Chartism

A Historical Background
What was the campaign about?

- When the Chartist movement was established in the late 1830s, only 18 per cent of the adult male population of Britain could vote (before 1832 just 10 per cent could vote).
- Much of the working-class population were living in poverty, but without a voice in politics, they did not feel they could change their situation.
The Peterloo Massacre, 1819.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>How injured</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashton, John</td>
<td>Cowhill, Oldham</td>
<td>Sabred</td>
<td>A Special Constable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashworth, John</td>
<td>Bulls' Head, Manchester</td>
<td>Sabred and trampled on</td>
<td>Killed on the Spot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckley, Thomas</td>
<td>Baretrees, Chadderton</td>
<td>Sabred and stabbed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson, William</td>
<td>Saddleworth</td>
<td>Sabred and crushed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldes,</td>
<td>Kennedy Street, Manchester</td>
<td>Rode over by the Cavalry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lees, John</td>
<td>Oldham</td>
<td>Sabred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Neil, Arthur</td>
<td>No. 3, Pigeon Street, Manchester</td>
<td>Inwardly crushed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partington, Martha</td>
<td>Eccles</td>
<td>Thrown into a Cellar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitworth, Joseph</td>
<td>Hyde</td>
<td>Shot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crompton James</td>
<td>Barton</td>
<td>Trampled on by the Cavalry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heys, Mary</td>
<td>No. 8, Rawlinson's Buildings, Oxford Road, Manchester</td>
<td>Rode over by Cavalry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Or who have subsequently died, in consequence of the injuries there received.
The Peterloo Massacre
Reactions

- Reform of the electoral system finally arrived with the **1832 Reform Act**, which increased the proportion of eligible voters in England and Wales to 18 per cent of the adult-male population and 12 per cent in Scotland.
- Although the working classes had high hopes for the Reform Act, they eventually felt betrayed as despite the new legislation, the poor ultimately remained voiceless in the way their country was run.
The meeting at St Peter’s Fields did not directly achieve any parliamentary reform and actually led to a suppression of civil liberties.

Following the massacre, the Tory government introduced 'Six Acts' to suppress radical newspapers and seditious meetings, with the aim of reducing the chance of an armed uprising.

However, the Peterloo Massacre did create martyrs for the cause of reform and the anger of the masses only served to strengthen support for change.
What was the goal of the campaign?

• The ultimate goal of the Chartists, as stated in the first minutes of the London Working Men's Association, was 'to seek by every legal means to place all classes of society in possession of their equal, political, and social rights'. This was to be achieved by campaigning for six key changes to the parliamentary system:
The People’s Charter

THE

PEOPLE’S CHARTER;

BEING THE

OUTLINE OF AN ACT

TO PROVIDE FOR THE

JUST REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE OF

GREAT BRITAIN

IN THE

COMMONS’ HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT:

EMBRACING THE PRINCIPLES OF

UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE,

NO PROPERTY QUALIFICATION,

ANNUAL PARLIaments,

EQUAL REPRESENTATION,

PAYMENT OF MEMBERS, AND VOTE BY BALLOT.
How did the campaigners become experts on the issue?

- The Chartists were able to spread information relatively quickly using a network of newspapers, as well as mass meetings and speeches.
- This enabled supporters of Chartism to learn about the issues and keep up to date with news and events. The Chartist leaders also met regularly at conferences and meetings.
PITY OF THE RASCHAL ELECTORS.

The probability of a general election, as a consequence of the change of Ministers, has set Whigs and Tories on the alert, and already many overtures are being made for bringing about a coalition. The Whigs, including the name of the "independent electors" for the "Martyr" Mr. Trenchard, are "in Consideration" Mr. Basildon. We are not sure if the radicals shall exhibit any active feeling, and if the line shall, for aiding in the strength of interests to our own of Commons, a measure of the same character. The Whigs, though now a great number, must not be expected to be seen from the employment of a small number to obtain such as they can. The two parties, of course, differ in their views; one is on the side of property, ready on all occasions to vote against any measure which the radicals may attempt to make; the other, of course, ready to offer to realize a radical project without hesitation. But the presence of twenty persons in the House is of little value, since two are not of unlimited honesty, of sound judgment, and of valuable experience; the midst of the people's attacks would be directed to the real interest of the whole people; a measure of Commons would accordingly be what the Whigs aim at, and it is certain that the radicals will not have the same number of men to vote against any of the Whig measures for the radicals may attempt to make. The Whigs, of course, ready to offer to realize a radical project without hesitation. But the presence of twenty persons in the House is of little value, since two are not of unlimited honesty, of sound judgment, and of valuable experience; the midst of the people's attacks would be directed to the real interest of the whole people; a measure of Commons would accordingly be what the Whigs aim at, and it is certain that the radicals will not have the same number of men to vote against any of the Whig measures. A better project might be to realize the real interest of the whole people; a measure of Commons would accordingly be what the Whigs aim at, and it is certain that the radicals will not have the same number of men to vote against any of the Whig measures. A better project might be to realize the real interest of the whole people; a measure of Commons would accordingly be what the Whigs aim at, and it is certain that the radicals will not have the same number of men to vote against any of the Whig measures. A better project might be to realize the real interest of the whole people; a measure of Commons would accordingly be what the Whigs aim at, and it is certain that the radicals will not have the same number of men to vote against any of the Whig measures.
Chartism had a huge amount of support from the working classes, particularly in industrialized areas. The largest Chartist petition claimed to have nearly 6 million signatures.

Many prominent Chartists had skills in writing, printing and oratory, which helped attract the support necessary to make Chartism a mass movement.
This is a daguerreotype (an early form of photograph) of the Chartist meeting held at Kennington Common on 10^{th} April 1848.
MEETING OF FEMALE CHARTISTS.

A meeting of female Chartists was held on Monday evening, in the National Charter Association Hall, Old Bailey, for the purpose of forming a "Female Chartist Association," to co-operate with the Male Association; and for other objects connected with the interests of "the People's Charter." — On the motion of Miss Susanna Inge, seconded by Mrs Wyatt, Mr Carey was called to the chair.—After a suitable address from Mr Ridley, in which he commented on the present state of woman, and pointed to the position which, according to his judgment, she ought to occupy in society, elevating her thoughts to political aspirations, Mr Cohen expressed the high degree of satisfaction which he had received from Mr Ridley's address, but could not help saying that woman would be more in her proper character and station at home, where she was the pride and ornament of "the domestic hearth," than in the political arena. (Sensation among the ladies.) He
Who were their opponents and what stood in their way?

- Chartism was opposed by almost all those who had the vote, together with MPs and the ruling classes – all of whom were among the wealthier members of society. The Chartists were sometimes portrayed as worthy of ridicule in the media, and sometimes as a source of danger.

- The Chartists created obstacles for themselves and the success of the movement through lack of unity and disagreements over tactics. There was a split between those who wished to use peaceful 'moral force' and those who wished to use the threat of 'physical force' to achieve the aims of the Charter.
The Illustrated London News in 1848.
How did they plan for success?

- The People’s Charter was written by William Lovett, but Feargus O’Connor became the main leader of the Chartist movement.
- The Chartists were extremely clear about their central aims, which were published in The People’s Charter, together with plans for a secret ballot. They planned for success by presenting three enormous petitions to Parliament.
The more radical Chartists took part in riots in Newcastle, Birmingham and elsewhere round the country, at which leading members of the movement were arrested.

The most infamous episode in the history of Chartism was the disastrous **Newport Rising**, which took place on 4\(^{th}\) November 1839. A group of Chartists stormed a hotel and 22 of the protestors were killed by waiting troops.
How successful were they?

- Although the Chartists gathered enormous support in the form of signatures for their petitions, their demands were rejected by Parliament every time they were presented.
- By the time Chartism ended in 1858, not a single demand from the People’s Charter had become law. Although the Chartists failed to achieve their aims directly, their influence persisted and reformers continued to campaign for the electoral reforms advocated by the People’s Charter.
Some Improvements

- A new Reform Bill was passed in August 1867 that gave the vote to all male heads of households over 21, and all male lodgers paying £10 a year in rent.
- Further reform arrived with the Ballot Act in 1872, which ensured that votes could be cast in secret – a key demand of the People’s Charter.
Getting Better

• In 1884 the Third Reform Act extended the qualification of the 1867 Act to the countryside so that almost two thirds of men had the vote. Eventually, only one of the Chartists’ demands – for annual parliamentary elections – failed to become part of British law.

• At the time, Chartism may have been judged unsuccessful, but there is no doubt that the movement's campaign for electoral reform played an important role in the development of democracy in the UK.