

THE DERBYSHIRE RECORD OFFICE,

1966

By JOAN SINAR

IN 1966 the use of the Office's services both by depositors and students increased considerably. This was pleasing but led to difficulty after Mrs. Booth's resignation in mid-February consequent upon her marriage. Not only was no work possible on the backlog of listing which grows continually, but day-to-day work also piled up. It was only the appointment of an undergraduate, Miss A. Wright, as a temporary assistant for two months in summer, that halted the process. She brought up-to-date indexing and the despatch of lists, tackled a variety of chores, and helped with the listing of modern collections. Mr. C. J. Williams joined the Office as Assistant Archivist in September, making it possible to continue with the long overdue re-organization of the strongroom. The initial examination and rough sorting of a block of official records brought to light material relating to roads, bridges, health, public undertakings and charities, the existence of some of which had been suspected but not known, and made useful additions to our holdings at many minor points.

There were seventy-seven gifts and deposits, and fifteen further deposits, in all ninety-two accessions. Probably the most important of these as a source of Derbyshire history is Lord Vernon's deposit of deeds and papers relating to his estates from the 12th century onwards. Lord Vernon is retaining custody of certain sections of his papers, but has agreed that these should be survey listed. The other deposits of family and estate records are fairly small and consist largely of deeds covering lands and manors through the country in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Amongst the more interesting of these are the deeds of the buildings at Ashbourne which housed in turn an inn and Erasmus Darwin's boarding-school for girls.

A number of sale particulars have come from various sources, including an interesting group of particulars and valuations of Derbyshire manors in the mid and late 17th century. A similar document of more specialized nature is an 18th-century copy of the parliamentary survey and particulars for grants of the manor of Eckington, 1650. The 19th- and 20th-century particulars are illustrated in the main by plans which greatly increase their value to the student. Earlier ones naturally lack such refinements. Estate maps and plans are not common before the 19th century, and the Office was pleased to get a detailed map of Risley and Breaston drawn in 1722, with a delightful sketch of the surveyor in full-skirted coat.

Business records have received more attention this year. Indeed one deposit, that of the records of Charles Wright and Sons, wine merchants, of Wirksworth, by reason of its bulk and physical condition dominated the life of the Office for much of the year. These books and papers opening with a grocer's sales ledger in 1797 show clearly the building up of a business of more than local importance organized to deal with customers not merely in the midlands but in the greater part of England and Wales. The Office heard of the papers through the kindness of the staff of the Butterley Company. The owners, who had not previously realized the interest of their papers, had already sent some to salvage and were preparing to dispose of the rest. They were most kind and generous in their co-operation when they were aware of the real situation, and their manager drew attention to their old equipment which was reported to Mr. F. Nixon. These papers even in their damaged condition are an important source for business and social history, and would have been superb if their existence and interest had been realized in time. Anyone who owns, or knows of the existence of, business papers would help future generations if he could ensure that an archivist's advice is asked before papers are either destroyed or shot out of the office to moulder in a shed. In this Office records less than one hundred years old are not shown to searchers without the depositor's written consent, and in any local authority record office similar arrangements can be made to guard a firm's or family's privacy.

Some businesses have already realized the possible interest of their surviving records and either agreed to a survey or deposited their papers. The Butterley survey has been suspended this year because of pressure of work, but two small surveys are in process on the records of a Matlock corn mill, and on those papers of Messrs. John Bowmer, tape manufacturers, of Wirksworth retained in the owner's custody when the bulk of their older records were deposited. A third survey of the records of Shacklocks, estate agents, at Alfreton, has just been started. The National Coal Board has deposited a first instalment of estate maps, and a further load of accounts and other records is waiting to be collected. The practice papers of John Curzon and his predecessors, solicitors, mid 18th century to the late 19th century, are still being accessioned but include material relating to the Derby Canal and an unidentified 18th-century colliery which may be in Leicestershire. The papers of the Chesterfield-Hernstone Lane Turnpike Trust, 1856-1882, throw welcome light on the running and winding up of these trusts, and the search by a particular trust for some new activity, in this case the proposed tramway from Chesterfield to Brampton and Whittington.

Smaller groups of business records include 25 items relating to leadmining in the Alport district preserved by the Needham family, 1809-1860, two limestone quarry leases 1887-1895, Hodgkinson's Almanack for Matlock 1896-1943, and a small bundle of advertisements for Buxton attractions, early 20th century. Several deposits have included relevant business directories of one type and another, as well as two general directories: Pigot's *Commercial Directory*, 1828-1829, Vol. II, and Kelly's *Directory for Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire*, 1941. These directories are often thrown

away as old rubbish but are in fact extremely useful to geographers, local historians and many other research workers. In one week those in this office have been used by postgraduates working on 19th-century poor law, politics, and rural depopulation, as well as the usual run of students making local studies. The physical wear on these directories is heavy, and duplicate volumes are quite as welcome as directories of which we do not already have a copy.

Other business records have formed part of private deposits of a miscellaneous nature such as a further instalment of Mr. F. S. Ogden's papers. These include rating papers for Hulland 1827; and Brailsford 1861; plan of an estate at Ireton 1781; section of Repton School well and borehole, 1906; 17th- and 18th-century deeds; and printed papers relating to the coal trade 1905-1910. Mr. Thornhill deposited a group of papers relating to turnpike trusts later temporarily withdrawn, and a collection of school exercise books of the mid 19th century.

The collectors and local historians have been generous this year. Some have deposited papers, others have given copies or permitted copies to be made of manuscripts or working notes on a variety of subjects ranging from family trees to notes on Dronfield church, and a group of papers and notes on the Youlgreave and Monyash district. N.E. Derbyshire has been strongly represented in the collectors' deposits. Perhaps the largest of these were the working notes of the late Mr. W. Jacques on the history of Chesterfield with manuscript records and handbills relating to apprenticeship, public transport, gas, water and electricity undertakings, 19th century and 20th century, with a copy of J. Cary's Map of Derbyshire 1801. The newspaper cuttings and Figaro pamphlets from this collection were passed with the depositor's permission to the County Library which has a Figaro collection and a growing collection of newspaper cuttings. Newspaper cuttings forming an integral part of a collection are normally retained here, but large separate collections of cuttings are passed to the County Library Local History Collection, now housed in the Regional Library, Steep Turnpike, Matlock.

Other collectors' deposits range from 16th-century household accounts kept in a copy of *The Primer of the Salisbury Use*, Rouen, 1538, thought to have been found at Spinkhill, a collection of deeds for N.E. Derbyshire, 17th-19th century, and a further instalment of the papers of Bernard Lucas of Hasland, early 19th century, to the account book of the rector of Breadsall 1709-1719, and a varied collection of deeds and papers for N. Derbyshire, 17th to 19th century, including apprenticeship papers for Litton and other mills. Copy manuscripts presented to the Office or copies made here with permission include thirteen wills, 17th century, a plan of the Revell estate at Carnfield 1693; Bateman's "Annals of the Township and Village of Middleton" 1848; typescript copy of *The Wirksworth Advertiser Supplement* on the Wigwell murder 1863; handbook on Belper Boating Association, early 20th century; and a detailed topographical account of Clay Cross in the 1890s, 1951; manuscript copy of a South Wingfield rate assessment 1813, 1966.

Official records transferred relate to education and welfare. They include logbooks for schools at Boylestone, Shirley and Stainsby; a set of O.S. 1/2500

first edition covering most of the area controlled by the Belper Board of Guardians; and a number of minutes and ledgers as yet unexamined for N. Derbyshire Boards of Guardians. Hospital records — minute books and ledgers — have been deposited for Ridgeway (formerly Isolation Hospital) 1895-1948, Whitworth Hospital 1933-1948, Ashbourne Joint Hospital Board 1903-1948, Draycott Hospital 1913-1948, and Wirksworth Cottage Hospital 1945-1948. The Office is now recognized as the repository for hospital records (other than medical case records) for Derbyshire. Further instalments of petty sessions records for Alfreton, Belper, Matlock and Wirksworth have been brought in. The minute books of the Derbyshire Insurance Committee, 1912-1948, were only the second set of records relating to insurance deposited in the office, and it was very encouraging to receive the rules, minutes and contribution account of the Staveley Shed Sick Club, a railway friendly society, 1914-1966. As yet the Office is very weak in friendly society and allied material. Ashover Parish Council made a further deposit of papers, and the Clerk of the Temple Normanton and Pilsley Parish Councils and School Managers deposited records of all four bodies.

Survey work has been limited severely this year mainly by shortage of staff in the normal survey months, but a few small surveys have been undertaken, mostly in connection with deposits being arranged. There is a large backlog of earlier survey lists awaiting drafting before they can be typed. Listing fell steadily behind as an increasing number of deposits came in and an increasing number of students and postal enquiries needed attention.

We are catching up again with listing the small deposits and quickly listed material, and once more attacking the rough sorting of large deposits and official holdings. Collections consisting largely of deeds are those which are most in arrears, and these need more time to sort and list than almost any other form of record except letters. The larger family collections have presented particular difficulty because they need periods of uninterrupted attention which it was not possible to give single-handed. Work on them has now started again. Talks and exhibitions continue to be in great demand at many levels. Short talks and small exhibitions are given to social groups with only a general interest. These are a valuable means of contact with Derbyshire people for they often result in deposits or invitations to survey records. Longer talks and more extensive exhibitions are given to groups with some particular historical interest — extramural and W.E.A. classes and local archaeological or historical societies, as well as students at colleges of education. Indeed this year as well as the normal introductory talk on the use of record offices and the choice of a special subject to the Matlock historical students, short talks surveying sources for a first-year topographical project have been given to small groups. This, it is hoped, will save time in explaining the material to the individual student when he comes to use the papers. Accommodation for searchers, though more comfortable than it used to be, is still limited. Would-be searchers are urged to make appointments or check by telephone that a visit is possible. There is not only the ordinary risk that there may be no archivist in the office, but this year a new risk that the searchers' accommodation may be filled.