

= Assassination of Spencer Perceval =

Spencer Perceval , the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland , was shot and killed in the lobby of the House of Commons in London , at about 5 : 15 pm on Monday 11 May 1812 . His assailant was John Bellingham , a Liverpool merchant with a grievance against the government . Bellingham was detained and , four days after the murder , was tried , convicted and sentenced to death . He was hanged at Newgate Prison on 18 May .

Perceval had led the Tory government since 1809 , during a critical phase of the Napoleonic Wars . His determination to prosecute the war using the harshest of measures caused widespread poverty and unrest on the home front ; thus the news of his death was a cause of rejoicing in the worst affected parts of the country . Despite initial fears that the assassination might be linked to a general uprising , it transpired that Bellingham had acted alone , protesting against the government 's failure to compensate him for his treatment a few years previously , when he had been imprisoned in Russia for a trading debt . Bellingham 's lack of remorse , and apparent certainty that his action was justified , raised questions about his sanity , but at his trial he was judged to be legally responsible for his actions .

After Perceval 's death , Parliament made generous provision to his widow and children , and approved the erection of monuments . Thereafter his ministry was soon forgotten , his policies reversed , and he is generally better known for the manner of his death than for any of his achievements . Later historians have characterised Bellingham 's hasty trial and execution as contrary to the principles of justice . The possibility that he was acting within a conspiracy , on behalf of a consortium of Liverpool traders hostile to Perceval 's economic policies , is the subject of a 2012 study .

= = Background = =

= = = Biographical details = = =

Spencer Perceval was born on 1 November 1762 , the second son from the second marriage of John Perceval , 2nd Earl of Egmont . He attended Harrow School and , in 1780 , entered Trinity College , Cambridge , where he was a noted scholar and prizewinner . A deeply religious boy , at Cambridge he became closely aligned with evangelicalism , to which he remained faithful all his life . Under the rule of primogeniture , Perceval had no realistic prospect of a family inheritance , and needed to earn his living ; on leaving Cambridge in 1783 , he entered Lincoln 's Inn to train as a lawyer . After being called to the bar in 1786 , Perceval joined the Midland Circuit , where his family connections helped him to acquire a lucrative practice . In 1790 he married Jane Wilson , the couple having eloped on her 21st birthday . The marriage proved happy and prolific ; twelve children ( six sons and six daughters ) were born over the following 14 years .

Perceval 's politics were highly conservative , and he acquired a reputation for his attacks on radicalism . As a junior prosecuting counsel in the trials of Thomas Paine and John Horne Tooke , he was noticed by senior politicians in the ruling Pitt ministry . In 1796 , having refused the post of Chief Secretary for Ireland , Perceval was elected to parliament as the Tory member for Northampton , and won acclaim in 1798 with a speech defending Pitt 's government against attacks by the radicals Charles James Fox and Francis Burdett . He was generally seen as a rising star in his party ; his short stature and slight build earned him the nickname " Little P " .

After William Pitt 's resignation in 1801 , Perceval served as Solicitor General , and then as Attorney General , in the Addington ministry of 1801 ? 04 , continuing in the latter office through Pitt 's second government , 1804 ? 06 . Perceval 's deep evangelical convictions led him to his unwavering opposition to the Catholic Church and to Catholic emancipation , and his equally fervent support for the abolition of the slave trade , when he worked with fellow evangelicals such as William Wilberforce to secure the passage of the Slave Trade Act 1807 .

When Pitt died in 1806 his government was succeeded by the cross @-@ party " Ministry of All the

Talents " , under Lord Grenville . Perceval remained in opposition during this short @-@ lived ministry , but when the Duke of Portland formed a new Tory administration in March 1807 , Perceval took office as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons . Portland was elderly and ailing , and on his resignation in October 1809 , Perceval succeeded him as First Lord of the Treasury ? the formal title by which prime ministers were then known ? after a wounding internecine leadership struggle . In addition to his duties as head of the government he retained the Chancellorship , largely because he could find no minister of appropriate stature who would accept the office .

= = = Troubled times = = =

Perceval 's government was weakened by the refusals to serve of former ministers such as George Canning and William Huskisson . It faced massive problems at a time of considerable industrial unrest and at a low point in the war against Napoleon . The unsuccessful Walcheren Campaign in the Netherlands was unravelling , and the army of Sir Arthur Wellesley , the future Duke of Wellington , was pinned down in Portugal . At the outset of his ministry Perceval enjoyed the strong support of King George III , but in October 1810 the king lapsed into insanity and was permanently incapacitated . Perceval 's relationship with the Prince of Wales , who became Prince Regent , was initially far less cordial , but in the following months he and Perceval established a reasonable affinity , perhaps motivated in part by the prince 's fear that the king might recover and find his favourite statesman deposed .

When the final British forces withdrew from Walcheren in February 1810 , Wellington 's force in Portugal was Britain 's only military presence on the continent of Europe . Perceval insisted that it stayed there , against the advice of most of his ministers and at great cost to the British exchequer . Ultimately this decision was vindicated , but for the time being his main weapon against Napoleon was the Orders in Council of 1807 , inherited from the previous ministry . These had been issued as a tit @-@ for @-@ tat response to Napoleon 's Continental System , a measure designed to destroy Britain 's overseas trade . The Orders permitted the Royal Navy to detain any ship thought to be carrying goods to France or its continental allies . With both warring powers employing similar strategies , world trade shrank , leading to widespread hardship and dissatisfaction in key British industries , particularly textiles and cotton . There were frequent calls for modification or repeal of the Orders , which damaged relations with the United States to the point that , by early 1812 , the two nations were on the brink of war .

At home , Perceval upheld his earlier reputation as scourge of radicals , imprisoning Burdett and William Cobbett , the latter of whom continued to attack the government from his prison cell . Perceval was also faced with the anti @-@ machine protests known as " Luddism " , to which he reacted by introducing a bill making machine @-@ breaking a capital offence ; in the House of Lords the youthful Lord Byron called the legislation " barbarous " . Despite these difficulties Perceval gradually established his authority , so that in 1811 Lord Liverpool , the war minister , observed that the Prime Minister 's authority in the House now equalled that of Pitt . Perceval 's use of sinecures and other patronage to secure loyalties meant that by May 1812 , despite much public protest against his harsh policies , his political position had become unassailable . According to the humorist Sydney Smith , Perceval combined " the head of a country parson with the tongue of an Old Bailey lawyer " .

Early in 1812 agitation for repeal of the Orders in Council increased . After riots in Manchester in April , Perceval consented to a House of Commons enquiry into the operation of the Orders ; hearings began in May . Perceval was expected to attend the session on 11 May 1812 ; among the crowd in the lobby awaiting his arrival was a Liverpool merchant , John Bellingham .

= = John Bellingham = =

= = = Early life = = =

Bellingham was born in about 1770 , in the county of Huntingdonshire . His father , also named John , was a land agent and miniaturist painter ; his mother Elizabeth was from a well @-@ to @-@ do Huntingdonshire family . In 1779 John senior became mentally ill , and , after confinement in an asylum , died in 1780 or 1781 . The family were then provided for by William Daw , Elizabeth 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , a prosperous lawyer who arranged Bellingham 's appointment as an officer cadet on board the East India Company 's ship Hartwell . En route to India the ship was wrecked ; Bellingham survived and returned home . Daw then helped him to set up in business as a tin plate manufacturer in London , but after a few years the business failed , and Bellingham was made bankrupt in 1794 . He appears to have escaped debtors ' prison , perhaps through the further intervention of Daw . Chastened by this experience , he decided to settle down , and obtained a post as a book @-@ keeper with a firm engaged in trade with Russia . He worked hard , and was sufficiently regarded by his employers to be appointed in 1800 as the firm 's resident representative in Archangel , Russia . On his return home , Bellingham set up his own trading business , and moved to Liverpool . In 1803 he married Mary Neville from Dublin .

= = = In Russia = = =

In 1804 Bellingham returned to Archangel to supervise a major commercial venture , accompanied by Mary and their infant son . His business completed , in November he prepared to return home , but was detained on account of a supposed unpaid debt . This arose from losses incurred by a business associate for which Bellingham was deemed liable . He denied any responsibility for the debt ; his detention , he thought , was an act of revenge by powerful Russian merchants who ? erroneously ? thought that he had frustrated an insurance claim relating to a lost ship . Two arbitrators appointed by the governor of Archangel determined that he was responsible for a sum of 2 @,@ 000 roubles ( about £ 200 ) , a fraction of the original amount claimed . Bellingham rejected this judgement .

With the issue still unresolved , Bellingham obtained passes for him and his family to travel to the Russian capital , St Petersburg . In February 1805 , as they prepared to set out , Bellingham 's pass was revoked ; Mary and the child were permitted to proceed , but he was arrested and imprisoned in Archangel . When he sought help from Lord Granville Leveson @-@ Gower , the British ambassador in St Petersburg , the matter was dealt with by the British consul , Sir Stephen Shairp , who informed Bellingham that as the dispute involved a civil debt , he could not interfere . Bellingham remained in custody in Archangel until November 1805 , when a new city governor ordered his release and allowed him to join Mary in St Petersburg . Here , instead of arranging his family 's swift return to England , Bellingham laid charges against the Archangel authorities for false imprisonment , and demanded compensation . In doing so he outraged the Russian authorities , who in June 1806 ordered his imprisonment . According to his later account , he was " often marched publicly through the city with gangs of felons and criminals of the worse description [ to the ] heart @-@ rending humiliation of himself " .

Mary had meanwhile returned to England with her son ( she was pregnant with her second child ) , eventually settling in Liverpool where she set up a millinery business with a friend , Mary Stevens . For the next three years Bellingham made constant demands for release and compensation , seeking help from Shairp , Leveson @-@ Gower , and the latter 's successor as ambassador , Lord Douglas . None were prepared to intercede on his behalf : " Thus " , he later wrote when petitioning for redress , " without having offended any law , either civil or criminal , and without having injured any individual ... was your Petitioner bandied from one prison to another " . Bellingham 's position worsened in 1807 , when Russia signed the Treaty of Tilsit and aligned itself with Napoleon . Two further years passed before , after a direct petition to Tsar Alexander , he was released and ordered to leave Russia . He arrived in England , uncompensated , in December 1809 , determined to secure justice .

= = = Seeking redress = = =

On his return to England Bellingham spent six months in London , seeking compensation for the imprisonment and financial losses he had suffered in Russia . He considered the British authorities were responsible , through their neglect of his repeated requests for help . Successively he petitioned the Foreign Office , the Treasury , the Privy Council , and Perceval himself ; in each case his claims were politely rejected . Defeated and exhausted , in May 1811 Bellingham accepted his wife 's ultimatum to abandon his campaign or otherwise lose her and his family . He joined her in Liverpool to begin life afresh .

During the following 18 months , Bellingham worked to rebuild his commercial career , with modest success . Mary continued to work as a milliner . The fact that he remained uncompensated continued to rankle . In December 1811 he returned to London , ostensibly to conduct business there , but in reality to resume his campaign for redress . He petitioned the Prince Regent , before resuming his efforts with the Privy Council , the Home Office and the Treasury , only to receive the same polite refusals as before . He then sent a copy of his petition to every member of parliament , again to no avail . On 23 March 1812 he wrote to the magistrates at Bow Street Magistrates ' Court , arguing that the government had " completely endeavoured to close the door of justice " , and asking the court to intervene . He received a perfunctory reply . After consulting his own MP , Isaac Gascoyne , Bellingham made a final attempt to present his case to the government . On 18 April he met with a Treasury official , Mr Hill , to whom he said that if he could get no satisfaction , he would take justice into his own hands . Hill , not perceiving these words as a threat , told him he should take whatever action he deemed proper . On 20 April , Bellingham purchased two .50 calibre ( 12 @. @ 7 mm ) pistols from a gunsmith of 58 Skinner Street . He also had a tailor sew an inside pocket to his coat .

= = Assassination = =

= = = House of Commons , 11 May 1812 = = =

Bellingham 's presence in the House of Commons lobby on Monday 11 May , caused no particular suspicion ; he had made several recent visits , sometimes asking journalists to confirm specific ministers ' identities . Bellingham 's activities earlier that day did not overtly indicate a man preparing desperate measures . He had spent the morning writing letters and visiting his wife 's business partner , Mary Stevens , who was in London at the time . In the afternoon he had accompanied his landlady and her son on a visit to the European Museum , in the St James 's district of London . From there he made his way alone to the parliament buildings in Westminster , arriving in the lobby shortly before five o 'clock .

In the House , as the session began at 4 @. @ 30 pm , the Whig MP Henry Brougham , a leading opponent of the Orders , drew attention to the Prime Minister 's absence and remarked that he ought to be there . A messenger was sent to fetch Perceval from Downing Street , but met him in Parliament Street ( Perceval having decided to walk and dispense with his usual carriage ) on his way to the House , where he arrived at about 5 @. @ 15 . As Perceval entered the lobby , he was confronted by Bellingham who , drawing a pistol , shot the Prime Minister in the chest . Perceval staggered forward a few steps and exclaimed " I am murdered ! " before falling face down at the feet of William Smith , the MP for Norwich . ( It was also variously reported Perceval had said " Murder " or " Oh my God " . ) Smith only realised that the victim was Perceval when he turned the body face upwards . By the time he had been carried into an adjoining room and propped up on a table with his feet on two chairs , he was senseless , although there was still a faint pulse . When a surgeon arrived a few minutes later , the pulse had stopped , and Perceval was declared dead .

In the pandemonium that followed , Bellingham sat quietly on a bench as Perceval was carried into the Speaker 's quarters . In the lobby , such was the confusion that , according to a witness , had Bellingham " walked quietly out into the street , he would have escaped , and the committer of the murder would never have been known " . As it was , an official who had seen the shooting identified

Bellingham , who was seized , disarmed , manhandled and searched . He remained calm , submitting to his captors without a struggle . When asked to explain his actions , he replied that he was rectifying a denial of justice on the part of the government .

The Speaker ordered that Bellingham be transferred to the Serjeant @-@ at @-@ Arms 's quarters , where MPs who were also magistrates would conduct a committal hearing under the chairmanship of Harvey Christian Combe . The makeshift court heard evidence from eyewitnesses to the crime , and sent messengers to search Bellingham 's lodgings . The prisoner kept his composure throughout ; although warned against self @-@ incrimination , he insisted on explaining himself : " I have been ill @-@ treated ... I have sought redress in vain . I am a most unfortunate man and feel here " ? placing hand on heart ? " sufficient justification for what I have done . " He had , he said , exhausted all proper avenues , and had made it clear to the authorities that he proposed to take independent action . He had been told to do his worst : " I have obeyed them . I have done my worst , and I rejoice in the deed . " At around eight o 'clock , Bellingham was formally charged with Perceval 's murder , and was committed to Newgate Prison to await trial .

= = = Reaction = = =

Reports of the assassination spread quickly ; in his history of the times , Arthur Bryant records the crude delight with which the news was received by hungry workers who had received nothing but woe from Perceval 's government . In his prison cell , Cobbett understood their feelings ; the shooting had " ridded them of one whom they looked upon as the leader among those whom they thought totally bent on the destruction of their liberties " . The scenes outside the Palace of Westminster as Bellingham was taken out for transfer to Newgate were consistent with this mood ; Samuel Romilly , the law reformer and MP for Wareham , heard from the assembled crowd " the most savage expressions of joy and exultation ... accompanied with regret that others , and particularly the attorney general , had not shared the same fate " . The throng surged around the hackney coach carrying Bellingham ; many tried to shake his hand , others mounted the coach @-@ box and had to be beaten off with whips . He was hustled back into the building , and kept there until the disorder had died down sufficiently for him to be moved , with a full military escort .

Among the governing classes there were initial fears that the assassination might be part of a general insurrection , or might spark one . The authorities took precautions ; the Foot Guards and mounted troops were deployed , as was the City militia , while local watches were reinforced . In contrast to the public 's evident approval of Bellingham 's actions , the mood among Perceval 's friends and colleagues was sombre and sorrowful . When parliament met the next day , George Canning spoke of " a man ... of whom it might with particular truth be said that , whatever was the strength of political hostility , he had never before that last calamity provoked a single enemy " . After further tributes from government and opposition members , the House moved a grant of £ 50 @, @ 000 and an annuity of £ 2 @, @ 000 to Perceval 's widow , which provision , slightly amended , was approved in June .

The regard in which Perceval was held by his peers was made evident in an anonymous 1812 poem , " Universal Sympathy , or , The Martyr 'd Statesman " :

= = Proceedings = =

= = = Preliminaries = = =

An inquest into Perceval 's death was held on 12 May , at the Rose and Crown public house in Downing Street . Among those who gave evidence were Gascoyne , Smith , and Joseph Hume , a doctor and Radical MP . He had helped to detain Bellingham , and now testified that from his controlled behaviour after the shooting , Bellingham appeared " perfectly sane " . The coroner duly registered the cause of death as " wilful murder by John Bellingham " . Armed with this verdict the Attorney General , Sir Vicary Gibbs , requested the Lord Chief Justice to arrange the earliest

possible trial date .

In Newgate prison , Bellingham was questioned by magistrates . His calm demeanour and poise led them , unlike Hume , to doubt his sanity , although his keepers had observed no signs of unbalanced behaviour . James Harmer , Bellingham 's solicitor , knew that insanity would provide the only conceivable defence for his client , and despatched agents to Liverpool to make enquiries there . While awaiting their reports he learned from an informant that Bellingham 's father had died insane ; he also heard evidence of Bellingham 's supposed derangement from Ann Billett , the prisoner 's cousin , who had known him from childhood . On 14 May a grand jury met in the Sessions House , Clerkenwell , and after hearing evidence from the eyewitnesses , found " a true Bill against John Bellingham for the murder of Spencer Perceval " . The trial was arranged to take place the next day , Friday 15 May 1812 , at the Old Bailey .

When Bellingham received news of his forthcoming trial he asked Harmer to arrange for him to be represented in court by Brougham and Peter Alley , the latter an Irish lawyer with a reputation for flamboyance . Confident of his acquittal , Bellingham refused to discuss the case further with Harmer , and spent the afternoon and evening making notes . After drinking a glass of porter , he went to bed and slept soundly .

= = = Trial = = =

The trial began at the Old Bailey on Friday 15 May 1812 , under the presiding judge Sir James Mansfield , Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas . The prosecuting team was led by the Attorney General , Gibbs , whose assistants included William Garrow , himself a future Attorney General . Brougham having declined , Bellingham was represented by Alley , assisted by Henry Revell Reynolds . The law at that time limited the role of defending counsel in capital cases ; they could advise on points of law , and could examine and cross @-@ examine witnesses , but otherwise Bellingham would have to present his own defence .

After Bellingham had entered a not guilty plea , Alley asked for a postponement to allow him time to locate witnesses who could attest to the prisoner 's insanity . This was opposed by Gibbs as a mere ploy to delay justice ; Mansfield concurred , and the trial proceeded . Gibbs then summarised the prisoner 's business activities before meeting misfortune in Russia ? " whether through his own misconduct or by the justice or injustice of that country , I know not " . He recounted Bellingham 's unsuccessful efforts to obtain redress , and the consequent growth of a desire for revenge .

Having described the shooting , Gibbs dismissed the possibility of insanity , maintaining that Bellingham was , at the time of the deed , fully in control of his actions . Numerous eyewitnesses testified to what they had seen in the Commons lobby . The court also heard from a tailor who , shortly before the attack had , on Bellingham 's instructions , modified the latter 's coat by adding a special inside pocket , in which Bellingham had concealed his pistols .

When Bellingham rose , he thanked the attorney general for rejecting the " insanity " strategy : " I think it is far more fortunate that such a plea ... should have been unfounded , than it should have existed in fact " . He began his defence by asserting that " all the miseries which it is possible for human nature to endure " had fallen on him . He then read the petition that he had sent to the Prince Regent , and recalled his fruitless dealings with various government agencies . In his view the principal blame lay not with " that truly amiable and highly lamented individual , Mr Perceval " , but with Leveson @-@ Gower , the ambassador in St Petersburg who he felt had originally denied him justice , and who he said deserved the shot rather than the eventual victim .

Bellingham 's main witnesses were Ann Billett and her friend , Mary Clarke , both of whom testified to his history of derangement , and Catherine Figgins , a servant in Bellingham 's lodgings . She had found him recently confused , but otherwise an honest and admirable lodger . As she stood down , Alley informed the court that two more witnesses had arrived from Liverpool . However , when they saw Bellingham , they realised that he was not the man to whose derangement they had come to attest , and withdrew . Mansfield then began his summing up , during the course of which he clarified the law : " The single question is whether at the time this act was committed , he possessed a sufficient degree of understanding to distinguish good from evil , right from wrong " . The judge

advised the jury before they retired that the evidence showed Bellingham to be " in every respect a full and competent judge of all his actions " .

= = = Verdict and sentence = = =

The jury retired , and within 15 minutes returned with a guilty verdict . Bellingham appeared surprised but , from Thomas Hodgson 's contemporary trial account , was calm , " with [ out ] any demonstrations of that concern which the awfulness of his situation was calculate to produce " . Asked by the court clerk if he had anything to say , he remained silent .

The clerk then read the sentence , Hodgson records , " in a most solemn and affecting manner , which bathed many of the auditors in tears " . First , he damned the crime , " as odious and abominable in the eyes of God as it is hateful and abhorrent to the feelings of man " . He reminded the prisoner of the short time , " a very short time " , that remained for him to seek for mercy in another world , and then pronounced the sentence of death itself : " You shall be hanged by the neck until you be dead , your body to be dissected and anatomized " . The entire trial had lasted less than eight hours .

= = = Execution = = =

Bellingham 's execution was fixed for the morning of Monday 18 May . The day before , he was visited by the Revd Daniel Wilson , curate at St John 's Chapel , Bedford Row , a future Bishop of Calcutta , who hoped that Bellingham would show true repentance for his act . The clergyman was disappointed , concluding that " a more dreadful instance of depravity and hardness of heart has surely never occurred " . Late on Sunday , Bellingham wrote a last letter to his wife , in which he appeared confident of his soul 's destination : " Nine hours more will waft me to those happy shores where bliss is without alloy " .

Large crowds gathered outside Newgate on Monday ; a force of troops stood by , since warnings had been received of a " Rescue Bellingham " movement . The crowd was calm and restrained , as was Bellingham when he appeared at the scaffold shortly before 8 o 'clock . Hodgson records that Bellingham mounted the steps " with the utmost celerity ... his tread was bold and firm ... no indication of trembling , faltering , or irresolution appeared " . Bellingham was then blindfolded , the rope fastened , and a final prayer was said by the chaplain . As the clock struck eight the trap door was released , and Bellingham dropped to his death . Cobbett , still incarcerated in Newgate , observed the crowd 's reactions : " anxious looks ... half @-@ horrified countenances ... mournful tears ... unanimous blessings " . In accordance with the court 's sentence , the body was cut down and sent to St Bartholomew 's Hospital for dissection . In what the press described as " morbid sensationalism " , Bellingham 's clothes were sold for high prices to members of the public .

= = Aftermath = =

On 15 May , the House of Commons voted for the erection of a monument to the assassinated Prime Minister in Westminster Abbey . Later , memorials were placed in Lincoln 's Inn , and within Perceval 's Northampton constituency .

On 8 June the Regent appointed Lord Liverpool to head a new Tory administration . Despite their eulogies to their fallen leader , members of the new government soon began to distance themselves from his ministry . Many of the changes that Perceval had opposed were gradually introduced : greater press freedom , Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform . The Orders in Council were repealed on 23 June , but too late to avoid the declaration of war on Britain by the United States . Lord Liverpool 's government did not maintain Perceval 's resolution in acting against the illegal slave trade , which began to flourish as the authorities looked the other way . Linklater estimates that around 40 @,@ 000 slaves were illegally transported from Africa to the West Indies , because of lax enforcement of the law .

Linklater cites Perceval 's greatest achievement as his insistence on keeping Wellington 's army in

the field , a policy which helped to turn the tide in the Napoleonic Wars decisively in Britain 's favour . Despite this , with the passage of time Perceval 's reputation faded ; Charles Dickens considered him " a third @-@ rate politician scarcely fit to carry Lord Chatham 's crutch " . In due course , little but the fact of his assassination lingered in public memory . As the bicentenary of the shooting approached , Perceval was described in newspapers as " the prime minister that history forgot " .

The justice of Bellingham 's conviction was first questioned by Brougham , who condemned the trial as " the greatest disgrace to English justice " . In a study published in 2004 the American academic Kathleen S. Goddard criticises the timing of the trial so soon after the act , when passions were running high . She also draws attention to the court 's refusal to allow an adjournment that would permit the defence to contact possible witnesses . There was , she maintains , insufficient evidence produced at the trial to determine the true state of Bellingham 's sanity , and Mansfield 's summing @-@ up showed significant bias . Bellingham 's claim to have acted alone was accepted in court ; Linklater 's 2012 study posits that he could been an agent of other interests ? perhaps Liverpool merchants , who bore the main brunt of Perceval 's economic policies and had much to gain by his demise . Comments by a Liverpool newspaper , says Linklater , indicate that talk of assassination was common in the city . It remains unknown how Bellingham gained the funds to spend freely in the months preceding the assassination , when he was not apparently engaged in any business . This conspiracy theory has not convinced other historians ; the columnist Bruce Anderson points to the lack of any concrete evidence to support it .

In the months immediately following her husband 's execution , Mary Bellingham continued to live and work in Liverpool . By the end of 1812 her business had failed , and thereafter her movements are obscure ; she may have reverted to her maiden name . In January 1815 , Jane Perceval married Sir Henry William Carr ; she died , aged 74 , in 1844 .

In 1828 , The Times reported that Cornish industrialist landowner , John Williams the Third ( 1753 @-@ 1841 ) received a dream warning of Perceval 's assassination on 2 or 3 May 1812 , nearly ten days before the event , " correct in every detail " .

A distant kinsman of the assassin , Henry Bellingham , became Conservative MP for North West Norfolk in 1983 , and held junior office in the Conservative @-@ Liberal coalition government of 2010 ? 15 . When he temporarily lost his seat in 1997 ? he regained it in 2001 ? his narrow defeat was widely regarded as arising from the intervention of Roger Percival , the candidate for the Referendum Party whose votes largely came from disgruntled Conservatives . Despite the different spelling , media accounts asserted Percival 's descent from the assassinated Prime Minister 's family , and reported the defeat as a belated form of revenge .

The greater part of the Palace of Westminster ( Westminster Hall apart ) that stood at the time of the assassination was destroyed by an accidental fire in 1834 , following which the Houses were comprehensively rebuilt and expanded . In July 2014 , a brass memorial plaque was unveiled in St Stephen 's Hall , Houses of Parliament , close to the place where Perceval was killed . Michael Ellis , Conservative MP for Northampton North ( part of Perceval 's old Northampton constituency ) had campaigned for the plaque after four patterned floor tiles that were said to mark the spot had been removed by workmen in a recent renovation .

= = = = Books and news articles = = = =

= = = = Online = = = =