

people were obliged to move back in all directions. With the wind blowing from the north-east those on the south side of the street had more than once to beat a retreat from the heat. It was computed a crowd of around ten thousand enjoyed the finale of the municipally-organised spectacle. The glow from the bonfire illuminated the night sky, and could be seen from a great distance, though by eleven o'clock the crowd had begun to diminish.⁵

Throughout the day an indication of the high spirits among townsfolk was indicated by numerous pyrotechnical displays: not content with the arrangements devised by the council, later in the evening a group of youths reluctant to disperse, not only continued to let off fireworks but formed their own procession and persisted in singing *Soldiers of the Queen*, accompaniment coming from a variety of improvised instruments. Having decided to douse the flames and presumably hoping to defuse the excitement, at eleven o'clock the Fire Brigade was called on to extinguish the fire.

Up to his point everything had passed off according to plan, though the efforts of the firemen to put out the flames provoked catcalls and showers of stones hurled at them by those who wanted the celebration to continue. Not content with hampering the efforts of the fire brigade, a disgruntled section of the crowd now directed its attention elsewhere. At half past eleven an attack was made on the police station, windows in that building and the chief constable's office were shattered by volleys of stones and the use of catapults. The noise-level was supplemented by groans and hooting. Eventually the police did manage to restore the peace, though this was only achieved by systematic patrols clearing the streets. It was not until one o'clock on Sunday morning that things had quietened down.⁶

The events in Banbury were paralleled elsewhere: London, according to the correspondent of the *New York Times*, was in 'a delirium of joy.' It was reported that there were still people to be found at four in the morning determined to rejoice at the news. 'Calm, phlegmatic London is beside itself with emotion,' American readers were informed. And London was not the only place to celebrate, for the writer noted 'extraordinary scenes of celebration throughout the whole Empire.' It would seem the revellers in Banbury were not all that out of step with the general sentiment. Unlike Londoners however, Banburians were

⁵ *Banbury Advertiser*, as footnote 3.

⁶ *Banbury Guardian*, 24 May 1900.