



City of Westminster

The Queen's Tower



The **Queen's Tower** is situated in the South Kensington Campus of Imperial College London, England. It is 287 feet (87 m) tall with a copper covered dome at its top. To reach the base of the dome from the ground on foot, one must ascend a series of narrow spiral staircases, which comprise 325 steps in total.



The tower used to be the central tower of the Imperial Institute, and is now the sole remaining part of that building. The Institute was founded on Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, and its partial demolition began in 1957. At that time it was generally known as the Collcutt Tower, after its designer, the Victorian architect Thomas Edward Collcutt. The tower itself would have been demolished along with the rest of the Institute, had it not been for a public campaign led by the then Poet Laureate, and supporter of 19th

century architecture, John Betjeman. He warned that tastes in architecture change and that the destruction of this building (at a time when Victorian architecture had fallen out of favour) would be a loss.

In 1966, with the rest of the building demolished, the tower was repaired to enable it to stand on its own, which involved the construction of new foundations. There are also two stone lions at the foot of the tower, which were once set at the entrance to the Imperial Institute. These two stone lions are pair of a set of four, the other two (which are not in such good condition) are in the grounds of the Commonwealth Institute.



There are ten bells hung for change ringing in the middle of the tower, about two thirds of the way up. These bells, known collectively as the Alexandra Peal, were a gift from Mrs Elizabeth M. Millar of Melbourne, Australia in 1892, and are named after Queen Victoria — the tenor (largest) bell — and her nine children (Victoria (Adelaide Mary Louise), Edward, Alice, Alfred, Helena, Louise, Arthur, Leopold and Beatrice).

They are rung on Royal Anniversaries and on the dates of the Imperial College degree ceremonies.



The highest viewing gallery is below the dome at the top of the building. Upon walking through the door one gets the unique view of seeing the top of the Albert Memorial on top of the Royal Albert Hall. Being one of the tallest towers in west London, the Queen's Tower enjoys an interrupted view in all directions. The viewing gallery once open to the public is currently closed to visitors.

On any reasonably clear day one can see the bowl effect of the seven hills on which the original city of Londinium was built by the Romans, on which now stands the City of Westminster.

