



1953 – 1973 Caroline Penman's history

Caroline Penman (nee Filmer) was, at the age of 9, determined to be an antiques dealer. Her parents moved from a modern home in Reigate, to a Tudor house in Lindfield, W Sussex. They visited shops, auctions and houses open to the public, to furnish a period home. Caroline found that she could remember facts & dates, while her elders forgot them. At school, gradually double history lessons took over from sports & sciences, and her knowledge of social history and associated artefacts grew, concentrating on the 18th century.

In her school holidays she worked in the local antique shop in Lindfield, Sussex, then **Brighton Fair** came into Caroline's life, and she worked for Cultural Exhibitions Ltd, in 1959. Every July thereafter she was at the Brighton Fair (which was a very social event!), working for Reg Wilkinson (glass) for 3 years, before taking a stand of her own.

Caroline left school at 16 for a part time apprenticeship at Eric Seldon's Eastbourne antiques shop. She started buying, with the £2,000 left to her by her grandmother.

1962: Parents bought her a shop n Lindfield High Street, and at the age of 18 Caroline opened her own "**Lindfield Antiques**" shop.

1967 Caroline launched her first fair, in the local King Edward Hall, Lindfield. A 2-day event in August

1969 Caroline married a Royal Engineer, Richard Penman, who was rapidly bought out of the army, and became involved in dealing (in model engines & tin toys), and together they organised the fairs.

As well as running the shop and organising Fairs, Caroline and Richard took stands in other fairs - Brighton and Kensington, Wilton House, South West fairs, Howison-Howorth Fairs and North West Fairs run by Noel Gibson and Sue Brownson - using an American RV as a base (great fun!)

1969, the Ardingly Showground was the next venue, and from then on, Fair Organising took over.

When VAT started (1973) the prospect of special scheme book-keeping for the fast turnover that she was maintaining was too daunting, so the shop was sold. Still showing at fairs, the organisation of them took centre stage.....

Penman Fairs 1967 to 2019

1967 – 2007 LINDFIELD ANTIQUES FAIR Annual 2 days

After the initial decade, it was passed to Ron Beech who also took over Tony Keniston's fairs.

1968 - 1970 MID SUSSEX ANTIQUES FAIR Martlets Hall, Burgess Hill Annual 2 days

1969 – 1985 SOUTH OF ENGLAND ANTIQUES TRADE FAIR, Ardingly Showground

Initially 60 indoor stalls, some vetted. Outside pitches grew to 800,

Eventually 4 times a year, with Abergavenny & Pig & Sheep buildings added

Sold 1985 to Geoff Witacker (owned Newark), whose son sold all to DMG

- 1979 - 1980 Various showground, aerodrome fairs were tried, to emulate Ardingly:
 2 years: EPSOM RACECOURSE ANTIQUES FAIR
 1 year: BIGGLESWADE Old Warden Aerodrome
 2 years: CAMBERLEY AERODROME
 1 year: THRUXTON AERODROME
- 1979 – 1982 SHEPTON MALLET FAIR, West of England Showground. Indoors and outside.
 Given to Dave & Anne Stroud as a wedding present. They sold to DMG in 1995 & emigrated to Australia
 DMG employed Sue Ede to run all the "IACF" fairs. Annual then twice a year
- Caroline then moved to standfitted, vetted fairs...
- 1973 – 1977 NATINAL COLLECTORS' FAIR Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch
 bought from Eric Gamlin for £250 twice a year, 3 days, 50 stands
- 1976 – 2011 WEST LONDON ANTIQUES FAIR Kensington Town Hall. Originally Jan only
 August date added in 1986, sold in 1997 to Clarion Events. 3 floors, up to 90 stands
- 1980 - 1991 BRIGHTON ANTIQUES FAIR Corn Exchange
 taken over from Roger Heath Bullock, Cultural Exhibitions – 4 days up to 50 stands
- 1981 Husband Richard suffered severe head injuries in a car crash, 6 months in coma,
 returned home after rehabilitation, so fairs were reduced somewhat
- 1983 - 1984 THAME ANTIQUES FAIR Spread Eagle Hotel, Oxfordshire (taken over from Eric Gamlin)
- 1984 – present CHELSEA ANTIQUES FAIR, Chelsea Old Town Hall (taken over from Josephine Graham-Ballin)
- 1986 - 1995 WESTMINSTER ANTIQUES FAIR Horticultural Hall, Vincent Sq (taken over from Donald Newby)
- ? TUNBRIDGE WELLS ANTIQUES FAIR The Spa Hotel, Sue Barton's silver being stolen overnight
- 1987 - 1989 CITY OF LONDON ANTIQUES FAIR, The Barbican, (started in partnership with Raymond Gubbay)
- 1989 Barbara Bell joined the business, through till the present
- 1989 - 2019 CHESTER ANTIQUES FAIR, County Grandstand, Chester Racecourse
 Started from scratch encouraged by Valerie Owen Hughes, sold to Cooper Events 209)
 Originally February only, with October date added in 2000
- 1989 BRITAIN IN HONG KONG SHOW The new Exhibition Centre, HK Sadly a disaster!
- 1989 CHELTENHAM PERIOD HOME SHOW
- 1991 - 1993 THE LAPADA FAIR Royal College of Art organising it for LADADA
- 1991 - 1998 SUSSEX OAK & COUNTRY ANTIQUES FAIR, Barkham Manor, in a lovely Barn
- 1993 - 2000 KENSINGTON ANTIQUES FAIR Kensington Town Hall (ex-Cultural Exhibitions, with Terry Gasson)
- 1996
- 1996 A new group of Contemporary **ART FAIRS** was established, Chelsea being the only success:
 22 years: Chelsea Old Town Hall
 4 years: The HAC, Armoury House, City
 2 years: Mid-Sussex, Barkham Manor
 1 year: Winchester Guildhall
 1 year: Frogmill, A40 Nr Cheltenham
 1 year: The Swan at Tetsworth
- 1998 - 1999 THE 20TH CENTURY SHOW Chelsea Old Town Hall
- 1998 CITY OF LONDON ANTIQUES FAIR, Honourable Artillery Co, HAC

1999 - 2000 WEST OF ENGLAND ART FAIR, The Pavilion at Bath (with Duncan & Jacki Phillips)

1999 LINGFIELD PARK FAIR Lingfield Racecourse - not repeated

2000 – now PETERSFIELD ANTIQUES FAIR, Festival Hall (taken over from Heather Gamlin)
February and September, plus a June fair, dropped after 2002

2000 Chelsea's 50th anniversary

2001 BATH ANTIQUES FAIR The Pavilion, great expectations – but a flop! a one-off

2002 HOUGHTON TOWERS FAIR Nr Preston a one-off

2003 CHELSEA's duration reduced from 10 days to 6, March & September

2003 - 2005 DULWICH ART FAIR Dulwich College

2004 TYTHE BARN FAIR Nr Bicester a one-off, not allowed to advertise!

2004 - 2007 BURY ST EDMUNDS ANTIQUES FAIR The Athenaeum, (no fair in 2006)

2004 Louis Aldred and Stephanie Cripps were recruited to assist during fairs.
Also Ben Miller in Bury. James Mudie worked for 6 months full time.

2004 - 2005 UCKFIELD ANTIQUES FAIR Civic Centre Not popular or profitable, so only two

2005 March Chelsea now called KINGS ROAD ANTIQUES FAIR, co-inciding with BADA Fair

2005 - 2012 ANGLIAN ANTIQUES & ART FAIR, Cressing Temple – 2 beautiful medieval Barns

2006 New LINDFIELD ANTIQUES FAIR trying to add standfitting – too small! Not repeated

2006 - 2008 SUSSEX ANTIQUES FAIR, NEW venue: East Sussex National Golf Hotel
June 2006, moved to October in 2007, added ART in 2008, but lack of visitors finished it.

2006 Celebrated CHELSEA's 100th fair in Sept.

2006 SOLENT ART FAIR Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth – one off

2007 The 101st CHELSEA Antiques Fair higher standards – looked beautiful, lost money

2008 Nov Penman Fairs Limited took over from Caroline Penman sole trader,

2009 Ben Cooper joined Penmans, part-time - lowering our average age!

2010 TOWCESTER ANTIQUES FAIR, T Racecourse, venue could not offer same space again, one-off

2010 WEST LONDON ART & ANTIQUES FAIR in June, against Olympia & its American Director.

2012 CADA Fair at Blenheim Palace, working for the Cotswold A D Association.

2012 GUILDFORD ANTIQUES FAIR, newly rebuilt Civic Centre, June & December.

2013 CHELSEA ART FAIR now under Ben Cooper's Directorship – fewer higher priced stands

2014 Ben Cooper & Barbara Bell made co-directors of Penman Fairs Ltd with C Penman

2015 MALL GALLERIES ANTIQUES FAIR logistically difficult & too small – not repeated

2016 - 2017 FIRLE PLACE ANTIQUES FAIR in Tithe Barn, Lewes, Sx. Small not well supported

2016 - 2018 BURFORD ANTIQUES FAIR, B School – lower level 40 stands. Passed to 2Cs Fairs 2019

2018 No CHELSEA as Old Town Hall closed for refurbishments

2018 WINDSOR ANTIQUES FAIR, the Racecourse.
Eager anticipation, but a disappointment, 2019 date offered but no exhibitor support. Sad!

2019 Penman Fairs LIMITED closes, lack of fairs.
Caroline continuing as a sole trader, assisted by Barbara & Ben when needed.
Running Petersfield Feb & Sept, pos June also Plus Chelsea (hopefully)
Chester sold to Sue Ede of Cooper Events, Burford passed to TwoCs Fairs.

Fairs that never quite happened:

1992 Great plans to move Chelsea to Royal Hospital Grounds, but failed to get permission.
1995 Great plans for City Antiques Fair at Hon. Artillery Co field, but could not get support
1997 Planned but Cancelled ASCOT Antiques Fair
2006 Planned but cancelled HOVE and SHERBORNE Antiques Fairs + CAMBRIDGE ART Fair
2008 June Chester ART Fair planned in a different building – cancelled, insufficient support
2014 Planned CHILTERN Antiques fair, cancelled, lack of support.