

THE MUSEUM

The Museum has undergone considerable changes during 1988. Following the retirement of Christopher Gowing after 26 years of service, the post of Curator was redesignated 'County Museums Officer' and Colin Dawes took up this position in March.

An in-depth assessment of the Museum's work, collections, management and facilities was carried out by the County Museums Officer, and this *Museums Service Appraisal* was presented to the Library and Museum Subcommittee of the County Council in December. Another report, by the Area Museums Service for South-Eastern England (AMSSEE), was also presented to the Committee. This was produced as part of a 'Major Project' carried out by AMSSEE, and was the first such project in Britain. Over 80 experts visited the Museum to assess all aspects of its work and collections, and important recommendations were made for the future.

The structural problems of the Museum building have become more apparent, and it was decided that, apart from the Aylesbury Gallery and Special Exhibitions Gallery, the Museum would have to be closed for a considerable period of time. By 31 March 1989 the Museum will have closed, and its collections

and staff will be in temporary premises in the former Halton Middle School for a period of up to four years. This will enable the Museum's buildings to be completely renovated and will allow the construction of modern facilities and displays, and will result in the production of a fine new County Museum.

The Museum has continued to acquire items for its collections. Of particular importance was the acquisition of 611 Roman silver denarii from Little Brickhill, which were purchased with help from the Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund. They represent an additional part of the hoard of 292 coins previously acquired in 1967. A fine nineteenth-century painting of Brill, by Edmund J. Niemann, was also acquired with substantial assistance from the Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund and the National Art-Collections Fund.

Special exhibitions in the Museum continued to be successful, and an exhibition of banners proved to be a particularly popular attraction. Visitor numbers, however, dropped to 26,563, compared to 29,549 in 1987. Much of this reduction may be accounted for by difficulties in the galleries due to the Museum's structural problems.

Colin V. Dawes

COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

Extracts from the Report of the County Archivist for 1988

This was an uneventful year, during which hoped-for relief from the problems of staffing, accommodation and storage again failed to materialize. It ended however, with the welcome news that the budget panel had recommended that priority should be given to filling the two additional posts of assistant archivist and trainee conservator.

There was one new departure, the introduction of a readers' ticket system as part of a coordinated attempt to improve security in county record offices.

There was a total of 131 accessions during the year; the corresponding figure for 1987 was 108.

A complete series of registers of permanent teachers, 1904–30, was transferred from the Education Department, supplemented by registers of teachers' salaries for various dates between 1935 and 1946. Anyone writing the history of a school will find these volumes invaluable.

Chiltern District Council deposited the building contract plans for the former Amersham Rural District Council, 1917–47, with accompanying registers. This large accumulation of well over 5000 plans will be of great value for research into the social and economic history of the area as well as for the study of particular houses.

The records of the ecclesiastical parish of High Wycombe, comprising over 180 volumes and a considerable quantity of papers, were deposited. The parish registers date from 1610 and the accounts and rate books from the 1660s. Additional records were received for over twenty other ecclesiastical parishes.

Records of two local building firms, George Darlington & Sons of Amersham and W.

Hearne of Bourne End, were acquired. The former begin in 1889. Thomas Wethered & Sons, brewers, of Great Marlow, deposited property records of public houses in many parishes, some of which go back to the 17th century. Mr Alan Wigley passed over more records of the family estate agents' business including a complete set of bidding books for properties auctioned, 1877–1934.

A further sizeable consignment of mixed deeds and documents was received from Parrott and Coales, Solicitors, of Aylesbury. Among them are records relating to William Rickford, MP for Aylesbury from 1818 to 1841 and founder of the town's first bank.

There were six accessions of manorial records of various dates including good runs of court rolls for the manors of Temple Wycombe, 1342–1544, and Winslow, 1619–1701, and steward's papers for the manor of Aylesbury, c. 1650–60.

A fine series of 29 early deeds relating to Edlesborough was acquired by purchase with assistance from the Purchase Grant Fund administered by the Victoria & Albert Museum and from the Buckinghamshire Record Society. The earliest document is thought to date from the end of the twelfth century and is possibly the oldest document in the Record Office.

Also acquired by purchase were an annotated poll book for the county election of 1784, and an outsize map of part of the Wotton estate, 1847. The poll book notes deaths and changes in land ownership and gives names of new voters.

Other estate and family records received included papers relating to the Bell family of Milton's Cottage, Chalfont St Giles, 1788–1919; diaries of John Pope Fordom, farmer, of Little Kimble, 1822, 1827–9, 1833, and two eighteenth-century estate maps, one for property in Little

Kimble, 1748, and the other for the manor of Chearsley, c.1763.

Cataloguing was again devoted almost exclusively to recent accessions. A start was made on classifying and relisting the manorial records deposited by the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, which will be kept as one collection. Cataloguing of one older accession, the additional Bulstrode MSS, was finally completed.

Place-indexing of the contents of the valuers' books in the records of Wigley, estate agents, Winslow, was completed, and indexing of the various series of sale particulars in the same archive begun. Name indexes were prepared for several recently completed catalogues.

The number of personal visits during the year was 2580 (2611 in 1987). Postal enquiries were 636 (719). A total of 2842 (2576) telephone calls

was logged of which 1253 (1186) were enquiries.

The problem of storage space continued to worsen and will become acute before the end of next year unless extra space can be found. The proposal to build extra accommodation in the courtyard above the Record Office, mentioned in last year's report, is in abeyance for the time being.

An unexpected challenge to the conservator's skills presented itself when the statue of John Hampden in Ayles Market Square was moved to an adjacent site. A 'time capsule' in the form of a sealed jar containing newspapers, documents, and other souvenirs of the unveiling in 1912 was recovered from the base but the papers were found to have suffered badly from damp and the conservator was called in to restore those that could be salvaged. They were then inserted in an enlarged capsule which was substituted for the original.