

## **Military riot, 1844**

In 1836, a police force had been established in the city for the first time. Welcomed as an (obvious) aid to the upholding of law and order, among many citizens the new force was seen as an unwarranted drain on the rates. This difference of view took political lines, with the Liberals being in favour of the new force and the Tories broadly opposed. This situation was made more complex by the significant garrison in the town which had hitherto been the only uniformed force on the streets, and which (among the ranks) took a dim view of the new police.

Serious trouble began in early 1844 in the area of the Green Man on Kirkgate, with records of soldiers making indiscriminate attacks on the population.

In June, matters reached a head when violence between the general population and some soldiers of the 70<sup>th</sup> infantry (exacerbated by anti-Irish sentiments) broke out at the Green Man. Police called at the pub to arrest some soldiers named as responsible for beating a civilian, Edward Thompson, but they were booed by an anti-police crowd as they led the men away. A fight ensued between police and soldiers, and the prisoners were briefly freed; they were later recaptured along with others and imprisoned.

After appearing in court, these men were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment. To quell tension, the military were confined to barracks but orders were disobeyed, and many gathered, heavily armed, in the Green Parrot on Harper Street and went in search of revenge against the police. In major pitched battles that followed, the police came off worse, often with the population actively supporting the soldiers, but in some instances with civilians supporting police against army in a complex political situation. Following this riot, officers kept troops under control but the population was still in aggressive mood and further battles between a mob and the police occurred in Briggate which were only quelled by cutlass-wielding constables.

Heavy penalties were handed out at trials held over several days at the end of June and early July.