

## History of School of Architecture and the Built Environment

The origins of the School of Architecture and the Built Environment can be traced back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the foundation of Quintin Hogg's Young Men's Christian Institute (YMCI) in the early 1870s. In 1882 the Institute moved into 309 Regent Street and began an ambitious programme of evening classes in trade and technical education which were open to the general public. South Kensington Science and Art Classes (under the auspices of the Board of Trade) were held at the Institute, including courses in Building Construction and Geometry. After the move into Regent Street, the Institute provided trade classes in Land Surveying and Levelling, Brickwork and Masonry, and Quantity Surveying. The **Polytechnic School of Civil and Mechanical Engineering** taught technical classes in Chain and Theodolite Surveying, Levelling and Drawing.

The YMCI gradually became known as the Polytechnic Institute (taking its name from the building at 309 Regent Street which had formerly housed the Royal Polytechnic Institution). In 1891, Hogg's Polytechnic became the model upon which other polytechnics were founded in London. The term 'polytechnic' entered the UK education system for the first time and we officially took the name Regent Street Polytechnic.

From 1891 there was a **School of Architecture** providing evening classes (and day classes from 1894) in a variety of subjects allied to the Architecture and Building trades, as well as preparation for professional examinations including those of the Surveyor's Institution, Royal Engineers and Royal Institute of British Architects. The Head of School was Charles F Mitchell. Together with his brother, George, Mitchell wrote a series of textbooks which continued to be used in the teaching of Building Construction into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. George Mitchell (1868-1952) became the official architect of the Polytechnic, overseeing the 1910 rebuilding of 309 Regent Street and the Chiswick boathouse. He took over the School of Architecture at his brother's death in 1916. Their older brother, Robert Mitchell (1855-1933), was the first Director of Education at the Polytechnic and was the driving force behind the development of technical classes.

After World War One the School of Architecture, whose President was Sir Bannister Fletcher RSA, PRIBA, FSI, (1866-1953), taught evening classes in architecture and architectural draughtsmanship, building, surveying, geometry, building law, mathematics and mechanics, as well as technical craft subjects (carpentry, joinery and cabinet making). The Day School provided a three year Diploma course which on completion meant exemption from the RIBA intermediate examination. Two further years studying in the Evening School led to passing the final stage of RIBA and qualifying for Associateship. There was also a Preliminary Department which took boys a year younger (aged 15) and prepared for admission to the Senior Schools.

In 1929 the School moved into newly opened premises at what was called the Great Portland Street Extension, now Little Titchfield Street. The 1929 prospectus states that 'The aim of the School is to afford instruction to youths and young men who intend to enter architects', builders', and constructors' offices or works, or to follow any of the designing and construction industries where a technical and trade training constitutes the best and surest basis for excellence and success.'

The Architects (Registration) Act 1931 recognised the School's Diploma Final Examination in Architecture as qualification for registration.

A series of lectures in Town Planning (history, law and design) appear from September 1927, under the direction of W Harding-Thompson ARIBA, AMTPI. Three lectures are given by Edmund R Abbott, Past President of the Town Planning Institute in February 1928. From 1930/1931 a three year course in town planning is offered by the Polytechnic, leading to examinations for membership of the Town Planning Institute.

A sandwich course in civil engineering, leading to a Diploma in Technology was introduced in 1958. From 1964 this became a CNAABSc Degree. In 1967 a three year full-time course was also introduced.

From 1965 a yearly programme of short postgraduate courses of up to 2 weeks duration were offered for design professionals and the Construction Industry.

In 1960 the London County Council announced a plan to turn Regent Street Polytechnic into a tripartite federal college by adding a new **College of Architecture and Advanced Building Technologies** (CAABT) and also a College of Engineering and Science (CES). The existing commercial subjects would remain centred on 309 Regent Street. New sites were acquired at New Cavendish Street and Marylebone Road (the Luxborough Lodge). Both schemes suffered prolonged delays and the new buildings were not finished until 1970. Meanwhile the publication of the White Paper, 'A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges' (Cmd 3006), had announced the creation of some 30 polytechnics throughout the country to form what became called the public sector of the binary system of higher education. The 13 existing colleges managed by ILEA were to be reorganised into five. In 1969/70, Regent Street Polytechnic merged with Holborn College of Law, Languages and Commerce to form the Polytechnic of Central London (PCL).

The modern purpose-designed premises at Marylebone Road were built for the College of Architecture and Advanced Building Technologies which comprised the Department of Architecture, Surveying and Town Planning and the Department of Civil Engineering. The heads of department were D J Oakley (architecture), D F Strongitharm (building) and J A Percival (civil engineering).

In 1971 the MSc in Transportation and Planning was introduced.

In 1974/75 it was renamed the **School of Environment**, comprising three departments: Architecture, building and civil engineering, Social and environmental planning and Surveying.

In 1989 the seven Schools of PCL were merged into four Faculties. The new **Faculty of the Environment** however did not change greatly in its composition. Its new Dean was Prof Michael Romans, later Marylebone Provost.

In 1990 Harrow College of Higher Education merged with PCL and two years later, we were re-designated the University of Westminster.

In 1990 a new course in Architectural Engineering was introduced to bridge the gap between architecture and structural engineering.

In 1993 the faculty was renamed the **Faculty of the Built Environment**. Three years later there were proposals to move the entire faculty to Harrow by 2000.

In 2007 the University returned to a School structure, renaming it the **School of Architecture and the Built Environment**, comprising the Department of Architecture, Department of Property and Construction and the Department of Urban Development and Regeneration.

In August 2013 the University adopted a new Faculty structure and the name changed to the **Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment**.

Alumni include:

Trevor Dannatt - studied at RSP 1934-1942

Ralph Erskine (1914-2005) – 1936 Dip. (1<sup>st</sup> class) in Architecture

Nelson Foley (d.2006) – 1937 Dip. (Distinction) in Architecture

H G Gillett (1898-2010) – studied at RSP in 1920s

David F Lebensold (1917-1985) – 1939 Dip. (Distinction) in Architecture

William Rogers (1914-2008)

Peter Tabori

Members of Pink Floyd: Richard Wright (1963), Roger Waters (1962) and Nick Mason

Chris Wilkinson - studied at RSP 1964

Gordon Cullen - studied at RSP 1932