

## CAMPDEN WAR MEMORIAL

EVESHAM JOURNAL 14<sup>th</sup> October 1916

Campden Parish council

At the meeting on Tuesday a letter was read from Messrs. J.W. Pymment and Sons offering to erect at their own expense a temporary record to those resident in Campden who had fallen in the war. Such record to be placed six feet from the ground at the East end of the Town Hall, and also suggesting a scheme should be started for the erection of a permanent memorial after the war. The offer was approved by the Council and the Clerk was instructed to write to the Town Trust for their approval.



Unveiling of the temporary War Memorial in 1916



Armistice came on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 and people gathered in the Square.

Miss Josephine Griffiths wrote, in her Book of Remembrance (now in the Parish Church):

*And at 3 o'clock in the afternoon all hurried to the Parish Church for a great Thanksgiving Service. There, where the men of Campden in the fighting line had been daily remembered before the altar it was meet to "sing unto the Lord for He hath triumphed gloriously" The wounded men from Norton Hall had chairs in the nave, and, in spite of crutches, pain and suffering, their joy was indescribable. This wonderful day ended with a bonfire in the square and the singing of the National Anthem with patriotic enthusiasm. But hush! Amongst all that gladness there were broken hearts and tearful eyes, and deep mourning.*

Campden, in company with many other communities in the country, wanted to create a



permanent reminder of the role that local servicemen had played in defence of their country. The Parish Council called a Public Meeting in the Town Hall on April 5<sup>th</sup> 1919 to discuss what form a memorial should take and how to raise the money to finance it. A committee was formed with Dr. Dewhurst in the Chair along with members of the public and tradesmen.

The Green before the War Memorial was installed

By July 1919 several suggestions had been made - such as a permanent nursing home with resident nurse, extension of the Town Hall to form a men's club, cottages for ex-servicemen, a drinking fountain and the traditional one of a Cotswold stone pillar, topped by a cross and inscribed with the names of the fallen.

At a committee meeting votes were taken for each project and as it was decided that the building projects would be too expensive to maintain, and as the traditional stone pillar was by far the most acceptable, this was agreed.

The cost would come from public subscription, for which an official form would be available and the next meeting would be another General Meeting in the Town Hall to present the Committee's findings. Mr. R.L. Griggs, the local architect was asked to submit plans for the building of the memorial which would be displayed at the Post Office for the public to view. The site was to be the strip of land between the Market Hall and the Town Hall which, with the permission of the District Council, would be levelled with a retaining wall and steps leading down on to the lower side of the High Street. The Town Trust Committee had agreed to the future maintenance of the site.

The committee was divided and two thoroughly acrimonious public meetings were held.

*'...the war memorial affair was a struggle between this conventional leadership, which expected to be in control of affairs in Campden, and the rising liberal and aesthetic leadership, rooted in the Guild, which challenged this expectation.'*

Fees C. *Christmas Mumming in a North Cotswold Town.*

(Ph.D.Thesis 1988)

This struggle was expressed in opposition to the appointment of F. L. Griggs as the architect, on the grounds that he had not fought in the war; possibly, also, because he had been received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1912. In the eyes of some, these things made him unsuitable to design a memorial for the mainly Protestant dead.

At the October General Meeting there was some opposition to the proposal that Mr. Griggs be appointed as architect on the grounds that he had no military record and it had been proposed that, wherever possible, workers on the site should be ex-servicemen. Eventually objections were overcome on a motion led by committee member, Mr. P. Woodroffe, that, on account of Mr. Griggs' knowledge of local stone and conditions, he should be accepted. After so much dissent there was no alternative but to form a third committee which, though democratically based, was sympathetically towards Griggs.



The new War Memorial Committee had H.G. Ellis as Chairman, Miss Josephine Griffiths as Hon. Secretary and R. Hands as Hon. Treasurer.

Griggs was asked to submit costs and nominate a suitable builder to help him in execution of the project. There was no further discord and the carving and lettering was done by Alec Miller and Edgar Keen, who donated their labour. At a subsequent committee meeting, Mr. Griggs gave his estimate of costs which amounted to between £600 and £700 - but as only £288 had so far been donated, it was decided to make a fresh appeal to the public, as work should not commence until a sufficient sum was available.

H G Ellis (Chairman) and Matthew Cox (Headmaster) inspect the planned line of the wall.

There was some delay during the winter months, while the committee waited for the necessary funds to accumulate, and also for finished plans from the architect, and there was concern that people would not contribute until they knew how the finished area would appear, especially with regard to the retaining wall on to the High Street, but by the time of an April committee, the architect was able to report that the tender submitted by Messrs. Jewson and Berkeley of South Cerney had been accepted as the two local firms of Espley of Evesham and J.W. Pymont of Campden regretted that they were unable to commit themselves due to pressure of contracts and shortage of labour.

Jewsons pointed out that much of the preliminary work of stone carving, etc. would be done in their own workshops and the setting up and groundwork would be done later – however they hoped that the main work would be completed within three or four months.

In reply to a request from Fr. Bilsborrow, a member of the committee, Lord Gainsborough had agreed to open Westington Quarry which had been closed during the war years, to supply stone for the project and also offered to donate stone to the value of £30 for that use - there was also an offer of sand from Lord Harrowby.

The work took much longer than expected and the committee exchanged claims and counter claims about the blame with the builders over the ensuing months. Eventually the unveiling ceremony could be arranged.



Lord Haig was asked to perform the unveiling ceremony on Sunday, Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> 1921 but regretted being unavailable due to pressure of business and General Sir R. Stephens, K.G.B., head of Camberley Staff College took his place.

The Committee asked local farmers to cart away the rubble and they eventually agreed to do so after harvest but it was still there at the unveiling ceremony in the following January, hidden behind the wall.



The major issue that the Committee faced throughout the project was raising enough funds to complete the work, and this was partly linked to public feeling about the height of the retaining wall, which affected donations. In order to swell the funds, the Rev. Hitchcock offered the vicarage gardens as a venue for a fete and the Chairman, Harry Ellis, whose basket-making business had joined a government scheme to help unemployed ex-servicemen, rounded up members of his family and staff to form a Jazz Band to tour the streets and public houses in order to collect funds.

Chief among this group were the Hathaway family who were all musical, with concertinas and fiddles well used among the Morris Dancers. Also taking part was an ex-Londoner, Tom Hook, who acted as clown and entertainer.



The costs had still not been covered by the time of the completion of the Memorial and a Grand Whitsun Fete was held in May 1921 as the final fund-raiser. The Fete included a play, enacted in the Conygree, entitled 'The Bride's Ransom'.



The original papers of the War Memorial Committee are in the CCHS Archives and can be seen on request.

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