

# From Peterloo to Captain Swing: Victims or Insurgents?





# From Peterloo to Captain Swing: Victims or Insurgents?

- Introduction
- Peterloo and the Bristol ‘Riot’
- Captain Swing and the Tolpuddle ‘Martyrs’
- Some Thoughts
- Some Conclusions



# Introduction

- Straw Poll
- What we remember: hidden histories
- How we remember: distorted history
- Sources

# Peterloo 1819

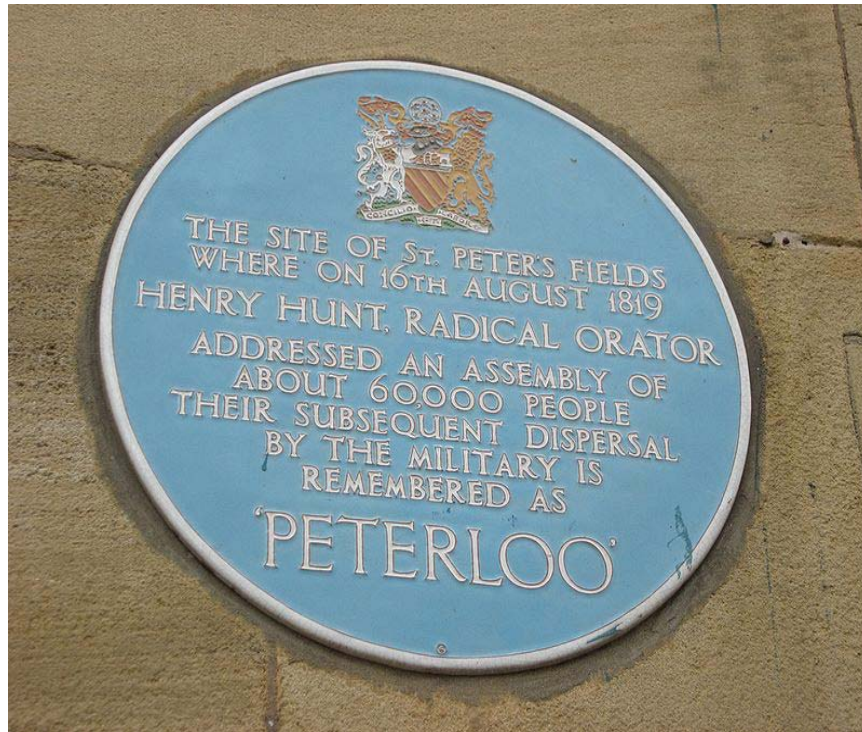




# Peterloo 1819

- **What happened?**
- **The social democratic narrative**
- **The hidden history: a new narrative?**
- **Re-reading Peterloo**
- **Remembering**

# Peterloo 1819



# The 1831 Bristol 'Riot'





# The 1831 Bristol ‘Riot’

- **What happened?**
- **The competing narratives**
- **Why Bristol fails the test**
- **Mob agendas: a new narrative?**
- **Remembering**

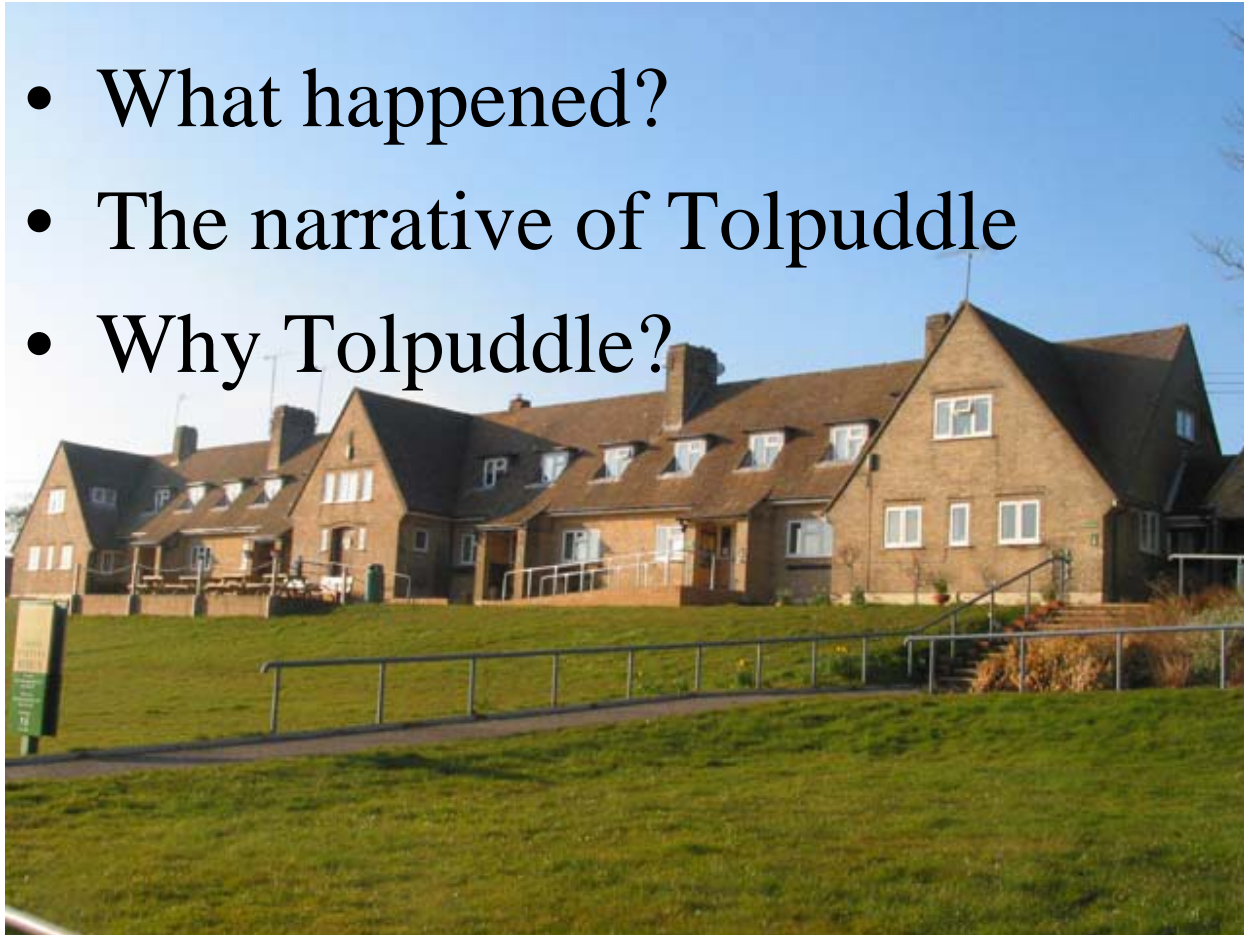


# The 1831 Bristol 'Riot'



# The Tolpuddle Martyrs (1834)

- What happened?
- The narrative of Tolpuddle
- Why Tolpuddle?

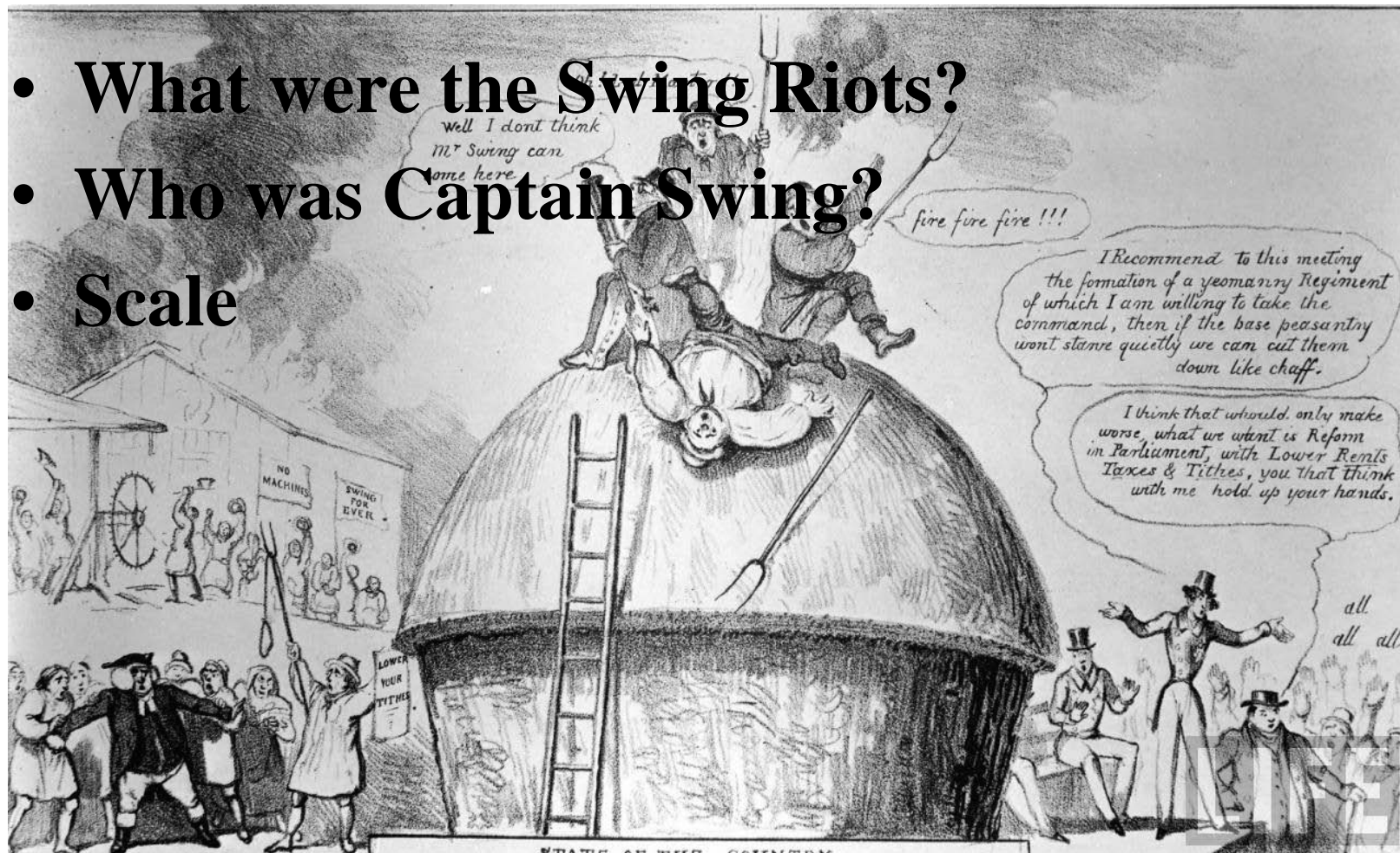


# The Tolpuddle Martyrs (1834)



# Captain Swing (1830-31)

- What were the Swing Riots?
- Who was Captain Swing?
- Scale

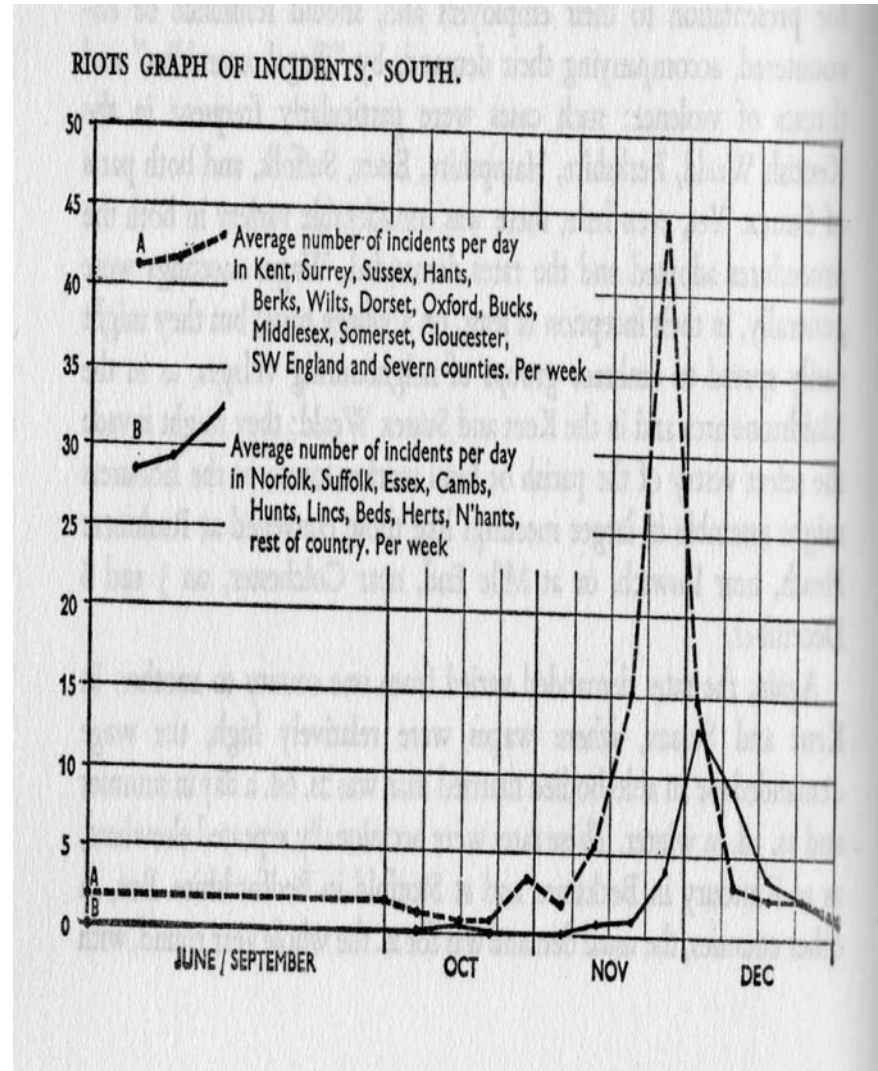
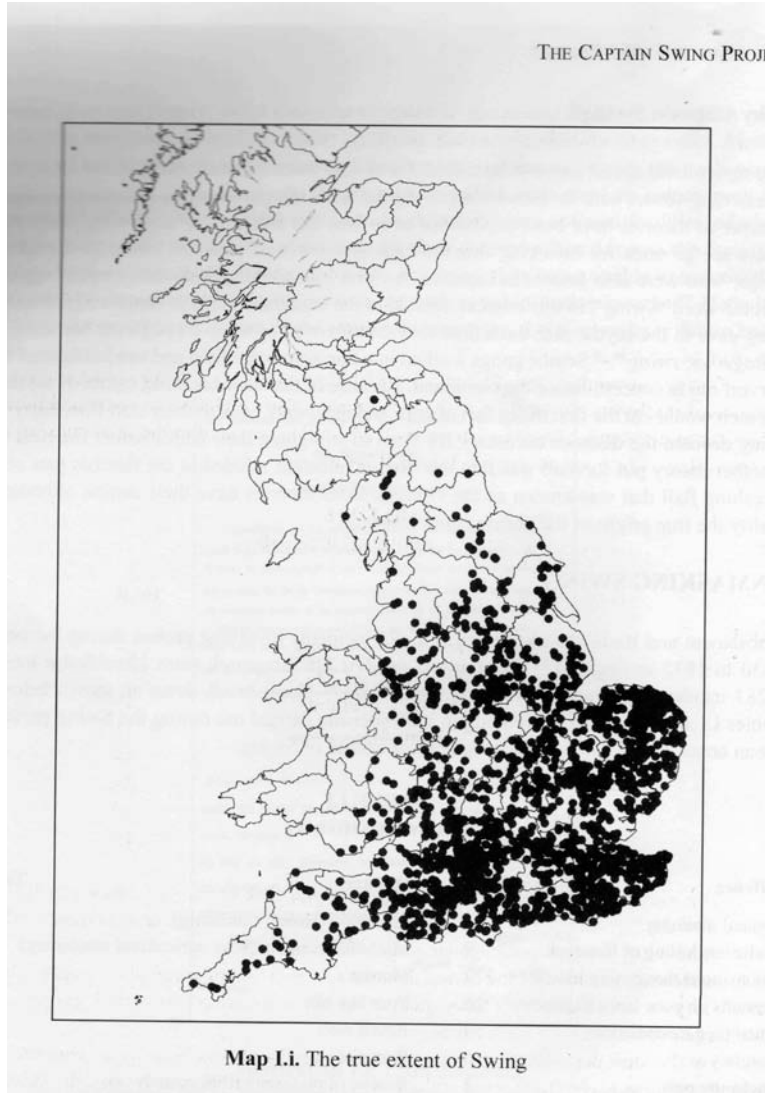


# Captain Swing: Some Statistics 1

**TABLE I.I**  
**All Swing Offences**

<b>Offence</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Offence</b>	<b>Total</b>
Animal maiming	76	Machine-breaking (threshing)	539
Malicious killing of livestock	9	Machine-breaking (other agricultural machinery)	47
Anonymous threatening letters	272	Murder	1
Assaults on poor law officials	25	Poor law riot	19
Attempted incendiarism	54	Racial riot	5
Burglary	16	Rent riot	3
Enclosure riot	3	Rescue of protesters from custody	102
Extortion	2	Robbery	252
Food riot	10	Theft	2
Gleaning riot	1	Tithe riot	69
Highway robbery	3	Verbal threats (to commit incendiarism, etc.)	18
Incendiarism	1,292	Wage riot	284
Incitement	3	Wilful damage (fences, crops, tackle, etc.)	32

# Captain Swing: Some Statistics 2

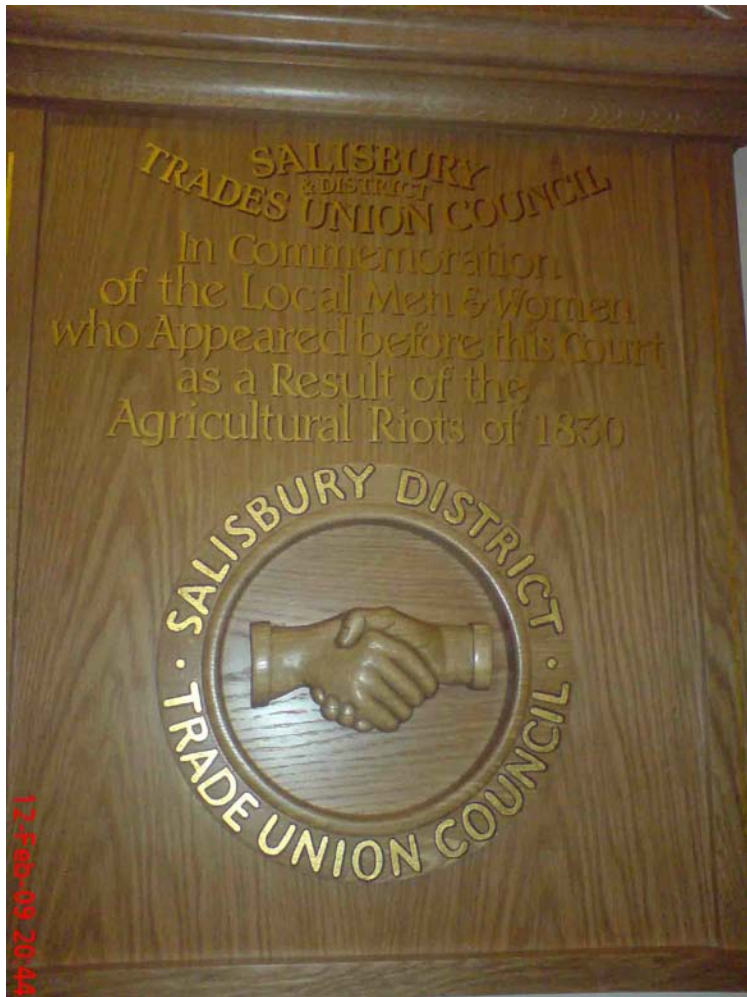




# Tolpuddle and Swing: The Flea and the Elephant

- The Flea: Tolpuddle
- The Elephant: Swing
- Mythmaking and ticking the boxes
- Remembering

# Captain Swing: Remembering







# Some Thoughts

- Violence and non-violence
- Formal ‘organization’ and spontaneity
- Victims or insurgents?
- The two sided coin of modernity
  - The problem of the ‘peasant’ (or rural proletarian)
  - The problem of the ‘lumpen’
  - Pre-industrial’ tactics as anti-progress
  - The problem of politicisation



# Some Conclusions

- Hidden histories
- Distorted histories
- Class struggle in many forms
- Agency
- Victims and Insurgents