

Shirley Tanner: architect

Dr Stephanie Tanner remembers her mother a longtime Camberwell resident.

Shirley Tanner, architect and resident of Camberwell since 1959, was a founder member of The Camberwell Society.

Serving on the Society's first planning sub-committee chaired by Stephen Marks, Shirley worked closely with Stephen on various campaigns. One of the earliest was an attempt to prevent the demolition of the Victorian terrace houses designated for replacement with the new Selbourne Estate. Shirley and Stephen undertook a thorough architectural survey of the terraces and interviewed residents. They concluded that the houses were in sound condition and urged the Council to reconsider.

Shirley, a proud Australian, was born in Maroubra, a seaside suburb of Sydney on 9 November 1928. A highly intelligent youngster, she attended the prestigious North Sydney Girls High School, going on to study architecture at the University of Sydney.

In 1952, Shirley married Jim Tanner, an architecture student at the University of New South Wales. Following graduation Shirley completed a three-year postgraduate course in town planning. In 1957 the University awarded her the Hezlet



Bequest to study landscape design at Durham University.

After a year in the north east of England, Shirley and Jim headed for London. They settled in Camberwell Grove in September 1959 having persuaded (with some difficulty) their bank manager to loan them the money to buy a tenanted late Georgian mid-terrace house. Children followed in the 1960s as Shirley built up her architecture practice. During this time she volunteered at the St Giles' Centre,

and then for the Windsor Walk Housing Association joining the management committee as consultant architect, developing sheltered housing for patients of the Maudsley Hospital.

In 1970, Shirley stood for election to the Greater London Council as a member of the party 'Homes Before Roads' dedicated to resisting GLC plans for an inner London motorway. This campaign was highlighted in an episode of the BBC Two television series *A Secret History of Our Streets* in which Shirley featured.

From the mid-1970s, Shirley's interest in health and social care led her to specialize in the development of GP surgeries, and design for primary care remained her work's focus until retirement in 1993.

Shirley now had time for her other passions – painting, drawing and gardening. But she never lost her enthusiasm for design and was thrilled to see her son, and then her grandson, follow her lead into architecture.

Shirley died, aged 92, on 27 May 2021. She leaves behind her beloved Jim, daughter Stephanie, son Ben and grandsons Kaspar and Luke.