Revisiting Tolpuddle: A Critique of the TUC Narrative

Ian F. Sprague, JE

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Advisor: Keith Wrightson

A temperate weekend in mid-July 2011 saw hundreds of people descend upon the parish of Tolpuddle in Dorset to celebrate the "Tolpuddle Martyrs" and their significance to the English labor movement. Situated some 8 miles east of the county seat Dorchester, Tolpuddle (formerly known as Tolpiddle for the small River Piddle that passes through it) is undeniably beautiful. Patchwork fields of golden wheat rise above the village, obscuring the noisy highway that cuts through the northern reach of the parish. Hedgerows border the roads that cut through the village and several ponds drawn from the River Piddle provide fruitful trout fishing.

In such an idyllic setting, apparently little changed since the time of our historical inquiry, one can scarcely imagine the existence of tremendous rural poverty and social discontent. Yet in reality, by the 1830s, impoverished farm workers were alienated from both the land itself and their traditional employers and social 'betters'. The men of Tolpuddle were in such dire straits by 1833 that they took collective action, forming a nascent agricultural labor union called the Agricultural Labourers' Friendly Society. While it was influenced by the hundreds of industrial and artisanal trades unions forming across England at the time, the *Friendly Society* was unique in being one of the first examples of unionization among farm laborers. For this act of peaceful resistance, the leader George Loveless and five other members were indicted by the local landowners and tenant farmers and convicted of swearing an illegal oath on March 17 1834. Their punishment was the maximum possible: transportation and 7 years of forced labor in the penal colonies of Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales. While unions were technically legal at the time, the Martyrs were found to have broken an

obscure act passed some 35 years previous aimed against mutineers in the Navy.[1] This blatant case of persecution immediately set off mass protests from union sympathizers throughout England. It was in remembrance of this injustice and its response that the Trades Union Congress organized the festival in Tolpuddle that July weekend.

The publications disseminated by the Trades Union Congress for the event serve to help us establish the key features of their interpretation of the historical events at Tolpuddle. In a pamphlet available at the festival we learn the particulars of the Martyrs' stories through the lens of its authors, trade unionists. At the time, "in the towns and cities, a new idea was growing: trade unions".[2] The punishment of the martyrs is characterized as setting an example to trade unionists nationwide, reaching beyond Dorset. In addition, the reaction of contemporary radicals and unionists across the nation, and their collective effort in acquiring the unconditional pardon of the Martyrs from Lord John Russell (then Prime Minister), plays an understandably large role. Meetings held by Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union (of which the Martyrs' union was purported to be part) and the newly formed 'Dorchester Labourers' Committee' featured thousands and a march from Copenhagen Fields to Whitehall in protest involved some 30000 people. Radical MPs such as Thomas Wakely, Joseph Hume, and William Cobbett added their voices to the general protest. Pardons were received 1836, and the laborers returned in mid-1837 and early 1838.[3] This truncated narrative is best summed up in the pamphlet advertising 2011's Festival and

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[1] *The Book of The Martyrs of Tolpuddle* (London: The TUC General Council, 1934).
[2] *The Story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs* (London: TUC, 1957), 1.
[3] *The Story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs.*

Rally entitled *Back to Our Roots*, which features a blue box on the back, entitled the "Tolpuddle Story":

> "On 24th February 1834, six farm labourers from Tolpuddle were arrested on a charge of taking part in an illegal oath ceremony. The real offence was that they had dared to form a trade union to defend their livelihoods. For this they were sentenced to seven years' transportation to the penal colonies of Australia. The sentences provoked an immense outcry, leading to the first great mass trade union protest. The campaign won free pardons and the Martyrs' returned to England. It was an historic episode in the struggle for trade union rights in Great Britain and around the world."[4]

This 'unionized' narrative is also visible in much of the fictional and historical works dealing with the Martyrs in the 20th century. In G.E. Fussel's *From Tolpuddle to T.U.C.*, the adoption of the six agricultural laborers into a teleology of trade union power is visible even in the title itself. The result is often a simplification of the motives of the reactionaries in the drama. In Fussell's view, the landed classes in Dorset during the 1830s are a bundle of paradoxes:

> "Many wise and excellent men gave time and thought to the poor. They were ingenious and, until frightened, were not unkind, but they did not regard the labouring class as men and brothers, and because of the

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[4] *Back to Our Roots: Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival & Rally 15-17 July 2011* (Bristol, UK: South West TUC, 2011). (See Appendix, Figure 2)

> distinction to which their minds were habituated they were unable to confront the obvious remedy for the sufferings of the poor. They would not raise their wages and so make them independent citizens. All that they would do was to relieve the poor as a charity, not knowing that a well-to-do working class would be more than profitable to them than an impoverished one."[5]

The tension between blind ignorance and intelligence in this reading strips the landed classes into mere caricatures of reactionaries, without intelligible motivation, and cheapens the historical value of the incident itself. This ambivalence regarding the Dorset elite is a primary problem of the labor narrative that I will address below.

In her book *The Tolpuddle Martyrs* (recommended for a full account of the Martyrs, their punishment, and renewal), Joyce Marlow continues this incomprehension of the elite actors' motivations in the Tolpuddle drama. The 'villain' of the typical narrative is undoubtedly Squire James Frampton of Moreton, some three miles to the south of Tolpuddle. Marlow's characterization of the squire captures the essence of the role he plays in the Tolpuddle story: "reasons were not within Frampton's scope. It was the labourer's duty to revere magistrates, respect property, and learn the lessons of the compensatory after-life....Frampton held his beliefs sincerely, and his temperament made him the local spearhead pulling his less spirited brethren behind him...".[6] As one might guess, it was Frampton who led the judicial persecution of the martyrs in 1834. However, his zeal in the defense of the elite cannot be understood without an

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[5] G.E. Fussell, *From Tolpuddle to T.U.C.* (Slough, UK: The Windsor Press, 1948), Preface.
[6] Joyce Marlow, *The Tolpuddle Martyrs* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), 57.

understanding of the collective fears and paranoia of the landed classes in Dorset at the time. By illustrating more fully the apprehension rampant among the Dorset elite in the years leading up to 1834, I will reveal it as another factor in determining the harsh reaction against the six hapless Dorchester Labourers.

In an article that appears in *History Workshop* from 1997, Clare Griffiths describes the original adoption of the Tolpuddle narrative by the Trades Union Congress. 1934, the centenary of the Martyrs' arrest and transportation, was the crucial moment in the "canonization" of the Martyrs.[7] Indeed, David Englander sources the origin of the term 'Martyrs' to 1934 (before which they were simply known as the six 'Dorchester Labourers').[8] To celebrate the centenary, a huge event was held, attracting union members from throughout the British Isles and around the world. Griffiths explains how the festival was instrumental in a TUC effort to reinvigorate union zeal among the young by reminding them of the personal sacrifices made to forward the cause of collective bargaining.[9] Presaging Fussel, the TUC placed Tolpuddle into a teleology of progress for the worker wrought by union activity, reminding attendees "how much things had changed over the last hundred years, and specifically of the importance of trade unions in achieving that progress".[10]

In the background, however, there was the specter of an uneasy relationship between the TUC's celebration and the contemporary state of agricultural laborers in

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[7] David Englander, "Tolpuddle: The Making of the Martyrs," *History Today*, 34:12 (1984): 47-51.
[8] Englander, 47.
[9] Clare Griffiths, "Remembering Tolpuddle: Rural History and Commemoration in the Inter-War Labour Movement," *History Workshop Journal*, 44 (1997): 144-169, 158.
[10] Griffiths, 160.

Dorset. Critics at the time highlighted the persisting hostility to unions in Dorset, pointing to a ban on the hiring of union members at the *Dorset County Chronicle* and the *Southern Echo*. They also called attention to the case of one Alderman James, an Agricultural Workers' Union organizer who apparently lost a mayoral race in Dorchester as a result of his participation in the centenary celebration.[11] Further, the 1934 pamphlet advertising the festival read more like a vacation package brochure than a manual in the travails of the agricultural laborer, again calling into question the TUC's fidelity to the agricultural unionists of Dorset. The pamphlet advertised a tennis tournament, football match between England and France, Carnivals, and a pageant. A play entitled "Six Men of Dorset", written for performed at the centenary, traced a nostalgic account of the Tolpuddle story. Needless to say it was a hit with critics, who claimed it "would thrill all London". [12] A procession of tableaux included a depiction of "a war widow weeping at a grave" and "an aeroplane dropping bombs on children of all nations", redefining the Martyrs to stand in opposition to all worldly suffering.[13] This international aspect of the Tolpuddle celebration is noted by Griffiths, who calls attention to the great recognition of the Martyrs as heroes of liberty in an antebellum Europe that was rapidly losing freedom.[14] While the Martyrs were celebrated internationally as founding fathers of the trade unionism in 1934 Dorset, it wasn't without a certain ignorance of the plight of their fellow farm workers in Dorset.

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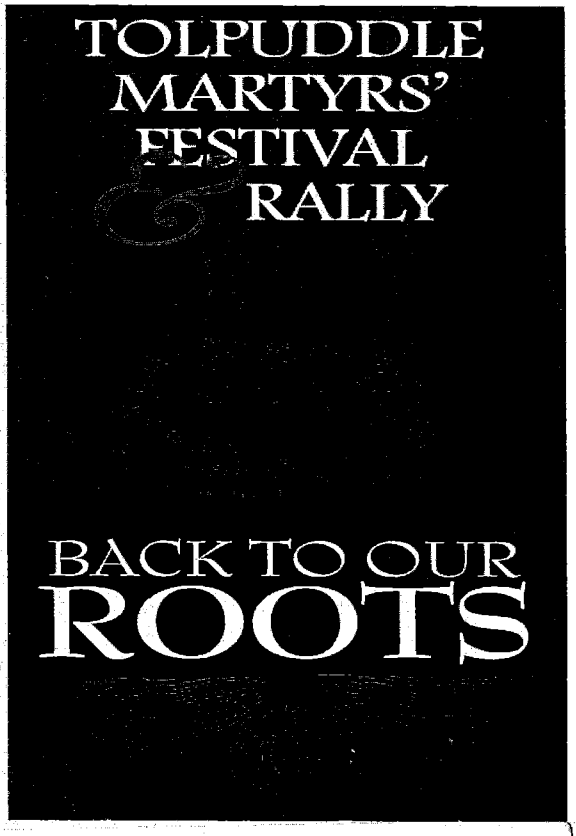
[11] Griffiths, 160.
[12] *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle,* 45.
[13] *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle,* 33.
[14] Griffiths, 159. (Also see Appendix, Figure 3)

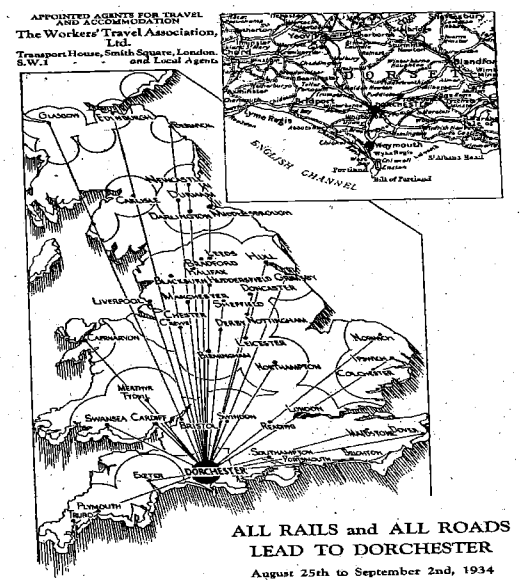
Figure 1: 1934 TUC Brochure (below as well) and 2011 TUC Festival Brochure[15][16]



DORSETSHIRE LABOURERS' CENTENARY COMMEMORATION

(Under the auspices of the General Council Trades Union Congress).

APPOINTED AGENTS FOR TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION
The Workers' Travel Association, Ltd.
Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1 and Local Agents



ALL RAILS and ALL ROADS LEAD TO DORCHESTER

August 25th to September 2nd, 1934

DORCHESTER, August 25th—September 2nd, 1934

Provisional Programme

All the Week.	T.U.C. Summer School. I.F.T.U. Summer School.
Friday & Saturday, Aug. 31st & Sept. 1st.	Trades' Council Annual Conference.
Thursday, Aug. 30th.	Dedication of Memorial Cottages. Workers' Sports— Tennis Tournament. Football—London v. Dorchester. France v. Belgium. Presentation of Play. Pageant (local).
Friday, August 31st.	Sports, Tennis Tournament. Football—England v. Belgium. Presentation of Play.
Saturday, Sept. 1st.	Finals of all Sports Events. Football—England v. France. Presentation of Play.
Sunday, Sept. 2nd.	Unveiling of Memorial at Tolpuddle. T.U.C. Demonstration in Arena.

Daily visits arranged to Tolpuddle, Weymouth, and other places of interest. It is hoped to arrange for a Fair to be held at Dorchester throughout the week. Sports events include Flat Racing, Cycling, Jumping, Tug-of-War, Bowls, Tennis and Swimming.

UNDER ARRANGEMENT

Demonstration of Folk Dancing—Band Contest—Carnival Day—Dances—Whist Drives and other Evening Entertainments.

ACCOMMODATION

This is naturally limited, but the W.T.A. is arranging for provisional reservations in Hotels, Inns, Boarding and Private Houses in Dorchester and Weymouth for visitors staying the night and longer and for the whole week.

CAMP ACCOMMODATION

For one night visitors, sports and youth groups, the W.T.A. has under consideration the provision of a large Temporary Camp. To ensure the success of this, those likely to avail themselves of this facility should indicate their desire to the W.T.A. without delay. *In view of the large expense and the heavy risk, the Camp will not be proceeded with unless there is an early effective demand.*

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[15] "1834-1934 All to Dorchester", London: TUC Library, HD 6664

[16] *Back to our Roots*, TUC Pamphlet

Figure 2: Evidence of the international recognition of the Tolpuddle Martyrs[17]

[17] Rattenbury, Owen, *Hammen der Freiheit*, London: TUC Library, HD 6664

Other 1930s critics from within the labor movement opposed the choice of Tolpuddle as a distraction from more radical collective action during the crucial period of the 1830s. Indeed, the reason for the Dorchester Labourers' massive publicity in 1834 was that their persecution was resisted by the first fully national trades union, Robert Owen's G.N.C.U.[18] Alan Hutt was a particularly vocal radical critic, and in his article "Class against Class 1834-1934" he does not find the Martyrs emblematic in any way of the upheaval occurring in industrial centers like Leeds and London at the time. Further, he complains that George Loveless (the leader) and his men never held a strike or officially called for higher wages, and that it was "was precisely the respectability and moderate attitude of the Tolpuddle men (they were all Methodists and two of them were well-known local lay preachers) that made the Government's attack on them so peculiarly scandalous, and that has always been the subject of comment by historians".[19] E.P. Thompson echoes this sentiment in his reading of the Methodist religion at the time as being a hindrance to worker and class solidarity.[20] Joyce Marlow stresses this decidedly moderate side of Loveless's fledgling "Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers", noting that "none of the men was a political animal as such, and of political motive none was accused", and pointing out that in the rules drawn up for the union "a high moral tone can be detected", with violence, obscenity, and political or religious discussion prohibited during meetings.[21]

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[18] G.D.H. Cole, *Attempts at General Union*, (London: MacMillan and Co, 1953), 68.
[19] Hutt, 20.
[20] E.P. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 54.
[21] Marlow, 43-45.

Another way the 'unionisation' of the Tolpuddle narrative endorses a *less* radical vision of rural discontent is in its treatment of the *violent* agrarian forms of upheaval that predated collective action. Traditional methods like rick burning and animal maiming are seen as a failed measures and collective bargaining is the only viable solution. Seen in this light, the labor interpretation seems strangely conservative. Quoting the *London Times*' response to the Captain Swing riots of the early 1830s, after which 457 men were transported for destroying property (a punishment approximately 75 times more severe than that in Tolpuddle), G.E. Fussell claims such resistance "failed and the men who led the last struggle for the labourer passed into the forgetfulness of death and exile"[22]. According to Fussell, the answer to the laborers' plight came four years later with the alternative of unionization. This reflects a general misapprehension of the nature of agricultural unrest, speaking to a general misappropriation of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, farm laborers as they were, into the industrial Trade Union teleology.

Indeed, it is even possible to argue that the adoption of the Martyrs as a national cause in 1834 worked directly against the interests of the laborers in question. G.D.H. Cole points out that had it not been for the grand demonstration by the G.N.C.U., Robert Owen felt he could have successfully acquired a free pardon for Loveless and his men by direct negotiation with the then Home Secretary Lord Melbourne. After the march on Whitehall and presentation of a petition, it took until 1837 and 1838 for the laborers to be freely pardoned and returned to England. In this way, the interests of the laborers and the larger trade union movement (which undoubtedly benefitted from mass

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[22] Fussel, 22-23.

demonstration) can even be said to have been opposed. And while the union arranged for the support of the laborers' families while their bread-earners were in the colonies, Cole skeptically remarks, "If any money was collected, Hall probably took it with him on his travels," referring to fraud within the ranks of the G.N.C.U.[23]

The G.N.C.U. and TUC are not the only organizations to have laid claim to the six Dorchester Labourers. Joseph Arch, the founder of the first successful National Agricultural Labourers' Union (N.A.L.U.), gave an honorary address to one of the Martyrs James Hammett in 1875. Arch refers to Hammett and his companions as "martyrs to the cause of Unionism" and explains that "the cause of Union...of true humanity was hastened and gained strength by the outrageous penalties inflicted upon you and your comrades", but recognizes the need for further work in rural regions, calling attention to recent evictions of union members on country estates in Dorset.[24] While some similarities with the TUC narrative of 1934 are undeniable, Arch consciously distanced himself from his trade unionist contemporaries when he formed the N.A.L.U. in 1870s.[25] It makes sense then that in 1934, "the example of Tolpuddle was held in less reverence by the N.A.L.U. than by unions drawn from other industries...just as the agricultural economy gave way to urban industry, so the Tolpuddle stalwarts were treated as forbears of all trade unionists, whatever their occupation".[26] Indeed, in his memoirs, Arch refers to the plight of the Martyrs not as an inspiration, but as a cautionary tale, noting that "he certainly knew the stories of the six labourers arrested that morning

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[23] G.D.H. Cole, 72-73.
[24] "Address to Mr. James Hammett, 1875", TUC Library, London HD 6664 Tolpuddle M.
[25] Arch, 103.
[26] Griffiths, 164.

near Dorchester, and even his immense courage took caution from their story of mistreatment."[27] This characterization suggests that the TUC's celebration at Tolpuddle, like the G.N.C.U. advocacy for the laborers in 1834, was ignorant of the fundamentally rural problems and interests at play in the events of 1834.

Finally, like most of the martyrs, Joseph Arch was himself a Primitive Methodist, and with all this talk of martyrdom it is no surprise that in 1912 a memorial arch was built for the martyrs on behalf of the church, leading Joyce Marlow to count this moment as the origin of the term "Tolpuddle Martyrs" (unlike Englander, above, who significantly claims it was 1934). [28] The laborers' identity as Primitive Methodists (George Loveless was a lay preacher) in conservative Dorset was incredibly important in their worlds, effectively signifying a self-removal from the social order of the parish, which had its center in the church.[29] In Tolpuddle during the 1810s and 1820s, visiting Methodist preachers were attacked with rocks and stones, and all poor aid and benefits were administered by way of the Church of England Vicar. Furthermore, Vicar Warren of Tolpuddle during the 1830s played a crucial role in earlier, pre-union wage negotiations between Loveless and the farmers, ultimately betraying their trust and supporting the landlords and employers. Such was Loveless's ire over this that he later wrote a pamphlet lambasting the established church (as opposed to the landlords in Dorset who orchestrated his persecution).[30] It is clear then that the Martyrs' (and later the Methodist Arch's) story could as easily function as an exemplar of the efficacy of

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[27] Joseph Arch, *The Story of His Life Told By Himself*, (London: Garland, 1984) 70.
[28] Marlow, 269.
[29] K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 52.
[30] George Loveless, *The Church Shown Up*, (London: Dorchester Committee, 1838).

Christian dissent effecting social justice than as a triumphalist foundation narrative for the national trades union movement.

While the Tolpuddle Martyrs are paragons of the labour movement today, we have demonstrated that this is due to an active effort on the part of the TUC. The Martyrs' travails are now a 'collectively remembered historical event'. In my next section, I will use a theoretical framework to better describe the nature of the Martyrs' collective memory.

NATIONAL MEMORY

In relative terms, the transportation of six men to Australia for attempting to unionize is a minor occurrence in the nationwide upheaval of the 1830s. The pages of local papers such as the *Dorchester and Taunton Journal* attest to the busy character of these years, which included both violent agitation for the Reform Bill and agrarian violence brought on by Captain Swing in 1829-1830. Both of these incidents resulted in large-scale transportation. Furthermore, these six men were not the only examples of collective labor action in the Southwest at the time: a work stoppage by glovers in nearby Yeovil crowded the broadsheets during 1833-1834. The glovers, like the martyrs, faced persecution for their collective action, but did not elicit the nationwide outrage that the six Dorchester laborers did in 1834, even though they were more effective as a union. While the durability of the Martyrs' legacy is undoubtedly a result to the mass agitation for pardon, they still present a problem of collective memory. James J. Fentress's book *Social Memory* analyzes the natures of collectively held memories and their methods of transmission. He categorizes kinds of social memory by the cultures

from which they originate, differentiating between memories held by peasants, the working class, and entire nations. While the Martyrs were undoubtedly agrarian, as we have seen, the main propagators of their legacy are the industrial and service unions of urban England, beginning with the 1834 Copenhagen Fields march in London. By placing the Martyrs' legacy into Fentress's theoretical context, I will demonstrate that its canonization into the TUC narrative (and subsequent truncation) most resembles an act of 'National memory' quite distant from what the agrarian Martyrs might have expected.

For Fentress and many thinkers since Marx, the peasantry somehow exists 'outside' of historical time, because of their dependence on annual cycles of nature.[31] Their cyclical experience of time makes understanding their concepts of history problematic. Fentress characterizes the four typical "peasant memories" as the:

> 'commemoration of past local resistance itself, most notably resistance against the state(revolts against landlords—which were anyway often smaller in scale and more temporary—do not seem to produce the same long-term resonance and narrative force in local societies).... the remembrance of a Golden Age of just royal rule...the more legendary nobility of Roland and the others, which can serve as an image of absolute justice..." and "still more distant, is the millenarian image of divine justice at the very beginning of time".[32]

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[31] James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 101-102.
[32] Fentress, 108.

According to this short list, we can immediately see that not only does the Martyrs incident of 1834 not qualify under any of these types, it shows the *most* affinity to the very one that Fentress rules out: resistance to landlords. Of course, the 'resistance' he is discussing refers to the violent resistance characteristic of agrarian unrest at the time—the maiming of animals, the burning of corn ricks, the breaking of machines, and sometimes the threatening of the person of the farmer or landlord. While wage negotiation and organization were included in this 'archaic' form of resistance, they were carried out in a manner significantly different than the trade union model. As discussed above, this distinction is a reflection of the wedge between the Martyrs' importance to industrial unions and to their fellow agricultural laborers.

As Fentress continues to describe the hallmarks of peasant memory, one is struck by a curious similarity between the peasant's relationship to collective memory and that of the Dorset *elite* in 1834. Describing a famous incidence of rural violence, the French "Great Fear" of July 1789, he explains the confusion that memory wrought on the frightened peasant rioters, to whom "flocks of sheep, the reflection of the sun in windows, and burning weeds all became brigands....they reacted like this because they had a...remembered image of the terms in which aristocrats were capable of responding to peasant self affirmation".[33] In a similar manner, local Dorset farmers' and landowners' strong reactions to Loveless and his union were driven by the recent memory of the French Revolution, the threat of French invasion, and frequent rural unrest in the 40

[33] Fentress, 102.

years leading up to 1834.[34] This condition of fear, then, is a palpable influence on the judgment of the Martyrs' and will be addressed as an important circumstance of the incident. However, when it comes to the crystallization of the Martyrs as a legend of labor history, it is enough now to recognize that their legacy does not share much in common with traditional peasant memories likely held by their fellow laborers in Tolpuddle.

Fentress's template for working class memory maps on to the Martyrs with more success, but with several important distinctions. Given what we know about the canonization of the story by the industrial TUC, this would be expected. The explicitly political nature of working class memory is an "inescapable part of its analysis", as we have observed in the TUC centenary celebration.[35] However, the character of working class memory elaborated by Fentress soon diverges from what we have observed in the case of the Martyrs. When describing the archetypal working class memory, coal miners' memories of strikes, he notes "the evident importance to the miners....of the exact level of violence of state repression".[36] While there was a pamphlet written by the Martyrs' urban sympathizers (the Dorchester Labourers' Committee) devoted to revealing the "Horrors of Transportation", the fact remains there was no lethal physical violence.[37] Much more important was the symbolic resonance of six union members being wrongfully persecuted, and the attendant nationwide solidarity in the movement for

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[34] James Frampton, *Records of the Dorset Yeomanry*, comp. C.W. Thompson (Dorchester, Dorset County Chronicle printing works, 1894), 7.
[35] Fentress, 115.
[36] Fentress 116.
[37] *Narrative of the sufferings of Jas. Loveless, Jas. Brine, and Thomas & John Standfield,* (London: Published for Dorchester Committee, 1838).

their pardon. Further, Fentress remarks how mining communities were distinctly local and represented a "community identity in opposition to the outside world".[38] The fact of the exportation of Tolpuddle's memory denies this possibility. Indeed, the rest of England comes to Tolpuddle to remember the Martyrs, and while some visitors are local residents, most are not. The TUC material advertising the Martyrs Commemoration in 1934 presented Dorset as an ideal destination for a holiday. Further, as I've mentioned, the six Martyrs were initially known as the Dorchester Labourers, after the provincial capital in which they were tried. Only in the 20th century did their native parish name "Tolpuddle" enter the equation, a fact that reveals the artificiality of a sense of locality in this case.[39]

It seems the memory of the Martyrs shares the most affinity with what Fentress describes as "national memory". While typically national memories are a product of the bourgeoisie, "mythological charters" reinforcing the legitimacy of hegemonic structures, there are often alternative national narratives crafted by institutions such as trade unions and political parties.[40] These narratives are both linear and teleological, and have political objectives. The attachment of political importance to the memory of the Martyrs is one of its central characteristics that gives it this national quality: "the labour movement....has made a major contribution to giving the working classes a sense of the meaning of change perceived across linear time, in effect as an alternative 'national' memory to that of the upper middle classes, and often deliberately constructed as

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[38] Fentress, 116.
[39] Marlow, 269.
[40] Fentress, 133.

such".[41] It is a 'national' memory, of a distinct labor cast, that the Martyrs' memory resembles most today. Their particular story has been subsumed into the teleology of labor's fight against capital in industrial society, and while it stands in opposition to exploitation, it reinforces the structure of the national trade union as the voice of the working class. With this understanding of the creation of the Martyrs as an object of English collective memory, I will turn to some oft-neglected circumstances surrounding their unjust treatment in 1833-34.

REVISITING TOLPUDDLE

In light of the above discussion, I intend to re-visit the Tolpuddle of 1833-34 by shedding light on unique conditions in the parish that are not included in the 'national memory' crafted by the TUC. I will engage with the structural phenomena of land concentration and enclosure, the climate of rural unrest and fear, and the character of the elites in the region of Tolpuddle—all aspects of the story that testify to its uniquely *agrarian* character and suggest a significant truncation of the narrative as a result of its adoption into the TUC's national memory.

STRUCTURE

To have a full understanding of the events that transpired in Tolpuddle in 1833-34, I will provide context regarding the prevailing structure of the rural economy at the time, first on a national scale, and then specifically in Dorset and Tolpuddle. Central to this question is the massive trend of land redistribution at work throughout the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This change was especially damaging to the position of

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[41] Fentress, 123.

smaller landowners. By 1750, small owner-occupied farms (300 or less acres) occupied just 15% of English land, down from 25-35% in 1690.[42] This decline is more stark than the numbers suggest, as many tenants in the 17th century benefitted from customary terms of tenancy, while by the late 18th century more tenures were short-term leases easily dissolved by the owner.[43] With 80% percent of land held by gentry and large magnates by 1800, "the triad of owner, tenant, and labourer was an entrenched and peculiar feature of English agriculture".[44] Through the mechanism of parliamentary enclosure, the trend of concentration of land ownership was exacerbated, driving former peasants with tenant rights into a growing pool of agricultural laborers employed on short-term and seasonal basis: the ratio of labourers to owner-occupiers increased from 2:1 in 1700 to 3:1 by 1831 (the ratio was even higher in the county of Dorset). [45] Combined with the great population growth throughout the agricultural regions of England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a social structure that was bottom-heavy due to large amounts of laborers predominated. This social arrangement was particularly evident by 1830 in the rural Dorset of the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

The mechanisms by which English arable and pastoral lands were amassed into large units of production are as heterogeneous as the lands themselves, but several facts of estate law at the time undoubtedly advantaged landed magnates. M.J. Daunton and John Rule both discuss the role of "strict settlement" in the protection of large landed estates, but more important from a legal standpoint was the redefinition of the

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[42] John Rule, *The Vital Century: English Developing Economy 1714-1815* (London: Longman, 1992), 41.
[43] M.J. Daunton, 62.
[44] Rule, 47.
[45] Rule, 86.

owner/tenant relationship in agricultural communities. The decline of customary tenancy, which privileged tenants with discounted rents, guarantees of tenancy for life, and common rights, came with a rise in short term leases, a stricter division between owning and renting lands, and a stronger ownership right for the aristocracy.[46] In addition, land markets were active in the 18th century (despite the elaborate trusts protecting the estates of the elite), and the advent of mortgage finance advantaged larger landowners, allowing them to use debt to invest in more land.[47] Finally, the complex legal and economic relations between aristocrats and yeomen allowed for much property consolidation by private agreement or piecemeal purchasing of lands.[48]

However, the method most noted in the literature (and popular consciousness) is undoubtedly that of *enclosure*, specifically by parliamentary act, during the 18th and 19th centuries. There is considerable confusion and controversy regarding the role of parliamentary enclosure in the development of England's economy, ranging from condemnation for impoverishing the countryside (the Hammonds) to praise for facilitating the world's first full-scale industrialization (J.D. Chambers and G.E. Mingay).[49] M.J. Daunton distills the essentials of enclosure to three characteristics: 1) consolidation of properties 2) transition of common use tenure to ownership in severalty 3) physical enclosure of space.[50] The third component is the most visually recognized aspect of the process, witnessed by the hedgerows that cover the English countryside today. More

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[46] M.J. Daunton, 69.
[47] M.J. Daunton, 86
[48] Rule, 47.
[49] J.M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure, and Social Change in England 1700-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 15.
[50] Daunton, 100.

interesting to our topic however, is the fact that the first two characteristics have been already mentioned in our discussion of the concentration of landownership throughout the 18th century. This brings us to an important question in the history of enclosure—that of its precise role in the land redistribution of the 18th/19th centuries. Those who believe in the economic justification for enclosure (that it promoted efficiency), argue that it was the most productive way to manage agricultural resources, given the trend towards larger landholdings that *already* existed because of economies of scale. Works by the Hammonds and other 20th century social historians blame the concentration of land ownership (and attendant 'proletarianization' of the farm worker) entirely on enclosures because of their destruction of the common rights to once held by cottagers and the parish poor. More recent scholarship has called attention to the aftermath of enclosure in parishes where it occurred, noting that land ownership continued to concentrate towards larger holdings, while in unenclosed villages the same trend is not apparent.[51] Robert C. Allen's work on probate records has explained the increased rents resulting after enclosure (long an argument for its economic effectiveness) in terms of higher grain prices, turning a proof of greater productivity into a simple rise in rents based on prevailing price levels.[52]

This reading is most applicable to the 'second wave' of Parliamentary enclosure that began in 1790 and lasted through the Napoleonic Wars. This period was characterized by astronomically high wheat prices resulting from the turbulence in France. Whereas prices per Winchester quarter rarely stray above 50 shillings for most

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[51] Rule, 86.
[52] Robert C. Allen, *Enclosure and the Yeoman*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

of the 18th century, beginning in 1789 they rarely dip below 70, often reaching as high as 120 or 130 shillings.[53] In this price-inflated environment, it became advantageous for landowners to enclose their parishes, devoting more land to the growth of wheat and renegotiating loans and leases with tenants.[54] It is during these years that many historians observe the emergence of the 'capitalist farmer' interested in maximizing productive capacity for export and managing input costs like labor.[55] Indeed, many writers also observe the rapidly rising pretensions of this new farming class, whose wives no longer deigned to take an active role in farm work and instead preferred ladylike employments like the pianoforte. As we will discuss later, this period of high prices and enclosure had dramatic implications for class relations in the parish. From an economic perspective, however, it appears that enclosure was both a culmination and a factor in the increasing concentration of landownership, and as Jeanette Neeson writes, "the effect of the second wave of parliamentary enclosure on landholding was to change the names of most farmers and to reduce their numbers".[56] Neeson argues that in spite of the higher grain prices, later parliamentary enclosures exacerbated the landed monopoly over property and effected an importation of new farmers more interested in the monetary gains possible given the economic climate of the war period.[57]

Where these dramatic changes left the Dorset agricultural laborer is clear from the Board of Agriculture's 1815 *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset.* While the Board and its chief Arthur Young were known to be enthusiastic supporters of

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[53] Daunton, 579.
[54] Rule, 55.
[55] Daunton, 69, Neeson 251, Arch.
[56] Neeson, 251.
[57] Neeson, 251.

enclosure as a means of boosting productivity, the impoverishing effects of this imbalance in land distribution could not go ignored. The writer William Stevenson consistently bemoans the ill effects of this feature of the landscape, noting that "In many parts of Dorsetshire.....one man occupies a whole hamlet, parish, or lordship....which has been too frequently made, by laying five or six farms together. It is contended, that if the same quantity of land were to constitute ten or twelve little farms, the profits arising from the labour and industry of the small farmers would be such as to enable them to bring up their families with comfort."[58] Stevenson suggests land redistribution into smaller parcels as a potential solution to widespread poverty, indicting the land concentration exacerbated by enclosure as a social ill.

Along with the concern for the concentration of land ownership is an even more pronounced disapproval of the shortening of tenures and labor contracts. Stevenson observes a general decline of copyhold in favor of freehold ownership, resulting in a 4:1 ratio of the latter to the former, and an attendant shortening of leases in the county.[59] His appraisal of this trend is damning: "No circumstance threatens agriculture with more fatal consequences than the unwillingness, on the part of the landlords, to let their farms for long leases."[60] This shortening of contracts was part of the 'capitalization' of agriculture during the war years and extended as well to labor contracts. Inflation also played a part—it was in the interest of owners to be able to renegotiate contracts with

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[58] William Stevenson, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dorset* (London: Sherwood, Neely, & Jones, 1815) 90.
[59] William Stevenson, 73-74.
[60] William Stevenson, 105.

farmers to adjust for exploding prices, and indeed Stevenson notes, "rents in general have doubled within the last twenty-five years."[61]

All these changes at work in Dorset hurt the laborers at the bottom of the order. With landlords consistently raising rents and demanding productivity from tenant farmers with unstable contracts, farm managers mitigated their financial stress by reducing labor costs. They were in a good position to do so because of the oversupply of farm labor. Unsurprisingly, wages stagnated, and again in 1815, "The price of labour, in many parts of this county, appears to have undergone little variation for some years."[62] Judging by the various wage figures described in the *General Report*, they were to increase little in the 20 years leading up to the 1834. Wages of around 7s a week in the area of Tolpuddle in 1815 show this stagnation continued into the 1830s—we know that before any union was formed Loveless agitated for wages of 9s per week: these were later cut as low as 6s.[63]

What Stevenson's report reveals about the labor market in the Martyrs' Dorset reflects the absolute poverty of farm workers in the region, but also reveals the problematic heterogeneity of wage rates and forms of payment at the time. Wages varied considerably in quantity and manner of payment depending on the season, the nature of the work being done, and the proportion that was paid in kind (which in turn depended on the going price of wheat or barley).[64] For example, at the neighboring manor of Athelhampton, "women have 6d [pence] a day, and 8d. in harvest. Men have 1s.

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[61] William Stevenson, 106.
[62] Board of Agriculture, 428.
[63] Board of Agriculture, 435.
[64] Board of Agriculture, 435.

a day, and wheat at 5s, and barley at 3s, a bushel; but they work much by the piece mowing corn at 2s., water-meadows at the same price, and dry meadows at 1s 6d per acre."[65] The problem of discussing general wage rates, or a "living wage", immediately becomes clear with this example of variable payments. In this way, the 'labor narrative', which uses Loveless's *pre-union* negotiations over wage rates as a way to connect their story to that of general trade unionism, runs into serious problems. Add the further confusion of the part-time nature of agriculture (demand for farm labor was not consistent, and especially weak in wintertime), and the picture becomes almost irreconcilably complex. In the end, the existence of rural unrest throughout the early 19th century is a clear reflection of the fact that farm laborers were in dire straits, having lost both common rights and labor security.

Tolpuddle's enclosure was part of this 'second wave' of enclosures, and much of the social and economic context of the Martyrs' incident is consonant with the national picture presented by historians like Daunton, Rule, Allen, and Neeson. Tolpuddle was enclosed by act of Parliament at the behest of William Morton Pitt, Esq., who was then lord of the manor. Of the illustrious Pitt family, this county gentleman and sometimes Member of Parliament for the County of Dorset resided some three miles from the village at Kingston House in Stinsford. As was common in the many Parliamentary enclosures of the time, the superficial motivation of the re-allotment of lands was that of economic efficiency. Where before, the lands were "divided into several small pieces or parcels intermixed with each other", now they were to be "divided into specific shares, and allotted unto and amongst the several persons interested therein", such that they

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[65] Board of Agriculture, 435.

"would be more convenient...and might be considerably improved".[66] The Act appointed three gentlemen from outside the parish as commissioners to direct the allotment and division of the lands. All that was required in terms of promulgation of the act was notice in the *Dorchester and Sherbourne Journal* and "upon some Sunday immediately after Divine Service" (Church of England, of course).[67] Claimants of rights to land or the commons that were to be abrogated were to present such complaints *in writing* at a meeting advertised in the *Journal* some twenty days previous. For a smallholder or laborer to read, let alone write, was quite rare at the time, rendering enclosure an extremely likely conclusion across the whole of England.[68] Even if peasants or laborers managed to enter a formal complaint, the costs and time of the Parliamentary procedures by which they were processed were prohibitive.[69] In this manner, the common rights and former land distribution of Tolpuddle that the Martyrs' forbears had been accustomed to were completely replaced. Like other parishes enclosed during the period, the new property regime of the parish favored the landowners and tenants at the expense of laborers, and also engendered a large amount of social resentment among the poor.

The language of the act betrays a strong inclination towards the conglomeration of landholdings—continuing the concentration of landownership among the few. Lands less than five acres were to be subsumed into larger parcels, and fields divided amongst

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[66] An Act for Dividing and Allotting the Open, Uninclosed, and Commonable Lands and Grounds within the Manor of Tolpuddle in the County of Dorset, 34 Geo. 3 c. 74.
[67] Enclosure Act.
[68] Neeson.
[69] J.L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, *The Village Labourer, 1760-1820* (London: Longmans, Green, 1912), 26.

several owners or lessees were to be combined into one unit.[70] Similarly, 'encroachments' on parcels of land, which took the forms of gardens and small pastures, were to be absorbed into the newly enclosed large plots. Further, a new spatial segregation resulted from the Act of Enclosure in 1794: glebe lands, whose yields went directly to the Vicarage, were concentrated around the vicarage itself, for the purpose of 'convenience'. In effect, this concentrated the power of the vicar and lord who could directly oversee the labor on their own land. Unsurprisingly, these parcels happen to be the most valuable, situated as they are close to the River Piddle and thus amenable to flood irrigation. Roads were plotted throughout the parish, and hedges were required to be planted on both sides of the roads lining plots of land, accentuating a sense of restriction and enclosure in Tolpuddle. No longer could livestock or people wander freely about the parish.

In a document of sale advertising the property, we obtain some details about the structures in place on the Manor and estate in 1828. There were 2 cottages on the whole of the estate and 37 "small" tenements that produced an annual rent of around 20 pounds.[71] These abodes, while not enough to account for the 343 inhabitants of the parish in 1841, were held on "lives", or copyhold, and as such were remnants of older forms of tenure untouched by the modernizations of enclosure (presumably because they were small and marginal). However, this did not apply to the tenancies of the farmers, who were "tenants at will", meaning that their leases could be terminated by the landowner at any point—a trademark of the movement towards 'capitalist farming'

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[70] Act of Enclosure

[71] Particulars of The Tolpuddle Manor and Estate, June 1828, Dorset History Centre D/KAT/ E11 27 June 1828

being wrought by enclosure in agriculture at the time.[72] In his 1863 history of Dorset, John Hutchins elaborates on certain provisions taken for the benefit of the tenants of cottages and tenements, praising the system in place at Tolpuddle, in which the 'industrious cottagers' are to pay annual rents on the pasturing of their cows, and their cottages with large gardens are rented on a payable rent scale.[73] Despite his praise, Hutchins's observations suggest a truncation of common rights to pasture and garden plots, which were typically free. Similar constraints applied to timber and fish harvesting: the 50 acres of coppice wood were harvested by the farmers for 20 pounds annually, and the game and trout, as in most other parishes, were to be enjoyed by the owner.[74] We are reminded of the effects of the enclosure when Hutchins, in his short passage on Tolpuddle, advises manor owners to "discontinue the prevailing and alarming practice of annihilating small leasehold and copyhold estates, by throwing them together into large farms...by which a useful class of yeomanry seems gradually extinguishing".[75] These views of the economic conditions of Tolpuddle reveal some effects of Parliamentary enclosure on land distribution and the condition of the labouring class approaching 1834.

The effects of enclosure are further clarified from the tithe commutation records for Tolpuddle, dated 1841, some seven years after the Martyrs incident. The document was composed in response to the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836, which was intended to standardize the payment of tithes across England and end the practice of payment in

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[72] Keith Wrightson, e-mail message to author, Feb. 8, 2012.
[73] John M.A. Hutchins, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset* (Westminster: John Bowyer Nichols and Sons, 1863).
[74] 1828 Sale Document.
[75] Hutchins.

kind in favor of payment in money.[76] The act called for commissioners to produce detailed lists of all of the landholders, the nature and size of their holdings, and occupiers along with detailed maps of the parish. Of the 1997 acres, 3 roods, and 6 perches subject to the tithe commutation in the Parish of Tolpuddle, 1984 acres were owned by 4 men (two of them related, James Frampton and his son Henry). While there were 25 other titheholders represented in the documents, only one of these owned more than an acre. More importantly, for the four gentlemen's large landholdings, there are listed a total of five 'occupiers', or lessee farmers. Thus, not only was land *ownership* concentrated, but land holdings themselves were concentrated into large farms run by single tenant farmers. Long gone were the 'small leasehold and copyhold estates' mentioned by Hutchins. As a result, not only were the free common lands and encroachments of Tolpuddle replaced by rented gardens and pastures, the laborers of Tolpuddle were employed by an even smaller group of farmers. When appraising the lot of agricultural laborers in the Martyrs' Tolpuddle, these uniquely agrarian structural trends cannot be ignored. Enclosure and concentration of land ownership dramatically altered the cultivated landscape in the parish of Tolpuddle, contributing to the rural poverty that precipitated the formation of Loveless's union in 1833.

FEAR, UNREST AND THE DORSET YEOMANRY

Changes in land distribution and employment practices, occurring on a national scale, had a role to play as a structural feature that precipitated the Martyrs' incident. Understandably, along with these changes in the economic structure of the parish came

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[76] Tithe Apportionment of Tolpuddle, Dorset, June 30 1841, National Archives, Kew, IR 29/10/230.

a significant rise in class tension and unrest in rural regions. The end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 brought on a severe economic depression especially damaging to the agricultural economy. Throughout the 1820s grain prices were a fraction of what they were during the war. In 1818, English exports dropped 30%, and following the war the number of demobilised soldiers and sailors numbered 200,000. Unemployment was 500,000.[77] The authorities were quick to respond: in 1794, in response to the possibility of both foreign invasion and internal insurrection, Parliament passed the Volunteer Act. This institutionalized what until then had been a wartime form of defense: the Volunteer Yeomanry Cavalry.[78] Significantly, by 1802 there were provisions for peacetime maintenance of the Yeomanry in at least limited proportions, breaking with tradition. Composed exclusively of farmers and landlords, the prevalence of the Yeomanry Cavalry throughout England and especially in the region of Tolpuddle reflects two important facts of rural life in the years leading up to 1834 that go largely ignored in the trade union narrative of events. First, the real threat of civil unrest, and second, a real fear of insurrection on the part of the elite classes in Dorset.

Between the years 1795 and 1835, there was hardly a year in which Yeomanry from somewhere in England or Scotland was not called in to quell civil disturbance.[79] The fact of these disturbances and their perception by the empowered elites formed the crux of class relations between men like the Tolpuddle Martyrs and their overlords like Squire Frampton. This became acute when outbreaks of rioting by rural laborers spread across the rural Southern counties (including the areas around Tolpuddle) in the

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[77] Peter D. Athawes, *Yeomanry Wars* (Aberdeen: Scottish Cultural Press, 1994), 30.
[78] Athawes, 33.
[79] Athawes, 35-50.

Captain Swing riots of 1829-1830. Hobsbawm and Rudé, in their study of these riots, engage the ambiguity of this problem of paranoia. Unlike Fussell, who saw in Captain Swing the death knell of pre-union forms of worker resistance, Rudé and Hobsbawm explain that:

> "contemporaries were impressed less with the defeat of the labourers than with the fact that they had actually risen. What shocked farmers and landlords painfully was not the feebleness but the strength of the labourers' activities in 1830, and therefore the continued necessity to conciliate them. For them the rising was not the last kick of a dying animal, but the first demonstration that a hitherto inert mass, active at best in a few scattered areas and villages, was capable of large-scale, co-ordinated or at least uniform movement over a great part of England."[80]

Viewed in this light, the fear of the upper classes is palpable and the potential of large scale violence very real. In Dorset the riots were relatively minor, yet we know that workers in the region of Tolpuddle were agitating for a 10s weekly wage.[81] Rudé and Hobsbawm go on to stress the non-union nature of rural unrest, naming the Martyrs as the only familiar example at the time of an agricultural trades union—its "very rarity and eccentricity merely demonstrate how wide the distance between the archaic and modern movements still was."[82] Again, we can see the gap between the symbolic usage of the Tolpuddle Martyrs as an epitome of trade unionism and the reality at the time of

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[80] Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (New York: Norton, 1975) 282.
[81] Hosbawm, Rudé, 127.
[82] Hobsbawm, Rudé, 292.

most rural discontent (in which the Martyrs had previously participated), which was carried out through more direct means such as rick-burnings and machine breaking.

The labor narrative seems to misunderstand the older, destructive brand of agricultural unrest. Hobsbawm and Rudé's *Captain Swing* goes as far as to directly diagnose this misapprehension of the realities of rural resistance during the 19th century, placing it at the feet of urbanized leftist historians:

> "Indeed, of all the many gaps in our knowledge of the farm-labourers' world in the 19th century none is more shocking than our total ignorance of the forms of agrarian discontent between the rising of 1830 and the emergence of agricultural trade unionism in the early 1870s.* The historians of social movements of the urban left—to which most of them have traditionally belonged—i.e. they tended to be unaware of it unless and until it appeared in a sufficiently dramatic form or on a sufficiently large scale for the city newpapers to take notice. They were wrong. the most cursory inspection of the evidence shows that agrarian unrest of the old type continued well into the 1850s, and social incendiarism can be traced down to about 1860."

The asterisk specifically cites Tolpuddle as an exception to this rule, but only "because of its urban repercussions. It has never been studied in relation to contemporary rural movements."[83] We see here a common penchant on the part of the Trades Unions and historians to fundamentally misunderstand the problems and collective responses of the

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[83] Hobsbawm and Rudé 282.

agricultural worker. Instead they take out of context those rural incidents that approximate the mechanisms of the urban industrial left like Tolpuddle. In reality, the older, more direct methods of uprising were means to the same end of union activity, and "groups of farm workers turning up at a farm were most careful to state their aims, basically the need for a living wage and the requirement to smash the new threshing machines."[84] Undoubtedly in some cases these more "archaic" methods of direct intimidation were effective. Through the example of Captain Swing, we see an echo of Alan Hutt's objection to the choice of Tolpuddle as the *least* radical example of worker resistance at the time.

However, landowners and farmers in counties like Dorset were not guilty of this misunderstanding, and the Yeomanry Cavalry was their response to the specter of rural uprising. The 1715 Riot Act and equestrian intimidation were the Cavalry's main weapons, and beginning in 1794 their national ranks quickly swelled from 46 Corps, with 7,472 members, to 225 Corps and 19,190 members in 1798. Following brief cessations, their numbers floated around 20,000 from 1830 through 1834. The Duke of Wellington explained the efficacy of the Volunteer Cavalry: "It is much more desirable to employ cavalry for the purpose of police than infantry....cavalry inspires more terror at the same time that it does much less mischief. A body of twenty or thirty horse will disperse a mob with the utmost facility, whereas 400 or 500 infantry will not effect the same object without the use of their firearms."[85] It is important to note both the

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[84] Athawes, 46.
[85] Athawes, 46.

cavalry's role of maintaining civil order as well as the peaceful means by which they achieved that end.

Born of this fear of invasion or domestic insurrection was the Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry, in which Major James Frampton played a key formative role. The climate of concern had ancestors in the Jacobite invasions of the 18th century, and indeed W.M. Pitt's kinsman Lord Rivers founded the Dorset Militia in 1757 to militate against French attack or domestic uprisings.[86] In 1794, the year of Tolpuddle's enclosure and the passage of the Volunteer Act, some 1450 pounds (a huge sum at the time) were raised for the equipment and support for the newly formed Dorset cavalry. According to Major Frampton himself, the developments across the channel were the formative motivation:

> "The Revolution in France having given rise to Principles totally subversive of all order and Good Government, and Clubs and Societies being formed in London and other populous Towns in the Kingdom for the purposes of disseminating such Principles of Liberty and Equality as they were called, and it being believed that Plots were actually formed by these disaffected persons, after promoting secret discontent, to proceed to open violence and endeavour to overthrow the Constitution of this Country".[87]

A rural suspicion of urban environments and their ideological spawn is evident from this passage, especially in his reference to the nationwide Corresponding Societies chronicled in E.P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class*. Frampton

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[86] Gwen Yarker, *Georgian Faces: Portrait of a County* (Dorchester, Dorset: Dorset County Museum, 2010) 21.
[87] James Frampton, *Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry*, 7.

characterizes the Cavalry as essentially a rural paramilitary group, dedicated to the interests of landed wealth in Dorset. It is no surprise then, that the membership in the Dorset Yeomanry was required to "consist solely of Gentlemen, Yeomen, and respectable Tradesmen" and that "no servants should be admitted".[88] The fact that recruits came from the classes of yeomen and tradesmen reflects the wide-spread nature of fear at that time, and lends credence to concerns over possible worker unrest (farmers dealt with laborers on a daily basis). One thing is clear however: while the poor fought in English wars throughout the globe, the Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry needed no footmen—they were a militia engineered to maintain the county's social hierarchy in the face of perceived threats from without and within.

And indeed, they did so in a spectacular fashion—equipment was ordered, uniforms were standardized, and training regimes were put in place.[89] The artist Thomas Beach painted portraits of the "Volunteer Rangers" in their forest green uniforms, to be hung in lavish county homes like Lord Dorchester's Milton Abbey.[90] To prepare for the possibility of French attack, the Yeomen outlined detailed plans for the removal of livestock and foodstuffs from the coastal regions of Dorset and set up beacons on hills along the coast, ready to be lit as an alarm. Regions of the coastline were divided up between officials corresponding to their place of residence, with Major Frampton in charge of the coastal regions closest to Tolpuddle and his own estate Moreton.[91] In response to these early and vigorous exertions of the cavalry, William

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[88] James Frampton, *Dorset Yeomanry Cavarly*, 10.
[89] James Frampton, *Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry*, 111.
[90] Gwen Yarker, 61.
[91] James Frampton, *Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry*, 110.

Morden Pitt wrote a treatise (some two years after his enclosure of Tolpuddle) advocating the formation of similar Cavalries throughout rural England. Entitled "Thoughts on the Defence of this Kingdom", Pitt made clear his support for institutions like the Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry, to whom he donated a full 200 pounds:

> "The late institution of yeomanry cavalry, is likely to be productive of much good. Considering it only as an armed association of persons possessing property, as well of yeomanry as of the superior orders in society, it is admirably calculated to check the attempts of rioters and mobs, whether conspiring for the purpose of subverting the constitution, of for that of plunder".[92]

Pitt was explicit in his rationale for the utility of such an organization—it was to be a police force ready to maintain order in the face of insurrection on the part of the poor. It is no surprise that he does not seem to be concerned with the difference between politically motivated and simply criminal mobs. Either would have been an affront to the established powers, and in light of the chaos being wrought across the channel, cause great trepidation amongst landowners and farmers alike.

During the relative calm of Orleanist France before the unrest of the 1830s, the Cavalry withdrew, suggesting its presence in Dorset was tied to actual perceived threats across the Channel. In spite of his zeal, Squire James Frampton in fact advocated the disbanding of the Yeomanry during times of peace, revealing an awareness of the

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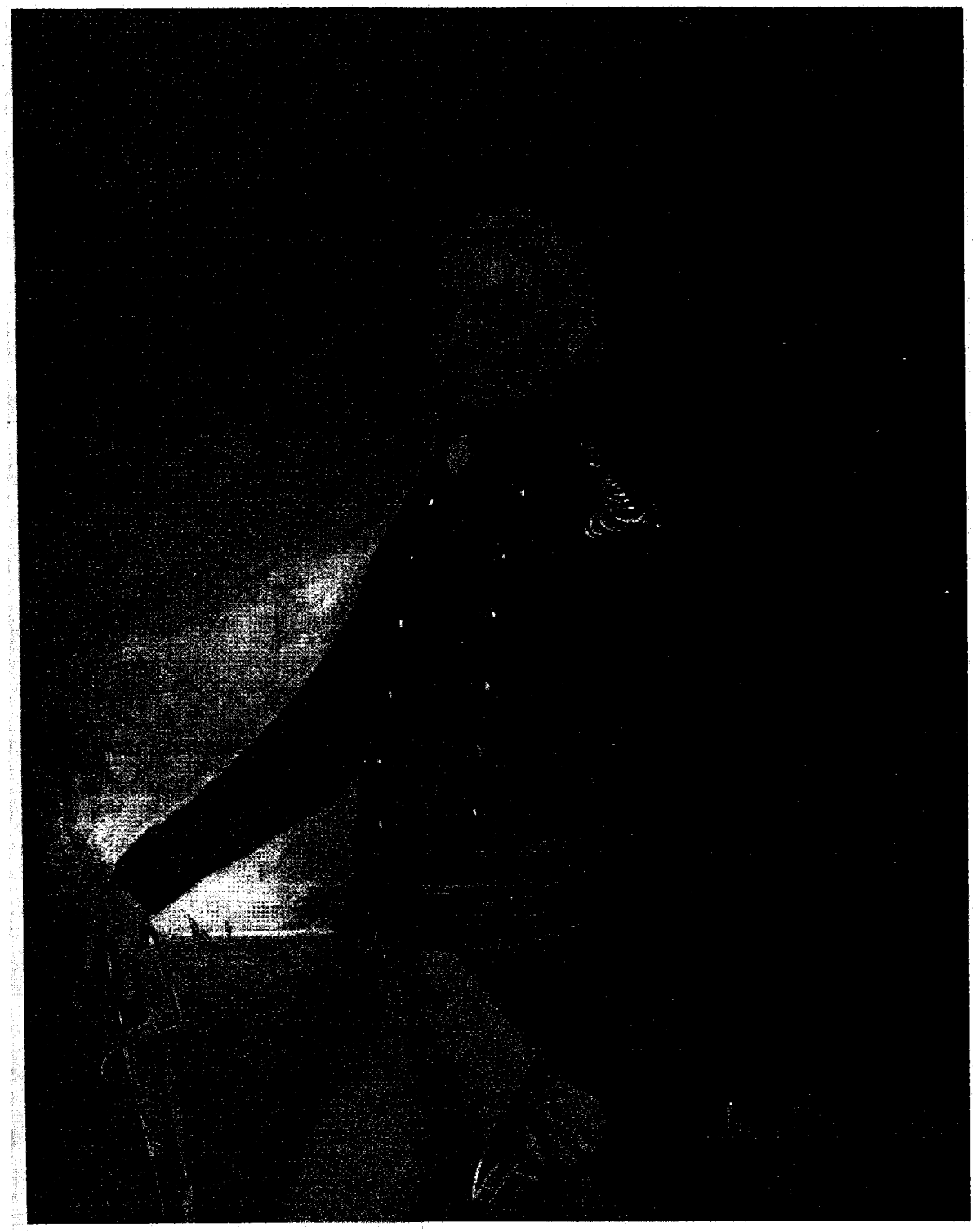
[92] William Morton Pitt, *Thoughts on the Defence of this Kingdom* (London: Payne and McInlay, 1803).

Figure 3: Major James Frampton of the Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry, 1795-1797[93]



[93] Gwen Yarker, 65. Painted by Thomas Beach (1738-1806).

perceptions of the poor in the region. In his justification for the temporary cessations of training and readiness throughout the first decades of the 19th century, he writes that the cavalry "were looked upon with a jealous eye by the poorer classes of the People, who fancied that, because the Farmers were armed, they could keep up the price of provisions....but by these men now disbanding themselves, although requested to continue their services, they proved that they had no such intention."[94] It is clear then, that the weapons in Frampton's arsenal were not limited to violent retribution and reinforcement of the power structure. He was sensitive to the perceptions of the lower classes, however cynical his perspective may have been, and he saw the value of disbanding the cavalry as a means of encouraging harmony between the farmers and their laborers.

Nevertheless, with the agitation for Reform and the rise of Captain Swing in the early 1830s, the Yeomanry was again called to the field of battle for the policing of the rural poor throughout Dorset. With new uniforms of showy scarlet coats, blue capes and gold girdles, these elite marauders grew in strength and number in proportion to the amount of rural unrest and the disorder across the channel.[95] Battalions were founded in Wimborne Charborough, Blandford Forum in 1831 in response to the Captain Swing riots of 1830. In towns across Dorset, "Guardian Associations" were formed explicitly to protect property against unrest.[96] The language of Frampton's description of Captain Swing is telling: "the agricultural element...was in a condition of ferment; political Unions were formed, bands of laborers assembled together in various parts of

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[94] James Frampton, *Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry*, 49.
[95] James Frampton, *Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry*, 116.
[96] *Sherborne, Dorchester, and Taunton Journal*, April 3, 1834.

Dorsetshire firing farmhouses, destroying machinery, and threatening the Country houses of the gentry."[97] It is clear from Frampton's appraisal of the political climate that to him, horizontal class groupings (unions, protest) held the potential for violence against property. Not only was he observing: in November of 1830, he led 150 Cavalrymen against a large group of rioters, capturing the three leaders and taking them to Dorchester Gaol.[98]

Violence recurred in the area in 1831 in response to Parliamentary elections that had a direct bearing on the Reform Bill. One Capt. John Goodden, writing to Colonel Frampton in October 1831, reported serious injuries in upheaval in Sherbourne on the night of October 21st, but also that "although I had Ball Cartridge with me, I did not consider I was justified in firing, not having a Magistrate with me."[99] Frampton later praised Goodden's men's forbearance in a letter to the Lord Lieutenant of Dorset.[100] Thus, while the Cavalry was certainly active in suppressing uprisings in the countryside, some measure of restraint was observed and encouraged. A couple examples of the Cavalrymen's injuries from the Goodden affair should suffice to establish the character of the violence they were confronting. One John Melmoth received contusions on the eyebrow, eyeball, upper lip, and elbow, and another Thomas Tucker received "two severe cuts on the face, and several blows on the body". Far worse off was John Percy, who fractured his skull and was near death—a month after his injury he was still in

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[97] James Frampton, *Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry*, 108.
[98] James Frampton, *Dorset Yeomanry Cavarly*, 108.
[99] James Frampton, *Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry*, 125
[100] James Frampton, *Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry*, 125

recovery. Other head injuries were reported from the same incident.[101] In spite of their bodily sacrifice, the Yeomanry were the subjects of the ire of angry owners of damaged property—letters in the *Dorchester and Taunton Journal* saw fit to defend the brave conduct of Goodden's men in the face of accusations of ineffectiveness. Goodden's troop was apparently "hooted by the mob, assailed with stones, unhorsed, their swords and caps taken from them, and the latter stuck on posts and cut to pieces" before they were able to disperse the rioters. By any standards, the violence was severe—which reflects both on the real danger of the rural unrest, as well as the restraint of the cavalrymen.

Through the lens of Squire Frampton's Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry we can understand the very real climate of fear amongst the landed classes the precipitated the events of 1834, a factor oft written off as reactionary paranoia. The specter of domestic revolt drove landowners like Frampton as well as farmers and tradesmen to take strong action to protect their property in the most peaceful manner possible. As we will see in the next chapter, some of the same county figures involved in the formation of the Cavalry were also inextricably tied to the subjects of their fear—through the mechanisms of charity and enlightened philanthropy.

FACES OF THE ELITE

As a third and final alternative perspective on the events of Tolpuddle in 1834, I turn to the villains of the narrative—Squire James Frampton and his cadre of landowners, who as magistrates carried out the injustice against the six Martyrs. Understandably, the reactionary elites are demonized in the labor narrative. Below I

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[101] James Frampton, *Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry,* 126.

offer facts about class relations that undermine this simplification. Calling to mind G.E. Fussell's contradictory characterization of the rural elite, landowners like W.M. Pitt and Squire Frampton took an active effort in amelioration of the condition of the poor, revealing a penchant for charity and enlightened philanthropy amongst a supposedly reactionary and callous class.

The agricultural laborer's poverty during the early 19th century was a well-documented phenomenon amongst the ruling classes in England. The Dorset elites were no exception to this rule. While he was yet Lord of Tolpuddle Manor, William Morton Pitt published a treatise on the very subject, entitled "An Address to the Landed Interest, on the Deficiency of Habitations and Fuel, for the Use of Poor". Pitt fully accepted the responsibility of landowners for the welfare of their laborers and cottagers: "Attention to the wants of the Poor is, without doubt an essential part of the duty of those who possess property".[102] For the typical estate owner in the late 18th century, Pitt states the obvious—since the reign of Elizabeth I the rural poor had been sustained through tough times by the poor rate, collected from the wealthier members of the parish. In Tolpuddle during year 1815, this amounted to 343 pounds worth of poor rates levied,[103] which when considered in proportion to the value of real property in the parish, was quite a large total.[104] Indeed, the county of Dorset, because of its primarily agricultural economy and pervasive rural poverty, levied some of the largest amounts of poor rates in the

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[102] William Morton Pitt, *An address to the landed interest, on the deficiency of habitations and fuel, for the use of the poor,* (London: 1797).
[103] Edward Boswell, *The Civil Division of the County of Dorset* (Dorchester: Weston, Simonds, and Sydenham, 1832), 133.
[104] Boswell, 33 [Ratio of Value/Poor Rates Levied=4.9 (Tolpuddle) vs. 10.5 (nearby Piddletown)].

whole of England. Of a total population of 125,495 in 1815, some 13,910 were relieved at least in part by the Parish, and this number is likely an underestimate because it did not include the children of those receiving aid.[105] The consensus for 1811 was that a seventh of the population was relieved by the poor rate, pegging the number closer to 18,000. More importantly, that number represents an almost twofold increase from figures collected in 1803, indicating that aid (and poverty) were increasing dramatically through the first decades of the 19th century. We can see then that Pitt's treatise was written in the context of a widely accepted redistributive logic well ingrained in the customs and practice of the country parishes throughout Dorset.

Of course, on the ground the reality was often different than expenditure records would indicate. The institution of the Speenhamland system throughout the Southwest ensured that laborers were kept on a level of bare sustenance for their wages. Formulated in a 1795 Berkshire meeting of concerned landowners, Speenhamland was initially conceived as a manner of improving the lot of the poor. However, because it pegged wages to the price of a loaf of bread (varying with the amount of dependents a laborer had) and made up any differences through Parish aid, the effect of Speenhamland was a competitive downward spiral in wages, as employers would off load wage costs onto the Parish (to whom they already paid Poor rates). Thus, while traditionally the Poor Rate served to sustain only the aged and infirm, it soon became a universal component of a laborer's wages.[106] Further, to the chagrin of religious Dissenters like the majority of the Martyrs, parish aid in the form of cash handouts or

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[105] Boswell, 34.
[106] Hammonds, 141.

other payments in kind was often restricted to members of the Church of England.[107] It is undeniable that in spite of massive parish handouts the laborers continued to suffer throughout the early 19th century.

Nevertheless, the landowning classes did not limit their philanthropy to the poor rate—as is witnessed by the existence of charities and trusts in the Tolpuddle region. As of the year 1815, in Dorset as a whole, there were 23 schools, 14 almshouses, and 2 hospitals all endowed for the poor. During the same year, £1,727 worth of charitable donations were made through the parishes of the county. In addition, several endowments made by wealthy landowners in the area represent another form of wealth redistribution. The infamous James Frampton took over the accounts of one Joanna Milbourne's charity in 1807, providing for a school in the parish of Affpuddle, the next parish over from Tolpuddle. While the school was a church school that taught the catechism, it served all of the children of the parish.[108] A neighboring parish to the west, Piddletown, benefited from on Dr. William Bradish's charity, endowed in the early 17th century, providing for limited to assistance to certain qualifying recipients. Again, there was a distinct religious character to this charity—only those who could say the catechism by heart could receive assistance.

If a landowner is to be judged by his treatment of the poor in his home estate, the Martyrs' antagonist Squire James Frampton appears to us differently than in G.E. Fussell and Joyce Marlow's characterizations. Throughout the years leading up to 1834, Frampton managed his family's charity, which took the annual rents of property they

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[107] Arch, 16.
[108] "Charity Commissions Report for Dorset," 1839, 83

owned in Bere Regis (a few miles east of Tolpuddle) and put them towards the placement of deserving, poor parish children in apprenticeships. Initially directed towards the Frampton's own parish of Moreton, in 1758 the charity was expanded the parishes of Affpuddle and Toner's Puddle (along the Piddle river, just east of Tolpuddle). It is almost certain that Loveless's laborers would have been aware of Frampton's charity, both because of their proximity and because we know a labor union connected to Loveless's had sprouted up in Bere Regis at the time of their trial. This charity was active during the period of our concern: from Lady-day (March 25) 1827 to Lady-day 1834, 30 apprentices from the villages (and 17 from Affpuddle) were placed out in apprenticeships with premiums of 20 pounds each to aid them in building their careers. It is also clear that Squire Frampton had a direct and involved role in the administration of these benefits as "the indentures are generally filled up by Mr. Frampton himself, and the names of the masters and apprentices....are all entered in a book kept for the purpose".[109] In addition to Frampton's own charity, he administered that of one *Roger Coker*, a rector in Moreton, that provided for the education of the parish's poor children beginning in 1813.[110] It is clear then, that a penchant for charity was a characteristic of Frampton's dealings with the lower orders in the parishes roundabout Tolpuddle. While the results of these ventures may not have been enough to address systemic problems of rural poverty, they still reflect on some of the beneficent aspects of class relations at the time.

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[109] "Charity Commissions Report for Dorset", 1839, Dorset History Centre, PC/CHV/2/1 96-97.
[110] "Charity Commissions Report"

Recalling W.M. Pitt's treatise on the state of the poor, we can see in addition to traditional village trusts a more enlightened and modernized strain of thought regarding charity in Dorset during the 19th century. Bemoaning the deficiency of fuel and housing for laborers as well as the horrors of the poor house, Pitt advocated the conversion of uncultivated lands into cottages and peasant gardens, noting that "labourers, who possess this kind of property, are the most industrious, sober, and frugal, that they seldom apply to their parishes for relief".[111] Coming from the author of enclosure in Tolpuddle, this statement seems contradictory, but also suggests the possibility that some lands were preserved for peasant use there. Pitt also echoes general sentiments about the importance of property to further endorse peasant land-ownership: "Every labourer, possessing such property of his own, would consider himself as having a permanent interest and stake in the country".[112] The idea of stake, or interest in the welfare of the community (and thus political enfranchisement), being determined by property ownership, was applied to the disenfranchised orders of society. Overall, in his treatise we can witness an enlightened beneficence at work amongst the former Lord of Tolpuddle manor—concerned with the plight of the lower orders and rational in his approach to its solution. Pitt even went so far as to specify the ideal peasants' cottages, drafting floor plans (pictured below) that would be conducive to the health and

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[111] Pitt, *Address to Landed Interest*, 5-6
[112] Pitt, *Address to Landed Interest*, 6

Figure 4: William Morton Pitt's Drawings of an ideal peasant habitation

happiness of their inhabitants.[113] Pitt's involvement in the improvement of the condition of the rural poor did not stop with publication of treatises, however—he was involved in the Dorchester Mendicity Society, which was responsible for relieving the poverty of over 1000 persons annually.[114]

Pitt was not alone in his approach to the improvement of the poor. Another ex-MP and large local landowner, Edward Berkeley Portman was noted for being especially progressive in dealing with his laborers and cottagers. With a large estate in Bryanston, some 10 miles northeast east of Tolpuddle, Portman was renowned locally for his forward-thinking experiments with the 'allotment system'.[115] In line with Pitt's recommendations, Portman's experiment called for laborers to be granted small garden plots near their habitations to ensure their self-sustenance and allow them to remove themselves from parish relief.[116] According to the reports of the *Sherbourne and Yeovil Journal*, Portman's experiment was a great success: "the labourers, without a single exception, paid their rents to the full, and uniformly expressed themselves sincerely grateful to Mr. Portman for his liberality and kindness."[117] Like Pitt, Portman also wrote out his own proposals for the improvement of the rural poor on his estate, outlining specific plans for the distribution of land, housing, fuel, clothing, and education. Most interesting were his proposals calling for a systems of small weekly payments to go towards education and the provision of clothing at the end of the year (a kind of

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[113] Appendix, Figure 1
[114] *Sherborne, Dorchester, and Taunton Journal*, April 29, 1830.
[115] "Proposals for the Improvement of the Condition of the Labourers on the Property of E.B. Portman, Esq." *Sherborne, Dorchester, and Taunton Journal*, Dec 24th, 1829.
[116] Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury Dec 2 1833.
[117] Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury Dec 2 1833.

layaway). Also of import were monetary incentives for peasants' diligence and good moral conduct.[118] Finally, we learn from the *Dorset County Chronicle* that in the wake of Captain Swing, Portman lowered rents on his farmers as a means to promote higher wages for his laborers, attracting the ire of other more reactionary landowners like Frampton himself, but also indicating the efficacy of the "archaic" methods of rural resistance discussed above.[119] Between Pitt and Portman, both important members of the Dorset elite (as evidenced by their tenures in Parliament), a class of enlightened wealth, dedicated to improving the condition of the rural poor, undermines the view of the Martyrs' social betters as uniformly reactionary.

This message was not lost on the rural poor in the region, either. The poor of Dorset recognized Portman's stance of general benevolence. During the political violence of 1831, when the reactionary Lord Ashley won a fiercely contested seat against the pro-Reform Mr. Ponsonby, a mob ran riot in Blandford, destroying and burning property.[120] At 10:30 p.m. during the day of violence, Mr. Portman "addressed them, beseeching them to desist from acts of violence and to return home. They seemed to listen to him with attention and respect: his speech was productive of its intended effect upon some of the people, for their numbers were much diminished at 11."[121] The rioters did not completely disappear, however, continuing to damage the property of the town clergyman and electoral officials. Nevertheless, we can see that Portman's enlightened

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[118] Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury Dec 2 1833.
[119] Mary Frampton, *The Journal of Mary Frampton* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1885), 359.
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[121] *Sherborne, Dorchester, and Taunton Journal*, Oct 27 1831.

benevolence was recognized by the insurrectionary element in Blandford, and that he commanded at least some good will from his impoverished social inferiors.

Portman's long service in Parliament for the County of Dorset, from 1823-1832 attests to his additional popularity amongst the enfranchised of the county. Not only was he adept at representing the interests of the voting class, he used his power to support measures that served the welfare of the English poor. In a speech to the electors of Mary-le-Bone in London (the site of his next Parliamentary seat), he puts forward a progressive agenda and directly endorsed wealth redistribution and social reform for the benefit of the poor: "I therefore consider that a well-regulated Property Tax might be substituted in lieu of the Assessed and some other Taxes; by which means the wealthy would more generally contribute towards the exigencies of the State, and the less wealthy be relieved in proportion".[122] While he was not addressing the landed interests in Dorset, the idea of one of the landed elite supporting a tax on property flies in the face of any accusations of bald self-interest. And while it is certainly possible he lost his Dorset seat because of such magnanimity, his activism was not absent during the meat of his tenure as representative of the notoriously Tory County. In 1829, Portman was the author of one "Friendly Society Bill", a Parliamentary bill passed that called for a *direct*

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[122] Edward Berkeley Portman, *To the Electors of the Borough of Mary-le-bone, The Substance of speech, delivered by Edward Berkeley Portman, Esq,* (London: Simpkins, 1832).

government regulation and legitimization of the collectivization of wealth among the poor.[123]

Friendly Societies were small-scale insurance plans designed for small contributors. A form of mutual benefit, if a member became sick or infirm he would be relieved off the pool of contributions from the group as a whole. Present in poor communities since time immemorial, Friendly Societies came to the attention of Parliament especially in the 1820s as a means to combat rural poverty and dependency on poor rates.[124] In E.B. Portman's proposal for a universal template for friendly societies in Dorset, the rationale of the system is articulated: "Wherever there is a contingency the cheapest way of providing against it is by uniting with others, so that each Man may subject himself to a small deprivation in order that no man may suffer a great loss."[125] However, the proposal took pains to distinguish itself from previous versions of Friendly Societies, which were often centered on the Village pub and characterized by "mismanagement and conviviality". The friendly society in Portman's imagination was one of sober mutual assistance, with the collective goal of raising those dependent on parish aid out of abject poverty to self-sufficiency.[126] Nevertheless, what friendly societies amounted to was a horizontal class alliance, and as such often attracted the concern and ire of the higher orders of society who believed it was a mask

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[123] House of Commons, "From February the 5th, 1829, in the Tenth Year of the Reign of King George the Fourth, to December the 10th, 1829, in the Tenth Year of the Reign of King George the Fourth", *Journals of the House of Commons* 6 March 1829, vol. 84, p. 109.
[124] House of Commons, 109.
[125] Edward Berkeley Portman, *Rules regulations, and Tables of Contributions and Allowances, recommended for the constitution of a friendly society, in the county of dorset, upon legal and scientific principles on the plan of the Rev John Thomas Becher, A.M.* (Blandford: John Shipp, 1825).
[126] Portman, *Friendly Societies.*

for insurrectionary combination.[127] In a report dated 1812, it was found that 37 friendly societies existed in Dorset, composed of some 3795 members—amounting to 3 in every 100 people living in the county.[128] It is no surprise, then, that the six Tolpuddle Martyrs in question called their fledgling labour union the *Agricultural Labourers' Friendly Society*—reflections of their indebtedness to agrarian norms and hesitance to be militant unionists. It seems they were of a greater accord with landowners like Portman than the labor narrative would suggest.

CONCLUSION:

By delving into the particulars of Tolpuddle's economic, social, and political conditions in the years leading up to 1834, I hope to have illustrated the differing perspectives and motivations of the principal actors in the Martyrs' arrest and transportation. The structural impediments of land concentration and the erosion of customary tenure, the climate of fear and unrest in Dorset embodied in the deployment of the Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry, and the enlightened philanthropy practiced by some of the elite classes all help to explain why certain 'actors' acted as they did. Further, they all reveal complexity and distinctly rural nature to their travails belied by their adoption into the TUC narrative.

That being said, the TUC's narrative is only one of several competing 'national memories' at play in Dorset today. Some weeks before I arrived to take part in the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival & Rally in the summer 2011, an exhibition ran at the Dorset

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[127] Arch, 16.
[128] Williamson, *General View of Agriculture in Dorset,* 464.

County Museum in Dorchester entitled: "Georgian Faces: Portrait of a County". Many of our elite friends like Frampton and Pitt were presented in their Yeomanry uniforms. While an explication of the narrative presented at the exhibition would require another chapter, I will say that it all but ignored the experience of the less glamorous parish poor. A small reference to the conviction of the "Tolpuddle labourers" is followed by a commendation of "conscientious landowners like James Frampton, who paved the way for the founding of the Dorset County Museum in 1845". The 'wealth' narrative and 'labor' narrative run parallel, but do not seem to acknowledge each other sufficiently. I hope by reading my qualifications to the labor account I will have proven the benefit of bringing multiple class perspectives from the Tolpuddle Martyrs story into conversation with one another.

Word Count: 12,360

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY:

For me, the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs begins not in the 1830s Dorset of the six agricultural laborers in question, but in London, Ontario, Canada. This may seem strange—but not when one realizes that the provincial Canadian city is the final resting place for five of the six "Martyrs". So in a manner that recalls many films and novels, this story begins at its end. This indirect point of embarkation has another rationale, however—my mother was born and raised in London, Ont, and my ancestors were responsible for the masonry enclosing the cemetery where the five martyrs currently lie. Surprisingly, I was completely unaware of this fact until I was well into my research on the subject. This past Labor Day, the London (Ontario) City Council commemorated the Tolpuddle Martyrs by commissioning a public sculpture of two hands, realized in a skeletal frame, clasped together as a show of mutual support. My grandparents attended the memorial event and celebration, and I have included pictures of the memorial below.

In the fall of 2010, I became acquainted with the martyrs when I read E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* for a class at Yale. Thompson mentioned the plight of the six Dorchester Labourers several times as a signpost to the reader, never outlining the full story, as if he were referring to a popular legend his readers would be surely be aware of. As it turned out, these 'Martyrs' neither died for their cause (forming an agricultural union) nor were they successful—they were transported to Australia and the next major farm laborers' union came together some 40 years later. I was intrigued, and dug a little deeper, encountering several pamphlets and documents in Yale's archives pertaining to the subject. The topic seemed the perfect

synthesis of my interests—having spent the previous summer working on Yale's market garden, and the spring before that studying English social and cultural history in London, I took to my labors with a passion. A few months of research and 25 pages later, I had completed a short paper dealing with the Martyrs and their dissenting Primitive Methodism.

By the time I had realized the uncanny connection between these six agricultural laborers from 1830s Dorset with my Canadian hometown, I had written up a proposal for further research the following summer in London and Dorset. The coincidences were not finished, however. As I planned my trip to England I learned from my grandparents in London that they had befriended an English physician from Dorset on exchange London, Ont. some 50 years previous. He had felt it very important to visit the graves of the Martyrs. Letters were exchanged, and upon my arrival in Dorset I spent an agreeable afternoon reconnecting with these old family friends. In this way, what began as a solely historical project, exotic for a student from America, became a project of collective memory for the Flannigan clan from rural Canada.

While in Dorset on my fellowship, I attended the Trades Union Congress's annual "Tolpudlle Martyrs Festival and Rally". It is rare as a student of English rural history to share my excitement over the subject with others, and the Tolpuddle Martyrs inspired a great community of remembrance. Drawn from the varied and vocal English left, the festival goers included card carrying Socialists, Communists, and members of various industrial and public service unions. The venerable Tony Benn spoke to enthusiastic cheers, Billy Bragg played songs of the English working class, and a choir from Tazmania

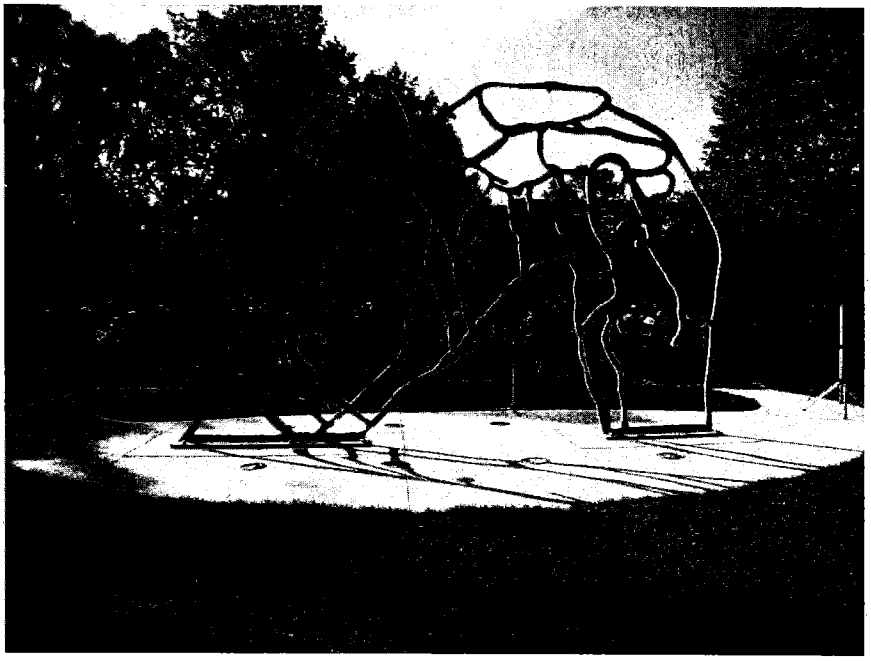
(formerly Van Diemen's land, where several of the Martyrs slaved away at work camps after their transportation) sang hymns of solidarity. However, what was most amazing was that this renewal of *industrial* class commitment was staged during a day devoted entirely to the legacy of six *farmworkers* from the year 1834. The laborers, now 'Martyrs', commanded an audience much wider than their experience would suggest.

My research in England was focused initially on the class structure and land distribution of the parish of Tolpuddle, and I found much useful material to this end in the British Library, the National Archives in Kew, the Institute of Historical Research and the Dorset County History Centre. By searching through files, microfilm, and books pertaining to the parish during my period of inquiry, I was able to cobble together a picture of the major landowners and figures of the region. Documents like the Tithe Commutation of Tolpuddle in 1841 came with lists of landholders in the parish and their holdings, while those like Mary Frampton's diary and Frampton's account of the Dorset Yeomanry Cavalry offered a human perspective on the landed reactionaries and class unrest at the time. Nevertheless, while my initial objective was to establish a 'snapshot' of the parish in 1833-34, I simply could not dodge the legendary status of the Tolpuddle Martyrs in labor history. My searches constantly brought back semi-fictional materials, novels, plays, and propaganda.

I soon realized that what was most extraordinary was the remembrance of the event, and its canonization in the labor teleology. In the TUC archives in Holloway I found more materials addressing this side of the issue. Reading Clare Griffiths' piece on the formation of the narrative allowed me to hone in on the particulars of the process.

Historical sociologists like Philip Abrams, William Sewell, and James Fentress provided a theoretical framework with which I could characterize what I had observed in my research. And so, in finality, my project reflects a synthesis of research objectives—I engage with some of the structural and cultural characteristics of the region in the years leading up to 1834 with an awareness of the simplifications carried out by the TUC's act of canonization. By integrating these two temporal focuses (the snapshot of 1834, and the 178 years of rememberance) into a piece that revisits the events at Tolpuddle in 1834, I hope to have gained a clearer view of the motivations and perspectives of actors in the drama at Tolpuddle in 1834.

As a final note, I would like to thank Dr. Keith Wrightson for his guidance throughout this entire process. I'd further like to express my gratitude to the many people who were of great assistance in all stages of this project: Kyle Farley, Master Penelope Laurans, Jonathan Edwards College, Martin Postle, Gregory Eow, James Scott, Keith and Celia Glennie-Smith, Les Kennedy and the Southwest TUC, the Donger Family, the residents of 113 Howe St, and my own supportive parents—thank you. Further, I would like to *dedicate* this project to my wonderful grandparents, Louis and Marge Flannigan.



Tolpuddle Martyrs in London, Ont.[129]

[129] Louis Flannigan, e-mailed to author, 9 Sep. 2011.

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