

PROTEST THE PAST, PRESENT + FUTURE OF PROTEST

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Exhibition guide for group leaders

Disrupt? Peterloo and Protest exhibition
People's History Museum

On show until Sunday 23 February 2020

Open every day 10.00am – 5.00pm

Radical Lates second Thursday each month 10.00am – 8.00pm

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THE PAST, PRESENT + FUTURE OF PROTEST

Disrupt? Peterloo and Protest exhibition © People's History Museum

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Exhibition information

***Disrupt? Peterloo and Protest* exhibition summary**

Part of the national commemorations marking 200 years since the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester in 1819, People's History Museum's (PHM) headline exhibition for 2019 tells the story of Peterloo and highlights its relevance today, examining issues within our democracy that people are campaigning for 200 years on.

The exhibition features objects, including original Peterloo artefacts, brought together for the very first time, alongside pieces telling more recent stories of protest. A short film commissioned especially for the exhibition brings to life the story of Peterloo, protest, and the road to democratic reform.

A creative space within the exhibition is a Protest Lab; an experimental gallery for individuals, communities and organisations to use to share and develop their views and ideas for collective action.

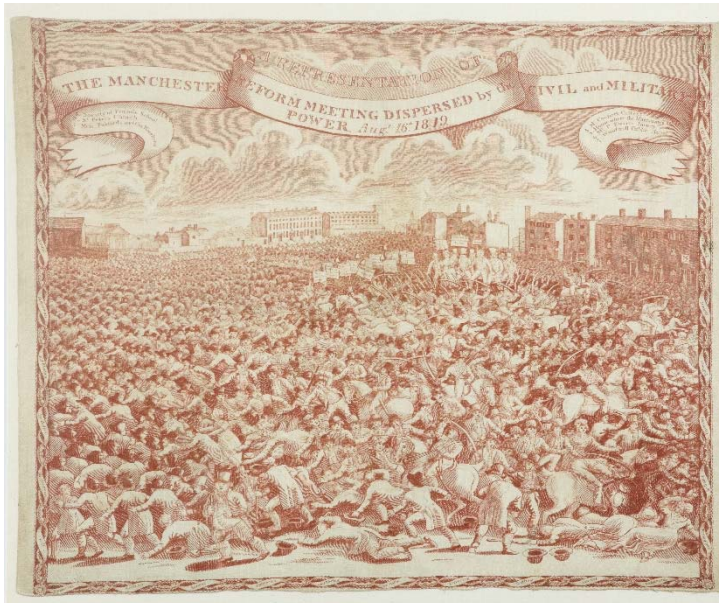
If you are interested in using this space for a meeting or an event to promote a campaign, please get in touch to discuss your idea on disrupt@phm.org.uk or 0161 838 9190.

The documentary film commissioned for the exhibition that is presented in the space makes personal and emotional connections to the time of Peterloo. A range of contemporary and familiar voices provide personal perspectives on the event, highlighting the relevance of what happened 200 years ago and how the Peterloo Massacre connects to current activism and campaigning today. There is no graphic content in the exhibition but the documentary film does include silent excerpts from the 2018 film *Peterloo* which is rated 12A due to the moderate violence and language that it contains. The exhibition also displays a printed list of fatalities which includes details of how people were killed, for example crushed, sabred and truncheoned.

The exhibition is suitable for all ages.

Part of PHM's year long programme exploring the past, present and future of protest, marking 200 years since the Peterloo Massacre; a major event in Manchester's history, and a defining moment for Britain's democracy. The exhibition is supported by [The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#).

Background to the Peterloo Massacre



Peterloo commemorative handkerchief, 1819 © People's History Museum

On 16 August 1819, 60,000 people congregated in St Peter's Field in Manchester, with demands for the right to vote, for freedom from oppression, and for justice. Despite its peaceful beginning, this was a day that would end with a bloody outcome.

Social and political context

In 1789 the French Revolution shook the world and the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity spread rapidly. In Britain less than 3% of the population could vote and the system was entirely corrupt. In the context of poverty and the huge numbers of working people pushed into the industrial centres in Manchester and the surrounding areas, a reform movement demanding the right to representation captured the minds of large numbers of working people. Despite the growing population of Manchester, there was no Member of Parliament (MP) to solely represent the area.

What happened on the day?

The industrial towns surrounding Manchester put huge efforts into the preparations in the weeks beforehand and contingents from each area had different creative responses. Oldham's centrepiece was 200 women in white dresses and a banner of pure white silk, emblazoned with inscriptions including 'Universal Suffrage', 'Annual Parliaments' and 'Election by Ballot'. The protestors were peaceful and unarmed.

The crowds waited in eager anticipation to hear the principal speaker of the day, Henry Hunt. According to witnesses, tens of thousands of people were waiting, so tightly packed together that 'their hats seemed to touch'.

In an overlooking building, staring down on the scene, were the magistrates. The magistrates dealt with cases such as public disorder, and are often referred to as 'justices of the peace'. After two hours of observing, they gave the orders to the enforcers of law surrounding the crowd that the protesters must be dispersed, while the radical reform leaders were to be arrested. On hearing these orders, the recently formed Manchester and Salford Yeomanry pulled out their sabres and charged the crowd on horseback.

At least 18 people were killed, of whom three were women, and around 700 were injured, of whom 168 were women, even though women comprised only 12% of those present.

The impact of the Peterloo Massacre

The British government was keen to cover up the massacre, imprisoning the reform leaders and clamping down on those who spoke out against the government. Within days the massacre was being reported upon both nationally and internationally.

The Six Acts legislation was implemented as a result of the massacre which limited the freedoms of the public and the press in an attempt to suppress radical reform. It became extremely dangerous to even publish words that discussed the Peterloo Massacre, and taxes on newspapers were increased so that working class people would be less likely to read them. When Percy Bysshe Shelley heard of the massacre, he penned the poem *The Masque of Anarchy*, powerfully indicting those who were responsible. Yet Shelley could not find a publisher brave enough to print his words, with the genuine threat of imprisonment hanging over radicals in this period. It was only in 1832, after Shelley's death, that the poem was first published, and the new Chartist movement would take up his words with gusto.

How many people were killed at Peterloo?

We may never know the true number of people who died as a result of the Peterloo Massacre. Past errors and recent discoveries mean numbers have changed over the years. Research is ongoing, and in this bicentenary year the figure currently agreed by historian Dr Robert Poole and The Peterloo Memorial Campaign is 18 dead.

This number is slightly different to the list in Main Gallery One, which shows the nature of evolving historical research.

What to expect when you visit *Disrupt? Peterloo and Protest*




As you enter the exhibition you will see that the space is split into two.

The right hand side features eight key objects used to discuss important themes linked to the Peterloo Massacre. A ten minute film plays in this space and tells the story of Peterloo and highlights the relevance of what happened 200 years ago, and how the Peterloo Massacre connects to current activism and campaigning today.

The left hand side is a creative space called Protest Lab. This presents what protest looks like today. Visitors are invited to contribute objects and stories through different interactive elements. This space will develop and evolve over the course of the exhibition.



Disrupt? Peterloo and Protest key objects

THE DEMAND FOR REFORM	
 <p><i>Universal Suffrage or the Scum Uppermost</i> hand coloured engraving on paper by George Cruikshank, July 1819</p>	<p>This engraving was printed one month before the Peterloo Massacre. The monster in the print represents radical reform; it stands victorious over the cherished British institutions of the arts, royalty and religion.</p> <p>It was designed to warn of the dangers of giving more people the vote and potential revolution.</p> <p>Cruikshank signed the piece with his initials rather than a full signature, which was often a sign that the artistic statement was that of his employer, not his own political beliefs. However, we will never know whether he agreed or disagreed with the sentiments here.</p>
WHAT HAPPENED ON THE DAY?	
 <p>Peterloo commemorative glass, date unknown</p>	<p>This rare glass shows the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry violently dispersing the crowds at St Peter's Field.</p> <p>The picture is a copy of the central section of the famous print <i>The Peterloo Massacre</i>, published by radical printer Richard Carlile in 1819.</p> <p>The glass is displayed in its original 19th century frame.</p>
THE VIOLENCE OF THE MASSACRE	
 <p>Portrait of Hugh Hornby Birley, captain of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, oil paint on canvas, date unknown</p>	<p>This portrait shows Hugh Hornby Birley, a Manchester mill owner and captain of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, seated on a red chair, and is thought to have been painted around 1819.</p> <p>The Manchester and Salford Yeomanry were a force of volunteer soldiers working for local government leaders.</p> <p>Birley ordered the soldiers into the crowd. 18 people died and around 700 were injured; many eyewitness accounts noted Captain Birley's cruelty and violence during the event.</p>

THE WOMEN OF PETERLOO



Mrs Mabbott's dress, around 1819. On loan from Manchester Art Gallery

A Mrs Mabbott wore this dress on 16 August 1819. She was a confectionary shop owner from Shude Hill.

Rather than being an active participant in the protest, our research suggests that Mrs Mabbott was caught up in the violence of the day.

The yeomanry explicitly targeted women during the gruesome dispersal. More than 25% of all casualties were female, even though they comprised only 12% of those present.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?



The Skelmanthorpe flag, around 1819. On loan from Tolson Museum

This flag is believed to have been made in 1819 by a Mrs Bird, a pattern maker from Radcliffe Street in Skelmanthorpe, a village near Huddersfield, to honour the victims of the Peterloo Massacre.

Following the Peterloo Massacre, the government toughened laws and limited freedoms of the public and the press through the Six Acts, despite widespread sympathy for the protestors. Despite this, people continued to meet in secret in support of reform.

This flag was used at these secret meetings, and was buried between meetings to hide it from the authorities. Had anyone been found in possession of the flag, they would have been arrested.

THE RADICAL PRESS



A Slap at Slop and The Bridge Street Gang news sheet by William Hone and George Cruickshank, 1821. On loan from Working Class Movement Library

A Slap at Slop and The Bridge Street Gang was first published in 1821 as a short satirical news sheet. Most notably, it covers the Peterloo Massacre, featuring a satirical design for both a monument and medal for the soldiers of Peterloo.

William Hone was an English radical writer and publisher, who by 1819 had already defended himself against charges of libel.

In partnership with illustrator George Cruickshank, Hone published a number of political works, most of which aimed to highlight the abuses of political office.

COMMEMORATING PETERLOO



Peterloo commemorative medal, around 1819

There were a number of commemorative medals produced following the massacre, however, this medal is believed to be one of the only surviving examples of its kind.

It features a much more hostile and angry slogan than medals produced later; an example of which can be found in Main Gallery One.

It is thought that the medal may have been produced to raise funds for the victims of the massacre, although this is unconfirmed.

It is an alloy disc decorated on both sides. It appears to have been made in two separate pieces and then soldered together.

THE ROAD TO REFORM



Pontefract secret ballot box, August 1872. On loan from Wakefield Council.

The 1872 Secret Ballot Act allowed voters to elect a Member of Parliament (MP) in secret by placing an 'X' on a ballot paper next to the name of their choice, rather than voicing their vote in public beneath the gaze of employers or landlords.

This ballot box was used in the first ever election held after the passing of the act, during a by-election in Pontefract, West Yorkshire in August 1872.

The box is still marked with the seals used to ensure the votes were not tampered with. The seal was made from wax and stamped with a liquorice stamp that was also used to stamp Pontefract cakes made in a local factory.

What is Protest Lab?

The spirit of Peterloo is still very much alive today across Greater Manchester. From campaigns fighting for votes for women, LGBT+ and disability rights, to equality campaigns and workers' rights, the people of Manchester and its surrounding towns and villages have taken a leading role in shaping and setting the national conversation on the fight for equality.

Protest Lab is for visitors and local people to use to promote and take part in activism in commemoration of those who gathered at St Peter's Field in 1819.

In this space you will find:



Map of Greater Manchester activism and noticeboard

We are inviting people to add a sticker to our activism map and to leave material on our noticeboard to highlight locations of current activism in Greater Manchester.

See what is happening in your area or bring material to add.

How have you protested?

We are asking people to add their own objects that tell a story about protest to Protest Lab. These could range from traditional items such as placards and badges from a protest march, to everyday objects that tell a personal story of protest. Objects will be added throughout the run of the exhibition.



Please note the objects in this section are on open display. They may not look like traditional museum objects but we must ensure they are treated in the same way and are not touched or moved from the shelves.



What do you want to change?

Use this space to make, print, or draw your own campaign slogan. Take it on a protest, give it to someone else or leave it somewhere for someone to find. Send us a photo of you doing this to disrupt@phm.org.uk, or tag us on Twitter [@PHMMcr](https://twitter.com/PHMMcr) and Instagram [@phmmcr](https://www.instagram.com/phmmcr) using the hashtag #MyProtestPHM.

Toolkits

Discover a range of literature to flick through and handy takeaway toolkits giving practical tips and ideas for creating your own protest material.



Activity ideas

Personal protest

As you go around Protest Lab, be inspired by the creative ways in which people have and continue to protest.

Discuss together your own ideas and take part in the following activities within the space.

Encourage creativity, there are no wrong answers!

1. Group discussions

What do people protest about?

What does protest look like?

How have you protested?

What object would you donate to the space and why?

2. What do you want to change?

Be inspired by the toolkits to design your own protest postcard with words and images about an issue that is important to you.

See the 'five things you could do with your protest postcard' information in the Protest Lab to find out how you can spread your message.

Activity ideas

Simple drama techniques

As you go around the exhibition, bring historical figures to life and provoke empathy with past events using these role playing techniques.

Pick characters from the historical figures referred to in the displays.

Encourage creativity, there are no wrong answers!

1. Hot-seating

One person adopts the role of a certain character. Other members of the group ask questions of the character. The person in role responds to the questions with answers consistent with the character.

Example: Portrait of Hugh Hornby Birley, captain of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry

2. Freeze frame or tableaux

Where group members recreate a 'picture' or scene in a held pose. Consider the characters in a chosen picture. Use your body and facial expression to represent how the character may be feeling.

Example: Picturing Protest photo wall

3. Thought tracking

One person poses as a particular character and another person comes and puts their hand on the character's shoulder and speaks in the first person as that character; it could be what the character is thinking or feeling about a difficult situation they may be in.

Example: Mrs Mabbott's dress

4. Conscience alley

Ask the group to think about how a character might be feeling about a particular situation or issue. Choose a member of the group to be the character. The group forms two lines facing each other and the character walks down the middle. The group speak the thoughts of the character as they walk past.

Example: George Cruikshank after producing the print, *Universal Suffrage or the Scum Uppermost* in July 1819

Activity ideas

See, link, wonder

As you go around the exhibition, bring objects to life using these conversation starters. Create links between the objects and their everyday lives.

Encourage creativity, there are no wrong answers!

1. See

What do you first notice?

What does it remind you of?

What clues can you find out about its age or function?

2. Link

What interests or surprises you most about it?

Does it look like anything you recognise?

What do you already know about it?

How do you think it might work?

3. Wonder

What else would you like to know about it?

What would a relative or friend say about it?

How could you find out more?

How to book a session

People's History Museum offers an engaging Learning Programme, providing opportunities for early years, schools, colleges, universities, adult and community groups, and families to learn about, be inspired by and get involved in ideas worth fighting for; ideas such as equality, social justice, co-operation, and a fair world for all.

Groups can book a range of sessions from interactive storytelling, drama performances and artist-led workshops, to creative writing and walking tours.

Here are a selection that would support a visit to this exhibition:



Living History: *Peterloo*

Join Edward, a newspaper editor who is reporting on the Peterloo Massacre on 16 August 1819. Uncover the story of the day by meeting two very different eyewitnesses and decide for yourself why the peaceful protest turned into violence. Suitable for age 7+

pARTicipate sessions: The Art of Protest and Print Power

How and why do people protest? Look at historical and contemporary examples of protest art from PHM's collections. Working with an artist, participants will create their own protest art. Suitable for age 9+



Creative Writing

This workshop uses poetry and spoken word to explore how voice and language can bring about change. Inspired by political speeches and ordinary people's memories of moments that altered their lives and the world. A practical, fun and engaging way to enhance writing and speaking skills using rhythm, rhyme and rhetoric. Suitable for age 9+

Guided Tours

We offer guided tours of the main galleries and changing exhibitions. Tours can be tailored to your interests – just ask! Suitable for age 16+



For further information on PHM's full Learning Programme or to book a session, visit phm.org.uk/learn or contact the Learning Team on learning@phm.org.uk or 0161 838 9190.

Further information

People's History Museum resources

Further resources can be found: phm.org.uk/learn/peterloo/

NFC (Near Field Communication) tags

Where you see this sign:



You can use a contactless device to access websites to find out more about the themes explored in the exhibition.

If you do not have a NFC enabled device, you can access the information on PHM's website: phm.org.uk/exhibitions/disrupt-peterloo-and-protest



The Peterloo 2019 project

The Peterloo 2019 project has created a FREE History and Citizenship learning resources package aimed at Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4. The resources can be delivered by both schools and cultural organisations and are part of the bicentenary commemorations of the Peterloo Massacre across Greater Manchester in 2019.

This package of resources are mapped to the National Curriculum and are flexible enough to be delivered as part of mainstream subjects and by non-subject specialists. The resources, designed in collaboration with schools, teachers, and students, are available for download from the Peterloo 2019 website peterloo1819.co.uk from late April 2019.

This project has been co-created with The Politics Project and is supported and funded by Historic England, Parliament Education Service and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Practical information

Content

There is no graphic content in the exhibition but the documentary film does include silent excerpts from the 2018 film *Peterloo* which is rated 12A due to the moderate violence and language that it contains. The exhibition also displays a printed list of fatalities which includes details of how people were killed, for example crushed, sabred and truncheoned.

Objects

There are lots of opportunities to get involved and interact in the exhibition, however, some items are on open display and we kindly ask that you take care around these. Please refrain from touching or moving these objects.

Film

The documentary film is ten minutes long, includes subtitles and runs on a loop. The sounds play into the space. There are benches for visitors to sit down on.

Taking photographs

Photography without flash is allowed in the exhibition and we encourage sharing via social media on Twitter [@PHMMcr](#), Facebook [@PHMMcr](#) and Instagram [@phmmcr](#) using the hashtag #PHMPeterloo.

Health and safety

If the fire alarm sounds you will be shown to the nearest fire exit by a member of museum staff. In the exhibition this is located on the back wall and leads out to the pedestrian path by the River Irwell. The meeting point is outside the Civil Justice Centre, opposite the museum's main entrance on Left Bank.

Accessibility

Seating is provided in the exhibition. There is a large print guide, magnifier and colour overlays available near the exhibition's entrance. All film footage has subtitles. The exhibition is fully accessible. If you have any queries or require any assistance, please contact the museum in advance on 0161 838 9190.

Sensory sensitivities

The audio from the film can be heard throughout the exhibition. All other audio will be accessed via headphones. The exhibition space can get busy; if you require a quiet space during your visit ask any member of staff. Our usual quieter visiting times are Monday to Friday, 3.00pm – 5.00pm and Saturday and Sunday 10.00am – 12.00pm.

We advise that you contact the museum prior to your visit to help us best cater for your requirements on learning@phm.org.uk or 0161 838 9190.

Please only use pencil in the exhibition space.

No food or drink is allowed in the exhibition space.

Group bookings

The exhibition space can get busy. We advise all groups to book prior to their visit so you can get the most out of your time at the museum.

Protest Lab is an activity space and will sometimes be used for community workshops. During these times access may be limited.

Feedback

There are plenty of ways in which you can share your opinions or feedback throughout the exhibition:

- A comments book is available by the exhibition's exit
- Speak to a member of staff
- Phone 0161 838 9190
- Email exhibitions@phm.org.uk
- Twitter @PHMMcr
- Facebook @PHMMcr
- Instagram @phmmcr
- Write to us at the museum address below

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