Almost a third of the new homes will have three or four bedrooms in order to accommodate families. The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said it could be ‘a fantastic opportunity to deliver a landmark regeneration scheme, as part of a determined effort we are making across London to bring forward public land for development. As well as bringing some vital new community facilities it will deliver quality housing that will make a real difference to families in the area.’

Jackie Jacob, ICA London Director said: ‘This is a massively important regeneration project for the borough. Hadley Mace impressed us by demonstrating their commitment and ability to deliver the scheme. We will ensure local residents are kept fully informed during construction.’

Councillor Chris Roberts, Leader of Greenwich Council said: ‘It is great news for Greenwich. The scheme is a key part of the Council’s drive to ensure residents have access to quality homes and modern services in first-class buildings. It will see the revival of a part of Greenwich, which also looks forward to the arrival of a cruise liner terminal in time for 2012, and a new hotel. Residents, visitors and businesses will all benefit from the major regeneration of this part of the borough.’

Hadley Mace will work with award-winning architects Make to deliver a family-oriented, eco-friendly development that includes private gardens and a large public square. A start on site is scheduled for before the end of the year and it is anticipated that the first phase of homes and community facilities will be ready by late 2013. The entire development will be completed approximately three years later.

Dick Allard, of the Westcombe Society Environment Committee said: ‘In many ways this is a well designed scheme which should integrate well into the local neighbourhood. But despite some measures to limit car ownership, if nothing more is done it will still make terrible local congestion even worse. As a start, how about a shuttle bus service to North Greenwich?’

Lorraine Tuner of the East Greenwich Tramway Users Association (EGBUA) commented: ‘We have waited far too long for this great news. It was about 4 years ago that we first met with the original developers (Pendragon) and it was an exciting design and with the extensive residential plan, we recognized that it would attract new customers in our high street. However, also highlighted to the developers, was the need for considering development of the available commercial space so as not to develop the community into an “island” community, and we hope the new developers will see the importance and value of working closely with EGBUA.’

Blackwall Tunnel vision

Transport for London has revealed figures showing that a vehicle breakdown in the Blackwall Tunnel is likely everyday during the London 2012 Olympics. Between July and September 2010, there were 96 breakdowns in the tunnels. This means that on average, there was more than one breakdown per day. The data was made available following a Freedom of Information request to TFL made by the website made by Greenwich.co.uk.

The tunnel forms an important part of the Olympic Route Network, which is designed to ensure that athletes and VIPs can get to venues. Normally, the tunnel carries around 50,000 vehicles a day in both directions, and there are worries about a breakdown during the Games. Speaking before the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April, Council Chief Executive Mary Ney said: ‘We’ve got outstanding issues with TFL around the Blackwall tunnel and contingency planning …’

TFL point out that the Met’s Safer Transport Command Roads Policy Unit, funded by TFL, has been permanently based at the tunnel since 2011, and has reduced tunnel closure time by 32 percent. The policing unit tries to intercept “potentially sub-standard” vehicles to stop them entering the tunnel.

As our report on page 7 of this issue points out, LOCOG’s transport plans for London 2012 still need council consent as a condition of the original planning application. Quite apart from the Blackwall tunnel, serious question marks over bus routes, parking arrangements and ‘Zil’ lanes in Greenwich remain.

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The Virgin London Marathon took place on April 22nd. A record 37,900 runners were registered. Many were charity runners, and wore novelty outfits; they included stilt-walkers, clowns, rhinos - and Baggus!

The Westcombe Society

OUR AGM: NEW LEADERS WANTED!

Sun, May 20th 12.30 - 2.30pm (inc. Wine and cheese lunch)

At the AGM members will elect the Society’s new committee and officers – including the Chairman, as current officers are retiring this year.

Some members are standing for re-election but we urge members to come forward and stand for all these offices. We would welcome some new faces and fresh ideas so that we can continue to evolve. This will also be your chance to meet the new managers of Mycenae House Community Centre, Mark Johnson Brown. The full agenda is on page 2.

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT SPONSORED WALK

There is still time just to sign up for the walk in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support in Kent (Cushborough) on Sunday 6th May (9 miles or 3 miles) Registration for £15.

Dogs on leads welcome too. If not a walker, sign up to sponsor our team! To participate in either, ring Caroline 0208 8550948 asap

JUBILEE CELEBRATION ON SAT. 16TH JUNE

From 1.00 - 5.00pm, in Mycenae House Gardens.

This is a family event, and is combined with a ‘Young Tree’ Tree party (by invitation).

Also included: a BBQ, cake stall, live music, races for the children, face-painting, Punch & Judy and much, much more for young, old and in between. Please come along and join us to celebrate the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee. Mycenae House & Gardens.
The Westcombe Society GM

The Annual General Meeting of the Westcombe Society is on Sunday May 20th 12.30 - 2.30 pm in Mycenae House, 90 Mycenae Road.

A wine / soft drink and cheese lunch will be provided.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Approval of and Matters Arising from Minutes of 2011
3. Reports: * The President of Westcombe News * Environment Sub-Committee
4. Treasurer’s Report and Presentation of Audited Statement of Accounts for Year Ending 31.03.2012
5. Election of Officers
6. Charity of the Year
7. Talk by Mark Johnson Brown, the new Manager of Mycenae House
8. Future plans
9. A.O.B.

Spring Events

It’s been a busy time for the Westcombe Society.

April 7th saw the traditional Easter Egg hunt in Mycenae of the South, and despite the weather, was very well-attended. Many thanks to Joanne and Patricia for organizing the hunt and using up the surplus for the yummy Easter cakes. Many children wore Easter bonnets, not forgetting the boys – one had an Easter V for ‘Villain’.

One hunter left behind a very beautifully decorated basket, please ring 07709571777 if you would like to claim it.

The Westcombe Society quiz night hosted ten teams who set to with enthusiasm, high spirits and determination to be the Brain of Westcombe Park 2012! We were pleased to welcome a number of new faces including several teams that had not been Westcombe members before. Tea and chips were provided by Mr Fas Fry, for the second time under the new management, and were much appreciated. The first prize was won by ‘The Marrakech Mob’.

Letters

Letters to the editor may be edited through lack of space. Any views expressed are those of the writers only, and are not necessarily those of the Westcombe Society or the WVN.

From: Caroline Owen
Beaconsfield Road
I have realised that the time has come this year to add a WVN message about the regulations for having bonfires. During the weekend we were completely surrounded by a low level of smoke 300m in any direction by a very smoky and smelly bonfire which had been lit by our new neighbours. We had to abandon the garden and take our children’s garden games and chips were provided by Mr Fas Fry, for the second time under the new management, and were much appreciated. The first prize was won by ‘The Marrakech Mob’.

From: Cllr Alex Grant (Lab) Blackheath & Eltham

There are understandable concerns about the MOD’s plans to site surface-to-air missiles on the south side of the A2, in Blackheath as a security measure during the Olympic Games. I was misquoted in your report on the matter in the April issue of the WVN. Your report quoted me as saying that “the plans will not endanger anyone, and any presence of military installations on the heath is not going to cause any damage. Access will not be impeded in any matter more than necessary.” I hastily correct this to read ‘the site considered a low risk, however, there may be a number of road and rail infrastructure to service the site, and it is possible that access to the site may not be impeded in all matter more than necessary.” The selective quotation of my statement is misleading.

From: Joe Beal
Vauxhall Fields

I was disappointed to read Cllr William’s support for Boris Johnson’s damaging Thames estuary airport proposal. Adding yet another airport is not in the interests of London or our environment.

The Thames estuary site has already been rejected. I refer to the Cllfie airport sites, and similar reasons give rise to reject this latest crazy plan - the high costs involved, increased carbon emissions and severe environmental damage. The area is also internationally important for tens of thousands of migratory wading birds and wildfowl. There are not many places left for such a spectacle in this country. Must we continue thinking about this thing just to satisfy economic greed and political posturing? Even if everyone felt about the wildlife, you might remember the plane that had to crash land in New York’s Hudson River, was brought down by a flock of geese, well, thousands of Brent Goose winter in the Thames estuary, which might be put on the habitat, how much land will be taken up, and how long.

From: Sue Whitmmer

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Road rage killers

GEORGE GARVEY

A ROAD-RAGE spat over a clipped wing mirror which escalated to a ‘Narco and Habs’ style car chase saw an innocent pensioner mowed down at the roadside at Stratheden Road, a court heard. As a result of the incident, Jaawant Bains, of Cambridge Row, Woolwich, was jailed for six years after being found guilty of causing death by dangerous driving of Miss Audrey Walker, aged 79, from Plumstead. Marcus Bailey, from Clapham, was jailed for two years for causing death by careless driving.

The two men were sentenced at Inner London Crown Court on Friday, March 21. Detective Inspector Mark Cam, who led the police investigation, said: “Miss Walker lost her life because of Bains and Bailey’s reckless behaviour, which started from a minor dispute on a public road.

“They both drove dangerously, recklessly, above the speed limit and without any consideration for members of the public.

“This wasn’t just a case of bad driving. There is no excuse for either man’s behaviour - I am pleased with today’s verdict. I hope it goes some small way to providing comfort to Miss Walker’s family who have acted with great dignity throughout.”

Pedestrian Audrey Walker, 78, was killed by the first of two cars being driven at what was described as “unreal” speed after an argument between the drivers escalated into a deadly pursuit.

Bains, aged 30, who denied a charge of causing death by dangerous driving, ploughed into the elderly woman after losing control of his Vauxhall Corsa, crashing into a roundabout at the Standard.

Witnesses said he appeared to be “driving for his life” as he sped away from the co-defendant Marcus Bailey, who was following at speed in his Vauxhall Astrar. Bailey, 22, also denied causing death by dangerous driving.

“Wanted to be hidden”

After crashing through the iron railings and landing on the roundabout, an injured and bloodied Bains crawled from his car and fled to a nearby estate agent, where he asked staff to help hide him from Bailey.

A jury heard how, a short time afterwards, Bailey and a friend pulled up at the scene asking where Bains had gone – telling witnesses they were going to “——” him up.

Witness Victoria Penn was overcome by the two cars moments before the fatal crash. She described the chase as like “something from the movies. It was mental driving, I’ve not seen anything like it in 20 years of driving. I couldn’t believe it.”

Defending Bains, Richard Bentwood said his speed was motivated by fear. A witness, who helped Bains into his mangled car immediately after the crash, described his frenzied state. Michael Singhulate told the court he went to Bains’ aid, and said the Indian man seemed “confused and scared.”

Dripping with blood

After helping Bains into an estate agents on a nearby road, Marcus Bailey said he was approached by Bailey and a friend who had pulled up in his Audi. He said the pair were aggressive, saying they were going to kill Bains after he “clipped his mirror.”

“They were aggressive, shouting "where the —— is he. I’m going to kill him! I told them to calm down, the man had been hit.”

The police took Bains away, Bailey is alleged to have carried on the verbal threats saying he was going to “—— him up.”

Representing Bailey, Nicholas Corssellis claimed that even after colliding with an elderly woman at high speed, Bains had no real chance of safety.

He said: “He (Bains) did not show any concern for the woman who he had just hit —— only himself. He did not ask about her, but wanted people to help him leave the scene.”

Prosecutor Zubair Ahmad said that both men should be held accountable for the tragic death of Miss Walker, who had been to a bank and some local shops when the crash happened.

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In memoriam

A special Thanksgiving Service in memory of Spencer Perceval, the only British Prime Minister to be assassinated, will be held in St Luke’s at Charlton in 3pm on Saturday 12th May. The service is open to anyone, but an official invitation is required as the Duke of Gloucester will be attending. To get an invitation ring 8856 7373.

Tickets for the Spencer Perceval Concert at 7.30 in the church that evening are for numbered seats. To book, ring 8856 7373.

See Rick Newman’s article on page six of this issue of the WN.

Local News

The Cutty Sark

Like a Phoenix, the Cutty Sark has risen from the flames – and what a grand re-birth this Stately sailing ship, one of the world’s last surviving tea clippers, was raved by fire five years ago as restoration work was being carried out.

At first it was feared that the ship was lost forever – but she has returned … brighter and better and more beautiful than ever after a £50 million make-over.

Before the Queen’s ‘re-launch’ of the ship on April 25th, the RN’s news editor Geoff Garvey had a look round.

“Even though workmen were still scurrying around, fixing up cables, manhandling bulky displays and putting finishing touches to the dramatic display of ancient ships’ figureheads, it was obvious the ship has been transformed. I’d not been on board for many years - and the new look is breathtaking.”

“Particularly eye-catching is the fact the ship has been lifted three metres above her dry dock, so that visitors can now walk underneath the 965-ton vessel and admire the elegant lines of her hull.”

“Naturally, in these modern times, the space will be put to good use in the evening for ‘corporate events.’ But for visitors to the ship, it is all freely available.”

It’s a new chapter in the extraordinary life of one of the world’s most famous ships. The last surviving tea clipper and the fastest and greatest of her time, she is a living testimony to the bygone, glorious days of sail – and a monument to those that lost their lives in the merchant service.

She was originally built in Scotland in 1869 to bring tea back from China, but in 1871 the Suzan Canal was opened – the result – the sailing ship was becalmed in the desert-siked waterway as steam ships raced past. Without any wind to fill her sails, the crew had to find a new role - bringing wool from Australia.

After that work ended she became a training ship, and then she was retired by a seafarer captain, who opened a campaign to bring her back to Britain. After first being employed as a training ship at Greenhithe, she ended up in a specially built dry-dock in Greenwich.

Work was being carried out to conserve her when the disastrous fire broke out. Thankfully her masts, sails, rigging, figureheads and other fittings were away at Chatham Historic Dockyard. The hull and decks were very badly damaged - but she’s come back sailing fit.”

So why is she called Cutty Sark? Well, the name is from a poem by Robert Burns. She was named after Cutty Sark, the nickname of the witch Nannie Dee in Robert Burns’ 1791 poem Tam o’ Shanter.

The ship’s figurehead shows Nannie in a stark white carving of a bare-breasted woman with long black hair holding a grey horse’s tail in her hand. In the poem, Tam spotted the witch dancing in a church as he was riding his horse nearby.

She wore a linen sark – or chemise - that she had been given as a child, which explains why it was cutty, or in other words far too short.

The erotic sight of her dancing in her short Undergarment caused Tam to shout out “Weel done, Cutty-sark”. In a fury, Nannie and her fellow witches chased Tam after Tam through the graveyard.

He was badly pursued and as he reached a stream he recalled that witches couldn’t cross running water. He spared his steed on to jump the water, but as he did so, Nanny reached out and grabbed the horse’s tail – which came off in her hand.

Luckily, Tam escaped – and the legend is depicted in the ship’s figurehead that shows the witch holding the horse’s tail.

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THE POINTERS SCHOOL

‘Double in size’

SPOTTED: ODD ONE OUT . . . ?

Geoff Garvey, the news editor of the WN, who visited the Cutty Sark in its role as a member of the Greenwich Tour Guides Association, pictured with the world-famous collection of ships’ figureheads on display on the tea clipper.

Westcombe News May 2012
Bringing history to life
25 years of Tour Guiding

This year The Greenwich Tour Guides Association is celebrating 25 years of guiding in Greenwich. The Greenwich Tour Guides is an Association of fully trained local history/tourist guides working within the Royal Borough of Greenwich. They are full of enthusiasm about Greenwich, and their main aim is to show off this amazing Borough to the world.

The Association was formed in 1987. The founder, Fred Sage, who died in 2005, worked on the river and on retirement turned his attention to a subject that had always fascinated him - local history.

Fred saw the need for tour guides for this major tourist destination. Through hard work and perseverance, a training course for local history tour guides was set up with the help of the ILEA and the local community college. Fred Sage was the course tutor until 1993. The course was a great success and continued to run on a regular basis until 1996. In 2006 and again in 2011 the Association ran its own very successful training courses.

The Association is based in the Greenwich Tourist Information Centre and from there conduct two walking tours daily. These walks take place at 12.15 pm and 2.15 pm in good weather.

International tourists, UK visitors along with many locals are welcomed to Greenwich. On the tours they discover the main history of the World Heritage Site with its Royal and Maritime connections, along with the importance of time.

Entertaining and informative guides will tell you about Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, both born in Greenwich, the building of the Old Royal Naval College as a retirement home for sailors, and tell you why time starts in Greenwich. Tailor-made group tours and specialist walks can also be arranged.

The future is looking very exciting for Greenwich, and for the tour guides. The honour of Royal status given to Greenwich has attracted world wide attention and will bring more visitors to the Borough. The eyes of the world will also be on Greenwich as a host Olympic Borough. Tours run daily from Discover Greenwich (subject to availability) at 1400. For groups of 15 people or more, call 020 8269 4799 or email tours@wrc.org.uk to arrange a group tour coach drops, and catering packages.

Want to “meet” figures from Greenwich’s rich and varied history? Try the following free events, in which character actors perform in the Painted Hall:

Meet Joe Bowe – Life as a Greenwich Pensioner Sunday May 6th 12.00, 13.00 14.00 & 15.30
Meet John Doman – a black Greenwich pensioner in the early C19: Sunday May 13th, same times.
Meet Samuel Pepys – tales from the famous diarist Sun. May 27th same times

The Old Royal Naval College has a series of events celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. They include:

Choral Pilgrimage 2012: The Earth Resounds on Wednesday May 9th: The world-renowned choir The Sixteen, with their UK tour, comes to the College singing Renaissance music. Tickets: £16/£26/£36 at the chapel.
For information, ring 01994 631 485

The Big Jubilee Lunch Sunday 3rd June: Celebrate to Queen's Diamond Jubilee for free: with free entertainment, and spectacular views of the pageant passing by at the Old Royal Naval College.

The Greenwich Booklands International Festival runs for ten days from 23rd June, and there are many events over the weekend in Greenwich.

Local music rules!

Euphonia Works (President Prof. Robert Williston) was founded in 2010 by Ailsa Kitchen and Joseph Timmins, and, with Tamsin Valey-Cohen is already making waves in the music world.

Invited to perform at Rye Arts Festival in 2011, this summer they have been invited back to Rye, as well as doing a tour of Sussex, including a performance in Aldeburgh.

Local musician Joseph Timmins says: “We are delighted to announce that our inaugural chamber music series is taking place here in Blackheath.”

The recitals themselves will be given by some of the country’s finest young professionals in the beautiful surroundings of St Mary’s Hall, Crescent Hill, Blackheath. The 2012-2013 season will include: in the programme:

- Joseph Timmins, harpsichord
- Richard Newton, cornett
- Rebekah Wray, viola da gamba
- Nicholas Prangle, recorder
- Emma Lewis, soprano
- Sarah Redmond, mezzo-soprano
- William Plater, counter tenor

Tickets are £12 (£10 concessions) per concert.
The dates are: May 5th at 6.00 pm and June 9th at 7.30pm. For more information or to request seats or to join the Euphonia Works mailing list, contact: euphoniaworks@gmail.com

The hand of history

CLARA DALY, TOM GRAY & SARAH LEWIS

Tom Daly Photo: Clara Daly

If you go into the Painted Hall down in Greenwich, look in the picture of King George I and his family. But wait – there’s someone missing: Mother?

Who is she? Look carefully and you will see the ghostly image of a hand sticking out from the rug beneath the king’s feet.

This faintly drawn hand is thought to be that of Sophia Donseth, wife of George I, himself involved in numerous affairs. She was divorced for her alleged infidelity with a handsome Swedish count named Count Philip Christoph Von Kinnsmark (who was later murdered). She was locked in a castle until her death, 32 years later.

According to the story, Thornhill, the artist (later Sir James Thornhill) asked the King if he wanted his estranged wife in the picture. “For all I care, you can paint her under the carpet.” declared the king.

Thornhill took him at his word, the ghostly hand is said to reflect how the matter was ‘swept under the carpet’.

It was this picture that caught the eye of teachers from Halstow School as they prepared for a school project, working with Jo Hall, Learning Manager at the Old Royal Naval College.

The project was assisted by Greenwich Learning Consultants Team and was co-ordinated by the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Learning Group which assists schools in using local resources.

Halstow pupils had previously worked on projects such as the National Gallery's

premium score-restaurant displays were done by him and other pupils at Halstow

Morden College Care Home – Cullum Welch Court

Cullum Welch Court is an exceptional Care Home with a CSCI ‘3 Star Rating’, situated in the peace & tranquility of the award-winning grounds of Morden College, Blackheath, it provides spacious, attractive and affordable accommodation; delivering high quality nursing & personal care for elderly people. With a wide range of activities, excursions and facilities provided to the Residents in our Care Home; they are also able to enjoy our private Chapel, Library, Clubhouse bar & Restaurant. Cullum Welch Court is able to accommodate a certain number of private senior residents and also a small number of permanent private residents.

For further information please contact: Mrs Sharon Herd (Matron/Registered Manager) on 0208 463 8399

WESTCOMBE NEWS May 2012

We welcome participation by local schools in the Westcombe News, as they are an important part of the community. The WN looks forward to receiving other contributions from local schools in the coming months.

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FEATURES

Spencer Percival: In memoriam

If you go to a Quiz Night, perhaps one organized by the Westcombe Society, or in a local pub, sooner or later you might hear the question “Who was the only British Prime Minister to be assassinated?”

There may be a number who in your view might deserve such a fate, but only one did so – and he did not deserve it: Spencer Percival, who lies buried, along with his wife, at St. Luke’s in Charlton.

Born in London on 1st November 1762 Spencer Percival was the seventh son of John Percival, 2nd Earl of Egmont, and the second son of his father’s second marriage to Catherine Compton. Educated at Harrow and Trinity College Cambridge, he was by profession a lawyer, and a good one at that.

He trained as a barrister at Lincoln’s Inn and was called to the bar in 1786. Much of his legal career was spent in the East Midlands. He entered politics as Member of Parliament for Northampton and, as with his legal career, his ability, dedication and integrity saw him rise to the highest offices in the land. However, it is the misfortune of Spencer Percival to be remembered principally for the manner of his untimely death on 11th May 1812.

To be strictly accurate, he was not called “Prime Minister” the term Prime Minister only gained formal acceptance when first mentioned in a royal warrant in 1905. At the time of his assassination in the lobby of the House of Commons, Spencer Percival was not only the First Lord of the Treasury the office later referred to as Prime Minister but as with other commoners he held up to 1826, he was also Chancellor of the Exchequer.

He had previously served as Solicitor General (1801) and later as Attorney General (1802) before becoming Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Leader of the House of Commons.

Spencer Percival is buried here at St Luke’s in Charlton, interred in the Egmont family vault in the crypt (now sealed). There is a modest monument at the back of the church beneath a portrait bust by the celebrated sculptor Sir Francis Chantrey.

Troubled times

He lived in troubled times: Britain had been at war in wars on and off for thirty years. As the home industry the Industrial Revolution was changing the nation and followed upon the earlier transformations brought about agriculture and transport. The population doubled in number in a generation; towns and cities expanded rapidly. The British Empire was growing despite the recent loss of the American colonies. All this was against a backdrop of constant threats both at home and abroad.

Across The Channel, Europe was in a state of rapid change as Napoleon brought order first to post-Revolutionary France and then sought to impose himself on the rest of the Continent. British trade throve and the wealth prospered – but there was the ever-present threat of invasion and challenge to the supremacy of the Royal Navy that protected both trade and shore.

It was an epic period of British history. Despite the massive growth in trade the government struggled to maintain order and security at home. In 1811 Luddites rebellied against new technology. Many smallholders and farm workers had been driven off the land, and forced to seek employment in the growing towns and cities. Government wrestled with issues of Catholic emancipation and slavery, with Spencer Percival a leading voice against both. An admirer of William Pitt the Younger, Percival entered Parliament as MP for Northumberland in 1796 aged 33.

Percival in office

When the Duke of Portland put together a coalition of Town and Country, Percival served as Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons. But the Duke of Portland was in poor health, and Percival was effectively the first minister and moved into 10 Downing Street, then as now the official residence of the First Lord of the Treasury. (The Prime Minister has no official residence apart from Chequers in Buckinghamshire). On 4th October 1809 Percival formally succeeded the Duke of Portland as First Lord of the Treasury; he declined the knighthood that was traditionally offered to ‘commoners’ who took on the position.

Percival proved extremely capable: he had to address the consequences of the serious illness of King George III – what we now know was perjury, but what was at the time seen as his ‘madness’. Spencer played a key role in setting up the arrangements for the Prince of Wales to reign as Prince Regent.

In addition, his economic wisdom enabled the country to fund Wellington’s campaigns in the Iberian Peninsula.

Links with Charlton

Percival had strong links with this part of London. He spent part of his childhood in Charlton when his father, who was First Lord of the Admiralty, was based nearby at Woolwich Dockyard. Percival was christened in the parish church in Charlton.

A decade later, when his older brother Thomas rented a house nearby, they returned to visit Charlton House, by then occupied by the family of his brother Thomas, Maryon-Wilson – including his daughter. Spencer’s older brother, Charles, was attracted to Marguerite as soon as he married in the Chapel in Charlton House in 1787.

Spencer was attracted to her sister, Jane, but Sir Thomas was too well disposed to the younger brother, a lawyer of seemingly limited prospects.

Nevertheless, Jane and Spencer conpired to marry the month after Jane became twenty-one in June 1791. They married in secret in Greenwich on 10th August. According to legend, Jane ended Charlton House by a rear window, and married still wearing her riding clothes. The marriage was well received by her family the marriage, which subsequently produced six sons and six daughters. (A seventh son did not survive.) By all accounts he was a good man and loving father.

By July 1792, Percival’s circumstances had so improved that he was able to move into a home at 59 Lincoln’s Inn Fields.

Even after he entered Parliament he continued as a lawyer, and he distinguished himself in his ongoing legal career this on some source of income – MP’s were not paid) when he defended Princess Caroline, the estranged wife of Prince of Wales. He was also against accusations intended to secure a divorce for the Prince. The princess set up house first (in August 1797) in the Vicarage or Old Rectory in Charlton, and later at Montagu House in Blackheath.

Murder!

When Spencer Percival was assassinated in the lobby of the House of Commons at 5.15pm on 11th May 1812, it quickly emerged that the murder was not the start of any insurrection, as was first feared, but was the act of one man, a bankrupt trader, a man who had been imprisoned in Russia and who felt he had been abandoned by his fate to the Peninsula.

Bellingham made no attempt to escape and his only defence was that he had meant to kill someone else. Although the sanity of the assassin was questioned, Bellingham was immediately put to death. He was hanged on 15th May, 1812.

Percival had died within minutes of the shooting, and was taken to 10 Downing Street and remained there until 18th May when the funeral procession made its way to St Luke’s. The funeral at St Luke’s was a private ceremony at his widow’s request. Percival’s assassination occurred at a time of the Luddite riots and elsewhere in the country the news of his death was greeted with celebrations.

However, the news was greeted with shock and disbelief, and in 1812 it was mourned as a man of learning and integrity, a man George III said was “the most straightforward man I have ever known.”

At the time of his assassination, Spencer Percival lived in Ealing. His ascent to high office had brought scant financial reward and he reportedly had only £106 3d in his bank account when he died.

Parliament immediately ensured that his wife and children were provided with a settlement of £50,000 for his children and additional annuities for his wife and eldest son.

Jane Percival subsequently married Peninsula War hero, Sir Henry Carr, in 1814, but was widowed for a second time in 1821. She died in 1844 it was interred alongside her first husband in the family vault in St Luke’s where there are memorials to her and other members of the family. Percival is remembered in a bequest by his daughters, and on the site of their former family home, in 1905, was consecrated as the St Luke and St George’s Percival Commemoration Church.

(The story of Spencer and Jane Percival is told in Hugh Gaunt’s Lives, Living history: a family’s 17th Century – Cambridge: Greetbooks 2010.)

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RICK NEWMAN on the life, times and untimely death of Spencer Percival

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LOCG’s travel plans... GORDON BAKER asks “What plans?”

The Royal Borough of Greenwich does not appear to have taken the trouble to understand local concerns, let alone define them. * Nor has the Borough displayed a sense of urgency in dealing with the situation. When are the Planning Board considering the Olympic transport planning application? Why has that meeting so often been postponed? * Any information about Olympic transport plans has been handed out as a fait accompli rather than as a proposal for discussion.

As long ago as 2003 LOCG planning has been to meet the requirements of Olympic contest officials, contestants and spectators without sufficient regard for the local impact.

The Borough Council on which side are you on?

The Westcombe Society has written to the Boundary Commission registering objections to the Commission’s proposals to split Greenwich. In particular they split West Greenwich from East Greenwich and the World Heritage Site – and bundle Westcombe Park in with Deptford.

The Society’s objections to the proposals are the same as those given by Richard Jackson in his submission as Chair of the Greenwich Society and those given by our MP Nick Raynsford. In a letter to the Chairman of the Westcombe Society, Gordon Baker says:

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