





law in order

It really is a small, small world. Today we have travelled on a cold, bright morning to London Wall to take a look at the new offices of leading commercial law firm Maclay Murray & Spens.

This is not the first time we have been to the impressive One London Wall. It is also not the first time we have written about a forward-thinking legal practice in this area. And, just to prove how small a world it really is, as we turn into London Wall we bump into an old friend from the city who just happens to be starting work at the neighbouring DZ Bank this very morning.

Having bid Mark good luck with his derivatives, we head up to the 12th floor of OLW and are immediately taken by what we find as the elevator doors open. A cool blue glass floor mirrors the subtle, sophisticated branding of the glass signage in the corridor. Turning into the clean, bright reception area we discover something we had not bargained for – the view. Now I know we have talked about remarkable views over London before, but this really is quite special. The south-facing scene could almost have been designed specifically for this very spot, with St Paul's dominating in the foreground, the Tate





►► Modern over its shoulder and, on this bright, clear morning, sightlines stretching all the way into Kent and Surrey. Big Ben is even perfectly framed within the London Eye.

Maclay Murray & Spens Assistant to the Chief Executive and Project Director Carole Thomson and Inter Arc Design's Design Director Susan Redgrave join us in admiration of the view. Susan has articulated the MMS vision for the offices, and in particular the impressive client facing facilities we have already seen a little of. Before we take an in-depth look at the rest of the scheme, we move through to one of the smart new MMS meeting rooms where Carole provides us with a warming cup of coffee and a background to the company itself. 'We are a Scottish based UK legal firm of nearly 600 people now. We have been in London since 1989. Originally we opened in London as a defensive measure to secure the corporate work we did for banks and for London based clients. However, these days we are in London because we are a UK firm and a London base is essential for

our clients and our continued development. We are looking to position ourselves towards the top of the mid-tier of law firms in London. Within that we try to differentiate ourselves and we believe that our major differentiator is our people. 'When we first opened in London we took premises in Foster Lane and over the years we grew to take over the entire building. In 2004 we merged with another law firm, the City Law Partnership (CLP), who had offices in Old Bailey.

'Before the merger, we had already been looking to move from Foster Lane to provide both expansion space and a better working environment for our staff. When we merged with CLP we knew we had to find bigger premises still to ensure that we could all be together to realise fully the benefits of the merger.'

With two separate sites, two sets of teams and two differing working layouts and cultures (while CLP already had open plan working space, the Foster Lane site was far more cellular and, to steal Carole's description, 'very '80s in design') the newly ►►►►►

case study



►► expanded MMS wanted to capitalise on the business opportunities presented by the merger, to bring its staff together, and also to provide better client facilities and continue to grow the business. 'We started looking for new premises in January of last year,' Carole recalls. 'The search took us four or five months in total. We were looking for modern, stylish premises with large floorplates in a building where we would be able to expand in the future and we wanted a bright, pleasant environment to help us retain existing staff and also attract new staff. In terms of location we wanted to remain in the heart of the City and we were concerned not to be too far away from the St Paul's area to avoid inconveniencing our people.'

And of course the deal had to be right financially. The space at One London Wall provided MMS with exactly the right environment, was in the right location and came at the right price. The only slight negative was that, although the prime 12th floor space was available, the floors directly below were already occupied, so the firm decided to take the 8th as well as the top floor. 'We felt the 12th floor really gave us a profile in the City,' Carole continues. 'Whilst the views are spectacular, the focus of the

OLW Project Team (comprising Tina Webb, London Office Manager and Crawford Hawley-Groat, IT Manager, as well as Carole) was the creation of a professional, stylish, functional and flexible space. Our strapline is 'Very Smart People' – and we believe that we are differentiated from the mass of other law firms by the quality of our people. Our focus is very much on our people and we wanted to be high up in the building so that we could have very light, open space in which to work.'

That particular aim has most certainly been achieved here at London Wall. The initial fears of some staff that they would be moving into a call centre type environment were soon allayed as, with Susan Redgrave joining the project team, formative designs and proposals were forwarded and unanimously approved. 'We explained that we would effectively be implementing a 'villages' concept, where we could identify the departments and within those the teams working together. These are separated to some extent by physical barriers but at the same time we wanted to maintain sight lines and communication. We explained that whilst in some cases we would be taking offices away – nobody here has an office – we would instead provide quite a large ►►►►►►►►





▶▶▶▶▶ number of quiet rooms, together with wireless IT and telephone facilities to ensure that as far as privacy and security is concerned, people have the necessary facilities.'

The tone for the client facing areas was established by Susan's front-of-house scheme. We ask how the relationship between Susan and MMS was first established. 'We appointed SHOR Associates, and they in turn appointed Susan of Inter Arc Design, as design consultant for the interiors,' Carole tells us. 'Susan really pulled it out of the bag for us and under extremely tight deadlines.'

'Over a weekend I read through the company's literature and articles that had been written about the firm,' Susan recalls. 'My initial reaction was that this was a wonderful project, as I specialise in interior branding, where the interior design solutions relate directly to the clients business strategy and 'brand' within their marketplace. I felt that this was a great opportunity to apply my skills. The firm was looking to reposition itself in the market and I felt confident that I could help facilitate that. When I met with the firm's Chief Executive, Magnus Swanson, I was delighted to find that my design ideas were consistent with his vision for the future of the business.'

The general office areas here are refreshingly open plan and, as Carole stated a little earlier, do not contain a single cellular office. Departmental interaction and communication are now markedly improved thanks to the flexibility of the layout and the careful analysis of adjacencies.

Departments are defined by low level filing units, while the smart quiet rooms, services and comms are all situated towards the central core, to allow everyone to enjoy the light and the views the periphery of the space has to offer.

We can even see glimpses of Susan's front-of-house scheme in the frosted glazing employed for the quiet rooms.

Back in the MMS reception area our eyes are drawn to the variety of fantastic wall finishes – including an extremely tactile finish that subtly hints at MMS' corporate blue and a retractable slatted wall. Indeed, we are told that said wall and its counterparts that normally segregate the impressive meeting rooms beyond were all opened for a major MMS client function just last night. Not that there is any sign of a party by the time we arrive.

The series of meeting rooms fan to either side of the reception area and offer wireless technology, sumptuous private meeting space for clients, video

conferencing facilities and of course in-built flexibility. As well as that view.

There is even a cool breakout/hot desking zone for clients to make themselves at home in.

The palette throughout is clean and neutral with just a hint of MMS blues – remarkably comparable to and in line with the MMS corporate literature.

Splashes of colour are provided through a series of fantastic contemporary artworks which cleverly mirror the views of London that can be seen from anywhere within the suite. This law firm may well have its roots north of the border, but it also has plenty of London pride ●

essential ingredients

- Client:** • Maclay Murray & Spens
- Interior Design:** • Inter Arc Design
020 7987 2504
- Project Management:** • SHOR Associates
020 7600 8600
- Lobby/Reception Floors:** • Architectural Ceramics
0121 706 6456
- Joinery:** • Thorpes
0116 259 3888
- Furniture Supply:** • JS Seating
020 8315 7441