

# The Pentrich Revolution Bicentenary Walk 6 of 19

- On 9th June 1817, over 300 men set out for Nottingham from villages on the Derbyshire-Nottinghamshire border.

- They thought they were part of a 'general rising' to bring down an unjust and oppressive government. Motivated by poverty and hunger, all efforts to gain a hearing suppressed, and having no vote, many saw an armed revolt as the only alternative.

- Unbeknown to them, the Government 'agent provocateur', William J Oliver had encouraged the armed revolt. Rebel leaders had already been arrested and only a handful would take up arms in Huddersfield and Nottingham. The Derbyshire men were to be used as an 'example' to others.

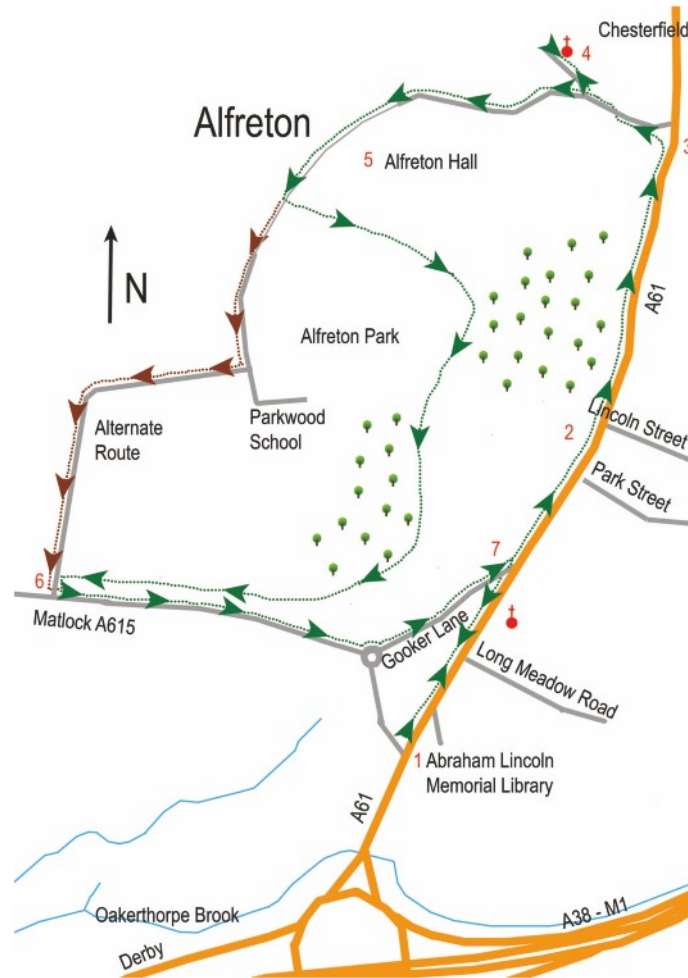
- Ambushed by troops, the marchers fled and many were arrested. At their trial in Derby, three - Brandreth, Ludlam and Turner - were sentenced to death. They were to be hanged then beheaded. Fourteen were transported to penal colonies in Australia, others imprisoned. Their families were evicted and homes destroyed.

The other walks in this series

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Nottingham, England                   | 10. Heanor, England             |
| 2. South Wingfield, England              | 11. Langley Mill, England       |
| 3. Fritchley, England                    | 12. Eastwood, England           |
| 4. Heage, England                        | 13. Giltbrook, England          |
| 5. Pentrich, England                     | 14. Sutton in Ashfield, England |
| 6. Alfreton, England                     | 15. Derby, England              |
| 7. Swanwick, England                     | 16. Sydney, Australia           |
| 8. Ripley, England                       | 17. Parramatta, Australia       |
| 9. Codnor, England                       | 18. Kiama, Australia            |
| 19. The full route of the march, England |                                 |



THE PENTRICH  
& SOUTH WINGFIELD  
REVOLUTION GROUP



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Emily Gentle  
2017



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This walk is produced by:-

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# The Pentrich & South Wingfield Revolution

Walk 6 of 19  
Alfreton, England



Alfreton War Memorial  
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Gentle



- Distance:** 2 miles. Care needed when crossing roads.
- Difficulty:** An urban walk on pavements and footpaths. Can be muddy.
- Park:** The Abraham Lincoln Library on Derby Road.
- Start:** Abraham Lincoln Library, Derby Road, Alfreton. OS ref. Explorer 269-405 551.

**Alfreton, an historic town recorded in the Domesday Book, was an important centre in 1817, as a crossroads for the Turnpike roads between Chesterfield, Derby, Nottingham, and the High Peak, and centre of the most important coal mining area in the county. Men from the town and surrounding communities joined the rebels marching from Pentrich.**

**1. From the library go up the hill towards the town, taking the first turn on the right, Long Meadow Road.**

In 1817 a group of workers, houses were built upon this road, which opened up into the footpath between Alfreton and Swanwick. This was the site of the Queen's Head, a public house run by John and William Peach, meeting place of miners and framework knitters. This public house was to play an important part in the rebellion of 1817. In 1812 framework knitters from Swanwick joined the Luddite attacks on frames that were being used to undercut the established rate for work. 12 attacks are recorded. By 1816 other local workers, especially miners, were facing growing poverty and wanted reform. Job Walker, a local framework knitter, called a meeting to set up a Hampden Club, and was in contact with Thomas Bacon, the radical leader from Pentrich. Bacon sent him a letter when he was present at a national meeting of the Hampden Clubs at the Anchor Inn in London in April 1817. Government reports named local 'committee men'; Thomas Goose, Edward Haslam and James Barnes from Alfreton. Early in 1817, William Benbow, the radical leader, came to speak at the Peach's pub. Benbow, a Manchester shoemaker, non-conformist preacher, associate of William Cobbett, both leading political



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reformers among 'labouring classes'. He was arrested in May 1817 and held, without charge, until early in 1818. He would later become famous for promoting the tactic of the general strike among the Chartists in the 1830s, which he called 'The Grand National Holiday'. It would have been from here that the Alfreton men would have set out to join others from Swanwick on the 9th June 1817. 20 to 30 in total would join the main Pentrich rebels' march at Codnor, on the route towards Nottingham.

**2. Continue up the hill, pass the House of Confinement on your left.**

Built in 1820, this was the town's 'lock-up' for many years until the opening of the town's police station in the 1840s. See the information board here.



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**3. Continue up to the Market Place next to the War Memorial.**

The information board gives an interesting account of the town's history and points to places of historical interest around the Market Place, especially the eighteenth century coaching inn, the George, at the corner with Chesterfield Road.



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**4. Turn left as you face up the hill, into Church Street, walk up the street and visit St. Martin's Church on your right.**

In St Martin's Church, dating from 1200s, many of those from this area who took part in the rebellion were married and baptised. In 1804 Francis Hill and Jemima Truman married here. Francis was cousin to John Hill who was transported. Thomas Bacon of Pentrich, a leading figure in the rising, was a signatory witness. If you take the path just past the church you will come to a lovely view of the upper Amber Valley towards South Wingfield and Wessington, with Crich Stand on your left.

**5. Return to Church Street, turn right towards the grounds of Alfreton Hall, the Leisure and Medical Centres on your left and the Polygon Centre on your right. Walk through the car park behind the Hall, turn left onto tarmac path, after 200 yards turn left off of the path onto a track through the trees at the horses sign, (can be muddy) re-route over the**

**tarmac path if the route is too muddy, continue downhill to the exit onto Wingfield Road.** The Alfreton manor dates from



©Photograph by Emily Gentle

Norman times but the present Alfreton Hall dates from 1725, when Rowland Morewood pulled down the old hall. The Morewood family built its wealth on growing local industry, especially coal mining. In April 1818 the Duke of Devonshire stayed here when visiting Pentrich following the rebellion. Accompanied by Colonel Wingfield Halton of South Wingfield and Mr Lockett, the prosecutor at the Derby Trial, he was shown the route the rebels took, met those who had been 'victims of the ferocity of Brandreth' and those who had shown their loyalty. He also made arrangements 'for the general improvement' of Pentrich, which would have included the eviction and destruction of the homes of the rebels. He then 'proceeded directly to Alfreton Hall, highly pleased with his excursion'.

**6. Turn left down Wingfield Road to the mini-roundabout, turn left up Gooker Lane, passing Watchorn Park on your right onto the A61, Derby Road, facing the Watchorn Church.**

The church was built for the Primitive Methodists with donations from Alfreton born Robert Watchorn. Born on Long Meadow Road, he emigrated to U.S.A. and made his fortune, becoming U.S. Commissioner for Ellis Island from 1905-1909. Not forgetting his roots, he became a benefactor for Alfreton. The Abraham Lincoln Memorial Library, further down Derby Road, was built with a donation from Watchorn.

**7. Cross the road to the Church and turn right to return to the Library and the end of the walk.**

The rebel's march in 1817 was halted by troops at Giltbrook in Nottinghamshire. Three men from the Alfreton parish, which included Swanwick, were tried in Derby in October 1817, and condemned to transportation to Australia. German Buxton (31), a miner, transported for life. Thomas Bettison (35), a miner, transported for 14 years, as was Joseph Rawson (32) a framework knitter.