



TOLPUDDLE OLD CHAPEL TRUST

Company number: 8908950 Registered Charity number 1159578

tolpuddleoctrust@btinternet.com

www.tolpuddleoldchapeltrust.org



PRESS RELEASE:

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Legacy of Tolpuddle Martyrs saved thanks to National Lottery

The National Lottery Heritage Fund today confirmed a grant of £329,300 to help save Tolpuddle Old Chapel, the meeting place of the Dorsetshire Labourers before the events that saw them help spark the Trade Union movement and become known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

The Grade II* Listed building is of international importance but it is in a poor state of repair and on Historic England's 'At Risk Register'. The National Lottery funding will secure its future.

After four years of dedicated hard work by trustees, volunteers, project managers, consultants, architects, Friends of Tolpuddle Old Chapel and financial sponsors, TOCT has raised over £290,000 for the project, with £36,000 left to raise for the project which will cost £655,000 in total.

The National Lottery funding success finally puts The Trust in a strong position to realise its vision of renovating and extending Tolpuddle Old Chapel.

Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, the project will renovate and extend the former chapel to provide the potential for the appropriate re-use of the building as a 'quiet place in the heart of this historic Dorset village', as well as creating interpretation and community engagement activities to tell the history of the building and its connection to the Dorsetshire Labourers later known as The Tolpuddle Martyrs.

Stuart Hobley, Area Director London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "Over two centuries old, Tolpuddle Old Chapel represents a fascinating chapter of the story of Dorset, the Tolpuddle Martyrs and social

justice. Thanks to National Lottery players, the building will be saved and the legacy of the people and communities who used it will be shared."

Commenting on the award, Andrew McCarthy, Chairman of TOCT said: "The Trustees of the Tolpuddle Old Chapel Trust welcome the continued support of the National Lottery in awarding this grant towards the cost of renovating this unique former chapel.

Since our purchase of this 'At Risk' building in 2015, the Trust has received the backing of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, The Architectural Heritage Fund, Historic England, Charitable Trusts and Foundations, Dorset County Council, the former West Dorset District Council and numerous individuals.

This final highly significant National Lottery funding will allow the Trust's architect, Paul Richold of Architecton, to move plans forward in order to start building work, as well as ensuring this wonderful legacy is saved for future generations."

Local MP, Rt Hon Sir Oliver Letwin, congratulated the Trust saying: "It is a great delight to hear of your successful Grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

What is so wonderful about your project, quite apart from the beautiful way in which it is being executed, is the fact that it has been conceived not by some great agency charged with such functions, but by the voluntary efforts of people who have nothing to gain by it and whose enthusiasm for the cause derives exclusively from their concern to improve the place in which they live and to celebrate the links of that place with a part of our history that is of global significance.

I am proud to have supported Tolpuddle Old Chapel Trust during its three years development and look forward to building work starting to provide this additional heritage destination for West Dorset."

Sarah Ball, Heritage at Risk Architect at Historic England welcomed the news: "The Old Chapel is of great historic significance through its connection with the Tolpuddle Martyrs. We are proud to part-fund this project and to support the members of the Tolpuddle Old Chapel Trust in their tireless work to secure the chapel's future. The National Lottery Heritage Fund's award is wonderful news and means that vital major repairs to this important building can soon get under way."

NOTES TO EDITORS

History

- The property's heritage significance is intrinsically linked to its development and use by the Dorsetshire Labourers (known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs from 1838) and its role as a central focus of the early 19th century Methodist circuit in rural Dorset.
- It was built in 1818 as a Methodist chapel. Research suggests that two of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, George Loveless and Thomas Standfield, were involved in the construction of the cob building.
- The chapel was used by at least four of the six Tolpuddle Martyrs. Under the guidance of the lay preacher, George Loveless, **the chapel provided a space where the Dorsetshire Labourers were able to meet, exchange ideas and build their confidence to challenge the injustices of their harsh living and working conditions.**
- In 1833 they met up with the fledgling union of The Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers.
- In 1834 they swore an oath and formed their own branch of the Union.
- They were subsequently arrested, tried in the Shire Hall Courthouse in Dorchester, transported to Australia and Tasmania, pardoned and eventually 5 of the 6 moved to London Ontario in Canada to start a new life.
- These events played a huge role in the subsequent creation of the Trade Union movement which of course is still celebrated today by the annual Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival.

The Building

- The former chapel is listed as Grade II* by Historic England.
- Research suggests that the original cob structure was built by two of the Tolpuddle Martyrs and their families.
- The building is mainly built of cob on a brick and stone base with flint infills.
- The roof has double roman clay tiles.
- The original door leading from the road is blocked with an infill window with a boarded hatch above it. There is a beautiful original central pointed arched window opening on the rear wall which is blocked with brickwork. The building is thought to be little altered from how it looked in the 1830's, although it may have had a thatched roof at that time.
- For the past 150 or so years it has been used for agricultural purposes. The building is currently, and has been for a number of years, in a poor state of repair and currently is not in use.

The future

TOCT is committed to sympathetically preserving, renovating and maintaining the Grade II* building as 'a quiet place in the heart of this historic Dorset village'.

The project has many aspects including renovation, a new extension, interpretation and learning. The renovation proposals for the former chapel and the designs for the new extension have been developed through many stages and with guidance from the formal approval body, Historic England.

Public consultations in 2015 combined with meetings with local schools and stakeholders has developed new ideas for uses, new learning activities and interpretation.

Paul Richold of Architecton, Bristol, produced designs for the building works which have obtained planning permission.

Adrian Whittlesea, Artist and TOCT Trustee, has provided artist impressions of the future proposals.

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future. www.heritagefund.org.uk.

Follow @HeritageFundUK on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact:

Email: info@tolpuddleoldchapeltrust.org

or tolpuddleoctrust@btinternet.com

Website: www.tolpuddleoldchapeltrust.org

Twitter: [@TolpuddleOCT](https://twitter.com/TolpuddleOCT)

The National Heritage Lottery Fund: Rebecca.Harris@heritagefund.org.uk / 020 7591 6027

Historic England: Elizabeth.Clare@HistoricEngland.org.uk

MP: letwino@parliament.uk

Architecton: www.architecton.co.uk

Digital artist, Jason Wisner-Mills, www.jwmaritist.co.uk

The “Whole Story” of The Dorsetshire Labourers

This is a digital depiction of the “Whole Story” of The Dorsetshire Labourers, who were later known as The Tolpuddle Martyrs.



The digital artist, **Jason Wilsher-Mills**, depicts the Tolpuddle Martyrs Tree with the silhouettes of the six Dorsetshire Labourers walking round it. In the early 19th Century, they walked daily from their homes to and from the farm now known as Tolpuddle Manor, on their way to and from their farm work.

He includes the 1818 Chapel built by them and used for non-conformist worship until 1834. Under the guidance of the lay preacher, George Loveless, **the chapel provided a space where the Dorsetshire Labourers were able to meet, exchange ideas and build their confidence to challenge the injustices of their harsh living and working conditions.**

In 1833 they met up with the fledgling union of The Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers. In 1834 they swore an oath and formed their own branch of the Union.