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The Blandford Forum riots, 15-19 October 1831

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Abbreviations

CO	Commanding Officer
HO	Home Office
Jnr.	Junior
JP	Justice of the Peace (Magistrate)
N/A	Not Applicable
N/K	Not Known
OPC	Online Parish Clerks
ret.	Retired
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
Snr.	Senior
TNA	The National Archive

1 Introduction

1.1 Blandford Forum: governance and jurisdiction

Under a charter granted by James I, the borough of Blandford Forum¹ was ‘governed’ by a self-electing Corporation consisting of a Bailiff and up to ten ‘capital’ burgesses. The Bailiff was chosen from this body at the end of September every year, and a court leet was held annually about a month later. The retiring Bailiff became the Steward or ‘Recorder’. Other officers of the borough included two constables and a Town Clerk. According to the Report on Municipal Corporations, the Bailiff ‘has no magisterial functions’, and there were no other local (borough) magistrates empowered by the charter. The Steward, or Recorder, presided over the annual Court Leet, but had no other function and the two constables were the only police in the town. This governance framework applied only to the borough however (the southern section of the town) and covered only about half of Blandford’s built-up area by 1831. The town was expanding to the North, and many of the wealthier residents had built their houses along the northern end of Salisbury Street and the road to Shaftesbury leading away from it, outside the boundaries of the borough. In 1831, Blandford had a population of 3,100 people.² The borough boundary is indicated in Figure 1. It excluded all buildings to the North and West of the line, including the *Crown Inn*.



Figure 1: 1838 map of Blandford Forum showing borough boundary.³

¹ Hereafter ‘Blandford’.

² *Parliamentary Report on Municipal Corporations in England and Wales, Blandford Forum (1833)*, 1131-6.

³ Blandford Forum tithe map and apportionment, 1838 Dorset History Centre T/BF.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 The Captain Swing riots, 1830

Swing's impact in Dorset was largely felt in the same north and eastern part of the county affected a year later by reform rioting, and magistrates were fully aware that news of protests as well as radical newspapers could be carried quickly 'by coachmen, post boys and carriers' between communities along the turnpike road system. The most visible causes and objectives of Swing in 1830 may not have been as overtly 'political' as the struggle for parliamentary reform in 1831, but as Cobbett argued in Swing's aftermath:

It is a most erroneous notion, that the country people are *ignorant* on the subject of political rights, and that they are to be led to the pool like horses. They understand the matter well, they are more stubborn than townspeople in adhering to their rights, and much more difficult to deceive and cajole.⁴

Carl Griffin, perhaps the most influential of the new rural historians, is equally emphatic:

To claim that Swing was pre-political or even apolitical is unhelpful. It is to deny what we might usefully call a shared 'instrumental' politics of everyday parish life, which informed Swing's claims and discourses and, critically, that rural workers readily made the link between this instrumental politics and arguments for their involvement in participatory politics.⁵

It would be unwise to force too great a distinction between the cultural world of agricultural labourers in 1830 and small-town artisans and labourers in 1831. Blandford, Sherborne and Yeovil were all market towns in which the agricultural and proto-industrial worlds regularly mixed and townsmen and women in each of those communities will not have been strangers to seasonal farm labour any more than 'country people' were strangers to industrial outwork. Moreover, Blackmore Vale was 'the only place in Dorset where some attempt was made at sustained resistance to the authorities' in 1830 and Castle Hill at Duntish the site of the last physical confrontation between Dorset Swing labourers and the military, in December.⁶ Castle Hill is roughly equidistant from Yeovil, Sherborne and Blandford and the fracas will still have been fresh in the minds of the men and women attending meetings in support of reform in each of those three towns in February.

1.2.2 The Dorset By-election, 1831

The immediate cause of trouble at Blandford, Sherborne, Wareham and Poole was the conduct of a by-election for one of the two county seats, following the suicide of one of the sitting members. The contest, between Lord Ashley (Tory) and William Ponsonby (Whig) was widely seen as a microcosm of the debate over the fortunes of the second Reform Bill, then before parliament and was dominated by the reform question. Two of Ashley's Blandford-based lawyers and agents, George Moore and Septimus Smith, were believed to have been challenging and disqualifying a significant number of Ponsonby's voters on grounds of false or inadmissible property qualifications, based on professional knowledge of their clients that should have been

⁴ Both quotations from Tom Scriven, *Activism and the Everyday: the Practices of radical Working Class Politics 1830-1842* (unpub. PhD, University of Manchester, 2012), 37-8

⁵ Carl J. Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England, 1700-1850* (Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2014), 151.

⁶ Barbara Kerr, *Bound to the Soil: A Social History of Dorset* (John Baker, 1968), 114.

confidential. The issue, as *the Taunton Courier* put it, was over ‘the trickery of the lawyers and the partiality of the assessor.’ These allegations were picked up and more widely circulated by the *Western Times*, whose owner claimed he had witnessed several cases of malpractice in the polling marquee, later causing Moore to sue the paper for libel.⁷

A number of leading figures in Blandford and its environs were prominent anti-reformers closely associated with Lord Ashley. On 29 September, the Sheriff of Dorset, James John Farquarson, and Justice of the Peace (JP) Major John James Smith headed a parade from Dorchester races into the town in celebration of Ashley’s decision to run in the by-election. They appeared at the window of the *King’s Arms* with Ashley during his acceptance speech and spoke to the crowd of his supporters.⁸ Farquarson, along with local JPs Rev. John Bastard, Rev. George Pickard and William Hanham were all members of Ashley’s election committee. Farquarson and Smith also headed lists of Ashley’s declared supporters. These lists of members of the committee and supporters of Ashley were published in the local press several times and bill-posted.⁹ Farquarson and Hanham were also well-known as Captains of troops of the Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry local to Blandford.

2 The Blandford riots

2.1 Preludes – Sunday 2 October

Attacks on the property of Ashley’s supporters started as soon as polling began at Dorchester. Crowds gathered each evening outside the *Crown* and *Greyhound* inns (Figure 2, Locations 4 and 5) to receive news of the state of the poll as voters returned home from Dorchester on the mail coach. One observer stated:

I went to the mail every day when it came in and there were generally 300-400 persons present there [at the *Crown Inn*]; a few of them town’s people, but a greater portion country people.¹⁰

The *Crown*, it will be noted, lay outside the jurisdiction of the Corporation while the *Greyhound*, which also served as Ashley’s committee rooms, lay inside it. As early as 2 October, window breaking began at the *Greyhound* itself and at houses owned by some of Ashley’s supporters, prompting two county magistrates, John James Smith and the Rev. John Bastard to begin swearing in special constables to keep crowds in check, but ‘such is the height to which party spirit has been carried’, very few townsmen came forward.¹¹

2.2 Day 1 - Saturday 15 October (Market Day)

Crowd action on Saturday 15th was not widespread but may perhaps be seen as an indication of the public mood. Richard Shittler, an Ashley-supporting farmer from Hazelbury Bryan came to town to visit the market, and found it ‘in a disturbed state, in a mobbing way’. At about 4pm,

⁷ *Taunton Courier*, 26 October 1831; *Dorset County Chronicle* 15 March 1832. The libel case went to court in March 1832; Moore was exonerated and Mr Justice Park presiding awarded him £100 in damages.

⁸ *Dorset County Chronicle* 29 September 1831.

⁹ *Dorset County Chronicle* 29 September 1831, 6 October 1831; Poster: list of those declaring support for Lord Ashley on offering himself as representative for the county – 28th September 1831. Dorset County Museum, Dorchester.

¹⁰ Evidence of William Ball, a whitesmith, living in Blandford. *Dorset County Chronicle* 15 March 1832.

¹¹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6, 13 October 1831; *London Evening Standard*, 21 October 1831.

he was recognised as he went into Thomas Bennett's drapers in Salisbury Street by a crowd outside that included John Cherrett, George Long and Richard Bleathman. Cherrett, who was holding up a rope, shouted, 'turn him out, we'll hang him'. Long told the crowd:

This is the man that took out one of Mr Ponsonby's voters by treating him with a glass of liquor and making a (bet?) with him.

Shittler escaped through the back door and made his way to the kitchen of the *Blue Boar* in the Market Place. The crowd, about 40 strong, gave chase and went into the inn after him. Shittler tried to pacify them by offering drinks, but two men, who he identified as Bleathman and Long, assaulted him with stick, pulled him outside, beat him again and knocked his hat off. Cherrett approached with the rope again and proposed tying Shittler up and throwing him in the Stour. Shittler, pursued by the crowd, went into Robert Dominey's house nearby in the Market Place. Some of the crowd, including Long, went in after him, but were ordered out by Richard Moore who then guarded the back door to prevent anyone getting back in. There were further calls to throw Shittler off Blandford Bridge, but the crowd dispersed when it was time for the mail coach to arrive at the *Crown*, and at 7pm Shittler left in disguise under cover of darkness. Moore went with him to the top of the town and brought him his horse.¹² Incidents of 'attacking houses, destroying windows etc.', continued until late in the night, according to the town Bailiff and rector, Rev. George Chard.

2.3 Day 2 - Sunday 16 October

Clearly agitated and unable to sleep, Chard, finally felt 'compelled' to send a message to the county JPs acting for the Division, Edward Berkely Portman and Sir J. W. Smith, at 2am, requesting a meeting. These three, together with one or two others, therefore met at the *Crown Inn* in the afternoon, and Chard broached the subject of military assistance. He was, as the *Sherborne Mercury* explained, a supporter of Lord Ashley. Chard, it was suggested in 'a letter from Blandford', reproduced in several newspapers, had already 'made himself particularly obnoxious to the populace by his active opposition to "Reform and Ponsonby."' ¹³ As, for that matter had the overwhelming majority of clergymen in the county. As the Tolpuddle 'martyr', George Loveless later put it in his pamphlet, *The Church Shown Up*, 'Out of 200 clergymen, 12 only voted for the reform candidate!' ¹⁴ To Chard's disappointment, Portman and Smith both felt military intervention premature and advised that it wasn't even necessary to enrol special constables. There were no further outbreaks that afternoon, but Chard wrote anyway, requesting troops to be sent over from Weymouth.¹⁵

2.4 Day 3 - Monday 17 October

Early on Monday morning, crowds began blocking the High Road at Durweston Bridge to prevent Ashley's supporters going to and from the poll. At 10am, the deputy bailiff, Samuel Kendall opened the Town Hall (Figure 2, Location 7) for a hurriedly convened town meeting.

¹² Dorset History Centre, Christmas Quarter Sessions, January 1832, depositions and calendar, Information of Richard Shittler, 29 October 1831; information of Richard Moore, 4 November 1831; *Hampshire Advertiser* 14 January 1832.

¹³ *English Chronicle and Whitehall Evening Post*, 20 October 1831.

¹⁴ Tom Scriven, 'The Dorchester Labourers and Swing's Aftermath in Dorset', *History Workshop Journal*, 82 (Autumn, 2016), 13.

¹⁵ TNA, HO 52/12, George Chard to Melbourne, 29 Oct 1831, ff. 35-7; *Sherborne Mercury* 24 October 1831.

The Corporation's hope was to bring as many respectable householders together as possible and secure their assistance to keep the peace. However, no meeting could be held. A rather less respectable crowd 30-40 strong had already gathered outside the building, first demanding admittance, then drifting backwards and forwards between the Hall and the *Greyhound*. Some pushed their way inside and went up into the courtroom, but Kendall remained by the gates until he heard the upstairs windows being rattled. He shouted up the stairs, 'This will not do to break the windows', at which they came back down, allegedly punched and 'laid hold' of Kendall and shouted, 'pull and turn him out!' He later named 22-year-old John Horlock as the ring leader.¹⁶

Meanwhile, similar scenes were being enacted outside the *Greyhound*. Whether arriving as members of Ashley's election committee or as county magistrates, the Rev. John Bastard and William Hanham Esq. were both confronted outside the Inn that morning. Bastard was seen running through a small crowd of about 20 people in the yard armed with sticks and being 'very riotous' at about 10am. As he reached the front door, someone pulled him back, put a fist to his face and shouted, 'damn your eyes, I'll beat your brains out', before knocking off his hat. An inn servant, Jane Meaden, identified her assailant as Richard Bleathman. As Bastard forced his way into the waiters' pantry, Meaden tried to hold the door shut to protect him, but was immediately struck on the head with a stick by a man shouting 'pull him out, pull him out'. That man, she later testified, was George Long.¹⁷

Hanham was confronted by the same crowd as he arrived outside the *Greyhound* shortly after Bastard. According to Hanham's own testimony, there were now about 50 of them; they hissed and groaned at him, and one waved a blue and white flag in front of his horse, causing it to rear. This was John Horlock again. Hanham pressed on and one man (he swore it was Long) threw a heavy stick at him, hitting his arm. As Long ran up to collect it, he accused Hanham of striking at him with his whip, a charge Hanham rejected. The magistrate managed to get inside but some of the crowd came after him. Hanham asked:

if there were not constables or magistrates to protect the lives of persons
and received the answer that neither one or the other would act.

He made his way upstairs and locked himself in an attic room for an hour and a half.¹⁸

By late afternoon, Chard decided it was time to summon the soldiers he had sent for the previous afternoon. A party of the Third Dragoon Guards accordingly marched up, but their commanding officer would not let them act to disperse crowds without orders from a county JP. Quite why neither Bastard or Hanham could have done this remains unclear unless they were unable (or unwilling) to leave the safety of the *Greyhound* once they had got into it, or they had already left the scene. At any event, the dragoons' Commanding Officer (CO) went to Bryanston House to persuade Portman, as a JP officially acting for the Blandford Division, to come and give the order. Portman was surprised to see him, given that he'd earlier refused to summon soldiers when asked to do so by Chard, demanded to know on whose authority they

¹⁶ Dorset History Centre, Christmas Quarter Sessions, January 1832, depositions and calendar, Information of Samuel Kendall, 18 October 1831.

¹⁷ Dorset History Centre, Christmas Quarter Sessions, January 1832, depositions and calendar, Information of Jane Eleanor Meaden, 18 October 1831.

¹⁸ Dorset History Centre, Christmas Quarter Sessions, January 1832, depositions and calendar, Information of William Hanham, 19 October 1831.

had been sent and ordered the CO to march them back out of town in the morning. As an outspoken advocate for reform and a known supporter of Ponsonby, Portman's response is perhaps not altogether surprising; he and Chard were unlikely to have seen eye to eye.¹⁹ He had earned himself a popular reputation as a paternalist during the Swing riots, the first landowner in the district to raise labourers' wages to 10 shillings a week, meeting them face to face to secure the deal and offering them all beer.²⁰ The deflated CO returned to the *Greyhound* empty handed.

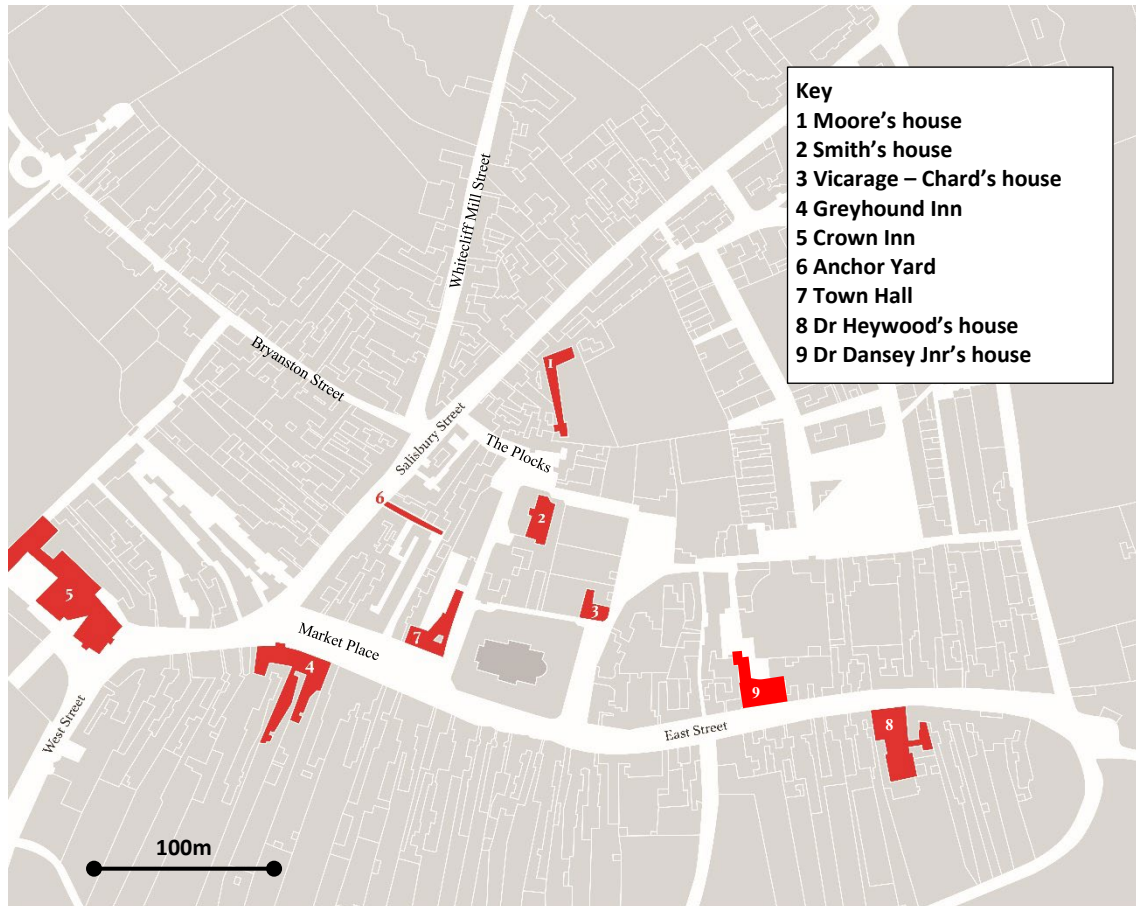


Figure 2: Schematic map of Blandford (1838) showing properties targeted by the rioters.

As darkness fell, around 7pm, crowd action on what the *Dorset County Chronicle* called 'a more systematic plan' began in earnest. The trigger was the arrival of the mail coach outside the *Crown Inn* at 6.30pm, bringing with it the news that Ashley had finally been declared the victor in the by-election by just 36 votes. One anti-Reformer later testified:

there were about 400 persons assembled, some of whom were townspeople, and many were tradesmen of Blandford.

He heard people in the crowd calling out the names of known Tory voters and that:

Mr Smith and Mr Moore would be served out for their conduct to the voters of Dorchester.

¹⁹ TNA, HO 52/12, George Chard to Melbourne, 29 Oct 1831, ff. 35-7.

²⁰ Scriven, 'Dorchester Labourers', 6.

Between 6.30 and 7pm, a crowd moved off to George Moore's house in Salisbury Street (Figure 2, Location 1) and began breaking his windows. A wall was damaged, and a greenhouse demolished.²¹ It seems possible that Moore's house had already been singled out for attack at some point later that afternoon. One of his servants later claimed she had seen Richard Bleathman:

opposite the front gate in the afternoon with about fourteen boys, some of whom had sticks in their hands.²²

From Moore's house, the crowd moved on to Septimus Smith's (Figure 2, Location 2), broke shutters, windows, palings and part of an exterior wall and began destroying papers, registers and wills. Smith, one of Ashley's lawyers, was also deputy registrar for the diocese (the Bishop's court) so, like Chard, closely associated with the ecclesiastical authorities as well as the anti-reform movement. Chard dashed back to the *Greyhound* to send a messenger to Portman, urging him to come and disperse the crowd.²³

Soon after that, Chard received news that his own house (the Vicarage, Figure 2, Location 3) was being attacked, so went out to try and save it. Chard's parsonage was given a thorough trashing. As the *Sherborne Journal* reported it:

In less than five minutes, the work of destruction at both back and front, was far advanced. The panels of the doors, the windows, and shutters, were beaten in and the house laid entirely open. The hatred the mob evinced towards Mr Chard would doubtless have moved them to have razed the house to the ground, but for the timely arrival of the military'.²⁴

The dragoons appear to have followed Chard as he advanced on the parsonage, so we may presume he had by now persuaded the CO that they didn't need a county JP to order them into action. In a letter to Lord Melbourne, he wrote:

I read the Riot Act in the front of my own house and with the aid of the military drove the mob out of the back yard to which part they had gone after having destroyed the front.²⁵

The crowd did retreat momentarily as the dragoons cantered towards them, but 'rallied directly, and shouted "the King and Reform!"'.²⁶

There was clearly some jurisdictional confusion in play here. As bailiff for the borough of Blandford Forum, Chard was fully empowered to read the Riot Act and to order soldiers to forcibly disperse crowds under its provisions, but only within the very limited boundaries of the borough (see Figure 1). Persuading a JP like Portman, with a county-wide jurisdiction, to read the Act instead, would certainly have been more effective, but the initial refusal of the dragoons' commanding officer to act at all is an indication of the confusion often caused by local understandings of the Act's scope and provisions. Soldiers were understandably reluctant to

²¹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 15 March 1832.

²² *Morning Chronicle* 17 March 1832.

²³ TNA, HO 52/12, George Chard to Melbourne, 29 Oct 1831, ff. 35-7.

²⁴ *Sherborne Journal*, 27 October 1831.

²⁵ TNA, HO 52/12, George Chard to Melbourne, 29 Oct 1831, ff. 35-7.

²⁶ *Sherborne Journal*, 27 October 1831.

forcibly disperse civilians, whatever the scale of a riot, unless clearly indemnified from prosecution for assault or unlawful killing by an undisputed reading of the Act.²⁷

At 10.30pm, a messenger was finally sent to Major John James Smith and his father Sir John Wyldbore Smith (both county JPs) at the Down House, requesting that they go into Blandford immediately to sanction further military intervention beyond the borough boundary. A group of 11 townsmen, principally members of the Corporation, including Chard, John Dansey Snr., John Shipp and Henry Abbott, meanwhile penned a requisition, urging them to make speed:

Mr Moore's, Mr Smith's and Mr Chard's houses are already nearly demolished but the commanding officer says he cannot act out of the borough without the sanction of a county magistrate...'²⁸

Smith Snr., it will be remembered, had accompanied Portman to the meeting with Chard at the *Crown* a day earlier, and expressed his opposition to military involvement. Now declaring himself unwell, it was young Smith Jnr., a known supporter of Lord Ashley, who went into town to confront the crowd. In fact, the Smith family, father and son, were divided over the reform issue. The Smiths were related to the Pinneys of Bristol and when Col. Pinney's son had stood as a pro-reform candidate for the borough of Lyme in the summer election of 1831, Smith Snr. took a house at Lyme for Pinney's accommodation. One of the Pinney sisters was meanwhile married to the more conservatively minded Smith Jnr., a young and recently appointed JP. At Ponsonby's nomination in Dorchester, Smith Snr. had sent a note of support but declined taking a public role on Ponsonby's committee due to 'private family feelings'. At heart though, he and Portman were politically aligned.²⁹ Finding Moore's house already badly damaged, according to his own account, Smith Jnr. immediately ordered the soldiers to form up out of sight, then went into the Square in front of Septimus Smith's house and addressed the crowd:

I entreated them to abstain from violence and disperse peacefully, telling them that in case they continued in their outrageous proceedings, I should be obliged to have recourse to the military force which was drawn up in the adjacent street. The mob was very violent in their language towards me, calling me Turncoat, Ashleyite etc.

While he and the deputy bailiff, Samuel Kendall continued in their attempts at pacification leavened with the threat of military intervention, Portman arrived, mounted, and rode carefully into the midst of the crowd.

²⁷ Under the Riot Act (1715), any assembly of 12 or more people refusing to disperse one hour or more after its reading was deemed to be committing a capital felony and dispersal by main force, military or otherwise, was thus sanctioned. The Act's accompanying short proclamation was to be read out in the hearing of all participants, 'commanding and with a loud voice', by 'any one or more justice or justices of the peace, or by the sheriff of the county, or his under-sheriff, or by the mayor, bailiff, or bailiffs, or head officer'. As bailiff then, Chard was fully empowered to invoke the Act, but only within the limits of his own authority – the borough of Blandford Forum. The military would therefore not be under the Act's judicial protection if they forcibly dispersed anyone in any of the streets to the north and west of the borough boundary unless it was also read by a JP for the county. For an excellent summary of the Act's practicalities see Adrian Randall, *Riotous Assemblies: Popular Protest in Hanoverian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 24-8.

²⁸ Dorset History Centre, D1 NL/2, signed requisition to Major John James Smith and Sir John Wyldbore Smith, n.d.

²⁹ *Dorset County Chronicle* 29 September 1831.

The mob loudly cheered him and he addressed them, deprecating the violence of their conduct and entreating them to disperse... They declared they should not have acted as they had done had they not been irritated by the conduct of a body of horsemen who rode into the town in the morning and by the appearance of the Troops in the town. As far as I could hear, Mr Portman told them that he had not been accessory to sending for the military for as far as he knew them he believed they did not require a military force to prevent them from disturbing the peace.

If they would just go home, Portman promised, he would send the soldiers back to Dorchester in the morning.³⁰ Smith's wife put it more bluntly in a letter to her mother at Lyme Regis. Portman, she said, had been:

haranguing the mob, advising them to disperse but also saying aloud, "let those who have called in the Military abide by the consequences; I will have nothing more to do with it". John could not stop him, but of course the people cried "Hurrah for Portman", "Portman's on our side", and recommended pulling down their opponents houses. Whereupon Johnny went among them, in spite of being called a "bloody Ashleyite" and having a stone aimed at his head, and tried to speak to them but finding it would not do he succeeded in dispersing them with the assistance of the dragoons... I am sure that if Mr P chooses to encourage them in this manner, they will not long confine their depredations to the Town.³¹

When the dragoons were withdrawn back to the *Greyhound* yard following the brief action outside Chard's parsonage, the crowd soon regrouped and returned to commit further damage at Moore's house in Salisbury Street, breaking in, destroying his papers and tossing documents into the street. Moore's house lay outside the borough boundary, and Chard will have been powerless to instruct the dragoons to protect it. 'The King and Reform!', the crowd shouted again, 'The soldiers will not hurt us!'.³² This second attack on Moore's house, it would later be suggested, was different in kind to the first and represented a conscious escalation. The initial attack between 6.30 and 7pm had focussed on breaking the windows, shutters, garden walls and exterior fittings, while the second was more concerned with gaining entrance to the office and destroying papers. 'The green before the house was covered with papers', recalled Moore's servant, Anne Sims:

I saw Bleathman getting out of the window of the office. He had papers in his hand, which he tore.

Somebody in the crowd, though it wasn't clear who, was alleged to have cried:

drag out the bald-headed wretch; he shall never walk alive across Blandford Bridge again!³³

Back at Septimus Smith's house, John James Smith had been placed in an awkward position and clearly wanted a word with Portman ('I made the best of my way to see him') but he couldn't

³⁰ Bristol University Library special collections, *Pinney Papers*, notes, Smith to Pinney (at Lyme Regis), n.d.

³¹ Bristol University Library special collections, *Pinney Papers*, letter Mrs Smith to Mrs Pinney, 'Monday, finished Tuesday'.

³² *Taunton Courier*, 26 October 1831; *Sherborne Journal*, 27 October 1831.

³³ *Morning Chronicle*, 17 March 1832.

get through the surrounding crowd and 'it was out of my power to get near him'. Portman then rode over to the *Greyhound*, accompanied by the crowd, 'cheering him all the time'. Smith went upstairs with the CO just as reports came in that windows were being broken at Dr Walter Charles Heywood's and Dr John Dansey Jnr.'s houses on East Street (Figure 2, Locations 8 and 9). It was now about 11pm. Telling the CO to get his men formed up in the Inn yard, Smith instructed John Shipp, Henry Abbott, William Ilott, the two constables and one or two others to accompany him to Dr Heywood's. There he found 30 to 40 people 'actively engaged in pulling down the wall in front of his house and several others in the garden', trying to force their way inside.

Every pane of glass in front of the house was completely smashed. The minute they saw me they all ran out of the garden. I addressed them, asking if that was the way they kept the promise they had given Mr Portman. The gentlemen with me joined their persuasions to mine, that they would return peacefully to their homes.

Whether because the majority had gone home or just split themselves over several targets, numbers did now seem to be thinning out and the town appeared fairly quiet by 12.30am. Nevertheless, Smith kept his small party of civilian peacekeepers together and patrolled the streets with them until 2am:

when some person stating that the mob had gone to Langton to attack Mr Farquarson's house, I rode down to see if the report was true; I found no mob there but Mr James Farquarson, with a considerable number of people with him, prepared to resist an attack'.³⁴

Farquarson, of Langton House, three quarters of a mile from Blandford, was the county Sheriff, and had made himself particularly unpopular not only as chairman of Ashley's election committee at its daily meetings in the *Greyhound*, but as a turncoat, for he had previously been a supporter of reform.³⁵

Smith appears to have stayed up all night. All being quiet, he sent the dragoons home to get some rest but instructed the CO not to march them back to Dorchester in the morning as Portman had ordered but to report back to him. Smith went briefly back to the Down House to consult with his father, and 'we both agreed on the absolute necessity of detaining the military'.³⁶ Smith's wife concurred:

we can get no special constables to be sworn in – all parties are at loggerheads.³⁷

2.5 Day 4 - Tuesday 18 October

At 7am, a messenger arrived at the Down House from Farquarson requesting an immediate meeting in Blandford. Like most of the county magistrates, he had been busy in Dorchester for the last few days, attending the quarter sessions and was anxious to catch up on events in Blandford. Smith Jnr. went first to Portman's house to persuade him to co-sign a requisition to

³⁴ Bristol University Library special collections, *Pinney Papers*, notes, Smith to Pinney (at Lyme Regis), n.d.

³⁵ See the election summary at *History of Parliament*; <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/dorset>

³⁶ *Pinney Papers*, notes, Smith to Pinney (at Lyme Regis), n.d.

³⁷ *Pinney Papers*, letter Mrs Smith to Mrs Pinney, 'Monday, finished Tuesday'.

the dragoons' CO, asking them to remain. Portman 'had some difficulty putting his name to such a document, having been of the opinion that the troops were unnecessarily called in', but said he would leave it to Smith's discretion as he had witnessed more of the previous night's disorder than he had. Smith then returned to the *Greyhound* where he found Farquarson and another JP, Rev. George Pickard, rector of Bloxworth, eight miles south of Blandford, waiting for him. At 8.30am, they jointly signed the requisition to the dragoons and sent it to the CO.

Next, Smith joined several other JPs at the *Greyhound*, and they spent the morning taking evidence from witnesses to the previous night's rioting. Some arrest warrants were issued for a few named individuals, including Bleathman, Long and Horlock. Securing them was unlikely to be easy however, since they couldn't rely on special constables and the two town constables were unlikely to be sufficient, 'there being at this time a great concourse of people assembled in the town and every reason to apprehend that a rescue might be attempted', as Smith put it:

We used our best endeavours to obtain a force of special constables to assist in apprehending Long, Bleathman and Horlock who were then walking about the town, but ineffectually. Several of the inhabitants came into the room on being sent for but when told for what purpose their services were required, they refused to be sworn in – after the lapse of an hour or more.³⁸

Smith and the two constables then went off on their own to execute the warrants. Long and Bleathman were found in a small crowd and Long was carrying a gun. This, it transpired, was a weapon the crowd had confiscated from a servant of the Rev. Robert Crosse who had supposedly fired it at them when they advanced on his house at Langton Long Blandford, just outside the town to the South East, either that morning or the evening before. Smith told him to surrender to the warrant but Long refused. Smith persisted, following the crowd as they walked towards the end of town on the Wimborne Road, one of them – presumably not Horlock this time - carrying a flag. Thinking Long was about to make a run for it, Smith grabbed hold of him at the edge of town. This provoked a violent response, the crowd around Long attacked Smith physically and only stopped when Smith drew a pistol and threatened to shoot the next person to assault him. One of those striking Smith was identified by a townsman as Bleathman.³⁹

Smith was unable to retain Long in custody however, possibly because he was wary of Long's gun. Long, together with his crowd, walked back towards Crosse's house at Langton Long Blandford, where Long threw the gun over Crosse's fence. 'There', he said, 'I have given up the gun that one of Mr Cross[e]'s servants shot at me with'. Long was now secured and taken to the *Greyhound* to be questioned and charged along with Bleathman. Horlock, still carrying the blue and white flag, was taken out of a crowd facing the soldiers guarding Bleathman and Long. According to a visiting farmer named James Sweetman, Horlock shouted, 'Damn them, they are not half men' then threw a stone at one of the soldiers, hitting him on the helmet.⁴⁰ All three

³⁸ *Pinney Papers*, notes, Smith to Pinney (at Lyme Regis), n.d.

³⁹ Dorset History Centre, Christmas Quarter Sessions, January 1832, depositions and calendar, Information of John James Smith and John James, 18 October 1831. For the allegation that a servant had shot at the crowd see for example *Morning Post* 21 October 1831.

⁴⁰ Dorset History Centre, Michaelmas Quarter Sessions, October 1831, information of James Sweetman, 18 October 1831.

were committed to the next sessions and marched off to Dorchester gaol under an armed guard of dragoons.

It was now 3pm and according to Smith:

the appearance of the town indicated a repetition of the proceedings of the previous evening. There being a large concourse of persons parading the town in a tumultuous and disorderly manner, and it being impossible owing to the backwardness of the inhabitants to get together anything like an effective civil force, no persons volunteering to be sworn in special constables.

Smith went briefly home and was back in the *Greyhound* by 6pm to find the crowd outside steadily growing and, according to the *Sherborne Mercury*, parading the streets and shouting 'Ponsonby and Reform forever; down with the boroughmongers'.⁴¹ Trouble broke out at 7pm when stones were thrown at whatever windows the *Greyhound* had still intact. Smith went outside and read the Riot Act.⁴² Since it was dark, Smith called for a light and one of the soldiers fetched a lantern and held it so that Smith could read but it was dashed from his hand by a man with a stick. Consequently, Smith had to read the Act a second time under a retrieved light and a man named William Baker was taken up and lodged in the *Greyhound* for using the stick.⁴³

None of this had much effect. 'The mob did not disperse after the Riot Act had been read but continued parading the town', Smith reported, and as the hour mark approached, negotiations became tense. The soldiers were ready to act but required orders to do so. Smith had no wish to send them in and so he and one or two others spent some time explaining the gravity of the situation and appealing to the crowd to disperse. John Rolls a pro-reformer and glover from Blandford, stepped forward and proposed to Smith that if he would give the crowd another half hour, and hold back the soldiers in the meantime, he and a few others should be able to persuade the crowd to go home. Smith agreed but would not bow to a further demand from one man in the crowd that Baker should be released before they'd agree to disperse.

However, before the half hour was up, news arrived at the *Greyhound* that two more houses in upper Salisbury Street were now being attacked and their windows shattered, Colonel Stuart's and Colonel Cleveland's. Smith and Farquarson ordered the dragoons to march up the street, but on reaching Cleveland's house they found the crowd already scattering. The two magistrates then returned with the soldiers to the *Greyhound*. At 8pm news arrived that a crowd had gathered once again at George Moore's house and were destroying the back entrance. Three young apprentices Francis (Frank) King (15), Alfred Stevens (14) and Harry Applin who were friends and lived on Salisbury Street and Whitecliff Mill Street close to Moore's house took an active part in the rioting. Interviewed in 1890 King stated:

I well recollect the second night of rioting in Blandford in Whitecliff Mill St. when Alfred Stevens, Harvey [Harry] Applin & myself pulled up the flint stones in that street for the Rioters to smash the back premises of George Moore Solicitor for the Tory member [Ashley]... I could mention many other

⁴¹ *Sherborne Mercury* 24 October 1831.

⁴² *Pinney Papers*, notes, Smith to Pinney (at Lyme Regis), n.d.

⁴³ Dorset History Centre, Michaelmas Quarter Sessions, October 1831, Information of Charles Green, James Prankard and Thomas Warburton, 19 October 1831.

instances of our Activity in different parts of the Town during the 2 days rioting...⁴⁴

Smith arrived on the scene and ordered the crowd away, but less than an hour later, they returned and recommenced the attack. In all probability they were simply drifting between targets in the upper part of Salisbury Street.

This was a key moment. For the first time now, the crowd not only held their ground as the military advanced but showered them with stones.

The streets were still full of people and as stones were thrown in all directions at the military, it was necessary to disperse the mob and clear the streets without any further ceremony. Accordingly, the military force was divided into two parties which patrolled the town in different directions and entreated [~~crossed out: obliged~~] the inhabitants to return to their homes and shut their doors and windows, stones however were thrown from the latter as well as from behind walls and down passages and alleys...

Missiles continued to be thrown at the military and eventually:

Mr Smith received a severe cut in the head from a stone. The military proceeded to clear the streets by force and in one or two instances were obliged to fire a few shots to disperse the mob, particularly near the Lancastrian school.⁴⁵ The military were so severely pelted from a passage called the Anchor Yard that it was found necessary to clear it, but when the cavalry rode in they found the passage obstructed by a cart filled with bricks which had been moved across it, from behind which they continued to pelt the soldiers. Orders were given to fire and the passage was then cleared whilst a dismounted party removed the cart'.⁴⁶

The fighting in Anchor Yard (Figure 2, Location 6) was particularly fierce:

...a group of men and women were hemmed in and fired upon by the troops in a yard behind the Corn Exchange. Alfred [Stevens], then 13 [14] years old and evidently already a well-grown boy ... was in the crowd, and distinguished himself by unseating a dragoon with a large stone while some women escaped through a gateway.⁴⁷

Francis King one of the group of teenage apprentices along with Stevens remembered the terrifying experience of being 'chased by one of the 3rd Dragoons [Guards]' and claimed that the:

⁴⁴ Susan Beattie *Catalogue of the Drawings Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects - Alfred Stevens* (1975) p. 11.

⁴⁵ It is not clear where this school was but a school on the Lancastrian system was noted to have opened in Blandford in 1812, see *Salisbury Journal* 23 March 1812. No schools of that name were noted in the Parliamentary report of 1835, but there was a British School and this may have been another name for a Lancastrian school. There was a national school in Damary Lane (see *Blandford Street Directory*, 1831).

⁴⁶ *Pinney Papers*, notes, Smith to Pinney (at Lyme Regis), n.d.

⁴⁷ Kenneth Romney Towndrow *Alfred Stevens - Architectural Sculptor Painter and Designer - A Biography with New Material* (1939) pp. 13-14.

Dragoons fired on the rioters who were in Anchor Yard – through the Anchor Gateway & the boys were throwing stones...⁴⁸

Nobody appears to have been mortally wounded, reported the *Sherborne Mercury* but ‘Many persons however were desperately cut upon the head and arms by the sabres’, and bullet damage could be seen afterwards on some of the houses.⁴⁹ The use of live rounds remains unclear. In a report written on the hoof to the undersecretary of state at the Home Office, Smith Snr. wrote, ‘It was so bad at first that the military were compelled to skirmish the mob and recourse to blank cartridges’, in which case fatalities were unlikely, although he added ‘I fear there will be blood spilt this evening.’⁵⁰

The military continued patrolling the streets from midnight to 1am and at 2am Farquarson ordered them to retire until the morning. ‘The temperance and forbearance of the soldiers throughout the whole night was beyond all praise’, noted Smith. However,

The magistrates regret to state that with the exception of the 2 constables and some few individuals whose property had been damaged or threatened by the mob, that they met with no assistance whatever from the householders or other inhabitants of the town. To this want of co-operation from the respectable inhabitants of the town, to the difficulty of obtaining any intelligence, must be attributed the extent of the damage done during the half hour allowed at the request of Mr Rolls for the mob to disperse.’⁵¹

Smith’s wife sent a graphic account of all this, and the role played in it by John as a JP, to her mother in Lyme Regis:

After waiting the proper time, the soldiers were obliged to fire and set about them with swords. The people fortified themselves behind carts, flinging stones, bricks and everything they could get was used... [Smith received] a cut in the head from a stone flying out of a window and in short, he [John Smith] was the hero of the day, for although Old Farquy [Farquarson] was in the town, John thought it would increase the tumult to let him be seen, and I am sure no violence was used for in the first instance, John went round to each house, imploring the people to keep at home and he did not move from the dinner table where he was dining till the stones thrown in at the window obliged him... How it is to end I know not, and owing to the way Portman has courted the mob and the Reform Committee it will be just impossible for John to act as a magistrate without the assistance of the military and he is obliged to go about armed which is a sad state of things but I rejoice to say he does not appear to suffer much except being achingly stiff from his cuts or bruises...⁵²

2.6 Day 5 – Wednesday 19 October

By 9.30am, both of the Smiths, Farquarson, Portman, Hanham, Pickard and Bastard were all back at the *Greyhound*. The town’s Reform Committee had finally stepped forward and agreed

⁴⁸ Stannus’ interview notes with Frank King (c.1890) Papers of Hugh Hutton Stannus 1874-1952 StH/1/3-4/11 RIBA Drawings & Archives Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum.

⁴⁹ *Sherborne Mercury* 24 October 1831.

⁵⁰ TNA, HO 52/12 ff14-15, J W Smith to Sir Francis Freeling, 18 October 1831

⁵¹ *Pinney Papers*, notes, Smith to Pinney (at Lyme Regis), n.d.

⁵² *Pinney Papers*, letter Mrs Smith to Mrs Pinney, second letter, ‘Wednesday morning’

to be enrolled as special constables so that was their first action. The second was to pen a collectively signed application to the Home Office for the dragoons to be retained indefinitely, since the civil power had proved itself 'totally inadequate to maintain order'. The one stumbling block was Portman, once again a dissentient voice, adding that he would only support retention 'until tranquillity is returned', and his continuing belief that the civil power was quite adequate to maintain the peace.⁵³

3 The aftermath

The recriminations were swift. George Chard sent an account of the riots to the Home Secretary on 29 October, placing much of the blame on the refusal of the county magistrates to take the early initiative. If only Smith Snr. and (especially) Portman had acceded to his request that they summon military aid on Sunday, following the assaults on Richard Shittler, the scale of later destruction might have been prevented, he said.⁵⁴ Smith Jnr. and Farquarson stopped short of blaming Portman, but could not conceal their annoyance with Blandford's respectable class for standing back and facilitating disorder:

They cannot conclude their account of these painful transactions without alluding to the extreme apathy which appeared to be shown by almost every tradesman in the town while these most outrageous and disgraceful attacks were being made on the houses of some of the most respectable inhabitants.

Only 'the constables and perhaps ten other individuals, most of whose houses had been destroyed', had assisted the civil power.⁵⁵

Those to emerge with credit were chiefly the military, who were praised for their 'forbearance,' and Major John James Smith. As one newspaper correspondent put it:

Though young and but recently qualified as a magistrate, he has conducted himself, not merely throughout the tumults, but throughout the election, with so much judgement, so much firmness, so much promptitude, and, with all, so much good and proper feeling under very trying circumstances that his name deserves to be held up as an ornament to his country and an example to all aspirants to the magisterial bench.⁵⁶

Judicial retribution swiftly followed. The coinciding of the Michaelmas quarter sessions at Dorchester with the outbreak of rioting at Blandford and Sherborne meant that many magistrates were away from home when rioting began. This may have been obstructive to any speedy and co-ordinated response to events as they unfolded at the time, but it was nevertheless convenient from the point of view of swift legal redress and punishment since it allowed suspects to be put to the bar within days of an offence being committed. With the County Yeomanry still busy at Sherborne, the sessions were extended and the Grand Jury retained, 'as it is resolved upon bringing such of the Blandford rioters as are in custody to trial immediately'.⁵⁷ So Bleathman, Long, Horlock and Baker were all put to the bar in Dorchester a

⁵³ TNA, HO 52/12, George Chard to Melbourne, 29 Oct 1831, ff. 35-7; ff. 12-13, signed requisition of Dorset magistrates, 19 October 1831; Smith Snr. to Melbourne, 19 October 1831.

⁵⁴ TNA, HO 52/12, George Chard to Melbourne, 29 Oct 1831, ff. 35-7

⁵⁵ *Pinney Papers*, notes, Smith to Pinney (at Lyme Regis), n.d.

⁵⁶ *London Evening Standard*, 25 October 1831, Letter from 'A Native, Dorchester'.

⁵⁷ *Daily Advertiser* 24 October 1831.

few days after being taken up and committed to gaol, giving them no time to organise an effective defence. The first three therefore opted to traverse to the January sessions, leaving Baker alone to test the mood of the County bench. Since he was accused only of using a stick to knock down the lantern used by Smith as he read the Riot Act, he may have expected some leniency, for the only defence he offered was to say he was drunk at the time. It cut no ice with the magistrates, and he was sentenced to six months in gaol.⁵⁸

By the time the January sessions came on, four more suspects had been taken up and charged, John Cherret (17) for the assault on Richard Shittler; Thomas Jackson (23) and William Kent for damaging George Moore's house; and John Barnes (33)⁵⁹ for riot and an unspecified breach of the peace. Jackson, Barnes and Kent were all referred on to the assize court, because a decision had clearly been taken to prosecute them on the capital charge of partially destroying houses.⁶⁰ Richard Bleathman, George Long, John Cherret and Horlock (the flag carrier) were then dealt with on various counts of riot and assault, strictly speaking non-capital felonies and misdemeanours.

Of these cases, the 22-year-old shoemaker George Long's looked the most serious. To begin with, he had resisted arrest whilst armed with a gun. Secondly the magistrates had prepared separate indictments against him for simple riot on both the 17th and 18th October, for the assault on William Hanham, the assault on Jane Meaden, the assault on Richard Shittler and an assault on Samuel Payne.⁶¹ In fact, the magistrates had depositions against him for the mobbing of Richard Shittler too, but these were held back. Worse yet, he was known to the borough authorities for previous misbehaviour. On bonfire night in 1828, Long was one of several young men put before the Blandford petty sessions for fighting with special constables when the magistrates tried to prevent crowds from throwing fireworks in the street. 'Broken heads and broken windows were the order of the night', noted the *Salisbury Journal*. Long and several others were bound over to keep the peace for twelve months.⁶² Long's trial now at the county sessions was conducted quickly on two main counts; first the assault on Meaden for which he was given twelve months with hard labour, then the assault on Shittler for which he was given a further six.

Richard Bleathman (24), originally from a farming family in Sturminster Newton but recently moved to Blandford also had a string of indictments against his name, including the assaults upon John James Smith, Bastard, Meaden and Shittler. Like Long, he was speedily convicted and

⁵⁸ *Sherborne Mercury* 31 October 1831

⁵⁹ John Barnes is also listed as James Barnes in the Dorchester Prison register and in the *Dorset County Chronicle*. See *Dorset County Chronicle* 23 February 1832 and Dorchester Prison Admission and Discharge Register 1827-1839 p. 118 no. 193 and p. 120 no. 240. Research suggests John was his baptised name in 1802. He is also listed as 29-years-old in the Dorchester Prison register and 33 in the Dorset calendar of prisoners for trial Christmas 1831, see Appendix 2.

⁶⁰ It is difficult to be sure why these three were referred to the assize. No depositions have survived amongst the quarter session papers for Jackson, Barnes or King, and King didn't even make it to the calendar, but the appearance at the sessions of all three is noted by the report in the *Salisbury Journal* 16 January 1832.

⁶¹ *Dorset County Chronicle* 27 October 1831.

⁶² *Salisbury Journal* 10 November 1828; *Dorset County Chronicle* 9 January 1829.

sentenced to twelve months with hard labour. The remaining duo, Cherret and Horlock, were then sentenced respectively to twelve and six months with hard labour.⁶³

The Dorset assize opened at Dorchester in March 1832. The presiding judge was Mr Justice Gazelee who had already distinguished himself by hanging three Reform Bill rioters at Nottingham. As expected, the principal charges against Jackson and Kent centred on the part they allegedly played in destroying private property, and specifically the house and possessions of George Moore, the crowd's first target. These were capital charges but the evidence against them proved insufficient and both men were acquitted. The less specific charges of riot and breach of the peace preferred against Barnes were not capital, but they were less difficult to substantiate, and he was sentenced to imprisonment for 18 months. The prosecution were not yet done, however. Richard Bleathman and George Long, already serving sentences for their conviction at the quarter session, were brought into court from their cells, prosecuted on the same counts as Jackson and Kent for the attack on Moore's house, convicted and sentenced to death.⁶⁴

These sentences sent shockwaves through the county for their unexpected severity. Four men in Bristol and three at Nottingham had been hanged already for taking part in reform riots, but the outbreaks in both of those cities had been considerably more serious in scale than the riots at Blandford, and the sentencing court in each case had been convened by Special Commission, ordered and conducted with exemplary capital convictions in mind.⁶⁵ In no other counties where Reform Bill rioters were tried, even where capital convictions were obtained, were executions ordered, but Gazelee made himself plain, instructing Bleathman and Long 'not to entertain any hopes of mercy'.⁶⁶ There was no stomach for public hangings in Blandford however, nor in Bleathman's home parish of Sturminster Newton, and stringent efforts were made to save them in the following days.

Why were Bleathman and Long singled out for exemplary treatment? There is no obvious answer to this, but it will have been noted not only that they were both identified as participants in the first day of rioting (Saturday 15th) when Richard Shittler was pursued and attacked, as well as on subsequent days, and that the various cases of assault alleged against them included physical attacks upon county magistrates – John James Smith, William Hanham and John Bastard. Long, whose previous record will not have helped his case, was carrying a gun when confronted by Smith, and Hanham claimed he'd been beaten with a stick.

A clemency petition in favour of Richard Bleathman, containing 580 signatures, was sent to the Home Office from Sturminster, another to the judge and a third 'signed by almost every respectable persons in the place' from Blandford. John Rutter of Shaftesbury and the radical lawyer, Wintour Harris, took up the case. There was no doubt Bleathman and Long had taken part in the riot, Rutter conceded, but no evidence of premeditated design had been offered and no serious personal injuries had been inflicted. In fact, 'The evidence adduced at the trial was

⁶³ Dorset History Centre, Epiphany Quarter Session calendar, January 1832.

⁶⁴ *Salisbury Journal* 19 March 1832.

⁶⁵ Steve Poole, "'Some examples should be made": Prosecuting reform bill rioters in 1831-2', in Michael T. Davis, Emma Macleod, and Gordon Pentland (eds.), *Political Trials in an Age of Revolutions: Britain and the North Atlantic, 1793-1848* (Palgrave, 2019); Steve Poole and Nicholas Rogers, *Bristol From Below: Law, Authority and Protest in a Georgian City* (Boydell, 2017), pp. 325-352.

⁶⁶ *Salisbury Journal* 19 March 1832.

considered so slight in support of the capital charge that their counsel called no witnesses on their behalf either as to facts or to character', and there was no clear evidence linking either of them with the first attack on Moore's house'. They may have been identified as present, but nobody saw either of them actually break anything. If they were present during the second attack on Moore and Smith's houses, the targets then were legal papers rather than the buildings and, significantly, 'The jury first brought in verdict of Guilty, but not of demolishing', a distinction which, in Rutter's view, amounted to 'a virtual acquittal from the capital charge'. Gazelee had simply dismissed the nuance and pronounced sentence of death.⁶⁷

Harris had also received a letter from Thomas Fooks, Clerk to the Peace in Dorset, expressing his view that very little of the evidence introduced against Bleathman and Long at the Assize was any more damning than the evidence produced against them at the quarter session and for which they were already serving gaol terms. Harris forwarded this to Lord Melbourne but there were already rumours circulating in the county that Gazelee had relented and asked Melbourne to issue a respite, as indeed he had.⁶⁸ Bleathman and Long were re-sentenced to transportation for life to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) and did not return. Long had in fact attracted very little overt public sympathy following trial and no petitions appear to have been produced in his name. Bleathman certainly attracted more attention; indeed some people at Sturminster where his family continued as farmers, were still in touch with him in 1844 when a fresh petition was sent to the Home Secretary, this time praying for a full pardon since his employer at Green's Pond in Tasmania was ready to testify to his exemplary behaviour.⁶⁹

As the assizes were running their dramatic course in Shire Hall in Dorchester several of those personages targeted by the rioters in Blandford were attempting to claim compensation for damages to their houses and property. On Saturday 10 March 1832 a Sheriff's Court was convened in Dorchester in the *Antelope Inn*. Writs of inquiry were executed to assess the damage and large sums were awarded to George Moore Esq. (£283 2s. 9d.) and Septimus Smith Esq. (£186 18s. 2d.). The other successful claimants were Colonel Cleveland (£76 9s.), Dr Charles Heywood (£60 15s. 3d.) and ex-Bailiff Rev. George Chard (£56 17s. 4d.).⁷⁰ The significant payments to Moore and Smith, Lord Ashley's by-election agents, were a testament to the fury and duration of the repeated attacks on their houses. However, it is unclear why other property-owners such as the proprietor of the *Greyhound Inn*, the surgeon John Dansey Jnr. or Colonel Stuart did not appear to have claimed compensation.

4 Targets of the rioters

The targets of the rioters in Blandford, whether persons or their property, are listed in Table 1 in chronological order. Of the seven people who were physically attacked five were associated with the Ashley election campaign (Shittler, Bastard, Hanham, Smith Jnr and Paine). Two were members of Ashley's election committee, one a publicly declared Ashley supporter and remaining two Ashley voters. Only the deputy Bailiff, Kendall and the elusive Samuel Payne,

⁶⁷ TNA HO 17/83, John Rutter to Wintour Harris, 21 March 1832. See also the surviving petition from Sturminster Newton.

⁶⁸ TNA HO 17/83, Mr Justice Gazelee to Melbourne 26 March 1832; Wintour Harris to Melbourne, 28 March 1832.

⁶⁹ TNA HO 17/83, petition from Sturminster Newton, February 1844.

⁷⁰ *Dorset County Chronicle* 15 March 1832; *Atlas* 25 March 1832.

were not politically aligned in the public domain.⁷¹ Nine properties targeted by the rioters can be located, and of these, five suffered major damage. These were the houses and business premises of Ashley's election agents George Moore and Septimus Smith, the former being visited four times by the crowd over two days, the Bailiff and self-declared Ashley supporter George Chard and the Tory surgeon Charles Heywood. Col. Cleveland's is the only case where there is a lack of evidence of political alignment, though there is certainly class alignment with the Dorset gentry. Of the four properties suffering minor or unknown damage, John Dansey Jnr., Robert Crosse and Col. Stuart were all Ashley voters, and it was common knowledge that the *Greyhound Inn* was the meeting place for the Ashley election committee. The *Greyhound* also became the proxy HQ for the magistrates and the military once the rioting had commenced, which may have enhanced its status as a target.

One might argue that amongst the population of over 3,000 in the town, Ashley voters and supporters would be hard to isolate despite the public voting system that was in place in 1831. However, alongside the public declarations of support made by 'Ashleyites' is the fact that in the town of Blandford only 42 people voted in the by-election and of these, only 16 for Ashley. In the Division as a whole, this number expands to a total of 70 votes for Ashley and 85 for Ponsonby.⁷² It was thus hard to hide, as an Ashley voter, from the prying eyes of pro-reformers.

Another feature of the data in Table 1 is the significant number of solicitor-magistrates and cleric-magistrates that were targeted. Of the 15 named people whose person or property were attacked by the rioters four were of the former group (Hanham, Moore, S. Smith and J. Smith Jnr.) and two (Bastard and Chard) of the latter. Although leading figures in the governance of provincial towns such as Blandford would more than often be reflected in these occupations and duties, the targeting also reflects resentments about corruption in the County by-election, the anti-reform Church of England, the votes of the Lords Spiritual against the Second Reform Bill and perhaps the harsh penal regime of Dorset in the 1830s.

An overall assessment of the targeting was given during the Dorset Lent Assizes of 1832 when William Ball, a whitesmith from Blandford, who had been present in the crowd at the *Crown Inn*, stated to the court:

The Rev. Mr. Chard's, Dr Heywood's, and Dr Dansey's houses were also attacked; Col. Cleveland's house was also served out that evening; I do not know what are the political opinions of Drs. Dansey and Heywood, and Col. Cleveland, or Mr. Chard, an cannot form a belief; I have heard Mr Chard was an anti [reformer]; *I rather expect they were all antis...*⁷³

Another eyewitness, Francis King, who had taken part in the rioting summed this up many years later when he stated:

The riot was in consequence of the Dorset [by-]election being gained by undue pressure from the Tories...and the prominent Tories houses were damaged.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Despite significant research into Samuel Payne there is little substantiated biographical evidence available.

⁷² Morris, R. "The Dorset By-election of 1831" in *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, Vol. 109 (1987) App. III.

⁷³ Our emphasis in italics. *Dorset County Chronicle* 15 March 1832.

⁷⁴ Stannus' interview notes with Frank King (c.1890) Papers of Hugh Hutton Stannus 1874-1952 StH/1/3-4/11 RIBA Drawings & Archives Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum.

Name or owner	Date Oct 1831	Attacks on person (P) or property (H) and number [n]	Level of injury or damage ⁷⁵	Vote in 1831 by-election	Civic position	J.P.	Occupation
<i>Greyhound Inn</i>	2	H	Minor	N/A	'Ashley election HQ'	N/A	N/A
Various		H	Minor	Ashley	'Ashley supporters'	N/K	N/K
Richard Shittler	15	P [several]	Minor	Ashley	-	No	Farmer, landowner
Charles Paine		P	Minor	Ashley	-	N/K	Shoemaker
Samuel Payne		P	Minor	DNV	-	N/K	N/K
Various		H	Minor	Ashley	'Ashley supporters'	N/K	N/K
Samuel Kendall	17	P	Minor	DNV	Deputy Bailiff	No	Patternmaker
John Bastard		P	Minor	Ashley	Ashley's election committee	Yes	Cleric
William Hanham		P	Minor	Ashley	Ashley's election committee	Yes	Solicitor
George Moore		H [2]	Major	Obj. Ashley	Ashley election agent	Yes	Solicitor
Septimus Smith		H [1]	Major	Obj. Ashley	Bailiff, deputy registrar of the diocese and Ashley election agent	No	Solicitor
George Chard		H [1]	Major	Ashley	Rector and Bailiff	Yes	Cleric
John Smith Jnr.		P	Minor	Ashley	Ashley supporter	Yes	Solicitor
John Dansey Jnr.		H [1]	N/K	Ashley	-	No	Surgeon
Charles Heywood		H [1]	Major	DNV	Tory supporter	No	Surgeon
Robert Crosse		17/18	H [1]	None	Ashley	-	No
John Smith Jnr.	18	P	Minor	Ashley	Ashley supporter	Yes	Solicitor
<i>Greyhound Inn</i>		H	Minor	N/A	'Ashley election HQ'	N/A	N/A
Archibald Stuart		H [1]	N/K	Ashley	-	No	Army Col. ret.
Col. Cleveland		H [1]	Major	DNV	-	No	Army
George Moore		H [2]	Major	Obj. Ashley	Ashley election agent	Yes	Solicitor

Key: DNV = Did not vote in by-election, N/A = Not applicable, N/K = Not known, Obj. = Vote objected to, ret. = retired, J.P. = magistrate

Table 1: Summary of targets of Blandford rioters in October 1831 in chronological order

⁷⁵ The level of damage is determined as being major by either being greater than £10, more than one attack or more than one hour for the attack.

5 The rioters

The purpose of this section is first to analyse the sample of 12 rioters derived from those named in the sources or who were arrested to determine some characteristics of the crowd that took part in the rioting in Blandford. In the latter part, short biographies of the rioters are provided based on more detailed research into their backgrounds.

5.1 Prosopographical analysis

The prosopographical data for the sample is summarised in Table 2. Of the 12 men, three were unskilled labourers, six were engaged in skilled artisanal-type trades, and three were apprentices to these trades. This suggests a largely working-class male crowd. The median age was 19 years and the range 14-29 years. All of the sample, bar one (Barnes) were unmarried and apparently without children, probably a consequence of their relative youth. Evidence for literacy is patchy with three or four of the sample being at least semi-literate.

Of the 12, ten were born in the parish of Blandford or immediately across the river Stour, in Blandford St Mary. The remaining two were from Shillingstone, five miles to the northwest of Blandford and three miles further on, from Sturminster Newton. At the time of the riot, it appears all of the sample were living in Blandford. This evidence suggests this was a 'Blandford riot', that is, the rioters came from the town and its environs, rather than being the actions of 'outsiders' from further afield.⁷⁶

A lack of sources makes it difficult to determine whether they were owners of land or property, though the lack of voting rights amongst the rioters and their parents suggests that none had significant holdings. The only exception would be Richard Bleathman's father, Thomas, who could vote due to a freehold in Hinton St. Mary whilst living a mile down the road in Sturminster Newton. Of the sample, none owned businesses in Blandford, with only the two apprentices (Stevens and Applin) having parents who operated artisanal concerns.

Only two of the sample (Long and Watts) had criminal convictions before October 1831, the former in 1828 and the latter in 1830, both of which were public order related offences. Of the whole group only Watts had been imprisoned previous to the riot. A third (Barnes) may have been brought to court for bastardy six years previously. Although the members of the sample were relatively young, clearly the majority had not been in serious trouble with the judiciary.

5.2 Biographies

The rioters will be considered in the following groups, those who acted together in the initial disturbances on Saturday 15th October (Watts, Long, Bleathman and Cherrett), those that took an active part on Monday 17th October (Horlock, Jackson, Kent and Barnes) and those that were involved on the final day of the rioting Tuesday 18th October (Baker, King, Stevens and Applin).

Henry Watts (aka Oats) was born in Blandford in 1813 to John, an ostler, and Hannah Watts. An apprentice blacksmith, he was arrested in 1830 aged 16 years and imprisoned in Dorchester gaol for two months with hard labour for 'throwing stones and trespass'. He was committed to gaol by local magistrates Thomas Horlock Bastard, the Blandford town Recorder in 1831, and James John Farquarson, the Sheriff of Dorset. This was followed in 1831 by a further three-

⁷⁶ It could also be a consequence of the fact that magistrates, constables and other local to Blandford would be more likely to recognise suspects from their own town. However, unusually, there were no contemporary reports suggesting that the rioting was carried out by 'outsiders' from other towns.

month sentence for trespass after the riots of October which was deliberated by the magistrate Sir John Wyldebore Smith. Whilst in prison in Dorchester he was charged with 'riot and assault' for attacking Charles Paine a shoemaker and Ashley voter from Shillingstone during the disturbances on Saturday 15 October in Blandford. Watts was recorded as being 'disorderly' whilst serving his latter sentence.⁷⁷

George Long was in the crowd with Watts that day. Long was born in Blandford in December 1808 to John and Sarah Long, their fifth surviving child after Jane (13), Sarah (9), John (6) and James (3). When just a baby of 7 months, George, and the rest of the Long family were forced out of Blandford by a *General Order of Removal* issued by local magistrates. These orders were the result of a parish refusing to give poor relief to families deemed to be from a different 'home parish'. In this case the magistrates ordered the Long family to move to the village of Batcombe, 17 miles to the west of Blandford, so as to avoid relief payments to them. It appears that despite this setback the Longs returned to Blandford at some point over the following years. George became a shoemaker and his brother James a stone mason who remained in Blandford until the 1860s.⁷⁸ Although the impression has been given in some secondary sources that George Long was already considered a 'delinquent' in the town, he was at least semi-literate and has only a single recorded offence prior to October 1831, a relatively benign bind over as a result of the raucous Guy Fawkes celebrations of 1828.⁷⁹ Such celebrations and associated disturbances were fairly common in the west country in the period. Despite his visible role in the Blandford reform riots it must have been a shock to many that he was given a death sentence for attempting to demolish the election agent George Moore's house.

Long's companion during their transportation to Van Dieman's land, Richard Bleathman, was born in Sturminster Newton to Thomas and Mary in 1806. The couple had got married six months earlier probably when Mary realised she was pregnant with Thomas' baby. Mary also gave birth to two more children, Thomas Jnr. and William. Thomas Snr., a farmer, was a freeholder in the parish and had the right to vote. Both of Richard's parents were at least semi-literate and clearly passed this onto their children.⁸⁰ Richard described himself as a 'butcher and ploughman', showing his familial connections with farming. The status and nature of the Bleathman family as small farmers may have been a reason for the considerable public outcry after Richard's capital sentence. Two petitions for clemency were submitted by the people of Sturminster Newton to the Home Office, the first signed by 580 people and the second by 89. A third from Blandford was apparently signed by most of the 'respectable' people in the town and probably saved the life of Bleathman and perhaps Long.

⁷⁷ England, Dorset Church of England Parish Registers, 1538-1999; Dorset, England, Dorchester Prison Admission and Discharge Registers, 1782-1901 Prisoner Register 1827-1839; *Dorset County Chronicle* 22 March 1832.

⁷⁸ England, Dorset Church of England Parish Registers, 1538-1999; Dorset, England, Dorchester Prison Admission and Discharge Registers, 1782-1901 Prisoner Register 1827-1839; 1841, 1861 census, Blandford; Poor Law Settlement and Removal Records, 1682-1862, General Order of Removal, Dorset, Blandford Forum, 5 August 1809; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 10 November 1828, 05 January 1829.

⁷⁹ Bawn, Kevin P. "Social protest, popular disturbances and public order in Dorset, 1790-1838". Unpublished PhD (University of Reading, 1984) p. 58.

⁸⁰ Dorset, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812; 1801, 1841 census Sturminster Newton; Dorset, England, Dorchester Prison Admission and Discharge Registers, 1782-1901 Prisoner Register 1827-1839; Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll.

Catherine Cherrett was one of nine brothers and sisters, five of whom died in their 30s. She gave birth to John in 1813 in Blandford, though without a husband or father to support the child. Despite the stigma of being 'base-born' John had more difficulties ahead when his mother died in 1827 leaving him as an orphan at 13 years of age. He was probably brought up by other members of the family; for example, Catherine's surviving sister Mary-Ann was a Charwoman living in Blandford in 1851. John trained as a butcher and despite his unstable background does not appear to have a criminal record. After his imprisonment for a year as a result of the reform riot in Blandford, Cherrett joined the army, enlisting in 1833 into the 14th Regiment of Lancers. Three years later he deserted and in 1837 was implicated, along with three others, in the murder of a pauper in Corfe Mullen near Bournemouth. Whilst the other suspects were captured by the authorities, Cherrett absconded and next appears in army records in 1841 in Clonmel, Tipperary where he was sentenced to four months hard labour for 'breach of the articles of war'. He was discharged in 1841 and may have died five years later.⁸¹

John Horlock was born to William and Ann in Blandford in 1809 and went on to become a labourer in the town. Horlock was very visible during the reform riots as he was carrying the 'blue and white flag', appeared at most of the major confrontations and spurred the crowd on to attack the Dragoons. Several witnesses claimed he was a 'ring leader' and Francis King recalling the reform riots nearly 60 years after, stated that 'a main ringleader called "hokey pokey" incited them to attack the Yeomanry [Dragoon?] cavalry'. This could be a derivation of Horlock's name distorted by memory and time. Horlock paid for his visibility in the riots with a six-month sentence of imprisonment with hard labour. After his release he married Jane Bellows of Blandford St Mary in 1835 and had several children.⁸²

Thomas Jackson was born in 1807 to George, an agricultural labourer, and Susannah (nee Wareham) in Shillingstone, about five miles to the northwest of Blandford. His parents went on to have six children before Susannah died aged 44 in 1823, when Thomas was 16 years old. Both of Thomas's parents were illiterate. After Susannah's death the family moved from Shillingstone to Blandford and lived for many years on Bryanston Street. Like his father Thomas was an agricultural labourer and he married Jemima Davis, a dressmaker, in 1835 and they had two children. Thomas and Jemima were both illiterate.⁸³ Jackson was tried in the assizes with William Kent. Kent was born in Blandford in 1815 to Thomas, a bricklayer, and Ann, a cook. The family lived on Salisbury Street. William trained as a Baker in Blandford and appears to have left the town in the 1830s.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Dorset, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906; 1851 census Blandford; Dorset, England, Dorchester Prison Admission and Discharge Registers, 1782-1901 Prisoner Register 1827-1839; UK, Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Soldier Service Records, 1760-1920; Army Deserters 1828-1840; *Dorset County Chronicle* 16 Nov 1837; Ireland, Prison Registers, 1790-1924 Tipperary, Clonmel, 1840-1848.

⁸² Dorset OPC Blandford St Mary, Marriages July 1754-1837; Dorset, England, Dorchester Prison Admission and Discharge Registers, 1782-1901 Prisoner Register 1827-1839; 1841 census Blandford; Stannus' interview notes with Frank King (c.1890) Papers of Hugh Hutton Stannus 1874-1952 StH/1/3-4/11 RIBA Drawings & Archives Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum.

⁸³ Dorset, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812 Shillingstone; Dorset, England, Dorchester Prison Admission and Discharge Registers, 1782-1901 Prisoner Register 1827-1839; 1841, 1861, 1871 census Blandford; Dorset OPC, Blandford Forum, Marriages 1814 to 1846.

⁸⁴ Dorset OPC, Blandford Forum, Baptisms 1814 to 1830; England, Dorchester Prison Admission and Discharge Registers, 1782-1901 Prisoner Register 1827-1839; 1841 census Blandford.

The final member of the group who were tried for rioting on Monday 17 October 1831 was John Barnes. At 29 he was the oldest of all the sample and was married with two children. Barnes was born in 1802 in Blandford St. Mary, to John, a labourer, and Ann. The family went on to live in The Plocks, near Salisbury Street. John trained to be a shoemaker and in 1828 married Mary Lavender in Blandford. The couple moved to Blandford St Mary and their second child was born a month before the riots in September 1831. After his incarceration, John and Mary went onto have several more children in the 1830s.⁸⁵

William Baker, a labourer, was born in Blandford in 1812 to Edward and Mary (nee Harvey). Edward was serving in the 3rd Dragoon Guards when he married Mary in 1799. Both Edward and Mary were illiterate. After serving his six months in Dorchester gaol, William returned to Blandford where he married the already pregnant Elizabeth Matthews in 1833. William Baker appears to be semi-literate, unlike his spouse Elizabeth.⁸⁶

The remaining three of the sample studied were teenage apprentices, childhood friends and active over the two days or so of rioting according to the oldest, Francis King, when he recalled the events sixty years later in the 1890s. King was born in Blandford in 1816 to Abraham, a servant, and Sarah. He was apprenticed to local gunsmith, Samuel Pegler, who ran a gun, watch and clock making business on Salisbury Street. Francis is described as a 'gunmaker' when he married Mary Rolls, a laundress and the daughter of an army sergeant major in 1838. Mary and Francis had eight children and lived on Oakfield Street. They ran a gun and musical instrument shop on East Street until he passed away in 1895.⁸⁷

Alfred Stevens was born to George, a painter, and Susannah (nee Sampson) the daughter of a local farmer in 1817, three years after they were married in Spetisbury, three miles south of Blandford. Alfred had only one sibling, an older brother who died at the young age of 23 in 1838. The family moved to a house behind No. 38 Salisbury Street in Blandford where George plied his trade as a house, sign and heraldic painter. His son Alfred was educated at the village school and recognised as a gifted artist at a young age. With the financial help of Rev. Samuel Best, the rector of Blandford St Mary, and latterly the Pegler family he was able to travel to Italy in 1833 and trained in Florence as a classical artist. Alfred went on to become one of the most accomplished designers, sculptors and artists of the Victorian era.⁸⁸ There are far fewer sources concerning Harry Applin, the last of the trio of riotous apprentices. It is likely that he was

⁸⁵ Dorset OPC Blandford St Mary, Marriages July 1754-1837; Dorset OPC Blandford St Mary, Baptisms 1813 – 1840; England, Dorchester Prison Admission and Discharge Registers, 1782-1901 Prisoner Register 1827-1839; Dorset OPC Blandford Forum Baptisms 1831 – 1849; 1841 census Blandford.

⁸⁶ Dorset, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812 Blandford Forum; Dorset, England, Dorchester Prison Admission and Discharge Registers, 1782-1901 Prisoner Register 1827-1839; Dorset OPC Blandford Forum Marriage 1814 to 1846; Blandford Forum Baptisms 1831 – 1849.

⁸⁷ Pigot & Co. 1831 Trade Directory for Blandford Forum; Dorset OPC Blandford Forum Baptisms 1814 to 1830; Dorset OPC Blandford Forum Marriages 1814-1846; Census Blandford 1841, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891; Blandford Forum Kelly's Directory 1875, Stannus' interview notes with Frank King (c.1890) Papers of Hugh Hutton Stannus 1874-1952 StH/1/3-4/11 RIBA Drawings & Archives Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum.

⁸⁸ Pigot & Co. 1831 Trade Directory for Blandford Forum; Dorset OPC Blandford Forum Baptisms 1814 to 1830; Dictionary of National Biography, Volumes 1-22 for Alfred Stevens Shearman - Stovin (Vol 18); Census Blandford 1841, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891.

apprenticed to James Applin a painter who had premises on Whitecliff Mill Street, and who may have been his father.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Pigot & Co. 1831 Trade Directory for Blandford Forum.

Name	Age (1831)	Parish of birth	Home (1831)	Occupation	Marital status (children)	Semi-literate	Voter	Previous criminality	Charge [date of incident]	Sentence	Notes
Henry Watts (aka Oats)	18	Blandford	Blandford	Blacksmith	Single	N/K	No	1830	Riotous assembly and assault [15 Oct]	6 months hard labour	Imprisoned for 2 months with hard labour in 1830 for 'throwing stones and trespass'. Attacked Charles Paine, 15 Oct 1831 whilst 'riotously assembled'.
George Long	22	Blandford	Blandford	Shoemaker	Single	N/K	No	1828	Riot and assault, 'demolishing a house' [15, 17-18 Oct]	18 months hard labour - death reduced to transport for life	Financed and bound over to keep the peace for 12 months in 1829 with five others letting off fireworks at Guy Fawkes night in 1828. Attacked and chased Richard Shittler and Samuel Payne (15 Oct) with Bleathman and Cherret. Attacked the <i>Greyhound Inn</i> with Bleathman (17 Oct). Attacked JP J. J. Smith on Wimborne Road (18 Oct).
Richard Bleathman	24	Sturminster Newton, Dorset	Blandford	Ploughman and Butcher	Single	Mother and Father	No, but Father is	None	Riot and assault, 'demolishing a house' [15, 17-18 Oct]	12 months hard labour - death reduced to transport for life	Attacked and chased Richard Shittler (15 Oct) with Long and Cherrett. Attacked the <i>Greyhound Inn</i> with Bleathman (17 Oct). Attacked George Moore's house during together with George Long (17 Oct). Violence with JP J. J. Smith on Wimborne Road (18 Oct).
John Windham Cherrett	19	Blandford	Blandford	Butcher	Single	N/K	No	None	Riot and assault [15 Oct]	12 months hard labour	Attacked and chased Richard Shittler with Bleathman and Long (15 Oct).
John Horlock	22	Blandford	The Plocks, Blandford	Labourer	Single	No	No	None	Riot and assault [17-18 Oct]	6 months hard labour	'Ring-leader' in scuffles at Town hall (17 Oct). 'Blue and white' flag carrier. Threw stones at Dragoons at Langton Long Blandford (18 Oct).

Name	Age (1831)	Parish of birth	Home (1831)	Occupation	Marital status (children)	Semi-literate	Voter	Previous criminality	Charge [date of incident]	Sentence	Notes
Thomas Jackson	23	Shillingstone, Dorset	Blandford	Agricultural Labourer	Single	No	No	None	Throwing stones and demolishing a house [17 Oct]	3 months hard labour and Acquitted	Jackson accused of damage to George Moore's house. The 3 months hard labour may have been for the original offence of 'throwing stones'. Jackson was acquitted for 'demolishing a house'.
William Kent	16	Blandford	Blandford	Baker	Single	N/K	No	None	Stealing a parchment deed and demolishing a house [17 Oct]	Acquitted	Kent accused of damage to George Moore's house
John (James) Barnes	29	Blandford St Mary	Blandford St Mary	Bootmaker	Married (2)	N/K	No	1825 - criminal record for Bastardy	Riot and demolishing a house [17 Oct]	3 months hard labour	Barnes accused of damage to George Moore's house.
William Baker	19	Blandford	Blandford	Labourer	Single	Yes	No	None	Riot and assault [18 Oct]	6 months hard labour	Assaulting a JP doing his duty. Accused of using a stick to knock down the lantern used by J. J. Smith as he read the Riot Act at the <i>Greyhound Inn</i> .
Francis King	14	Blandford	10 Market Place, Blandford	Apprentice gunsmith	Single	Yes	No	None	Not accused	N/R	Apprenticed to S. Pegler, Watchmaker and Gunsmith. With Stevens and Applin helped in the attack on Moore's House (18 Oct). Involved in both days of rioting.
Alfred Stevens	15	Blandford	Behind 38 Salisbury Street, Blandford	Apprentice painter	Single	Yes	No	None	Not accused	N/R	Apprenticed to his father, George Stevens. With King and Applin helped in the attack on Moores House (18 Oct). Knocked a Dragoon off his horse with a stone in Anchor Yard (18 Oct). Involved in both days of rioting.
Harry Applin	N/K	Blandford	Parents Whitecliff Mill Street, Blandford	Apprentice painter	Single	N/K	No	None	Not accused	N/R	Apprentice to his father, James Applin. With Stevens and King helped in the attack on Moores House (18 Oct). Involved in both days of rioting.

Table 2: Prospographical data for the sample of Blandford rioters

Appendix 1 – Biographies of key characters

Henry Abbot. Abbot ran a linen and woollen drapers' business on Market Place and was an Ashley voter in the October by-election.⁹⁰

Rev. John Bastard. JP and member of Lord Ashley's election committee.⁹¹ Presumably related to Thomas Horlock Bastard the Blandford town Recorder in 1831, major landowner, and owner of Charlton Marshall estate. The Bastards rebuilt Blandford following the catastrophic fire of 1731. John Bastard lived in West Lodge at Iwerne Minster, about seven miles North of Blandford (his daughter was married in the church there in 1832).⁹²

Rev. George Chard. Rector of Blandford from 1821 until his death in 1836. Chard was effectively acting Bailiff of the town in October 1831 as his successor, Septimus Smith, had not been formally installed. Chard was an Ashley voter in the 1831 by-election.⁹³

Colonel John W. Cleveland. Royal Artillery. Returned from military operations in India in 1826 and lived on Salisbury Street.⁹⁴ A frequent attendee at society balls and Blandford races. Considered to be amongst the '100 principal gentry in the county'.⁹⁵

Rev. Robert Michell Crosse. Oxford University educated cleric, lived in Langton Long Blandford and was an Ashley voter in the 1831 by-election.⁹⁶

John Dansey Snr. Solicitor and four-time former Bailiff of Blandford (1797, 1805, 1812, 1820) Dansey Snr. was a banker in partnership with the Bastard family in Market Place. Dansey Snr. was an Ashley voter in the 1831 by-election.⁹⁷

John Dansey Jnr. Surgeon John Dancy practiced with Joseph Daniel in East St. He was an Ashley voter in the 1831 by-election and later (1838) stood successfully as Tory councillor in elections to the Blandford Corporation.⁹⁸

Robert Dominey (Domoney, Dominy): A butcher and Ashley voter in the 1831 by-election. Lived on Market Place.⁹⁹

⁹⁰ *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum* (1831); Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll.

⁹¹ *Dorset County Chronicle* 29 September 1831.

⁹² *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum with the Villages of Blandford St Mary, Spetisbury & Neighbours* (Pigot & Co. 1831).

⁹³ Dorset OPC, Blandford, List of Bailiffs – 1592 to 1834 Retrieved from: <http://www.opcdorset.org/Blandford/BlandfordForum.htm>; Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll.

⁹⁴ An Anne Cleveland was the occupier of a house on Salisbury Street at the junction with Park Road in 1838, so it is likely this was Colonel Cleveland's residence in 1831. Blandford Forum tithe map and apportionment, 1838 Dorset History Centre T/BF Location 124.

⁹⁵ *Dorset County Chronicle* 16 February 1826, 4 June 1829, 3 September 1829, 21 October 1830.

⁹⁶ *Oxford University Alumni, 1500-1886 - 1715-1886, Volume I – C*; Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll.

⁹⁷ *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum* (1831); Dorset OPC, Blandford, List of Bailiffs – 1592 to 1834 Retrieved from: <http://www.opcdorset.org/Blandford/BlandfordForum.htm>; Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll.

⁹⁸ *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum* (1831); Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll.; *Dorset County Chronicle* 8 November 1838.

⁹⁹ *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum* (1831); Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll.

James John Farquarson. Sheriff of Dorset and JP, and Captain of the Blandford troop of the Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry. Farquarson lived at Langton House, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from Blandford. He was chairman of Lord Ashley's election committee in Blandford, meeting daily at the *Greyhound Inn*. Farquarson had been a reformer until the by-election when he suddenly switched sides to back Ashley causing significant public criticism.¹⁰⁰

William Hanham. Solicitor and JP of High Hall, Pamphill, eight miles southeast of Blandford. Hanham was Captain of the Wimborne troop of Yeomanry Cavalry, a Tory and a member of Ashley's election committee.¹⁰¹

Dr Charles Walter Heywood. Leading surgeon in the town with a practice on East Street. Heywood publicly supported various Tory causes in the 1830s including helping form an anti-reform 'Conservative Association' and petitioning against Irish representation in parliament.¹⁰²

William Ilott. A farmer and landowner from nearby Tarrant Monckton (4 miles to the northeast of Blandford).¹⁰³

Samuel Kendall Jnr. Deputy Bailiff in 1831 and a pattern maker on East Street. His father, Kendall Snr. had been a baker and Town Sergeant in 1791.¹⁰⁴

George Moore. Moore of Salisbury Street, Blandford was a solicitor and one of Lord Ashley's election agents. His vote for Ashley in the October election was objected to and undecided.¹⁰⁵

Charles Paine. A shoemaker born and living in Shillingstone, five miles to the northwest of Blandford. He was married with four children. Paine was unusual compared to others in his trade in that he had the right to vote and supported Ashley in the 1831 election.¹⁰⁶

Rev. George Pickard. JP and Vicar of Bloxworth (about 7 miles south of Blandford). Pickard was a member of Lord Ashley's election committee and unsurprisingly an Ashley voter in 1831.¹⁰⁷

Edward Berkely Portman. Solicitor, JP, county MP for Dorset until 1832 voting with the Whigs. Lived at Bryanston House near Blandford. Popular in Dorset for support of the wool industry in parliament. Portman fought the May 1831 election on the reform issue and was a very vocal

¹⁰⁰ *Dorset County Chronicle* 29 September 1831; Stephen Farrell, *Dorset, Constituencies 1820-1832, The History of Parliament: House of Commons 1820-1832*, ed. D.R. Fisher, 2009. Retrieved from: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/dorset>; *The Times* 22 October 1831; *Dorset County Chronicle* 6 October 1831; Poster: list of those declaring support for Lord Ashley on offering himself as representative for the county – 28th September 1831. Dorset County Museum, Dorchester.

¹⁰¹ *Dorset County Chronicle* 29 September 1831; *The Times* 22 October 1831.

¹⁰² *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum* (1831); *Dorset County Chronicle* 11 January 1838, 2 November 1837.

¹⁰³ *Dorset County Chronicle* 29 December 1825, 2 July 1829, 29 October 1835, 11 October 1832.

¹⁰⁴ *Universal British Directory for 1791 for Blandford*; *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum* (1831).

¹⁰⁵ Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll; *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum* (1831).

¹⁰⁶ Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll; Dorset OPC Shillingstone (alias Shilling Okeford) Baptisms 1781-1812, 1813-1825, Marriages 1781-1812, Census 1841; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 06 February 1832.

¹⁰⁷ *Dorset County Chronicle* 29 September 1831; Dorset OPC, Bloxworth, 1841 census. Retrieved from: <http://www.opcdorset.org/BloxworthFiles/1841Bloxworth.htm>; Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll.

supporter of reform. In the October by-election Portman opposed Ashley and got into a public row with him.¹⁰⁸

John Rolls. A glover on Salisbury Street, Rolls was a Ponsonby voter in the 1831 by-election. He came from a protestant dissenting background and appears on a list of respectable residents of Blandford calling for a meeting of freeholders to nominate the candidates in the county election of May 1831.¹⁰⁹

John Shipp. Bookseller and printer in the Market Place, Blandford. Hosted Blandford's anti-Reform Bill petition in March 1831 which was left for signing at his shop/library.¹¹⁰

Richard Shittler: Farmer and landowner at Hazelbury Bryan. Voted for Ashley in the 1831 by-election.¹¹¹

Major John James Smith. Smith a JP, lived at the Down House, just south of Blandford on the banks of the Stour. Now demolished, only the stables remain of the original house. John Smith headed a parade in Dorchester to celebrate Ashley's decision to stand in the by-election and appeared by his side in his election address along with **James Farquarson**.¹¹² Smith also appears on published lists of Lord Ashley's supporters.¹¹³ His father was JP, **Sir John Wyldebore Smith** who also lived at Down House, who was unwell at the time of the riots.

Septimus Smith. Solicitor, Bailiff of Blandford from 1831-1832, deputy registrar for the diocese and one of Lord Ashley's election agents. Smith's house in Blandford at the of Church Lane still exists and is now the Royal British Legion building. Smith's vote for Ashley in the by-election was objected to and remained undecided.¹¹⁴

Colonel Archibald Stuart: The retired Colonel lived on Salisbury Street and was an Ashley voter in the 1831 by-election.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ Stephen Farrell, PORTMAN, Edward Berkeley II (1799-1888), of Bryanston, Dorset, *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1820-1832*, ed. D.R. Fisher, 2009. Retrieved from: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/portman-edward-1799-1888>.

¹⁰⁹ *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum* (1831); Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll; *England & Wales, Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Registers, 1567-1936*; *Dorset County Chronicle* 5 May 1831.

¹¹⁰ *Dorset County Chronicle* 10 March 1831; *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum* (1831).

¹¹¹ Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll. Dorset OPC, Hazelbury Bryan, 1841 census. Retrieved from: <http://www.opcdorset.org/HazelburyBryan/1841HazelburyBryan.htm>.

¹¹² *Dorset County Chronicle* 29 September 1831.

¹¹³ *Dorset County Chronicle* 6 October 1831; Poster: list of those declaring support for Lord Ashley on offering himself as representative for the county – 28th September 1831. Dorset County Museum, Dorchester.

¹¹⁴ *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum* (1831); Dorset OPC, Blandford, List of Bailiffs – 1592 to 1834 Retrieved from: <http://www.opcdorset.org/Blandford/BlandfordForum.htm>; Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll.

¹¹⁵ *Trade Directory for Blandford Forum* (1831); Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll.; *Dorset County Chronicle* 11 March 1830.