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



PETERLOO

ST. PETER'S FIELDS THE PETERLOO MASSACRE

On 16th August 1819 a peaceful rally of 60,000 pro-democracy reformers, men, women and children, was attacked by armed cavalry resulting in 15 deaths and over 600 injuries.

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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)

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

The Tolpuddle Martyrs (1834)



Captain Swing (1830-31)



Captain Swing: Some Statistics 1

TABLE I.I All Swing Offences

Offence	Total	Offence	Fotal
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

RIOTS GRAPH OF INCIDENTS: SOUTH.



· Average number of incidents per day In Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hants, Berks, Wilts, Dorset, Oxford, Bucks, Middlesex, Somerset, Gloucester, SW England and Severn counties. Per week 35 Average number of incidents per day in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambs, Hunts, Lincs, Beds, Herts, N'hants, 25 rest of country. Per week 20 15 10 JUNE / SEPTEMBER OCT NOV DEC

Map I.i. The true extent of Swing

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