

## **CITY OF LONDON SCHOOL IN QUEENHITHE**

The City of London School was set up, by Act of Parliament, in 1837 and its first building was in Milk Street. It moved to the Victoria Embankment in 1883.

James Boyes became Headmaster in 1965 and his preoccupation was to move the School to a new site. The need to move from a building which seemed ever more to be antiquated was underlined by the Blackfriars Bridgehead Improvement Scheme agreed in 1960 and opened in 1967, reducing the land that separated the School from the Embankment traffic. The question was to move or not and when agreed – where to go. Many options were considered but if it moved from the City it would no longer attract boys from all parts of London as it had for more than a hundred years. An ideal site became available, it had been under redevelopment plans for 25 years; the east side of Blackfriars Bridge between the Thames and Queen Victoria Street. The Chairman of the Schools Committee, Alec Coulson, proposed this site on 10 July 1969 and it was agreed by the Court of Common Council. The saga had begun – it took another 16 years to move! ‘For most of my 19 years’, Boyes said at his last Prize Day in 1984, ‘we seem to have been talking about the new school; consulting, drawing plans, altering plans, having encouragements followed by set backs, hoping, being disappointed, hoping again. Now we are really on the way’. This was due to the fact that the Corporation decided to finance the School itself following the sale of Billingsgate Fish Market. City Architect, Stuart Murphy had been preparing plans for the site since 1967. Over two years later Boyes had said ‘We designed a palace of a school. The sports hall would have rivalled the Crystal Palace’. But it would have been prohibitively expensive to run and a more modest scheme was developed. Also in 1974 the Government curbed local authority spending with the Community Land Act which threatened the value of the old School and its site. A further five years passed before offers of buying the old and building the new came in but for one reason or another were unacceptable.

Martin Hammond took over from Boyes in the Autumn Term of 1984; by then only two years away from the move to the new building. All the issues surrounding the new building had been taken and Terry Heard (Second Master 1980-1997) was appointed Internal Project Co-ordinator. The site of the new School had had a long history; the Romans had built a riverside wall (cc AD400). Some 700 years later the Normans built Baynard’s Castle at the west-end of the site to stand at the western-end of their city waterfront and correspond with the Tower of London in the east. The (rebuilt) south-west tower survived until 1720 and its remains are still in existence and although buried no part of the School’s buildings have been placed over them. By the time Tom Meddings (an old boy of the School) of the City Architect’s Department began to plan the School for the new site, he faced a major obstacle; a double carriageway road link to connect the Victoria Embankment with the Tower was built. This went through the heart of the new School at ground level! Tom Meddings also believed that all the major parts of the School (Headmaster’s Study, staff and boys’ common rooms) should take advantage of the riverfront. Other rooms were also placed on the southern-side; The Asquith Room (general meeting room), the Boyes Recital Room for small concerts, library and open terraces for the boys’ use. Therefore these design factors also dictated that the main entrance had to be on the river-frontage. Pedestrians, moreover, had to be brought over the dual carriageway, which was ‘encased’ beneath the School, from Queen Victoria Street via Peter’s Hill (St Paul’s Vista) on the eastern-side of the School. There also came a traffic-free approach along the Embankment from Blackfriars Tube Station. The Concourse (atrium), made of glass, was designed so that its views overlooked the river to the Southbank and St Paul’s Dome to the north and was the ideal setting for John Carpenter’s statue.

The School also contains,, along with normal classrooms and laboratories and dining facilities, a fully-equipped gymnasium, fencing sale and swimming pool, a fully function theatre (Beaufoy) and its main assembly room – The Great Hall – containing a magnificent Walker organ. Fortunately the days of dull grey concrete slab building had passed and the School was built in warm red-brick. One final design undertaken by Tom Meddings was that the School was built on a structural grid and internal walls are not load-bearing and therefore rooms can be altered, as and when necessary, to accommodate any changes in usage. The School was opened by HRH The Princess Anne on 19 March 1987.

Since 1987 several other features have been added, not least the Design Technology Block, to the west of the main building, a Bookshop and improved computer facilities.

G S Griffin  
Assistant Headmaster

For a complete history of the School visit their website at:

[www.clsb.org.uk/index.html/history%20of%20CLS.htm](http://www.clsb.org.uk/index.html/history%20of%20CLS.htm)