

The Original Black Spider Letters

Pentrich October 1817

It's all finally come to a full stop. It's taken a while for me to realise what were bein' planned. As yo know I were never one in t'middle, I just kept me ear t'ground.

Well, its gerrin on to December and I'm only just gerrin round to puttin me pen to paper. Whilst life went on, I suppose it allus does, Pentrich sempt a more miserable place and yo never saw more than one or two talking together.

Yo maybe dunna need to be teld but Jeremiah Brandreth, William Turner and Isaac Ludlam were all hanged and then be-headed on Friday 7th November in Derby. I didna go but I were told that they built a special wooden gallows in front of Derby Gaol. There were thousands a folk in Derby to see good men murdered by t'government and yo canna get mey to believe otherwise.

George Weightman's sentence was the same as t'other three but it were found out he were not to be hanged but transported wi some of t'others. Nubdy really knew why. Wor it cos he were young or did he squeal a bit? There were rumours, as yo can imagine, but nowt were every clear. It were hard to imagine him goin' against his family.

When t'papers eventually got to Pentrich we all wanted to know what were being sed and them as could read, like me, were in great demand to read em t'others.

We were shocked when most o'news in papers wor about Prince a'Wale's daughter, I think they called her Charlotte, she'd died in childbirth. Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales was the only child of the Prince of Wales , and Caroline of Brunswick. If she'ad outlived both her grandfather King George III and her father, she woulda become Queen, but she died after childbirth at t'age of 21.

Charlotte's parents hated each other from before their arranged marriage and soon separated. Folks said as T'Prince of Wales left most of Charlotte's care to governesses and servants, but only let see with Caroline now and agin. That's how t'posh folks lived.

It were not an unusual event when some poor baby didna mek its first bothday so I dunna think folks around us shed many tears.

Some went to prison and fourteen were to be sent to Australia. This bunch included me old mate Tom Bacon. I never got to see him but I imagine he'd find it hard as an old man - it fact th'oldest by far.

Quite a few younger men were let go wi a warning from t'judge to behave themsens in t'future. This is all very well but if men were left starvin' and couldna feed their families, there's allus goin' to be trouble one sort or another, yo mark my words.

When them as went to Derby to see what happened drifted back they didna mek a song and dance abowt it. Wey all knew as there were some as had bin on t'march and never captured. But, to be 'onest, there'd bin no specials or soldiers searching since end o'August. We call came to t'idea that they'd got who they wanted and that were it - the messages has been passed.

The village were in a state o'shock. One or two women and their kids moved in wi relatives and one family I knew flitted to Cromford seeking work wi Arkwright, he'd built a village for 'is workers so they sed.

The White Horse were another sad quiet place and yo only found a few older men there except perhaps on Sunday naight when a few more younger men came to let off a bita steam. I've gotta say that I didna hear anybody talkin' about revolution or marching. It sempt as though they' learnt their lesson and that's maybe what t'Government wanted. Nancy started a bit of a collection for some families as had lost their bread-winner but most folks 'ad little to give. I suppose there were allus t'wokhouse and afew went there.

I really ought to say a little bit about t'Church and yo'd maybe a'thought as they'd abin generous. Well, and mind you I only got this from others as I didna go anywhere near, vicar were generous wi his warnings and chastising them as went on t'march but that wor it. Some woman told me that she asked vicar for bread and he'd told her that she 'reaped what she sowed'. I know for a fact that she didna go ont'march and her husband, who were forced at gunpoint was in gaol.

Whilst I were maybe unkind t'vicar, Curate Wolstenholme were more concerned about folks - that were until he disappeared.

Just to end this bit, I ought to say that chapel folks found a little better welcome - but not too much.

I hear as men as were to be transported were being shifted from Derby and Nottingham Gaols to get ready for t'convict ship. Yo can only imagine wot they felt, we'd hearda transportation afore and we all knew as nubdy ever came back so that were it. None of us had any idea what Australia were like - it doesna bear thinkin' abowt.

As November went on one or two men, I not goin' to name names, began to talk abowt t'rising. How all them men as were promised never turned up not even them as were to be ready on Nottingham. I remember old Tom tellin' us how he knew that there were thousands ready in Manchester, Leicester and London. He telled us that t'soldiers had agreed not to leave their barracks and folks would join from all over t'country.

As it toned owt, there were no bugger, none at all. I think as all them as were arrested and prosecuted were Derbyshire men apart from Brandreth who were from Nottingham. I find it 'ard to believe that men from two small villages, South Wingfield and Pentrich, wi a few more coulda done as much as they did and suffered as much as they are.

This isna t'end of it. Some are beginin' to ask how them in power knew what were happenin'. Why didna soldiers arrest them waiting in Nottingham. I'll tell thi why, becos there werena there. Somea us think they'd be warned off. It were only after trial had ended that some local lads began to think that there mighta bin a spy, some bugger informing on what Tom and t'others were planning. If there was, I only hope he's not from round here or there'll be hell to play and that's a fact.

If folks do write about this saga, I hope they tell truth. I've tried to write what I saw and heard and not to add bits as weren't true. It all started wi my friendship wi old Tom, It wor 'im as taught me to read and write and I know for sure that Tom Bacon were a good man who cared about others.