

## ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH

### GREENWICH - OLD ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE

The modern Borough of Greenwich to the east of the city only came into existence in 1965 when the old boundaries were extended to include most of the neighbouring borough of Woolwich, with the 'Royal' designation being granted in 2012 to mark the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. The area is world famous as the traditional location of the Prime Meridian on which all Coordinated Universal Time is based – hence the designation of Greenwich Mean Time. The Royal Observatory was started in 1675 and completed the following year to the design of Sir Christopher Wren for the modest cost of £520.



**[The Old Royal Naval College showing the split in the buildings so as to give an uninterrupted view from Queen's House]**

In 1011-1014 the Danish fleet lay off Greenwich while the invaders camped to the east of the present borough at a location they referred to as being a 'green place on the bay' (Grenewic in Anglo-Saxon). The Domesday Book records that there was a manor here held by Bishop Odo of Bayeux, and by 1300 there was certainly a royal palace, or hunting lodge, since King Edward I is known to have made offerings at the chapel of the Virgin Mary. In 1417 the Duke of Gloucester enclosed 190 acres of land (now Greenwich Park) and built a palace called Bella Court (also known as Greenwich Palace) in 1426. This was the birthplace of many in the House of Tudor, including King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I. Appropriately enough in 1605 King James II gave the park and palace to his wife, Anne of Denmark, who set about building Queen's House which was completed in 1635. At this time Greenwich became a fashionable resort with many grand houses being built.

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Following the Civil War Greenwich was not sold off, as were most of the Crown lands, but designated as a home for the Protector, Oliver Cromwell. Greenwich Palace fell into disrepair, but after the Restoration King Charles II planned the construction of a new palace to the designs of John Webb (a pupil of Inigo Jones), but ran out of money in 1669 with just one wing, the King Charles Building, completed. It was not until 1692 that Queen Mary decided that the project should be completed in order to provide a hospital for disabled seamen, corresponding to the recently finished Chelsea Hospital. The buildings were designed by Sir Christopher Wren (who gave his time free of charge) along with his assistant Nicholas Hawksmoor.



**[Part of the undercroft of the King William Building under the Painted Hall where M is seen with the Union flag covered coffins of MI6 personnel in *Skyfall*]**

Wren demolished all that remained of the original palace save for the undercroft that is now the basement of the Queen Anne Building, which was completed in 1728. However, there was controversy as Wren's plans would have obscured the view from Queen's House, and so Queen Mary ordered that the new buildings should be split in two so that the house should remain visible from the waterfront. Dr. Samuel Johnson, who lived

in Greenwich when he first came to London, remarked “that the parts were too much detached to make one great whole”.

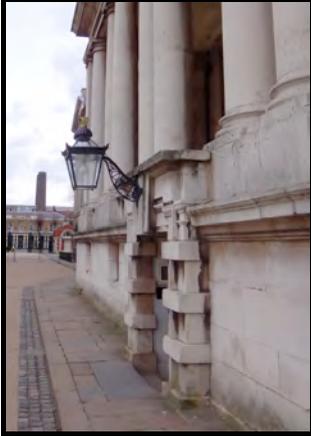
Vanburgh succeeded Wren and completed the King William Building in 1705, but did not finish the façade of the west front for another twenty-one years. He also built two houses for himself in the area, Vanburgh Castle (in the style of a fortress and said to be England’s first folly) and Ranger’s House. In 1708 James Thornhill (who also painted the interior of the dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral) began work on the Painted Hall. In the central section of the ceiling of the lower hall he depicted William and Mary dispensing Peace and Liberty to a grateful Europe, and in the upper hall we see Queen Anne and her husband acknowledging the salutation of Victory. For nineteen years’ work, Thornhill, who was knighted in 1720, received £3 per square yard for the ceiling and just £1 per square yard for the walls. In January 1806 Lord Nelson’s body lay in state here for three days, and more than thirty thousand people came to pay their respects.

The buildings were really too grand for a hospital, as Dr Johnson recognised. In 1771 a Captain Baillie complained that “Columns, colonnades and friezes ill accord with bully beef and sour beer mixed with water.” The administrators of the hospital were accused of cruelty and corruption, and the number of pensioners declined so sharply that in 1869 the buildings were vacated.

Four years later the Royal Naval College moved here from Portsmouth, remaining at Greenwich until the site was taken over by the University of Greenwich in 1996. The following year the entire complex, including the Queen’s House, the Royal Observatory and Greenwich Park, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site, and in 2001 Trinity College of Music moved into the King Charles Court. There are other reminders of Britain’s maritime past, for just behind the Old Royal Naval College is the National Maritime Museum, comprising two-and-a-half million items housed in sixteen galleries and covering every aspect of Britain’s seafaring heritage, while close by in King William Walk lies the most famous tea clipper, the Cutty Sark, which was built in 1869 and was still carrying cargoes when she was bought and restored in 1922.

It will come as no surprise that Greenwich has been seen in around fifty film and television productions, the most notable of which are: *Charge of the Light Brigade* (1968), *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1969), *Murder by Decree* (1979), *The Bounty* (1984), *Patriot Games* (1992), *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001), *The Mummy Returns* (2001), *What a Girl Wants* (2003), *The Madness of King George* (1994), *Vanity Fair* (2004), *Amazing Grace*

(2006), *The Golden Compass* (2007), *The Oxford Murders* (2008), *Dorian Gray* (2009), *Sherlock Holmes* (2009), *The King's Speech* (2010), *Gulliver's Travels* (2010), *The Wolfman* (2010), *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* (2011), *The Iron Lady* (2011), *Les Miserables* (2012) and *Thor: The Dark World* (2013).



**[The same camera angle as used in *Octopussy* with the repository door just visible on the left]**

Two James Bond films have used the Old Royal Naval College in their productions, albeit only for a few seconds in each case. In *Octopussy* a side door in the Queen Mary Building became the entrance to the Art Repository in St. Petersburg, through which General Orlov enters to discover that the reproduction Fabergé egg has been stolen in transit. The building, complete with Russian guards, is convincing apart from the landmark chimneys of Greenwich power station in the background.

Most recently in *Skyfall* it is in the undercroft of the same building that M is seen inspecting the coffins of personnel following the attack on the MI6 offices at Vauxhall Cross. The original scene was longer but was trimmed in the final edit.

Entry to the Chapel, the Painted Hall and the Visitor Centre is free, though the Painted Hall and the Chapel may be closed at short notice for maintenance or for private functions, so do check the official website ([www.ornc.org](http://www.ornc.org)).



## **NORTH GREENWICH - THE O2**

The O2, formerly the Millennium Dome, has a rather chequered history. The structure is essentially a large white canopy that encloses about 20 acres of land on the site of a former gasworks at the tip of the Greenwich peninsula, on the south side of the River Thames. The canopy is suspended from twelve hundred-metre-high steel masts by forty-five miles of steel cable, and is reckoned to be the largest domed structure in the world, being

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three hundred and sixty-five metres in diameter and fifty-two metres high at the centre. It is constructed of PTFE, a durable and weather-resistant glass fibre fabric, but with an estimated lifespan of only twenty-five years. The building was conceived in 1994 as a flagship project for the Millennium, in the tradition of the Great Exhibition and the Festival of Britain. Having failed to attract enough private investment, construction finally began in 1997, funded by the National Lottery. The architect was Richard Rogers.



**The O2 with no sign of James Bond clinging to the canopy as he did in *The World Is Not Enough***

The Millennium Dome opened on New Year's Eve 1999, with a New Millennium Spectacular attended by members of the Royal Family. There followed the year-long Millennium Experience, featuring fourteen zones (Body, Mind, Faith, Work, Play and so on) along with other attractions. Despite criticisms that it was lacking in content, more than six million people visited the Millennium Experience, but that was not enough to produce an operating profit. National Audit Office figures showed that the total cost at the liquidation of the New Millennium Experience Company in 2002 was £789 million, of which less than £200 million was covered by ticket sales.

For several years the site remained closed, except for some special one-off uses, such as at Christmas 2004, when it became a shelter for the homeless. On the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2005, the Millennium Dome officially became The O2, in a £6 million deal with the telecommunications company of that name. At the same time, the new owners, the Anschutz Entertainment Group, began a redevelopment of the site, which, over the next few years, saw the 150-acre site transformed. Within the dome they installed a 23,000-seat indoor

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arena, a 2,200-seat music club, a cinema, exhibition space, bars and restaurants, while the waterfront area gained office accommodation, ten thousand new homes, a school, a hotel, and new transport links. The new complex, costing £600 million, was opened to the public on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2007. The latest spectacular addition is the Emirates Air Line cable car that crosses the Thames at a height of ninety metres (nearly three hundred feet). It began operating in June 2012.

It was in 1999 that James Bond was seen clinging to the O2 canopy at the end of the pre-title chase sequence of *The World Is Not Enough*. A detailed description of the boat chase locations is given on pages 137-147.

