



THE LONDON NAUTICAL SCHOOL

Clive Marsh view of LNS - 1963 to 1966

The first thing to realise is that the LNS is a unique school in every way.

Living by the Thames estuary I saw every ship that entered the Port of London and like most boys wanted to go to sea.

I decided that the LNS would help me achieve this and at the age of 13 my father took me for an interview with the headmaster Mr Colgate. I also had to sit examinations in mathematics and English. I was delighted to receive an offer of a place including a voucher to pay for my season ticket to London. My parents were even more delighted since they would no longer be paying fees to my independent school which was about to close. It was a good fit all round.

There were 3 of us boys starting at the same time and we all went to sea. One stayed on to become captain of a large vessel and the other two of us eventually left the MN to pursue careers in industry reaching managing and finance director roles with multinational corporations. It is only with hind sight that one realises how influential the LNS has been in our development.

The education we received was outstanding both in marine and normal GCE subjects. By the time we went to sea most of us had a good number of GCEs and were adept at celestial navigation, ship construction and seamanship. Of most interest to me was boat handling and sailing, we did plenty of that and this has become my lifelong interest as a past Commodore of the Merchant Navy Association Boat Club. I was always more interested in boats than in ships.

Initially we were based in a building behind the current Stamford Street School. It was a formidable brick construction somewhat damaged by bombing during the war. Eventually we moved into the Stamford Street building which was better.

Being in the centre of London and by the Thames gave us students a unique blend of experiences and we would use our season tickets to come and explore London at weekends.

In the 1960s most of our teachers were WW2 veterans and subject experts more than professional educationalists. They were all excellent. For example we had 3 extra-master mariners, ex RN and RAF officers. Their intention was to turn out cadet navigation officers for the MN and that's what most of us did. I was offered places with Cunard Brocklebank and Canadian Pacific Steamships. I took the later.

My two most influential teachers taught subjects that I liked but was not particularly good at. Captain Harding Reins tried valiantly to teach me all he knew about celestial navigation and even now I get the sextant and tables out every summer only to forget how it's done during the winter. Another influential teacher was Crawford Dew who taught me art and sailing. I still paint but have never got good at it. However, I feel I am a good boatman and have owned 50 yachts and motor boats looking for the perfect one. I am well into my 70s and a few years back met Crawford Dew on social media. We talked often and I had no idea what a great painter he was. He still encouraged me and we were to meet up at the National Gallery but it was not to be. He was a keen East Coast sailor. Many of the LNS teachers had illustrious careers. Most liked boats and many sailed yachts.

As the UK Merchant Navy fell into decline I re trained, attended university as a mature student, followed a career in accounting and then in corporate and merchant banking. I am still working part time as an examiner for a professional institution and author for several financial publishers. For a while I taught A level accountancy at an independent school and used my LNS teacher role models to help me provide good results.

The LNS motto is 'The Thames Carries her Sons Everywhere' or something like that. My work travels have taken me to Canada, New Zealand and Venezuela. But, I have now settled back in Old Blighty with 5 grandchildren. Would I encourage them to attend the LNS? Well, four are not interested in maritime careers but I do have one grandson who is an excellent footballer and I notice that in recent years the LNS has produced some excellent footballers! That is the interesting thing about the LNS. It has produced a First Sea Lord, many famous footballers, TV personalities, MPs, writers, ship's captains and captains in industry. Not everyone can be famous but all old LNS boys I have met have been really useful one way or another. Many of the 1960s boys settled in NZ and Australia. I spent 8 years living and working in NZ. They pop up all over the place.

In spite of its unique character and illustrious alumni the LNS is little known. It has never been a school to attract much press attention. But it came to my notice that at HM the Queen's Jubilee some years back the 3 most senior mariners at the event were all LNS alumni. They were the First Sea Lord, the Head of Thames Pilotage and the Captain of Her Majesty's barge.

The LNS has evolved over the last 100 years to continue to supply really useful people. I would like to think that it continues for another hundred. A nautical education is useful both at sea and ashore. I like to think I have been useful as forecast in the attached reference from the Head Master!

Clive Marsh

LNS cadet 1963-66