

# Bridgwater Trades Union Council

1913-2013

## CENTENARY CELEBRATION SATURDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER

Join us for a march, with your branch banner, to a rally at Bridgwater Baptist Church, to commemorate the founding of the town's organised trade union movement by local rail-workers in 1913

**12.30pm: Assemble: Cranleigh Gardens, Bridgwater, TA6 5JS**  
**1pm: Banner parade and march**  
**1.45-2.45: Rally, Baptist Church, St Mary Street, TA6 3EQ**

Speakers:

- Rosemary Eaton, Minister, Bridgwater Baptist Church
- Nigel Costley, Secretary, South West TUC
- Rosie McGregor, White Horse(Wiltshire) Trades Union Council
- **Bob Crow, General Secretary, RMT**

**3.15 – 4.15pm: Ships, Bricks & Cellophane:** *a radical view and discussion of Bridgwater's political and industrial history, with Dave Chapple, postman and secretary of Bridgwater Trades Union Council*

Further information: Dave Chapple: 0777 6304 276 [davechapple@btinternet.com](mailto:davechapple@btinternet.com)

## “A red ship in a sea of blue!”

Bridgwater Trades Union Council was founded on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1913 after a march of over 2,000 workers from Bridgwater and Highbridge proudly wound its way through Eastover, Fore St and High Street to a rally at the Town Hall.

**This new West Country trades council was founded by the Bridgwater and Highbridge Branches of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR). The NUR itself had only just been established: a historic joining of several railway unions, including the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS)**

In the militant years before World War One, the new NUR was hailed as a significant step towards achieving a single, strong, industrial union for the whole rail industry-then, as now, privately owned and run. Today's RMT continues that militant NUR tradition!

**In 1913, Bridgwater had NUR, ASLEF, RCA and AEU members working at both Bridgwater North Station (Somerset & Dorset) and the Great Western Railway (GWR): (a goods station at Bailey Street, the carriage works at Colley Lane, and the Bridgwater docks and wharves.)**

Highbridge had double the number of Bridgwater's rail workers: 900 at the huge Wallrow carriage, repair and engine works: the engineering headquarters of the Somerset and Dorset Railway.

**The Brick and Tile industry was still dominant in Bridgwater, and workers from Ben Tillet's Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourer's Union-a forerunner of Unite- were there on the day, with the bakers, printers, tailors, the various building trade unions, the Engineers (AEU), agricultural workers, Co-op workers, and, perhaps, the National Union of Seamen.**

Our 2013 centenary celebration also commemorates 100 years of working-class political and industrial organisation: Bridgwater as “a red ship on a sea of blue”: defiance of hostile employers and a counterweight to Conservatism! Bridgwater Trades Council is still fighting the cause of the Bridgwater working-class, so come and join us on October 19<sup>th</sup>!