

## A Short History of the Campden Society

In the 1920's there was growing concern about changes to the character of Chipping Campden – particularly amongst the considerable body of artists and craftsmen still working and living in the locality. It was they who formed the first Campden Society in 1924 “For the protection of the beauty and character of the town and of its neighbourhood, for the preservation of its ancient crafts and traditions, and for the promotion of the best interests of the local arts and crafts of today”.

F L Griggs who had been made ARA in 1921, was a leading figure amongst many who gave of their time energy and money to these purposes. This original Campden Society organised exhibitions to promote the reputation of the town between 1924 and 1939 when it faded, but, early on, Griggs felt that it was not being effective in protecting the “at risk” built heritage. To remedy this, he and others established the Campden Trust in 1929 especially to maintain the town's amenities, exercise some control over new development, and engage in the purchase, preservation and repair of existing buildings in harmony with local building traditions before resale.

Operating as a company limited by shares, the Trust was very active, except in the war years, until 2000. Its role was especially important up to the 1970's when Conservation Areas were introduced and the new local government planning authorities were empowered to control development.. In this period the Trust rescued and restored numerous properties on the High Street and in Westington, and built new houses in the grounds of Westington Old House, generally imposing covenants limiting development on all these properties when they were sold on.

Providentially, the trust also acquired the Coneygree (1934) and the 17th century Market Hall (1942) and duly handed both over to the National Trust. These achievements rank with the earlier acquisition by Griggs himself of Dover's Hill which he then gave to the National Trust.

The Campden Society (The Society) itself was not revived until 1970 when it was recreated under the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, by Sir Gordon

Russell, Charles Tyson, Margaret Monkhouse and others. As a recognised amenity society its main conservation object, following amendment in the early 1980's, was “To secure the preservation, protection and improvement of the character and beauty of Campden and its features of historic and public interest with full regard to its needs as a living community”.

Since then, The Society has vigorously exercised the right for its views to be considered by the planning authorities in relation to the Conservation Areas and the planning controls brought in by the Town and Country Amenities Act of 1974. It has played an influential role in helping the built character and setting of Campden (including Broad Campden) to survive largely unspoilt into this century mainly by:

Requiring thorough reassessment of the Conservation Area in Chipping Campden which encloses such a large proportion of the built environment.

Pressurising the Cotswold District Council (CDC) to adopt strongly protective policies for Campden by the early 1980's, including a tight Development Boundary not least to preserve the beautiful setting of the built heritage.

Involvement in the design and development of Wolds End in the 1970's and by influencing the density and character of much that has been developed since.

Constant diligence in attention to planning applications and to the evolution of protective policies and measures in Local Plans, usually encouraging and supporting CDC officers in advancing the best options for this special place, but challenging them when necessary.

The Society also engaged fully in improvement projects, working with the Town Council on traffic management and car parking, on pavements and tree planting.

As interest grew in the history and social character of Campden there was a call for these aspects to be hived off from The Society for special attention. This led in 1983 to the formation, by Colonel Geoffrey Powell and others of The Campden and District Historical and Archaeological Society (CADHAS) as a separate charity.

The Campden Trust also registered as a charity in 1975 with amended objects – to preserve and enhance....the architectural quality and interest of Campden and to maintain and provide open spaces, trees and other amenities. By then, however, it was working alongside the new Campden Society, properly constituted as an amenity society. It was also operating with limited assets relative to the burgeoning property market. In consequence, the Trust's activity was reduced to making grants towards laudable public repair and improvement projects – including to the National Trust (NT) for work on the Market Hall and to the Town Trust for work on the Town Hall. Latterly it also worked for the town with the Diocese of Gloucester to have covenants in favour of the NT imposed on the sale of the Old Vicarage (now Covenant House) to prevent added development in the future on that important part of the Conservation Area. In 2000, the Trustees of the Campden Trust concluded that it would be best to combine its residual role and assets with The Society to create a single, stronger and more effective conservation force for Campden in the 21st century.

The Society embraced amalgamation. It adopted a new constitution in 2002, that provided additional powers particularly in respect of property, and access to the funds left (with appropriate safeguards) by The Campden Trust to be held by The Campden Conservation Trust Fund (CCTF) – a subsidiary charity of The Society..

Under the new constitution, Campden still covers the town of Chipping Campden, the village of Broad Campden and their surrounding areas and the Society is established for the public benefit for the following purposes – known as The Objects:

- To secure the protection of the architectural and historic quality of Campden, its open spaces and its natural setting
- To promote high standards of planning, architecture and landscaping in Campden
- To stimulate interest in /concern for the character and beauty of Campden

In 2000 the reinvigorated Society produced a fresh strategy including the need to celebrate the well-preserved built heritage. It duly enlisted the help of CADHAS and the Peelers Trust in

establishing a permanent public display in the Court Room of the Old Police Station entitled The Character of Campden. This was realised in 2003 including a fine relief model of Chipping Campden in its setting funded by Frank Mottershead. Between 2001 and 2004 The Society also created its own comprehensive record of the built heritage comprising some 450 shots of the fronts of buildings and street scenes together with over 50 aerial views of the Conservation Areas, approaches to the town and the country setting. Copies of all these images were given to CADHAS for inclusion in the Community Archive.

From the turn of the century, The Society took a positively supportive line both on the Guild of Handicraft Trust's project to create a centre at Court Barn, Church Street, realised in 2005. The Society also chose to give to the Guild of Handicraft Trust the important collection of Ashbee drawings and the remarkable collection of early photographs of Campden by Jesse Taylor. These collections had been inherited from the Campden Trust and previously only on loan to the Guild, and these moves were helpful to the Guild's efforts to establish the new centre at Court Barn.

A little later, The Society actively supported and encouraged development of a care home finally established as Mill House at the Old Silk Mill site in 2007.

In 2005, using its new powers and resourced by the CCTF, The Society took up an opportunity to purchase Wolds End Orchard – a much neglected old orchard earmarked in the current Local Plan as the site for a car park. It did so to preclude the possibility of purchase by a speculative developer and to bring it into protective ownership for the benefit of the community, including ownership of the only remaining practicable site for a visitors' car park. The conditions of purchase were difficult for The Society, requiring application to be made for a car park because the vendor hoped thereby to obtain permission to build a house on a part of the orchard to be retained. This application process, however, did enable The Society to identify its perception of the location and style of a less obtrusive, smaller car park than that originally envisaged by CDC – accepting, in any case, that it was up to the CDC to act in the matter if and when the consensus in the town

required/supported it.

The Society acquired the site for the benefit of the community (specifically cleared with the Charity Commission) and has succeeded in keeping the car park option open. It is a fact, however, that The Society could not, under its constitution or the terms under which it justified purchase of the Orchard, commit to any form of development on this land unless there was a community/local authority call for such a development.

As regards a car park, The Society continues to be convinced that one, primarily for long stay visitors, is needed to meet the growing car parking difficulties in the town. It is also satisfied that, for want of any practicable alternative, it would have to be developed, with due care for the environment, on the Wolds End Orchard site much as it was presented in the obligatory planning application. In line with its strategy, The Society argues that this is needed to sustain the town's viability as a local shopping centre as well as a uniquely attractive destination for mainly car borne visitors. The Chamber of Trade supports this perception but it remains a contentious issue for the town – opposition voiced particularly by the protest group called 'Care for Campden'.

The Society's initiative has also provided for agreement to be made with Chipping Campden School for the Orchard to be cleared and used for its farming, rural crafts and nature study activities - so bringing the Orchard out of dereliction and into use for the benefit of the community.