

# *The Pentrich Revolution Trail*



*The story of  
England's last  
revolution  
June 9th 1817*

## **The Revolutionaries Hanged**

Jeremiah Brandreth, 31, FWK, Sutton-In-Ashfield  
Isaac Ludlam, 52, Stone-getter, S. Wingfield  
William Turner, 46, Stonemason, S. Wingfield

## **Transported**

James Bacon, 64, FWK, Pentrich  
John Bacon, 54, FWK, Pentrich  
George Brassington, 33, Miner, Pentrich  
German Buxton, 31, Miner, Alfreton  
John Hill, 29, FWK, S. Wingfield  
Samuel Hunt, 24, Farmer, S. Wingfield  
John Mackeswick, 38, FWK, Heanor  
John Onion, 49, Iron Worker, Pentrich  
Edward Turner, 34, Stonemason, S. Wingfield  
Joseph "Manchester" Turner, 18, Clerk, S. Wingfield  
George Weightman, 26, Sawyer, Pentrich  
Thomas Bettison, Miner, Alfreton  
Josiah Godber, 54, Labourer, Pentrich  
Joseph Rawson, 31, FWK, Alfreton

## **Jailed**

John Moore, Shoemaker, Pentrich  
Edward Moore, Shoemaker, Pentrich  
William Weightman, 27, Labourer, Pentrich  
William Hardwick, Collier, Pentrich  
Alexander Johnson, 24, Labourer, Pentrich  
Charles Swaine, FWK, S. Wingfield

**FWK=Frame Work Knitter**

## **The Evidence that Remains**

Walking through the village of Pentrich today, the visitor could easily miss evidence of the Revolution.

This leaflet is intended to point out what we know to be the landmarks associated with the events of 1817. The plaques in our heritage trail explain the significant points before, during and after the Revolution of June 9<sup>th</sup>, but the whole village landscape was very different. Most houses were small cottages only a few still remain. The Dog Inn is one building that was certainly here inside, its Revolution bar bears witness to the events of the time. Also part of the landscape was the church of St. Matthew. Other cottages and farms that have disappeared were built near the road, usually at right angles to it. Their newer replacements are further back from the road.

The site of the White Horse Inn, for many years disputed, was recently identified from rental records at Chatsworth. Opposite the Churchyard, it was pulled down immediately after the Revolution and the land that went with it redistributed to other tenants.

At the very centre of the village, the large stone houses you can see near the junction of Asher Lane and Main Road were all constructed after 1825 on empty plots probably where revolutionaries used to live. Where the Village Hall now stands (the former school) was the home of Thomas Bacon. The school was endowed by the Duke of Devonshire immediately after the Revolution and remained open until 1958. There were several farms in the village itself. Only Home Farm on Main Road now survives. The Congregational Chapel opposite Home Farm had been used by non-conformist worshippers for over 100 years at the time of the Revolution a newer building now replaces it.

Pentrich remained part of the Chatsworth Estate until 1950, when the tenants were able to buy their own houses during an auction by the estate. The rural character of the village today is owed in part to the fact that progress stopped in 1817, and nearby Ripley became the new commercial centre.

One piece of history that does still remain, however, is the fact that many of the plots of land along Main Road have the same boundaries as they do in the earliest maps. Today's villagers have gardens in the same places where the villagers of 1817 lived, and the hedges and walls remain to this day.

## Useful Information

**Parking:** Customer car parking is available at the Devonshire Arms and at the Dog Inn. Please don't park here unless you intend to be a customer of the pub. There is additional parking at the Village Hall unless in use for a private function.

**Toilets:** The Dog Inn and Village Hall both have toilets available when they are open, including wheelchair accessible toilets. If visiting in a group please contact the Village Hall bookings Officer to arrange for the Hall to be open for your use (a small hire charge may be made).

**The Country Code:** The trail crosses working farmland and uses public footpaths. Please use the County Code leave no litter, keep dogs on a lead and do not allow them to foul footpaths. If you open gates, close them behind you. Please respect the privacy of villagers' houses.

**Access:** The trail is not wheelchair accessible, but the short route avoids steep steps. 5 plaques can be seen within 200 yards of the Village centre, where the pavement is wheelchair accessible but steep, not all crossings have dropped kerbs.

### The Pentrich Revolution Heritage Trail Directions for Walkers

This is approximately a four-mile walk, of average difficulty, taking about two hours. For children and anyone wishing to avoid the steep canal steps, we recommend the shorter two-mile version of the walk.

#### **(Skip to S)**

From Dog Inn (**Plaque 1**) turn right and walk along Asher Lane towards Ripley. Follow pavement, crossing road when it ends, to continue past Asherfields Farm (**Plaque 2**). Pass under A38 bridge and turn left immediately afterwards, up a small concrete roadway. Follow public footpath signs, along a tall hedge. Cross railway line to join "the Coach Road" (2<sup>nd</sup> track to the right of the reservoir), Turning left past white timbered house. This will bring you to Derby Road, with Butterley Engineering facing you.

Turn left along pavement. About 100 yards down the road, the octagonal post room stands opposite you (**Plaque 3**). Retrace your steps back to Coach Road, following it this time to the far end. Turn right onto Asher Lane again and follow road up to end under A38 bridge. Cross Asher Lane to join footpath which runs alongside Geeson's Yard (you will see a sign saying Geeson's). Follow path until you reach canal and continue alongside it. Cross stile at far end steep steps will take you up to the A610 where you turn right.

**S For a shorter version of the walk, turn left out of Dog Inn car park along Main Road and through village. At end of village fork left down track past the old Congregational Chapel. Follow track to bottom, over stile and down narrow track between hedges. Drop down over stile at end of track onto A610 and turn right. At this point the two walks converge.**

Follow pavement towards traffic lights and turn right onto the B6013 (Chesterfield Road). **Take care if you cross this fast road.** Continue up Chesterfield Road to **Plaque 4**, noting the 1760s mile walker where road forks up towards Pentrich. **Plaque 5** is on your right, on wall of Devonshire Arms. Follow pavement past the farm on left to the old mill (**plaque 6**). Opposite here you will see a footpath running along the side of a house up towards open fields. Walk up the field keeping hedge on your right. The footpath curves to the left and gradually up towards a stile in the corner. Pause as you climb to take in the dramatic views towards Crich. The yellow public footpath marker at the stile is a sign you are on the right track. Keep hedge to your right and you will come to another marked stile. Cross over and continue to yet another stile. This will take you to the right into next field. Keeping hedge to your left you will now find you are walking towards Pentrich. About halfway up the field turn left through stone gap. Walking across the field follow path bearing left to corner stile. Cross field towards St. Matthews Church in the distance. Go through stile into the churchyard.

From bottom of church steps (**Plaque 7**) cross road and turn left to find **Plaques 8, 9 and 10, Plaque 8** is immediately after you cross, **9** further up and **plaque 10** across the road on the Village Hall. Return down the village to the Dog Inn.

## Pentrich a Village full of History

The Village of Pentrich and its surrounding Parish were, until the Revolution of 1817, of great significance in the local area. There is evidence that Pentrich was already settled when the Romans came through here on their way to Chesterfield and the North in 200AD. A Roman encampment at what is now Coney Grey Farm was named after the Village, and place name specialists believe that the name "Pentrich" may be of Celtic origin. Various suggestions are that the name means "Boar's Hill", "the end of the ridge" or "behind the pound".

The Parish of Pentrich was an important centre, more important than nearby Ripley, The Church of St. Matthew (below) was built in c. 1150, close to the site of a Saxon Cross which stood in what is now the junction of Asher Lane and Main Road. Carved Saxon stones can still be seen in the church.

Until 1540 the Village belonged to Darley Abbey, but it then passed through the hands of the Zouch family before coming into the ownership of the Cavendish family, later Dukes of Devonshire, in 1634. Pentrich remained part of the Chatsworth Estate for over 400 years.

The Black Death visited Pentrich in 1349, when three Vicars died in one year. This was still very much a rural, agricultural community. The medieval field system changed little over the years approaching Pentrich from Derby on the A38 it is still possible to see the parallel hedges which show where the "Messuages" or crofts would have been. Some Pentrich houses still stand exactly where medieval cottages were shown in maps of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In 1662 non-conformism came to Pentrich. The old Congregational Chapel, passed during the shorter version of our trail, was built then by Reverend Porter, formerly Vicar of Pentrich, but ejected because of his beliefs. The church was used from 1700 onwards, most recently by the United Free Church Methodists. It was pulled down in 1971.

Another Methodist Chapel at Buckland Hollow (close to Plaque number 4) was built as a house by a man named Wheatcroft a carrier on the canals. It was used as a chapel until pulled down in the 1060s. From Buckland Hollow, incidentally, a daily service carrying goods by water to Nottingham was offered.

The Industrial Revolution began to change Pentrich very early on. The Milestone at Plaque 5 was made by J Haywood Jnr, marking the arrival of the Turnpike road which came through late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and from which Pentrich residents could collect income. At about the same time (1790) Butterley Engineering Ltd was founded as Benjamin Outram and Company to develop the coal and iron deposits in the Butterley area. The first blast furnace and foundry were built on the present site. The original partners were Benjamin Outram, William Jessop Snr, John Wright and Francis Beresford. Outram and Jessop were prominent engineers, noted particularly for the construction of canals and the development of railways and docks in the UK and overseas. The name was changed to the Butterley Company in 1807, and the gatehouse at plaque 3 was probably built at that time, shortly after the construction of the Derby to Alfreton turnpike. The company's famous contracts include the structure of St. Pancras Station in London for the Midland Railway Company in 1868. Today Butterley Engineering continues in the same traditions of mechanical and structural engineering for major projects worldwide.

The Industrial Revolution brought the Cromford Canal to Pentrich in 1790, dividing Pentrich from Ripley. The trail takes walkers along half a mile of the towpath. This section of the Canal was used by the Butterley Company until it was closed for safety reasons in the early 1900s.

Even before the canal and the iron works, Pentrich Colliery was employing the men of the Village from 1750. The walk takes you past the former colliery site at Geesons scrap yard, which still uses one of two of the colliery buildings. Mining could have taken place here in medieval times, as evidence of bell pits was found when the land was being reclaimed in the 1980s.

Coal mining continued in Pentrich for centuries, the pits only being closed in 1946 when the rest of the industry was nationalised. Pentrich was a comparatively safe colliery, and one where innovation took place a pumping engine from Pentrich Colliery was formerly on display at the Science Museum in London, and Pentrich was one of the earliest pits to stop the use of pit ponies.

One of the village's other employers can still be seen at the old red brick building on Asher Lane (just as our trail turns left towards Butterley). Now Pentos Office Furniture Ltd, this was formerly the cotton spinners Messrs J Towlson and Co who manufactured lace thread. Arthur John Towlson lived at Victoria Cottage, near the Dog Inn, and his company, which had another mill at Wingfield Park, were important local employers. The site was taken over by Stevensons Dyers in the 1940s. Local dyeworking had been important since before the 1830s, when the Pentrich damson trees were originally grown as a crop for dyeing, before chemical dyes were available. The trees are still enjoyed by villagers for their fruit.

Study the list of revolutionaries involved in the rising of 1817 and we can see that many of those involved were iron workers (at Butterley), colliers and miners at Pentrich mine, labourers, framework knitters and farmers. This was a busy and thriving village in the process of change from agricultural to industrial lifestyles. It was against this background that the Revolution was played out.

### **Why did the Pentrich Revolution Happen?**

In 1815 the Napoleonic Wars ended at the Battle of Waterloo, and the end of the war brought a recession in the iron and textile industries some of central Derbyshire's main employers. To help the poor and unemployed there was a form of Parish Relief based on a rating system, but as more people claimed relief the tax on remaining families increased. This had the effect of bankrupting small farmers and other working people.

By 1817 the Industrial Revolution was gathering momentum and the population was growing, especially in urban areas. With the increase and movement of population the government was no longer representative of the people. For example the growing industrial areas of Leeds and Manchester had no MPs to represent them but Cornwall had 44 MPs. The monarchy was also in a precarious state. The Prince Regent's extravagant lifestyle did not endear him to the people at a time when many of their subjects were suffering unbelievable hardship, the Royal Family were perceived as enjoying themselves. Against this background of recession, poverty and bad government, groups intent on political reform began to meet.

In Nottingham, Derby and Ripley reformers would meet as "Hampden Clubs" such as one at the Cook Hotel in Ripley. In 1816 the weather added to the misery. We now know that the Tambora volcano of 1815 wrought havoc with global weather patterns, and in Derbyshire there was snow in June. Crops failed, and bad weather in autumn 1816 meant crops went unharvested. Starvation threatened and violent disturbances broke out all over the Country over the price of food.

With the French and American Revolutions in recent memory, the government feared widespread revolt and adopted panic measures. Meetings of more than 50 people were forbidden, effectively disbanding clubs and reform meetings like the Hampden clubs. Spies were sent out to report back on unrest, and by suspending Habeas Corpus the government ensured that anyone could be held in prison without trial.

### **Why did Pentrich get Involved?**

Thomas Bacon, a war veteran and Framework Knitter living in Pentrich (plaque 10), was active in the reform meetings. He travelled to various reform meeting around the Midlands and the North and reported back that an insurrection was planned, men from Yorkshire, Nottingham and elsewhere were planning to march on London and overthrow the government. Unknown to local people a newcomer in their midst, known as Oliver, was also a government spy and was reporting back to the government all that went on.

By May 1817 meetings in the North were being broken up and ringleaders imprisoned, but Oliver persuaded local men that the rising was to go ahead by doing so, he overstepped his role and became an agent provocateur, inciting less educated people to rise. Thomas Bacon began to fear arrest and went to

ground at Booth's Hovel (plaque 6). He had no part in the rising. Replacing Bacon as leader was Jeremiah Brandreth, known as the Nottingham Captain. An unemployed Stockinger from Sutton-in-Ashfield, he was described as sallow and ill-looking. On June 5<sup>th</sup> he arrived in Pentrich and took part in meetings at Asherfields Barn (plaque 2) and the White Horse Public House (plaque 8). It was revealed that the rising would be on June 9<sup>th</sup>, setting off for Nottingham at 10.00 pm, and collecting men and arms en route. When they reached Nottingham, Brandreth told them, they would get 100 guineas, bread, beef and ale.

## June 9<sup>th</sup> 1817

At 10.00 pm the men assembled at Hunts Barn in South Wingfield, setting off in two groups to knock on farm doors and force men to join them, there was resistance, many men and women putting up an argument or trying to hide. It was during an argument with Widow Hepworth that her servant Robert Walters was fatally shot (plaque 4) he was the only man to die that night. The men reassembled at Pentrich Lane End (plaque 5) and went on to Butterley Ironworks (plaque 3). Here Brandreth demanded arms and cannon shot but the Butterley men stood their ground and the marchers turned away empty-handed. Marching on through pouring rain, the revolutionaries stopped at three public houses along the way, promising landlords to pay for their drinks after the government had fallen. Drunk, wet and demoralised, many men defected into the night, but a small band made it across the border into Nottinghamshire at around dawn, only to be faced with a detachment of the King's Hussars. There was a brief scuffle, some were arrested and more disappeared into the night.

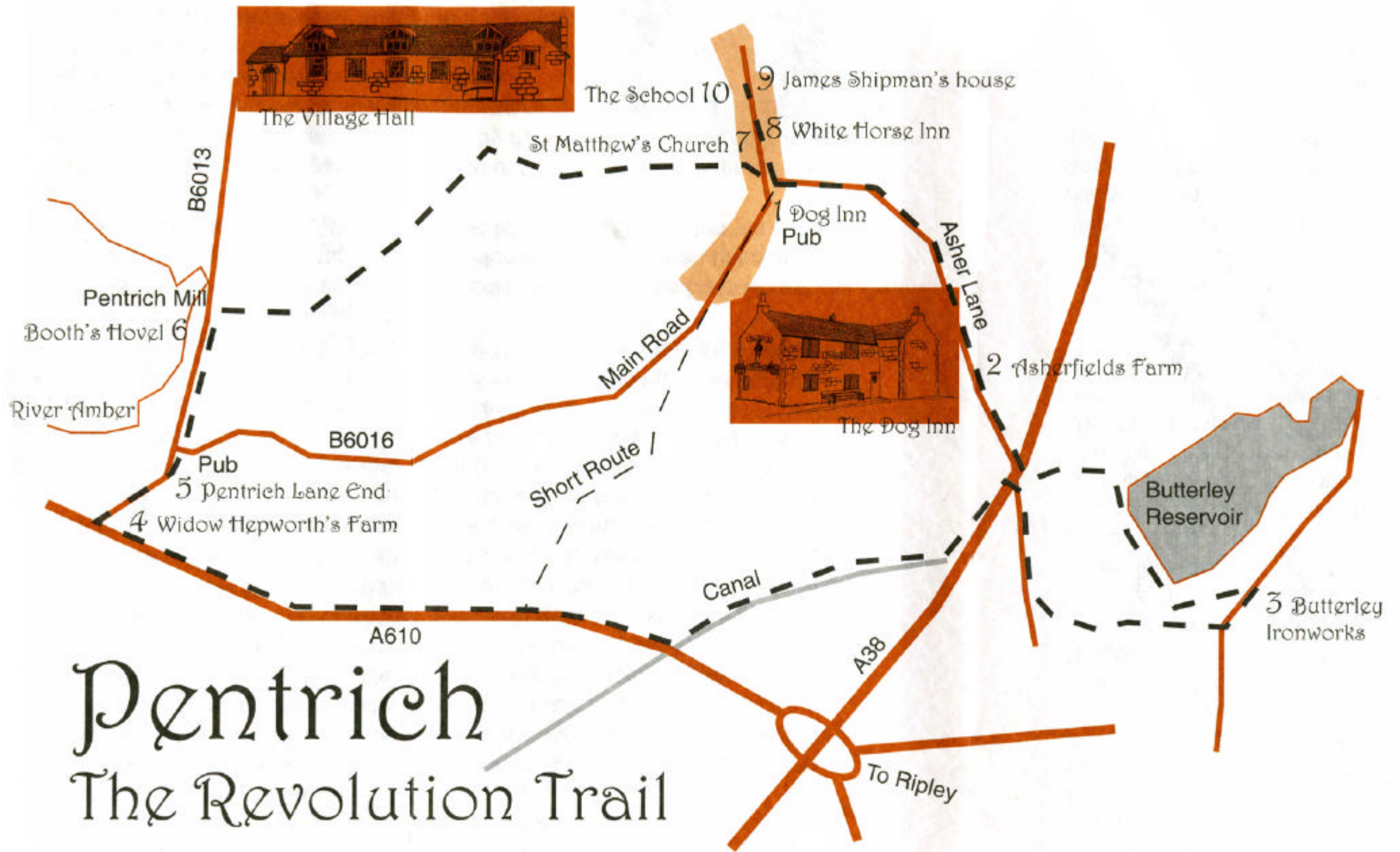


## Retribution

Over the next few weeks rebels hid (plaque 7), but many were nevertheless arrested. A show trial in October was a national sensation, especially when the ringleaders Jeremiah Brandreth, Isaac Ludlam and William Turner were sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered. They were the last men in England to receive that sentence, but in the end received "clemency" and were only hanged but beheaded. 14 other men were transported to Australia, and six more jailed. By this time public appetite for punishment was waning, and there was debate in the press about the rights and wrongs of the "example" being made of Pentrich men. The poet Shelley famously wrote a lament after the hangings, including the line "We pity the plumage but forget the dying bird". No evidence was offered against twelve other men.

## The Aftermath

The history of Pentrich almost stopped with the revolution. The Duke's agents ensured that houses where guilty men had lived were pulled down (plaque 10 and 8). Wives and children were put out of their tenancies and years later can be traced in other parts of the Country still scraping a livelihood after their disgrace. In the village those who had not taken part distanced themselves from the trouble refusing to associate with those suspected of taking part, and offering evidence against them. Land taken from guilty men was redistributed to loyal tenants, some of whom had given evidence at the trial (plaque 9). The village became smaller and less important in succeeding years. The judge at the trial had commented on Pentrich men's ill-education, and in 1818 The Duke of Devonshire visited the village and endowed the school (plaque 10). In 1819 Revd. John Wood raised a subscription for a chapel of ease at Ripley, warning that the lack of space for prayer in Pentrich had led to the recent trouble. A new church opened in 1821 at a cost of £1,600 raised by voluntary subscription, and Ripley began its growth as the busy town it is today, while Pentrich slipped out of notice. The men who were transported to Australia went there in the *Tottenham* and the *Isabella*. All eventually received absolute pardons, but it is not thought that any returned to Pentrich. Their descendants occasionally contact the village, and it is known from letters home to Rebecca, wife of Josiah Godber, that life there was not as bad as they feared. The harsh sentences handed down to the Pentrich Revolutionaries had the effect the government wanted. The call for reform was temporarily silenced and it was to be almost 20 more years before reform was achieved.



# Pentrich

## The Revolution Trail