

Marylebone Road Site History

In 1960 the London County Council announced a plan to turn the Regent Street Polytechnic into a federal college by adding a new College of Architecture and Advanced Building Technology and also a College of Engineering and Science. CAABT was allocated the Luxborough Lodge Site in Marylebone Road and CES the site in New Cavendish Street (see separate guide).

This was known as the Luxborough Lodge site on Marylebone Road opposite Madame Tussaud's, had housed the St Marylebone Workhouse continuously on the site since 1775. In 1965 the last buildings on the site were closed, clearing the way for demolition and redevelopment. The new buildings were designed by the London County Council's Architects Department. The plan was based around a central podium, and special features included the construction hall to act as a testing laboratory for large structures.

The schemes for both new colleges were much delayed (delays in releasing capital, legal and planning difficulties etc) but were finally finished in 1970. The work was going on against the background of post-Robbins reorganisation and the creation of the binary line between Universities and Polytechnics. 30 new polytechnics were established in 1970 as part of what was described as the public sector of higher education, awarding degrees from the Council for National Academic Awards. Under this legislation, Regent Street Polytechnic had been re-designated and had changed its name to the Polytechnic of Central London (PCL) as part of its expansion into a multi-site institution.

The two new buildings were officially opened by Lord Hailsham on 21 May 1971 in a ceremony that also included the official designation of the new Polytechnic of Central London. The binary line was abolished in 1992 and PCL became the University of Westminster.

In recent years, the site has been redeveloped as part of an ongoing major refurbishment programme, including the creation of a new entrance and the modernisation of the characteristic white frontage onto Marylebone Road. The former concrete construction hall on the site (once used to test the materials for Spaghetti Junction) has been developed into the Ambika P3 Gallery, with a regular programme of exhibitions by both students and international contemporary art.

Relevant sources available in the University of Westminster Archives

Workhouse History

A publication on the St Marylebone Workhouse written by Alan R Neate was jointly published by the University of Westminster, the St Marylebone Society and the City of Westminster Archives Centre in 2003. A copy of this is available to consult at the University Archives, or can be purchased via the City of Westminster Archives for £6 at:

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/archives/publications/>

Opening Ceremony and Designation

The Opening Ceremony for Marylebone was held on the same day as our New Cavendish Street premises and concurrently with the ceremony for our designation as the Polytechnic of Central London. The programme for these events includes a number of photographs and a history of the site.

Photographs

The University Archives holds photographs of the interior and exterior of the Marylebone Road site, mostly in black and white, as well as photographs of the opening ceremony (see above).

Presscuttings

There are numerous mentions of the Marylebone Road site in the Polytechnic's student magazines, both prior to its construction and afterwards (especially as it included a Halls of Residence). The Archive also holds a copy of The Architectural Review, Vol CXLIX no. 887 (1971) which features articles on both our Marylebone Road and New Cavendish Street premises.

Administrative papers

The University Archive holds a copy of the original proposal to establish a College of Advanced Building Technology in central London from 1957, known as the Woodbine Parish report. There are also minutes of an Advisory Committee which met in 1964 to discuss the proposals. Mentions of the new college are made in the Board of Governors' minutes and there are also Estate committee minutes discussing the building before and after its completion.