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Author(s): Professor Steve Poole (UWE), Dr Roger Ball (UWE), Professor John Drury (University of Sussex)
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Abbreviations

CCEd	Church of England Database
Jnr.	Junior
JP	Justice of the Peace (magistrate)
N/K	Not Known
PU	Political Union
TNA	The National Archive

1 Introduction

1.1 Administration and local government

Yeovil was technically a borough but had no charter or particular privileges and held its status by custom or 'by prescription'. By popular tradition at least, King John had granted the town a charter as early as 1205, but if true, the paperwork had vanished by the nineteenth century. The ancient 'Borough', such as it was, covered only a third of the built-up area of the town in the 1830s, its boundaries defined by a tithing called 'Borough' (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Map of Yeovil (1853) showing the 'borough' boundary¹

The nineteenth century Corporation had a Portreeve as its head man (equivalent to a mayor) but local government was limited in its powers to the equivalent of the vestry. The Corporation comprised the Portreeve and 11 burgesses, although in practice, by the 1830s, there were never actually more than five. The Portreeve was chosen by the Lord of the Manor, John Phelps of Montacute House in 1831, from three candidates, all of whom had to be residents of Borough but not burgesses themselves. The

¹ Thomas Webster Rammell, *Report of the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Enquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the Parish of Yeovil* (London, 1852).

candidates were selected and put forward by the burgesses. When a Portreeve retired, he then became another burgess but permitted to live outside the borough. This gave rise to some absenteeism; one former Portreeve moving to a house 30 miles away in 1835 yet remaining a burgess.

Theoretically a Portreeve was elected for just one year, but in practice the ironmonger and glazier, Robert Jennings had been in post about four years in 1831 and he remained in office until 1838. When the burgesses tried to replace Jennings in 1829, he objected to the candidate chosen by the Lord of the Manor, citing incorrectly drawn up legal papers, and refused to surrender the mace or his office. This was despite an order made in Kings Bench that he recognise a successor in 1830. In the end, the burgesses acquiesced, and Jennings carried on. Thus, the Portreeve and the burgesses comprised a powerless Corporation governed by some fairly archaic conventions and which was required to hold no formal meetings except the annual election. It ran no criminal courts, could not exact fines and had no borough Justices of the Peace (JPs). The Corporation did own property though – about 60 houses from which it took rent.²

Justice and the maintenance of order at a local level was therefore largely dependent on divisional county JPs, who held regular petty sessions in the town although an average of just twelve committals a year were made for offences committed within the boundaries.³, although not one of them elected to live in the town. This this would prove decisive in the ease with which rioters were able to destroy property systematically without encountering any meaningful opposition until after 11pm on the night disorder began; three full hours in which they had *carte blanche* to do as they pleased.

1.2 The Improvement Act, 1830

In June 1830, a local Improvement Act was granted to the town by Parliament, establishing a body of Commissioners independent of (and arguably more representative than) the Corporation, comprising the county JPs for the Yeovil division, the vicar of the central parish church of St Johns, and thirty-nine named £40 householders. The Commissioners exacted an Improvement Rate to fund work to be done, which set them against the Portreeve, the ironmonger Robert Jennings who, as we have already seen, was a divisive figure in the town. Jennings was opposed to Improvement Commissioners and led an unsuccessful ratepayer's revolt against the new rate. Once passed, the improvement Act empowered the appointment of 'watchmen and patrol, beadles and streetkeepers' and the building of a watchhouse and watch boxes. These watchmen were to undertake basic policing duties, suitably armed with staves. By 1835 there were four watchmen and two constables based at a watchhouse equipped with cells for housing prisoners overnight if necessary while awaiting examination by a JP in the morning.⁴

1.3 Employment: distress in the gloving trade

The 1831 census estimated Yeovil's population at 5,921, and the leather glove trade remained the main employer although in sharp decline. Gloving employed not only townsmen but women too, some as outworkers in the rural hinterlands. Varied processes were involved: dressing, paring, colouring, cutting and sewing the raw imported and domestic leather, including lambskins. In 1828, about 3,000 men and boys undertook the preparatory work, while up to 6,000 women were employed in the district to do the sewing. When trade was brisk, men could earn between 10s. and 30s. a week and

² 'Report on the Corporation of Yeovil', *Reports from Commissioners on Municipal Corporations in England and Wales* (1835); John Goodchild, *The Borough of Yeovil: Its History and Government Through the Ages* (Yeovil 1954); *Bath Chronicle* 24 June 1830 (on Jennings).

³ *Reports from Commissioners on Municipal Corporations*, *op. cit.*

⁴ *Yeovil Improvement Act 1830* TNA legislation.gov.uk UK Local Acts 1830 c. cxvi (Regnal. 11 Geo 4 and 1 Will 4). Retrieved from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/Geo4and1Will4/11/116/contents/enacted>; Bob Osborn "The Need for Town Improvements" *The History of Yeovil*, Yeovil's Virtual Museum. Retrieved from: <http://www.yeovilhistory.info/history%20-%20commissioners.htm>.

women 4s. to 12s., but by 1833, even skilled womens' work had dropped in value to an average of 7s. a week.⁵ Decline was controversial because prohibitions on the importation of cheap gloves from Europe, especially from France, had been recently lifted and towns like Yeovil were feeling the effects. And there were knock-on effects too. Yeovil's glove manufactories acted as a hub for outwork in an array of other towns and villages within a 40-mile radius. The issue was raised in Parliament by Henry Hunt during a brief debate on a petition from Milborne Port protesting French imports.⁶ All MPs except Hunt expressed their support for free trade and said there was nothing they could do by way of amelioration. A petition from Yeovil followed, this time supported by former Somerset County MP, Gore Langton, who argued for prohibition.⁷ Distress was acute by the time of the riots, with Yeovil manufacturers announcing they would be cutting production by 50%, based on a sales average calculated for each week between December 1830 to December 1831. As the *Morning Herald* put it:

In order to form a correct idea of the effect of this measure upon the work-people, it should be recollected that during the time on which the average is taken, the trade was in an exceedingly depressed state – that the earnings of the operatives were very low – and that therefore it is probable that they will not be able to make more than one fourth of the sum necessary for their support.⁸

There was some early trades union organisation in the town. Distress and underemployment in the gloving trade had plunged 'one of the happiest and most flourishing neighbourhoods in the Empire from a state of competence and prosperity into one of beggary, pauperism and moral degradation', according to Robert Ralls, chairman of the Committee of Operative Glovers of Yeovil and its Neighbourhood.⁹ The efforts of the glovers to bring their case to parliament did not go unnoticed by the county authorities. In March 1832, John Phelps of Montacute House, Lord of the borough of Yeovil, advised the Home Secretary Lord Melbourne of a series of resolutions lately published as a handbill by Ralls and the glovers' Committee, which 'betray a good deal of discontent'. He was particularly alarmed by the suggestion 'that to a starving population it is very far from being the wisest policy that could be pursued towards them, to offer them a stone when they ask for bread'.¹⁰ Something of the local impact of all this can be seen in the escalating cost of poor relief. There were 178 people regularly receiving out relief in Yeovil in 1831 and costs had doubled from £936 in 1803 to £1,851.¹¹

Agricultural labour too was in a depressed state. The 1833 Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry on the Poor Laws found weekly wages for farm labour as low as 7/- a week, and there were very few alternatives for keeping people in work. As the Commission heard, 'The poor in this parish, having been brought up to particular branches in the glove trade, can do little else; but when out of work, we put them on the roads or give a little relief until again employed'.¹² The gloving trade recovered to

⁵ *The Times*, 3 December 1828; *Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry on the Poor Laws* (1833), reply from Samuel Cayme, p.409a.

⁶ The Somerset town of Milborne Port lies 8 miles to the east of Yeovil.

⁷ *Sherborne Mercury* 23 January, 6 February 1832.

⁸ Cited in *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 19 January 1832.

⁹ *Southampton Herald*, 4 February 1832.

¹⁰ TNA HO 52/19/2, John Phelps to Melbourne, 22 March 1832.

¹¹ L. C. Hayward, *From Portreeve to Mayor: the Growth of Yeovil, 1750-1850* (Castle Cary 1987), p.42.

¹² *Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry on the Poor Laws* (1833), replies from John Woodford, JP, from Chilton Cantelo, Yeovil's neighbouring parish, and Samuel Caymes, an overseer, pp.400a, 206h. For a comparison with average wage rates of agricultural labourers in other counties see R. Ball et al. *The Sherborne Riots of October 1831* Riot 1831 Case Studies (2023) Table 2 p. 8. Retrieved from: <https://riot1831.com/2023/05/the-sherborne-riots-of-october-1831/>.

some degree and was in better fettle by 1850 – skilled leather cutters could earn between 16s. and £1 2s. a week by 1852, though women earned only between 4s and 6s.¹³

1.4 Social conditions

As Yeovil's population grew during the first half of the nineteenth century, and the wealthier classes began to move out towards Kingston to the North or Hendford to the South, new housing for the labouring poor was developed in the central and southern parts of the borough. This was mostly insalubrious and small, and concentrated in courts and rookeries behind the older houses in Middle Street, Vicarage Street and South Street.¹⁴ An 1852 Sanitation report found consumption killed more people than in most other towns in the district and put it down to close working conditions in glove manufacturing: 'It is no uncommon thing to find in the winter season as many as eight or nine persons crowded in a space, we will say, eight feet square, sitting around a small table, and with one or two lights, and seldom any fireplace for ventilation : these people are employed in sewing gloves'.¹⁵ Fevers such as Typhoid were common, not above average overall, but much more common in poorer areas:

It often results fatally, and is generally found in the lower parts of the town, that is in South-street, Reckleford, Vicarage-street, Belmont (where it was extremely fatal a few years since). Middle street, Dodham, Addlewell, and Goar Knap. These districts comprise the worst-conditioned parts of the town, and there is a marked difference between them and the other parts of the town. I do not recollect to have seen a case of fever of that class in Kingston-street, and very few in Hendford.¹⁶

The labouring population was poorly housed:

Dean's court, Middle- street, contains six houses, beside two in the front facing the street. There is only one privy and one well, which are so contiguous and badly secured that the latter acts as a drain to the former, and the water, in consequence, is too polluted for use. Similar causes for complaint existed in Pashens-court, South-street, and Jennings-court, Vicarage-street. In Huish there is a row of 18 or 20 houses, called Paradise, with, I was assured, two privies only for the whole inhabitants. Indeed, nothing could be more deplorable than the aspect of some of these abodes of the humbler classes.¹⁷

1.5 Parliamentary reform and the Yeovil Political Union

There was no properly constituted Political Union in Yeovil at the time of the riots, but one was in the planning stages by mid-October and fully formed at the end of the month. Signs of pro-reform sentiment had been present for several months previously, however. For example, a petition praying for a reform of parliament, the disenfranchisement of corrupt 'rotten boroughs' and the eradication of placement and pensioners as MPs, was presented to the House of Commons from Yeovil and its vicinity by Edward Sanford MP in February 1831.¹⁸

Clearly there were local tensions mounting between the new Improvement Commissioners and the old Corporation at the time of the riots. Yeovil was the largest town in South Somerset after Taunton and Bridgwater, but unlike those two towns enjoyed no parliamentary representation of its own, despite being technically classified as a borough. Yeovil was therefore represented only as a

¹³ Rammell, *Report of the General Board of Health* p. 8.

¹⁴ Hayward, *From Portreeve to Mayor*, p.42.

¹⁵ Rammell, *ibid.*, 29.

¹⁶ Rammell, *ibid.*, 29.

¹⁷ Rammell, *ibid.*, 30-31.

¹⁸ *The Times* 28 February 1831.

component part of the county constituency of Somerset in 1831, and even after the Reform Act was passed in 1832, representation was limited to its being in the 'new' county constituency of West Somerset. Yeovil can perhaps be regarded as a pro-reform town (nationally and locally focussed), but one which found it difficult to escape from Tory domination. At the 1830 parliamentary election, the county returned one Whig (Edward Sanford) and one Tory (William Dickinson), but in 1831, Dickinson lost to the Whig William Gore-Langton, giving the reforming Whigs both seats. The trend continued in 1832, when once again the Whigs took both seats for the new Western Division (this time Sanford and Charles Kemeyes-Tynte). In 1837, Tory control of the constituency resumed. In Yeovil's case, the *Sherborne Journal* noted in 1835 that reformers must continue to

be active in order to prevent the management of the Corporation from falling into the hands of that band of High Tories who have hitherto succeeded in securing to themselves the direction and control of every public institution [in the town].¹⁹

Yeovil did not become a parliamentary constituency in its own right until 1918.

After the rejection of the Reform Bill on 8th October 1831 there were a series of significant public protests in South Somerset towns (see Figure 2). Pro-reformers in Taunton were quickest off the mark on 11th October organising a meeting in the Guildhall which had to be moved to the Assizes Hall as it was "by far the largest [meeting] ever remembered in this town".²⁰ The leading speakers did not equivocate:

[Mr R. Welch] quoted copiously from the Black Book, an enumeration of the sums received by the bishops of the various dioceses, upon which he strongly commented, predicting that in a few years there would be "no bishops" (applause), and no less confidently anticipating that ere long there would be "no House of Lords", (Hisses). At this same meeting the Rev. Sidney Smith ... said "I feel it as a churchman, because I cannot but blush to see so many dignitaries of the church arrayed against the wishes and happiness of so many people. I feel it more than all, because it will sow the seeds of deadly hatred between the aristocracy and the great mass of people".²¹

Other large pro-reform meetings took place over the following week in Shepton Mallet (14th October), Bridgwater and Chard (both 17th October).²² However, calls for a countywide meeting which had been placed in requisitions to the High Sheriff of Somerset prior to the defeat of the Reform Bill were rejected.²³

In Yeovil, at about the same time that the Lords' rejection of the Reform Bill was known, a loyal address to the King favouring reform was prepared and plans laid to set up a Political Union.²⁴ Yet it appears that there was no mass public protest meeting in the town, unlike many of its neighbours. This may have been a consequence of the nascent organisation of the pro-reformers or the reluctance of Phelps, Jennings and the Corporation.

¹⁹ Goodchild, *Borough of Yeovil*, p.33.

²⁰ *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 20 October 1831; *Morning Advertiser*, 14 October 1831.

²¹ *The Examiner*, 16 October 1831. For more on the 'Black Book' see R. Ball et al, *The Sherborne Riots of October 1831* p. 24. Retrieved from: <https://riot1831.com/2023/05/the-sherborne-riots-of-october-1831/>.

²² *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 20, 27 October 1831.

²³ *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 17 October 1831; *Evening Mail*, 17 October 1831.

²⁴ *The Times*, 22 October 1831.

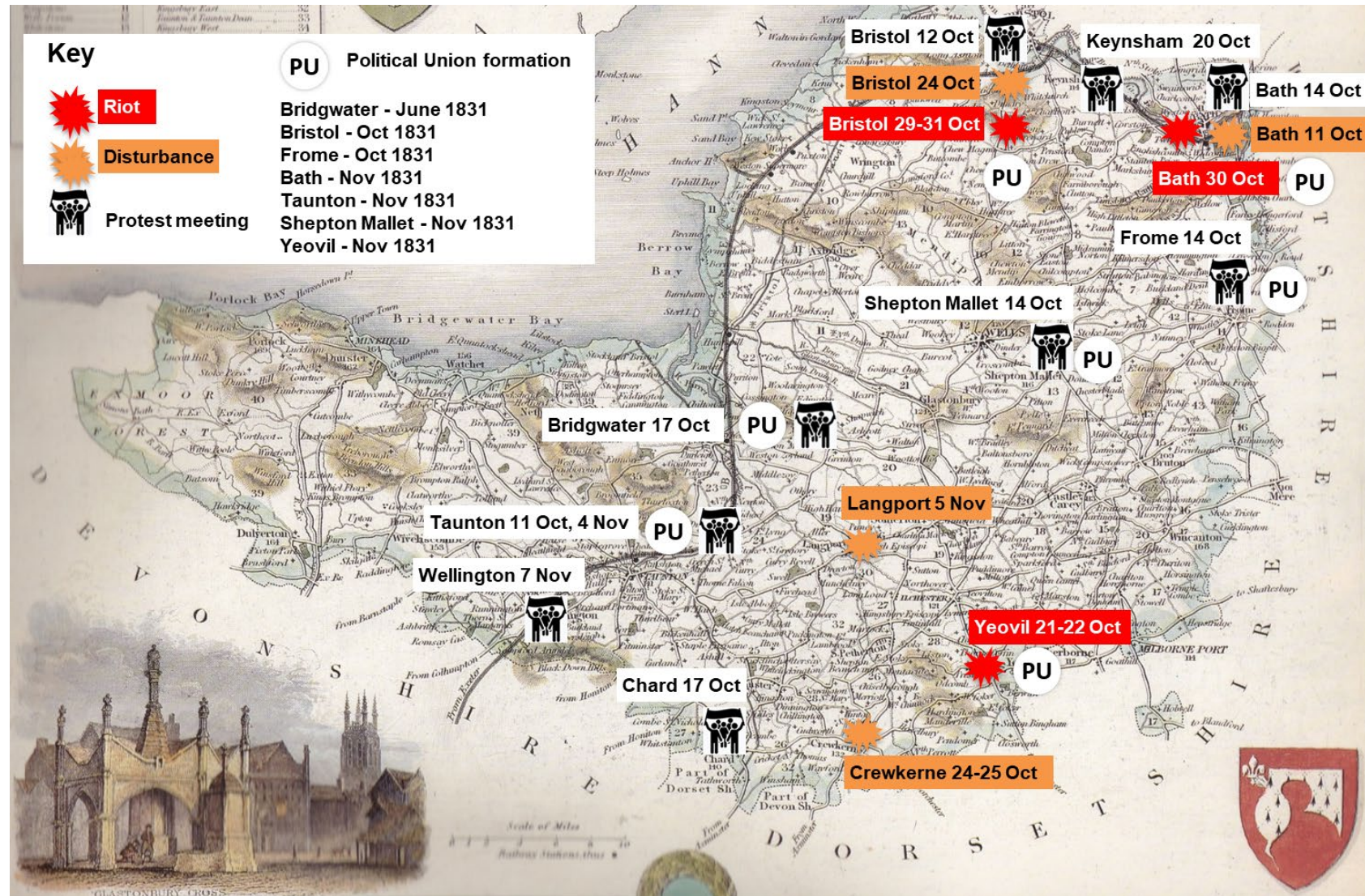


Figure 2: Reform related protest meetings, riots, disturbances and Political Unions in Somerset Oct-Nov 1831²⁵

²⁵ This schematic was constructed from a survey of national and local newspapers. R. Ball and J. Askew, *The defeat of the Second Reform Bill in October 1831 - An overview of public responses (Part 1 – the overall survey)* Riot 1831 Articles (2023). Retrieved from: <https://riot1831.com/2021/10/an-overview-of-public-responses/>; N. LoPatin. *Political unions, popular politics and the Great Reform Act of 1832*. (Springer, 1998) pp. 174-177.

The Yeovil Political Union was established on 31 October 1831²⁶ and Phelps did his best to obstruct it from the outset, distributing copies of the recent Royal Proclamation restricting the activities of PUs in strategic places: 'I have directed one copy to be served personally on the innkeeper at Yeovil where such a meeting was convened last week, and another copy to be affixed conspicuously opposite his residence', he reported on 25 November.²⁷

On the following day, the Political Union responded by publishing a broadside of their own, asserting that the prohibitions on meetings outlined in the Proclamation did not apply to them, and that the Yeovil Union was legally constituted. Its aims were expressed as to 'help to overthrow a vile oligarchy that has long existed in violation and defiance of reason, truth and justice and which has brought our once happy native land into the fatal jeopardy which now entangles it'. They confirm too that they are ready and willing to assist in putting down disorder should it arise.²⁸ By 1832, the Union was chaired by Henry Collins Jnr., the Yeovil glove manufacturer of Court Ash House, just off Court Ash itself, and other committee members included William Phelps and Thomas Hayward (both served as secretary). Once the Reform Act was passed, the Yeovil PU was unequivocally universal suffragist in outlook, as indicated by the invitation they sent to Henry Hunt to dine with them on their second anniversary 31 October 1833.²⁹

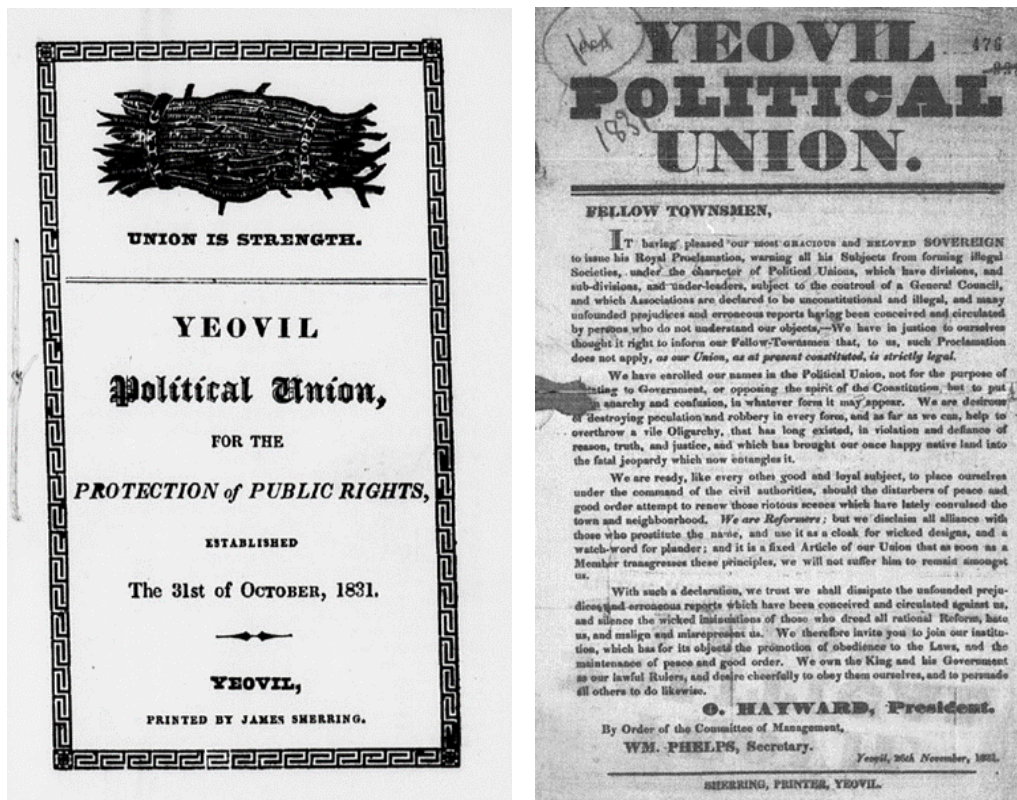


Figure 3: Rule book and flyer announcing the formation of the Yeovil Political Union (1831)³⁰

²⁶ TNA HO 52/19/2, f.400, Rule book of *Yeovil Political Union for the Protection of Public Rights* (Yeovil 1831).

²⁷ TNA HO 52/15, f.599, Phelps to Melbourne, 25 November 1831.

²⁸ TNA HO 52/15, broadside dated 26 November 1831.

²⁹ *Poor Mans Guardian*, 3 November 1832; 12 October 1833.

³⁰ TNA HO 52/19/2 f.400, Rule book of *Yeovil Political Union for the Protection of Public Rights* (Yeovil 1831); HO 52/15, broadside dated 26 November 1831.

2 The Yeovil riots

2.1 Context: The Dorset by-election, 1831

The immediate cause of the unrest at Yeovil, as well as at Blandford, Sherborne, Wareham and Poole, was the conduct of a by-election for one of the two Dorset County seats, following the suicide of one of the sitting members. The contest, between Lord Ashley (Tory) and William Ponsonby (Whig) was seen locally as the debate over the fortunes of the second Reform Bill, then before parliament, in microcosm, and was dominated by the reform question. Ashley's agents were widely suspected of conniving to force the disqualification of voters for Ponsonby when they arrived at the polling in Dorchester, on spurious grounds. 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 one Blandford lawyer to sue the paper for libel.³¹ Clearly, Yeovil was not in Dorset, but interdependency between Yeovil as a centre for the gloving trade and several Dorset towns within Yeovil's orbit created a close social and economic relationship, and Yeovil's proximity to the county border also have guaranteed some Yeovil lawyers acting for Ashley's agents, and some Yeovil men holding the 40s. freehold franchise on property in Dorset.

The Lords' rejection of the Reform Bill had occurred on 8 October, and the immediate riots in response at Derby and Nottingham had clearly concluded by the time Ashley's narrow victory in Dorset was declared on 17 October. Rioting at Parkstone (Poole) had erupted briefly while the poll was still open, and the more serious outbreaks, first at Blandford as first news of the election result arrived, then at Sherborne soon afterwards all took place before rioting in Yeovil began. It is unclear what the trigger was here, or why it took until 21st, four days after the close of the Dorset poll, for disorder to begin, but it may be relevant that Friday was market day, and the town will probably have been abuzz with conversation about both the election result and the rioting that had followed it in nearby towns. Indeed, the weekly market may well have furnished Yeovilians with some early first-hand riot reports from actual participants and eyewitnesses.

2.2 Day 1: Friday 21 October

Trouble did not break out until the evening when market trading was over. A crowd remained in the market Place however, then moved off at about 8 or 9pm³² to attack selected houses (see Figure 4). Crowd composition at this stage is difficult to assess. According to an unsigned letter in the *Taunton Courier*, 'the greater part of the mob were boys who were supplied with stones by women who carried them in their aprons.'³³ The marginalisation of the crowd as 'boys' characterised much retrospective commentary and had become something of a trope amongst newspaper reporters. Some took a more enlarged view, however. The county magistrate John Goodford of Chilton Cantelo manor, later told the Home Secretary:

It was a matter of general observation both to the inhabitants of the town and persons attending the market that there was a considerable influx of strangers who were there without any apparent occupation, and that there was a general excitement amongst the manufacturing population.³⁴

³¹ *Taunton Courier*, 26 October 1831; *Dorset County Chronicle* 15 March 1832. The libel case went to court in March 1832; Moore was exonerated and Justice Park presiding awarded him £100 in damages.

³² *Sherborne Mercury* 31 Oct 1831 says the crowd moved off around 9pm, but Newman later testified that his house was attacked around 8pm (*Dorset County Chronicle* 12 April 1831).

³³ *Taunton Courier*, 26 October 1831. Other papers took a similar line. For the *Southampton Herald*, the crowd was composed of 'a few disorderly boys'. *Southampton Herald*, 29 October 1831.

³⁴ TNA HO 52/13 f.606, letter from Goodford to Lord Melbourne, 27 October 1831.

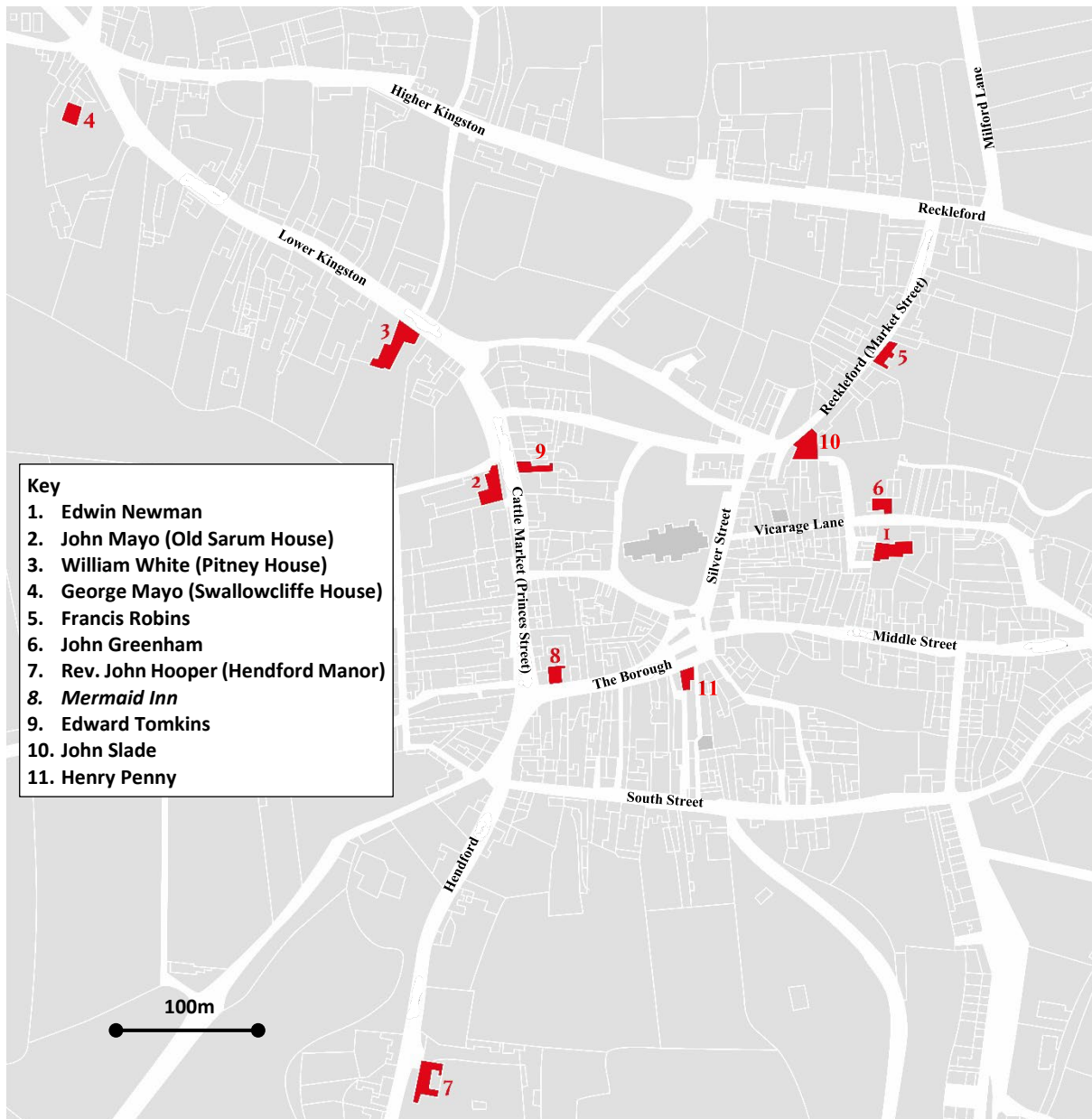


Figure 4: Schematic map of Yeovil in 1831 showing properties targeted by the rioters.

Whatever its social composition, by the following day the crowd was judged, by some magistrates at least, a 'numerous and tumultuous mob completely beyond the control of the civil power'.³⁵

Premises were selectively targeted for attack. First to be visited was the Ashley-supporting attorney, Town Commissioner and vestryman, Edwin Newman, in Vicarage Lane (Figure 4 Location 1).³⁶ Newman claimed a crowd of about 50 people assembled and began attacking his house at 8pm, but the trees in front protected it from stone throwers who, at this early stage seem not to have been prepared to leave the road and enter his garden. Damage done on this first foray was therefore restricted to a few broken windows. The crowd turned from Newman's house to that of another attorney, Edwin Tomkins in Princes Street (Figure 4 Location 9) also an Ashley election agent, this time breaking a great many windows. Tomkins made an attempt to confront them, drew a pistol, gathered

³⁵ TNA HO 52/15 f.634, letter to Melbourne from Thomas Hoskins, John Phillips, Wm Helyar and John Newman, 25 October 1831.

³⁶ Newman's house has since been demolished and the whole street built over, but it was noted as having trees in front, a 'green' of some kind and a courtyard so it can be accurately identified on Watts' town map of 1831.

a few friends in support and threatened to shoot anyone who tried to force an entrance. Stone throwing continued however, and the defenders were forced to retreat. The third target was almost opposite, John Ryall Mayo's Old Sarum House (Figure 4 Location 2), a relatively grand and sizeable residence, but window breaking here was short-lived because, 'the multitude, understanding that he was a friend to the measure of reform, desisted from further aggression'.³⁷ The intended target was very probably Mayo's brother George, a declared Ashley supporter and glove manufacturer of Swallowcliffe House near the Kingston turnpike gate (Figure 4 Location 4).³⁸ The crowd shattered his windows next, pausing *en route* to give the same treatment to another attorney acting for Lord Ashley, William White of Pitney House (Figure 4 Location 3).³⁹

By 10.00pm the crowd had considerably grown in size and their attacks on the houses of Ashley supporters began to increase in ferocity. Francis Theophilus Robins, another attorney connected to Ashley, was the first to have his home invaded and his personal property destroyed as well as his windows (Figure 4 Location 5).⁴⁰ According to his own testimony, a crowd 500 strong arrived at his house, pushed over a six-foot garden wall and broke into the house. He and his family retreated temporarily into a nearby cottage owned by the family but on being warned by Edwin Tomkins that another crowd was trying to break into his office, they both went off to defend it. By the time Robins got back to his own house around midnight, the crowd had been in it for two hours, leaving all the windows, doors and shutters broken, cupboard doors smashed and his downstairs furniture in pieces. He estimated the damage at around £300.⁴¹

Giving evidence later in court, Tomkins said he witnessed two groups smashing windows, a book case and some chimney ornaments. He went in and remonstrated with them, and they shouted out 'Reform!'. They wanted to know if he was for reform, so he said he was, but not 'not a reform won with brickbats'. He thought he heard them threaten to burn the house down but claimed he was able to order everyone out. He then locked some upstairs doors and gave the key to Robins' servant.⁴² Others too testified to the scale of the damage. Various items, it was said, including a tablecloth, a wooden portico, some trellis, and a book were seen smouldering in the parlour fireplace; tables were taken out into the garden and their legs broken off to make clubs with which to break more furniture and ornaments.⁴³ Robins recounted the attack on his house in a letter to the Duke of Westmoreland, owner of Brympton House nearby and for whom Robins acted as agent:

After demolishing every window they proceeded to enter the house and destroyed every article of furniture, books, plate, linen, china, wine, spirits; in short everything the house contained except our clothes, and not content with this they injured and destroyed every tree and shrub in the garden, and if Mrs Robins and myself had not made our escape, I have every reason to believe our lives would have been sacrificed. Your Lordship can scarcely form an idea of the scene which now presents itself.⁴⁴

³⁷ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 27 October 1831.

³⁸ George Mayo appears on a list of Ashley supporters published in the *Dorset County Chronicle* (29 September 1831) and bill posted. Poster: list of those declaring support for Lord Ashley on offering himself as representative for the county – 28th September 1831. Dorset Museum, Dorchester.

³⁹ William White had attempted to vote for Lord Ashley in the Dorset by-election, but it had been objected to and remained undecided. *Dorset election, September and October, 1831. The poll* p. 56.

⁴⁰ Newspaper sources all agree that Robins lived in Ram Park, but at that time the 'park' was a large open field with very little housing. The 1832 Poll book and a Directory both place Robins in Reckleford/Rotton Row, now Market St. Hayward places Robins in Sheep Lane, just north of St Johns' Church. Hayward, *Portreeve to Mayor*, p.74.

⁴¹ *Dorset County Chronicle* 12 April 1832.

⁴² *Dorset County Chronicle* 12 April 1832.

⁴³ *Dorset County Chronicle* 12 April 1832.

⁴⁴ TNA HO 52/14/2 f.124-5.

It is not clear why Robins was singled out for such comparatively severe treatment. According to a letter in the *Taunton Courier*, Robins house had not a single piece of furniture or ornament left on ground floor, the bookcases had all been pulled out and a piano destroyed. An entire cask of gooseberry wine together with 8 or 10 dozen bottles of French wine were taken out onto the lawn and drunk, mostly, according to press reports, by women.⁴⁵ Tomkins told the court, 'It appeared to me that the chief object of the attack was the windows and furniture'.⁴⁶

At around 11pm, some sections of the crowd left Robins' house 'in parties'⁴⁷ and 'proceeded through the Borough', breaking the glover Henry Penny's windows⁴⁸ as they passed (Figure 4 Location 11) and then the windows of yet another attorney and agent of Lord Ashley, John Slade in Reckleford (Figure 4 Location 10). Next to suffer was John Greenham in Vicarage Street, vestryman, commissioner and the most long-standing glove manufacturer in Yeovil (Figure 4 Location 6).⁴⁹ After breaking his windows, at 11.30, the crowd paid a second visit to Edwin Newman's house, more or less opposite to Greenham's and treated it to an attack every bit as ferocious as the riot at Robins'. Windows, shutters and doors were beaten in with sticks and stones, and then, 'when they saw the door was broken they made an instant rush and forced themselves into the house', recalled a witness.⁵⁰ From there they broke into the office where Newman confronted them with a pistol and threatened to shoot them as they tried to break an inner door to get into the main part of the house. 'At this time I heard very foul oaths and curses', Newman testified, 'I heard the screams of my wife'.⁵¹ Newman's wife was upstairs with their children. According to the report in *the Times*, Tomkins told the court, 'I addressed the mob, saying I was going to take Mrs Newman and her children away and I should think no person would be so cowardly as to injure them. They desisted until we had passed, and then commenced again'.⁵² The strategy for completing their work in the house was much the same as at Robins'; furniture and papers were piled in the kitchen '2-3 feet high', then items were consigned to the fireplace and burned.⁵³

For some three or four hours that evening then, no check had been made on the crowd's progress beyond the efforts made by two of the victims to effect a dispersal at pistol point. The town constables had not put in an appearance and there appears to have been little or no attempt at intervention by 'respectable' townsmen.

Five miles away in Chilton Cantelo, the county magistrate John Goodford was advised by his son, returning late that night from dinner with Phelps at Montacute, that there seemed to be trouble in Yeovil. Goodford, who had a disability that made it difficult to stand, saddled up his horse and rode down to see if it was serious. It was, he later admitted, a 'mere accident' that he arrived in Yeovil at all.⁵⁴ He would later be critical of the failure of the district JPs to respond more quickly (or of townsmen to summon JPs), especially given the scale of the recent trouble at nearby Sherborne. All he could do as he pulled up outside the shattered remains of Edwin Newman's house at about 11.30pm, was attempt a negotiation. 'Intimidation was impossible as I had no force', he wrote. A lengthy standoff ensued. The crowd left the building to see what Goodford had to say; he estimated there to be about 500 of them although some he regarded as onlookers rather than active rioters. Eventually he persuaded them not to re-enter Newman's house. 'The assemblage of people was so large and the support he was likely to receive, with the exception of that afforded by some spirited inhabitants of the town, was so limited' (and made worse by the town's meagre force of peace officers all being

⁴⁵ *Taunton Courier* 26 October 1831.

⁴⁶ *Dorset County Chronicle* 12 April 1832.

⁴⁷ *Dorset County Chronicle* 12 April 1832.

⁴⁸ *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 5 November 1831.

⁴⁹ *Somerset Gazette* 5 Jan 1839.

⁵⁰ *Dorset County Chronicle* 12 April 1832.

⁵¹ *Sherborne Mercury* 9 April 1832.

⁵² *The Times* 5 April 1832.

⁵³ *Sherborne Mercury* 9 April 1832.

⁵⁴ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.606, letter from Goodford to Lord Melbourne, 27 October 1831.

away, giving evidence at the Quarter Sessions), that physical opposition was ‘quite pointless’ and he had to resort to ‘remonstrance’. He called to them several times, ‘all that are peaceable and loyal subjects, follow me’. And with that he retired to the *Mermaid Inn*.⁵⁵

The streets remained quiet until sometime after midnight when Goodford was advised that a crowd had gathered outside Hendford Manor, Rev. Hooper’s house (Figure 4 Location 7). Goodford went back out at once and managed to disperse them. Sporadic trouble continued until 3am, and it was daylight before the streets were completely cleared. Goodford finally went home at about 8am.⁵⁶ On his way there he encountered the Mudford Yeomanry who had at last been mustered, awaiting orders outside the town. There was nothing for them to do at that early hour so he told them to go back home but to return to Yeovil at 5pm on Saturday evening.⁵⁷

2.3 Day 2: Saturday 22 October

No reports of crowd activity emerged during the following day while it was still light, but Goodford and his fellow magistrates, including Thomas Hoskins and Sir Alexander Hood, busied themselves with enrolling special constables, mobilising the Yeomanry troops of both Martock and Mudford, and requesting as many of the 3rd Dragoon Guards as could be spared from Dorchester.⁵⁸ John Goodford went back onto town himself and found 500-1,000 people outside *Mermaid Inn* in the evening (Figure 4 Location 8). There were general rumours going around that a further influx of strangers were coming in from the country with bags and bludgeons⁵⁹, looking for opportunities to plunder. By 5pm, at least four county JPs had arrived in town and set themselves up in the *Mermaid*.⁶⁰ According to the magistrate Thomas Hoskins’ testimony at the assize, the JPs and ‘respectable inhabitants’ quickly held a town meeting at the Inn to organise opposition to any further outbreaks of rioting.⁶¹ The Mudford Yeomanry cantered in and formed up outside the *Mermaid*, but were then ordered out again for fear of antagonising the crowd.⁶²

‘For a considerable time, the mob contented itself with shouting, parading the town and using expressions of defiance, coupled with the word “Reform”’, reported Goodford. ‘The magistrates forbore from interfering with the populace, in the vain hope that no immediate acts of violence would take place.’⁶³

At about 6.45pm, a section of the crowd peeled away from the *Mermaid* and resumed the previous night’s attack on the Rev. Hooper’s house. Hoskins, Goodford and the town constable, Thomas Sharland, with a small body of special constables enrolled that morning, went to disperse them and Hoskins read the Riot Act. This, it will be noted, was the first time it was read, nearly 24 hours after rioting had started, and in fact the first time the authorities were in any position to make use of it, given that they now had some Yeomanry to call in. This had little effect according to a collectively signed letter to Melbourne from several JPs, and ‘the riot still continued in different parts of the town’. Magistrates were reluctant to introduce the soldiers if it could be avoided, so several attempts were

⁵⁵ *Dorset County Chronicle* 12 April 1832; TNA HO 52/15 f.606, letter from Goodford to Lord Melbourne, 27 October 1831.

⁵⁶ *Dorset County Chronicle* 12 April 1832. The order of crowd events listed and numbered here is as given by the *Sherborne Mercury* 31 October 1831, except for Greenham’s house which that paper didn’t mention. Greenham’s is as reported in *Dorset County Chron* 12 April 1832.

⁵⁷ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.606, letter from Goodford to Lord Melbourne, 27 October 1831.

⁵⁸ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.606, letter from Goodford to Lord Melbourne, 27 October 1831.

⁵⁹ *Sherborne Mercury* 31 October 1831; *Dorset County Chronicle* 12 April 1832.

⁶⁰ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.634, letter to Melbourne from Thomas Hoskins, John Phillips, Wm Helyar and John Newman, 25 October 1831.

⁶¹ *Sherborne Mercury* 9 April 1832.

⁶² *Dorset County Chronicle* 12 April 1832.

⁶³ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.606, letter from Goodford to Lord Melbourne, 27 October 1831.

made by them and some townsmen to 'induce the people quietly to disperse' and the crowd adjusted their behaviour but remained at large.⁶⁴ Giving evidence at the assize, Hoskins elaborated, 'as soon as they understood the purpose of the Riot Act, they ceased to throw stones and received us with yells and hisses'.⁶⁵

It was decided to make some arrests and the special constables were sent in to effect it. Two men were taken up and secured in the *Mermaid*. But this led to escalation. 'The cry of "rescue the prisoners" was raised throughout the streets', wrote John Goodford, 'and a formidable attack was made upon the inn with stones and every sort of menacing expression'.⁶⁶

One of those later identified as a ringleader here was 26-year-old Thomas Galloway. He had already been identified by Goodford and Sharland during the attack on Hooper's house as 'a spokesman among them', and he would later find himself in trouble for leading the crowd attack on the *Mermaid*. As Sharland later testified,

A man coming from the Mermaid told a portion of the mob that there was a prisoner there. And I then heard [Galloway's] voice exclaiming, "Damme, we'll have him out". That portion of the mob then proceeded towards the Mermaid. I got very near the prisoner (Galloway); I saw him throwing himself about, apparently very violent, and I heard him say, "If there's no one more worthy than myself to lead you on, then follow me", with an oath I think.⁶⁷

The magistrates were having difficulty controlling the situation. Goodford estimated there were now 500-1000 people outside the Inn. Hoskins ordered the gates of the inn to be shut but the crowd pressed forward and hammered on them. Goodford was briefly trapped outside the inn with them – he'd gone out to summon help from the Martock and Mudford yeomanry who were still being kept out of sight, but they managed to get him inside to safety. In attacking the *Mermaid*, the crowd seemed to become bolder: 'The lantern was then broken. I took a man, with a stone, into custody', Hoskins told the assize, 'but they rescued him again'. Another rioter, a woman stone-thrower this time, was taken up by a Mr Wellington, but she too was rescued by the crowd. However, the two prisoners inside the *Mermaid* remained secure.⁶⁸

Magistrates now believed their only option was to summon the Yeomanry, but even when they were introduced, the crowd proved difficult to disperse. They were hooted and assaulted as they made their way on horseback through the Borough to the *Mermaid*. Goodford confirmed they had sticks thrown at them, causing a few injuries, but 'they never offered to retaliate and were completely obedient to their officers'. It was about 9pm by the time the Yeomanry and constables made a serious attempt to disperse the crowd from the front of the inn. 'This, as it may be supposed, was not effected without a considerable degree of difficulty and danger', explained Goodford, 'and a very considerable time elapsed before the united exertions of both the troops of yeomanry could break the assemblage of the populace'.⁶⁹

According to an anonymous letter writer in the *Taunton Courier* (possibly John Greenham), the crowd were by now reconvening in other parts of the town. He saw a group stop outside John Mayo's house and give three cheers for him and for reform, while anti-Reformers faced physical reprisals. 'My servant was near losing his life', claimed the writer, 'He is much bruised. James Acreman lost three

⁶⁴ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.634, letter to Melbourne from Thomas Hoskins, John Phillips, Wm Helyar and John Newman, 25 October 1831.

⁶⁵ *Sherborne Mercury* 9 April 1832.

⁶⁶ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.606, letter from Goodford to Lord Melbourne, 27 October 1831.

⁶⁷ Somerset Heritage Centre, Easter Quarter Session papers, Information of Thomas Sharland, surgeon, 4 April 1832.

⁶⁸ *Sherborne Mercury* 9 April 1832.

⁶⁹ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.606, letter from Goodford to Lord Melbourne, 27 October 1831

teeth and farmer Buck was taken up senseless'.⁷⁰ The Yeomanry were certainly resisted. 'I saw repeated attacks made on the yeomanry', Tomkins testified. 'One of the Martock Troop was injured in several places. He was not sensible for some minutes after I saw him.'⁷¹

Fighting between the crowd and the Yeomanry seems to have been pretty fierce in front of the *Mermaid*, where the objective was still to rescue the two prisoners inside, and in the Market Place. 'A mere display of power was of no avail', judged the *Sherborne Mercury*, but the Yeomanry did their job 'temperately and manfully'.⁷² If the Yeomanry had been too disciplined to retaliate to provocation when they first arrived, they quickly recovered their fighting spirit now, making use, if contemporary newspaper accounts are to be believed, of both sabre and pistol. There were 'many wounded through the sword', it was reported in *the Courier*. 'Many single shots were fired at the rioters as they stood behind the pillars of the Market House', it was said; many were cut with sabres, and a number of soldiers were hit by stones as they charged the crowd outside the *Mermaid*. The *Courier's* correspondent believed an order was given for six men of the Martock troop to fire live ball; four fired high over crowd's heads 'and two fired amongst the populace. One man immediately cried out and said he must be taken home'.⁷³ This report tallies fairly well with Phelps' report to Lord Melbourne. He remained at Montacute to guard his own house, but the JP Alexander Hood arrived at 3am to tell him that:

there had been a severe contest. The two troops, Mudford and Martock, were obliged to fire a few pistol shots to clear the mob behind the standings in the Market Place but no report had he received of any lives being lost. The Yeomanry only used the flat sides of their swords but they charged them several times in the streets. The mob attempted to rescue the prisoners but were soundly thrashed by the Yeomanry.⁷⁴

Amongst the injured, it was alleged by the *Courier's* anonymous correspondent, George Soper had a sabre wound and a barber named Parkhouse was ridden over. They also added 'Captain Tatchell, I hear, acted most determinedly'.⁷⁵

But this version of events was contested by the *Sherborne Mercury*. The Yeomanry caused 'little personal injury to anyone', the paper asserted, although many soldiers had been hurt by stones and one Martock soldier shot himself in the thigh by mistake. And the report that the Martock troop had been ordered to fire with ball was dismissed as false. Captain Tatchell's orders, insisted the paper, were that nobody was to fire; and that if any pistols were fired, it was without his knowledge, and they were only discharged into the air.⁷⁶ In a collectively signed report to Lord Melbourne, the four JPs lodged in the *Mermaid* also played down the violence meted out to the crowd. The Yeomanry acted with 'great forbearance' when 'volleys of stones and bricks' were thrown at them', they wrote. 'The soldiers were compelled to fire several times' but nobody was killed, 'nor have we heard of any serious wounds being inflicted'.⁷⁷

By midnight rioting seems to have ceased but JPs sat until 1am-2am in the *Mermaid* to ensure the peace held. The Yeomanry were dismissed and replaced by an officer and 26 privates of 3rd Dragoon

⁷⁰ *Taunton Courier* 26 October 1831.

⁷¹ *Sherborne Mercury* 9 April 1832.

⁷² *Sherborne Mercury* 31 October 1831.

⁷³ *Taunton Courier* 26 October 1831.

⁷⁴ TNA HO 52/15, f.580, Phelps to Melbourne, 23 October 1831.

⁷⁵ *Taunton Courier* 26 October 1831.

⁷⁶ *Sherborne Mercury* 31 October 1831. The man who shot himself was a Mr Dattle of Haselbury, nr Crewkerne. He recovered. *Morning Post* 8 December 1831.

⁷⁷ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.634, letter to Melbourne from Thomas Hoskins, John Phillips, Wm Helyar and John Newman, 25 October 1831.

Guards, who had finally arrived and patrolled for the rest of the night. The magistrates offered a brief analysis of cause and targets:

We think it right to state that the cry used by the mob in the attack and plunder of the houses was “reform”, and that the gentlemen whose houses were selected were either professional agents of Lord Ashley in the election or gentlemen who had voted for or promoted his interest.⁷⁸

3 Aftermath

3.1 Scapegoating strangers and making arrests

Magistrates moved swiftly to arrest principal suspects but found it difficult. As Phelps put it on 23 October, ‘I fear we shall not get evidence against the leaders as I could get none whilst in Yeovil against the rioters of the preceding night and there is a very bad disposition in all the lower orders’.⁷⁹ JPs maintained the widely circulating view that strangers were greatly to blame and they may certainly have suspected that events in Yeovil were engineered by people from Blandford or Sherborne. Indeed, conspiracy theories like this cut both ways for a comment on the earlier Sherborne riot in the Tory *Morning Post* had it that ‘promises of support are held out by the “Zummerset Refarmers” from Yeovil and the neighbourhood, some of whom were conspicuous in the crowd last night with swords concealed under their coats...’⁸⁰

As investigations began now in Yeovil, ‘Six entire strangers to the town’ were arrested on suspicion but released for lack of evidence with which to charge them. ‘The magistrates believed however that persons from a distance had been so engaged’.⁸¹ Goodford was considerably more explicit. Not only were there shadowy figures from beyond the borough behind the disturbance, but they were not motivated by a genuine belief in reform either. In fact, he sensed the spirit of Swing behind the riot:

‘The different rallying cries used and the general conduct of the mob leads to the conviction that the riot and spoliation of property were the result of a preconcerted plan. Independently of the unusual concourse of strangers before referred to, nearly all of whom, with the exception of those in custody, had disappeared on Monday when all hope of further commotion was at an end, it turned out, in the course of the examination of the several prisoners that a large body of ostensible hawkers and their followers had arrived simultaneously in the town, all exercising the same line of their trade and not one having done any business in its neighbourhood. However strong the suspicions might be against these individuals, all were discharged with the exception of one who was charged on the oath of a most respectable inhabitant to have taken an active part in the attack on the inn. Although “Reform” was at first the Watchword and the attack was primarily directed against the property of individuals known or supposed to entertain notions in any degree hostile to that measure, yet (from the numbers of villagers who were seen in Yeovil both on Saturday and Sunday, ready to lend their aid in the work of demolition, and from the attacks which have been menaced on the houses of the gentry and clergy in the neighbourhood) we are of the opinion that it is not the ebullition of a mere political feeling, but

⁷⁸ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.634, letter to Melbourne from Thomas Hoskins, John Phillips, Wm Helyar and John Newman, 25 October 1831.

⁷⁹ TNA HO 52/15, f.580, Phelps to Melbourne, 23 October 1831.

⁸⁰ *Morning Post*, 24 October 1831.

⁸¹ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.634, letter to Melbourne from Thomas Hoskins, John Phillips, Wm Helyar and John Newman, 25 October 1831.

that the agents of the last Winter's outrages are again at work and that secret, if not open, destruction of property will be resorted to'.

Using Swing for leverage, John Goodford and his fellow JPs now lobbied Melbourne to retain the Dragoons throughout the coming Winter.⁸²

The *Dorset County Chronicle* hammered home the message that the riots had been instigated by strangers by offering some evidence, and a few other reflections on the size and nature of the crowd.

A few panes of glass were broken at a gentleman's house, a person called out "This is not the house, it is a house in a green we must go to", and the crowd immediately left the house. If the leaders had not been strangers, they could not have made the mistake. Several suspicious men were seen urging on the rabble who have not been seen since. The mob did but little personal violence to anyone; the actual perpetrators of the mischief were so few in number that a small body of resolute men without arms might have put down the riot at any stage of it, but the confusion was so great that a sufficient number could not be brought together. There is no doubt that much mischief was prevented by the more respectable inhabitants mixing with the rioters and expressing their detestation of their conduct.⁸³

But not everyone blamed the disorder on outsiders. A correspondent in the *Times* at least saw a connection between the riots and the depressed state of the glove trade, and called for action to get the town back to work:

The population were once employed, moral and happy; now hundreds are out of work and those that have it are not earning enough to support their families; consequently discontent and licentiousness abound and the irritated feelings of the unhappy artisans are only subdued by a military force.⁸⁴

Secondly, it will be seen from the list of those taken up and charged with offences at the assize, that these 'ringleaders' were not on the whole shadowy strangers and although it is clear from the trial reporting that some of those arrested were youths, several more of them were men in their 20s and 30s.

3.2 Further threats and country houses

Looking ahead after the Yeovil riots were over, John Phelips of Montacute met with Goodford and began planning the enrolment of a good number of special constables to ensure no further outbreaks took place on either 5 November '(usually a lawless day)' or 17 November, the date of Yeovil's 'Great Fair'.⁸⁵ Enrolment went well; 87 men came forward on November 1 and a further 53 on November 3.

Robins was worried about the Earl of Westmoreland's seat at Brympton a couple of miles away and voiced his concerns in a letter:

A threat has been held out against Brympton House and I have in consequence had the pictures and most valuable part of the furniture removed but as yet no attack has been made and whilst we can keep the detachment of the third dragoons which is at present here, we may I hope consider ourselves safe. Seven houses besides mine were attacked on Friday last, one of which was ransacked equal to mine; indeed the consequences

⁸² TNA HO 52/15 f.606; Goodford to Melbourne, 27 October 1831.

⁸³ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 27 October 1831.

⁸⁴ *The Times*, 10 December 1831, letter from T.H.

⁸⁵ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.605, Goodford to Melbourne, 27 October 1831.

are worse as the mob entered the office and destroyed some most valuable deeds and papers.

Westmoreland quickly forwarded the letter to Lord Melbourne, urging him to ensure the Dragoons were retained to protect the mansion, reminding the Home Secretary that it lay only 7 miles from Sherborne where Lord Digby's castle had been so badly damaged a few days earlier.⁸⁶

Brympton wasn't the only manor house outside the town on which it had been feared an attack might take place. Phelps returned hot foot to Montacute from Taunton on 22 October with information that the Yeovil crowd 'had given out that they would come here'. He organised the defence of his house and sent the Martock troop of Yeomanry to Yeovil (he says he had met them marching towards Montacute), and once he'd satisfied himself that Montacute was safe (23rd) he left for Yeovil himself, 'to take my turn of duty'.⁸⁷

3.3 Criminal prosecutions

Decisions had also to be made about compensation payments to riot victims and the mounting (and financing) of prosecutions. By March 1832, the magistrates had committed 14 men and one woman to face trial at the Easter assize. Some hope was held out for financial assistance from central government. In November, Phelps of Montacute had written to Melbourne for guidance on organising the prosecutions:

It would be desirable to know whether it is the intention to prosecute at the next assizes under the direction of his Majesty's government the rioters now confined in Ilchester Gaol, or whether they will be left to the ordinary course of prosecution. One of the principal ringleaders, Henry Earle, was on Saturday last by me committed on a clear case of being the first person who, with a bludgeon, assailed and broke into Mr Newman's house where the above felony of large amount was perpetrated, and whilst under his examination he was identified as having been active in the preceding riot and felony the same night at Mr Robins'.

A note added to the letter in Whitehall confirmed that central government had no such intention.⁸⁸ Clearly however, magistrates had already decided to focus their attention on the two most serious attacks on property: the houses and offices of Newman and Robins. This strategy was reflected in the court proceedings of April 1832. The 15 prisoners awaiting trial at Ilchester would all be prosecuted at the Easter assize rather than the quarter session, allowing lawyers much greater latitude in preparing capital charges. Four men were arraigned for the attack on Newman's house: James Martin (15); Thomas Dommet Symes (25), John Gill (27) and Henry Earl (36). A further five were capitally charged with the attack on Robins' house: John Curwood, Edward Miller, John Baker, Richard Marks and Edward Dodge (24).

These capital prosecutions were augmented by a secondary series of grouped indictments, five for simple riot at Robins' house (Curwood, Marks and Baker again; and Jacob Vagg and Eliza Hodges) two for the attack on the *Mermaid* (Miller again, and James Guard), and then another four for sundry acts of riot, disorder and attacking the Yeomanry (Guard again, Daniel Brown, John Saint and Edward Murray).

The capital charges were tried first.⁸⁹ Prosecution witnesses stepped up to identify all four of the defendants charged with the attack on Newman's house and they were accordingly convicted. If the

⁸⁶ TNA HO 52/14/2 f.124-5, Westmoreland to Melbourne, (with enclosure) 30 October 1831.

⁸⁷ TNA HO 52/15, f.580, Phelps to Melbourne, 23 October 1831.

⁸⁸ TNA HO 52/15/3 f.621-2, Phelps to Melbourne, 22 November 1831

⁸⁹ Unless otherwise stated, I have taken details of the assize hearing from *Sherborne Mercury* 9 April 1832, the fullest account available.

Mercury's report is accurate, the trial for the attack on Robins' house was longer, involving a greater number of witnesses, and it ran a very different course. Although the identificatory evidence offered was much the same, the prosecution case was hampered by the defence calling a great number of witnesses of their own, some to offer alibis, others to argue that a defendant was simply spectating, and some simply to offer a good character. After Justice Park had summed up, the jury acquitted all five.

Guard and Miller were dealt with next, accused of taking part in the attack on the *Mermaid Inn*, but although the two witnesses (the JPs Goodford and Hoskins) gave graphic accounts of the riot, they appear not to have been able to identify either of the defendants, and Park had little choice but to direct an acquittal.⁹⁰ Then it was the turn of Curwood, Marks, Vagg, Baker, and Hodges, the only woman to stand trial, for breaking sundry items of furniture and crockery in Robins' house. These were all young people and elicited a degree of sympathy (and only short gaol terms) from Park on account of it. They had, he suspected, been influenced by 'infamous incendiaries'. Only Baker was acquitted; the rest were handed terms of between two months and six days. The lightest was for Jacob Vagg, the youngest of the lot and afforded a good character by one of the constables.⁹¹

Edward Dodge was then rather surprisingly put back into the dock and capitally convicted for stealing two bottles of wine from Robins' house – a prosecution built around testimony from a man named Thomas Harwood, who was forced to admit he had 'said nothing about the two bottles yesterday' at Dodge's first trial and subsequent acquittal. He was an old offender and known to the court, having served a year in gaol for assault in 1828, then a further eight months, with a whipping, for stealing chickens in 1829.⁹² In the circumstances, Dodge's conviction gave the prosecution the opportunity to hand down a capital sentence, or transportation for life not only for the attack on Newman's house but for Robins' as well.

One more piece of tidying up was then completed when Goodford recognised one of the character witnesses for the defence, Thomas Galloway, as one of those who took a prominent part in the crowd attack on the *Mermaid Inn*. Since it was too late to put Galloway straight into the dock, Goodford had him committed to the coming quarter session, at which he was convicted and sentenced to 18 months in prison. By the end of April then, examples had been made of prisoners taken for complicity in all three of the key crowd events at Yeovil.⁹³

That left just four defendants still to be dealt with, Guard, Brown, Saint and Murray, for riot and assault, including the attack on the *Mermaid* and some physical attacks on members of the Yeomanry. Park wanted it understood that this case was 'very bad' and much worse than that of the youths he had treated lightly earlier that morning. They were all convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from six to eighteen months.⁹⁴

Martin, Symes, Gill and Earl, the four men capitally convicted for the attack on Newman's house, had to wait a little longer for sentencing. They were not left for execution at the close of the assize so, sensing the strong possibility of transportation for life, John Gill's friends and family petitioned the Crown for a prison sentence instead. Gill was a mason's labourer, respectably married and well enough known to attract the signature of the Portreeve, Robert Jennings and one of the constables as well as several Yeovil builders. He was rewarded with a two-year gaol sentence. Of the two younger men, both described as 'boys' who 'wept much' when sentenced, Symes got 18 months and Martin 12,

⁹⁰ Curiously, Miller was noted in some newspaper reports as having pleaded guilty however, despite having been acquitted on two separate indictments, and receiving a one-month prison sentence: *Sherborne Mercury*, 9 April 1832.

⁹¹ *Taunton Courier*, 11 April 1832.

⁹² *Dorset County Chronicle* 24 January 1828; *Bristol Mirror* 18 July 1829.

⁹³ Somerset Heritage Centre, Easter Quarter Session papers, Information of Thomas Sharland, surgeon, 4 April 1832 *Taunton Courier*, 25 April 1832.

⁹⁴ *Taunton Courier*, 11 April 1832.

though neither of them petitioned. Henry Earl was less fortunate. The evidence given against him by the glover, T. H. Blake, had identified him as the man who broke down Newman's front door with a heavy wooden bludgeon.⁹⁵ For that he was sent to join Edward Dodge in the Hulks before they were both taken onto the *Circassian* in October and transported to Van Dieman's Land for life. Earl did not petition for clemency, too poor perhaps to attract much local sympathy. The glover Thomas Blake, who gave evidence against Earl at the assize, believed he scratched a living as an itinerant pedlar of cloth, skins and ribbons, and in Van Diemen's land he did not prove a model prisoner. Frequently cited for insolence and disobedience, he was whipped twice in 1837 (36 lashes the first time, 50 the second) and given ten days solitary after that.⁹⁶

Dodge did petition. Raised on behalf of his wife and three young children, the petition argued that Dodge had not been identified as a ringleader and was a victim of personal prejudice:

We have much reason to suppose that the evidence of the principal witness against him and on whose evidence he was convicted, proceeded not from a love of justice but from a malicious feeling of long standing against the prisoner.

Certainly, had it not been for the evidence offered by Thomas Harwood on Dodge's secondary indictment for stealing two bottles of wine, he would have walked free from the assize with his co-defendants for the riot at Robins' house. The petition was ignored, and Dodge continued to be punished for petty thefts in Van Dieman's Land, incurring two spells of hard labour in chains as punishment, first for six months, then for twelve. He worked there as a shepherd.⁹⁷

One other defendant petitioned for clemency, this time for a reduced sentence, in August 1832. The Yeovil carpenter John Saint, married and with seven dependent children, had been sent to Wilton gaol by Park for the relatively short term of twelve months, but, since he had already served five months at Ilchester while awaiting trial by that time, his friends considered it worth petitioning for an early release. This petition, the work of the schoolmaster, Thomas Hayward, attracted 118 signatories, mostly craftsmen and tradesmen but including the riot victim, Edwin Newman and the governor of the gaol who testified to Saint's good behaviour in prison. In Hayward's view, Saint had been unfairly convicted:

It is well known that he had no concern whatever with the riots but at the time he was (to say the least of it) unceremoniously accosted by the Yeomanry, he was just coming into the town from his work, and being somewhat elevated with liquor, he certainly made use of language which, at another time, he would not have done, but the confinement he has since October last) will no doubt operate as a caution to him to be more guarded in future.⁹⁸

4 The targets

Along with the various primary sources of evidence of who and what was attacked by the rioters we have details of the compensation claims made and awarded. The largest claims from the county were made by Edwin Newman (£1,000), and Francis Robins (£500) both of which would be determined at the next assizes. There were also a number of relatively small claims for damages agreed in the petty session for the hundred on 19 November.⁹⁹ This data for property damage is combined with that for

⁹⁵ *Taunton Courier* 4 April 1832

⁹⁶ Tasmanian Archives, CON 34/1/4 p.80.

⁹⁷ TNA, HO 17/89, petition for Edward Dodge, 1832; Tasmanian Archives, CON 31/1/10, p.107.

⁹⁸ TNA HO 13/61, and HO 17/51, petition and correspondence concerning John Saint, 1832.

⁹⁹ Somerset Heritage Centre, epiphany quarter sessions 1831.

recorded attacks on the person and some prosopographical information in Table 1.¹⁰⁰ The table is split into two parts, the first gives the targets where the chronological order is known, the second for those where it is unknown. The level of property damage was determined as being 'major' by either being greater than £10 in compensation, more than one attack or more than one hour for the attack. The level of injury to the person, minor or major, was based upon the reports in the sources.

An inspection of Table 1 shows that of the ten houses suffering significant damage from attacks by the rioters, six of them were owned by people directly associated with Lord Ashley's anti-reform by-election campaign in Dorset. Five of these six targets were occupied by attorneys working as election agents for Lord Ashley (Newman, Tomkins, White, Robins and Slade) and the remaining property was owned by the wealthy glove manufacturer George Mayo who was a publicly declared Ashley supporter and had voted in the by-election in Dorset whilst residing in Yeovil. William White had also attempted to ballot for Ashley, but his vote had been objected to and remained unresolved. It should also be noted that these six properties were amongst the first eight to be damaged, with the crowd realising its error in attacking the house of pro-reformer John Mayo and rapidly changing their plans to attack his (anti-reform) brother's house in Kingston.

It is unclear from the evidence why the glove manufacturer and Town Commissioner Henry Penny was targeted, though it appears that barring John Mayo several of the major capitalists in the gloving trade in Yeovil were sought out for punishment (George Mayo, Penny and John Greenham). This was probably a result of their political leanings but may have had some relationship to the collapse of the trade and the suffering amongst working-class families over previous years. Of the remaining three properties suffering major damage, the Rev. Hooper's residence Hendford Manor was probably the most distant from the town centre (see Figure 4) and was attacked on both days of the riots. It is likely that this was a consequence of the popular anger concerning the anti-reform stance of the Anglican church hierarchy and in particular the actions of the bishops in voting down the Second Reform Bill in the House of Lords two weeks previously. Despite our research we have been unable to obtain (as yet) profiles of William Brown and John Hands. The former appears in the 1832 and 1834 electoral registers as a freeholder holding property on Ebenezer Row, located next to the Methodist (Wesleyan) chapel in Middle Street.¹⁰¹ Of the latter we know very little other than that he was a 'gentleman'.

It should be noted that there was little if any physical violence to the person by the crowd on the first day of rioting despite the level of property damage. On the second day, however, there is evidence of some attacks on individuals, outside of the violent confrontations at the *Mermaid Inn* and with the Yeomanry. Whether this was the result of altercations on the street or at the doorstep is unclear, and they are only mentioned in one anonymous source. The writer claimed 'my (unnamed) servant' (sic) had nearly been killed and that William Buck a local farmer, yeoman and landowner from Yeovil and another, James Acreman, had been injured.¹⁰² It is unclear if this violence was due to interventions by these individuals, targeted acts by the crowd or merely individuals settling 'scores' of some sort.

Of the compensation claims for targets that did not appear in the narrative sources of the riot (below the orange line in Table 1) the most curious are those of the servants of the 'gentleman Francis Ashton' (Sanders, Collins and Hix). This suggests that the servants living quarters or homes were damaged

¹⁰⁰ Prosopographical data was obtained from the following sources: Records of Masonic Lodges in Somerset, Lodge of Brotherly Love (No. 329), Yeovil Minute books: Minute Book 1831-1835, Somerset Heritage Centre A/DLY 8/1/22; *Taunton Courier*; *Dorset County Chronicle*; Pigot's Trade Directory 1830 – Yeovil pp. 737-738; 1841 Census for Somerset, Moorlinch, Yeovil; List of those declaring support for Lord Ashley, 28th September 1831. Dorset Museum, Dorchester; UK Poll Books and Electoral Registers, 1538-1893, 1831, 1832, 1834; Osborn, *The History of Yeovil*; *Yeovil (with small sketch) 1831*, (Watts) Somerset Heritage Centre DD/RI/C1660/29; Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835 (CCed); Rammell, *Report of the General Board of Health* (1853), map; Somerset Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry Muster rolls, 1824-1831 Somerset Heritage Centre DD/CN/54.

¹⁰¹ According to Osborn "'Ebenezers' was the commonly applied term to non-conformists of any denomination". Osborn, *The History of Yeovil* "Ebenezer Row".

¹⁰² *Taunton Courier* 26 October 1831.

perhaps as a misguided attack on ‘Ashton’s’ property. Investigation into who ‘Ashton’ was has not provided any likely candidates other than Rev. Francis Bickley Astley, an absentee cleric who became sinecure rector of the Kingston Pitney Chapel in early September 1831. Astley owned land and perhaps property on Milford Lane north of the town centre (see Figure 4) whilst residing 45 miles away in Manningford Abbots in Wiltshire.¹⁰³ Another anomaly is George Rossiter’s Gentleman’s Boarding Academy in the Mansion House on Princes Street which some secondary sources claim was targeted by the crowd, however it is unclear at what stage of the riot that this occurred.¹⁰⁴ It is also unclear where the final target, High Constable, carpenter, builder and future Town Councillor John Cox, lived in 1831.¹⁰⁵

In the introduction we drew attention to the schism in the governance of Yeovil between the Lord of the Manor John Phelips, the immovable Portreeve Robert Jennings and the archaic Corporation on one side and the new Town Commissioners and reforming elements in the nascent Political Union on the other. Although Phelips and Jennings were anti-reform and acted as such, despite threats they and their property were not subject to attacks, which may have been merely a product of geography.¹⁰⁶ Instead the initial driver for the crowd was to punish those who were intimately involved in the perceived corruption of the by-election. As Table 1 shows, this did not mean the victims were only associated together through the by-election. George Mayo, Newman, White and Penny were all Town Commissioners; Greenham, Penny, White and Newman were all vestrymen and Tomkins, White, Slade and Trehern were all connected through freemasonry.

In summary, outside of the confrontations between the Yeomanry and crowd in the Borough and at the Mermaid Inn, the most repeated, sustained and intense attacks by the crowd were targeted on property *not* people. The majority of these assaults were directed at the houses of those in Yeovil who were closely connected to the anti-reform campaign of Lord Ashley in the Dorset by-election. A particular flavour of these expressive crimes was that they targeted attorneys acting as election agents, based on the popular understanding of the by-election as having been corrupted by these officials in favour of the Tories. This conclusion is supported by noting the two locations that sustained massive amounts of damage, the houses of the election agents Edwin Newman and Francis Robins. This was where the crowd *escalated* their action by deciding to *enter* these premises to destroy property and the ‘paperwork’ of these attorneys. By doing so, they also *escalated* the legal consequences from misdemeanours to potential capital sentences, something they may have been fully aware of.

¹⁰³ UK Poll Books and Electoral Registers, 1538-1893, 1832, 1834; *Yeovil (with small sketch) 1831*, (Watts) Somerset Heritage Centre DD/RI/C1660/29; Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835 (CCEd).

¹⁰⁴ See for example Osborn, *The History of Yeovil* “Reform Riot of 1831”.

¹⁰⁵ Osborn, *The History of Yeovil* “William Cox - Jeweller and Mayor of Yeovil”.

¹⁰⁶ Phelips’ residence at Montacute House was 4 miles and the Earl of Westmorland’s Brympton House 2 miles or so from Yeovil. Threats were made to both.

Name or owner (property)	Attacks on person (P) or property (H) and number [n]	Claim for property damage	Level of injury or damage	Civic position	Occupation	Notes
Edwin Newman	H [2]	£1,000	Major	Town Commissioner, Vestryman	Attorney	Agent for Lord Ashley
Edwin Tomkins	H [1]	£13 13s.	Major	Freemason	Attorney	Agent for Lord Ashley
John Mayo (Old Sarum House)	H [1]	No claim	Minor	Surveyor of Highways, Town Commissioner	Glove manufacturer	Attack halted as pro-reformer
William White (Pitney House)	H [1]	£28 17s.	Major	Town Commissioner, Vestryman, Freemason	Attorney and Banker	Agent for Lord Ashley, vote in Dorset election objected to
George Mayo (Swallowcliffe House)	H [1]	£29 17s.	Major	Chairman Town Commissioners	Glove manufacturer	Ashley supporter, voted for Ashley in Dorset by-election
Francis Robins	H [1]	£500	Major	-	Attorney	Agent for Lord Ashley
Henry Penny	H [1]	£19 16s.	Major	Town Commissioner, Vestryman	Glove manufacturer	
John Slade	H [1]	£13 18s.	Major	Vestryman, Cornet Mudford Yeomanry Cavalry, Freemason	Attorney	Agent for Lord Ashley
John Greenham	H [1]	£4 17s.	Minor	Burgess, Vestryman, Portreeve (1797)	Glove manufacturer	
Rev. James Hooper (Hendford Manor)	H [2]	£15	Major	Stipendiary Curate (Brympton)	Cleric	
Richard Trehern (Mermaid Inn)	H [1]	£7 14s.	Minor	Freemason	Innkeeper	Attack to release prisoners
N/K	P [1]	-	Major	-	Servant	
William Buck	P [1]	-	Minor	-	Farmer	Landowner and Yeoman
James Acreman	P [1]	-	Minor	-	N/K	
George Rossiter	H [1]	£6 1s.	Minor	-	Schoolmaster	Gentleman's Boarding Academy
Charles Sanders	H [1]	£5 1s.	Minor	-	Servant	Servants of 'Francis Aston', 'Gentleman'
Ann Collins	H [1]	18s. 6d.	Minor	-		
Sarah Hix	H [1]	£3 5s.	Minor	-		
William Brown	H [1]	£25 18s.	Major	-	N/K	
John Hands	H [1]	£13 18s.	Major	-	'Gentleman'	
John Coch (Cox)	H [1]	£3 5s.	Minor	High Constable	N/K	

Table 1: Targets of the Yeovil rioters in October 1831.

5 The rioters

Prosopographical data was collected for a sample of 19 arrestees and 2 members of the crowd who were injured by the Yeomanry in the Yeovil riots of October 1831.¹⁰⁷ This is summarised in Table 2. Of the 21 people in the sample, 20 were men. The median age was 26 years and the age range 15-36 years. Of the 20 people with known occupations six were unskilled labourers, 12 were involved in artisanal-type trades, of which four were engaged in glove manufacture, and the remaining two were hawkers. This suggests a largely working-class, male crowd.

Of the 16 members of the sample where we have familial data, 11 were married, with all but two having children. The relatively high median age compared to Sherborne (20.5) and Blandford (19) may explain why the majority were married with children. Evidence for literacy in this case comes primarily from gaol description books. It is unlikely these skills were actually tested in practice. Of the 17 who were imprisoned, all are marked as being able to read and seven claimed they could write as well. This seems exceptionally high, so it might be more realistic to claim that half the sample were semi-literate, as some of the other sources suggest.

Although 19 of the 20 members of the sample lived in Yeovil at the time of the riot, only four were born in the town. Five were raised in Somerset villages, another four were from Dorset, two from Ireland and one from Cornwall, with the remaining five unknown. Those families drawn from the regional environs of Somerset and Dorset are probably a result of the 'push and pull' effects of the decline in agricultural employment in the rural hinterland and the opportunities for work in the gloving trade in Yeovil. In terms of the disturbance, however, this was clearly a 'Yeovil riot' in that the arrestees were almost all drawn from the town. Despite some of the media reports,¹⁰⁸ it does not appear to be the work of 'outsiders', a common trope for deflecting blame after intra-community collective violence has occurred.

A survey of electoral registers from the ballots of 1832 and 1834 demonstrated that only one of the 21 members of the sample could vote, and this was after the successful Reform Act of 1832. This was Stephen Parkhouse, a hairdresser and perfumer from Hendford who had been trampled by the Yeomanry during the fighting on 22 October. The main conclusion to be drawn from this is that the vast majority of the sample owned no significant land or property. This is backed up by a study of the trade directories for the period which show that Parkhouse was the only member of the sample who owned a business.

Finally, and perhaps most surprisingly considering the draconian nature of the application of property laws in the period, only two of the 17 arrestees taken to court had significant criminal pasts. Fifteen-year-old Jacob Vagg(e), a labourer, who was born in South Petherton, 7.5 miles to the west of Yeovil was charged earlier that year with stealing cows. It appears that he was

¹⁰⁷ Prosopographical data was obtained from the following sources: *Taunton Courier*; *Dorset County Chronicle*; *Sherborne Mercury*; Pigot's Trade Directory 1830 – Yeovil pp. 737-738; 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871 Census for Somerset, Moorlinch, Yeovil; UK Poll Books and Electoral Registers, 1538-1893, 1831, 1832, 1834; Osborn, *The History of Yeovil*; *Yeovil (with small sketch) 1831*, (Watts) Somerset Heritage Centre DD/RI/C1660/29; Rammell, *Report of the General Board of Health* (1853), map; Somerset Baptism Index: Baptisms, marriages & burials 1813-1837 Somerset Heritage Centre D/D/RR 490A; Somerset, England, Marriage Registers, Bonds and Allegations, 1754-1914; Somerset, England, Gaol Registers, 1807-1879: Ilchester Gaol: Description books (1821-1843), Registers of Prisoners (1808-1843), Shepton Mallet Gaol: Registers of Prisoners (1856-1879), Description books (1855-1878) and Wilton Gaol: Gaol registers (1810-1879) and Description books (1807-1859); England & Wales, Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Registers, 1567-1936.

¹⁰⁸ See for example *Dorset County Chronicle*, 27 October 1831.

found Not Guilty of the offence.¹⁰⁹ More unfortunate were the Dodge family who in 1829 were arrested en-masse for poultry crime. Edward Dodge (21) a leather parer and his younger brother Thomas (16), a labourer, were arrested and imprisoned for 9 months for stealing fowls, with Edward receiving a whipping. Their widowed mother Fanny, a 'labourer' in the absence of their father, was also arrested for having a hen in her possession, one of the stolen fowl perhaps, and was thus guilty of receiving stolen goods. Fanny was also imprisoned for 8 months first in Ilchester gaol and then in Shepton Mallet with four weeks in solitary. Yeovil magistrate John Newman presided over the imprisonment of both Fanny and her son Thomas, and by the end of 1829 they were all in incarcerated together in Shepton Mallet prison. The effect on an already struggling family without a husband and father of these juridical decisions must have been immense, particularly when Fanny was forced to leave behind two younger children.¹¹⁰

Two years later Edward Dodge would be facing a capital charge for his role in the attack on Francis Robins' house and, it seems, for taking two bottles of wine. This would be commuted to transportation for life. Edward Dodge, leaving a wife and three young children in Somerset, sailed from Plymouth on 4 October 1832 aboard the *Circassian* bound for Van Dieman's Land (today's Tasmania).¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *Taunton Courier* 30 March, 13 April 1831.

¹¹⁰ Wiltshire, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812, Donhead St Mary with Charlton, St John the Baptist, Parish Registers, 1795-1812; *Bristol Mirror* 18 July 1829; *Taunton Courier* 6 May, 15 July 1829; Somerset, England, Gaol Registers, 1807-1879: Ilchester Gaol: Description books (1821-1843), Registers of Prisoners (1808-1843), Shepton Mallet Gaol: Registers of Prisoners (1856-1879), Description books (1855-1878).

¹¹¹ Osborn, *The History of Yeovil "Reform Riot of 1831"*.

ID	Full name	Home town	Current abode	Age 1831	Occupation	Owner of business (1830)	Marital status and children in 1831	1832/34 electoral roll for Somerset	Semi-literate ?	Previous criminality	Known action in Yeovil riot	Sentence	Notes
1	James Martin	Yeovil	Yeovil	15	Pastry Cook	No	Single/0	No/No	R	None	Riotous assembly at Newman's; Attack on Edwin Newman's house	Death commuted to 12 months imprisonment	Born to John (a carpenter) and Mary who were living on Vicarage Street, Yeovil
2	Thomas Dommet Symes	Wayford, Somerset	Yeovil	25	Mason	No	Single/0	No/No	R & W	None	Attack on Edwin Newman's house; Riotous assembly at Newman's	Death commuted to 18 months imprisonment	Base born (illegitimate) to Ann Symes.
3	John Gill	Yeovil	Yeovil	27	Labourer	No	Married/2	No/No	R	None	Attack on Edwin Newman's house; Riotous assembly at Newman's	Death commuted to 2 years imprisonment	
4	Henry Earl	Tregorny, Cornwall	Yeovil	36	Hawker	No	Married/0	No/No	R	None	Attack on Edwin Newman's house; Riotous assembly at Newman's	Death commuted to transportation for life	Named as a "principal ringleader"
5	John Curwood	Hosgrey? Ireland	Yeovil	33	Dyer, Glover	No	Married/1	No/No	R	None	Attack on Francis Robins' house; Riot at Robins' house	Imprisonment for 2 months	Married to Mary a glover. Whole family are glovers.
6	Elizabeth Hodges	West Camel, Somerset	Yeovil	17	Glover	No	Single/0	No/No	R	None	Riot at Robins' house	Imprisonment for 1 month	Daughter of Charles (shoemaker) and Mary (nee Hodges) from West Camel, Somerset

ID	Full name	Home town	Current abode	Age 1831	Occupation	Owner of business (1830)	Marital status and children in 1831	1832/34 electoral roll for Somerset	Semi-literate ?	Previous criminality	Known action in Yeovil riot	Sentence	Notes
7	Richard Marks	Yeovil	Yeovil	18	Leather parer	No	Single/0	No/No	R & W	None	Attack on Francis Robins' house; Riot at Robins' house	Imprisonment for 2 months	Married Elizabeth and moved to London leather market in 1830s.
8	Jacob Vagg(e)	South Petherton, Somerset	Yeovil	15	Labourer	No	Single/0	No/No	R/No	1831	Riot at Robins' house	Imprisonment for 6 days, Hard Labour	Father Thomas a labourer and mother Hannah. Accused of stealing Cows March 1831. Married Ann Williams in July 1845 in Plymouth, Devon. Imprisoned 1841 Ilchester, deserter from the Royal Navy at Plymouth. Vagg died in January 1847 in Stonehouse, Devon, at the age of 30.
9	James Gard (Guard)	Montacute, Somerset	Montacute Somerset	25	Mason	No	Married/0	No/No	R & W	None	Riotous assembly at Robins'; Attack on the <i>Mermaid Inn</i>	Imprisonment for 12 months, Hard Labour	
10	Daniel Brown	Stalbridge, Dorset	Yeovil	30	Labourer	No	Married/1	No/No	R & W	None	Riotous assembly at Robins', stoning <i>Mermaid Inn</i>	Imprisonment for 6 months, Hard Labour	
11	John Saint	Sherborne, Dorset	Yeovil	35	Carpenter	No	Married/7	No/No	R & W	None	Riotous assembly at Robins', stoning <i>Mermaid Inn</i> and using violent language against the Yeomanry	Imprisonment for 12 months, Hard Labour	Father, Thomas and mother, Mary. Non-conformist baptism. Evidence of smallpox. Marries Charlotte Cox of Yeovil, in Yeovil (1818), both semi-literate. Connected to Sherborne School

ID	Full name	Home town	Current abode	Age 1831	Occupation	Owner of business (1830)	Marital status and children in 1831	1832/34 electoral roll for Somerset	Semi-literate ?	Previous criminality	Known action in Yeovil riot	Sentence	Notes
12	Edward Murray	Knox Street, Sligo, Ireland	Yeovil	29	Hawker	No	Married/2	No/No	R & W	None	Riotous assembly at Robins'; stoning <i>Mermaid Inn</i>	Imprisonment for 18 months, Hard Labour	
13	Edward Dodge	Donhead St Mary, Shaftesbury, Dorset	Yeovil	23	Leather parer	No	Married/2	No/No	R & W	1829	Attack on Francis Robins' house; Stealing 2 bottles of wine	Death commuted to transportation for life	Father, Thomas and mother, Fanny. They had 4 children. Edward (21) and his younger brother Thomas (16), a labourer, were imprisoned for stealing fowls in 1829. Both got 9 months imprisonment and Edward was whipped. Fanny Dodge (39) his mother was also imprisoned for the same crime, with four weeks solitary plus 8 months for having a hen, and thus receiving stolen goods. They were moved between Shepton Mallet and Ilchester gaols. John Newman presided over the trials of Fanny and Thomas Dodge. When Fanny, Thomas and Edward were imprisoned in 1829, she had at least one son aged 3 years.
14	Edward Miller	Yeovil St John	Yeovil	29	Labourer	No	Married/0	No/No	R	None	Attack on Francis Robins' house; Attack on the <i>Mermaid Inn</i> . Riotously assembling at dwelling house of Edward Tomkins	Imprisonment for 1 month	Parents William and Mary from Yeovil St John
15	John Baker	Bradford Abbas, or Seran (Cerne?) Dorset	Yeovil	30	Sawyer, bricklayer	No	Married/3	No/No	R	None	Attack on Francis Robins' house; Riot at Robins' house	Not guilty	Married to Sarah a glove sewer. Mary the eldest daughter is a Glover in 1841. In 1831, three children Mary (6), John (4), Tabitha (<1).

ID	Full name	Home town	Current abode	Age 1831	Occupation	Owner of business (1830)	Marital status and children in 1831	1832/34 electoral roll for Somerset	Semi-literate ?	Previous criminality	Known action in Yeovil riot	Sentence	Notes
16	George Poole	Combe St Nicholas, Somerset	Yeovil	30	Blacksmith	No	Married/0	No/No	R	None	Stealing 10 lbs of beef from Robins' house	Not Guilty	
17	Thomas Galloway	?	?	26	Labourer	No	?	No/No	R & W	None	Riotous assembly at the <i>Mermaid Inn</i>	Imprisonment for 18 months, Hard Labour	Identified as a ringleader. Schooled at Clifton.
18	George Soper	?	Yeovil	?	?	No	?	No/No	?	?	Injured by Yeomanry		
19	Stephen Parkhouse	?	Hendford, Yeovil	?	Hairdresser	Yes	?	Yes/Yes	?	?	Injured by Yeomanry		
20	Potter	?	Yeovil	?	Hairdresser	No	?	No/No	?	?			Arrested but not charged
21	Sylvester	?	Yeovil	?	Mason	No	?	No/No	?	?			Arrested but not charged

Table 2: Prospographical data for the sample of arrestees and participants