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Witness statement in connection with the Orgreave "rioting" on 18th June 1984

Full name of witness : LESLEY ANN BOLTON
Address : 3 Wharncliffe Road, Sheffield, S10 2TH
Date of birth : 11.6.1945
Occupation : Shoemaker
Marital Status : Married, with 2 children aged 17 and 18.
Previous convictions : None.

I am a member of Sheffield Woman Against Pit Closures and had been on a number of pickets before June 18th, mainly smaller and quieter ones than June 18th. We had been to Mansfield and Bolsover, generally small, quiet pickets, where there had never been any trouble. I had'nt experienced anything like Orgreave that day, and I wasn't expecting it. I knew it was going to be a large picket, but I wasn't anticipating any trouble. *

* I went with three other women, Audrey Thomas, Sarah Green and a woman called Eileen whose surname I don't know. I just wanted to observe what was going on, and I spent the time walking around, taking photographs and talking to people. We went by car and parked in the ASDA car park at about 8.45 or 9 o'clock. We split up and I went off on my own with my camera, in order to take photographs and make observations, because I was worried about what was happening. I was anxious about the antagonism developing between the police and pickets, and I wanted to talk to the pickets about their experiences, and also to see how the police handled a large picket.

There were quite a few people in the car park, and the car park was full of cars. I walked out of the back entrance of the car park onto Orgreave Lane, and when I got up to the junction with Highfield Lane there were groups of men sitting on the grass and walking in both directions. There were also groups of men walking down Highfield Lane and standing about just above the railway bridge. I went over the bridge and further down

Highfield Lane and then saw that there were men sitting in a field of stubble on the right hand side of the road, and also on the walls on both sides of the road. I walked down to get close to the police cordon which was stretched right across the road and across the field. It seemed quiet, but tense. There was nothing happening between police and pickets at that time. The police had their long shields and their helmets on at that point. (photos (A1) and (A2) show the position and strength of the pickets and of the police lines.) You can also see that there is quite a big gap between the front of the pickets and the police line. I took 2 photos of the front line, one from behind the front line of the pickets, which shows the pickets standing some ten yards from the police lines, and again I took a photograph of the police holding riot shields in front of the cordon. (Photos (A3) and (A4)). There were no missiles. ^{none on ground.} I wandered around talking to people. 3-9.15.

Then I became aware of activity on the roadway, and what it looked like was a shove between the pickets on the road and the police cordon. I can't be certain of the time, and I wasn't aware that lorries were leaving from the coking plant. I was standing on the field, behind some other photographers, because I didn't want to get involved in the confrontation. I took some pictures of the push, which are numbered (A5), A6, A7 and (A8). This was a fairly short confrontation, as far as I can recall, and I was maybe 15 feet away from the main body of the pickets and the confrontation on the road. There were other photographers in the front of me, including Martin Jenkinson, and others whose names I don't know. As soon as I had taken the photographs I went to the very back of the field, because I wanted to avoid any trouble. I did not see any arrests at that point.

From the back of the field I took some more photographs, one showing the mass of pickets and the police line. (A9) I had noticed that there was a group of mounted policemen standing in a cornfield to the right of the

stubble field as you are looking down towards the coking plant. I went into that cornfield behind the mounted policemen and took a photograph from that position (A10). I then noticed that there was something happening in the middle of the field and I noticed some smoke. I couldn't see what was happening but I took a photograph of the ^{see some smoke on A11.} general scene. (A11) Then the whole crowd in front of me turned and ran towards me, stood where I was on the edge of the cornfield and the stubble field. (A12). People were running away from whatever it was that was happening, and when people stopped running, I became aware that a group of mounted police had come through the police cordon on the field. Still from a distance away, I took photographs numbers A13 and A14, and I noticed that there was a very small fire burning in the stubble field. I walked down towards the fire and the mounted policemen, who were circling the fire, and also a group of what I believe are called snatch squad officers had come out and some of them were attempting to put the fire out with their feet. (A15, A16). It seemed to me that the police sending out mounted officers and snatch squad officers just wound up the tension considerably. Especially considering the situation and the very small incident caused by the fire.

At this point I went back to ASDA to get another film, because my other one was used up. When I came back, the police with riot shields had been removed from the front line of the cordon and replaced by policemen in ordinary uniform. Again I can't be certain of the time. I noticed that there was something going on between the police and pickets and there were some stones going over. (B1). There was no push going on, and the pickets were standing back from the police, but there was the odd stone going over. And the police also seemed to be throwing them back. Stones were coming back from behind the police lines at any rate. Photos B1 and B2 show that confrontation. B1 shows how quiet things were when I got back from ASDA. Many men had actually left the fields. Most men were either sitting around on the grass or sitting around on the wall with their shirts

3 1/2 hours
at 10:15
see A10 & A11

3:100 on field

off, because it was very warm. The confrontation at that stage consisted only in the exchange of abuse by both sides and the odd stone throwing.

Photos B3 and B4 show the massive gap that had grown up between the police and the pickets at this stage. The pickets had moved quite far up the field. At this time I was stood at the front of all the pickets. I noticed then that the police began to reintroduce the long riot shields, edging them in along the front of the police cordon from the roadside towards the field. Photos B5 and B6 show that. Photos B5 and B6 show the shields being introduced up to the bush at the side of the road, I don't know whether the shields were extended right across the field, because the next thing, there was a cavalry charge by the police up the road even though there were hardly any pickets there. This is shown in photographs B7 and B8. There were 7 or 8 police horses involved in that charge. They galloped up the road. I was standing way back in the field, so I cannot say whether they had their sticks out. I was a bit awestruck and a bit frightened by this charge, even though it was some distance away from me. Because I couldn't understand why they were doing it, as there were hardly any pickets standing about at the time. It seemed like a tactical decision. The police lines moved up in stages, although I can't say how many yards they moved each time. I didn't understand why they had decided to take what seemed to me such aggressive steps, because there were no or hardly any pickets around on the field or on the road where they were. I was standing to the right hand side of the field, looking down towards the coking plant. I watched the proceedings, and I and a small group of about four pickets got left behind in the police push up the field. We were standing near the little copse which divides the stubble field from the cornfield. At one point a group of police in helmets with shields charged towards us. (B10) I moved speedily up the field, still behind the police lines, and I took another photograph B11, from behind the police lines of the back of the police cordon pushing up the field.

I remained behind the police lines for some time, because I noticed that several men had been arrested, and I went over to the road and took photographs of the arrested men as they were brought down the road. Photographs B12, B13, B14, B15, B16, B17 show this process taking place of the people being arrested being brought down the road. B17 shows the police on horseback having returned from a charge, wheeling round at speed in preparation to make another charge up the hill and over the bridge. (Note from M. McC : B13 shows, I think, Gary Hargreaves to the left and David Michael Fisher to the right. B14 shows George Fowlds being taken down. B15 shows David Bell being taken down, obviously in great pain with his left leg which had been broken. B16 seems to show John Sidney Thompson being taken down the road. B17 is a closer view of John Sidney Thompson.)

B15 : I took a photograph of a young lad in a white t-shirt who had been arrested by two officers, and obviously had an injured left leg. He was hopping on his right leg and obviously in a lot of pain. There were two ambulancemen who I remonstrated with and asked couldn't they do something about it. I said, "Can't you get him from the police and take him down to the ambulance?". One of them said, "There's nothing we can do." The policeman made him hop down the road, even though it was apparent to me that he was in considerable pain.

I took photograph B18, because the police were laughing and joking and congratulating themselves, and clearly enjoying every moment of it. I felt very outraged about their attitude.

I was behind the police lines and couldn't get over the bridge, because the police were holding the bridge. I wanted to get up into the village, I was unhappy about what I had seen of the police attitude and the police

tactics, and basically I just wanted to get away from it. It was clear that I would not be able to get through the police cordon, and I realised that the only way I could get back up into the village was to go down the railway embankment, across the railway lines and back up the other side. And thats what I did. I went down the steep embankment, crossed the railway lines and walked leftwards for a few yards along the other embankment, and then up the embankment and into the scrap yard just above the railway bridge. I came up behind a group of pickets who were on the road, throwing stones at the police. This was a very small number of pickets in relation to the rest, most of whom seemed to have gone back up into the village. There were not more than 20 or 30 of them. (Photo B20) Photograph B19 shows the view from the lower, north side of the railway embankment, just before I went down onto the railway lines, and shows the police shielding themselves from something or other.

The next photos I took were from a gravel driveway in front of some workshops. (B20 and B21). As I took photograph B21, the pickets in front of me turned and started running towards me. I realised that the police were making another cavalry charge, and the horses can be seen in the middle background of photograph B21. They are coming up through the police line. I turned and ran into a yard by one of the buildings and hid. I stayed there until the police had charged past. The mounted officers charged past, and then were followed up by snatch squads. Some of the police on foot came into the spaces between the buildings. And they were also on the grass verges in front of the workshops. I waited until I thought it was relatively safe to emerge, and then I came out and took photo B22. This shows at least 17 police horses. They are mostly milling around in the area of the junction. I saw horsemen and police on foot chasing individual pickets, laying about them with their truncheons with what seemed to me to be complete abandon. I saw some of the police

also going down to the left towards Orgreave Lane. It was chaos. At that time I felt frightened and confused and was unclear about what to do. I thought my best bet would be to make it back to the car. I was reluctant to go the back way down to the carpark, because the police horses and policemen on foot had gone down there in my sight. I thought it might be better to walk up the road, where I would be in sight of other people. (Note by M.McC : photo B20 ^{N0 /} shows the arrest of Kevin Marshall, held on one leg by a policeman shielded by another policeman with a shield.) I saw one young picket being beaten over the bonnet of a car. (M.McC : that is Kevin Marshall). Just after I took B22, I remonstrated with an officer who was beating a picket over the head and shoulders with his truncheon. I said to him, "Its not necessary to do that." He said to me, "After what I have had thrown at me, I'll do what I like." He seemed to me to be completely out of control.

After I had taken photograph B22, and after I decided I should make my way back to the car, I walked straight up Highfield Lane on the pavement. In so far as I could. As I crossed Orgreave Lane, and walked up towards the bus shelter on Highfield Lane, I noticed that there was an injured man lying on the other side of the wall, by the pavement. The wall is only a low wall and I was on the pavement, so he was only a few foot away. He had what looked like injuries to his ribs, he was groaning and seemed to be in considerable pain. I decided to see if he needed any attention. I climbed over the wall, and two other pickets came to offer help. I knelt down by him and he was very pale, He seemed to be in shock. Other people arrived, and it was clear to me that he needed an ambulance. I stood up and stood by the wall, and called to a policeman who was standing in the middle of the road. I said something like, "Could you please get an ambulance there's an injured man here." At this point I became aware of something bearing down on me from my left. As I turned I saw mounted police officer looming over me with his truncheon drawn with the apparent

intention of hitting me. In fact it was clear to me that he intended to hit me. I was also aware that he was shouting, I believe at me, but I can't say what he was shouting. I ducked away, and at the same time somebody pulled me from behind. He swept past me, narrowly missing me with his truncheon, in fact I felt the air sweep past me. I believe that at least two other officers on horseback swept past me immediately afterwards.

After this had happened, John Harris, a freelance photographer with IFL, told me that he had got a photograph of that, he thought. I said "Oh good!" I was extremely shaken, and I sat on the wall. I knew that I ought to go back to the car, but I had this feeling that I ought to stay there until the ambulance came and picked up this injured man. It seemed important at the time. As soon as the ambulance had come, I went back to the car. I sat there and recovered from the shock. I believe that this incident occurred at about 12.20 or 12.30 but I can't be certain. I am basing this assumption on the time we actually left Orgreave.

After about 20 minutes, I went back to try and find the other women I had been with. I walked back to Highfield Lane, and I noticed that there was a lot of smoke coming from the direction of the bridge. Also a number of pickets were running towards me. I took a photograph of this, which is numbered E2. I walked down towards the smoke, and noticed that a barricade had been built and was on fire. (Photo C1) I took a number of photographs and this barricade, C3, C4, C5 and C6. It was clearly a barricade that had been built by the pickets, to prevent the police making anymore cavalry charges. At this point it was very quiet here, and there was only a small group of pickets standing around. I walked slowly down the road towards the bridge, and I noticed that the police had got their own barricade at the lower side of the bridge.

I took photographs C7, C8, C9 and C10, and a close up C11. At this point I was told that if I didn't bugger off, I would get arrested. I cannot identify the officer who said that to me. After I had taken those photographs of the police lines, I went back to the car and waited for the other women to turn up. We left at about 1.15 or 1.30 I believe.

There was another photographer in the area where I was attending to the injured man, and John Harris told me that he knows who this man is.

(This other photographer needs to be chased up, not just because of the photos of that particular incident but because of any others he might have.)

In my estimation, the tactics used by the police on that day were largely responsible for the seriousness of the fighting between the pickets and the police. I was astonished at the ferocity of the police attacks on the pickets, and to me it was more like an incident from a banana republic in South America than what one might have expected in a country like England.

(This statement is much fuller than the statement which Lesley Bolton gave to Sarah Blandey on the 27th of June 1984, and in particular deals specifically with the photos in sequence.)