

The March to Peterloo.



A performance in Song Drama and Poetry

Written by Ken Scally & Lawrence Hoy

with

Sheila Hinds, Ailish Kay-Murray, Jon Peet, Bernard Cromarty

Dave Gaskell, Steve Higgins, John Pearson, Tim Marris, Ken Scally,

Lawrence Hoy, Stephen Knowles.

Then fall in lads behind the drum
With colours blazing like the sun.
Along the road to come what may
Over the hills and far away.

Though kings and tyrants come and go
A soldier's life is all I know
I'll live to fight another day
Over the hills and far away.

Traditional adapted from the 1705 version by John Tams for Sharpe

Poem continued (Scally) Sheila acc Tim & Steve

More horses they were needed in this brutal bloody war
Quartermasters would take them from pit and mill and farm
the men of science and engineering had harnessed the power of steam
with engines, locomotives their like never was seen

The fire within the boilers, was the saviour of our country
But the power generated, brought mechanisation into industry
mass poverty for the people mass profit, for the few

The fire within the human heart brought the throng to Peterloo

Narrator. The new technologies were introduced to increased output. The Trade Guilds were hampering this. It would need a state of emergency to remove their power. Government agents were said to be stirring up the workers to destroy the new machines. Soon a frame breaking law, punishable by death or transportation was passed, but attacks intensified. The Luddite uprising had begun. In Yorkshire the invention of the shearing frame, ruined the cloth finishers or Croppers

3, (Song) The Croppers tale (K Scally) Dave Gaskell solo

1809 saw the shear frames appear
we had seen good times for many a year
but now we see empty cropping shops
in the county of Yorkshire, the trades been stopped
the government's been asked to regulate trade
but that's not how the brass is made
to reject the frames would be unwise
they just don't give a damn about people's lives

in the cropping shops unrest did grow
the shearing frames now they must go
a petition was sent to the government
but the house of commons would not relent
the fire was kindled in the county of York
in the hearts of the cropper lads fighting for work
1000 troops sent to Huddersfield
but no one will make the bold cropper lads yield (Sally)

Narration The trouble was spreading into Lancashire, the atmosphere was made worse by the implementation of the combination law. This was used to convict people combining in groups of three or more to discuss pay and conditions. Westhoughton mill introduced power looms and was attacked and fired by Lancashire luddites four men were on trial for their lives! One of them a twelve-year-old lad Abraham Charleston, had been charged with supplying the flame by lending the rioters a tinderbox.

4, (Song) Abraham Charleston D (LHoy) Steve Higgins (Solo)

Here's the story of a crippled boy: Abraham Charleston was his name
Who lagged behind the crowd: the poor boy being lame,
He felt the anger heavy in the air through voices loud and shrill
And he saw the Luddites gather round Westhoughton Cotton Mill

We will take the cruel owner's mill and smash it to the ground
We'll fan the flames of hell and we will burn it down
Though there's witnesses to mark our deed, there needs be no alarm
We'll use the flint and tinder from the boy for he may fear no harm

The deed was done, the fire was lit, the mill burnt to the ground
The men into the shadows went. Soon no-one was around
No witness there could state a name no man there to find
Except for little Abraham, the boy who limped behind

The Sovereign will have his way, justice must be done
Some poor soul he must pay; they must hang someone
The judge he is a cruel man for Abraham there is no hope
And he will face his Judgement Day upon the hangman's rope

When e're good men of character think of evil that's been done
Remember Abraham, the boy who couldn't run
In innocence he stands condemned, Abraham carries blame
And now he's on the gallows Tree. For the lending of a flame

Dialogue Spoken

Judge(Bernard) As presiding officer I must have silence. Prisoners! You have been found guilty of a serious crime. The destruction of a mill and the frames within. for this act you will pay the ultimate cost, and may the Lord have mercy upon thy souls". ... The sentence of this court is that you will be taken to the place of execution and there hanged by the neck until you are dead.

Mother spoken (Lish). No! My Abraham is just a child. What country murders children on such flimsy evidence.

5 (Song) The Mothers plea duet (L Hoy) Unaccompanied

Judge

“Silence in court: silence in court
Of me you’ll stand in awe
You’ll listen to me
Or in contempt you’ll be
For I have the force of law
I have the force of law!”

Mother

“Your honour, your honour I beg of you
For mercy unto me
My little lad
No malice he had
Please spare the gallows tree
Spare the gallows tree!”

Judge

“Be silent woman, know your place
Who are you to speak?
Hold your tongue
You do me wrong
No mercy should you seek
No mercy should you seek”

Mother

“Your honour, your honour is justice served
Within the hangman’s noose?
What e’er you do
I beg of you
His sentence to reduce
His sentence to reduce”

Judge

“Begone from me. Enough I say
You must no more harangue
You’ve wearied me
With this tiresome plea
The boy shall surely hang
The boy shall surely hang”

Spoken Bailiff arrest the harlot, and throw her in the cells, do not let her see the light of day for two weeks

Poem (Ernie Ford) Sheila ac' Tim and Dave

To Lancaster Jail these four were dispatched
And tried for this burning, it was said they had hatched
then as the bells started loudly clanging
they found their release was to end up in hanging

That lad Abraham Charleston cried for his mam
As he was led to the slaughter like an innocent lamb
And on the 15th of June these four paid the bill
For the burning that happened at Westhoughton mill

Narrator After the Napoleonic wars Britain was in recession. In the beginning of 1815, the Corn Laws were introduced they were tariffs on imported food and grain ("corn") They kept grain prices high to favour domestic producers, causing deprivation and poverty throughout Britain and Ireland. this led to large protests for the repeal of the corn laws, nick named the bread tax, industrial reform and political reform.

6, (Song) Weavers lament G (Trad) Bernard & full ensemble

You gentlemen and tradesmen, that ride about at will,
Look down on these poor people; it's enough to make you crill;
Look down on these poor people, as you ride up and down,
I think there is a God above will bring your pride quite down.

CHORUS: You tyrants of England, your race may soon be run,
You may be brought unto account for what you've sorely done.

When we look on our poor children, it grieves our hearts full sore,
Their clothing it is worn to rags, while we can get no more,
With little in their bellies, they to work must go,
Whilst yours do dress as swanky as monkeys in a show.

You go to church on Sundays, I'm sure it's nought but pride,
There can be no religion where humanity's thrown aside;
If there be a place in heaven, as there is in the Exchange,
Our poor souls must not come near there; like lost sheep they must range.

You say that Bonyparty he's been the spoil of all,
And that we have got reason to pray for his downfall;
Now Bonyparte's safe in Gaol, and it is plainly shown
That we have bigger tyrants and Boneyes of our own.

7, (Song) Bread Tax, the corn laws C. (Trad) Ken and Dave

G

Hopeless trader, answer me what hath bread tax done for thee
Hast thy lost thine owing debts, hast thy bankrupt throng all ate
Let the Yankee tariff tell, none to buy and none to sell
Starving workmen, warehouse full, sacks of grain and polish wool
Grown not now the wanted wheat, which we cannot buy to eat
Sell thy stock and realise let thy streets of chimneys rise.
And when bread tax ten or two, learn what bread tax rents can do

What hath bread tax done for thee, farmer want for thine and thee
Ask of those who toil to live and the price they cannot give.
Ask our hearts our gainless marts, ask our children's broken hearts
Ask thy mother sad and grey, destined yet to parish pay
Bread tax weaver all can see, what hath bread tax done for thee
And thy children vilely led, singing hymns to shame full bread
Till the shops on every street know their little naked feet. **dead stop on G**

Bread tax eating absentee what hast bread tax done for thee
Fill thy breast with hellish schemes, fill thy head with fatal dreams.
Of potatoes basely sold and the price of wheat is gold
Our poor Britons forced to eat wheat priced roots instead of wheat

Poem They tax our Bread Sheila acc Tim, Bernard & Dave

They tax our bread they eat our souls, they brutalise despair.
They mock the victims they imbrute, and cry what beasts they are
Their talk is still of guns and swords but soon their pride will see.
We need no swords to conquer slaves and set the tyrants free

That slaves they are and beggars too, by statute they declare
Rascals by act of parliament, behold what beasts they are.
Their hearts ring round with ignorance and fettered to disdain.
Fraud jails their souls, and meanness links, their lusts to follies chains.

We bought the lord the hat he wears, we bought his ladies gown.
We bought the squire his coach and four, but wish he'd use his own.
Arms let them talk of gun and lance, no gun or lance need we
To turn our fetters into swords and set the tyrants free

8. (Song) The road to Peterloo (L. Hoy)

Of all the injustice we have seen
Upon the many wrought by the few
Of the foulest, of crimes that there have been
High on that list be Peterloo (repeat line)
Ye low-born men must keep your place
You're born to work, you're born to be
At the bidding of the men of grace
Think ye not that ye be free. (repeat line)

Chorus 1

Get ye back to your factory's boys
Get ye back to your iron cage
Tis there you'll find your best employ
With your pick and shovel you should engage (repeat line)
And as for your women, take them to hand
Teach them the manners of a serving lass
Show them who is in command
Ye must make them stay as befits their class (repeat line)
Harlots, strummers, doxies, whores
Ye wenches stay below the stairs
Back to your kitchen, tend to your chores
Ye know but naught of men's affairs (repeat line)

Chorus 2

Get ye back to your chamber, maid
Get ye back to your kitchen range

Tis there you'll find you should have stayed
With your cloth and your mop, you should engage (repeat line)
Now men of means must aye look out
And in privilege we will rejoice
Let no low-born harridan cast doubt
Be they harsh of manner, loud of voice (repeat line)
For fortune is a God-given right
No agitator shall question same
The forces of the sovereign's might
Will strike forthwith against your name (repeat line)

Chorus 3

Get ye back and remember clear
Heed not the braggart nor the witch's brew
For you will find the cost be dear
Upon the fields of Peterloo (repeat line)

(Speech) Sheila to take centre stage –Tim incidental violin music

Tis not right that we endure these hardships
No work for any of our men
The soldiers come back from Waterloo and take what work there is
Aye – or they're reduced to begging in the streets
No work for any in our station
Aye – then that is such, as we are reduced to begging in the streets
What on earth can such as we, do about it? We are but women: we have no voice!
We must be dutiful and tend to our own chores: support our menfolk
Support our menfolk??? Yes, and not by tending to chores ladies, not by taking up our
rightful station!
No: we will support our men by using our voices
Pause, hecklers, angry voices. Rubbish, away, fie, et-cetra
Why shouldn't we have a voice?
Why shouldn't women have a say in what happens?
Most men don't have a say, that's why: think on it!
Aye – think on it: all men should have a say

Aye – all men and all women too

Pause Offstage: Angry voices from male cast (ad lib – along these lines)

Get back to where you came from

Scullery maids: who gives you the right to speak? get back to the gutter.

Whores, strumpets, the lot of you. Way above your station.

On Stage Militia (Ken): Woman! I've heard enough of this seditious talk. You meddle in men's affairs at thy peril

Sheila: Men's affairs? What makes them men's affairs? Are we not hungry too? Do we not see our children starving? Are not our bellies not also empty?

Narrator The die was cast, no more injustice! The combination laws must go, the corn laws must be repealed, we must have the right to form trade unions, we need political reform and votes for all. The march began from the industrial towns to Henry hunts meeting of the reformists at St Peters field

9, (Song.) With Henry Hunt we'll go D. (trad) Ken vocal, Bernard Accordion Tim violin, everyone in chorus

Chorus

With Henry Hunt we'll go, my boys, with Henry Hunt we'll go,
We'll mount the cap of Liberty, to Peters field we'll go.

The sixteenth day of August eighteen hundred and nineteen
A meeting held on Peters field was glorious to be seen
Joe Nadin and his big bulldogs, as you could plainly see
and on the other side was the bloody cavalry

From Wigan, Oldham, Bolton and from other places too,
It was the largest meeting that reformers ever knew.
There many thousand people on every road were seen
The ladies in white dresses with leaves of laurel green

from Stockport town and Ashton, the mill folk all came in
they all behaved with honour bright the meeting to begin
upon the field they all did meet like heroes of renown
in all the British nation our match cannot be found

So, here's success to Henry hunt may he keep hale and strong
And likewise, all his colleagues, may they all live long
and let us not forget the day when we held up our hand
and hope to flourish once again all in our native Land
Henry Hunts speech to the crowd (Lawrence Hoy).....
Followed by.

Dialogue the upstairs window in Mount Street

Magistrate Hulton, Parson Hayes, the crowd is getting larger! it is an insolent challenge to the peace of the town from the lower orders. Please read the riot act!

Parson Hayes. But, sir, no-one will hear it, only us with the tumult outside?

Magistrate Hulton. Exactly parson! Captain ready your cavalry, and arrest Henry hunt and his conspirator's, then disperse the crowd with any means available

Colonel. But sir many of my men have been drinking they may lose control?

Magistrate Hulton All the better captain! Get them in formation and arrest Hunt; as I said. Any means available!

Colonel. YES! your worship!

Magistrate Hulton Well Parson! **Hayes begins to read the riot act, the dialogue fades, the music starts**

10, (Song) The Peterloo massacre D. Harvey Kershaw, Music The Oldham Tinkers

Jon Vocals guitar ensemble to come in on first chorus

In Peter's field in Manchester in year 1819
Cotton folk of Lancashire in protest did combine
Corn laws had brought the crippling tax
The price of food near broke folks' backs
And set alight the smouldering flax
And bristled many a spine

Chorus:

Salute once more these men of yore
Who were to conscience true?
And gave their blood for common good
On the fields at Peterloo

Sixteenth day of August brought the sound of marching feet
When workers Sixty thousand strong in Peter's field did meet
In Mount Street from an upstairs room, the magistrates looked down with gloom
And scoffed their rabble o the loom – vengeance, they vow, 'tis sweet

Then Riot Act were garbled out at Parson Hayes command
For this here Rochdale vicar made with richest living in land
But folk at meeting never knew 'bout Riot Act till bugles blew
And mounted Redcoats come in view, their sabres in their hands

These soldiers mowed folk down like flies, their sabres dripped with blood
They spared no man nor woman's cry, but pierced them where they stood
Many dead that day were named and hundreds more were ripped and maimed
While tyrants watching unashamed said it would do em' good

Poem (Trad) Sheila to accompaniment Tim Bernard Dave and Steve

The soldiers came onto the ground and thousands tumbled down
And many helpless women lay bleeding on the ground.
No time for flight was gave to us, still every road we fled.
There were such heaps of trampled down, some wounded and some dead.

Brave Hunt was then arrested and several others too.
They marched us to the New Bailey, believe me it is true
And numbers there was wounded and many there was slain
Which makes the friends of those dear souls so loudly to complain.

Oh God above look down on those for Thou art just and true
And those that can no mercy show thy vengeance is their due.
Now quit this hateful mournful scene, look forward with this hope
That every murderer in this land may swing upon a rope.

11, (Song) St. Peter's field A (Janet Russell) Lish and John ensemble

G C D G
St Peter's fields in Manchester, on a day we need not name.
 C G EM
in the blazing summer sunshine, the working people came.
 G C G EM
And the women they were dressed in white, wearing leaves of laurel green.
 G C D G
On Peter's fields in Manchester, 18 hundred and 19.
 C D G
Someone tell me how it happened; I know even less than you.
 C G EM
Their sabres drawn and sharpened, sixty thousand pushing through.
 G C G EM
We were standing in the front line, still I can't believe it's true
. G C D G
I saw her eyes, she saw mine. She was dead before she knew.

C D G

Sarah Jones, she has been slaughtered on the fields of Peterloo.

C G EM

And the red upon the green grass sparkles like the morning dew.

G C G EM

the tears roll down like water to wash the blood from you.

G C D G

Martha Partington has been slaughtered on the fields of Peterloo.

And when you wake up in the in the morning, thank the star that shines on you,
that the likes of Mary Hayes always do the things they do.

Now the green leaves of the laurel turn a red and deathly hue.

Margaret Downes has been slaughtered on a street not far from you.

She will die again tomorrow, just as she died yesterday.

She will die until the sorrow and the chains are swept away.

Now the green leaves of the laurel turn a red and deathly hue.

These brave women have been slaughtered on the fields of Peterloo.

Narrative

After the drunken yeomen, the cavalry, infantry and special constables, had finished their gruesome work. many peaceful protesters were dead, hundreds more lay injured, many with sabre wounds, many trampled by horses. The powers that be, were quite satisfied by the outcome. The people were hurt, mourning and feeling abandoned, optimism replaced with fear and anger. It is now believed that there were eighteen deaths at Peterloo, and more than six hundred were injured, many permanently. The injuries were mostly caused by sabre cuts, trampling by horses, or both. Those who died were John Ashton, John Ashworth, William Bradshaw, Thomas Buckley, Robert Campbell, James Crompton, Edmund Dawson, Margaret Downes, William Evans, two-year-old William Fildes, Samuel Hall, Mary Heyes, Sarah Jones, John Lees, Arthur O'Neill, Martha Partington, John Rhodes and Joseph Whitworth. Elizabeth Gaunt's unborn child miscarried after her brutal beating on the field and her subsequent arrest.

Magistrate William Hulton resigned from public office, claiming that only two people had died at Peterloo. Rev. Hayes became the highly profitable Vicar of Rochdale. Hugh Birley became the first President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. Henry Hunt went to prison in Ilchester for two and a half years.

13 Ellas song, We who believe in freedom A (Bernice Johnson Reagon)

Ist verse and chorus Lish and Jon with full ensemble on chorus

G

D

We who believe in freedom (PAUSE) we cannot rest

G

We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes

D

Until the killing of poor men, poor mothers' sons

G

Is as important as the killing of rich men, rich mothers' sons

That which touches me most Is that I had a chance to work with people

Passing on to others that which was passed on to me

To me young people must come first They have the courage where we fail

And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through the gale

Chorus

The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on

Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare to run against the storm

Not needing to clutch for power Not needing the light just to shine on me

I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny

Chorus

Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot, I've come to realize

That teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives

I'm a woman who speaks in a voice and I must be heard

At times I can be quite difficult, I'll bow to no man's word

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-exa8zHRtw>

Finale Narrator

The reform act only came in 1832, a full fourteen years after Peterloo. But the hated corn laws were only repealed in 1846. That was almost twenty-eight years after Peterloo, and that was with an intervention from Queen Victoria, against the wishes of the government. The Representation of People Act came in 1928, it was an important law because it allowed women over thirty to vote for the very first time. It also allowed all men over the age of 21 to vote too. Before this law, women weren't allowed to vote in general elections at all. Some men could vote, but not all of them - for example, a man had to have property in order to be able to vote, so it excluded people who weren't as wealthy. that was 99 and a half years after Peterloo. The struggle for justice must still go on today. We watch the news, and still see heart breaking events, unfold before our eyes, which could be prevented. Please use your votes, those people died for them, and also use your voice. Please sing with us, the final song that is synonymous with protest. A contemporary take on an old Baptist hymn, adopted by the civil rights movement in the mid 50's this song is sang wherever people protest social injustice.

14, (Song) We shall overcome Bb (Rev. Charles A Tindley 1900, adapted Lucille Simmons 1946)

Vocals. verses and chorus, 1st line Ailish, 2nd line Ailish & Lawrence, third and fourth lines full ensemble

Music First verse Jon Guitar all other verses full ensemble musicians

Final Chorus full ensemble unaccompanied vocals

We shall overcome We shall overcome
We shall overcome, someday
Oh, deep in my heart I do believe
We shall overcome, someday

We'll walk hand in hand We'll walk hand in hand
We'll walk hand in hand, some day
Oh, deep in my heart
I do believe
We shall overcome, someday

Chorus

We shall live in peace We shall live in peace
We shall live in peace, someday
Oh, deep in my heart
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day

Chorus

We are not afraid We are not afraid We are not afraid, TODAY
Oh, deep in my heart I do believe
we shall overcome, some day

Cast

Sheila Hinds, Poetry and Drama

Ailish Kay-Murray, Vocals Drama

Jon Peet, Guitar Vocals Drama

Bernard Cromarty Accordion Vocals Drama

Dave Gaskell, Vocals Guitar

Steve Higgins, Vocals Guitar

John Pearson, Narrator

Tim Marris, Violin Drama

Ken Scally, Vocals mandolin Drama

Lawrence Hoy, Vocals Bass, Guitar, Drama

Stephen Knowles, Graphics, effects.

Written by Ken Scally and Lawrence Hoy