

The Landmark Trust

OLD CAMPDEN HOUSE: EAST & WEST BANQUETING HOUSES AND THE ALMONRY

Today, the two banqueting houses are all that remain of a once grand of Jacobean house, destroyed by fire in 1645 during the Civil War. The house was built c1612 by a very rich mercer and moneylender called Baptist Hicks. When James I came to the throne in 1603, Hicks provided much of the finance for King and Court's extravagant lifestyle. We do not know for certain what his house looked like, but its style is still reflected in the Banqueting Houses. The designer may have been John Thorpe, who designed Hicks's London house when he was still plain 'Mr. Hix.' Hicks also provided Chipping Campden with its almshouses, market hall and water brought by conduit from Westington Hill.

The East and West Banqueting Houses were retreats for the family and their guests, to which they withdrew at the end of the main meal, to drink fine wines, and ate what we would now call dessert – dried fruit, small cakes and sweetmeats – looking out over once fabulous gardens. But then came the Civil War and on 10th May 1645 a Royalist garrison, withdrawing from the house which had served as their local headquarters, set light to it. "The howse (which was so faire) burnt" wrote one of them in his diary. By the light of the blaze they marched up to the escarpment and over Broadway Hill to Evesham, joining the Royalist troops under Prince Rupert, marching from Oxford to relieve the siege at Chester.

The mansion was never repaired. Gradually over the years its shell was raided for building stone, some reddened by the heat of the flames. The Banqueting Houses' open loggias were blocked to adapt them for humbler domestic use for the estate stewards orchards were planted in the former gardens. Such gentle adaptation ensured that the site remains largely undisturbed to this day. It is a hugely important survival of the layout of a fine early 17th-century garden.

Hicks's daughter Juliana, married Edward Noel whose son became 1st Earl of Gainsborough and the manor descended through the Noel family to the present day. In 1998, Lady Maureen Fellowes transferred the whole site to the care of the Landmark Trust.

The East Banqueting House has three storeys, the lower two being suites of rooms; the West has just two storeys, and a single large chamber on the ground floor. Both were originally open loggias. The intervening centuries have treated them differently, something reflected in Landmark's approach to their restoration.

RESTORATION OF THE EAST BANQUETING HOUSE AND GATEHOUSE

In the 1860s, the Earl of Gainsborough (Hicks's great grandson became the first Earl under Charles II) comprehensively restored the **East Banqueting House** so that he could use it to review his local volunteers as they practised their manoeuvres on the Coneygree below. By the time the Landmark Trust acquired the East Banqueting House in 1987, the roof was near to collapse, the west wall was bulging outwards, and the second floor was too dangerous to walk on. Much of the glass in the windows had been smashed and water was pouring down to the lower floors.

The Earl had glazed the loggia, and Landmark's restoration reflects his restoration. The roof had to be completely dismantled again and the 19th-century trusses repaired and put back. The existing stone slates were reused wherever possible. New lead parapet gutters replaced the old ones, which had perished completely, and new lead chutes and downpipes were provided on the back wall. The two leaning gables on this wall were cranked back to an upright position.

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Both Banqueting Houses are built of local stone and roofed with stone slates. The stonework is particularly fine. In the East Banqueting House, some had been damaged by the previous repairs using iron cramps, but as much as possible of the old carved stone was saved, and redowelled and fixed where necessary using non-corrosive materials. Where replacement was unavoidable, Guiting stone was used. One chimney had been plundered for a new hearth in the West Banqueting House in the late seventeenth century; this was replaced with a new copy. The terrace balustrade at the north end had been badly smashed. Many of the balusters survived, however, and were repaired and reinstated.

New window casements were made to a traditional design, with leaded lights and plain glass. The design of the new main doors was based on fragments of an earlier pair, which were found in a heap of rubble and probably dated from the late 17th century. The outer doors on the ground floor were repaired, but new oak doors were provided elsewhere.

In the main upper room, a new vaulted plaster ceiling was formed, similar to that which survived in the West Banqueting House. The cornice was also based on that in the other building. The walls were given a thin coat of lime plaster, and a new floor put in of wide oak boards. The spiral staircase is also oak, based on the 17th-century survival in the Almonry.

As the arrangement of the East Banqueting House was already 'upside down', the best position for the kitchen was below the main room on the first floor, with a bedroom beside it, and a bathroom and another bedroom on the floor below. These rooms, with their stone vaults and floors, are very much as they were found, minus the graffiti they had attracted. To prevent damp on the lower floors, a land drain was dug round the garden side of the building. During which excavations, the retaining wall of the original terrace was discovered.

There are a further bedroom and bathroom in the north lodge of the gateway. A later cottage and lean-to's behind were taken down, and the domes of both lodges repaired, where the joints between the stone had opened up and were letting in water. New gates were fitted, to allow passers-by a view of the grounds, formerly inaccessible. Work was completed in autumn 1990, under architect Andrew Brookes of Rodney Melville & Partners.

RESTORATION OF THE WEST BANQUETING HOUSE & ALMONRY

In 2000, the Noel family gave the whole site into Landmark's care. By then, the **West Banqueting House** was in imminent danger of collapse, especially the stair turret. It was decided to make the West Banqueting House and Almonry combined a second Landmark holiday let. Application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and various charitable trusts was successfully boosted by Landmark's own appeal and work started in October 2001, again under Andrew Brookes of Rodney Melville & Partners assisted by Stephen Oliver.

The West Banqueting House was altered substantially for residential use soon after the destruction of the main house. The windows and loggia were partly or wholly blocked with ashlar, presumably plundered from the ruins of the main house, and a Jacobean door and one smaller window inserted. Landmark's conservation approach has respected these early alterations, and this is why the banqueting houses now look rather different from each other

During restoration, the shafts of two of the barley twist chimneys had to be replaced; the fifth chimney seemed to have been plundered from the East Banqueting House some time in the past, to serve the inserted fireplace on the terrace floor. To help combat damp in the vaulted ground floor chamber, land drains were laid along the east wall. The use of breathable limewash inside also help with this. The west wall had moved away from rotted rafter feet by some 15cm so new metal ties were put in and a concrete tie beam cast. The lathe and plaster of the barrel ceiling was so decayed it had to be entirely renewed. In the kitchen, the floor was recorded, lifted and as many slabs as possible relaid.

Portions of the rich Jacobean interior survived in the upper chamber of the West Banqueting House. Sections of the original plaster frieze showing a winged lion with a man's head have been carefully pieced back together and refixed. The rough studwork partition which divides the first floor chamber has been kept and, to ensure privacy both for the Court House and for visitors to the East Banqueting House, the loggia and some of the windows remain blocked. Others in the kitchen and north and west walls have been unblocked to provide more light. Both external doors are 17th-century originals; the one leading onto the terrace may have been salvaged from the main house.

Large sections of Jacobean wainscotting also survive at the head of the stair turret. This turret was added soon after the building's original construction, at first to hold a garderobe (or lavatory). Soon after, perhaps when the banqueting house was converted to domestic accommodation, a staircase was inserted instead. These stairs did not survive although the marks of the treads and risers are clearly visible in the walls. We have inserted a carefully designed replacement.

The West Banqueting House has thus deliberately been left much as it came to Landmark, so that it reveals its later history as a domestic dwelling. William Harrison, key player in the mysterious events known as The Campden Wonder, may well have lived here in the mid-17th century and been responsible for the adaptation.

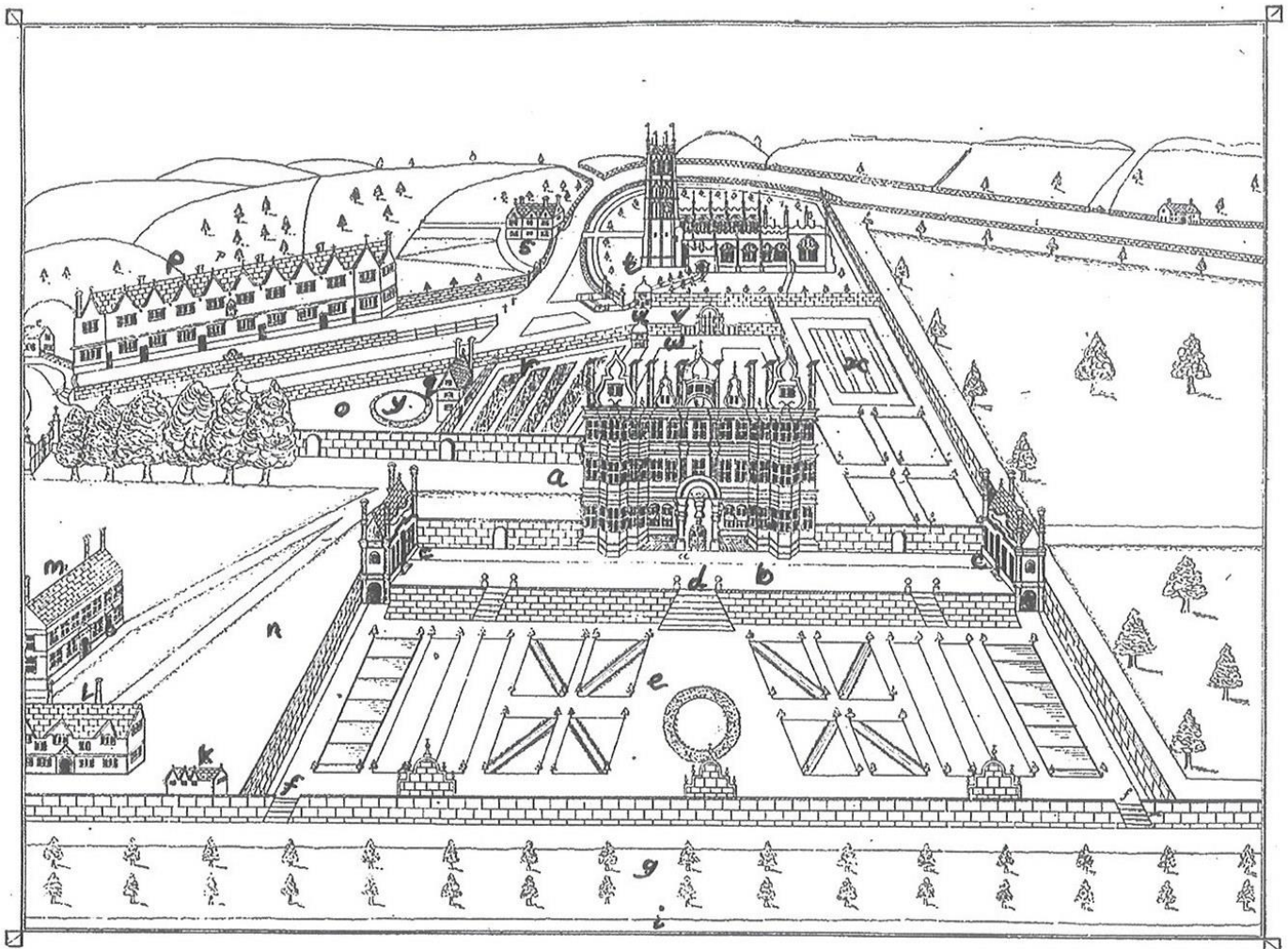
The **Almonry** also dates from the early 17th century and is an altogether simpler building than the Banqueting Houses. It follows the more traditional pattern of Cotswold architecture seen also in the former stables (now the Court House) and the Hicks's Almshouses across the road. It has three storeys with just a single room on each floor, linked by a stone spiral staircase. Its original function has been the subject of much debate: it may have been the office of a household official although the carefully framed views from its first floor windows suggest it could have been intended as a garden pavilion. Equally, blocked arches in its basement wall and proximity to the 'bleaching garden' in early views have led to speculation that it could even have been a laundry. Later references suggest use as a hen roost or dovecote. The only certainty is that it was not built as an almonry, a whimsical name acquired in the 1930s, no doubt due to its proximity to the almshouses, and which has stuck.

In 1930, the Almonry was repaired by F L Griggs, renowned engraver and campaigner for Chipping Campden. The large fireplace on the ground floor is a later insertion but the fireplace on the first floor and the balustrade at the top of the stairs are 17th-century. Like the West Banqueting House, it has been re-roofed and the stonework repointed. Court Barn, the surviving fragment of Campden House and Juliana's Gateway at the bottom of Hicks's garden are also in the care of the Landmark Trust, and now leased to the Guild of Handicraft Trust.

THE LANDSCAPE OF OLD CAMPDEN HOUSE

The wider landscape at Old Campden House is a unique survival of an early Jacobean garden. Hicks carried out extensive landscaping to improve the natural lie of the land to create the parterre below his great house to the south, overlooked from a terrace and flanked by raised walkways. As visible from aerial photos (and, occasionally, molehills) the main parterre had a star of paths radiating from the centre to its corners and sides. At its lower end, the main parterre gives way to steep terracing that falls away, originally to an ornamental canal with water parterres at either corner. One of these, the east water parterre, is still identifiable as a square feature with four symmetrical pools circling a central 'island', accessible by diagonal pathways. The western parterre, eroded by later agricultural use, is no longer recognisable.

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BIRDSEYE VIEW OF CAMPDEN HOUSE, BURNT DOWN IN THE YEAR OF NASEBY, 1645 (from an old drawing).

References—*a*The house. *b*The terrass walk. *c*The banqueting house. *d*The garden stairs. *e*The great garden. *f*The orchard stairs. *g*The great orchard. *i*The long canal. *k*The coach-house. *l*The brew-house. *m*The stables. *n*The stable court. *o*The henn yard. *p*The hospital. *q*The laundry. *r*The bleach garden. *s*The parsonage house. *t*The church. *u*The porter's lodge. *v*The outward court. *w*The great court. *x*The garden court. *y*The pond.

Reproduced from Percy Rushden, *History & Antiquities of Chipping Campden* (1899). This version of a lost original is inaccurate in not showing raised walkways flanking the parterre, and in showing 'the great garden' as twin parterres rather than a single 'star', but it is helpful in identifying the various functions of the site and its buildings.

At the far south eastern corner of the site is a viewing mound, from which a sally (or reed) bed once stretched to the culvert in the middle of the Coneygree (reeds had various household uses in the 17th century). The culvert is all part of the sophisticated water supply system for the site, starting with the conduit house on Conduit/Westington Hill. The remnants of lead pipes were found during the restoration works.

Gardening was a passion of the day, with garden plans and plants and discussed just as much as plans for the houses. New species from the New World were status symbols in the great gardens of the day. The crown imperial lily, tulips, Turk's Cap lilies, fritillaries, candytuft, laburnum, sunflowers, evening primrose, nasturtium, lilacs, ranunculas, and Michaelmas daisies were all introduced during the period and might have been found in Campden alongside native species, as Hicks sought to create one of the finest gardens of his day. Today we must use the imagination, but the uniquely surviving earthworks make it still possible to appreciate the drama and conceits of an early 17th century garden.

The Landmark Trust is a building preservation charity that rescues historic buildings at risk and lets them for holidays The East Banqueting House sleeps 6 people and the West Banqueting House 4 people. To stay in the buildings on the Old Campden House site or any other Landmark property for a holiday please visit www.landmarktrust.org.uk or phone the Landmark Booking Office on 01628 825925.