

The Original Black Spider Letters

Pentrich September 1817

It's around middle o'September and nubdy knows what bin goin' on. There'd bin nowt worth readin' in t'papers. Wey know as there's a jail full o'men in Nottingham and another in Derby. We've heard as them in Derby were put on bread and water by Lockett. I mighta mentioned Lockett he's t'solicitor who seems to hate every bugger and I think it woks t'other way as well, anyroad that's wot they say.

I dunna know as anybody went to visit them in jail. I'da liked to a seen Old Tom but Nancy told me to keep outa way - so I did.

It were as nubdy talked about march in White Horse. The only thing yo 'eard were "Ay yo 'eard owt?" "Not a bloody dickie bird, ow about thee?" was the usual reply.

Them as hadna bin involved kept on in same way as afore and, to be honest, some as ad bin involved kept their gobs shut and went on same way as afore. It were all a bit like that. There were one or two cottages in Pentrich who had their man in jail and one or two o't'other women took to giving some bread or maybe a chicken if they'd one to spare or even a rabbit if one o't'lads could catch one.

All men as worked at Butterley went on as afore. I dunna think there were any Butterley men on t'march, I never saw any at t'meetings. Thing was that they'd bin paid well. A few 'ad bin laid off after t'war ended but they were allus busy. There were

one or two who'd woked there afore t'march but had left or bin sacked, a bit like Owd Tom was.

One night there were a couple of South Wingfield lads in t'White Horse who were suppin' a bit too much ale. I sat in t'corner wi some mates and we could see their tongues were runnin' away wi thersens, if yo knows war I mean.

"It seem bloody strange to me," opened up on o'the men, "as far as wey knows there's no Nottingham men in jail at Derby or Nottingham. But there's plenty from Wingfield and from 'ere in Pentrich."

"That's raight," piped in t'other man, "Does tha think we were set up or summut?" He look round the room. I knew there were a few who had been on t'march; at least for an hour or two afore they ran off.

One of t'Bacon lads joined in, "Maybe, but wey canna prove owt, yo knows that."

The first man turned round to t'Bacon lad, "Wor aboutt that bloke called William Stephens? He came here and Wingfield wi Owd Tom weeks ago. Where was he when all t'trouble were on. Why was it none of them so-called Nottingham Radicals never turned up to help out when t'soliders arrived?"

T'second man, joined in "Did he know they were going to get caught, think aboutt it."

"Now then!" said Nancy, who'd bin watching this from behind t'bar. "yo maybe raight and yo maybe wrong but there's lot's a'us has as men folk locked waitin' for we dunna know what. If tha's no prove this sorta talk does no bugger any good."

"Come and ay a free jar afore you get 'om. There's no hard feelins' but yo never know who's listenin'." The men obviously knew Nancy by reputation and were not goin' to go against 'er. They got their free drink and sat down mumblin' to each other.

Nancy knows a lot more than she ever says and it sempt to me that she thought more than she said and, anyroad, it were not like her to give beer away. Wey all felt as times were strange, very strange.

From time to time there bits a news. F'instance, we heard that Jeremiah Brandreth, who'd took over from Owd Tom on t'march, ad bin caught tryin' to get outta t'country.

Someone who wor a church warden told Nancy as specials had grabbed young George Weightman at Sheffield. And, he was at t'family 'ouse of Wolstenholmes, same family as t'Pentrich curate.

It were also common knowledge as there were spies abowt and a lot of young men from th'area had bin taken to give depositions - that's like their story of wot 'appened.

I've already telled thee abowt them as were hanged in Derby last month, for burning Colonel Halton's hay ricks. Anyroad, this

left a nasty feelin' and yo got t'fellin' as they were after any bugger from Wingfield or Pentrich.

While I'm tryin' to tell thee wot were 'appenin', it's all a waitin' game. If you look at the Wingfield lads who ad bin' hanged a few weeks after t'job, this affair sempt to be hangin' on for ever. Nubdy in t'village knew wot they were waitin' for. There were wives wi starving kids wanted to know, one or two had even left their cottages to live with family as they couldna afford t'rent.

It'll soon be October and I dunna know when there's goin' to be a trial.