



## *Bradford on Avon Riot 1791*

Saturday evening last a tumultuous mob of nearly 500 persons riotously assembled before the house of Mr Phelps, an eminent clothier of Bradford, Wilts, and totally demolished the windows and doors and greatly injured the furniture with stones and Bludgeons.

Owing to the magistrate being unable to be summoned through illness, Mr Phelps and his friends "were reduced to the disagreeable necessity of firing on the rioters in their own defence". The guns left a man, a woman and a boy lying dead. Another man and a boy lay dangerously wounded in the forefront of the mob. Even this bloodshed did not deter them from the task for which they had come - and eventually Mr Phelps agreed to "deliver to them a carding machine upon which he had been making some experiments". The machine which had been bought in blood was despatched by fire, as the machine burnt, the constables arrived - not before time, one feels, - arrested the ringleaders and dispersed the rest.

Samuel Norman and three others were taken and committed to be tried for felony at the next Wiltshire Assizes. Mr Phelps was completely exonerated - the coroner's verdict on the bodies of the slain was "Justifiable Defence".

The Industrial Revolution as we all know went ahead. The tragic weavers were beaten by the march of time.

**This account is taken from Bonner & Middleton's Bristol Journal, dated May 21st 1791.**