Who Were The Chartists?
“Those who were originally called Radicals, and afterwards Reformers, are now Chartists.”
T.S. Duncombe, MP.
1796-1861
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The title page illustration is a detail from an engraving of the 1842 Chartist procession through London, carrying the second petition of 3,317,702 signatures to present to Parliament. The original print is an overall size of 304 x 559mm.
Foreword

This booklet is intended to be a short history of one of the most significant and least written about periods of history in North Staffordshire. The Chartist movement was to be the catalyst to perhaps the greatest radical and violent political action that Staffordshire has ever experienced.

There are many facets of Chartism that I could have chosen to introduce you to; however, I have decided to show you the significant characters, the major events of 1842, and a few corrections to mistakes that have been consistently written into local history books since the 1880's. Without, hopefully, adding too many new ones!

There is a special section about Joseph Capper, one of the most enduring and interesting characters to come out of North Staffordshire. He was not a famous potter, or a member of a wealthy family, but simply a blacksmith. His tale has been part of the Chartist legend in North Staffordshire since 1842. And part of the Chartist myth.

Since writing this work in 1991-92, I have developed my thoughts, and perhaps my skills as an historian, and no longer hold some of the views which I express in this work, nor would I necessarily detail some material in the manner I have. That said, I believe it still presents a useful and accessible history of North Staffordshire Chartism at a critical period. The bibliography at the end should provide ample extra reading for anyone wishing to delve further than this short work enables.

Robert Anderson.
2008.
CHAPTER 1

The Six Points Of The Charter

The Chartist movement was formed in 1838 out of the earlier reform movement of the 1830's. It consisted of the London Working Men's Association, the Birmingham Political Union, and anti-poor law agitators. From these Radical organisations the Chartist movement's national leaders were to come; William Lovett, a craftsman, Julian Harney, a journalist, to name a couple, and perhaps the most famous leader, Feargus O'Connor, a former Irish MP. This loose grouping then, would form the basis of the movement known as the Chartists. And what was their Charter? Well, it contained six main points:-

A Vote for Every Man twenty-one years of age and over, of sound mind and not in prison.
The Secret Ballot. To permit electors to cast their vote as they wished.
No Property Qualification for Members Of Parliament. To enable any man to be returned, regardless of personal wealth. If he won the votes, he took the seat for that constituency.
Payment of Members of Parliament. To allow any MP to serve his constituency without personal loss. Also to prevent corruption of MPs by vested interests.
Equal Electoral Constituencies. Giving equal representation to equal numbers of electors.
Annual Parliaments. To prevent wealthy candidates buying a constituency and make MPs accountable to their electorate.

Called the People's Charter, it was named after the Magna Carta of 1215. This new Charter was written in the style of a Parliamentary Bill, which the Radicals hoped to get passed in the House. It did contain a number of economic grievances and included a brief reference to monetary reform but its main impetus was Universal Secret Suffrage. It was designed to win rights for the people which were being denied them by the present parliamentary system. Many working people had helped campaigners for the 1832 Great Reform Bill. This had enfranchised around half a million more men - men of wealth and property. Too bad if you were a pottery turner or collier. The Whigs and Tories only wanted you if you could vote for them. The Bill had given the huge new industrial cities direct Parliamentary representation for the first time. But it hadn't given the vote to the working men whose labour and sweat had created the new cities, and the new wealth. These working men were horrified to find that they were to get no support from the very middle classes whom they had helped to enfranchise. In the Upper House Lord Durham argued that once the bill was passed, the middle classes would be the friends and allies of the government. The Government of the day, having secured the future of the country, simply wanted now to carry on as before. This grievance was the driving force behind the Chartist movement.

Whilst it might seem odd that ordinary working men wanted the vote, and political influence, they realised that the best way in which they could improve their lives was to gain political control of the House of Commons, or at least influence it sufficiently, so that they could use that influence and power to improve conditions. They could cut
taxes on bread, reduce the working week, improve wages, increase standards of living for the millions who were toiling unrecognised and unrepresented. The Chartists believed that "universal suffrage was a knife and fork question". This was the chance to change the state of the nation forever. By the end of 1838 there were Chartists in virtually every town throughout Britain. The Birmingham Chartists had the idea of sending the House of Commons a request, in the form of a petition, asking the House to enact the People's Charter. To enable the drawing up of this petition the Birmingham Chartists also suggested that a meeting of delegates should take place in London. In February 1839 the Chartists met at the British Coffee House, Cockspur Street, London. It took the "People's Parliament" until May to prepare the petition of 1,280,000 signatures from around the country. That May the convention moved to Birmingham, and sat for another two months discussing what to do when, as seemed certain, Parliament rejected the Charter. Here the Chartists started to break into the factions that would so characterise the movement. Two distinct groups developed, the "moral force" Chartists and the "physical force" Chartists.

The "moral force" Chartists wanted only peaceful methods of persuasion to be used, and were prepared to spend years convincing Parliament of the moral necessity for the Charter. The "physical force" Chartists were altogether more impatient. They wanted the Charter, and they wanted it now! They were so vocal and insistent in their language and actions in Birmingham that the "moral force" Chartists withdrew from the convention. With the rejection of the petition the "physical force" Chartist, Julian Harney, called for a General Strike. He believed that when the strikers could not afford food they would rise up and take it by force. A revolution would follow, and succeed. "Before the end of the year, the people shall have universal suffrage or death." However, not all the "physical force" Chartists were in earnest. Some simply wanted to bluff the government into giving the Charter. They felt that a revolution could not really succeed as the Chartists would have to face soldiers in pitched battle, without training or proper weapons. Feargus O'Connor, the most powerful orator amongst the Chartists, and the leader of the "physical force" group even said "they would not be so foolish to bare their naked bodies to disciplined soldiers". Still, a General Strike was decided upon. The Convention declared a General Strike or "National Holiday" for the 12th August 1839. And then lost its nerve. Many delegates had second thoughts. They had convinced themselves, in the months since they first sat, that a strike would end in "the utter subjection of the whole of the working class to the moneyed murderers of society". The Strike was off, the time for revolution was not yet right. There were some who felt that the time was right, and in Newport, South Wales, an armed uprising took place, reluctantly led by John Frost, who had been the Convention chairman when it dissolved in September after calling off the strike. This was poorly organised, and ended in disaster, as did so many Chartist risings.

Twenty-two Chartists were killed by soldiers, and the remaining rioters fled. The ringleaders were rounded up, and Frost, who was fifty-six at the time, was sentenced to death. This was commuted to transportation for life. He was the first of the Chartist Martyrs. As we shall soon see, the Potteries were to produce its own Chartist Martyr in the troubles to come. In July the House of Commons, elected by less than five percent of the people of Britain, rejected the first petition and the Charter by 237 votes to 48. Still, twenty percent of the House had supported the Bill. The Chartists continued to work for the Charter, both peaceably and by force. A further two petitions were to be presented to Parliament, one in 1842 and another in 1848. All
were rejected. In the second petition, presented in May 1842, over three million signatures had been collected. T.S. Duncombe, MP, presented the Chartist address to the House. The voting was 287 against the Charter, just 51 for. This time support for the Charter in the House was only eighteen percent. In the third petition, presented in April 1848, five million, seven hundred thousand signatures were collected. The House of Commons, surprised by the size of the petition, appointed a commission to look into it. The commission quickly reported that there were less than two million genuine signatures, and the rest were either fictitious or fatuous. Names ranged from Victoria Rex, and the Duke of Wellington, to Flatnose. Some writers have suggested that these "false" signatures proved the Chartists were frauds. But it should be remembered that the use of pseudonyms such as Punch or the Duke of Wellington should not automatically be equated with forgery. The parliamentary clerks had misread a traditional popular means of expression. Subscription lists to radical periodicals and "victim funds" had for years abounded with such names, which nevertheless represented genuine people who either wanted to keep their identities private, for example from their employers, or who wished to make fun of the authorities. Further doubt was cast upon some of the signatures because they were written in one hand. But again it should be remembered that Chartism appealed to the thirty percent of society who could not even sign their own name. There was no intent of forgery in that. The third petition was never actually voted upon, but it was put to the House in July 1849 by Feargus O'Connor. Only 15 votes were in favour. The movement was to continue until at least 1858 but it was no longer effective in promoting its aims. By 1868 though, workers were to find a new national voice, one which could achieve a decent and just living for honest men - the Trades Union Congress. But that is a separate story, one which could not have happened without Chartism - the greatest and saddest of all the working class movements in the mid nineteenth century.

Two contrasting contemporary views of Feargus O'Connor. One as the
firebrand demagogue and the other as the statesman-like political leader.

Here, for our purposes, we go back to August 1838 and the formation of the Potteries Political Union. Feargus O'Connor, the great national Chartist leader visited the area and made a speech at a meeting of the Union in November, when over five thousand people were present. All the names which were to become important in local Chartism were present, including William Ellis, John Richards, and Joseph Capper. O'Connor addressed that rally in Hanley with the following words, “You have about 130 master potters who annually share about one million's worth of your labour. Now, £250,000 would be more than ample for risk and speculation, and the remaining £750,000 would make you independent of the three Devil Kings of Somerset House.” The three Devil Kings referred to were the three Poor Law Commissioners in London. O'Connor was a most impressive speaker and he created an enthusiasm in local people which had never been seen before in the area. It was decided at this time to elect a delegate to the first Chartist convention due to be held in the February of the next year. John Richards was nominated and chosen to represent the Potteries. The meeting continued for some five hours, with Joseph Capper closing it and calling for torchlight meetings and a Sacred Week. Sacred Weeks were Chartist rhetoric for strikes. Afterwards, a dinner was held for about one hundred and twenty Chartists at the Sea Lion Hotel. This type of social event was very common with the Chartists. Tea parties, dances, and dinners were the acceptable face of Chartism. For the next few years local Chartists were widely tolerated by the authorities, and local paid-up membership neared one thousand. Popular support was even greater by 1842, when ten thousand signatures were collected for the 1842 petition. By July 1842, following another visit from O'Connor, there were eight separate National Charter Associations in North Staffordshire. Revolutionary activity can be seen from the many reports of guns and pikes being sold, secret meetings, and even in some areas suggestions of night-time drilling with arms, preparing for the war to come. Other activity can be seen from the large quantities of radical newspapers and books being sold. One of the most popular items was a drink called "The Chartist Beverage", distributed by local teetotal Chartists, who bought quantities of up-to one hundred and twenty pounds a week of it from Thomas Cooper. The beverage was in fact a coffee substitute, as real coffee was too expensive for the ordinary working man.

In North Staffordshire there was also an active Women's Chartist Movement. They had their own meetings; and were known as the Female National Charter Association of Upper Hanley and Smallthorne. The main appeal of the women's movement was to persuade men that women were equally deserving of the vote. Much the same arguments were put forward for women receiving the vote as for men. Their most prominent moment locally was on the visit of Feargus O'Connor to the Potteries. About three hundred of them, along with a band, marched through Lane End to Hanley, each carrying a white wand. Feargus O'Connor spoke of his visit as a "glorious gathering".

Throughout this period the Chartists had been gaining strength and growing in opposition to the Poor Laws and the Tory gentry. Chartists began to encourage men to apply for poor relief, making the system virtually unworkable. In late July 1842, the Burslem and Stoke workhouses were receiving four to five hundred new applications for assistance each day. The Trustees began to complain of Chartist involvement. Though only some of this could be due to Chartist encouragement, much was undoubtedly due to real need. In early August, Capper, Ellis and Richards addressed
crowds in Hanley whilst processions of men on outdoor relief marched past. By the
summer of 1842 which saw the Potteries in the grip of the worst trade depression of
the nineteenth century. And suddenly the Chartists offered hope and opportunity. The
Chartists felt that now was the time to give working men the chance to run their own
lives. They believed that if they could develop influence then they would be able to
affect foreign policy, which determined export trade, the life blood of the new cities,
and force masters to pay fair wages and ensure ongoing work. They could do away
with the poor houses and all the social stigmas that 1840's Britain subjected them
to. Best of all, as they saw it, for the first time the people who created the wealth
could actually share in it.

The Chartist troubles in North Staffordshire were to grow out of straightforward
industrial unrest. It was the beginning of July, 1842. 300 colliers at Mr Sparrow’s pits
in Longton had been on strike for several weeks now. Their grievance, like so many
strikes of the period, was that they felt they could not live on reduced wages. Mr
Sparrow was trying to cut them from 3s7d a day to just 3s. He had a legal requirement
to give two week's notice of this reduction, but chose instead simply to attempt to
impose it at once. Sparrow could afford the lock out. Coal prices had dropped, wages
were to his mind too high, and a lock out at least stopped the wage bill. Prices would
get better again in due course; in the mean time it was to be lower wages, or no
wages. He was in no rush to settle. This attitude was a common problem for working
men at the time. It seemed that they were at the mercy of an economy they could not
influence, with masters who would exploit them at any opportunity and they were left
feeling the only way to affect change was by their own militancy.

By the middle of July the Staffordshire Advertiser was reporting that "lawless mobs,
chiefly colliers, have been going about the district forcibly stopping the men from
work at the numerous collieries with which it abounds and creating much terror in the
public mind by their unlawful proceedings". The style of this reporting shows no
wrong on the part of the mine owner, Mr Sparrow, just that the colliers were an unruly
rabble. There was much press coverage trying to show that many working people had
no time for strikers. There was perhaps some truth in this, in that wages were so low
that few could afford the loss of earnings from coming out on strike, or suffering in a
lock out. Lord Granville's works at Shelton became embroiled in the trouble. He had
ordered his agent to cut wages by 6d a day. He had seen his opportunity to drive
wages down, and seized it. The men came out. A meeting in Hanley decided that the
strike should become general. With intimidation and violence the colliers succeeded
in spreading the strike.

The bands of men visited virtually every mine and iron works in the district, stopping
engines, and pulling plugs from boilers. This was the action which in Lancashire was
to be known as The Plug Plot. This type of activity was being repeated throughout
Britain. Of course, these strikes resulted in a lack of coal. The kilns in the potbanks
could not be fired. The pottery workers were unable to work as a result, and they
joined the ranks of unemployed in the area. However, they were fairly willing to join
the turn-outs, having received support from colliers in their two great disputes in 1834
and 1836. Still, it was reported that the mobs were spreading the strike and forcing
even agricultural workers to join the strike. By this time there were some five
thousand workers on strike, and many more simply could not work for lack of
coal. Men and their families were literally beginning to starve to death from wages so
low they could not afford to buy bread. The miners decided that this was the moment to turn the tide in their direction. The Committee of Operative Colliers decided to demand a pay-rise, an eight hour day, free coal, to be paid in cash, and that five nights' work should be paid as six days. These were bold requests, coming in the middle of the worst depression of the century, with little incentive for the employers to settle. The local magistrates panicked, called out the yeomanry, and bombarded the Home Office with demands for troops. As a result of these requests, troops of infantry were moved from Newcastle to the Hanley race course. This military pressure, added to the now lengthy strike, began to weaken the will of the striking miners and by the beginning of August a partial return to work was underway, with the colliery owners promising to look at the men's grievances. It is not hard to imagine hungry men, after striking for several weeks, being enticed back to work. The wandering bands of men, demanding money with threats of violence, began to disperse. They were to find the colliery owners' word untrustworthy, and it would in fact take some years more before miners were able to get worthwhile concessions from the masters.

The authorities hoped it was all over. They were wrong. There were to be more disturbances that summer. On Saturday 6th August there was a new turn out at two pits and trouble in Burslem. Three men, miners, begging for money and food, using a box in Burslem market, were arrested for vagrancy, and were locked up under Burslem Town Hall. As word spread of this, miners from the area decided to free the men. At around midnight a crowd of two hundred attacked the lock up, freeing the three miners, and others incarcerated with them. They broke the windows of the police superintendent's house and various buildings were damaged. One of the mob, George Coleclough, known locally as Cogsey Nelly, along with a companion, climbed the Town Hall tower and broke the illuminated dial of the clock. The hearts of the Burslem Market Trustees, who were immensely proud of their new clock, with its illuminated, transparent face put up a reward of £20 for the capture of those responsible. The *Staffordshire Advertiser* for the 13th August reported "The perpetrators of these wanton outrages are believed to consist principally of the more disaffected turn-out colliers, instigated, there is but little doubt, by the Chartists". The miners seem to have had the courage of their convictions, for the same report goes on to say that when troops who had arrived a day later left the area, a mob of one hundred and fifty went immediately to the police station and demanded the return of the box the men had been using. They then continued soliciting contributions from the inhabitants of the town.

The Chartist involvement in these troubles had been quite subtle. They provided men to spy on the military, as in the case of Edward Sale who was caught at the race course camp. They provided speakers at rallies and meetings, and John Richards, whom we shall hear more about, was the signatory of their public appeal for support. Potteries Chartists travelled to talk at meetings through the whole area and the lead shown by the miners in North Staffordshire was followed throughout the West Midlands and North. In particular, Shropshire and Cheshire fell under the influence of the orators. Strikes were taking place throughout the country at this time, and the Chartists saw their opportunity to call for a National Holiday. The anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre, August 16th, 1819, was approaching. Here was a tremendous opportunity for getting publicity and attention. Industrial unrest was certainly not a new event in any of the modern cities and towns but, practically for the first time, this was an organised attempt to mobilise the working classes against the property owning
classes. Chartist 'missionaries' were instructed to go out and talk to the workers in the industrial cities and towns of the North and Midlands. And so the missionaries started to offer working men and to some degree women, "the vote and more to eat" and the chance to stop "dying to live". This attitude of support for ordinary working people was to give the Chartists great popular appeal. That appeal was to be mingled with violence in 1842!

Thomas Cooper
From a woodcut published by Dr. Gammage
CHAPTER 2
Thomas Cooper Arrives

Amongst those Chartist missionaries was one who would be perhaps the single most important character in the troubles in North Staffordshire during mid August 1842. His name is Thomas Cooper, self styled General of the Shakespearean Brigade of Chartists, and a powerful orator. Cooper, more than anyone else, is responsible for much of the knowledge we have of the character of the Potteries Chartists. Thomas Cooper was born in the knitting and weaving town of Leicester in 1805, and was brought up in the poverty so common at the time. He had determined from an early age to teach himself Latin, mathematics, and literature. By the age of twenty-three he had opened a school for one hundred pupils. By 1840 Cooper had moved onto working as a journalist and it was in that year that he became a Chartist. When Cooper asked how much a weaver earned he was told "about 4s6d", and immediately he multiplied this by six days and arrived at the answer 27s a week. When it was pointed out to him that 4s6d was for a week's work he was appalled. How could a man keep a wife and children on this paltry sum? This was the world where people begged for used tea-leaves. A world of children working fourteen hours a day, six days a week, to earn a shilling, so that families might eat. Cooper, a Wesleyan Methodist, felt it was his destiny to try and change this world. In April, 1841 he became secretary of the Leicester Chartists, calling himself General, and giving commissions to officers in his "army". This militancy was to prove vital shortly. Thomas Cooper had left Leicester, his home town, on Tuesday, the 9th of August 1842, and travelled through Birmingham, Wednesbury, Bilston, Wolverhampton and Stafford to reach the Potteries. He was later to claim he had addressed crowds of up to thirty thousand people whilst on this trip. The reason he was making this journey was two fold. Firstly, as an elected delegate to the Chartist Convention in Manchester meeting on the 17th of the month, he needed to be present there, and secondly he was owed money from sales of his paper, The Commonwealth, and he chose to visit those towns where he was owed. He had previously contacted Chartist leaders in the towns to arrange to give lectures whilst on his way through, as this extract of a letter from John Richards sent on the 2nd of August shows -

Dear Cooper, I am ordered by the Council of the Upper Hanley and Smallthorne National Charter Association to inform you that your offered services are accepted.....I have to say that owing to the colliers turn out our organization is most sadly deranged. You will therefore be prepared to Enforce the Necessity of Union amongst us.

Yours in the Bonds of Democracy, John Richards, sub-secretary.

Cooper reached the Potteries on Saturday, the 13th of August. He went straight to Hanley, to lodge with Jeremiah Yates, a local distributor of radical publications and Chartist Beverage. That day Cooper saw no sign of the troubles to follow. The streets were quiet.
The following day, Sunday, as arranged with Richards, he went to speak at Fenton and then on to Longton. In the evening he addressed an immense crowd at Hanley, standing on a chair in front of the Crown Inn, on spare ground called the Crown Bank. Cooper had often used religious texts for the basis of his lectures and speeches, and on this particular evening he took the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt do no murder", as his theme. First though, he had the crowd sing Bramwich's hymn "Britannia's sons, though slaves ye be". He spent his time cleverly showing how kings, conquerors, wars, British Colonial Rule, and even the tax on bread all violated the concept of the sixth commandment. He showed how low wages paid to agricultural and colliery workers caused death and suffering violating the sixth commandment. Cooper stated later "My strength was great at that time, and my voice could be heard, like the peal of a trumpet, even to the verge of a crowd composed of thousands. How sincere I was, God knows! And it seemed impossible for me, with my belief of wrong, to act otherwise".

In fact, he spent so much of his time showing the wrongs of the system that he left little time for showing the crowd that they must "do no murder" and left them in a vengeful, excited state. But at least he had united them as Richards had hoped. Cooper was asked to address another meeting, primarily of striking colliers, and he announced this, as he stood down from his chair, for nine o'clock the next morning. In spite of the excited state of the crowd they dispersed peaceably enough that night. Cooper then went to the George and Dragon inn, a popular meeting place for Chartists and the unofficial headquarters of the local Chartist committee. Here messengers began to arrive with the news that all over England workers were coming out on strike, following the call from the Manchester Trades Conference on the 12th. In fact, the first strikes had started on Sunday the 7th of August in Lancashire in response to anti-corn law manufacturers reducing wages. This was a very different motive from that of the iron and coal masters in North Staffordshire when they reduced wages a few weeks earlier. These northern manufactures were hoping to cause strikes and agitation to unsettle a government they disliked. The Chartists leapt aboard the bandwagon, with the resolution "That all labour should cease until the People's Charter becomes the law of the land". And so Cooper retired for the night knowing that the next day was to be an important one. In fact it was to be the single most important day of his life. It was to be the day the revolution started - almost.

The next morning Cooper climbed once again onto his chair on the Crown Bank and began to address the crowd which he estimated at eight to ten thousand. He firstly appointed himself the chairman of the meeting so that he would be responsible for what was to follow. He then told the crowds that if they supported the resolution which was to follow, no government on earth could resist their demands. But he also told them that "peace, law and order" must be their motto, and if they kept their strike peaceful they had nothing to fear from the law. Joseph Capper also addressed the meeting, urging the people to seek their rights, but by peaceable means. Also present, and on the platform talking with Cooper, according to the anonymous writer in The Archer magazine, was William Ellis. John Richards, now seventy years old, proposed the resolution, "That all labour cease until the People's Charter becomes the law". It was then seconded, and according to Cooper everybody at the meeting seemed to vote for it, and certainly nobody opposed it. The meeting then broke up, seemingly to Cooper a great success, but the crowd had been inflamed by his words and were hell
bent on the revenge and destruction of the employers and the society they now believed to be responsible for their plight.

Forty or fifty of his audience went straight to Earl Granville's Shelton colliery, raked out the fires and pulled the plugs of the engines. A reporter with the *North Staffordshire Mercury*, the liberal newspaper, followed a mob of some two hundred men and boys around for the rest of the day and, according to his account "they were very riotous". The mob charged up the street shouting "To the lock up! Release the prisoners!" At the police station they soon freed the half dozen inmates, armed themselves with clubs kept for the special constables and proceeded to destroy the record books, break up the furniture and smash the windows. Pawn brokers, who had suspected trouble was brewing, gave goods back to anyone with a valid ticket, and in fact many goods were simply just looted by anyone who desired them. The mob proceeded on to Mr Gibbs, the Poor Rate collector, where, having destroyed the record books which were, to their minds, the cause of so much misery, they then threw his cage birds on the ground and trampled them underfoot.

This same mob was reported, by the establishment Advertiser, to number thousands. They now proceeded on to the Court of Requests and destroyed that too. These were three demonic structures, police, poor law, debtor’s courts, in the society of the poor and they were laid waste with an enthusiasm brought about by hunger, and despair. The people were free, the mob ruled! Now it was time to move onto Stoke, and here again they immediately headed for the police house. Despite the station being ready for them, with windows and doors secured, they soon broke in, and here, more men armed themselves, this time with cutlasses. The chief of police, Stonier, who lived in the building, managed to escape, leaving his wife behind to face the mob. One of the rioters cut the head off a cat, and threatened to do the same to her. But she escaped to an upstairs room. Another policeman escaped with a broken arm and an unidentified man was struck down with a cutlass. From here the crowd rushed on to Fenton, and attacked the house of Mr. Allen, believing, mistakenly, he had arms for the militia stored there. The arms had in fact been moved years earlier. They did find and steal a brace of pistols and a sword.

Cooper, now back sitting in the George and Dragon, waiting to lecture that evening, was suddenly brought messages of men being forced out at working factories, crowds roaming and looking for arms at houses, and attacks being made on houses. Cooper went out into the streets to see for himself and observed shopkeepers shutting up shop, and driving off in their gigs. Soon a company of infantry marched by, bayonets fixed, on their way to Longton, along with two magistrates. Hanley, Cooper thought at the time, was a human desert. That infantry, of the 12th Company, along with magistrates Parker and Bailey Rose stopped the rioters on their way to Fenton Police Station, by simply appearing in the distance. This was the first action by the authorities since the rioting had begun a few hours earlier. The mob then stopped for a little while, consulted, and decided to split into two. This was the point at which the military lost its grip on the events for the rest of the day and most of the next. One group went off to Penkhull to attack the house of Bailey Rose, after an abortive attempt to destroy the Stoke Workhouse. Still, they had more success with Rose's house, completely gutting it by fire. Apparently, Bailey Rose, had at one time said that he intended to make the people of the Potteries so honest that he could leave his watch in the street and no one would steal it. He probably revised his opinion of the Potteries people afterwards!
The other, larger group, continued on towards Longton. By half past one in the afternoon there were several thousand people gathering near the Town Hall in Longton. They started breaking the windows of that building, and moved inexorably onwards to the Police Station and the Parish Office. Houses were attacked in a similar vein, but inn keepers were more fortunate. They bribed the rioters with free drink not to damage the hostelries. Some householders paid the mob to leave them be but when the mob arrived at the house of the rector of Longton, Dr. Vale. The rector had made himself unpopular with a crass remark about how the poor people should use grass and leaves to make tea if they could not afford to buy it from shops. The mob soon found a way into his well stocked wine cellar. His library was destroyed and the whole house set on fire. The house at least was saved from total destruction by the arrival of a fire engine and a party of militia, at around five o'clock. A number of the mob had become so drunk they could not stand up to run away. One woman was fortunate to escape by being placed in a wheelbarrow by friends and removed! One rioter, a twenty nine year old, called Thomas Adkins, was arrested and upon being taken to Newcastle for imprisonment, died. At the inquest held by the Coroner, Mr. Stanier, a couple of days later, it was stated that death was due to drinking to excess. His brain had been turned to alcohol, according to the surgeon, Mr Tait, who had carried out the Post Mortem. The riots had claimed their first victim. Next in line was the Trentham Police House. This too was gutted by fire but the Leveson-Gowers were more fortunate. They had kept about sixty of their estate men to guard the property but the mob had other plans.

Thomas Cooper had returned to his lodgings at Jeremiah Yates' to write a letter to Leicester, asking the Chartist Committee there to hold a public meeting to pass the same resolution as Hanley. Chartists believed their mail was being intercepted so Cooper decided to send this letter, along with one to his wife, by foot messenger. It arrived in Leicester the next morning, the messenger having been paid 5s to get it there. In fact, the Leicester Chartists had already heard of the resolution and had passed it. Cooper's worries about the post were well founded though. In 1844 T.S.Duncombe, the radical MP for Finsbury, and self proclaimed Chartist, proved in the House that Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, had frequently had the private correspondence of radicals opened. In particular, that of Guiseppe Mazzini, a European Revolutionary and friend of Cooper. Post masters had been ordered to intercept mail under warrant. This allowed cases of libel to be brought, which were easier to prosecute against Radicals than conspiracy charges. Of course, letters became evidence in themselves, no witnesses were required, thus there could be no intimidation, and convictions were easy to obtain. Post Masters were also obliged to send leaflets and handbills to the Home Office, via the Post Master General. So much for the sanctity of the Mail and the Penny Post! As a result of Duncombe's allegations the rules for mail intercepts were tightened, and future Home Secretaries were to find it more difficult to spy on the population at will.

By five o'clock that Monday afternoon men were beginning to assemble for Cooper's evening address, due to start at eight o'clock. At six o'clock the crowd was so large, consisting of thousands, that the committee suggested Cooper had better begin talking at seven o'clock. Cooper, in his autobiography has the following to say about what he is beginning to realise, "Before I began, some of the men who were drunk, and who, it seems, had been in the riot at Longton, came round me and wanted to shake hands
with me. But I shook them off, and told them I was ashamed to see them. I began by
telling the immense crowd that I had heard there had been destruction of property that
day, and I warned all who had participated in that act, that they were not the friends,
but the enemies of freedom - that ruin to themselves and others must attend this strike
for the Charter, if they who pretended to be its advocates broke the law". Cooper then
harangued the crowd on the theme of "Peace, law and order!" And complained of the
harm violence would do to their movement. One report of Cooper's speech reads "Ye
oppressed sons of toil, the country we live in is a great hypocrite, for while it pretends
to be a hater of slavery in other lands, the rich enslave the poor by tens of thousands",
and goes on to finish with "Slaves, toil no more, but in your thousands go and tame
the proud". Cogsey Nelly was also at that night's meeting, where he was cheered by
the crowd when Cooper congratulated those who had freed the imprisoned miners in
Burslem a week earlier. A proposal was then put forward that John Richards should
go to the Manchester convention as the Potteries delegate (though in the end he did
not attend it), and then another that there should be a meeting at the same place next
morning, Tuesday, at six o'clock. At dusk the meeting drew to a close but the people
would not disperse.

Suddenly two pistol shots rang out, though there were no subsequent reports of
anyone injured by gunshot. Cooper then realised that he had not seen a policeman all
day. The immense crowd was out of the control of the authorities. There had been eye
witness and spy reports of guns being sold in the area since July 1839. It was at first
said that Pidduck the Ironmonger was involved, but better intelligence said it was a
Birmingham gun maker, called Thomson. It was thought that they were being sold at
the coffee shop owned by Mr Steele in Hope Street. Another report, this time by a
Nantwich Chartist, stated that they were being sold by Mr Salt, at his "coffee-house
and arms-depot", again in Hope Street. Salt allegedly had a large stock of guns,
pistols, swords, bayonets, pike-heads, etc. Thomson definitely was a gun runner, and
was tried and convicted later in Manchester, but the Potteries connection seems to
have gone undiscovered. Some of these reports were later augmented with rumours of
gunpowder and explosives. Cooper now began to realise that the lines from the
Chartist hymn, which he had sung with the crowd "the lion of freedom's let loose
from his den, and we'll rally round him again and again", were to these desperate men
more than just words. It is often said at this point in the story of Thomas Cooper that
he had unleashed forces he had not expected. But the truth, perhaps, lies nearer to the
fact that Cooper was always a "physical force" Chartist and had consistently used
language which could only lead to one result. And even whilst he had been speaking,
houses were being fired. The troops had withdrawn from the area for the night,
leaving the mob in control.

The military had become cautious of moving around at night following an incident in
Stone a couple of years earlier. In this incident cavalry had been attacked in the streets
from behind barricades. Traps had been set to pull horses to the ground and a number
of soldiers had been badly injured. This was, effectively, one of the first occasions in
England of guerrilla warfare. The inspiration for this type of tactic perhaps came from
a pamphlet by the Italian revolutionary Francis Maceroni called Defensive Instruction
For The People, a sort of layman's guide to urban guerrilla warfare. This was certainly
known to be circulating in North England at this time, though the more famous radical
Alexander Somerville had just published his counter pamphlet Warnings To The
People On Street Warfare. Whilst none of this was strictly Chartist activity it certainly
concerned the military, and they were taking no chances with their own safety. It was becoming dark as the mob turned to Hanley, where the Rev Aitkin’s house was to fare so badly. His wine cellars were soon emptied and consumed by this mob of men, women and boys. Aitkins was left without even the walls to his house, with the whole building reduced to rubble. The hostility shown towards Vale and Aitkins stemmed from the fact that both were on the Board of Guardians at Stoke Workhouse, and neither was very caring of their poverty stricken parishioners. Joseph Whiston, a potter and Primitive Methodist lay preacher claimed, at his subsequent trial, that he was doing the Lord's work as he helped fire Vale's house. For his night's work on the Lord's behalf Whiston was afterwards transported to Van Diemen's Land for twenty one years. Many large houses were destroyed, or their occupants intimidated into making payments to rioters to go away. Charles Meigh, the Master Potter, was lucky. A foreman at his works, Thomas Jones, paid seven sovereigns to Richard Croxton, a riot leader, to move the mob along past Meigh's property without incident. The Bolton Chronicle adds to this story that Meigh had, in fact, to send out for an extra three pounds, as the mob felt seven pounds was too little. One of those who were less fortunate was William Parker, the county magistrate. His property, Albion House, was left in ruins, just a burnt out shell, without so much as a roof. Another house destroyed was that of Mr Forrester, Earl Granville's Agent. By this time, some of the rioters, conscious of the crimes they were committing, had begun to blacken their faces, whilst others attempted to disguise themselves by dressing as women.

Whilst the Potteries was in turmoil that day, the neighbouring town of Newcastle was busy preparing to defend itself from the expected mobs. The local magistrates, along with Mr Cottrill, the Chief of Police, had enrolled over eight hundred men as special constables. It was reported that "the working classes came forward to serve with a readiness that did them credit". These men were armed with truncheons. Two cannon in front of the police station were readied for use. Newcastle was ready to defend itself. At around two o'clock that Monday afternoon word arrived that the mob was approaching. Panic gripped the people in the Market that day, and shops and stalls were hastily closed and business ceased. The mob somehow realised the danger if they entered Newcastle and turned elsewhere. By evening, the first twenty prisoners were being brought into the town, taken from Dr. Vale's house in Longton. One of their number, Thomas Adkins, as we have already stated, died on arrival. Another, Thomas Whalley, was reported to be still seriously ill from the effects of alcohol a few days later. In Leek that Monday a huge body of men arrived from Lancashire, Macclesfield and Congleton. They had come to turn out the workers in this mill town. The authorities in Leek had known in advance that trouble was coming and had sworn in special constables. This visiting mass were peaceful enough, and simply settled for getting the local work force out on strike. A threat was made that if the special constables and the Yeomanry interfered or the workers did not strike there would be trouble. But nothing violent occurred. That afternoon most of the mob returned in the direction they had come from and the remainder stayed to go on to Burslem on Tuesday. Samuel Bevington, another of the local leaders, suggested that Cooper should try to make his way to Manchester and the convention, as he could do no more in the Potteries. Thomas Cooper knew from the past experience of other Chartist leaders that he would now be a wanted man. The authorities would wish to quickly capture him for his speeches in the last few days. Now it was a question of how to escape from Hanley, as he had been told that the Potteries was cordoned off by soldiers, police and special constables.
How was Cooper to get away? Bevington, Yates and Richards suggested that Cooper should take a gig to the recently built Grand Junction Railway and join a train at Whitmore Station. A gig could not be hired anywhere. By now it was midnight and no more trains would be available until morning. It was then suggested that he should walk to Macclesfield, and catch the coach to Manchester at seven the next morning.

It was then suggested that he should walk to Macclesfield, and catch the coach to Manchester at seven the next morning. Two Chartists, Green and Moore, agreed to act as guides and for their trouble Cooper agreed to pay them half a crown each. So Cooper set out for Macclesfield at half past midnight, partially disguised in a drab top coat, with a hat in place of the travelling cap in which he was so well known, Green and Moore helping to carry his luggage. His guides led him out of Hanley, accompanied also by Bevington and other Chartist leaders until in Upper Hanley they bade him farewell. The journey out of town was by back streets and Cooper always claimed, at his trial and in his autobiography years later, that he saw "neither spark, smoke or flame". And yet as we have already seen, many buildings were alight that night.

Bevington had warned Cooper's companions to avoid Burslem, as the town was reported to be filled with special constables, who were arresting anyone who entered the town, and told them to go through Chell instead. His guides though, became lost just a mile from Hanley, and after arguing about which road to take, entered Burslem by mistake. It was now about two o'clock in the morning and they were soon noticed by a group of specials. Mr. Alcock, Chief Constable and Mr. Wood, both manufacturers in Burslem, were in charge of this group and not immediately recognizing Cooper took him to be questioned by "a tart looking consequential man" in the Legs of Man Inn. This ill-tempered man asked Cooper what his name was and as soon as the reply "Thomas Cooper" was heard Alcock immediately realised who they had captured. When Cooper admitted he was a Chartist lecturer, it was decided to take him before a magistrate immediately. The magistrate turned out to be Mr Parker, who had escaped to Burslem for safety from the mob. At this very moment even Parker's house was in flames. The magistrate was awoken and Cooper was led into his bedroom. Mr. Parker appears to have been terrified of the sight of Cooper, and asked only simple questions, sadly undocumented, but which Cooper described as "most stupid" in his autobiography. His luggage was searched and nothing incriminating found. Mr Wood then suggested that, as there was no charge, no witnesses, and as Cooper had freely admitted speaking at Hanley, it would be best to let him continue on his journey and he was released and went on with his guides.

It was by now after three o'clock in the morning as they hurried towards Macclesfield. Cooper was lost in his thoughts. "Was it not sneaking cowardice to quit the scene of danger? Ought I not to have remained and displayed the spirit of a leader, instead of shunning danger? No, it was better to go on to Manchester and know the spirit of the leaders with whom I had to act. O'Connor would be there and surely he would not be deficient in courage if he saw any real opportunity of leading the people to win a victory for the People's Charter". As the three men walked it became clear that they could not now reach Macclesfield in time for the early coach and so they decided to turn towards Crewe, where Cooper could take the train to Manchester. At Crewe they all had breakfast together, and Cooper then paid his two guides their half crown each and boarded the train. In his autobiography Cooper was also to claim that turning for Crewe saved him from meeting the mob of men heading towards the Potteries from
Leek and Congleton during the early hours. Had he met them, he states, he would have felt compelled to return with them as their leader, perhaps to be shot or arrested.

On Tuesday morning, the 16th of August, 1842, the crowds began to assemble in Burslem and Hanley. At a meeting in Hanley at seven in the morning, William Ellis encouraged the people to continue until the Charter became the law of the land. John Richards also addressed a small meeting in Hanley that morning, quite probably the same meeting as Ellis, where witnesses heard him say "Now my lads, we have got the parson's house down, we must have the churches down, for if we lose this day, we lose the day forever". Ellis then suggested that all those present should now go to Burslem to join the crowds beginning to assemble there. So, at around nine o'clock, to cries of "Now lads for Burslem", and "Now to business", the crowd of four to five hundred moved off in the direction of Burslem. As they marched into Burslem they were singing the Chartist hymn which Cooper had taught them, "the lion of freedom's let loose his den, and we'll rally round him again and again!". They joined those already milling around in Burslem at Chapel Square. Immediately trouble flared up. The mob forced its way in to Mr Barlow's George Inn, and stole fourteen pounds from the till, and then helped themselves to drink. And they didn't wait for the landlord to put it on the slate either, though they were all to pay in a different manner shortly. It was now about ten in the morning and word was sent to Major Trench, the commander of the fifty or so 2nd Dragoons who had been stationed in the town following the previous week's incident. Captain Powys, a magistrate, was talking with Major Trench when news of the trouble in town arrived, and instantly asked the Major to assemble his troops and proceed to the Market Place. A few of the troops soon cleared the mob from the George Inn, and only Cogsey Nelly gave any trouble, striking out with a large stick. But he was soon forced out, and immediately stones began to fly and every pane of glass in the building was quickly broken. This was the second time in just a week that Mr Barlow had lost all his windows, for the inn had suffered the same fate on the 6th. Captain Powys, aware of the imminent arrival of the mob of four to five thousand from Leek decided it was time to put a stop to this trouble. He rode to the top of St John's Square, placed himself in a prominent position, in full sight of the crowd in Market Place and "read the Riot Act in the loudest tone of voice". The two hundred Special Constables, under the command of Samuel Alcock, along with the few Metropolitan Police Officers, who until now had been screwing up their courage with glasses of ale in the Legs of Man Inn, assembled behind the troops ready for action.

Repeated warnings, and readings of the Riot Act took place, and the mob were exhorted to go home peacefully. They remained though, between the shambles and Mr Wedgwood's house. Shambles was the popular term for the market and Mr Wedgwood's house is best known locally as the Big House. The Captain now gave the order "Clear the streets!" And then "Charge!". As Captain Powys and the mounted troops rode up and down, they attempted to move people by using the flat edge of their swords. But to no avail. Burslem market place had many lanes and as soon as the crowd was driven down one, it reappeared up another. Cogsey Nelly, by now becoming an all round trouble maker, hit out at the mounted soldiers, using his stick to try and force them to drop their swords. According to the reports their arms became so tired from the blows that they soon rode away. "Hooray for Cogsey Nelly! Hooray for Cogsey Nelly!" came the cry from the mob. This small achievement fired the ambitions of the crowd and stones began to fly. At around midday the approach of the
huge mob from Leek could be heard. The first sound to filter into Burslem as they marched down Smallthorne Road was that of the band accompanying them to the tune of "See the conquering hero comes". Then they were shouting, "yellin' like madmen", and waving weapons which could be seen by those at the top of the Market Place. Captain Powys, in evidence later, described the scene as "the most tumultuous and violent mob which I have ever seen assembled, having seen many riots both in the country and in London". Charles Shaw describes them in perhaps more sympathetic tones. "They were a motley crew, pale faced and cadaverous looking...many of them carried all the stones they could." Captain Powys cried out to them "What do you want here?" "Our rights and liberty. The Charter and more to eat!" shouted back the mob. "Assembling in a disorderly mob, and threatening to destroy life and property is not the way to get rights and liberty. I entreat you to disperse and go quietly to your homes." The crowd yelled back "We'll make the soldiers run, an' duck them cowards behind". Ducking, in engine pools and canals, was a punishment meted out to Specials and regular Constables caught by mobs. The troops, and Special Constables formed up behind them, were now being stoned from both sides of the market place. Captain Powys, realising that further reasoning was pointless, now asked Major Trench to prepare his men to open fire. The troops, which had been placed at the entrance into Market Place from Leek, opposite the Big House, now prepared to shoot directly into the mob. As the cry "Fire!" went out, the rattle of musketry was heard, and in that first volley of rounds Josiah Heapy, a young shoemaker from Leek, was killed outright. He had been standing up on the steps of the Big House, having just thrown a large stone at the troops at the same moment as the order to fire was given. He was hit in the head, and his brains were scattered across the pavement. When his body was picked up afterwards, a bludgeon was found at his feet, and another stone in his hand.

The crowd, terrified by this onslaught, the first real opposition they had faced since the start of the riots, fled in every direction. Many were knocked over and trampled by the fleeing masses; others were injured by blows from the troops and specials that were now in hot pursuit. A bricklayer, William Garrett, found shot, the bullet having entered his back and passed out through his throat, was taken to the infirmary. Many others who had been wounded were fortunate enough to be taken away by friends or made their own escape. Charles Shaw, remembering seeing this as a child, recalls people running past him, on the road to Tunstall, with their clothes partly torn off, others limping from crush injuries or wounds. One man told a tale of being chased by a soldier who had tried to cut off his head with a cutlass. Another, a woman, had been wounded in the leg by a bullet, and was cursing and raving about what had happened to her. In the town itself, there were still many hundreds of people milling around, with the troops trying to clear them out. The Special Constables were blocking the entries to the Market Place to prevent a fresh gathering there. This seems to be the first positive action the Specials had taken all day, having seemed a little cowardly. This might well be explained by the fact that the Specials were made up of ordinary men, cobblers, smiths, colliers, potters, and the like, and whilst they were led by men of influence, they themselves were the neighbours, work colleagues, and perhaps even friends of those they were being asked to fight against. There were many reports that more people died of their wounds later, and of course they could not be taken to the infirmary at Etruria for treatment, as appearing with a cutlass or gun shot wound would have identified them as rioters, and probably subjected them to trial, imprisonment and possible transportation. Some must inevitably have died slow and lingering deaths from infected wounds. Credence is given to reports of this type when
you read in later evidence that one military officer, visiting his friend Major Trench, and accompanying him to the riot, had seen a man fall, but in a different area from where Heapy was found. He also believed that he had seen smoke from firearms in the mob, just before the military opened fire. A report in the *Bolton Chronicle* from a correspondent in the Potteries claimed that three men were killed and five or six wounded, and reports were made in Leek of wounded people being brought into the town.

The mob does seem to have had some degree of organization, if the following letter from a Burslem resident to the *Staffordshire Advertiser* is any indication. "Witness the rockets discharged to announce the departure of troops from Burslem; and a number of pigeons released in the direction of Manchester within a minute of the troops opening fire". Ralph Adderley, a JP, wrote to the Home Secretary that George Ryles, the Superintendent of Police at Burslem, had taken a note from the neck of a pigeon, caught when it was released by the mob. The note, a copy of which can be seen today in the William Salt Library in Stafford reads "We the mob that have assembled in the Potteries this morning, August 16, have been violently assaulted by thirty six horse soldiers of the 2nd Dragoons. Please send us fifty thousand men as speedily as possible". It was not of course signed. What became of the other pigeons released does not appear to have been recorded.

A report sent to the Chartist newspaper, the *Northern Star*, contains a slightly different view of the day's troubles. "I have just heard that the military stationed at Burslem have begun firing on the people....but reports are so rife at the present hour, that the extent of the loss of life cannot be told. I also hear that numbers are wounded, but how great a number I cannot say. Thus proving that the ruling few are determined, at all hazards, to perpetuate their rule over the sons of labour....I would say just one remark before I close this that, as a body, the Chartists have had no hand in the destruction of property that has been going on here, nor has the advice of the Chartist speakers been attended to." There is some evidence that this may well be a fair view of the troubles, in that as a rule, at Chartist rallies, there were often banners, and posters, with slogans such as "Liberty or Death", "United we stand, divided we fall", and the green, be-starred Chartist flag present. None of these are reported in Burslem that day by contemporary writers. Further, many letters from local magistrates and police officers to the Home Office, show reference to Chartists and colliers. The authorities seem to know the difference between Chartists and rioters when later discussing those jailed. This tends to suggest that these two groups, colliers and Chartists, have become muddled together in other reports. This confusion was to cost the Chartists dearly, both in personal terms and in terms of public credibility as a political organisation. At Hanley, completely unprotected by any military presence, the pawnbrokers again suffered, with many pledges stolen, and not by the persons who had pledged them. One man, chuckling at the idea of getting a new pair of trousers for free, put them on in amongst the crowd, and went off in search of more booty.

During the morning, a poster had begun appearing on walls in Hanley, calling a public meeting for that afternoon on Crown Bank "to consider the distressed state of the district and to devise means for a return to employment". This was organized completely independently of the Chartist movement. A Mr. W. Wear took the chair. It was then addressed by John and William Ridgway, the local liberal manufacturers...
who were keen to see a peaceful resolution of the workers' problems. Chartists then turned up and rather took over the meeting. It was then addressed by three Chartist leaders, John Richards, Moses Simpson, and William Ellis. The object of the meeting, to look for a way for men to return to work, was completely defeated by the Chartists, who carried a near unanimous vote to continue to strike for the People's Charter. Before the meeting had ended, a troop of Newcastle and Potteries Yeomanry, with a company of infantry entered the town and dispersed the meeting, then proceeded to clear the streets. That night, in Hanley, at a Chartist meeting, it was resolved that "after the lapse of a few days, to lull the military and authorities...groups of men, armed with pistols, go to the different public houses where the military are billeted, drink with the soldiers, and when so engaged suddenly shoot them." This was not carried into effect however, and the area began to quieten somewhat, with only sporadic outbreaks. Stoke and Longton were mostly quiet by this time.

In Newcastle the military build up continued with reinforcements from the Uttoxeter Troop of Yeomanry and two companies of 34th foot infantry. Newcastle was now relatively safe with a large military force to defend it and it became a place of refuge for a number of influential and respectable families from the Potteries. A proclamation was issued from Newcastle, which was the headquarters for magistrates and troops throughout North Staffordshire, and it offered a reward of fifty pounds to anyone who provided information leading to the conviction of a rioter. In the county town of Stafford, whilst the Potteries had been in turmoil, plans were being made. On Monday the 15th, information was received in the town that an attack was being planned on the gaol by colliers from North Staffordshire. About one hundred and thirty Special Constables were sworn in and the Stafford Troop of Yeomanry assembled, along with 12th infantry, who were immediately barracked within the gaol walls. The next day a letter arrived from the Home Office insisting that if an attempt was made on the gaol, the magistrates should use force to defend it if necessary. As the week wore on it was decided that arms should be stored in the prison, and artillery field pieces should be readied for use. Military reinforcements arrived in the form of 34th Foot from Stone, and the Wolverhampton Yeomanry. Stafford was ready.

When Thomas Cooper had boarded his train at Crewe he had entered the carriage containing, amongst others, John Campbell, secretary of the National Charter Association. As soon as the City of Long Chimneys came into sight, Campbell's face changed as he saw every chimney smokeless, and he said "Not a single mill at work! Something must come out of this, and something serious too!" As they walked through Manchester to reach their meeting place, Cooper and his colleagues saw troops of cavalry riding up and down, and pieces of artillery being pulled into place by horse. The next day, Wednesday, the convention of sixty delegates took place, and Thomas Cooper, who continually claimed that he was not a man of violence called for the convention to support the resolution which has been passed throughout the country "that all labour cease until the People's Charter becomes the law". He states his intention to vote for the resolution "as it meant fighting, and it must come to that. The spread of the strike would and must be followed by a general outbreak. The authorities of the land would try to quell it, but we must resist them. There was nothing now but a physical force struggle to be looked for. We must get the people out to fight, and they must be irresistible, if they are united." The convention voted for the resolution, with only six votes against. However, the final public address published by the convention was in fact in the name of the National Executive only,
and not the whole convention. As the convention drew to a close Thomas Cooper returned to Leicester, and the other delegates returned to their home towns.

Market Place, Hanley as it was engraved for the *Illustrated London News*, 1842.

The ruin of Parsonage House, Hanley as it was engraved for the *Illustrated London News*, 1842.
CHAPTER 3

The Authorities Regain Control

In the Potteries the authorities were beginning to regain control by Wednesday morning. The Burslem Coroner, William Harding, held an inquest on Josiah Heapy. He described examining the body, and finding a mortal wound on the upper part of the head. The skull was shattered and the brain protruding. He was of the opinion that it was the result of a gun shot, and that death was instantaneous. Heapy had, at the time he was found, 3s5d in his pockets in silver and copper. At this point the lad was still unidentified. A young woman then came forward and identified herself as Sarah Heapy, a cousin of the deceased. She told the inquest that he was an apprentice shoemaker, aged nineteen, from Leek, employed by Mr Rigby of Market Place, Leek. She said he was a widower, whose wife had died just two weeks earlier, and he had three children. She claimed he was forced on the march to the Potteries, along with her three brothers. In further evidence she claimed he had put twenty sovereigns in his trouser watch pocket, which he had collected for a Rechabite Society he belonged to. The coroner then asked for the body to be checked again, in view of the jury. No money or watch pocket were found. Sarah Heapy was now questioned in more detail about the money and claimed to have seen the deceased place the money on a table on Tuesday morning, where she "had her fingers upon each of the sovereigns to count them." The coroner now cast doubt on her whole story as the money could not be found, and he was not satisfied with the evidence. A juror stood up and commented that Heapy, had he been forced to join the mob, did not have to throw stones or lead from the front as some witnesses had claimed he had. The coroner now asked the jury to bring in a verdict, and quite quickly "justifiable homicide" was returned.

A couple of days later, an interesting letter appeared in the Staffordshire Advertiser. Josiah Heapy's brother wrote stating that the person who called herself Sarah Heapy, and represented herself as a cousin of the deceased was incorrect from beginning to end. The writer states that Heapy was never married, that he was quiet, sober, and an inoffensive youth. He was totally unconnected with any political party, and was forced away from Leek by the mob against his will. His master, Mr Rigby, also speaks of him in the highest terms. Clearly, Sarah Heapy was an impostor and had been looking for a reward of some kind for her evidence. Had there really been twenty sovereigns? Would she have been given them had they been found? Whilst the coroner had been sitting, word was brought to him that his house was under attack and an attempt was being made to fire it. Harding was lucky though, his servants, having refused to pay three men to go away, despite threats of violence, had found them pushing some type of combustible material through an open window. The fire had quickly been put out before any real damage was done. The three men were immediately apprehended and charged with having attempted to set fire to Mr Harding's house. All three were later transported for this. Now attention began to turn to the cause of the recent troubles and one correspondent to the Staffordshire Advertiser, signing himself Argus, complains that the area should have been better defended, with a system of alarm signals. He felt that a small body of soldiers could
hardly be expected to defend an area of some ten miles in length, when no intimation of trouble could be had other than "the tardy progress of some foot sore messenger". He goes on to explain a system for signals, stating that the terrain is suitable for hoisting flags on higher land to indicate the movement of the mobs. This would have prevented, he felt, troops arriving too late anywhere to be of use. In the Bolton Chronicle a report suggested that the cause was "the apathy of the church authorities. The Dissenters, but most especially a sect called the Kilhamites, or Wesleyan New Connexion, of which Mr Ridgway, of Anti Corn Law League notoriety, is a member". It went on to claim that the religious education of these towns had been left entirely to these new religions and as a result the working classes had been thoroughly steeped in radicalism. The same correspondent also felt that the Potteries was unjustified in rioting as it was suffering less than any other place in the Midlands or North.

Within days most of the pottery and colliery workers had returned to work, and manufacture had recommenced. All public meetings of Chartists were banned by the magistrates. The large build up of troops in the area meant it was now quiet, and people were not even troubled by intimidating beggars. This along with the large number of troops in the area had the effect of giving the impression of a state of Martial Law. The remaining military in the area were a troop of 2nd Dragoons, three companies of 34th infantry, two companies of 12th infantry, and five troops of Staffordshire Yeomanry Cavalry. The seriousness of the rioting can be seen from the level of damages committed to just five properties. Albion House suffered the worst with four to five thousand pounds worth; Rev. Aitkins suffered two thousand pounds worth, with Rose, Allen and Dr. Vale between them suffering three thousand pounds of damage. All of these people, and the more minor claims would all be settled from public funds. The total was estimated at around twelve thousand pounds, not including money intimidated from people. The public purse was going to be stretched dearly by just a few days of trouble. And don't forget the cost of billeting all the military. That too had to be paid for.

By now the roundups of known Chartists and rioters had begun. All week following the riots two courts a day were sitting in Newcastle. One in the Town Hall and another at the Police Station. The courts were manned by a team of magistrates working in rota, amongst whom were Thomas Hartshorne, John Harvey, Job Meigh and Captain Mainwaring. Each day prisoners had been brought into Newcastle from the surrounding district until by the end of the first week several hundred had been seen by the magistrates, and either released or punished, and for the more serious cases committed for trial at Stafford Assizes. The Staffordshire Advertiser commented that many of those taken in front of the magistrates seemed to show no sorrow for their actions, "which clearly showed how deeply their minds were perverted by the infatuating influence which had taken possession of them." By Friday, the 19th of August, 641 prisoners were in Stafford Gaol awaiting trial. And still the committals continued. Samuel Robinson was brought into Newcastle, charged with using seditious language and incitement to riot. Mathew Horrobin, who was to give evidence against others charged, was called as the main witness against Robinson. On oath he stated that he saw Robinson on the Monday directing people to different houses, and instructing which to destroy and what to burn. When Robinson was asked what he had to say he told the court that in fact all the troubles had been caused by Anti Corn Law League agitators. Robinson claimed he had tried to stop the destruction but he had been unable to speak to the mob. He then says that he went
away claiming that the Chartist cause would be injured for five years by the rioting. Mr R. Daniel of Stoke then offered to stand bail for Robinson to the amount of £2000. This was refused by the magistrates who considered the evidence against him too serious. Others charged included a man called Neal, known amongst the local Chartists as "Home Secretary". A person named Kimber was nearly sent to gaol on the grounds that he had been talking to soldiers on duty and at their barracks. The only thing which saved him from gaol was that the magistrates gave him the benefit of the doubt as they were unsure of his motives. Elizabeth Poulson and Samuel Wilshaw were charged with stealing pledges from Mr Hall, pawnbroker, at Hanley on the 16th. As they had later returned them, they were both discharged. This had in fact become quite common as a method of trying to avoid prosecution. Thomas Owen, a labourer from Shelton, was charged with rioting at Rev Aitkins property on the 15th. He was seen coming out of the house when it was on fire, with his face blackened and was heard to say, "We are the boys that can do it". He was identified as a leader of the mob at Mr Parker house also, and was committed for trial. Edward Smith, a clog and pattern maker, was charged with riot and feloniously destroying property at Dr. Vale's house. The prisoner was seen in one of the bedrooms of the house knocking the window sashes out, and then throwing furniture out onto the fire in front of the house. He too was committed for trial. Adam Wood was charged with riot and stealing several plated candlesticks from Rev Aitkins. He, along with Samuel Tildsley, who was charged with breaking the windows in Burslem Town Hall on the night of the 6th of August, was sent for trial. Richard Croxton, accused of taking seven sovereigns from Mr Meigh's foreman, by intimidation, had a witness swear against him that he said "I ought to have had three times seven sovereigns, for I could have caused the bloody place to have been burnt down". He also made a remark about "walking up to his knees in blood", which can hardly have impressed the magistrates. One prisoner, Dennis Mulligan, was quoted as saying to the court, in a broad Irish accent, "It was not a glass I was drinking out of, gentlemen, it was a bacon dish!"

Thomas Lester was unfortunate enough to find Mathew Horrobin giving evidence against him. Horrobin's evidence this time was that Lester had attended a small meeting of about thirty men in a field at the back of Keeling's Lane in Hanley. A list was brought to the meeting by a man called Gilbert, and read out. It contained the names of several prominent local people and Gilbert called for their houses to be burnt down. This was put to the meeting as a motion and no one objected. This was enough evidence to send Lester for trial. One of the problems with the manner in which both the committals and subsequent trials were held was that paid perjurers, along with anybody who held a grudge were able to stand up and give evidence. Much of the evidence was at best hearsay, and often inconclusive. As John Richards commented in a letter to the Northern Star, "We are now in the midst of a Tory reign of terror, Spies and Informers are now the only persons who seem to be noticed, no matter what their character may be. Thieves, convicts or Devils, their word is quite enough to commit an honest man to gaol". In a letter to the Northern Star in September the following comment shows the pressure which was applied by the establishment to make sure the Chartists were punished, "We have heard....that some of the prosecuting parties threaten their hands with loss of employment it they give evidence in favour of prisoners".

One of the more detailed committals was that of a group of ten men and women, charged with rioting and demolishing property at Dr. Vale's on the 15th. Richard
Wright was seen setting fire to the house with a firebrand, which he applied to a heap of broken furniture in one of the rooms. The same prisoner, along with Thomas Jackson, William Hollins, and Mary Shaw, was seen throwing furniture on a fire in front of the house. James Earp was seen demolishing the wood work around the windows whilst Joseph and Philip Saunders were seen breaking bedroom furniture by banging the pieces together. The prisoner Rosanna Ellis, along with Millicent Saunders, was seen carrying alcohol, which a man had brought from the cellar, in a pint basin, saying to her companions "here wenches, drink. There's plenty more". Another prisoner Elizabeth Robinson was seen carrying a bundle of clothes, covered with a white dimity petticoat. They were all sent for trial. Jeremiah Yates, potter and keeper of a coffee shop near Miles Bank, was charged with being one of a party who turned out the workmen at the factory of Messrs. Ridgway, Morley & Co., in Shelton, on Monday the 15th. Thomas Furnival and John Lawton both gave evidence against Yates and he was sent for trial, but at least he was fortunate in being released on bail first. Joseph Capper had returned to work on the Monday after leaving the Crown Bank Chartist meeting. He also worked Tuesday and Wednesday following, whilst Hanley burned and Burslem fought. He must have hoped that by playing no part in the events following the Monday morning meeting on Crown Bank, no responsibility would attach to him. How wrong he was. Shaw states "It was the overpowering sentiment of the middle and upper classes that something must be done". This probably sums up the attitude which prevailed after the riots, death and destruction of August 15th and 16th, 1842. The authorities and many ordinary townspeople were clearly so shocked and scared by the revolution which had so nearly overpowered them, that anybody who had the slightest suggestion of involvement in the troubles was to be severely punished.

Capper was easily identified with the rioters when you read in Shaw "Those who cannot afford to get guns must get pikes, and those who cannot afford to get either must get torches". As we shall see, denials of these words, and claims of false witness were to fall on deaf ears. Joseph Capper was arrested by four men on Sunday evening, August 21st 1842, on a charge of seditious speaking. One of the men was Frith, a local draper and tailor who was to be a main witness against Joseph Capper at his subsequent trial. Shaw states "The old man quietly surrendered to his captors. That August evening, in its quiet beauty, presented a perfect contrast to the tumult and excitement which prevailed as Capper was led through the marketplace, past his own workshop, his old wife and son and daughter following, accompanied by a sympathetic crowd." Shaw goes on to state that "Capper was taken to Newcastle-under-Lyme for safety". Whose safety, Capper's or Tunstall's? The gangs of men still wandering the district at this time would quickly have formed a plan to secure the freedom of this popular leader from any lock up in Tunstall or Burslem. After all, they had freed three miners held accused of vagrancy in Burslem just a couple of weeks earlier.

John Richards was soon picked up and brought to Newcastle for his committal. Richards, known best locally as Daddy Richards, was seventy at the time of his arrest. His local credibility had been harmed by his involvement with the Urquhartites in 1840 and he had not enjoyed since the broad support he had received in 1839. One authority describes him as "the man who forsook the bible for the Black Book". This was a reference to an 1820's radical publication The Extraordinary Black Book. The Staffordshire Advertiser reported the evidence against Richards with the
opening words "a long winded speaker at most of the Chartist meetings". Still, he could pull a good crowd and the court was quite packed. James Goostry, the Police Officer who had arrested Richards on a charge of seditious speaking told the court that when Richards had been shown the warrant for his arrest, he had stated that whilst the warrant was a legal one, the charge was false. Richards, in his defence, stated that he had in fact been at Mr Fenton’s, the pawnbroker, where he had helped to defend the property, with success. He was committed to Stafford for trial. As Richards was driven off to Gaol, he took off his hat, and joined by his companions in the carriage, "hurraed in a real or assumed dreadnought spirit". Richards had become prominent as a local radical years before the Chartist cause. In 1840 he had become a paid lecturer for the Urquhartites. This was a radical sect organised by David Urquhart, who later became MP for Stafford, to expose what he saw as a conspiracy between Lord Palmerston and Russian foreign agents. Urquhart believed that a plot had been hatched in 1839 in which twenty towns were to be seized by one hundred thousand armed Chartists. The Chartists were organized in cells of ten men, with a Council of Five at the top, with leaders which included a top police official. Urquhart was rather paranoid, and believed that such an efficient organisation could only be Russian. He compounded this with the belief that a Russian fleet was ready to set sail to Britain as soon as the revolution began. Urquhart, when he was informed of the planned uprising, quickly convinced two members of the Council of Five of the stupidity of their plan, and aided by twenty followers put a stop to it. Unfortunately, as he told it, the messenger sent to Newport arrived too late to prevent the trouble there. Urquhart went on to convince a number of Chartist leaders that "every diplomat's closet contained a Russian", and Lord Palmerston was "a paid tool of St. Petersburg and every European cabinet was a nest of Russian dominated mercenaries." It's not surprising that Richards lost support locally! Richards seems to have been genuinely concerned about the fate of those arrested and their families. In the Northern Star the following week, as we have already quoted he complains that families have been left destitute, and that he has not one farthing with which to relieve them, or help his friends Oldham, Robinson, Yates. He goes on "My head is ready to split with pain, my heart almost at bursting, and when I reflect on the cause, and see the goodly Fabrick of Chartism thrown down in these parts my soul sinks within me and I feel completely unmanned" and finishes "....should this vile aristocratic move succeed and the chains of slavery be riveted on the neck of my country, then farewell hope, farewell friends, farewell life, for to live in slavery and no hope will kill me outright." These seem melodramatic words one hundred and fifty years later, but at the time they must have been truly heartfelt. The despair and oppression which ordinary men lived under is quite enough to see why they were driven to the lengths of plotting and planning a revolution, even if it was rather "off the cuff" in the event.

By the 17th of August Queen Victoria was writing to Sir Robert Peel, the Prime Minister, and Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, stating how surprised she was by the way the authorities had presented so little opposition to the rioters in the Potteries and "the passiveness of the troops". She felt that apprehending Cooper and the other Manchester delegates must be a priority. Sir Robert Peel wrote in reply that "every vigilance will be exerted with reference to Thomas Cooper and all the other itinerant agitators”. Thomas Cooper, now back in Leicester, was arrested within a couple of days, and brought back to the Potteries by Midland Counties railway. His arresting officer was one of the London Police Officers who had been assigned to the Potteries. That day he arrived back in the Potteries and the next he was taken to
Newcastle for a hearing. The warrant for Cooper's arrest had read that he was charged with "exciting a multitude to riot and make a great noise." The examining magistrates were Captain Mainwaring and J.A.Wise, Esq. They were told by witnesses that Cooper's words "Peace, law and order" had been said not in earnest, but in innuendo. Cooper argued whether he could really be convicted of the crime of innuendo, conveniently ignoring the effect he must have known his words could have on the crowd. The magistrates also wondered whether they could examine a bundle of papers brought with Cooper from Leicester, as these had not been specified on the warrant. He was committed to Stafford for trial on a charge of aiding a riot at Hanley. As he was in Newcastle the magistrates held him there for the night and arranged to transfer him to Stafford the next day. Cooper states "to my amazement, I was borne away in an open carriage drawn by four horses, with a troop of cavalry, having drawn sword, escorting me to the Whitmore station". At Whitmore the constable accompanying him handcuffed his wrist and took him on the train to Stafford. Had he been escorted out of Newcastle with troops to prevent an attack? His carriage had passed Higherland, known locally at the time as Ireland, on account on the large number of Irish labourers who had settled in that area. These Irish labourers were generally supporters of Feargus O'Connor, the Irish leader of Chartism. Would they have tried to free Cooper? Or would they have tried to harm Cooper as an informer?

It was now the 28th of August and Cooper was in Stafford Gaol, along with a total of over seven hundred other prisoners, a mixture of Chartists and common criminals. William Ellis proved a much more difficult character to catch. On the 17th August, a letter was sent from a Burslem JP to the Home Secretary. The writer suggests "it would be a most important step to get Ellis out of the way as he does a vast deal of harm. He was one of the mob which attacked the military and obliged them to fire". The letter goes on to show the evidence given under oath by John Williams, a grocer from Sandbach. In that deposition he claims that Ellis told his audience, at a meeting on Crown Bank, on the 16th August, that there was only one soldier for every hundred inhabitants in the United Kingdom, and that if the Chartists did not obtain political freedom before the Red Coats returned from China and India, they would be thrown back a hundred years. This same crowd then went on to join the mob in Burslem. In a note added by the Home Secretary he feels that "Ellis should be caught immediately. If, after the words spoken by him, he took an active part in resisting the military, the case assumes the character of treason, at all events he is guilty of a high misdemeanour." Only later were the charges against Ellis reduced to riot and arson at the insistence of the Lord Chancellor. As a result of the prominence of Ellis' position locally, and because of the reports given to the magistrates, a warrant was issued for his arrest. Ellis however, had realised the dangerous position he was in and had quickly left the area. On the 19th of August he was reported in Congleton. Information was then received that he was hiding in Shropshire, near Wellington, but when the police looked for him they found he had left the previous night. They thought he had now gone to Wales, but then it was felt that he might have gone to Liverpool and from there to America on the ship Philadelphia. With this news the police gave up searching for him, believing he was long gone. By early September though, Ellis had been found. A letter was sent from a person in Glasgow to a friend in Burslem. A Bill Ellis was working in a potbank, owned by a Mr Thompson, in the Gallowgate, under the assumed name of George Forrester. This letter was shown to Mr Ryles, the Police Superintendent in Burslem, who consulted Samuel Alcock, the Chief Constable. Inspector Tierney of the London Police, who was still helping in
Burslem, was quickly sent to Glasgow with a warrant for Ellis's arrest. He was charged at Newcastle on the 12th of September, with inciting riot and treason. He was also charged with addressing the meeting on Crown Bank on Monday the 15th of August, just after Cooper had finished. Further, with being "arm in arm with Cooper", at the Rev. Aitkins house when it was set alight at two a.m. on the Tuesday morning. As if this was not enough they also charged him with using seditious language at meetings in June and July. Ellis' past radical activities in the Chartist movement were reported in the local press, undoubtedly blackening his character. He was committed to Stafford to stand trial. He was about to become the Potteries Chartist Martyr.

Ellis wrote two letters whilst in custody in Newcastle, both to Samuel Alcock. In the first, written on the 11th, the day before his hearing at Newcastle, he tries to explain the situation his imprisonment has left his family in. He describes the job in Glasgow as the first one he had been able to get in six months, and after just a week in the position he was "snatched away". He claims that as he left for Glasgow he had determined never again to have anything to do with radical politics, and that he still intends to keep that promise to himself. Nevertheless, he goes on, he wants the authorities to realise that he never advocated violence at any time in his speeches, and asks Alcock to write to the magistrates telling of his good character. In the second, written the day after his hearing, the 13th, he has clearly realised the dire situation he has been placed in. He asks the Chief Constable to notice "during my confinement my poor spirit-broken wife who is now left in the most hapless, helpless hopeless state of destitution." Both letters are written in a hand that is in fact, clearer and better formed than much of the official correspondence by authority figure. Further, they were to go unheeded by Alcock! At this time the local rumour that "they are laying bottles of port among the Gentry at Hanley that Cooper and Ellis will be hung for treason" seemed well founded. A defence fund was being formed for the Chartists now awaiting trial in Stafford Gaol, or on bail. The Northern Star states that about ten Chartists are involved and clearly the inference is that Chartists were not concerned to support those who had simply been in the troubles just for the fight. This tends to lend some support to the earlier idea that the rioters were not in the main Chartists, but simply striking workers. But clearly the authorities identified Chartist speakers with the riots. The above article, written by virtually the only North Staffordshire Chartist leader not arrested, Moses Simpson, goes on to list Richards, Capper, Ellis, Robinson, Oldham and their value to the movement and the good character of each of the individuals. Of Richards, Simpson talks of his twenty four years as a radical, how Richards helped the potters to win better pay conditions, how he fought changes in local government and local taxation schemes. Of Capper and his continuing fight to help the poor, of Ellis as a scapegoat, and as a good thinker and speaker, and of Samuel Robinson as a victim of police informers. And finally of Oldham, charged with felony, simply as a pretext for having been a speaker at Chartist meetings.

The Chartists and rioters sent for trial were to face a Special Commission. It consisted of three judges, sitting in separate courts, for two weeks, from the 1st of October to the 15th. The chief judge was to be Sir Nicholas Tindall, Lord Chief Justice of Common Pleas. The accused were often tried in batches, making errors and false identification by witnesses all the more likely. Even the editor of the Mercury commented in his paper, at the conclusion of the trials, that the speed and quality of trial must have resulted in some cases of mistaken conviction. And how right he may have been can be seen from the fact that this was the largest number of Chartists tried
at one time, with the greatest number of sentences of transportation and imprisonment for any single event in the whole of the Chartist period. Two hundred and eighteen men & women from North Staffordshire were put on trial, with a further fifty six from South Staffordshire. One hundred and forty six were given sentences ranging from ten days to two years imprisonment, fifty four were transported, varying in term from seven years to life, and eight were given ordinary prison sentences ranging from two months to two years. These figures increased over the next two years as more people were caught and tried. The figures do vary slightly from account to account, but those quoted here are based upon some of the most recent research. The miners suffered badly in terms of transportation and general sentences of imprisonment, with something like nineteen transported and seventeen jailed. As for the potters, they had around twenty one transported and sixty seven jailed. Of the women, twenty three were tried, fourteen found guilty. The longest sentence amongst the women was given to forty eight year old Ann Mewis. She received eight months imprisonment with hard labour, twice the sentence given to any other women. Apparently the women were, according to the Mercury, "for plunder far the worst". On the whole, by the standards of the day, the sentences, excepting transportation, were not particularly harsh. Had the riots taken place fifty years earlier then the death toll from executions could well have been in the dozens. Still, no one should be under the impression that prison life was a comfortable existence in Victorian Britain. John Ward, in his History of Stoke on Trent says, "Many acquittals took place, rather from the humanity of the judges than from defect of evidence". This statement, written in 1843, shows well the attitude of the establishment towards the Chartists.

Amongst those on trial was William Garrett, the man so terribly injured in the shooting at Burslem. He was sentenced to two years hard labour despite being in convalescence from his wounds. Sentenced along with him was John Ashley, a master tailor from Newcastle, whose only crime was to have stopped in the street to watch Rose's house being burnt. He received twelve months hard labour. Both died in Millbank Penitentiary in London serving their sentences. George Coleclough, alias Cogsey Nelly, was a twenty six year old miner. He was sentenced to twenty one years transportation. He had no Chartist connections, and as such did not benefit from the Chartist defence fund. He was charged with a number of crimes, riot, attempting to demolish Forrester's house, setting fire to Parker's and Vale's, and demanding money with threats from the landlord of the George, Burslem. He was to return to England from Van Diemen's Land, and by 1868 had set up as a shopkeeper. He played no part in any local politics ever again. Incidentally, the writer of the article in The Archer magazine shows the name of Cogzynelly, one word, with different spelling, and states his real name was Joe Bowley, a collier from Far Green, transported for life. Richard Croxton also received no help from the Chartist Defence Fund. He was sentenced to life transportation. In Van Diemen's Land he committed a long string of crimes, which led to his ticket being revoked in 1858. For Croxton the events of August 1842 were the end of life as he had known it. John Neal, 'The Home Secretary', left prison after two years hard labour. He was reported to be in very poor health. William Plant, a twenty three year old sentenced to two weeks hard labour, for intimidating a woman into parting with a shilling, in later life, recounted his experience of Stafford Gaol, in a jolly, rather light fashion. Clearly not everyone suffered terribly from the ordeal of trial and imprisonment. Incidentally, Mary Hall, the landlady of the George and Dragon, in New Street, lost her liquor licence for holding Chartist meetings.
Rumours on new groupings of armed Chartists and imminent new violence abounded. The authorities offered good rewards for evidence leading to the conviction of rioters, but no evidence of serious conspiracy or of the distribution of arms emerged at the October Assizes. The reports of guns being used during the riots, made by some witnesses and reporters, were not proven, or even spoken of, at the trials. Cooper, Richards, Capper and Ellis were all to receive two trials. A week before his trial, Cooper had been told, by William Prowting Roberts, the Chartist 'Solicitor General' that he was to be tried for arson in addition to the other charges of incitement to riot and causing a multitude to make a great noise. Cooper was naturally horrified by this. Roberts advised that as he was one of eighteen on this charge the only way to beat it would be 'to sever', that is, to be tried alone. Secondly, that he should challenge the jury. Cooper needed a new jury, not one which had already tried other prisoners. Thirdly, he must refuse to plead before he severed and had challenged the jury. Richards and Capper received the same advice. Joseph Capper's first trial was on the 11th of October 1842. He was charged with sedition. Whilst Cooper and Richards were asking "to sever" Capper foolishly bleated "I want to go whoam, try me and get done wi' me. I've done nowt amiss". And so the judge promptly obliged him. He had no defence counsel, preferring instead to rely on the truth of what he had to say. This was perhaps a little naive when the establishment was clearly determined to have its revenge on the men who had so threatened its existence. From the speech which was used to convict him come the following words. "We shall have a very severe fight, but it will be a short one. Have you got your guns, your swords and your bayonets? You must be prepared for war in a time of peace." He was sentenced to two years imprisonment in Stafford Gaol, though he could count himself lucky not to have had hard labour added to his punishment.

Thomas Cooper's first trial began on the 11th of October before Sir Nicholas Tindall, with Sir William Follett and a Mr. Waddington as the prosecuting counsel. Follett was later described in the DNB as "the greatest advocate of the nineteenth century", a formidable opponent indeed for Cooper to face. Thomas Cooper had hired the services of a Mr Williams, a radical attorney from the Potteries, who had in turn engaged a Mr Lees as barrister for Cooper's defence. However, Cooper effectively conducted his own defence, using the barrister only for points of law. Roberts also promised to help Cooper. When the time came, Cooper opened his defence that day by saying that he had only recently begun to interest himself in Chartism. It was in fact just twenty months since he had first heard a Chartist lecture. He then moved on to explain the events leading up to his arrest. He began with the Monday morning meeting on Crown Bank when he had made himself Chairman of that meeting. Cooper claimed that in so doing, this was proof of his peaceful intent. As a regular lecturer he knew full well that the chairman of any meeting could be expected to be responsible for the activities which took place. And he would not have been so rash as to make himself responsible for violence, would he? It had been claimed during the prosecution case that Cooper had made references to how few troops there were in Britain and how easy they would be to defeat. Cooper, in his defence, claimed that the Whigs had mis-spent the revenues of the kingdom and as such had entered into unjust wars. This had resulted in troops being sent overseas in such numbers to leave only ten for each large town. He had not meant to imply that this would make them easy to overthrow, simply that they should not be overseas. When he cross examined the witnesses who gave this evidence against him, they admitted having heard little of
what he had said, as they were busy talking amongst themselves whilst Cooper was speaking.

When he had talked of one tenth of the population coming out on strike on any given day and winning the Charter by doing so, he had also stated "without arms, or any show of physical force". And yet, the witnesses had not given this as part of their evidence. When advising people to strike he had said "What in the midst of harvest? You will say, when there is plenty on the ground? Yes, in the midst of harvest. And if there is plenty on the ground, there are plenty to gather it. Do not you gather it; let the yeomanry go home and gather it!" By this he had meant that the yeomanry were often farmers, he did not mean for people to attack them. As to the charge in the warrant of "causing a multitude to make a great noise", that was simply because he asked for three cheers to be given for O'Connor, three cheers for the Charter, and this was customary at large Chartist meetings. As to why he had not left the area as soon as he had reports of violence, Cooper states that he only received this information just before the evening meeting was due to start. He was at the Royal Oak, owned by an old friend from Lincoln, Preston Barker. He had been in the company of his old instructor D'Albrione there. After the evening meeting he had not left because Jeremiah Yates still owed him 17s6d from the sale of Chartist publications supplied by Cooper. And as a Chartist lecturer he was earning little, and could not afford to travel without the money he was owed.

D'Albrione, an Italian revolutionary and Cooper's former instructor from his days in Lincoln was working in the Potteries as a teacher. Cooper had lost touch with him after that meeting in the Royal Oak, and did not meet him again until 1848 in London, around the time of a number of mysterious plots in the Capital, not the least of which involved a Lord and a chemical which could burn through stone. One of the mysteries of D'Albrione is the fact, stated by Cooper, that he was always reluctant to pass on an address where he could be contacted. Cooper had never been able to reach this man at any time in their association. D'Albrione just seemed to make contact when it suited him. When Cooper met him in London, the Italian seemed rather down on his luck and simply wished to return to Italy. Cooper introduced him to Mazzini, the great Italian Patriot, who provided funds to get D'Albrione back to Europe. Could this man have played a greater role in the disturbances in Britain than we realise today? Was he the true Agent Provocateur for the outside influences upon the Chartist movement in Stoke on Trent? Certainly the standard view of history would dismiss this man as insignificant, but he keeps cropping up at all the right moments in Thomas Cooper's life.

Cooper then moved on to explain about the words "you have done your work well today". What he had actually said was "My lads, you have done your work well, if you go on as you have begun today, turning out hands, we shall soon obtain the Charter!" and added "My lads, you have done many things today that I disapprove of. You have destroyed property which you ought not to have done". To explain further his peaceful intent he argued that he said "Allow the soldiers to pass you. They will do you no harm, if you do not harm them." As proof that he had not started or caused the violence he showed how the trouble had started in Burslem a week before his visit. The fact that he was regularly in touch with local Chartists should have alerted the judges that this need not have stopped him spreading his violent message. Witnesses who said that they saw him in the street that night were mistaken he
claimed. They had merely seen someone similarly dressed. Cooper had been in the George and Dragon from dusk until midnight. He was with the Chartist leaders Yates, Bevington and Richards. As to whether he was to be seen walking to the burning of Parker's house he could prove that he was in fact being interviewed by Parker in Burslem at that time. Incidentally, Cooper made no reference to "The tart looking consequential man" at his trial. Who was this man? A government contact? Cooper claimed that he had never seen or known William Ellis, despite witnesses saying that they saw Ellis and Cooper walking arm in arm to Parker's house. Clearly Cooper was in Burslem at the time and so this must be false or mistaken evidence. But, it is hard to believe that Cooper did not know Ellis. Ellis was one of the best educated and most literate of the local Chartist leaders and was certainly active in meetings, meetings that Cooper may well have attended on earlier visits to the Potteries. The author of the article in *The Archer* is certainly in no doubt that Cooper and Ellis knew each other.

Cooper's whole two hour long defence was designed to illustrate that he was not a man of violence. But nowhere did he address himself to the type of inflammatory statements which he had made in Manchester on August the 17th. Admittedly this was not part of the evidence against him at the trial, but it certainly illustrates the fact that he was not telling the entire truth in his defence. He had clearly been careless in his language to let the authorities come this close to jailing him. However, Thomas Cooper's luck was in. The judge appeared to have some sympathy for Cooper. In his summing up Sir Nicholas told the jury that they could not convict Cooper of arson, as he was not in Hanley at the time Parker's house was being set on fire. The jury retired and took just twenty minutes to give a verdict of not guilty on all charges.
Cooper was then taken down into the 'glory-hole' under the courts, where in his autobiography he claims to have met William Ellis for the first time. Ellis had just been sentenced to twenty one years transportation. Cooper later said that he had been so affected by this young man's plight that he had been moved to write a long memoir of Ellis, published in *The English Chartist Circular*.

William Ellis, left England aboard the prison ship John Renwick for Van Diemen's Land, sentenced to twenty one year's transportation. Ellis had left behind in England a wife and four children, were soon destitute. Along with him on that ship were virtually all those sentenced to transportation from Stafford that October. The feeling of the men from the Potteries can be shown in the following extract from the Journal of T.E. Ring, the Surgeon Superintendent on the John Renwick. "In the confinement and discipline of a convict ship, the idle dream and wild vision of power to effect their criminal and insane purposes passed away, and the recollection of distant homes and the enduring ties of nature and affection severed so suddenly, and perhaps for ever, crowded upon them, and produced a marked and almost general despondency".

Ellis joined a probation gang at Cascades, where he remained until October 1846. He was then taken to work for a Mr. Tibbs, and then became a constable for a short while before moving North. In 1847 he attempted to abscond from Launceston and was given six months "hard and unpleasant labour" in Forestier's Peninsula. After this he spent time being employed and waiting in the hiring depots between jobs. He made three applications for a ticket of leave, but did not receive it until early January 1850. He became a constable again in December 1851 and was quickly recommended for a conditional pardon. This was approved in December 1853, but in the meantime he had bigamously married Catherine McGovern at St. George's Church, Battery Point. He was now forty years old, she was twenty eight and a widow. He never received a full pardon, and as such was unusual in that all the other major Chartist leaders, Frost, Jones, Williams, did receive pardons and returned home from exile. Ellis was to die in Australia a homeless drunk.

Thomas Cooper was taken back to Stafford Gaol from court and two days later he was brought before Sir Nicholas Tindall again, this time on a charge of conspiracy, along with William Ellis, Joseph Capper, and John Richards. William Ellis was not present in court as he was already on his way south for transportation. Cooper again asked 'to sever', and along with Richards this was granted. However, five weeks were to go by before Cooper received bail, and his second trial was set for March 20th, 1843. In all, Cooper had so far spent eleven weeks in gaol without conviction of any crime. He returned to Leicester and a hero's welcome. Cooper remained extremely active in the Chartist movement during the remainder of 1842 and early 1843. The 20th of March, 1843, and the start of Thomas Cooper's second trial, and co-incidentally his thirty seventh birthday. The judge at the spring Assize was the Honourable Sir Thomas
Erskine, and the Counsel for the prosecution was Serjeant Talfourd, MP., Mr Godson, MP for Kidderminster, Mr Richards and Mr Alexander. Neither Thomas Cooper, John Richards nor Joseph Capper could afford any Counsel. They were defending themselves. Cooper was even in debt as a result of his earlier imprisonment. Joseph Capper was really the downfall of Cooper and Richards in this trial. He had already been sentenced to two years imprisonment at the October Assize and when Cooper had heard the sentence on Capper, he realized that he and Richards would in all probability receive the same punishment at the March Assize. To Cooper's horror the old charge of arson was added to the list of crimes alleged. The trial began on a Monday morning and Cooper took until Saturday midday to cross examine, as he called them, the "scum of the Potteries" who were witnesses. Cooper, in his record of this trial, names the final witness as Major Beresford, who had led the troops at Burslem on the 16th of August. But, there was no Major Beresford, the assault on the mob at Burslem had been led by Major Trench and Captain Powys. Where did Cooper think this name up from? Was it a simple mistake, or a reference to a Government contact? Incidentally, proof that Major Beresford did not lead the troops in Burslem comes from a small presentation card, given to Major Le Poer Trench, a copy of which is lodged in the Alcock letter book.

Cooper began his own defence on the Saturday afternoon, following the cross examination of the prosecution witnesses. Half way through his speech, the court rose until Monday morning. Cooper continued his speech on the Monday, and by the time he had finished talking, had used ten hours of court time. Some further witnesses were called and on the Tuesday morning the Judge began his summing up. The first thing to happen was that Cooper was given a small glimmer of hope in the form of the judge marking the charge of arson as "a mistake". He was to be declared innocent of the felony. Cooper and Richards were found guilty, though, of sedition and conspiracy. Joseph Capper denied having anything to do with his co-defendants and claimed all his meetings had been held in public. But then so too all his inflammatory speeches. In fact they were so public that the Mercury reported Capper as saying "You know if you cannot fight you can torch" at a meeting in February 1842. Capper was fortunate though, when the leading counsel for the prosecution, Serjeant Talfourd, called for "mercy for the aged defendant Capper". Capper, whilst found being guilty, received no further sentence to add to the two years already imposed in October. However, the judge passed the task of sentencing Cooper and Richards to the Court of Queen's Bench by a writ of certiorari. So again Cooper and Richards were freed on bail to appear in London on the 4th of May for sentencing.

This time three judges sat, Lord Denman, Sir John Patteson, and Sir John Williams. Lord Denman, Lord Chief Justice of Queen's Bench, would not allow Cooper to reiterate evidence he had already given, the court was simply interested in hearing pleas for mitigation of judgement and sentence. Richards came forward and gave his own mitigation, and then at about 1.00pm Cooper began his. He talked until 5.00pm hoping for an adjournment, but Lord Denman insisted on hearing out Cooper that evening. And so, at around 6.30pm Cooper finally sat down. Sir William Follett then asked the court to pass a severe sentence on Cooper and to show some leniency towards Richards because of his age. Sir John Patteson pronounced sentence - Thomas Cooper to two years imprisonment in Stafford Gaol, John Richards to one year in the same prison. Thomas Cooper, compared to many Victorian prisoners had a relatively comfortable time in gaol. He made a determined effort to obtain privileges
which were not normally available to prisoners - better food, letters from relatives and friends, even pen, ink and paper. He also won privileges for visits from friends. He was even visited by a couple of Lords on occasion. Not bad treatment for an enemy of the state.

Capper and Richards also benefited from Cooper's gains. The three of them shared a day room, with a fire, and an armchair for Cooper to write in. Cooper, whilst recounting this, writes as if he is an old man, but in fact was only thirty seven at the start of his sentence. Capper was somewhat older at fifty four, whilst Richards was about seventy. It seems far more likely that he received these privileges, not for his age or nuisance value, but instead by co-operating with magistrates and his visitors. It is quite possible he provided information about the activities of local and national Chartist leaders. An illustration of this is the curious event of a planned breakout in Stafford Gaol. Cogsey Nelly, before transportation, had hatched a plot to overpower the guard at his cell, steal his keys, and release other prisoners and seize the weapons kept in the gaol for the infantry billeted there. Using the oldest trick in the book, he had lain on his bunk pretending to be sick, and when the guard approached him, he had snatched the keys from him and rushed to the cell doorway. However, unknown to Cogsey, the authorities had heard of his plan, and had a small group of soldiers waiting in the corridor that morning. How had the authorities heard of this? From Cooper? How different this story might have been had that escape attempt, if true, succeeded. Another example of Cooper's potentially treacherous nature emerges in London some years later, when he regularly made friendly contact with the prosecutor, Sarjeant Talfourd, and even the judge at his second trial. Cooper seemed always to be on the edge of revolutionary plots which fizzled out, sometimes mysteriously. Daddy Richards left gaol on the 4th of May 1844, Capper on the 30th of September 1844, and Cooper eventually left on the 4th of May 1845.

Many historians have written that Cooper played no further part in Chartism from this time, but it is sure that for at least the next ten years he was still an active exponent of the ideas of the Charter and he certainly continued his interest in radical politics until the 1860's. From the Mercury, 5th of October 1844. "On Monday last, after completing an imprisonment of two years in Stafford Gaol, on the charge of seditious conspiracy, Joseph Capper, "the Tunstall Blacksmith" was set at liberty. Some of his friends met him at the gaol and escorted him home. While passing through Stoke, he addressed a numerous part from the steps of the Shambles, at one o'clock, and others at Tunstall later in the afternoon. The chief topic of his addresses we understand was the treatment he received whilst in prison, which he described as that of a common felon. A tea party was held at Yates' coffee house, Shelton, after which a lecture was given by Mr A.G.O'Neil in the Christian Brethren's room, Hanley, admission one penny, the proceeds to be applied to the relief of Mr Capper's family". The article goes on to say that the Christian Brethren members were none too happy about having a political meeting held in their hall and did try to stop it. Not quite the glorious homecoming stated by some writers. It has also been suggested that he came out of prison broken in health and died quite soon afterwards. In fact he lived for another fifteen years until 1860. Not bad for a man "broken in health".

Capper really only seems to have made one other impact upon local events and that was at a meeting against Popery in Tunstall in 1850. Here he rose "to burn the Pope's Bull". This was apparently, according to Shaw, greeted with long continuing applause.
and cheers. Supposedly he was received by clergymen, magistrates and the respectable people of the town with a standing ovation. Quite a change from a few years earlier when this man had been considered an enemy of the establishment.

In the aftermath of the troubles in North Staffordshire in 1842, the first conclusions reached by the establishment were that an attempted revolution had occurred and that this must have been the result of a carefully orchestrated campaign. Useful evidence of the strong feelings of the local middle and upper classes can be seen by returning to the presentation card given to Major Trench. It reads "Presented to Major Le Poer Trench of Her Majesty’s 2nd Dragoon Guards As a small, but sincere tribute, expressive of the high esteem and respect which the inhabitants of the town of Burslem, in Staffordshire entertain of the gallant, firm, and temperate conduct displayed by him, and the men under his command, on the eventful morning of the 16th August 1842, when he successfully vindicated social order, restored the supremacy of the law, and effectively defeated the evil designs of a revolutionary mob". Samuel Robinson, found not guilty of Riot and Demolition of Property, blamed the Anti Corn Law League for starting the violence to discredit Chartism. Tories like Bailey Rose blamed the liberal manufacturers for encouraging the workers to entertain subversive ideals. The Home Secretary blamed Bailey Rose himself, for he abandoned the Potteries on the night of the fifteenth to the mob. Bailey Rose was censured for this by the Home Office.

In more recent time, blame has been apportioned by suggestions that the Chartists had been influenced by Owenite ideas. This in turn had led to the belief that economic emancipation could not be achieved without a parallel struggle politically and industrially. Whilst this is perfect political theory, the reality is that Chartism was a straight forward human issue. Ordinary men, hungry, oppressed, and wanting desperately to improve their lives, had turned to Chartism to help them in their struggle. By the end of 1842 a County Police Force had been established and the first Chief Constable of Staffordshire appointed. This was the authorities' response to the criticism from some quarters that local police had no control or anticipation of the riots and troubles of August.

Some modern writers have felt that by 1843 the authorities were beginning to play down Chartist activities and had begun to treat working men more fairly. However, the North Staffordshire miners, whether Chartists or not, were still struggling for decent wages. Again, Sparrow's colliers, who were still lower paid than other miners in the Staffordshire coalfield, came out on strike from November 1842 until January 1843 and also during May 1843. Both times they were beaten back to work without achieving any success. A miners' association was formed and within six months virtually all the North Staffordshire miners were members. Now a strike could take place across the whole coal field and in April 1844 the miners finally won better terms for themselves. The "hungry forties" were beginning to ease. The 1842 strikes and riots have been referred to by modern historians variously as, "the British equivalent of the 1848 European revolutions", "the most widespread and intense disturbances to occur in Britain between 1789 and 1848", and "the first General Strike, not only in Britain, but in any capitalist country". But behind all these statements do not lose sight of the men and women who simply wanted to improve their lives. Rightly or wrongly, they attempted to change society for the benefit of all, rich or poor. In so far
as Chartism failed the ordinary people who supported it, that was really more a result of asking too much, too soon of the established rulers of Britain.

Chartism did succeed in widening the political debate in Britain and within a few years changes could be seen. By 1858 the property qualification required for Members of Parliament had been abolished. Equal electoral districts had commenced from 1867, and were further refined in 1885. In 1869 women rate-payers, as well as men, were given the vote. Next, in 1872, the Vote by Ballot was established. In 1911 Members of the House of Commons voted to pay themselves. By 1918 the franchise had been so extended that all men over twenty one, plus women house owners over thirty years of age now had the vote, and by 1928, all women over twenty one were enfranchised. And so, five out of six of the Chartists' demands had been met within just a few years of the decline of the moment nationally. Of course, the sixth demand, annual parliaments, is unlikely to reach the statute book.

When Stephens had spoken of Chartism as a 'knife and fork' question the meaning behind this was that men were more than just hungry. It was an issue of the fight for Universal Suffrage and an end to the political oppression of working men. This is well illustrated when you consider that Chartism went through three phases. Firstly petitioning Parliament, then striking for the Charter, and finally, in frustration, rioting. A move from persuasion, to passive struggle to violent insurrection. Politically the area had been crushed in the aftermath of the riots. The Chartists decided upon a change of tactic. It was seen that taking control of local government posts and councils should be an effective means of influencing working men’s lives. The positions of Overseer, Church Warden, Constable and Surveyor were among the chief posts targeted, and after a hard struggle successes were recorded in many areas, including Lancashire, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and the Potteries. Jeremiah Yates is one example of this policy. After leaving prison in 1843 following a one year sentence he contested the election for Highway Surveyor in 1845. Yates held this post until his death in 1852. And by many of the accounts of the day, he appears to have been an able and efficient administrator. Joseph Capper is another example of Chartists infiltrating these types of positions. He became a member of the Board of Health. The reasons for working men needing political influence can be seen from a quick look at the conditions in North Staffordshire during the Chartist years.

In 1833, one hundred and thirty pottery firms employed an average of one hundred and sixty five employees each, and the largest seven firms had between five hundred and one thousand employees each. In the three parishes which encompassed the six towns, forty three percent of the working population was employed in the pottery factories. One third of the labour force was adult males, one quarter boys under twenty, twenty two percent were women, and one fifth were girls. The high proportion of young people reflects not only the employers' preference for juveniles but the mortality rates amongst adults from industrial disease, and the demographics of a population growth from sixty thousand to eighty thousand in ten years. At the Gladstone Pottery Museum in Longton, a placard in one their displays shows the following, relating to the 1851 census of England; ninety percent of potters died below the age forty five, and that a third of those were dead by the age of fifteen. In 1841 a thrower or painter earned £2 a week. An oven man £3 a week, a transfer only 10s, and children just 1s or 2s. In Shelton, between 1838 and 1842 the death rate was 28.4 per 1000, which was only slightly lower than Manchester and considerably
higher than the rate in Birmingham. In regard to housing, a visitor to the district in 1839 wrote in a letter to the *Mercury*, "There are but two classes of houses as of people. The thousands of those in the working order and the fine palace like abodes of the wealthy employers". From facts like these it takes little imagination to see the problems forcing men to desperate measures.

Various local working men’s organizations were now beginning to be formed. In early 1843 a new Potters Union was founded by William Evans. Evans, who had formerly been a Chartist, now denounced the movement. In November 1844 the *Potters Examiner* reported a fund of five thousand pounds being started for the purpose of buying land in America, on which "the victims of machinery were to be settled". Mechanization was coming throughout British industry, and despite the fact that there were, as yet, "no victims", the writing was on the wall. In panic the fund was commenced. Sheffield Trade Unions had given a loan of sixteen hundred pounds to the Potters during the 1836 strike. When they heard of this fund they immediately demanded full repayment, feeling that before any money was spent elsewhere they should receive their money back. The Potters Union replied that they had a duty to their own trade, and Sheffield could wait. In April 1846 The National Association of United Trades started to poach members of affiliated trade unions. The Potters tried hard to obstruct this Association. One method used was to circulate a rumour to the effect that the National Association were agents for the Chartists, and as the Chartists were growing unpopular by this time, following the 1842 riots, this rumour had some success. In November 1846 the Potters Union published a hand bill designed to show that its emigration scheme was better than the Chartist land scheme. It stated that the Chartists were paying fifty pound an acre for land in England. The Potters' Emigration Society was paying just a few shillings an acre in America.

The Hanley branch of the Chartist Land Society published a letter in the *Northern Star* in December 1846 in reply. This stated that fifty pounds an acre was only paid for the very best land, and much had been bought for less. The letter concluded by accusing the Potters Emigration Scheme leader, William Evans, of "juggling" and using "machinery dodges" to cajole money out of the potters. The Chartists further tried to damage the Potters Union and the Emigration Society by making malicious puns out of the area in America which Potteries people were settling in - Potterville, Dodge County. Much of this was very pointed and personal. The Chartists were still a powerful organization in the area, with over one thousand members in the Chartist Land Scheme. The tactics of the National Association of United Trades were similar. They claimed that "towards the price of one hundred shares at 25s each, which the United Branches of Operative Potters had taken out in the National Association only £1, 5s, 0d had been paid." They alleged that the rest had been subscribed and misappropriated, or as they put it "flung into the potters' bottomless pit - the Emigration Society." Of course the officials of the United Branches denied this. With the end to the trade recession commencing during 1847, men could once again find work. The Hungry Forties were over. By 1848 the Potteries as an area were quiet. There was no trouble when the Third Chartist Petition was presented to Parliament. Attention locally had totally focused on the rival land schemes. The Potteries Emigration Society continued to send families to Pottersville, USA, and the Chartist Land Scheme was settling families in farming communes here in Britain. By 1850 there were still parts of the United Branches in operation, and the Potters Emigration Scheme had become a general organization of workers from any industry. The
National Association For The Protection Of Labour, a sister organization to the other National Association mentioned above, was no longer of significance, and was not even called a "monster" any longer. Three organisations were still surviving in 1850. United Branches For Emigration, Chartists for Home Colonization and the National Association For Employment Of Labour For Workingmen's Ownership Of Industry. And, perhaps not surprisingly with names like that, they were all beginning to lose influence with working men. Chartism did continue until 1858 in the area. And here we really leave the old order behind. In just a few short years the Potteries had seen working men organize, rebel against oppression, and emigrate in desperation. In industry, the pottery masters formed a Chamber Of Commerce, arbitration rather than confrontation became the order of the day. Mechanization was gradually introduced, and the whole of the Potteries district was growing as a result of canals and railways widening the market place, with mechanization making more products available for the growing overseas markets of a burgeoning British Empire.

Interestingly, some historians have suggested that as trade was still poor at this time, the disorganization of working men turned into no organization. Others say as trade was good, political activity was not required. Men had jobs and therefore no interest in politics. I think the truth probably lies somewhere between the two. Trade was better, infighting had destroyed the political infrastructure locally, and men were genuinely less hungry. Radical politics for the time being was a dead issue.

Engravings of the Chartist riots throughout Britain as seen in the *Illustrated London News*, 1842.
CHAPTER 5

Joseph Capper - Fact and Fiction

Due mainly to Charles Shaw's *When I Was A Child* and Henry Wedgwood's *Romance Of Staffordshire* there has always been some information available about Capper. Frederick Harper's *Tilewrights Acre* and *Joseph Capper* novels have expanded this information, and confused it further. Sadly, there has been a constant repetition of inaccuracies and plain mistakes about the life of Capper. I hope here to correct some of them, and to provide some interesting new possibilities.

Lines in *italic* are correct information.

Born;

*According to his age at death, 1788.*
*According to Shaw, 1788.*
According to Wedgwood, 1778.
According to Harper, 1778.

Died;

*According to his gravestone, January 10th 1860.*
*According to his obituary, January 10th 1860.*
*According to Shaw, January 1860.*
*According to Wedgwood, 1848.*
According to Harper, January 10th 1860.

Age At Death;

*According to his gravestone, 71.*
*According to his obituary, 71.*
*According to Shaw, 71.*
According to Wedgwood, nearly 70.
According to Harper, 82.
According to Warrillow, 78.

Clearly there are some problems with Harper and Wedgwood dates. Harper has the same date of birth as Wedgwood, 1778. They do differ on the date of death, with Wedgwood opting for 1848, and Harper getting it right with January 10th, 1860. Wedgwood is at least close with an age of nearly 70, but a bit early with his date of death, whereas Harper has ended up with Capper dying at 82. A reading of either work shows the inconsistencies. Also, the work which many turn to as the "bible" for North Staffordshire history, Warrillow's *Sociological History of Stoke on Trent*, is clearly wrong on Capper. He states that Capper was over 60 when sentenced in October 1842. This would make Capper over 78 at death. This is different from every other writer. This leaves Shaw having about the best grip on Capper facts.

The Census for various years helps to provide a little good quality fact about the Capper family. The address is consistently shown throughout all three Censuses as 29 Piccadilly (Street), Tunstall.
The 1841 Census required that all ages were shown to the nearest five years below the true age of the person. This makes an exact date of birth difficult to determine, but at least we can trust the names. The 1851 Census has more detail for us. Here we see for the first time documentary proof that Capper was born in Cheshire, and it was no doubt he who stated Bunbury to the enumerator, though the handwriting is less than clear on this, and also on Henry's occupation. The 1861 Census has no mention of either Joseph or Sarah, who are now both dead, but the two brothers have a house keeper. It is also clear that John has changed his place of birth to Alpraham, a village a couple of miles from Bunbury. The 1871 Census. With just a quick search no trace was found of the brothers in Piccadilly. Perhaps this lends credence to Henry Wedgwood who suggests that "Capper's son returned from America to erect a stone at his Father's grave".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Birth Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>Joseph Capper</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>Not Staffs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sarah Capper</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Not Staffs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Capper</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>Not Staffs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Capper</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Stonemasons Apprentice</td>
<td>Tunstall, Staffs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>Joseph Capper</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>Tunstall, Staffs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sarah Capper</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Tarvin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Capper</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>Bunbury.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Capper</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Stonecutter</td>
<td>Tunstall, Staffs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>John Capper</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>Alpraham, Cheshire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Capper</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Coal Dealer</td>
<td>Tunstall, Staffs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1871 (no entries)

And what of his daughter, called Esther by Harper and mentioned only in passing by Shaw, with no name. Well, I could find no trace of her, and she certainly was not in the house in the first Census of 1841, nor any subsequent. She could of course have married by this time. Still, Shaw suggests she was at 29 Piccadilly at this time. Harper uses a number of different names - Capper's father was called Dan, his mother Lotte. His children become Ben, born 1807, Esther, born 1811, and Henry, born 1821. I can find no evidence of any of these except the Henry. As for his marriage, this was perhaps in 1807 or 1808, when he would have completed an apprenticeship as a smith, at the age of 19, having commenced at 14. Harper suggests he married rather
later, at 29, but Sarah would then be 36 or 37. She would not then have had Henry until she was 49. Most unlikely. But this is speculation, as I have not yet found a marriage certificate. In the Wolstanton Rate Book for 1822, Tunstall being part of Wolstanton Parish at this time, Capper is shown as renting a smithy in Smithy Lane. This was owned by a William Grocott. He also had a house, with garden, which he rented in Wellington Place, owned by a James Bourne. A Thomas Capper had a house and garden in Piccadilly, owned by The Building Club. This is probably the Tunstall Building Society of which Joseph Capper was a founding member in 1816. In the 1848 Tunstall Rate Book, Capper is shown with a number of entries. On page 31 he has a rented smithy in the High Street, owned by a Thomas Llewellyn. He has land in Paradise Street (page 51), a house he was living in at 29 Piccadilly (page 56), and another house (page 33), which he rented out. Thomas Capper is now shown to own land in Tunstall. (Page 16 & 42). In the 1851 White's Directory, Capper has his smithy in the High Street.

There is evidence of another Joseph and Sarah Capper living in Tunstall at about 1817. This Joseph is a Potter. There are two entries for children for this couple, one of whom was called Joseph. This is from the Tunstall Wesleyan Chapel, 1787 - 1837, Register of Baptisms, Certificate No 165. And who was Thomas Capper? I believe he was born in 1805. I am inclined to think that there were more than one family of Cappers in Tunstall at this time. I know Capper was and is quite a common name but I should not be at all surprised to find they were related to the Cappers of our story.

Here we come to another issue - I know of a direct Capper relative who claims that Joseph's father was called John, and that he was a leader of the Sandemanians, though he never stated if this was in North Staffordshire or Cheshire. Harper claims Capper's father was called Dan. Incidentally, Kinnersley, the Iron and Coal Master was a Sandemanian, and gave Joseph Capper a great deal of work. Could this be influence from Capper's father? There were certainly other smiths working in Tunstall with less politically extreme views than Capper. Maybe they were not as good or charged more. Also, this descendant always claimed that "long before the year 1800 Tunstall people referred to the Capper family as The Preaching Cappers". One anecdote he used to tell from 1920's Tunstall goes as follows - visitor to Tunstall "What sort of people live here?", Tunstall residents answer "There are three classes of people in this town. There are the good people, then there are the people who are not so good. Lastly there are the Cappers!".

John G. Llewellyn in his Story of Christ Church, Tunstall, 1832-1982 states that Capper came to Tunstall as a 'Blacksmith and Stone Grate Fitter'. This certainly tallies with the 1851 White's Directory. But what age was he when he arrived in Tunstall? My guess has to be after 1808 or 1810, when he would be 19 or 21 and have served an apprenticeship as a smith. In a speech reported in The Mercury on 17th November 1838 Capper says he has lived for twenty five years in Tunstall. This makes 1814 a possible arrival year. The Capper descendant I mentioned above believed that Capper opened a smithy in the High Street in 1816, and moved to a new one, purpose built in Ladywell Road, by 1828, though this is at odds with the Rates Book for 1848. Most writers romanticise their characters, and Joseph Capper seems to have benefited in common with this trend, except in one case - an article appeared in a local magazine, The Archer, in 1872. This was titled William Elton, The Chartist. It was written in local dialect, and clearly relates to William Ellis in fact. The mention of Capper is
quite entertaining - "Theer often cume tu help us drink 'Samson' a little hump-backed blacksmith from Tunstest, named Capper, an' hae, alung wi' Elton, won the principal speakers at th' maetins". Shaw describes Capper in rather more glowing terms "He was a stout man, with a round, placid face, a sort of saintly-looking John Bull, rather than of the Boniface type". Cappers birthplace, Bunbury, draws its name from St. Boniface-Bury. Did Shaw leave a hint here, or was this phrase co-incidence? Samson by the way was a popular non-alcoholic drink with the temperance movements.

Capper was a Primitive Methodist Lay Preacher. He was presumed to have been converted to Primitive Methodism at the Mow Cop Camp Meeting in 1807. However, there is some doubt as to whether he was actually there. Still, he was definitely working later as a preacher as can be seen in the Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum, where they have circuit plans showing the places he preached at. Harper has suggested that Capper's name, number 18 on the circuit plan, was removed, and replaced with an asterisk by a superintendent who felt he was protecting the good name of the church when Capper was jailed. However, in a review of Harper's book, The Methodist Recorder of twenty eighth of June 1962 suggests that this has never been substantiated and included in an official Methodist history and as such should be withdrawn. Many circuit plans do indeed have blank spaces and as such not too much should be read into this tale. The same issue of that magazine also tasks the perception that Capper was "The Speaching Radical", suggesting that this person was not clearly identified in Hugh Bourne's Journal. John T. Wilkinson in his life of Bourne states that “The phrase refers to one who had some measure of extreme political opinion, probably one of Luddite sympathies, and was therefore against the ruling Government authority. There is no indication as to the person concerned”. Certainly Bourne was no friend of Capper's; after all he had manoeuvred Capper out of his seat at the Primitive Methodist Conference in 1821, by insisting Capper was unsuitable to be a delegate. The Capper relative mentioned earlier always thought that one book could shed light on this, and that was The History of Milton Parish Church by David Jack. I have found no trace of this book or author. Capper was well known though for making entertaining and eccentric speeches which relied on religious themes, as can be seen by reading any contemporary newspapers of the time. The Staffordshire Advertiser and the Mercury both report many speeches. In fact, in a letter to the Mercury on the 17th November 1838, Capper complains that his speech a few days earlier has been mis-reported. The editor in reply agrees and then goes on to say that Capper's speeches are often difficult to report.

Capper's obituary notice has a mention of Capper as a member of the Board of Health, from the Staffordshire Advertiser 14th January, 1860. Page 5, column 7, Deaths: "On the 10th instant, at Tunstall, after a short illness, Mr Joseph Capper, blacksmith, aged 71 years, formerly a member of the local Board of Health, well known during former days for his ultra-political opinions." One final piece of information is in the Staffordshire Advertiser, 15th June, 1861. Page 8, column 8, Legal Notice. This is a standard legal notice giving note of a hearing relating to Joseph Capper's will.
Appendix

The Fore Runners To North Staffordshire Chartism

Spies And Spooks In Staffordshire

Living In The Potteries

The Sentences Given At The Trials

A Chartist Song

The Second Petition

Bibliography

The cover of the rare booklet published for the 100th anniversary of Chartism in North Staffordshire.
The Fore Runners To North Staffordshire Chartism

On a national basis the following are recognized as influential;

Major John Cartwright – He was advocating four out of six points in the Charter as early as 1776.

Charles James Fox – He advocated all six points of the Charter.

In a pamphlet, published in 1832, the People’s Charter made its first appearance. This was an abstract from The Rights of Nations.

The London Working Mens’ Association was formed in 1837.

At a local level the following twenty-eight point chronology proves useful in understanding the build up of influences that helped to form the Chartist movement in North Staffordshire and its leaders.

1757, 1783 and 1800. Outbreaks of food rioting.

Early 1790’s. Josiah Wedgwood supports Universal Suffrage.

Early 1790’s. Thomas Paine’s works in widespread distribution almost everywhere.

1812. Property owners in Newcastle form a semi-military defence force.

1812, May. Prime Minister Spencer Percival assassinated. Greeted with joy in the streets of the Potteries.

1812. A Newcastle delegate to a Lancashire meeting of revolutionaries claims that several thousand in his district are armed and sworn in.

1816. Radical Reform interest revives. Two political missionaries visit from London.

1817, Jan. Three thousand people attend the Potteries first open air reform meeting in Burslem. Watched by Lord Lieutenant, magistrates and troops. The radical organisation the Hamden Club is banned.

1819. Reading rooms established in Hanley.

1819, Nov. William Ridgway, Master Potter, chairs a meeting calling for reform and the ballot. Notably, he does not call for Universal Suffrage.

1820. Several employers give men time off with pay to attend a meeting and defeat a motion calling for support and loyalty to the government.
1824. The first Combination Acts repealed. The first Potters Union formed.

1824, Dec to 1825, Jul. A wave of strikes grips the area. Potters, colliers, carpenters, barbers!

1825. Potters Union collapses.

1830, Nov. National Association For Protection Of Labour visits the area.


1831, Apr. Miners join the National Association For Protection Of Labour.

1831. Potters and colliers uneasy. In May it takes four days for troops to restore order during a miners strike.

1832, Dec. Parliamentary Elections following the great Reform Bill. The local radical candidate, George Miles Mason, comes bottom of the poll. Riots in Hanley follow. He had been warned that to have Joseph Capper as a speaker on his platform would turn all property owners against him. And so it did.

1833, Autumn. Robert Owen visits the area. The Potters Union now has eight thousand members, six thousand of them in North Staffordshire.

1834. Owen’s Grand National Consolidated Trade Union collapses, but the Potters continue. Owen falls from favour in North Staffordshire because of his religious beliefs.

1834, Jun to Dec. A Potters Co-Operative forms in Burslem. First co-operative in the area.

1834-5. A miners’ strike wins a twenty five percent pay increase.

1835. The Potters are prominent in the agitation on behalf of the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

1836-7. The Potters start a strike, known as the Great Strike, which lasts five months. Ends in utter defeat and destruction of the Union, January 1837.

1837. Joseph Capper, at a meeting, asks “Where are the principles of men, who twenty years ago, read The Black Dwarf”. The Black Dwarf was a radical publication from the 1820s.

1837, Jul. Joseph Capper is a member of the Liberal Committee for the Parliamentary Elections. William Ridgeway is on the same platform.

Following Tory wins again, rioting follows. This time in Longton.
Spies and Spooks in Staffordshire

Because the radical movements in the area were dominated by working class people, the resulting animosity with the middle classes prevented local magistrates from being informed of events. The middle classes had little access to these organisations, and as such could not therefore inform on their activities. The agents of the magistrates, the Parish Constables, were equally unable to fulfil their function of informing the magistrates. However, the police force in Newcastle, and a greater spread of social mix, helped magistrates report and even predict disorder. The Stipendiary Magistrates were usually competent men who acted as agents for the Home Office. For example, Bailey Rose corresponded frequently with the Home Office. His advice on local matters was even sought by the Home Secretary.

This meant that the authorities were forced to rely on local spies and informers. The problems with this though, are that spies and paid informers would only show loyalty to money. If they could discover no plots or sedition then they would earn no money. As a result, they were often tempted to invent information to justify reward money. They also withheld information and spun it out over a period of time to get more money. There was even an incentive to start trouble just to have something to report. Spies had two main reasons to become Agent Provocateurs, firstly, by supporting violent actions, the spy gains credibility with the people he wants to betray, and secondly, the pressure of violence will convince the spy’s employer of his worth and therefore continue to receive payment for information provided.

In the early nineteenth century, Lord Sidmouth employed spies directly to tour manufacturing areas and look for intrigue and sedition. Spies should be seen in two contexts, those who are sponsored by government and those employed locally by magistrates. There were probably many more locally sponsored spies, as the government, by the Chartist years, were not keen on spies. There are even cases of the government refusing to give money to local magistrates to pay for information gathered by spies.

The sums spent on the Secret Service by Government in the first half of the nineteenth century are as follows:

Sidmouth spent £9,526 between 1812 and 1818.
Russell spent £1,790 between 1835 and 1838.
Normanby spent £591 between 1839 and 1841.
Graham spent £232 between 1841 and 1846.

Post Masters were also required to transmit all information of interest to the Post Master General, also to send leaflets and handbills to the Home Office, via the Post Master General. They were a particularly good source in that Post Masters could open mail under warrant from the Home Office. This allowed cases of libel to be brought, which were easier to prove against radicals. No witness
intimidation was the most obvious benefit, as the letters themselves became the evidence.

Factory Inspectors were another good source. Under the 1833 Factory Act, four inspectors were appointed to ensure regulations were being followed. Actual minutes of meetings request and order that meetings of Chartists should be reported by the Inspectors. John Fielden, radical MP for Oldham exposed this in the House in 1840 by reading from a confidential letter asking for these reports to be made. But Factory Inspectors were of limited use as informers. They had a huge territory to cover, and the local inspector for the Potteries district had two thousand seven hundred factories in his charge.

The Metropolitan Police had a part to play, in organizing young, or non-existent local forces, into effective police services. Often, though, they were not welcomed in the provinces, and were used simply as messengers.

Military commanders were probably the best source of information of the Government. They were free from local pressures, though this could also result in ignorance of local affairs, and their troops were billeted in houses where information could be gleaned.

Engravings of the Chartist riots throughout Britain as seen in the *Illustrated London News*, 1842.
Living in the Potteries

Staffordshire Colliers as they were engraved for
the Illustrated London News, 1842.

The conditions in which ordinary men, women and children lived and worked were quite the most dreadful imaginable. An astonishing level of cruelty and injury was inflicted upon people at work.

In the pottery industry many children were used, from quite young ages. Amongst the awful tasks was mould running. This involved taking full moulds to the kiln, and working in the dehydrating, exhausting high temperatures. According to Charles Shaw mould running was exactly the right term for this work as “nothing less than running would do”.

The worst work was that of the dippers. This meant that for twelve hours a day men, women, and boys had to immerse their hands in lead and arsenic fluid whilst dipping finished ware. This resulted in hands and clothes becoming saturated, with the effect that skin softened and fell off the hands, fingers would bleed and more of the solution would be absorbed through the broken skin. Constipation, colic, consumption, and epilepsy were all conditions which the unfortunate worker could be exposed to through this foul work.

In the mines there was little mechanization at the time of the riots, though where possible in the tunnels pit ponies were used, but frequently boys were made to pull the baskets, or corves, of coal through the tunnels. Children were put to work as young as seven or eight, and would work their way through a number of tasks before beginning to cut coal when aged around fourteen.
Children were all employed by “butty’s”, a journeyman potter who employed a team of staff to carry out more menial and laborious tasks. The butty was responsible for the distribution of wages to his own workers, receiving a lump sum from the factory owner and being expected to distribute this amongst his team. Often wages were only paid out in public houses, where the publican expected to receive a percentage in exchange for cashing larger notes into smaller change. So, young boys of nine, ten, and eleven years of age were being directly exposed to whatever depravity and vice was taking place in the public house.

Children, when interviewed for a parliamentary commission gave answers of “Don’t get enough to eat, get mostly potatoes with salt, never meat, never bread, don’t go to school, haven’t got no clothes,” “Haven’t got nothin’ to eat today for dinner, don’t never have dinner at home, get mostly potatoes and salt, sometimes bread.” “This is all the clothes I have, no Sunday suit at home.” In spite of the many schools in the area, education was of a very low quality and in fact Frederick Engels declared that “the whole district is plunged in the deepest ignorance”. Whilst children did in theory have the opportunity to go to school, most families could not afford to have their children anywhere other than at the pit or in the potbank.

The quality of housing and sanitation in the towns was, on the whole of the worst type. Much of the cheaper housing in the district had been built in the 1820’s and 1830’s. It had no public services, no sewers, no drains, no paved areas, no street cleaning. The reports provided during the mod nineteenth century of the state of public health in North Staffordshire make quite sickening reading and I do not intend to reprint any detail here. If you are interested try the “State Of Large Towns In North Staffordshire”, a Staffs County Council education booklet.

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<td><strong>Total Population:</strong></td>
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**The Sentences Given At The Trials In Stafford, Oct 1842**

**To Be Transported -**

**For Life**

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**Twenty One Years**

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**Ten Years**

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**Seven Years**

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**Imprisoned With Hard Labour –**

**Two Years**

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**Twenty Months**

Sampson Bates

**Eighteen Months**

James Oldham  Moses Dean  Eli Smith  Joseph Brock  George Cowell  Lawrence Simpson  Absalom Nixon  Samuel Simpkin  John Evans

**Fifteen Months**

Samuel Jones  George Jones  John Harding  James Ball  John Jones  Samuel Nixon

**Twelve Months**


**Nine Months**

Solomon Allen  Mark Baugh  James Mottershaw

**Eight Months**


**Six Months**

Thomas Jones
Thomas Sherratt
Richard Walley
Daniel Steele
William Hatton
Henry Standevens

Four Months
James Millington
Edward Boden
Job Neale
Samuel Eaton
John Bagnall
William Prince
Richard Edge
John Platt

Three Months
Dennis Mullagan
Joseph Wardle
Charles Wright
Emma Hammett
Moses Pye
John Steele
Samuel Meigh
William Hancock
Harriet Leese
Eliza Bettany
Hannah Boon
James Skerratt
Elizabeth Brian
Philip Sanders

Two Months
James Hurst
Susannah James
Ellen Boulton
Harriet Hansell
Elijah Boon
Edward Brock
Rosanna Ellis
Mary Shaw
Bidget Costello
Ralph Boon
William Hodson
Levi Forster
Miiillicent Sanders
William Ash
John Finney

One Month
William Powell

Fourteen Days
William Plant
Thomas Adams
Smith Child
William Knapper
David Sparks
John Hulme

Ten Days
John Billington

Imprisoned In The Common Gaol –

Two Years
Joseph Capper
Six Months
William Holyoake
Not Guilty
Fifteen Months
Joseph Linney
John Hodgetts
One Year
Jeremish Yates
Two Months
William Burnes

Five Months
Robert Williams

Not Guilty

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**Discharged On Bail**

- Arthur O’Neill
- Thomas Cooper

**Traversed To Next Assize**

**Discharged On Entering Into Recognizances**

- William Wakefield
- Lettice Myatt

**Discharged By Proclamation**

- Thomas Yates
- John Mills
- John Halford
- Robert Halford
- Samuel Wilcox
- John Blanchfield
A Chartist Song

Sad oppression now compels.
Working men to join themselves,
Ye sufferers don’t know more delay,
Work with might while it is day.

Chorus
I a Chartist now will be
And contend for liberty

The Charter springs from Zion’s Hill,
Though opposed, go on it will,
Will you serve it’s sacred cause,
And receive it’s equal laws?

Chorus

Union is our Captain’s name,
By just laws he’ll rule the main,
Before his face he’ll make to flee,
All bad laws of tyranny.

Chorus

Brothers and sisters now unite,
And contend for your just rights,
Then soon the poor will happy be,
Glorious times we all shall see.

Chorus
And the Chartists’ song will be
My country and sweet liberty.
Reproduced below is an extract from the second National Petition, presented to the House of Commons in May 1842. I have pap-phrased it somewhat, as it suffers from Victorian verbosity. The main points are clear. The unjust state of the Parliamentary constituencies, the level of taxation upon working men, the waste of that taxation in supporting causes which have no support amongst the tax payers, and the demand upon the Commons that it should enact The People’s Charter at once.

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland, in parliament assembled;

The petition of the undersigned people of the United Kingdom showeth….that your honourable house, as at present constituted, has not been elected by, and acts irresponsibly of the people; and hitherto has only represented parties, and benefited the few, regardless of the miseries, grievances, and petitions of the many. That the population of Great Britain and Ireland is at the present time about 26,000,000 of persons, and that yet, out of this number, little more than 900,000 have been permitted to vote in the recent elections….that Guildford, with a population of 9,920 returns to parliament as many members as the Tower Hamlets with a population of 300,000; Evesham, with a population of 3,998 elects as many representatives as Manchester, with a population of 200,000.

That you petitioners complain that they are enormously taxed to pay the interest of what is called the national debt – a debt amounting at present to £800,000,000. That in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, thousands of people are dying from actual want….that your petitioners would direct the attention of the honourable house to the great disparity existing between the wages of the producing millions and the salaries of those whose comparative usefulness ought to be questioned….your petitioners have learned that Her Majesty receives daily for her private use the sum of £164 17s 10d….His Royal Highness Prince Albert the sum off £104 2s 0d….the Archbishop of Canterbury the sum of £52 10s 0d, whilst thousands of the poor have to maintain their families upon an income not exceeding 2d per head per day.

That your petitioners complain that upwards of £9,000,000 per annum are annually abstracted from them to maintain a church establishment from which they principally dissent.

That your petitioners therefore, exercising their just constitutional right, demand that your honourable house….pass into a law the document entitled The People’s Charter.

For the full text see The Times, May 3rd, 1842.
A detail from an engraving of the Members of the 1842 National Convention

Notes

In the writing of this book I have been greatly helped by;

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Robert Fyson, who has prepared and presented much material from the Public Record Office and other sources, which would otherwise have been unavailable in Staffordshire. His own writings can be found by reference to the Chartism Bibliographies.
Bibliography

This bibliography contains a list of material consulted in the preparation of this book. Most can be found at Hanley or Newcastle reference libraries, and of course through the inter-library lending service. It is not an exhaustive bibliography, and anyone considering further study of Chartism should obtain both the bibliographies of the movement.


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