

# Road to Dorchester

*Graham Moore & Mick Ryan*

In the years 1831-32 there was a general movement of the working classes for an increase in wages and the labouring men in Tolpuddle gathered together and met their employers to ask for an advance of wages. They came to a mutual agreement and the masters in Tolpuddle promised to give the men as much for their labour as the other masters in the district.

However, the masters did not follow through on this promise and, indeed reduced the men's wages from 10 shillings per week to 9, then 8 and then 7 with the warning that it will soon have to be reduced to 6 an amount far below what needed to starve off starvation!

Around October 1833, George Loveless and a number of other Tolpuddle labourers formed a Friendly Society with the aim of trying to do something about the situation.

Four months later on the 21<sup>st</sup> February placards were posted threatening seven years transportation for any man who should join the union. Loveless saw one of these placards, read it and put it in his pocket. It was the first time he had heard anything about such a law. Three days later he was arrested and told he had to walk in company with the constable to Dorchester, about seven miles away.

Graham Moore wrote 'Road to Dorchester' thinking about how George Loveless would have felt on that morning, wondering what would unfold.

In the end they were sentenced to seven years transportation to Van Dieman's Land. The judge told them that he considered it his duty to pass such a harsh sentence "not for anything we had done, or, as he could prove, we intended to do, but for an example to others."

Graham Moore's song refers to Gray's Bridge which is a little stone bridge over the River Frome crossed before entry to the town. Dorchester Gaol is ahead up the street where public hanging was still taking place and "the spire of the church" St Peters on the left approaching it.

Graham enjoys the irony that the authorities made Loveless and his fellow labourers walk the seven miles to Dorchester but were decent enough to give them a lift to Australia.

# Road to Dorchester

Graham Moore & Mick Ryan

Six brave men we've read your story  
The trial the grief the pain and the glory  
At the hands of the Squire the Whig and the Tory  
In England 's pleasant land  
But if I could ask you one last question  
One last thought for your reflection  
Did you lose all hope, pray for protection  
On the road to Dorchester.

*On the road - on the road  
By the masters of oppression you were taken from your land  
On the road - on the road  
The immortal power of freedom took you by the hand*

Did you wake with a dread in the dark day dawning  
Did the sun force a way through the clouds of the morning  
Was the lark on the wing above you soaring freely in the sky  
What thoughts did you share what fears were growing  
Did you think you'd be home 'fore the cock was crowing  
Did you think of the land where you'd be going  
On the road to Dorchester.

As you crossed Gray's bridge with the jail ahead  
Past the spire of the church, the graves of the dead  
Did you feel regret for the things you'd said,  
The oath that you had sworn  
Were you sure in your heart that your cause was right  
Were you firmly resolved to stand and fight  
For the right to resist the master's might  
And for children yet unborn.

That road was trod before you came  
And since you've gone it's been trod again  
In trial and grief, glory and pain  
In England's pleasant land  
The road's still there and so's the town  
Where you stood for your rights, and your renown  
Is there on the road that you walked down  
The road to Dorchester.