

# Spotting faces in the crowds

## Five 'youths' in the Reform Riots

### Blackmailed

**Aaron Booth**  
**Age 19 (in 1832)**  
**Lived in Carlton**  
**Occupation N/A**

Arrested during the Reform Riots (he stated he came to town 'to look at the ruins of the Castle') and charged with the capital offence of:

'Riotously [...] assembling [...] to the disturbance of the public peace, and to the terror of the people.'

He was acquitted but then gave evidence before the Special Assize (held in January 1832 at Shire Hall) against George Forman, a 23 year old worker.

It is not conclusively provable whether Booth **was pressurised into a deal allowing him to get off if he testified against others**, but it seems likely.

He had been visited by Godfrey Tallents, who worked for the prosecution (and complained about 'most horrible' juries, who dared to acquit defendants!). Although Tallents' diaries do not provide details of that meeting, it is striking that the following day Booth was suddenly out of prison and testified against Forman.

### Bribed

**Charles Slater**  
**Age 15 or 16 (in 1832)**  
**Residence N/A**  
**Worked as a farm hand**

In the early 1830s Charles was a teenage farm worker frequently without work and income. He had received schooling at the Blue Coat School in Nottingham (today Bluecoat Academy in Aspley) but had to leave, 'my education not finished', after an accusation of theft when he was 13 years old.

He was in the crowds during the Reform Riots. Later described as an 'accomplice' of the rioters and claiming to have witnessed the attack on Lowe's mill, **he gave evidence against a number of persons** during the trials before the Special Assize.

The death sentences against Hearson and Armstrong were partly based on his testimony. He was taken to the Magistrates by his father, **most likely for economic reasons** (Slater recalls having seen 'some of the bills offering a reward').

Charles Slater, a youth about 16 years of age, gave similar testimony to that which he had given in the case of Hearson, Armstrong, and Shelton. He stated that Forman, one of the prisoners, was in the mob, near Dr. Storer's.

### Pelted

**William Musters**  
**Age 22 (in 1832)**  
**Residence N/A**  
**Clergyperson & rich son**

He was the second son of John Musters, magistrate and 'arch Tory' waging 'a vendetta' 'against radicals and poachers'. Born into considerable wealth, William joined the ranks of the clergy and became Rector of Colwick and West Bridgford.

**Colwick Hall**, his fathers' residence, **was targeted in the Reform Riots and William gave evidence at the trials.**

He was one of only three persons (aside from coppers and military) physically attacked, as rioters focussed on property, not people.

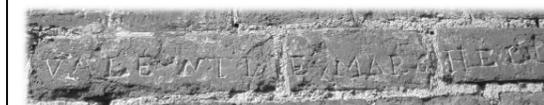
'[When] the mob arrived [I] met them [...]. [They] struck at and pelted me, and [...] I received a blow to my right arm. [...] The mob [broke] windows [and] destroyed everything they possibly could in the rooms they went into [...]. [My mother and sister hid in] the shrubbery [...]. My mother's health was very delicate [she died in February 1832]. The mob [...] left about six [...] shouting "Hurra".'

### Transported

**Valentine Marshall**  
**Age 16 or 17 (in 1832)**  
**Residence N/A**  
**Occupation N/A**

Charged for 'Riotously and tumultuously assembling' with others at Colwick Hall, he was tried alongside Charles Berkins (20) and Thomas Whitaker (24). All were declared guilty.

**Valentine was**, probably due to his age, 'recommended to King's mercy', i.e. **'transported for life'** rather than hung. As the judge pointed out, transportation was anything but a lenient sentence but meant a 'life of suffering and of privation' which many did not survive. Valentine was one of the lucky ones, surviving both the journey to and the sentence in Tasmania and living to become a successful florist. He seems to be the only alleged rioter who left us a surviving record of his existence by his own hand. His name is still to be found scratched on the wall of the men's exercise yard in what is now the Galleries of Justice.



### Executed

**George Hearson**  
**Age 21 or 22 (in 1832)**  
**Nottingham**  
**Lace worker**

Having been married 'about a year and a half', George was 'a bobbin and carriage maker' before working 'at the manufacture of lace'. He was allegedly known to have been in contact with 'idle and disorderly persons, and in the prize ring', he was known as 'Curley Hearson'.

**Along with George Beck (20) and John Armstrong (26) he was sentenced to death following the Reform Riots.**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1832, the 'die [was] cast!':

'A friend offered Hearson his arm, which he refused, saying, "No, I will go by myself." [On] reaching the steps, [he jumped] upon the scaffold. He then took off his white cap [and] twirled it round [...], as if in triumph, while the multitude gave several loud cheers, and his feet moved as if he were dancing. [Whilst] the hangman was fastening the knot, he looked up and said, "Give me plenty of drop, and do not let me suffer much punishment."