

Radical workers' bloc at Tolpuddle; come and meet the Anarchists!

Martyrs' festival and rally 19th-21st July 2013

In 2011 an anarchist-inspired black bloc stole the TUC's thunder and dominated the 'March for the alternative'. For a couple of hours, as Miliband set out his vision for saving capitalism - surrounded by bodyguards in case anyone remembered the last Labour government - militant workers in Oxford Street made a little piece of the country ungovernable.

At that year's Tolpuddle festival a lonely red and black flag fluttered over the campsite. A small group of anarchists, who had basically come for the music, decided to join the Martyrs' rally on the Sunday, but not wishing to march under the hammer and sickle or the Labour Party banner, scrounged a length of garden cane and tied a piece of plain black cloth to it. This image appeared on the front page of the Tolpuddle website.



The following year we decided to do it properly; local troublemakers Wessex Solidarity put out the following call through social media:

“Calling on Anarchists, Anarchosyndicalists, Libertarian Socialists, Revolutionary Unionists, Platformists, Wobblies, non-aligned working class radicals and all those who want to celebrate 200 years of class struggle without marching under the banner of a political party or the business unions that affiliate to them. Bring your red/black/(A)/pirate flags and let's start putting the libertarian left back into the consciousness of our class. We're portrayed as a disorganised rabble – show 'em we can get organised and march together as a group.”

The annual celebration of working class struggle is meaningless without us, and allows reformists and reactionaries to claim the union movement as their own. Despite initial hysteria from some of the organisers, we conducted ourselves with dignity, even behaving magnanimously towards a bunch of tankies who pushed in front of us, they have only the past; we'll take the future.

On the day, we were joined by members of the Anarchist Federation, Solidarity Federation, IWW, Class War and non-aligned Anarchist groups, from as far afield as Brighton, Bognor, Portsmouth, Thames Valley, Swindon, Bath, Bristol and the Midlands, many of us fresh from the counter – EDL action in Bristol. We also picked up some supporters along the way and got the thumbs up from quite a few people.



The 2013 bloc is going to be massive; this initiative has the formal support of AFed and SolFed and other groups are making plans to take part - with a bit of effort we could easily be the largest contingent there.

Stop by our stall in the Martyrs Marquee, or see us on the campsite for a cup of tea and a chat, and march with us on Sunday. If you or your group want to get involved, get in touch via the contact forms on [SolFed](#) or the [Wessex Solidarity](#) blog.

“Crowned heads, wealth and privilege may well tremble should ever again the Black and Red unite!” - Otto von Bismarck