

## How the Northern Star Reported on the Plug Riots in and around Leeds

24 August 1842

An immense body of people visited the villages of Calverly, Stanningley, Bramley, Pudsey etc, stopping all the mills on the road. The numbers increased as the party proceeded and by the time it arrived at Stanningley did not amount to less than 6,000 people. No damage was done where the demand to stop engines was complied with. Bread, cheese etc was given to the people in large quantities. At Stanningley the main body of the people divided taking different routes and united again at Bramley. Hunger seemed to be the great mover of the painful drama. The butcher's shops were visited and meat that was given to them was devoured in a raw state. After stopping the mills at Bramley the people reunited in one body and proceeded to Pudsey.

On the arrival of the vast body at Pudsey, it consisted of eight or ten thousand people. Nearly all of the mills immediately gave up work on the arrival of the multitude and this prevented anything approaching to a riot or disturbance. One mill owner, however at Far Pudsey refused to do so; and the people on that refusal began the work of destruction. The mill in question is known by the name Bank's Mill. At this time a few of the 17th Lancers arrived accompanied by two of the Messrs Eyres of Armley. The Riot Act was read and a few minutes allowed for the people to disperse. The people however instead of dispersing moved in one vast body on the military, which only numbered thirteen privates and one superior officer. Seeing the vast superiority of numbers, the soldiers prudently turned their horses heads and retired followed by the groans of the people and a few stones which served to quicken their pace. No further destruction occurred on the part of the people who were gathered. Had the proprietors of Bank Mill complied with the demands of the people, no damage whatever would have been committed. The entire object of the people was the stopping of the mills and food for immediate subsistence. The latter was given readily and generously by any party called upon - rich as well as poor. Several persons who had been thus visited declared they did not begrudge their contributions. Some who had previously declared they would not give a morsel of bread or a farthing of money, were touched by the conggated mass of misery which presented itself and could not withhold assistance from their apparently famishing fellow creatures. Everybody spoke favourably of the peacefulness of the people when allowed to accomplish the stoppage of the mills by forcing out of the plug from the boiler. From Pudsey the party proceeded to Bradford whence they had first set out.

About five o'clock on Wednesday afternoon a large body of people marched down Meadow Lane and from Holbeck and effected an entrance in Messrs. Marshall's mills. They stopped the engines at Messrs. Benyon's mill and all the hands turned out with apparent visceral exultation. From there they proceeded to the shops of Mailes and Marsh where a number entered by the watch house door and opened the large gates. Immediately the yard was filled, the engine stopped, the bell rung and the men were turning out, the mob began to leave the yard. At this instant Mr. Read Chief Constable rode into the yard amongst them, he was quickly dismounted but beat off the mob with his stick. A general rush was made to the gate and when the greater part had effected their exit, a large body of police arrived and closed the gates, thus capturing a number of prisoners.

The people seeing only a few policemen made an attack upon them with sticks, bludgeons and stones but were eventually compelled to fall back without gaining possession of the yard. The volley of stones poured upon the police was terrific for a short time. When the military arrived they were speedily dispersed up the road and across the fields in all directions. Many amongst them were strangers but the majority of them at this time were townsmen. During the time the military were drawn up at Dewsbury Road End and opposite the Union Foundry, many prisoners passed in the custody of the police and special constables towards the Court House amidst the most execrations and loud and

deep curses of an immense crowd of men, women and children who had been turned out of Messrs. Benyon's mill, Titley, Tatham and Walker's and those living in the neighbourhood. The masses who were of our own population expressed freely and loudly their sympathy with the rioters.

About four o'clock the Riot Act was read and two pieces of artillery were paraded into Holbeck. Between thirty and forty prisoners were taken but only so far as we could gather on very trifling charges. They were examined by the magistrates and remanded. In the evening and during the whole of Thursday the town continued nearly as quiet as it ordinarily is. In the course of the latter day however the coal pits of Messrs. Bower, Wilson and Brandling at Hunslet and Middleton were visited and the men were all turned out. We have not heard of any injury done to either person or property.

The turn outs yesterday visited the collieries at Hunslet and Middleton the whole of which were stopped. Some prisoners were taken. A meeting was held on Hunslet Moor which was dispersed by the police and soldiers. Six hundred foot soldiers carried by train and 650 more are expected tonight. The White Cloth Hall has been converted into a temporary barracks. General Brotherton has been sent from London to command the district. All is quiet.