

The Leicester Riots of 1773 and 1787: a study of the victims of popular protest

by David L. Wykes

In recent years, social historians have paid considerable attention to studies on popular protest. Indeed, the present interest in examining the origins of working-class movements in this country would hardly have been possible without such work.¹ The weight of research, as a result, has rather naturally fallen on studies of popular protest during the first half of the nineteenth century, in particular on the outstanding disturbances such as the machine-breaking outrages of 1811–16, the Reform Bill riots of 1831 and the Chartist riots of 1839 and 1842.² Although much of the work on popular protest has been concerned with this later period, a number of independent studies have been made for the eighteenth century. The work has been mainly on provincial food riots and industrial disorders (generally with reference to London),³ and on radical reform movements and movements directed against radical reformers (especially ‘Church and King’ riots).⁴

Work on popular disturbances in Leicestershire reflects this emphasis, and the main concern has been with Luddites and early trade union activity.⁵ Studies on the beginning of trade unionism in Leicester have led to an examination of eighteenth-century riots in the town in the hope of providing some information on early trade combinations and similar activities,⁶ but there are details of disturbances in the second half of the eighteenth century worth considering in themselves, particularly in the light of more recent studies on crowd behaviour.

This paper is mainly concerned with the ‘Whetstone Riots’ of 1787, the second of two major outrages of machine-breaking that occurred during the final half of the eighteenth century. They were not only more serious than the riots of 1773, but revealed a number of more complex and far-reaching features. As part of a larger study into nonconformists in the trade and industry of Leicester, this investigation will examine mainly the victims of the riots, who in both incidents were nonconformists, rather than those taking part, although as far as the material allows, the composition of the crowds will not be neglected. Unfortunately, the sources available are insufficient to provide the necessary detail to enable the approach pioneered by Professor Rudé in his work on ‘Faces in the Crowd’ to be used in this case. There is nothing comparable with the records made by the Parisian Police or those relating to Australian convicts.⁷ The reason for a local study of this nature is that an examination of the crowd’s behaviour and the reaction of the authorities to the disorders helps to provide an early view of the division that

developed towards the end of the eighteenth century between the town's High Anglican Tory Corporation and the radical, mainly nonconformist, manufacturers and leading tradesmen, who were in opposition.

The earlier of the two riots was occasioned by an attempt, in March 1773, to introduce an improved stocking-frame of simpler, and thus cheaper, construction developed by a Scottish mechanic. This improved stocking-frame was offered to a number of Leicester hosiers of whom two accepted and agreed to seek a patent. It is not entirely clear who the two hosiers were, but one was almost certainly John Goode (c. 1725–1785) and the other probably Nathaniel Simpson (1741–1784), both of Shambles Lane (later St. Nicholas Street).⁸ Both Goode and Simpson were prominent members of the Presbyterian (later Unitarian) Great Meeting. Rumours quickly spread giving the new machine greatly exaggerated capabilities. It was said that the new stocking-frame, operated by one man, could do as much work as 60 people and that a dozen stockings could be made at once; and there were other equally extravagant statements.⁹ The correspondent in the *Gentleman's Magazine* had heard that the new machine was a third quicker than the existing stocking-frames.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, on the basis of these rumours, considerable concern developed amongst the framework-knitters and other wage-earners, particularly as there had been a series of harvest failures since 1770, with food scarce and at high prices. Indeed, only two weeks earlier, in February 1773, 44 of the principal Leicester hosiers had agreed to maintain the level of wages prevailing at Christmas 1772, from the end of February for three months.¹¹

A large crowd, said to be over a thousand people,¹² had gathered in the Market Place by about 9.00 a.m. on Monday, the 15th March, including not only workers from the town, but also many from the surrounding countryside. The disturbance apparently began at about 10 a.m. after a football was kicked into the air. The Mayor quickly arrived to try to end the uproar and was joined by one of the proprietors of the new stocking-frame, who spoke to the crowd denying that the invention would lead to any unemployment, and he suggested a public demonstration to prove him right, and to allow them to examine the new invention. He even promised to give the stocking-frame up to be destroyed should it in fact prove to be to their detriment. During the lull the new machine was taken to the Exchange, but just before it was ready to be operated the mob erupted, forced themselves into the Exchange and seized the stocking-frame. After parading the machine round the town, it was pulled to pieces and the parts thrown into the crowd. Presumably overawed by the violence of the mob, the hosiers agreed to a meeting where they promised they would neither seek patents nor make any new stocking-frames that might reduce the numbers employed in the industry. After this the crowd quietly dispersed. The *Journal* was not slow to point out their folly in refusing even to *see* an improvement offered to them, and printed a letter from a correspondent which pointed out the advantages the new frame would have offered the framework-knitters. He said that he understood the new frame to be of a simpler construction, but at the same time capable of a greater variety and range, making possible both fine and

coarse work on the same frame. He pointed out that with a simpler construction each frame would be cheaper to buy and repair, and perhaps of more importance; since most stocking-frames were hired, the frame rents would be correspondingly lower.¹³

The attitude of the Leicester workers in 1773 was typical of many others in similar disturbances. Before the end of the eighteenth century, with the general absence of even primitive trade unions, the withdrawal of labour was rare, and although peaceful agitation occurred to solve industrial disputes in the traditional form by Parliamentary petitions, they were an expensive process that lacked the immediacy of the moment. Acts of violence to coerce the employer tended to be the commonest form of social protest, with trade disputes frequently developing into riots, either to provide pressure to maintain or raise the prices paid by the hosiers for finished articles, or, as in this case, because of hostility towards the introduction of new machines for fear of unemployment.¹⁴ Indeed, the worker, '... having no political rights, had no other means of redress of grievance than resort to the traditional riot'.¹⁵

Leicester had become the centre of the Midland worsted hosiery trade by the second half of the eighteenth century, and the only source of yarn was from the domestic hand-spinners, which led to difficulties and shortages at certain seasons. In 1787, a partnership was formed to exploit a new invention for spinning worsted yarn by machinery, based on an improvement involving the application of Arkwright's principle of cotton-spinning to wool, where the use of rollers was particularly suited to worsted spinning.¹⁶ The three partners involved with the new invention were John Coltman (1727-1808), a prominent hosier,¹⁷ and Joseph Whetstone (c. 1725-1811), a master woolcomber employing between a thousand and fifteen hundred combers, both leading members of the Presbyterian Great Meeting, together with the inventor, Joseph Brookhouse (1758-1831), who was also a member of the congregation.

Perhaps recalling the disturbances that followed the earlier attempt to introduce a new machine, Coltman and his associates chose Market Harborough as the location for their new spinning venture, away from the traditional areas of hosiery manufacture. If this was an attempt to reduce the concern of the workforce in the Leicester handtrade, then it was unsuccessful. The uneasiness expressed was such that one of the proprietors of the new invention (probably Coltman) felt it necessary to meet the hand-spinners on Wednesday evening, the 28th November 1787, to try to allay their fears. The next day he placed an advertisement in the *Journal* to support his arguments with an explanation in some detail. He proposed as a compromise that the partners would limit the number of spindles worked for two years, and even promised they would lay aside the invention until similar machines were adopted by their competitors. This appeal failed to settle the fears of the spinners, who held a general meeting of fellow-workers in their branch of the trade to consider 'the bad consequence that might result from a certain NEW-INVENTED MACHINE for Spinning-wool', to organise an opposition, and to find support for 'the present mode of trade, against all detrimental INNOVATIONS'.¹⁸

The disturbances began on Saturday night, the 1st December, with an attack on Joseph Whetstone's house in Northgate Street, but by about 11 o'clock the rioters had moved on to attack John Coltman's house in Shambles Lane, where they smashed all the windows facing on to the street. The Coltmans had been warned of the mob's approach just before its arrival by one of their workmen, and Mrs. Coltman, with her daughter, Elizabeth, and her youngest son, Rowland, was able to escape over the garden wall half-dressed. John Coltman tried to reason with the mob in front of the house, but was forced to retreat for his own safety. He then went to seek John Goode (1757-1837), son of one of the victims of the riots of 1773, for assistance to help rouse a neighbouring magistrate. After an hour, in which the doors and shutters were damaged, as well as the windows broken, the mob returned to Whetstone's house. Although Whetstone attempted to prevent the destruction of his property by firing into the mob, in which at least one person was injured seriously enough to be taken to the Infirmary and a number of others hurt, the rioters managed to force their way into the house and warehouse which they proceeded to loot. Whetstone's stock of worsted was thrown into the street and destroyed, together with his stocks of soap and a cask of galipoly oil (used in spinning worsted), while much of the rest of his raw materials and utensils were pilfered. Joseph Whetstone, fearing the mob might break into the upper storey of his house, escaped only with some difficulty by climbing down a windlass rope into his backyard.¹⁹ The uproar was eventually ended by the arrival of the Mayor, who after the riot act was read, allegedly said to the crowd, 'Good boys, you have done enough, you had better give over and go home!'²⁰

The following day, Sunday, a meeting was held in the Exchange by the Mayor and magistrates together with 'many considerable inhabitants'. They resolved that all persons arrested on suspicion of rioting should stand trial and that every measure possible should be taken to suppress the disturbances, after which they enrolled a number of additional constables.²¹ On Monday, many more constables were created; there were said to be almost as many as 500, but the town still remained very restless, although serious trouble was averted that night and little damage was done.²² The Coltmans, in view of the continuing unrest, removed all their stock-in-trade and furniture to various houses belonging to their friends, and with the Whetstones left Leicester for a fortnight. Brookhouse was also forced by the violence to leave the town, but as the inventor of the new machine he was in particular exposed to the crowd's abuse, having his effigy burnt by the mob, and unlike his fellow-partners, he was not able to return to live in his native town.²³ The violence was far worse the following night and during the attack on one of a number of different houses (probably belonging to other leading nonconformist manufacturers), Robert Dickinson, the Mayor, was seriously injured with a large stone thrown by one of the rioters, while trying to read the Riot Act. Two constables were also badly injured. This attack on the Mayor finally motivated the authorities to take the stronger action necessary. Assistance from soldiers, which had constantly been sought by the victims before and during the riots, was at last sent for, and a reward of a hundred

guineas offered for the conviction of the person guilty of injuring the Mayor and a further fifty guineas for a conviction against whoever had injured the two constables.²⁴

Despite these measures, the disturbances continued. On Wednesday evening, around 150 workers, on the basis of a rumour, went to Market Harborough and on arrival, at about half-past eight at night, they broke into a house containing Brookhouse's spinning machine, which they then proceeded to burn in the market-place there. They apparently committed no other damage and returned home directly to Leicester.²⁵ Thomas Lewin, Brookhouse's brother-in-law and former partner, sufficiently disturbed by the events, placed an advertisement in the *Journal*, dated the same day, the 5th December, declaring that he never had nor ever intended to have a spinning machine. Lewin had placed his brother-in-law in prison for debt when he had failed to perfect his new method of spinning worsted as soon as he had been engaged to do so.²⁶ His public denial did little good, for a large crowd of workmen left Leicester for Melton Mowbray on Friday morning, the day before the *Journal* was published, to seek a spinning machine about which they had information. They were met, however, on the bridge into Melton by a party of soldiers who prevented the crowd from carrying out its violent intentions, but the machine was handed over voluntarily by the owner, and so destroyed. Although it cannot be determined who owned the surrendered machine, if, as seems most likely, the individual was Lewin, there must be speculation as to whether he had developed his own improvement or pirated Brookhouse's.²⁷ This appears to have been the last serious disturbance caused by the workers in connection with the attempted introduction of spinning machinery in 1787.²⁸

It is worth considering at this point in detail some of the issues and consequences resulting from the ten days of rioting and unrest. A short article in the *Gentleman's Magazine* on the proceedings, reported smugly that the Mayor and magistrates, with the assistance of the specially appointed constables, were able to put an end to the disturbances without requiring military assistance.²⁹ This view concerning the efforts made by the authorities to end the disturbances contradicts those expressed by some of the nonconformist victims. It is clear that Coltman and Whetstone were sufficiently forewarned of the disturbances before they began, to take action to seek the protection of the authorities. Mrs. Coltman, in her letter to Miss Gifford a fortnight after the troubles, wrote that the Mayor, as Chief Magistrate, was applied to for protection in the middle of the preceding week and again at about 5 o'clock on the night of the first attack (1st December).³⁰ Indeed, Samuel Coltman, John Coltman's second son, states in his memoirs that the magistrates actually refused to provide protection until the partners had signed an agreement, drawn up by the authorities, promising not to conduct any worsted spinning by machinery within 50 miles of Leicester. No help was forthcoming to the injured parties until after they had been compelled to accept the Corporation's ban. By the time the Mayor arrived on the first night of rioting, Whetstone's house had been entered and most of the contents pilfered or destroyed.³¹ Following the first assault, Coltman and

Whetstone made several further appeals for military aid, but to no effect until Robert Dickinson, the Mayor, was injured.³² Dickinson never fully recovered and died in September 1788 as a result of his injuries a few days before the end of his term in office.³³

Much of the explanation of the hesitant, if not negligent, behaviour of the Borough Magistrates lies not only in the fact that they were members of the Corporation, but also in the nature and cause of the riots and the division that had developed between the High Anglican Tory Corporation and the middle-class conspicuously dissenting manufacturers who opposed it. There is much evidence that the disturbances, which started, at first anyway, as the hostile reaction of the spinners in the hand-trade against attempts to introduce mechanisation into their branch of the industry, developed into an assault on nonconformists in general. In the nightly alarms which followed the initial riot, the mob's party street-cry during their attacks on the property of dissenters in general was 'No Presbyterians, No machines'.³⁴ Coltman's and Whetstone's fellow-members of the Great Meeting represented too obvious a target for the abuse and prejudice of the mob, not only as their friends and associates, but because many of them represented the same successful group of worsted spinners and hosiery manufacturers in the town.

During the final quarter of the eighteenth century, the division, between the corporation party and the opposing, mainly nonconformist, interests, grew much fiercer, wider and more rigid; particularly since the nonconformists, as many of the town's most prominent and wealthy manufacturers and tradesmen, became increasingly more bitter about their exclusion from civic office and active in their attempts to remedy the situation, through campaigning for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. The Corporation quite correctly interpreted these reform movements, intensifying after the 1780s, as a threat to their own position, and naturally were to view them with great hostility.³⁵ Combined with their political and religious antipathy towards nonconformists, the majority of the Corporation were probably already sympathetic towards the workers in their disputes with the hosiers and worsted manufacturers; an element in their political complexion to become clearer in the first few decades of the nineteenth century.³⁶ No doubt they shared some of the wage-earners' hostility towards the introduction of machinery and their fears concerning unemployment and the problems of maintaining their customary standard of living, although the Corporation's views on their traditional duty to safeguard property must have been sorely strained. In addition there were members of the Corporation who were also manufacturers and who, like many others, did not wish to see technical innovation outdate their existing processes. They would have been anxious to avoid all the attendant difficulties that would have arisen from the introduction of a successful spinning machine.³⁷ Robert Dickinson, the Mayor, was a hosier as was Robert Peach, who after Dickinson's injury deputised at the many public meetings held following the riots, and seconded a motion 'that a petition be presented to Parliament to prohibit the use of machines'.³⁸ It is also perhaps worth noting that it was Peach who was Mayor in 1773. The only other hosier Mayor between 1773 and 1787 was Henry

Watchorn in 1780, who succeeded Dickinson in 1788 on his second term.³⁹ This picture of the interests and sympathies of the members of the Corporation does much to explain the reluctance of the authorities to provide protection for Coltman and Whetstone, and for their fellow Dissenters whose property was attacked.

Whetstone obviously felt that little had been done by the authorities, not only to prevent the disturbances in the first place, but afterwards to apprehend those involved. Only two individuals, after ten days' disorder and damage, were prosecuted for their part in the riots at the Borough Sessions in January, 1788. Robert Burrows, a labourer, was charged with stealing a wooden soap-tub from Joseph Whetstone, but acquitted through lack of evidence; and John Allen, a framework knitter, indicted for riotous assembly, who was accused of trying to incite a riot by carrying about a spinning-wheel dressed in ribbons, but was also acquitted. It was perhaps not surprising that a jury, drawn from the inhabitants of the Borough, was sympathetic towards those accused of attacking the nonconformist manufacturers involved in introducing a new spinning machine.⁴⁰ Following his return to Leicester, Whetstone placed an advertisement in the *Journal* on the 22nd December, that appeared weekly for nearly two months, offering an additional £10 reward, to the £40 offered by Parliament, for information leading to a conviction.⁴¹ Following the lack of result, Whetstone on the 26th January added to his original statement, and took the opportunity to deny the reports that he intended to reduce the amount of fine and super-worsted he had spun by his spinners. Clearly rumours were still circulating in an attempt to discredit Whetstone by suggesting he intended to employ fewer hand-spinners.⁴² Whetstone was also active in seeking compensation from the Corporation. His counsel, John Balguy (1747–1833) of Duffield (the native village of Mrs. Coltman), who was later Recorder of Derby from 1791 until 1830, was said to have unsparingly exposed the Corporation's incompetence in suppressing the riots. At the subsequent Summer Assizes, Whetstone won his action to recover damages against the Magistrates of the Borough for the losses he had sustained during the first night of riots, and was awarded £250.⁴³

Although we know the victims were members of the group of prosperous dissenting manufacturers, little can be discovered directly concerning the composition of the crowd in the disturbances of 1787, other than contemporary sources suggest they were mainly employed in the hand spinning and allied trades. The only direct evidence is provided by the indictment of the two individuals prosecuted for their part in the proceedings; one was a framework-knitter and the other a labourer as already mentioned. Walton, concerned with a study of the early history of trade-unionism in Leicester, saw the disturbance as an example of direct action by the hand-spinners, and suggested it was 'indicative of the capacity of working people to combine, if only for a short time'.⁴⁴ Similarly, Walton felt the riots in 1773 were, from the crowds who were gathered in Leicester on the same day from both county and town and the start of the disorder 'signalled' by the kicking of a football into the air, an obvious example of organisation and

preparation, and not so much a spontaneous outbreak of anger.⁴⁵ Professor Rudé's views concerning crowd behaviour during this period are rather different. He points out that the unrest was rarely confined to a single group but involved a 'mixed' class of people drawn from the town's 'lower set of people', the wage-earners and master craftsmen.⁴⁶ In answer to Walton's view that the disturbances of 1773 were not spontaneous but organised, it can be said that the extensive network of agents and middlemen between Leicester and the surrounding countryside, required by the domestic or putting-out system of the hosiery trade, as well as the links between market and village, could serve as a vehicle for rumour just as effectively. The fear, generated by the wildness of the rumours, served in turn to stimulate the disturbances. In this light, the kicking of a football can be seen, rather than 'the prearranged signal', as the action of a few hot-headed individuals in the crowd.⁴⁷ Professor Rudé makes the point that the 'spontaneity' and lack of organisation recedes as trade unions and political parties develop. The common feature is the transformation of a disturbance from a relatively small beginning into a full-scale riot.⁴⁸ While it seems likely that members of the committee of 'Master Tradesmen in the Worsted Branch' provided a focal point for the initial unrest during the 1787 disturbances, and Allen, the framework-knitter accused of trying to incite a riot, may have been one of the ring-leaders, its rapid development from what had started as a protest against technical innovation into a wholesale riot against nonconformists in general, presumably removed the direction of the riots from their control. These riots exhibited many features of a popular disturbance, involving predominantly 'direct-action' activities, such as the burning of Brookhouse in effigy,⁴⁹ and the attempted 'pulling-down' of Coltman's and Whetstone's houses, and later those of other nonconformists.⁵⁰

The consequences of ten days' rioting, and the ban placed by the Corporation upon any machines operating within 50 miles of the Borough, was the driving out of Brookhouse and his invention from the county. The *Tory Journal* quickly recognised the dangers of this situation and pointed out that 'Two of these machines are said to have been already demolished, but the *Invention* is not destroyed; and from what appears at the present, this cannot so easily be accomplished—Violence and intemperate riot may prevent its operation, but may also *drive away the whole manufactory*, and transplant it to another place'.⁵¹ Some of those in authority also realised the risk. Edmund Wigley, the Recorder, in his address to the jury at the Borough Sessions before the trial of the two rioters who were prosecuted, remarked that 'a lawless mob in seeking unlawful redress, always defeated their own purpose, and would probably drive away the manufactory of this place to distant towns, where property would be preserved inviolate'.⁵² Which was precisely what occurred: worsted spinning continued in Leicester unmechanised for over ten years, while the new process was developed in Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Yorkshire and even as far north as Aberdeen. It was to these places that Leicester manufacturers, at the centre of the Midland worsted hosiery trade, had to send for yarn to make up the deficiencies of the local hand-spinners.⁵³

In a number of respects, the ten days of riots and unrest at Leicester in 1787 has some interesting parallels with the Priestley riots in Birmingham of 1791, when Joseph Priestley, the famous theologian and scientist, and his chief supporters were attacked by the 'Church and King' mob. Not only were the riots and destruction directed against the property of nonconformists on each occasion, but the authorities failed to supply in both cases the lawful protection against the mob requested, even going so far as to withhold assistance deliberately. In addition, very few rioters from either disturbance were prosecuted for their part in the disorders.⁵⁴ Although there is no evidence that the Leicester disturbances in 1773 were anything other than a protest against technical innovation, it was the same group of nonconformists who were the victims again in 1787.

The behaviour of the wage-earners and their fellow labourers towards the introduction of machines is perhaps understandable, however irrational, in the light of their fears concerning unemployment or a lowering of their living standards, which were already poor. The riots in 1773 were not a simple fight against technical innovations as such, but a deliberate attempt by the wage-earners to try to maintain the subsistence levels which they believed were threatened by the new and improved stocking-frame. The development of the riots in 1787, from what had started initially as a riot against the partners introducing a new labour-saving spinning machine into an attack against nonconformists in general, occasioned by the failure of the authorities to provide the assistance requested, is an indication of the extent of the division which had by then developed between the Corporation and the manufacturing, mainly nonconformist, opposition. While the behaviour of the hand-spinners was understandable, the Corporation should have realised the dangers of such a policy towards what was the principal manufactory of the town far more clearly.

Notes

I should like to thank my Supervisor, Mr. R. H. Evans, M.A., J.P., for reading this paper and for his encouragement and useful criticism.

LRO Leicestershire Record Office

LJ *Leicester and Nottingham Journal*. After 1786 continued as the *Leicester Journal*

TLAS *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archæological and Historical Society*

1. E. J. Hobsbawn, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labouring Men* (London, 1964); G. Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (New York, 1964); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963)
2. E. P. Thompson, *op. cit.*; M. I. Thomis, *The Luddites: Machine Breaking in Regency England* (Newton Abbott, 1970); A. Briggs (ed.), *Chartist Studies* (London, 1959); F. O. Darvall, *Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Regency England* (London, 1934; 1969 with new introduction); R. F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Working Class Movements of England, 1800-50* (London, 1937; 1947); W. T. Ward (ed.) *Popular Movements c. 1830-1850* (London, 1970)
3. W. J. Shelton, *English Hunger and Industrial Disorders* (London, 1973); G. Rudé, 1964, particularly Chapter II; D. E. Williams, 'Midland Hunger Riots in 1766', *Midland History*, Autumn 1976, III, No. 4, 256-97

4. G. Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763 to 1774* (Oxford, 1962); G. Rudé, 'The Gordon Riots: A Study of the Rioters and their Victims', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, VI (1956), 93–114; R. B. Rose, 'The Priestley Riots of 1791', *Past and Present*, Nov. 1960, No. 18, 68–88
5. A. Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester: A History of Leicester 1780–1850* (Leicester, 1954); A. Temple Patterson, 'Luddism, Hampden Clubs and Trade Unions in Leicestershire, 1816–17', *English History Review*, 1948, Vol. 63, 170–188; J. Walton, A History of Trade Unionism in Leicester to the end of the Nineteenth Century, (unpublished M.A. thesis, Sheffield, 1952); J. F. C. Harrison, 'Chartism in Leicester,' Chapter IV in A. Briggs (ed.), *Chartist Studies*, (London, 1959)
6. J. Walton, *op. cit.*
7. G. Rudé, 1964, 199–202
8. In the newspaper accounts they are described as 'Messrs. Simpson and Goode'. Simpson is surmised to be Nathaniel Simpson since in 1768 he was described as of Humberstone Gate, but by 1775 he had moved to Shambles Lane. (*A Copy of the Poll, 1768; An Exact Copy of the POLL for the County of Leicester, 1775*).
By August 1775 Simpson had moved to Stonehouse in Gloucestershire with his family, where he was described as a clothier (LRO: 12 D 43/57/50, Bond from Nathaniel Simpson dated 18 August 1775; *LJ*, No. 1168, 26 August 1775, Advertisement—Auction of Simpson's household furniture and brewing utensils). It is fairly clear that this move was occasioned by his financial difficulties, perhaps the result of the failure of his interest in the improved stocking-frame, as in 1779 he assigned his property in Leicester to his brother, sister and brother-in-law, in settlement of part of the 'very considerable' sum he owed them. (LRO: 3 D 42/2/239, Abstract of Title to a Close near West Bridge, Leicester (1824).) If it was intended as a retrenchment of his affairs then it was unsuccessful. Shortly before his death he had moved to London where he was employed as a customs officer (*LJ*, No. 2674, 1 January 1785), but his financial affairs were in total disorder. His estate after his death was managed by a Cirencester attorney for the benefit of his creditors; the final dividend was not paid until June 1789. (LRO: 12 D 43/59/55–62, Correspondence, 1785–89)
Public Record Office: RG 4/2323 & 2324, Non-Parochial Registers: Great Meeting, Leicester; J. W. Clay (ed.), *Hunter's Familiae Minorum Gentium*, The Harleian Society (London, 1894), Vol. I, 29
9. *LJ*, No. 1046, Saturday, 20th March 1773
10. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1773, XLIII, 151; In a London newspaper it was said the machine had only three motions and weighed 25 lbs. *The General Evening Post*, No. 6155, 23 to 25 March 1773.
11. *LJ*, No. 1044, Saturday, 27th February, 1773
12. *Gentleman's Magazine*, *op. cit.*; *The General Evening Post*, *op. cit.*
13. *LJ*, No. 1046, Saturday, 20th March, 1773
14. G. Rudé, 1964, 69–70; E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Machine Breakers', *Past and Present*, 1952, No. 1, 57–70 (Reprinted in E. J. Hobsbawm, 1964, Chapter II)
15. G. Rudé, 1964, 34
16. W. Gardiner, *Music and Friends*, 1838, I, 82–3. Briefly, the difference between woollen and worsted yarn is that worsted, before it is spun, is combed to remove the short fibres (noils) so only leaving the long, while woollen yarn is carded. S. D. Chapman, 'Pioneers of Worsted Spinning by Power', *Business History*, 1965, VII, 97–116. For a more accessible printed account of the Leicester partnership see also *The Early Factory Masters* (Newton Abbott, 1967) by the same author
17. John Coltman of St. Nicholas Street should not be confused with John Coltman (c. 1725–1803), of The Newarke, also a prominent hosier and leading member of the Great Meeting. Vide F. E. Skillington, 'The Coltmans of the Newarke at Leicester', *TLAS*, 1933–4, XVIII, i, 1–40

18. *LJ*, No. 1822, Saturday, 1st December, 1787. Vide the two advertisements. W. Gardiner, 1838, I, 83
19. *LJ*, No. 1823, Saturday, 8th December, 1787; C. H. Beale, *Catherine Hutton and her Friends* (Birmingham, 1895), 88–90; J. Thompson, *History of Leicester in the Eighteenth Century* (Leicester & London, 1871), 186–9; *LRO*: 15 D 57/448–50, Samuel Coltman's Manuscript Memoirs of the Coltman Family [c. 1852], three volumes. Vide 15 D 57/449, Vol. II, Chapter 14
The details are mainly taken from the account in the *Leicester Journal*, with important additions from a letter printed by Mrs. Catherine Beale. The Letter, dated 18th December, 1787, was written by Mrs. Coltman, a fortnight after the riots, to a close friend, Euphemia, the only child of the Revd. Richard Gifford of Duffield, Derbyshire. The date of the letter and riots is mistakenly given by Mrs. Beale in her book as 1785, but in her hand-written draft for the printers, it is correctly given as 1787. Vide *Birmingham Reference Library: Hutton Beale Collection*, 83/1 f106–109. Thompson's narration, drawn from the newspaper accounts, has a number of differences in the apparent sequence of events, perhaps as much to do with the compression of writing during the editing as anything. It is possible he drew additional information from Whetstone's grandsons, whom he knew
20. C. H. Beale, 1895, 90
21. *LJ*, No. 1823, Saturday, 8th December, 1787, vide advertisement
22. *Ibid.*
23. C. H. Beale, 1895, 90; *LRO*: 15 D 57/449, Vol. II, Chapter 14; *Monthly Repository*, 1831, New Series, Vol. V, 498–9, Obituary of Joseph Brookhouse by W[illiam] F[ield], Unitarian Minister at Warwick
24. *LJ*, No. 1823, Saturday, 8th December, 1787, vide advertisement
25. *Ibid.* Vide editorial
26. *Ibid.* Vide advertisement; *LRO*: 15 D 57/449, Vol. II, Chapter 14
27. *LJ*, No. 1823, Saturday, 8th December, 1787
28. *LJ*, No. 1824, Saturday, 15th December, 1787
29. *Gentleman's Magazine*, December, 1787, Vol. 57, pt ii, 1116–7, 'Country News'
30. C. H. Beale, 1895, 89–90
31. *LRO*: 15 D 57/449, Vol. II, Chapter 14
32. C. H. Beale, 1895, 89–90
33. H. Hartopp (ed.), *Roll of the Mayors of the Borough and Lord Mayors of the City of Leicester 1209–1935* (Leicester, 1935), 171–2
34. C. H. Beale, 1895, 90; J. Thompson, 1871, 188
35. A. T. Patterson, 1954, 16–7, 27–8 & 64–5
36. *Ibid.*, 27–8
37. R. W. Greaves, *The Corporation of Leicester 1689–1836* (Leicester, 1939; 1969). 74
38. C. H. Beale, 1895, 90; *LJ*, No. 1826, 29th December, 1787
39. H. Hartopp (ed.), 1935, 164–172
40. *LJ*, No. 1829, Saturday, 19th January, 1788; G. A. Chinnery (ed.), *Records of the Borough of Leicester: Judicial and Allied Records 1689–1835* (Leicester, 1974), 166
41. *LJ*, Nos. 1825–7, 22nd December, 1787 to 5th January, 1788, and Nos. 1829–32, 19th January to 9th February, 1788
42. *LJ*, No. 1830, Saturday, 26th January, 1788
43. *LRO*: 15 D 57/449, Vol. II, Chapter 14; *LJ*, No. 1856, 19th July, 1788; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1859, pt i, 107; J. A. Venn (ed.), *Alumni Cantabrigienses* (Cambridge, 1940), Part II, Vol. I, 135
44. J. Walton, 1952, 63 & 61–4; In a petition to Parliament made by the hand-spinners, the riot was said to have originally begun because 'A certain manufacturer of worsted threatened a Sister of ours, whom he employed, that he would send all his jersey to be spun at the mill; and

further insulted her with the pretended superiority of that work. She having more spirit than discretion, stirred up the Sisterhood, and they stirred up all the men they could influence (not a few) to go and destroy the mills erected in and near Leicester and this is the origin of the late riots there'.

To the Nobility, Gentry, Magistrates and representatives in Parliament, of every county and town in Great Britain; more especially those of the town and county of Leicester. The Humble Petition of the Poor Spinners . . . in the Town and County aforesaid. [?Leicester, 1788], note, page 5.

There is a copy in the British Library Reference Division, Bloomsbury, (Shelf mark B.544(10)) dated 2nd May, 1788 in a contemporary note, and a further copy in The Goldsmiths' Library, University of London, where the authorship of the pamphlet is attributed in a MS note to the Rev. Wm. Ludlam (1717-1788)

45. *Ibid.*, 47-8
46. G. Rudé, *Paris and London in the 18th Century: Studies in Popular Protest* (1970, Fontana), 21
47. J. Walton, 1952, 47
48. G. Rudé, 1970, 19
49. *Monthly Repository*, 1831, 498
50. G. Rudé, 1964, 66 & 71; and *ibid.*, 1970, 19 & 23
51. *Lj*, No. 1824, Saturday, 15th December, 1787
52. *Lj*, No. 1929, Saturday, 19th January, 1788
53. W. Gardiner, 1838, I, 84 & 1853, III, 115; J. Thompson, 1871, 189
54. R. B. Rose, 1960, 82 & 68-88