The Fifth Day of October

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There's many a date in history of which the poet sings,
Of battles won and battles lost, of emperors and kings.
But the fifth day of October stays in my mem'ry yet.
For the things I saw in Derry town I never will forget.

Now poverty and hardship have long been Ireland's lot,
And some would say that Paddy's land is a place that's best forgot,
But I'm a true-born Derry man and never run away,
So with the few I joined the queue in the march that fateful day.

The Police came on like bully boys and told us we must cease,
For Derry town was not our own for marching where we please,
And wiser men and better had given this advice,
And if we dared to disagree we would pay an awful price.

And then the gang advanced on us, the tyrants' hireling crew,
And smiling in their viciousness their sticks and batons drew,
On the fifth day of October I saw sights that warmed my brain,
The screams and shouts or injured men, and the awful cries of pain.

Oh! Fools have ruled o'er men before, but always comes a time
Though beaten low by savage foe from off their knees they climb,
And woe be to the tyrants when the people's wrath is shown,
When corruption's laws and despot's cause are forever overthrown.

Come all you true-born working men and list awhile to me,
The fifth day of October will always precious be;
And freedom's torch that Derry lit will kindle far and wide
When the struggle's done and we've overcome, we can hold our head with pride.

from: J. McDonnell (Ed.), Songs of struggle and protest, 1979.
The notes to this song from the above mentioned book: "...The first Civil Rights march was held successfully in Dungannon in August 1968. The events set out in the ballad The Fifth Day of October occured when a Civil Rights march in Derry on October fifth, 1968, was attacked by the police, using batons, water cannon, and the dreaded CS gas.."

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