

The Original Black Spider Letters

Pentrích November 1815

It's bin a rough back end, it never stopped raining. It laid me off from building a couple of days for t'last week or so. If I don't work I don't get paid. Mind you it's not as bad as some o'farmers they've not sifted owt for weeks now.

In fact there's bin some strange happenings wí t'weather and nobody knows what's happening. There's bin some odd coloured lights around sunset and t'sky sometimes looked orange or red low down over t'hills. Bloody weird if you ask me¹. I've never seen owt like it.

Anyhow, you remember that I told thee about t'magísrate's man asking me to look out for him, well I saw him last week and he asked if I had owt to tell 'im. I told him I'd seen a few strangers in t'pub but I didn't get to speak to them. I told 'im I thought they were selling horses. He wer happy wí this and bugged off. I going t'ave to watch messen on this matter. I might talk to owd Tommy about this.

I ought to tell thee that I had a laugh t'other naíght. I called in t'White Horse for a jug and there were nubdy to talk to, only a few old uns in t'corner. Somebody had left a newspaper on bench so I gorra jug an' sat down by t'fire.

It were a Derby Mercury², only a few days old I think it wor from 2nd November. I donna buy one as its seven pence and I can buy beer wí that! I settled down to read it. I'll tell thee a few o'interesting bits. Mind you, it's sometimes hard to read when its dark and words are not very big.

On t'front page I noticed that Squire Edward Miller Mundy had put a notice in that steel traps and spring guns are constantly set in all the woods and plantations within several townships Shipley, Mapperley, Heanor and

¹ On 5th – 10th April 1815, a huge eruption occurred, followed by thunderous detonation sounds, when Mount Tambora in Indonesia erupted. Prolonged and brilliantly coloured sunsets and twilights were frequently seen in London between 28 June and 2 July 1815 and 3 September and 7 October 1815. The glow of the twilight sky typically appeared orange or red near the horizon and purple or pink above. This phenomenon was to have further effects throughout the summer of 1816.

² *The Derby Mercury* 2nd November 1815, via British Newspaper Archives

Smalley. I thought to messen it wer to stop men gerring a bod or two. These bloody things can mek a mess o'your legs and to mek it wos it can be bad if you to get before t'magistrate. I dunno suppose squire'd lose any sleep about that.

In another story It said that there'd been a fire at the New Mint in London I wonder how much money they'd bont and 'ow much had been spirited away. It says that the back was badly damaged but the beautiful front was untouched. It said that the military were called in to guard it. I'm not surprised, t'locals would be in as fast as you like.

There're still arguing about what to do with France³ after t'war ended. Napoleon had bin sent to an island called Elba. I'd a'thought that they woulda hung 'im! It says there are still some armies to be disbanded. It says that patrols are still finding loads of concealed arms in area of Paris. I hope they doona start up agin.

I wer getting raight interested, I ought to read a paper more regular.

I spotted an interesting bit about population, tha nows 'people'. I ripped the corner owt to ger it raight for thee. It were hard to understand.

'The population of Great Britain has been much augmented by the improved habits and condition of the labouring classes, by the comfort and cleanliness so lately introduced into the cottages, by the institutions to prevent the progress of contagion, by the draining of marches, which has increased the production of food, while it has made the air more salubrious, and above all, by the salutary effects of vaccination. There has been in England according to our celebrated statistical writer, Mr Colquhoun, a progress diminution of mortality.

In 1780 one person in 50 died annually

1790 one person in 45 died annually

1800 one person in 47 died annually

1810 one person in 49 or 50 died annually

During the last ten years the baptisms in England have increased nearly 25%. whsilst the increase of marriages exceeds 25%. Within the same period.

³ The Treaty of Paris was not formally signed on 15th November 1815.

In Wales, the baptisms have increased 30%, and the marriages 35%. The population of Great Britain during this period has been increased more than 14% upon the whole.

Interesting int'it, but I wonder why they have to use so many big words I can't understand. I can get t'numbers but wot the 'ell does' salubrious' and salutary mean?

There was a piece about a silly bugger called The Rochester Pedestrian by name o' Tuffee, he'd set out to walk 1000 miles in 21 days round Rochester wherever that is. He did 50 miles on his 8th day and then he had rheumatic pain in his knee, I'm not surprised. He got betta the next day "to the utter astonishment of his friends" and he's still going!!! Me dad once sed there's nowt so strange as folks, mind you he made it int'paper.

Some bugger 'as broken into a farm at Darley Abbey and nicked some potatoes, turnips, cabbages and his gate were damaged. Farmer Robert Holden is offering 10 guineas for any one giving information leading to conviction. I bet it were another poor sod outa wok an wanting to feed his kids.

Last bit to tell thee, some bugger 'as lost a black setter with a long tail and white bits he answers to the Dash - it seems he has gone by 'is name - he's dashed. Anyhow there's two guineas at Longford Hall if you find him.

One o' Turners asked me if I finished wi t'paper so I gev it 'im and fetched another jug. I saw me mate in t'corner and sat wi 'im to put world raight.