

Woolwich Garrison Church Trust

Newsletter Summer/Autumn 2022 No 11



Message from the Chairman

The relaxation of the Covid rules have meant that the Church has come back to life again with a full range of events and Services. It has been splendid to see the Church so well attended and for such a variety of events, ranging from Yoga and Concerts and Comedy Nights to Shakespeare, a wedding and birthday parties. But we are conscious that the Church remains consecrated ground and that the holding of regular Services is integral to its role. We held our annual St George's Day Service in April for the cadet groups of all 3 Services as well as the Scouts and other volunteer organisations. This was attended by the French Military Attache as well as many local representatives, including the Mayor. Later in the summer we held an Interfaith Service with some beautiful singing, led and organised by David Rome, one of our trustees. Then in September there was a Service of Remembrance for the life of Queen Elizabeth II organised by the Chaplain to the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, Richard Begg. There was very good turnout of soldiers particularly from the King's Troop, and the Service was held on a perfect late summer day.

I am glad that the Trust had the resources to have the tensile roof over the east end of the Church well cleaned this summer by the company which installed it. At the same time they repaired the defective water pipe connection at the top of the down pipes which drain water from the roof.



The work to the north porch has now been completed with both the York stone flags, and the gates and railings designed and installed by the Wheely Down Forge in Hampshire to match the central gates and the railings on the south porch, finishing the work required for the west end of the Church.

We are hopeful, with the assistance of Berkeley Homes, of being able to resolve the linked problem of the floor of the chancel and the roof of the crypt below. Put shortly the additional weight of the slabs which have been donated by Berkeley Homes and are in storage at the Barracks, could destabilise the brick arches in the crypt. But with the assistance of the engineer instructed by Berkeley Homes and the architect instructed by our Trust, a solution is in sight. A further Listed Building application will need to be made but if all goes according to plan it may be that this work might be completed by Easter 2023.

In the coming months we will be much engaged in fundraising for the Commonwealth & Gurkha Garden. I commend the piece in this Newsletter about the project, and hope that some of the readers might become Friends of the Garden. The Trust has a new Treasurer in place. Miles Storey has much experience as a Treasurer of various Charities as well as a career in the banking industry. With his assistance I am confident that we will get our Annual Accounts to the Charity Commission in time, and that going forward we will have an efficient accounting system in place.

I hope that you will enjoy this Newsletter and keep in touch with the Church via our website. It would be good to see you at any of our future events.

Tim Barnes

Chairman, Woolwich Garrison Church Trust

Farewell to Lt Col Ed Taylor



We have enjoyed the best of relationships with Lt Col Ed Taylor, CO of Woolwich Station, during his time at Woolwich, and are sad to be saying our farewells to him and Jemma. Ed shared our enthusiasm for the Garrison Church and considered it an important place not only as part of the history of the Royal Artillery but also as the natural location for Services for those soldiers currently based in Woolwich. Ed always attended the Remembrance Day Services at the Church and laid a wreath on behalf of Woolwich Station. He also came to the St George's Day Services and was glad to facilitate Army Services such as the Chestnut Troop Service at the Church.

Ed's most recent attendance at a Service at the Church was the short but moving Service of Blessing after his marriage to Jemma this summer at which Richard Begg presided.

Ed has been a keen supporter of the Commonwealth & Gurkha Garden project. Through his good offices we were able to hold our Dinner and Auction of Promises in the restored Officers' Mess last December, and 2 of the auctions facilitated by Ed, namely a tour of the King's Troop and a dinner for 8 in private room of the Officers' Mess, attracted high bids.

His new posting is as Military Attache to Bosnia -Herzegovina where he will be based in Sarajevo. At a time of tension in the Balkans and a war in Ukraine, it is obviously an important posting which will require military and diplomatic skills. We are confident that Ed will be as successful in Sarajevo as he has been in Woolwich and wish him and Jemma the best of luck in this next stage of their life together.

We pass on our congratulations to Ed and Jemma who completed the London Marathon in October 2022 in aid of Panas Helping Hands which provided over 100,00 meals free meals to NHS staff during the Covid pandemic and is now assisting with the fall-out from the war in Ukraine and the floods in Pakistan.

Obituary for Steve Offord



Steve was one of the original trustees of the Woolwich Garrison Church Trust, and loved the Church. He organised the rota of trustees to attend at the Sunday morning open days at the Church and at some of our other events. Unfortunately some of us were not as assiduous in these duties as Steve was, but he usually managed an 11th hour substitution if one of us had to cry off.

He and Jackie supported many of the events that were put on at the Garrison Church and in his final months when his health became increasingly frail

we were pleased that on occasions they were able to visit the Church by themselves and spend some time together in a place which meant a lot to both of them. We were not alone in appreciating Steve's qualities. It was a splendid tribute that the Royal Borough of Greenwich appointed him an Alderman in his last year. And the packed house at his funeral was a further tribute to his many qualities.

We will miss Steve, and send our condolences to Jackie and the family.

The Platinum Jubilee Celebrations



We were delighted to host 4 days of events at the Church to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Jeremy James Director of the Tramshed Theatre and a trustee of WGCT, put in the application to the Arts Council for Jubilee funding, and the success of that application meant that we could plan a truly memorable range of events. We are very grateful for Jeremy's input.

Thursday 2nd June saw a wonderful start to our celebrations with Company C putting on a concert paying tribute to the Andrew Sisters and some of the songs which we associate with Vera Lynn.

The performance was in two halves, in one of which the 3 singers were dressed in military uniforms and in the other in which they wore 1940s clothes with great panache. The performers who were all local, were very professional, and clearly enjoyed singing in close harmony. It was a great performance and was followed by fireworks on the other side of Grand Depot Road.





Friday 3rd June was the turn of the Caribbean Social Forum to organise events. Pamela Franklin, masterminded everything with her usual efficiency, including arranging for the BBC to attend the celebrations. Despite large number of Jubilee celebrations on this day, BBC London led its Evening News programmes with a piece about the events at the Garrison Church. Nearly 300 people attended the day's activities as well as 7 volunteers and 6 Caribbean members from the Barracks who attended for an hour before the end. Caribbean food, drink and music were supplied in abundance. All the flags of the Commonwealth countries were on display. Tents were erected, Dancing took place. The sun shone.

Every child was given a gift box and the adults were given a small bottle of sorrell (without the rum!) at the end of the night. The split of those attending was about 60% Caribbean Social Forum Members and 40% local residents. It was probably the manifest enjoyment of all those attending and their diversity, which led the BBC to feature the event.



Saturday was given over to the Nigerian community to organise, and they did so with a stall supplying Nigerian food, and dancing. The Sunday events were organised by us, and although the weather could have been kinder we had a good turnout of about 150 people during the day. We divided the events into 2 parts, the first featuring Nepali food and entertainment and the second focusing on the military and local connections, and English food.



Panas Restaurant provided the Nepali food (Sujan Katuwal, its proprietor is a good friend of the Church). He organised the Nepali singers and dancers. As part of the ethnic mix we also incorporated a very good steel band performance by Garry Clarke.

The second part of the afternoon involved a splendid performance by the RAF Air Cadets Band (Mark Bird and his team who regularly perform at the Church). The cadets having performed with such enthusiasm also demolished what was left of the delicious food provided by Strawberry Nut Nuts.



Perhaps the stand-out feature of the entire weekend was the performance by Reach, a theatre company operating under the Tramshed umbrella for young adults (aged 18-25) with additional needs. They put on a piece based on Abba hits and it triumphantly bore out their stated goal that “every member of the company is creatively challenged in all aspects of performance and encouraged to support one another, achieve goals and put on fab shows”. It was

particularly touching to see how young adults, some with quite serious needs, entered into the spirit of the piece with such joy, each enjoyed their moment in the spotlight and most had friends and family there to support them.

The general consensus was that the entire weekend was a great success, and even though we will not have a Jubilee to celebrate next year we are hopeful that a similar series of activities in the first weekend of June will become a regular part of the Garrison Church’s calendar.



Good Gym

We are fortunate to have been adopted by the local Good Gym Group. You may have heard of the organisation whose website describes its purpose as follows: “We are a community of people who get fit by doing good. We run, walk and cycle to help community organisations by doing practical tasks.”

The team have been to the Church on several occasions to help us clear the brambles along the Woolwich New Road boundary. A more cheerful and hard-working group it would be difficult to find. Often when they would be told that coffee and chocolate biscuits awaited them in the Church they would say that they had not finished and could we just give them another 15 minutes. All their volunteers enjoyed learning about the history of the Church and visiting the crypt. We were delighted that they held a summer party of their own at the church in July, hosted by one of our trustees Peter Waller.

Nest Collective

The Nest Collective is a leading force in contemporary and cross-cultural folk music. They seek out unusual and atmospheric locations for their Campfire Club events. We were delighted to have welcomed them to the Garrison Church on 2 evenings this summer. The combination of music, a fire pit, and a friendly bunch of people watching and chatting as the sun goes down and illuminates brilliantly the gold mosaic around the St George and Dragon is a good use of the Church on a summer evening, the music matched the setting, The Church was left immaculate after the sessions were completed. We look forward to seeing the Nest Collective return to the Church in 2023.



Gurkha Community

In 2022 we were delighted to further engage with the local Gurkha community who have shown such support to the plans for the Commonwealth & Gurkha Garden. We hosted a very well-attended garden party on a glorious summer's day in July where many signed up to become Friends of the Garrison. We look forward to next year's garden party.

Caribbean Social Forum Picnic



The August party organised by the Caribbean Social Forum is always one of the highlights of the calendar and this year was no exception.

It starts with a group of Forum ladies cleaning and polishing our kitchen to the state that it could be used as an Operating Theatre. And then the food and drink begins to arrive; in copious quantities and of great variety, including large amounts of rum. Then the tents are erected; a large Forum tent and the bell tents provided by the Royal Artillery. Then the DJ sets up his equipment. And then the Forum members arrive and the party begins.

And what a party. Grandparents (probably some great-grandparents), parents and lots of children. All having a great time. Interspersed with the DJ and his music we had 2 solo singing acts which starred people who had kept the spirits up of Forum members during the pandemic. They were highly professional and gave great pleasure to a large audience.

We signed up a number of Forum Members as Friends of the Commonwealth & Gurkha Garden. The Director of the Maritime Museum was present. He has become a friend of Pamela and some of her colleagues through a number of Windrush events held at the Museum to which they have contributed.

The Forum provided the Church with some badly needed additional trestle tables, a fridge and some further chairs. And by the following morning everything looked immaculate. We can leave our next spring clean of the kitchen to next summer's Caribbean Social Forum Party!

Commonwealth & Gurkha Garden



This project is now a principal priority for the Woolwich Garrison Church Trust. The design for the garden has been created by Juliet Sargeant, the well-known garden designer and Gardeners' Question Time panellist. She was the first black person to win a Gold Medal at Chelsea and with a Tanzanian father is a particularly good choice to design a Commonwealth & Gurkha garden.

The quality and beauty of her design have been widely admired and the creation of such a garden, of which there is no other example in the UK, has been widely welcomed. It is intended to act as a memorial to those Gurkha soldiers and men and women from the Commonwealth who have given their lives fighting in the 2 World Wars of the 20th century and in other conflicts. But also to reflect the vibrant contributions from the Nepali and Commonwealth communities in Greenwich today. We are fortunate to have as our 2 Patrons HRH The Duke of Gloucester and Lord Bilimoria. Among the many endorsements already received, we mention 2 from each group to represent the Commonwealth, the Gurkha and the local communities.

Seth Ramocan, High Commissioner for Jamaica

"I would like to take the opportunity to offer my best wishes and appreciation of your work to highlight the Commonwealth connection and honour the Service of the personnel of the Commonwealth. Jamaica is proud to have been among the men and women of bravery and commend those who have conceptualised and organised the erection of this historic monument."

George Brandis High Commissioner for Australia

"Over 100,000 Australians have given their lives in wars to preserve our freedoms. They did so standing side by side with those from other Commonwealth nations, including the famous Gurkhas. The Commonwealth & Gurkha Garden is an important initiative to remember those brave men and women. It will provide a fitting place of reflection and remembrance for the local community and visitors alike, and a lasting memorial to the sacrifice which they gave to preserve and defend our freedoms."

His Excellency Gyas Chandra Acharya, Nepali Ambassador to UK

"Nepal and the United Kingdom have been enjoying a friendly and cordial relationship spanning over 2 centuries and the British Gurkhas constitute a strong foundation. It is therefore a matter of great satisfaction that a Commonwealth & Gurkha Garden is being established at the historic Garrison Church; with a typical chautara. This is yet another fine example to the unparalleled service of the Gurkhas with their bravery and huge sacrifice."

Dame Joanna Lumley

"The Commonwealth & Gurkha Garden is going to be a place of quietness and remembrance. A place of rustling leaves and comforting sun and shade. It will be a place to feel pride and to have sorrow washed away. A place to think and be grateful for all those who came from faraway homes to fight for our country and freedom from tyranny. I love it already."

Matthew Pennycook MP, Greenwich & Woolwich

“I wholeheartedly support the the inspired Commonwealth & Gurkha Garden project. If the proposal were realised, it would not only provide a fitting memorial to the service and sacrifice of those from the Commonwealth and Nepal who served alongside British forces in successive conflicts, but a place of peace and reflection for visitors from the local community and beyond. I encourage everyone to get behind it.”

Carolyn Browne, local supporter and benefactor

“Built in 1862, destroyed in 1944, re-born in the last 10 years the Garrison Church is an inspiring example of how London adapts and develops. The next chapter in the Garrison Church’s history is to establish a garden drawing inspiration from across the Commonwealth and Nepal. I cannot think of a better way to reflect London’s multi-cultural heritage or Woolwich’s history.”



The fundraising campaign was launched at a reception on June 28th attended by HRH The Duke of Gloucester, representatives of various Commonwealth High Commissions, the Nepali Ambassador, Dame Joanna Lumley, Juliet Sargeant and many local supporters including the Mayor of Greenwich, Cllr Leo Fletcher. We had a beautiful musical interlude provided by the singer Lynda Nwabudike and keyboard player Melinda Peschut, both of them post-graduate music students at Trinity College of Music in Greenwich. HRH The Duke of Gloucester made a gracious and encouraging speech. It was a sunny afternoon and a great launchpad for our fundraising efforts. Those efforts have now raised £60,000 and that is without any grants from the major grant-giving bodies to whom we are about to submit applications.

We have set up a Friends of the Commonwealth & Gurkha Garden Group which has now attracted nearly 600 members. All Friends will receive a membership card, an invitation to a Friends Summer Party each year and a copy of our Newsletter. A minimum contribution of £10 is sought to become a Friend.

Approximately 50% of the £320,000 estimated cost of the garden is made up of the site engineering and piling works required to create a level base for the garden to be built on. If you have any contacts in the development /construction business who might be able to help with this work, it would be enormously appreciated. Put them in touch with our Chairman: tim@ttbarnes.com.



We hope that many who read this Newsletter will decide to support the Garden. We have set up a garden account with Handelsbank. Any contributions to the garden can be made by direct bank transfer to:

Commonwealth & Gurkha Garden Woolwich

Account number: 17073740

Sort code: 40-51-62

Or alternatively you can send a cheque made payable to the Garden Account to our Chairman Tim Barnes at The White House, Crooms Hill, London SE10 8HH.

We hope that by the time of our next Newsletter we may have something positive to report in terms of the start of the construction of the garden.

Remembrance Day



At last year's Remembrance Day Service we honoured two names from the Garrison Church memorials; one from the VC Memorial and one from the Royal Borough of Greenwich plaque. We thought that it would be appropriate to repeat the process in this Newsletter.

VC Memorial

Brigadier Jock Campbell

Jock Campbell was awarded the DSO and Bar and the MC, in addition to his VC. He was captain of the British Equestrian Team in the Berlin Olympics of 1936.

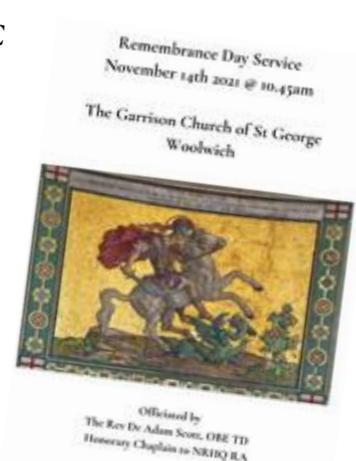
Having been awarded his MC in the First World War Jock Campbell was 45 years old when the Second World War broke out. He commanded the Artillery Company of 7th Armoured Division's Support Group under Brigadier Gott and was awarded the DSO and later a Bar for his brilliant command in decisive desert battles.



In September 1941 Jock Campbell was promoted to command 7th Armoured Division. In November while occupying the airfield at Sid Rezegh, south of Tobruk they were attacked by 2 armoured divisions of the Afrika Korps. The British tanks suffered heavy losses but prevented the Germans taking the airfield. Campbell's small force, holding important ground was repeatedly attacked and wherever the fighting was hardest he was to be seen either on foot in his open car or astride a tank.

Alan Moorhead's tribute is in these words, "He led his tanks into action riding in an open armoured car, and as he stood there, hanging on to its windscreen, a huge well-built man with the (English) officer's stiff good looks, he shouted 'There they come, let them have it.' When the car began to fall behind, he leapt on to the side of a tank as it went forward and directed the battle from there. They say that Campbell won the VC a dozen times that day. The men loved this Elizabethan figure. He was the reality of all the private yarns and tales of high adventure, and in the extremes of fear and courage of the battle, he had only courage. He went laughing into the fighting."

Campbell received a letter of congratulation from General von Ravnstein Commander of the 21st Panzer Division expressing his greatest admiration for Campbell's skill in "these hot days".





Greenwich Memorial

Lee Rigby

Lee was born in Greater Manchester in 1987 and became a drummer and machine-gunner in the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. After service in Afghanistan, Cyprus and Germany he became a recruiter and assisted with duties at The Tower of London.

A keen supporter of Help the Heroes Charity. Lee was wearing uniform and a hoodie supporting that Charity when on afternoon of 22nd May 2013 he was attacked while walking down Wellington Street (only a very short distance from the Garrison Church). Two jihadi terrorists ran him down in a car and then attacked him with knives and a cleaver. They were subsequently convicted of his murder and sentenced to life imprisonment with a full life term imposed by the Judge (meaning that they will never be released).

The Prime Minister (then David Cameron) and the Mayor of London (then Boris Johnson) attended his funeral at Bury Parish Church.

Among the many tributes were the following;

His Commanding Officer: "Lee was a natural choice to be an Army recruiter who had inspired many young people to join the Army. He was a dedicated and professional soldier proud to wear the hackle and cap badge of the Regiment. He was a real character within the 2nd Battalion and at the heart of our corps of drums, taking part in many ceremonial events. But he was also an accomplished machine-gunner who had served with distinction in Afghanistan, Germany and Cyprus."

His step-father: "What can we say about Lee, our hero. We are so proud of him. Lee's dream growing up was always to join the Army, which he succeeded in doing. He was dedicated and loved his job. He adored and cared a lot for his family and his young son Jack."

On the anniversary of his death there is always a large ride past from the biking community (the largest Chapter is made up of veterans). They stop and come into the Church for a few prayers and to be at the place where Lee Rigby is commemorated."



Armed Forces Covenant Fund

Without the assistance of a generous grant from The Armed Forces Covenant Fund we would not have been able to organise many of the activities at the Garrison Church during the year. The Trust is extremely grateful for this generous grant which is provided to bring the military family based at Woolwich and the local community closer together.

Part of the grant goes toward the costs of the Administrator to the Trust, without whose tireless hard work many of the events would either not have occurred at all or would not have been the success that they were. But part goes towards the organising of events and we should mention some of these.

Each month with the help of the grant we host an evening free film show, which is becoming increasingly popular. We run a bar (having now acquired a Premises Licence) and people often bring a picnic to eat as the sun goes down and before the film starts. We schedule a film each year to reflect a military theme, and this year decided on War Horse, a very popular choice.



Every Wednesday afternoon during the summer there is a Connect session at the Church. This is designed to bring parents and young children to the Church in a pleasant and casual setting, whether they are Army or local mums. We invested in some games, and books for the children and refreshments (including a glass of wine for particularly frazzled parents!) are provided free of charge.



We were also very pleased to host the Protein Dance processions over a weekend in September as part of the Greenwich & Docklands International Festival. The procession ran from Woolwich Common to the Town Centre. the dance piece was performed to a large appreciative audience. We look forward to the return of GDIF in 2023.

The Platinum Jubilee weekend which was partially supported by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund (although with a generous contribution from the Arts Council) showcased the Church at its best over 4 days. But we also held Comedy Nights organised by the Tramshed Theatre and our annual Open-Air Shakespeare. This year the performance was a highly imaginative Twelfth Night, visualising Illyria as some Love Island destination! It was a perfect summer evening, and there was a good audience.



But the military connections of the Church were not forgotten, and again the support of the Fund enabled events to be put on on quite an ambitious scale. The St George's Day Service in April for Cadets from the 3 Services together with youth groups from the Scouts and St Johns Ambulance, was attended by the Mayor of Greenwich and the French Military Attache. The splendid band of the local air cadets; 56th (Woolwich) Squadron performed.

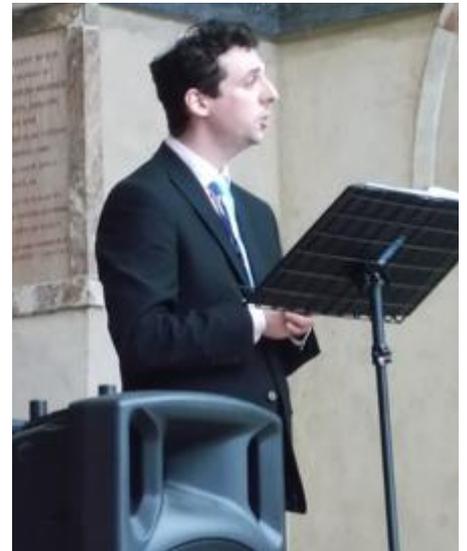
The Remembrance Day Service in November was well attended by many members of the Services based in Woolwich as well as by local people. Wreaths were laid on behalf of Woolwich Station by its CO, our MP, London Historic Buildings Trust, the Mayor of Greenwich, the Judges at Woolwich Crown Court, the Princess of Wales Regiment and the Army cadets, as well as the Woolwich Garrison Church Trust.

We remember in the service the life and example of one of the names on the VC Memorial, and one on the "local" memorial to men from Greenwich who have either died on military service or as a result of terrorist activity within the Borough, since the end of World War II. In this latter category we remembered last year the life and death of Jake Alderton who died in Afghanistan in 2007. We managed to contact members of his family who attended the Service and were moved when the tributes to Jake from his CO, his friends and his family were read out.

We also hold an Interfaith Service each year for all the major religions in south-east London. We are fortunate to have among our trustees David Rome who is a Cantor and led some of the singing for the Jewish faith.

Then at the end of the summer the Chaplain at Woolwich with the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment organised a moving Service of Remembrance to commemorate the life of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

At all these events we provide free refreshments.



Finally we should mention some of the things that we have been able to provide with the help of the AFCF grant. At all our Services we provide an Order of Service professionally printed. We have new lighting. And a good sound system.

The Garrison Church is increasingly well known in the community and we are anxious to build on this year's successes with an even more ambitious programme of events in 2023.

*For further information on how to make use of the Garrison, please contact
woolwichcommunityproject@gmail.com or 07463 996 285*