

THE MUSEUM

1990 was the year of consolidation for the County Museum. Moving to the Museum's Technical Centre at halton was completed by the end of February, and provided attractive and spacious accommodation for the Museum staff and a large part of the collections.

The structural survey by the County architect on the County Museum's Church Street premises was completed in August, and resulted in a detailed two-volume report. Many more structural problems were discovered than were initially expected, and the study revealed severe infestations of woodworm and death-watch beetle. It was estimated that the repairs to the building would cost £1.33m plus fees, and that necessary improvements to the building to enable it to re-open as a museum would cost £600,000. These sums have not yet been secured, and the starting date for repairs has not been set, which is a worrying situation.

Several significant acquisitions were made during the year. A Saxon gold and garnet pendant from Milton Keynes was discovered by the Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit during excavations at Westbury Medieval village. Generous financial assistance from the Victoria & Albert Museum Purchase Fund en-

abled the Museum to purchase a fine late nineteenth-century painting by Alfred de Breanski Sr entitled 'Medmenham Abbey and Ferry on the Thames'. The Fund also helped with the acquisition of two other items, an early sixteenth-century golf ring from Milton Keynes and a magnificent 'founder's hoard' of late Bronze Age axe heads and metal found in Aylesbury in 1973. A unique and important Roman forger's hoard of over 800 items including coin dies, coin blanks and metal in three pots was discovered near Fenny Stratford, and was also acquired for the Museum. These are but a few of the many hundreds of items added to the Museum's collection in 1990.

During the year the County Museum's Officer attempted to purchase a portrait of Mrs John Wilkes, painted in 1775 by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Despite raising £57,000 in total from private and Museum sources it was impossible at the time for the County Council to provide the extra £28,000 needed to secure the painting, which subsequently exported to France, £41,000 raised from private sources was returned to the donors.

Colin V. Dawes

COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

Extracts from the County Archivist's Report

This was another busy year. The Archives Panel appointed last October continued its examination of the Office's problem and future needs and the Office was involved in a joint project on the teaching of Local History in schools. In addition an extensive programme of microfilming of parish records was undertaken. In June the Record Office was at last given exclusive possession of the basement storeroom into which overflow material was moved last year.

Accessions

There was a total of 124 accessions this year; the figure last year was 116.

Small transfers of departmental records were made by the County Engineer, the County Secretary, and the County Emergency Planning Officer; some of the last contained information on wartime bomb damage.

An important group of records of the Amersham poor law union was deposited, consisting principally of minutes and accounts of the board of guardians. They dovetail with other, earlier, records of the union already in the Record Office.

Aylesbury Vale District council deposited a large accumulation of minute books, ledgers and rate books for Winslow Rural District Council and its predecessor body, the Rural Sanitary Authority, dating from around 1870.

Additional deposits of records were made for nine ecclesiastical parishes. Among those from Medmenham parish was a contemporary copy of a table of rates of wages in the county promulgated by quarter sessions in 1673. It is believed to be the earliest such list for Bucks to have come to light.

Nonconformist records received included records of the former Winslow Congregational church, the High Wycombe Methodist circuit,

and the High Wycombe and District Free Church Federal Council.

The world of business was represented by a series of out-letter books, 1867-1870, and other records of George Vernon & Son, Chartered Surveyors and Estate Agents, of High Wycombe. Much of the correspondence relates to estate management, some of it documented in great detail.

A chest full of title deeds of Selby-Lowndes family properties in Whaddon and Winslow was deposited. They date from the eighteenth century and include a lease of Winslow Hall, 1873, incorporating a schedule of fixtures in the various rooms. Also relating to the Selby-Lowndes family were two small estate maps of Whaddon Chase and its vicinity, 1800 and 1802. Two very fine map-surveys of the Lee family's Hartwell estate, dated 1777 and 1866 were also deposited.

Other estate material acquired included some stray deeds of the Lillingstone Dayrell estate, 1616-1805, and microfilms of the records of the Bucks estates of the Coke family of Holkham in Hillesden and Farnham Royal.

As usual, there were a good many small accessions of deeds and related documents for individual properties.

Cataloguing, Indexing and Conservation

In addition to routine listing and indexing of current accessions, several selected accessions from previous years were dealt with. They included the records of Borlase School, Marlow, the Baker family correspondence and a large quantity of rate books of former district councils. Detailed listing of the manorial records received from the Bucks Archaeological Society in 1987 continued. Work was begun on a final catalogue of the Buckingham borough archive to replace the existing rough handlist.

Conservation work included the repair of marriage bonds and allegations from the series in the Archdeaconry records, many of which are too fragile to be produced to searchers. More work was also done in protecting and conserving photographs, mostly forming part of privately deposited archives. Altogether 243 paper documents were repaired and deacidified, 288 were encapsulated, and the work also included the repair of twelve volumes and six

large maps.

Use of the Records

The number of personal visits to the Record Office during the year was 2513 (2599 in 1989). Postal enquiries were 676 (700). A total of 2806 (2830) telephone calls was logged. The number of document slips presented was 7987 (9202). A total of 12809 (15766) items was produced, including 1714 (1766) reels of microfilm.