

THE MUSEUM

The Museum for the first time organised two craft demonstration days in April at which a number of workers in textiles generously showed their skills. These included patchwork, smocking, spinning, lacemaking, goldwork and cutwork. Special displays were also put on of collections not normally exhibited, including a number of smocks, quilts, embroideries and lace. This event proved very popular and 854 adults and 318 children attended the two days.

In June the Museum published a definitive illustrated booklet on the Aylesbury duck by Alison Cole. The initial work was done while Miss Cole was working on a STEP project in the Museum. The booklet has proved by far the most popular of the Museum's publications.

After over a year of temporary staff, Miss

Linda Babb, formerly Senior Assistant at the Hereford and Worcester County Museum, was appointed Keeper of History and Archaeology in July.

The most important exhibition during the year was '25 Years of the Bucks Historic Churches Trust' which was opened by the Lord Lieutenant and demonstrated the work which the Trust has undertaken in the County. Another interesting exhibition was 'Views of Bucks in the 1940s' which consisted of a selection of watercolours from the Recording Britain series which is on permanent loan from the Victoria & Albert Museum. This was a project financed by the Pilgrim Trust at the beginning of the War whereby professional artists were asked to record buildings and views which might have been destroyed or badly damaged during the War.

COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

Extracts from the annual report by the County Archivist

The year was marked by changes in the staff and in the opening hours of the Record Office. John Wilson's resignation as Senior Assistant Archivist, effective from January 1983, came after six years service in a period of unremitting pressure on the Office during which his never failing good humour and unflappability were greatly appreciated.

The long-delayed internal review of the Office's services was finally completed but the changes recommended are likely to afford only modest relief.

The review was carried out by the Management Services Section of the County Personnel Department. Its brief included the definition of staffing requirements necessary to maintain

the existing level of service and the consideration of areas of potential development and their related staffing implications. Among the recommendations made — to be applied as financial and other constraints permit — were Monday closing of the searchroom, the eventual replacement of the post of General Assistant by two part-time Search Room Supervisors (at Archive Assistant level), the increased use of microfilms in the provision of photocopies for sale to the public and the reinstatement of a full-time Repairer-Conservationist post on the establishment. The report also recognised that adequate fulfilment of the existing demand in relation to modern records would require increased staffing. Other areas of potential development (e.g. education, exhibitions), however, received no detailed consideration on

the grounds that "putative demand for such developments is not demonstrable".

Coming after such a long period of gestation, the review is a disappointingly brief (15 pp.) and superficial examination of the Office's problems and its recommendations are hardly consistent with the objectives proposed. Reduced opening hours, for example, though they enable a more balanced allocation to be made of present very low staff resources, can only be considered a curtailment of service to the public and protests have been received from Bucks Family History Society and from several individual researchers.

Accessions

The total of separate accessions during the year was 127.

Much of the decline in the number of accessions from last year's high figure of 176 is accounted for by reduced intake from ecclesiastical parishes which in turn reflects the varied incidence of the diocesan survey. Records were received from 26 parishes of which four had not previously deposited. Early series of parish registers were received from Denham, the Lillingstones, Water Stratford and Hedsor; the first two Hughenden registers, which had been mislaid for some years, were also deposited. The records of Denham include a seventeenth century manor court book and those for Lillingstone Lovell a volume of eighteenth century constable's accounts. A large and important group of poor law and other records relating to Chesham, formerly kept in the parish chest, was deposited through the good offices of the Chess Valley Archaeological and Historical Society. Among them is a partial parish census for 1821. The accession from Chalfont St. Giles parish includes some unusually full records for the charity school there founded by Admiral Sir Hugh Palliser in 1794.

The diocesan inspector's survey of parish registers under the 1978 Measure has continued and is expected to be completed by the end of 1983 or soon afterwards. Survey work in Bucks this year was mainly confined to Mursley deanery.

A second group of parish registers deposited in the Office was microfilmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah with the consent of the diocesan Bishop and the permission of the parish authorities concerned. Copies of the films will be made available to the Office in due course free of charge and will be used as far as possible in place of the originals. A further advantage is the eventual inclusion of the microfilmed registers in the Bucks section of the International Genealogical Index to christenings and marriages, available on microfiche.

The discovery of a large cache of documents at Langley Park near Slough created some excitement locally. The house, which was built for the 3rd Duke of Marlborough in the mid-eighteenth century, is now the property of the Buckinghamshire County Council and the documents were found by a member of the Council's staff in a concealed wall safe in the entrance hall. They consist in the main of title deeds and records of estate administration, the latter dating from 1788 — when the Harvey family acquired the property — until c.1860, as well as some deeds and papers for that family's Irish estates.

Another substantial accession of estate records was that received from Lord Chesham for the Latimer estate. It relates mainly to the first half of the present century and it rounds off the extensive estate material previously deposited. The spread of "Metroland" is illustrated in correspondence files relating to property sales, etc., after 1902, and there is a set of duplicate returns of agricultural statistics for the estate, 1899-1918.

Of particular interest from the point of view of the student of forms of urban organisation are the records contained in the Colnbrook Town Box which reflect the town's former corporate status. A note in one of the record books c.1655 explains what happened:

"After the unhappie wars began some of the bretheren left towne and some died and by reason of the great troubles that were then in this kingdom they did not make choyce of the other burgisses in the roome of those that

were dead and dispersed then the cooperation was left of . . .”

Although the existence of the records was known from references in older published works, their whereabouts had long been lost sight of and thanks are due to the Middle Thames Archaeological and Historical Society for bringing them to the attention of the Record Office.

In contrast to Colnbrook the town of Beaconsfield never seems to have enjoyed borough status. However, an accession of records of the former urban district council includes relics of earlier forms of local administration, namely the Boards of Health set up in 1850 and the manor court. Even more unusual is a minute book of the local justice of the peace of the 1780s.

Additional records were deposited for the Chesham Broadway and Ford (Dinton) Baptist Churches. The minute books of the former, dating from 1712, are an important series. They are being transcribed for publication by the Baptist Historical Society.

There were several interesting small accessions of business records. Those for J. Millburn and Son, auctioneers, of Aylesbury are the first of their kind to be received while the account books of D.G. Patterson, draper and tailor of Chesham, are notable for their careful arrangement on a geographical basis.

Other miscellaneous accessions included the pocket diary of a Bucks justice of the peace for the year 1676; an early eighteenth-century household account book of the Farrer family of Cold Brayfield; and a small group of purchased medieval property documents for the Amersham area.

A group of early Maunsell family deeds for Chicheley was purchased by private treaty with assistance from the Purchase Grant Fund administered by the Victoria and Albert Museum. Generous grants from the Francis

Coales Charitable Foundation and the Friends of the National Libraries are also gratefully acknowledged.

Owing to an oversight the Chess Valley Archaeological and Historical Society was omitted from the list of contributors towards the purchase of the Drake deeds given in last year's Report.

Cataloguing and Indexing

As usual, the major effort had to be concentrated on keeping up with the listing of current accessions. However, the Chequers estate deeds and documents were catalogued and typed and an MS draft catalogue of the Townshend of Wood Green papers was substantially completed. Two other smaller groups of records relating to Aylesbury and to the Taplow area were also catalogued. The preliminary list of the Drake deeds purchased in 1981 was finished and limited access to the documents is now possible; further work on this archive has had to be deferred for the time being. The diocesan tithe commutation records transferred last year also await further attention. A card index is being prepared to wills in the probate records of the Buckinghamshire "peculiar" transferred from the Bodleian Library last year. When finished, it will be merged with the card index to Archdeaconry wills to provide a (colour-coded) union index.

The typescript index to the published annual lists of accessions mentioned in last year's report was completed.

A list was made for reference purposes of Bucks items in the Bodleian Library's topographical index of views.

A survey was carried out of the older records of the County Treasurer's department and recommendations made about retention policy. Some progress was also made in "weeding" files of the former County Clerk's department which have been brought together for appraisal in the Judges' Lodgings strongroom.