John Roan’s annus horribilis

The John Roan (JR) School has been at the centre of a perfect storm of recent events leading to discontent in the school community. Since September a Head Teacher both started – and resigned. This happened in an environment of strikes, confusion over school budgets, a restructuring process and a huge misunderstanding about academisation. So what happened?

It is difficult to know where to start but perhaps the threat of academisation is a good place. In January the Local Authority (LA) wrote to JR advising them to consider their position regarding academisation. (At that time the government’s policy was to turn all schools into academies by 2020.) In response the JR Governors sent out a letter to parents about their plans to investigate academisation. That upset some parents. Arguably that letter was badly worded and might have been interpreted as a declaration of intent to academise the school. Since then the Governors have repeatedly and publicly denied plans for academisation.

Governors against academisation

I asked for a comment. They said “The Governors against academisation denied plans for academisation. Quite rightly the Governors have

In September Nadine Powrie, the new Head Teacher, arrived. She must have expected a school that was financially thriving. This week, in an email to the school, Cllr. Gillian Palmer stated that the school has been “drawing on its financial reserves to support its expenditure until these reserves are depleted”.

Financial deficit

In 2012/13 there were reserves of £1.391m. Now there are none. It is possible that spending reserves created a false sense of security that must now be dealt with. Spending into reserves was signed off long before Ms Powrie was in post.

Putting this in the context of national changes in funding, JR face budget cuts of 4% a year over the next three years. A Head Teacher told me that budgeting is very difficult in this environment and most schools will find it hard to make budgetary projections even as little as three years ahead. Managing cuts of this severity would be financially challenging for any Head Teacher and heads in that position should be given professional respect to make informed decisions within these constraints.

Ms Powrie, working with the Local Authority, committed the school to a restructuring process the most compelling reason for which was a deficit in the school budget of £438,355 for 2015/16. The reasons for this deficit are not immediately apparent but the state of school reserves, and spending patterns in previous years must surely be taken into account.

On arrival Ms Powrie added a number of non-staffing costs to the 2015/16 budget, including CCTV – possibly a legal requirement. This action has been widely criticised and blamed for the deficit. However, nobody I’ve asked (including the JR NUT) can make theory that non-staffing costs add up to £438,355.

Confusingly although the Governors have stated that the deficit was not helped by an underfunded 6th Form, this statement has been taken in some quarters as a full justification for the deficit, something the Governors never meant. The Chair of Governors later apologised unreservedly for the confusion caused by the original statement.

It is too easy to assume that this deficit is caused by one thing alone. These are complex financial matters and further clarity would be welcomed.

The meaning of “Restructuring”

Restructuring inevitably meant threats to jobs. Salaries are by far the biggest expenditure for schools: Ms Powrie’s consultation process suggested cuts of 20% to teaching and administrative staff. It seems the consultation process stalled, leading to strikes and disruption by the NUT and the NASUWT.

However, questions remain in my mind. Why didn’t the NUT allow the consultation process to complete before striking? Did the NUT really understand the nature of the non-staffing costs that they were criticising? They certainly couldn’t answer many specific questions on this subject. Perhaps many of Ms Powrie’s additions to the budget were necessary.

(continued on page 3)

BBC Proms – on our doorstep

For the first time ever, this year’s BBC Promenade Concerts programme includes a concert at the Chapel in the Old Royal Naval College. In the past, the concerts have always been performed in the Royal Albert Hall, but this year, four new venues have been added: Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, the Roundhouse in Camden, a multi-storey car park in Peckham – and the ORNC Chapel. Rossini’s Petite messe solennelle will be performed by the BBC Singers, conducted by David Hill, at 3.00 pm on Sat. August 6th. Tickets will be on sale from June 24th. For more information on the BBC Proms, go to www.bbcproms.org.uk
community

The Environment Committee Report at the Westcombe Society’s AGM in May

1. Buildings

Over the year there have been many appli-
cations for planning permission and extensions.
Many of these are uncontroversial. However, in
cases where neighbours are overlooked, the
Committee offers its views. We are represented
with the Greenwich Conservation Group who include experts
in planning and architecture. Examples of concerns
that may object include: significant changes in roof line which
unbalance the symmetry of a property or
group of properties (e.g. from hip to gable or
some dormer windows), balconies and
roof terraces, or changes to windows and
doors that are out of keeping with the style of
property. We are also very concerned about
basement alterations involving extensive
work which cause noise and vibration nuisance to
neighbours and have, in some cases, led to
appeals to planning officers. Greenwich
Council’s new SPD (Supplementary Planning
Document) on Residential extensions, which
is commented on, provides useful guidance for
residents wishing to extend their property.

2. Trees

The Environment Committee holds two
monitor applications for Tree Works
because trees are an important part of our
environment. We live in a Conservation
Area, so residents have to notify the
Council before carrying out work on trees
with trunks bigger than 75mm diameter
(15m from the street). Recently we
have been pleased to see the Council plant
ew trees to replace those lost during the
Circumnavigation project. We are also very concerned
about heavy traffic noise on Westcombe Hill
and members of our Committee have taken part in a speed
survey of vehicles. In addition, we are represented
on the group that lobbies for control of aircraft noise
when flying over our residential area.

3. Open spaces

We are lucky to have two such valuable
classified Ads

spaces as the Heath and the Park, as well as
several smaller green areas. The
Westcombe Society continues to be
represented on the Blackheath Joint Working
Party (BJWP), the BJWP nature conserva-
tion group, the Stakeholders and Safer
Neighbourhood panels for Greenwich Park
and the Friends of Mycenae Gardens.
These groups work together to
preserve the natural environment of
Swamped by

London, W3 7Ne

The views expressed in the Westcombe News are not necessarily those of the Westcombe Society or of the Editor. We
welcome all reasonable comments to protect the interests of our readers by ensuring as far as possible the bona fides of our
residents with unresolved issues due to this
immediacy of pastoral care.

As the Lord in His infinite wisdom knows the
obsessive compulsive disorder that keeps
the Parish Council from keeping the church
clock ticking.
The Parish Council’s steadfastness in stand-
ing by a time-proven failure to seek profession-
al guidance (from, for example, Greenwich
Conservation or elsewhere) is a testament of blind faith over experience. May the Lord have mercy on us all.

From: M.A. Qurri Butt Sahib, Palestine
Two weeks I have been back from the land where the Blessed Child, whose name is
invoked in All Saints Church every Sunday,
was born and not, for the first time, the
Church Clerk stood in still mute witness to the inadequacy of pastoral care.

We would like to invite you to join us
in a guided walk on May Bank Holiday Sunday.
This gentle stroll through Greenwich & Blackheath brought to life those independent
women who campaigned for equality by signing a petition to give women the vote
in 1918. The BBC have made the 2006 Great
Which was the son of Napoleon III, and the last
dead in the Zulu War was the Prince Imperial.
I am surprised that the Royal Artillery
thought it would find a better home in
the Zulu, Afghan and Boer Wars, and I
remember the distinctive Zulu shields, assepsian
and Afghan weapons on it.

The monument commemorated the death of
the officers and men of the Royal Artillery in the
Zulu, Afghan and Boer Wars, and I
remember the distinctive Zulu shields, assepsians,
and Afghan weapons on it.

From: Liz Lowe
FaceBook
I was keeping Dr Drs Diggles‘ local historian and textile artist for her excellent
organised walk on May Bank Holiday Sunday.
This was the son of Napoleon III, and the last
dead in the Zulu War was the Prince Imperial.

I am surprised that the Royal Artillery
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From: Paul Attewell
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Blackheath Foodies Festival

The Foodie Festival takes place on Blackheath from July 8th - 10th. Among the treats promised are cookery demonstrations, food tents, real ale, top chefs and entertainment and children's activities. There will be a 'small stage' with live music.

Tickets prices start at £15.00 (with a £2.25 transaction fee) and the event opens at 11.00 and closes at 7.00 p.m (6.00 p.m. on Sunday.) Tickets and further information can be purchased from the website www.foodiesfestival.com or by calling 0844 995 1111. The event manager is Jeremy Hitchen (Jeremy.Hitchen@btconnect.com).

Celebrating the Steinberg Duo

Sunday 22nd May, 2016

Tchaikovsky, Liszt & Grég: Works for Violin & Piano, performed by the Steinberg Duo – Nick Burns - Piano & Louisa Stouchill - Violin at the Steinberg Museum, Vanbrugh Hill

Louisa Stouchill and Nick Burns of the Duo, and it showed, their rendering was precise but with great feeling, and they know the piece inside out: sudden changes of tempo and dynamic were handled perfectly, without their having to make eye contact. The outer movements were particularly impressive, a lively conclusion to the Duo’s recital, and a reminder of why their loyal audience, and the local music community will miss them.

The renowned and much loved Steinberg Duo are currently relocating from Greenwich to New Hampshire, (USA), where they will continue their prestigious international careers, including continuing to perform in the United Kingdom.

The Steinberg Duo offered a captivating final recital attended by their faithful audience, including fellow musicians, alongside the composer, Philip Sawyers, who has had a close association with the Duo for some time.

The May recital featured Grég’s third and final Violin Sonata, with its beautiful recurring themes, and the contrast of Liszt’s two elegies 130 and 131. These are usually arranged for cello, but the lower register of Louisa Stouchill’s instrument made for a rich sound, in the elegies as well as the Grég, the upper register was also handled beautifully, with 130 surging to a moving finale.

The minimalist surroundings of the Duo’s studio could have produced a harsh acoustic, but instead the sense was of immediacy and drama. It was not difficult to see why their performances in the similarly intimate surroundings of the Hattori Foundation had been so well received.

The occasional sounds of traffic and pedestrians outside were no more a distraction as a reminder that this was music brought to street level, in the best sense.

The highlight of this recital, however, was a flawless performance of Philip Sawyers’ Second Violin Sonata, composed in 2011 for the Duo. Sawyers is a relative rarity amongst contemporary composers, in that he manages to produce genuine musicality, but without straying towards the saccharine. This work is clearly a favourite

John Roan (continued)

One must be saddened by the resignation of Ms Powrie in May on the grounds of ill health. Ms Powrie’s interim replacement is Carolyn Roberts, Head Teacher at Thomas Tallis School.

When asked about the consequences of the restructuring process she told me that there were no compulsory redundancies and some voluntary redundancies. But she also pointed out that, reluctantly, teaching hours must be increased.

It seems clear to me that restructuring was necessary and that these changes to the school are sensible.

So what happens now? Forced academisation of the DfE remains a possibility. The government keeps changing the goal posts and the academisation issue is not over yet. The Governors may yet recommend that the school becomes an academy, but their reluctance to follow that path is clear. In view of the Education and Adoption Bill, 2016, their attitude may become irrelevant.

Parent Governors are a voluntary, elected group. They work tirelessly to support and challenge the school. Their role is essential and, as a parent, I hope we can support them as we await the recruitment of a new Head Teacher.

In the meantime Carolyn Roberts will lead the school. I met her. She is com- posed, thoughtful and her experience comes across when you talk to her.

She emphasised that in the coming months the dual priorities are the children and preparing the school for September. We can only hope that Ms Roberts is a calming influence and that she has a less challenging tenure than Ms Powrie did. Then we might look forward to a less turbulent year.
FEATURES

Remembering Jutland

A new book commemorates the centenary of the Battle of Jutland

By Pat Avery

The Battle of Jutland, fought on May 31, 1916, was the largest naval battle of World War I. One hundred years on, the author of a new book tells us how it all began.

Pat Avery was a 21-year-old wireless operator during World War I. His grandfather, Basil Phillips, was a wireless operator on the British battleship HMS Ambuscade. Avery’s book, “The Ambuscade: The Story of a Wireless Operator,” tells the story of his grandfather and the role he played in the battle.

“The battle was a dramatic one as well as the story of the battleship Ambuscade and its crew,” Avery said.

“I hope this book will help people understand the significance of the Battle of Jutland and the role played by the Royal Navy during the First World War.”

The book is available in paperback for £10 or downloadable on Kindle and iPad, at £5. The book features original plans of the ship, photographs, and maps. To order please visit the publisher’s website at: www.seafaneel.co.uk

New Photographic exhibition at Mycenae House

This photo by Lesley Hall was shortlisted for the prestigious 2016 Sony World Photography Awards. This photo is on show as part of the exhibition of photographs by Aperture Woolwich Photographic Society – on in Mycenae House until September. “Lesley is an amazingly talented and versatile artist and we are proud to have her working amongst us,” said Mark Johnson-Brown, manager of Mycenae House.

Solar pioneers of SE London

Camilla Berens

Pioneering solar co-operative, South East London Community Energy (SELCE), has been given a big thumbs-up by local VIPs as it celebrates the success of its first project.

At the sunset of last year, SELCE inaugurated 500,000 through a ‘community share offer’. A total of 138 people, mainly from Greenwich and Lewisham, became shareholders and they will now receive 4% interest on their investment over the 20-year life of the project.

To mark the ‘go live’ of the solar panels, SELCE held two celebrations, one in Greenwich and the other in Lewisham. At the Greenwich event, local MP Matthew Pennycook described the 13-strong team behind SELCE as ‘true pioneers’ who had put in over 6,000 volunteer hours to bring their project to life.

At the Lewisham celebration, Sir Steve Bullock, mayor of Lewisham, said that the project was ‘deeply impressive’. The solar arrays will save the schools more than £330,000 over the next 20 years, while carbon emissions will be reduced by almost 2,000 metric tons.

SELCCE is now planning to raise a further £350,000 through another community share offer which begins on July 1st. The money raised will provide solar arrays for another six community buildings in SE London. Shares can be bought from £5 to £20,000 and the offer ends at midnight on July 31st. SELCE is again offering 4% annual interest on the initial investment. For more information go to: www.selce.org.uk or call Giovanni Speciale on 0208 269-4882

Can we do anything about education?

YES! The arrival of computers has bowled over thoughtful people and upset the best educational practices of the past. People reason that because computers stem from mathematics, the kind of drilling used in maths teaching needs to be applied across the curriculum. This puts a lot of pressure on teachers and pupils: pressure which puts most children off education, or at best leads them to learn in little as possible to pass the exam.

The PER Report is based on 21 years of analysis of a 7,000 word document which shows exactly what is going wrong.

Readers of the Westcombe News can buy it by sending £5 and their address to:

The PER Group
cc Box 10916,
Blackheath, SE3 7WS
**WHAT'S ON**

**Arts**

**National Maritime Museum**
Above and Beyond **6th exhibition**
Visit their site, or read our special preview inside this issue, for a unique experience of the treasures inside this vast building.

**Royal Greenwich**
**FESTIVAL OF SONG**
Over 500 performers from 27 countries share this year’s festival of song at Greenwich. Visit, or read our preview inside this issue, to find out all about it.

**Queen Elizabeth Hall**
**Concerts**
Visit their site, or read our special concert review inside this issue, to find out all about this year’s concerts.

**Greenwich Hospital**
**Concerts**
Visit their site, or read our special concert review inside this issue, to find out all about this year’s concerts.

**Westcombe News July/August 2016**
5

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**Westcombe News July/August 2016**
In August 2015 Nicola White, local artist and an avid Thames mudlark, came across a brass luggage tag in Greenwich, SE10. It was the first time she had found a tag from the Thames. The tag was engraved with the name “F. Jury, 72 Woolwich Road”. Thus began a journey to unfold the story of Frederick Jury.

Frederick Jury was born in Bermondsey/Walworth in 1891. His parents came from Cootramundra in New South Wales, Australia. All this is of course just speculation. We do know that in all probability Fred travelled to Melbourne in New South Wales where he enlisted at Coorongundra in the 3rd Infantry Battalion, (19th Reinforcement). Sarah believes he enlisted in Greenwich. Then, on 22nd August 1916, almost 15 years to the day that he and Sarah were married, he embarked from Sydney, Australia to the UK on the ship HMT Witsham. In December, he stayed in Greenwich.

For the next two years and a half years the unit served in the trenches in France and Belgium and took part in most of the major battles at this time.

The War

After the outbreak of World War I, both Frederic Jury and his brother William (also known as Fred) enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces within one month of each other, in March 1916. Why did they go to Australia to enlist? Perhaps it was because the pay was apparently 3 times as much as the British Army; in Fred’s case it could have been that he was too old to enlist at home and the age limit was higher in Australia. All this is of course just speculation.

We know that after the war Fred lived at 72 Woolwich Road and was there at least until 1931. In 1932 he died at Queen Mary’s Hospital Roehampton. We also know that William Jury enlisted in the Australian army, was seriously wounded in action, was committed to Sunnyridge Mental Hospital in New Zealand in the 1940s. He died in the 1960s, in the same hospital. Sarah moved to Greenwich South Street in 1933, where she died in 1936.

You might think that is the end of Frederick Jury’s story. However, I thought I would try to find out where he was buried, with the idea that it would be nice to go and pay my respects to him. Well it just so happens that he is buried just around the corner from where I live - in Greenwich Cemetery. It was like searching for a needle in a haystack, but luckily, Jason, the grave digger with Royal Greenwich Parks, was very helpful. He checked the records, and told me that Fred’s grave would be in area “Z” which is the pavers’ grave area. The area is very overgrown, with some of the small tombstones completely covered in brambles and nettles. I wasn’t feeling too optimistic to tell you the truth.

And then, Jason shouted “I’ve found Frederick”, and he straightened the stone. It was a moving moment for me, to see his final resting place, and I found myself imagining who may have known him, and who may have buried him all those years ago in 1932. But for a moment I was a little taken aback when I read “Beloved Husband of Millie Jury” (was this another wife we had not heard of)? Then of course I realized that this was his pet name for Sarah Amelia Elizabeth Jury (shortened version of Amelia). In fact, Sarah’s grave is also in Greenwich.

Jason was a lot bigger and I spent a few moments next to Fred’s grave. It seemed sort of sad that after such an intriguing life, we had to search in the undergrowth for his headstone, but that is the way of the grave-stone. It’s the legacy we leave, the places we visit, the people we touched in our lives. There must be hundreds and thousands of undiscovered stories lying in the Thames waiting to be found one day. In the case of Frederick Jury, many decades passed before the Thames tide washed away the layers of thick mud and sand of us all as part of his life, pulsed together from the various databases and heritage sites that exist, but these few facts give little idea of the thoughts, feelings and dreams that made the man, and his wife, who they were.

Returning to the brass luggage tag found by Nicola White on the River Thames, it’s so true. So I put this to you: “And do you want to know something surprising? My past, my choices - when I die, all that past will vanish with me. It’s that astonishing thing: getting old: discovering that all the pain, all the drama, is so completely transitory. You carry it with you. Then, one day, you’re gone, and nobody knows about the narrative that was your life.” Unless you’ve told it to somebody or written it down.

It’s so true. So I put this to you. If someone found your lug- gage tag in the Thames in 100 years time, what would they write about you? What is your story? Have you ever tried to read the most stories from the River Thames, you can find them on my website www.ridiculart.co.uk
Open Spaces Society Slates Commercial use of Parks

In February, the WS reported that the Royal Borough of Greenwich Events Team withdrew its licence application to extend the number of events on Circus Field following an extraordinary number of objections from local residents, amenity societies and organisations, including the Westcombe Society. The latest edition of Open Space magazine indicates that this is a nationwide issue. The jury is out as to whether the Royal Parks could go the same way: it is hoped that the transfer of the management of the 8 Royal Parks and The Royal Parks Agency (TRP) from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to the Royal Parks Foundation will offer the parks a secure future.

The Open Spaces Society, Britain’s oldest national conservation body, has slammed the abuse of parks and green spaces for commercial purposes in an Opinion piece for the society’s latest issue of Open Space magazine.

The society has criticised Wandsworth Council for approving Formula E’s plan to occupy Battersea Park, Ealing Council for backing E’s plan to occupy Battersea for commercial purposes in an Opinion piece online.

In my view, such events are in breach of the Royal Parks’ terms. They contravene the parks’ status as designated common land, village greens, open spaces and public paths, and people’s right to enjoy them. This year it celebrates its 150th anniversary and remains one of the oldest national conservation bodies. It campaigns to protect open spaces in the first place.

A recent report, Learning to Relink Parks, by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery Fund and NESTA (National Endowment for Science Technology and Arts) has found new ways to raise income and reduce costs for public parks in the face of budget cuts.

Their recommendations include greater involvement of park users, local business and residents in the design and delivery of ideas. The report does not propose sacrificing the parks to international motor-races, nor noisy, muddy “festivals”.

There is massive evidence that green spaces are essential for people’s health and well-being. Local authorities should stop trying to sell off or exploit their parks and instead work with residents and others to make them better.

The Open Spaces Society was founded in 1865 and is Britain’s oldest national conservation body. It campaigns to protect common land, village greens, open spaces and public paths and people’s right to enjoy them. This year it celebrates its 150th anniversary.

CONTACT: Kate Ashbrook 01491 573535 (work) 07771 655694 (mob.)

Tomorrow GoodWednesday 7th

In Victorian times to satisfy the human need for fresh air and tranquillity in an increasingly dense urban area. That need is greater now than ever.

Of course local authorities are strapped for cash. Of course they must find savings and generate income. But they should not do so in ways which conflict with the ethos of those far-sight-ed people—some of them our founders—who secured these open spaces in the first place.

Campaigners tell Mayor Khan: NO to the Tunnel

Campaigners against the Silvertown Tunnel have launched a petition to demand that the new mayor Sadiq Khan withdraws the scheme from the planning system.

Mayor Khan pledged to look again at the scheme, put in place by Boris Johnson, after acknowledging worries about the air pollution and congestion a new road crossing between the Royal Docks and Greenwich Peninsula would cause.

TfL submitted the tunnel plans for planning permission in the final week of Boris Johnson’s mayoralty. If built, the tunnel will generate more traffic, exacerbating congestion at other bottlenecks across London, leading to worse air quality and longer journey times.

Mayor Khan told London Assembly members on May 25th that he was reviewing the scheme, along with all the crossing proposals put in place under Johnson - but refused to withdraw it from the planning system.

Now the No to Silvertown Tunnel campaign is asking him to:

• Show he is serious about his commitment to tackle pollution by withdrawing the Silvertown Tunnel proposal from the planning system immediately.
• Fully review the Silvertown Tunnel – taking into account all views, not just Transport for London’s – and other crossing schemes planned east of Tower Bridge.

Pre-construction costs for the tunnel are £107 million, according to documents submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. The full cost of building the tunnel will be at least £1 billion.

Since Mayor Khan was elected, it has been revealed his predecessor covered up a report that made clear the effects of air pollution in the borough that will be affected by the Silvertown Tunnel, such as Newham, Tower Hamlets, Greenwich, Lewisham and Southwark.

The No to Silvertown Tunnel chair Anne Robbins says: “We never had much faith in the congestion and pollution assessments for the Silvertown Tunnel, but the shocking revelations about pollution and primary schools mean Sadiq Khan needs to pull the scheme out of planning, and urgently look again at a scheme that will damage the lives of communities across east and south-east London.

“Nobody is denying Blackwall Tunnel congestion isn’t a problem, but the Silvertown Tunnel will only make the situation worse. Even a tunnel for ‘cleaner vehicles’ would just send more polluting traffic into local areas to head to the Rotherithe Tunnel. The tunnel will cost Londoners £107m before the diggers even start work – money TfL could put to better use elsewhere.”

The petition can be found at www.toxictunnel.co.uk.

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Planning applications can be viewed in the library, or at the Woolwich Library on the lower ground floor of the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington St. They may also be viewed on www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning.

Lightning strike

This stark trunk is all that remains of a cedar tree in the flower garden of Greenwich Park. The tree was struck by lightning in mid-afternoon on Friday 29th April.

Two passing joggers had a narrow escape: they said that, in future, they would celebrate two birthdays each year.

ED: The WN welcomes photographs of recent events sent in by readers: so please carry that camera with you, to catch that unique moment!

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