





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 ►►►►►►►►



