

THE MUSEUM

The Museum is still suffering considerable inconvenience from structural problems and so far it has proved possible only to relocate the Biological Records Office on the ground floor in an area which was formerly occupied by a small store off the Education Room and by the smaller of the two Geology Galleries. The work of the Museum is likely to be made extremely difficult over the next year or two.

A Museum Visitors Survey has been undertaken using a standard questionnaire produced by Data & Research Services of Milton Keynes who processed the forms by computer. The survey was carried out from 30 March to 16 April and from 13 July to 7 August and in total 493 visitors were interviewed. The main aims of the survey were to try to discover where people visiting the Museum came from and what they thought of the Museum. As was anticipated it showed that a majority of visitors are local and are most probably County ratepayers. Over 50% were ratepayers of Aylesbury Vale District Council and over 80% lived within 25 miles of Aylesbury. Over 80% said they were likely to visit the Museum again and were satisfied with the displays in their own interest areas. It was however obvious that people found it difficult to find the Museum due to the lack of direction signs in Aylesbury and that publicity was not proving satisfactory.

During the year most of the temporary exhibitions were initiated by the Museum staff. The most successful undoubtedly being one displaying photographs of the Vale and Chilterns in the 1890s from a private collection of glass plate negatives which had never been displayed before.

The exhibition of the Museum's collection of samplers and embroidered pictures was to coincide with the publication of a fully illustrated catalogue of the collection written by Rosemary Ewles, a former member of staff. Two of the exhibitions were held in both the Museum and the Milton Keynes Exhibition Gallery, those on 18th Century Gardens in Buckinghamshire and of the Museum's collection of British Studio Ceramics.

The Aylesbury Past Project under Hal Dalwood continued for the whole year but ends in March 1988. Apart from continuing a programme of fieldwalking they carried out an excavation on the site of the old police houses in Walton Street, Aylesbury and further details of this are given in the archaeological notes. When some pliosaur bones were found on the Watermead development site in Aylesbury a limited excavation was carried out by the Project team. This was a locally important find. The bones are of a carnivorous reptile the size of a small whale which lived in the seas covering most of southern Britain in Jurassic times. Whilst individual bones of pliosaurus have been found in the Vale before a spread of associated bones such as this is unusual. In addition tape recordings were made of some older inhabitants and in December a booklet *Aylesbury Remembered* was published. The work done under this MSC scheme has been invaluable.

The number of visitors to the Museum during the year was 29549; this compares with 36439 in 1986. There is no apparent reason for this as the temporary exhibitions have if anything been more interesting than the previous year. C.N.G.

COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

Extracts from the Report of the County Archivist

There was a small but significant increase in the Office's establishment, but full implementation was deferred for financial

reasons. However, staffing problems in the searchroom were ended by the appointment of a production assistant. Meanwhile the backlog of

cataloguing grew and the storage problem became more acute.

There was a total of 108 accessions during the year. A further large consignment of records of the former Aylesbury Borough Council was received, dating from 1917 (the date of the town's charter) to the 1950s. Among other official records deposited were some County Planning Officer's files relating to the establishment of Milton Keynes, and some First World War records of the Royal Bucks Hussars.

The ecclesiastical parishes of Horton, Wooburn and Gerrards Cross deposited their older records and nineteen other parishes made additional deposits. The Horton registers begin in 1571, Wooburn's only in 1653, but the parish has a wealth of material from the late seventeenth century onwards, much of it relating to poor relief; there is also a rare parish census of 1801.

Webster & Cannon Ltd, builders, of Aylesbury, passed over their surviving older records, dating from 1885. Other business records included a collection of sale particulars from the High Wycombe area, 1887–1961, and a plumber's estimate book for the Winslow area, 1891–1920.

The court rolls and other manorial documents deposited with the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society were transferred to the Record Office. Over a hundred manors are represented. There are particularly good runs of rolls for Chalfont St Peter, Chesham, Hartwell, Long Crendon, Iver and Stone.

A substantial body of Westbury estate deeds was deposited through the British Records Association. The greater part dates from the early eighteenth century, but there are extracts from earlier records. The first of two account

books for the Drake family's Shardeloes estate, 1746–1768, was acquired with help from the Purchase Grant Fund administered by the Victoria & Albert Museum. The second is already in the Record Office. Among other estate and family records received were letters home from George Church, a transported convict from Olney; an account roll for the Colet estate in Wendover, 1514–15; a royal grant of the manor of Taplow, 1614; and a pre-enclosure map of Marsh Gibbon, 1819. Finally, an album presented by Miss P. Appleby of Amersham deserves special mention, containing as it does a unique record of the activities of the Women's Land Army in Bucks during the Second World War.

As usual, listing was concentrated on recent accessions, including several from last year, but a number of large accessions remain to be dealt with. Cumulated indexes to the published lists of accessions for 1976–1985 were completed and await typing. The conservators battled on. 636 paper documents were repaired or flattened, and de-acidified. 360 were guarded and filed, while 16 large maps and 8 parchment documents were repaired. The largest single task was the repair of the seventeenth-century papers of Sir Robert Clayton.

Personal visits during the year totalled 2611 (2645 in 1986). Postal enquiries amounted to 719 (706). A total of 2576 (2735) telephone calls were logged, of which 1186 (1172) were enquiries. 13,473 (13,452) items were produced, including 2122 (1692) rolls of microfilm.

The Claydon House Manuscripts Trust

In June the trustees appointed a qualified archivist to catalogue the Verney archives, concentrating on the estate records stored in the Paper Room, rather than the more celebrated correspondence, which is available on microfilm in the Record Office.