

To: Colleagues, friends & supporters

28 January 2009

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Help mark 175 years of Union organising 18-25 April 2009

It was 1834 and 100,000 people gathered in what was Copenhagen Fields and has become the area just north east of King's Cross station to demand freedom for the Tolpuddle Martyrs; it is now 175 years later and residents in King's Cross together with trades unions from all over the country are preparing to commemorate that momentous day with a march on 25 April from the Caledonian Park to Edward Square where an acoustic music festival and lots of activities will end a week of events.

The credit crunch is hitting us all hard in 2009, but back in 1834 things were very much tougher for ordinary working people. Average family outgoings for the basics was 13 shillings and ninepence; six farm labourers from the Dorset Village of Tolpuddle soon to become 'martyrs', decided that local pay of 9 shillings a week was tantamount to starvation wages. So George Loveless together with his brother James and brother-in-law Thomas Stanfield, Thomas's son John, James Hammett and James Brine decided to set up a trade union to fight for better wages from the rich landowners including James Frampton. Frampton complained to the Prime Minister who agreed that development of unions must be stopped. The six were framed on charges of 'swearing an oath' under laws created to stop seditious meetings and assemblies and in March were sentenced to seven years transportation to the penal colonies of Australia where they could reasonably be expected to starve or die.

But... on April 21, 1834 a month after the Trial a mass procession of 35 unions, organised in Copenhagen Fields by the Metropolitan Trades Unions, marched to Whitehall to present a massive 200,000 signature petition which the Prime Minister refused to accept. Protests continued and after some years the Martyrs were freed. They are now world famous as six heroes.

In King's Cross a street has been named after the Martyrs and a mural on Copenhagen Street celebrates the original march. The commemoration march will begin at what would have



Tolpuddle in Islington. The Festival to commemorate the 175th Anniversary Festival of the demonstration in support of the Tolpuddle Martyrs which started at King's Cross in London in 1834. Supported by SWTUC and SERTUC.

<http://tolpuddlelx.wordpress.com>

been the north end of Copenhagen Fields, now called Caledonian Park, and end towards the southern boundary at Edward Square.

The 2009 festival in King's Cross will culminate on 25 April with a recreation of the Martyrs' oath, the march itself, banner making, music and comedy. The week of activities will include making links with local schools to teach students about the history of their area and a key episode in the advancement of democracy and workers' rights as debates and discussions with community groups to tell the story and consider the relevance today.

What we need

We have lots of ideas and enthusiasm, now we need hard cash. Our budget runs to nearly £10,000. This amount would enable us to mount a truly spectacular series of events. Without your financial help the festival will not be a success. Local people are donating a considerable amount of time and expertise, all administrative costs, meeting rooms in the run up to the festival and much, much more. Festival costs are being kept to the absolute minimum – see the budget attached – but there are outgoings the local community cannot cover. It is for these costs we are appealing to you. This event is not just about the King's Cross community, it is about the establishment of trade unionism throughout the country, indeed throughout the world. This is an opportunity for us all to publicise far and wide what trade unionism is all about – a message that needs to be heard, particularly in these times of financial stress when the first hit will once again be working people.

Please give generously. Whilst enthusiastic, the festival organisers need every penny you can spare.

Cheques should be made payable to 'Tolpuddle in Islington' and sent to the address overleaf, we are setting up the dedicated bank account for the festival in that name and are now waiting on the Co-op bank for our sort code and account number. As soon as we have these they will appear on our website (see bottom of previous page).

Yours in solidarity,



Sophie Talbot

Treasurer of Tolpuddle in Islington (also known as TolpuddleKX)