

The JM Upward Academic Centre

The Official Opening



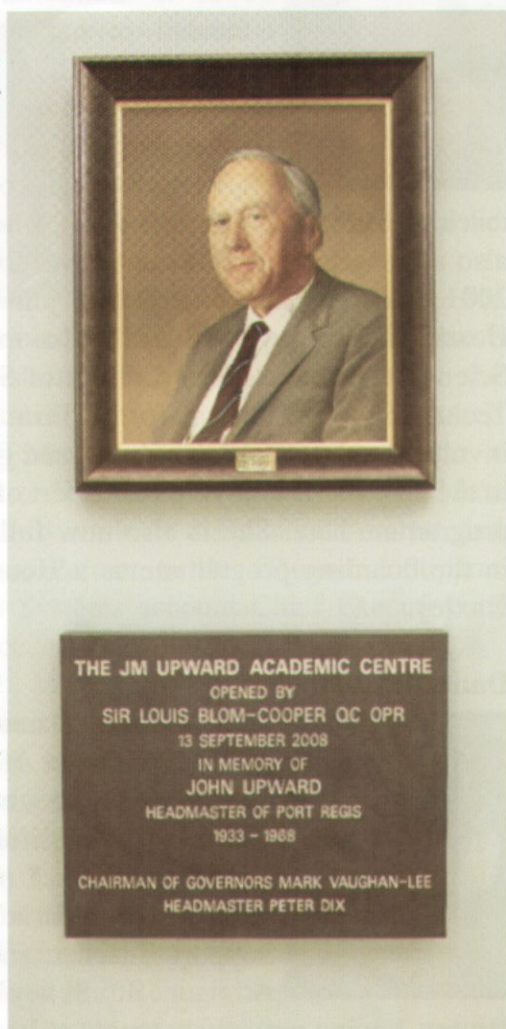
Saturday 13 September 2008 saw the official opening of the JM Upward Academic Centre by Sir Louis Blom-Cooper QC, an old boy of the school from the time of John Upward who was Headmaster of Port Regis from 1933-1968. The current Headmaster, Peter Dix, welcomed the guests to the occasion and thanked all those who had been involved in the project. He introduced Sir Louis, who spoke of the humanity and educational genius of John Upward. After cutting the ribbon Sir Louis announced the building officially open. Served with refreshments, the guests then toured the building before going across to the Dining Hall for a delicious buffet lunch.

The Building

The Centre's construction fulfils a long-term development plan to bring the academic and cultural life of the school together round Bob's Pond. No longer, I trust, will we see children gamely (or sometimes not so gamely) trying to get from the distant Old Gym and Pinewood classrooms over to Cunningham, Cent, Farrington or Queen's in the 5 minutes available and so be on time for the next lesson. It also allows us to remove first the temporary Lakeside classrooms immediately across the pond and later those at the far end of the Mansion, to provide wonderful playgrounds for the children and a much improved aesthetic.



But most of all it provides us with a building which is not only breathtaking in its design but also highly functional and ecologically sound. 12 boreholes descend 80 metres into the ground on the bank outside, with the associated technology providing the heating and cooling of the building without the burning of fossil fuels. This all works in parallel with the cutting-edge E-Stack natural ventilation system pioneered and developed by Cambridge University, which employs temperature and CO2 sensors, as well as discreet fans, to open and close windows and push or pull air. The whole building also works on a fully automated DALI lighting system to cut running costs even further. I think it is highly appropriate that we should be showing this generation of children how a high degree of sustainability can provide a wonderfully comfortable and functional building in which to work, whilst also doing what is ethically right and ecologically responsible. I think we can all be very proud of what we have achieved in this regard.



THE JM UPWARD ACADEMIC CENTRE
 OPENED BY
 SIR LOUIS BLOM-COOPER QC OPR
 13 SEPTEMBER 2008
 IN MEMORY OF
 JOHN UPWARD
 HEADMASTER OF PORT REGIS
 1933 - 1968
 CHAIRMAN OF GOVERNORS MARK VAUGHAN-LEE
 HEADMASTER PETER DIX



The beautiful design of the building is due in large part to the creative talents of the architect Brian Watts, a partner of Philip Proctor Associates and a recent ex-parent - he has delivered something very special. The ambience, the views, the abundance of natural light and the beautiful setting on the edge of the water have responded most elegantly to the brief, and given us something of which generations of Portregians and their families will be enormously proud. The execution of the design has been in the exceptionally capable hands of a current parent, Andy Robins, and his team at Snibor. The immaculate condition of the site and the building compound throughout the project exemplified the attention to detail and the overall professionalism of the team.

There were many sub-contractors who contributed to the success of the project, as well as individuals from the school itself who merit special mention. John Fletcher and his highly skilled maintenance team, who made much of the furniture as well as the lovely wooden walkway at the end of the pond; Rory Pope and his hard-working grounds team, who did much of the landscaping themselves as well as the new car-park areas; Stephen Dawson and his team for the installation of the IT; and Kevin Binns, our Estates Bursar, who managed the project from the start, liaising closely with the design and build team, putting up with the demands, both reasonable and unreasonable, of the Headmaster; and providing for the teaching staff just about everything they needed to use the classrooms effectively.

I would also want say a heart-felt thank you to Mark Vaughan-Lee and all the Governors for their unrelenting enthusiasm for this project and their constant support and encouragement. Chris Holloway has, in particular, been a tower of strength at all times, providing quite exceptional levels of expertise in every aspect of the project. His vision, determination and close attention to detail have been major factors in the success of what we have accomplished here. We are also most grateful to Robert Turner, an old friend and the principal architect at Capital and Continental in Paris, whose discreet input has been inspirational as well as hugely valuable.



The building is just beautiful: A child came into the atrium at the end of the holidays and, gasping, said to her mother, "Wow - this looks like the Reception of a Dubai hotel"!! Praise indeed. But it is also designed to inspire children in their studies. A parent has written to me to say, "Jamie has just called me to say that the new classroom block is amazing and that he just loves going over there each day and having his lessons". He might have added "even Latin"!

This academic centre, with its 14 classrooms and associated staff offices, resource and ICT facilities, meeting and tuition rooms, has been built in memory of John Upward, a truly remarkable Headmaster of Port Regis over 35 years from 1933 until 1968. Christopher Child, an OPR from the 1940s, told me the following story, "Whilst we were all still at Verulam some of us learned what "corporal punishment" was. It was The Slipper. For a really bad crime, the miscreant would be summoned to the headmaster's study to receive one or more slaps with The Slipper. Others would wait outside the door, straining their ears, to hear the slap, slap and - hopefully - cries of distress. We never heard the latter though as, years later, I learned that Upward would never, had never, laid a finger on a boy. He would stand with slipper in one hand and bring it down on the other hand and then in a loud voice say to the boy "Now dry your tears and don't do it again". The pale-faced felon would then exit, far too ashamed to admit that The Slipper was a fiction." It is splendid to think that the memory of a great Headmaster and a wonderful man will now be secured by the construction of this wonderful building.

PAED

