Rioting - Male Working-Class Authorship in *Alton Locke*', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 28 (2000), pp. 87-108.

Moss, David, 'A Study in Failure - Thomas Attwood, M. P. for Birmingham, 1832-1839', *The Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), pp. 545-70.

Navickas, Katrina, Moors, Fields and Popular Protest in South Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1800-1848', *Northern History*, 46 (2009). pp. 93-111.

Nicholson, Eirwen, 'Consumers and Spectators - The Public of the Political Print in Eighteenth-century England', *History*, 81 (1996), pp. 5-21.

O'Gorman, Frank, 'Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies - The Social Meaning of Elections in England 1780-1860', *Past and Present*, 135 (1992), pp. 79-115.

Pedersen, Susan, 'Hannah More meets Simple Simon - Tracts, Chapbooks and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth-century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), pp. 84-113.

Penner, Barbara, 'A World of Unmentionable Suffering - Women's Public Conveniences in Victorian London', *Journal of Design History*, 14 (2001), pp. 35-51.

Pickering, Paul, 'Class without Words - Symbolic Communication in the Chartist Movement', *Past and Present*, 112 (1986), pp. 144-62.

Plutchik, Robert, 'The Nature of Emotions - Human emotions have Deep Evolutionary Roots, a Fact that may explain their Complexity and Provide Tools for Clinical Practice', *American Scientist*, 89 (2001), pp. 344-50.

Poole, Robert, 'Samuel Bamford and Middleton Rushbearing', *Manchester Region History Review*, 8 (1994), pp. 14-22.

Poole, Robert, 'The March to Peterloo - Politics and Festivity in Late Georgian England', *Past and Present*, 192 (2006), pp. 109-53.

Poole, Steve, 'Till our Liberties be Secure' - Popular Sovereignty and Public Space in Bristol, 1780-1850', *Urban History*, 26 (1999), pp. 40-54.

Poole, Steve, 'Gillray, Cruikshank and Thelwall - Visual Satire, Physiognomy and the Jacobin Body', *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, (Bristol, 2011). pp. 2-29.

Reid, A., 'The Decline of Saint Monday 1766-1876', *Past and Present*, 71 (1976), pp. 76-101.

- Roberts, Matthew, 'Resisting "Arithmocracy" - Parliament, Community and the Third Reform Act', *Journal of British Studies*, 50, (2011), pp. 381-409.
- Rowe, J. D., 'The Failure of London Chartism', *Historical Journal* 11 (1968), pp. 472-87.
- Scarantino, Andrea, 'Emotional Expressions as Speech Act Analogs' *Philosophy of Science*, 85 (2018), pp. 1038-53.
- Scheer, Monique, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and is that what makes them have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion', *History and Theory*, 51 (2012), pp. 193-220.
- Sealy, Peter, 'After a Photograph, before Photography (takes command)', *The Journal of Architecture*, 21 (2016). pp. 911-37.
- Stoker, David, 'John Marshall, John Evans and the Cheap Repository Tracts, 1793-1800', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 107 (2013), pp. 81-118.
- Sullivan, Gavin, 'Collective emotions', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 9 (2015), pp. 383-93.
- Swift, E. R., 'Policing Chartism, 1839-1848 - The Role of the 'Specials' Reconsidered', *English Historical Review*, 122, (2007), pp. 669-99.
- Tholfsen, Trygve, 'The Chartist Crisis in Birmingham,' *International Review of Social History*, 3 (1958), pp. 461-80.
- Thompson, E. P., 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century' *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), pp. 76-136.
- Tilly, Charles, 'Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758-1834', *Social Science History*, 17 (1993), pp. 253-80.
- Wall, Illan Rua, 'The Law of Crowds', *Legal Studies*, 36 (2016), pp. 395-414.
- Weaver, Michael, 'The Birmingham Bull Ring Riots of 1839: Variations on a Theme of Class Conflict', *Social Science Quarterly*, 78 (1997). pp. 137-48.
- Wilf, Steven, 'Imagining Justice - Aesthetics and Public Executions in Late Eighteenth-century England', *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities*, 5 (1993), pp. 55-78.
- Willis, Mark, 'Charles Dickens and Fictions of the Crowd,' *Dickens Quarterly*, 23 (2006), pp. 85-107.
- Wouters, Ruud and Walgrave, Stefaan, What Makes Protest Powerful? Reintroducing and Elaborating Charles Tilly's WUNC Concept', *Social Science Research Network*, 2017, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2909740> (accessed 21 December, 2022).
- Wyke, Terry, 'Remembering the Manchester Massacre', in Poole (ed.), *Return to Peterloo, Manchester Region History Review*, 23 (2012).
- Zhao, Zhen et al., 'Active Crowd Counting with Limited Supervision', *arXiv:2007.06334v2* (2020), pp 1-20.