

Some of Sheffield's Past Campaigners

Samuel Holberry (The right to vote)

1816 - 1842

In the 1832 elections, of 43,458 adults in Sheffield, only 3,504 men were eligible to vote. A disturbance broke out following a demonstration on the Haymarket (the location of the old Castle Market), and troops opened fire on the crowd. Three men and two boys were killed, increasing resentment against local government and strengthening the campaign for the vote.

The Sheffield Working Men's Association, was established in December 1837, adopting the People's Charter which stated that,

'The working classes produced the rich man's wealth, while being oppressed by unjust and unequal laws'

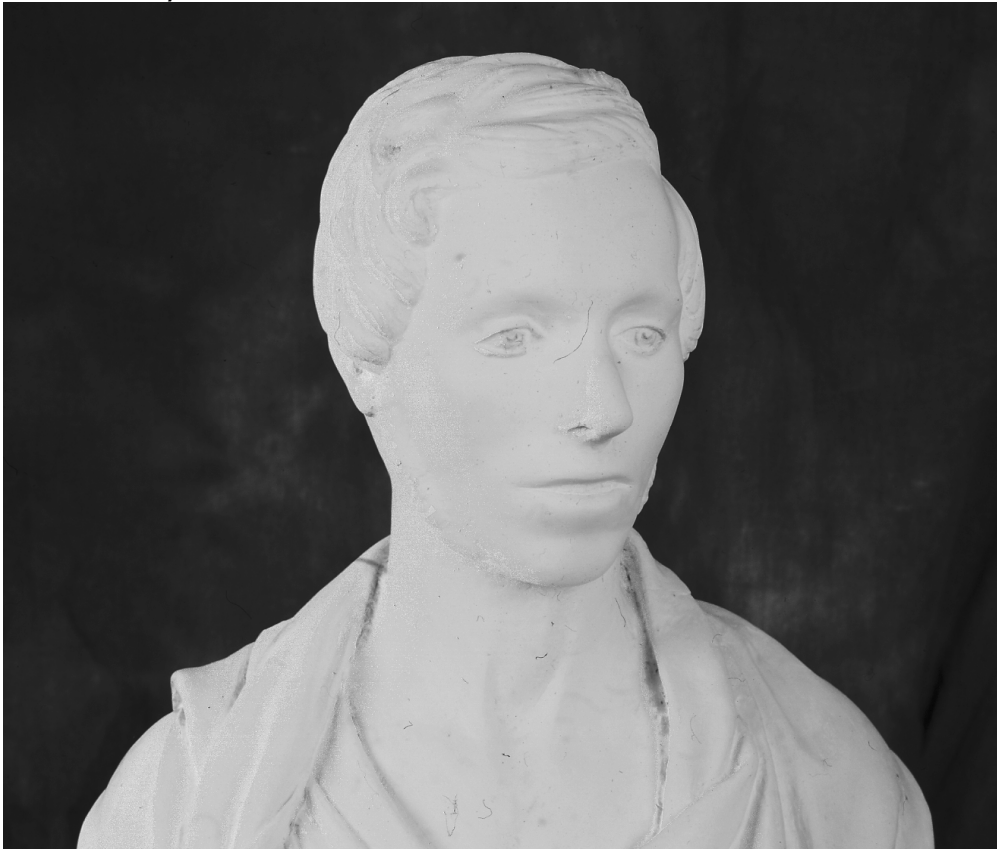
The Association's meetings and demonstrations were well attended and peaceful, but in July 1839 local magistrates banned the gatherings. On 12 August 1839, thousands of workers and their families ignored the ban and paraded through town, finally gathering in Paradise Square.

Troops were called in to break up the meeting, and a riot began. Around 70 demonstrators and several speakers were arrested.

Membership grew after the riot and meetings and marches were held on a daily basis with regular disturbances in the town centre. A more radical faction of the group, known as the Chartists and led by Samuel Holberry, planned an armed uprising in Sheffield. The daring plan involved taking control of the Old Town Hall and other town centre locations. Unfortunately for these Sheffield Chartists, the authorities found out about the plot and Holberry and his colleagues were arrested.

Samuel Holberry was sentenced to four years imprisonment with hard labour and died in prison at York Castle on 21 June 1842.

Samuel Holberry



Artist Unknown (made in tribute to him after his death)

On the day of Holberry's funeral, shops closed, and thousands of people lined the streets to follow the procession to the General Cemetery. Holberry's funeral encouraged new interest in Chartism, and membership of the Sheffield Working Men's Association grew.

Chartism took its name from the People's Charter, which had six points:

1. The right for all men over 21 to vote for an MP.
2. All areas of the country to be properly represented in parliament.
3. Annual elections for parliamentary seats.
4. Payment of MPs so that any man, can afford to become one.
5. The freedom to vote without fear of reprisals.
6. The right to become an MP without the need to own a large amount of land.