

The 1842 Strike - blood on the streets of Halifax



Join Catherine Howe, author of *Halifax 1842: A Year of Crisis*, on a guided walk of the sites where at least six workers were shot or sabred to death and hundreds injured by the military when they struck for democratic reforms in August 1842.

Friday 28 April 2017

5.30pm

Meet at Halifax Central Library

Free, donations welcome

Copies of Catherine Howe's *Halifax 1842: A Year of Crisis* will be on sale after the walk.



A Calderdale May Day 2017 event organised by Calderdale Trades Union Council. For more information, e-mail info@calderdaletuc.org.uk ring 07392 852561 or 01422 885211

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Chartism was the first ever working-class movement. It demanded: universal (male) suffrage, equal electoral districts, secret ballots, annual Parliaments, payment for MPs and no property qualifications for MPs. With just 8 per cent of adult males possessing the vote these were radical demands.

To obtain these demands the *People's Charter* petition was signed by over 1.3 million people, including 13,000 from Halifax. On 14 June 1839 it was rejected in Parliament by 235 votes to 46.

In autumn 1839, South Wales miners and ironworkers revolted. Twenty died after being shot down by soldiers in Newport. Disturbances in Sheffield, Dewsbury and Bradford followed.

In early August 1842 miners walked-out in the Black Country, which led to lay-offs in the neighbouring Potteries and then in Lancashire. Chartist leaders encouraged further walk-outs. There were fatal consequences when workers and the military clashed at Preston and Blackburn.

On 15 August 1842, thousands assembled at Skircoat Green in Halifax to greet strikers from Lancashire. The authorities responded by swearing in 200 special constables to serve alongside 150 soldiers. Yet with thousands of strike supporters also arriving from Bradford the mills were soon stopped when protestors removed a few 'plugs' in the boilers to prevent steam from being raised.

With Halifax at a standstill a large meeting was held on Skircoat Moor the following morning. The men and women of Halifax knew that those arrested the previous day were being escorted by the military to nearby Elland railway station.

Missiles were thrown at troops and, at least, three were badly injured in an unsuccessful attempt to release those arrested.

Some protestors moved back into Halifax town centre where the Riot Act was read. Troops then fired into the crowd before attacking with their sabres. Henry Walton, from Skircoat Green, received a fatal sabre cut to the head. At the end of the sustained attack at least, six were dead and hundreds lay injured. Many protestors were also arrested and a number served terms of imprisonment that ultimately killed them.