

The Pentrich Rising with Michael Parkin

This year being the bicentenary of the Pentrich Rising, there have been many commemorative events. Our contribution was a talk by Michael Parkin who has researched the subject in depth. His emphasis was explaining the contributory causes more than describing the resulting events, most of which are now well known.

Conditions for the people of Pentrich, South Wingfield, Ripley, Alfreton and Belper were dire. The domestic frameworkers were threatened by the factory system. Poor weather causing poor harvests created a shortage of food prompting poaching and the threat of the cruel Game Laws. Enclosure denied labourers their rights. Returning soldiers from the war with France did not help the situation.

In desperation, the Nottinghamshire men joined the general rising to bring down the repressive government. With memories of the recent French Revolution, the government was determined to suppress any revolt and employed spies to insinuate and report back. As a result, as we now know, the marchers were tricked, ambushed by troops and the leaders arrested and tried at Derby. Many were transported to Australia, some were imprisoned and three were sentenced to death by hanging and beheading.

The men, now known as the Pentrich Rebels were deceived by despicable means but their cruel treatment caused such an outcry it eventually helped to bring about economic, social and political reform.

Our speaker, Michael Parkin had given us a sobering evening but was warmly thanked for his lucid and enlightening talk.