

THE MUSEUM

1991 has seen the continuing investigation of the structure of the County Museum's buildings. A particularly exciting discovery was made on the first floor of Ceely House, where a 16th century wall painting was discovered behind an 18th century wall. Plans for the £2.3 million refurbishment and improvement of the building continue to be developed, and it is hoped that building work will commence early in 1992 if County Council funds allow.

Sir Timothy Raison MP is planning to launch an Appeal to fund the construction of a new art gallery at first floor level on the site of the former playground of the Old Grammar School. This will be the core of a 3,000 sq. ft suite of art galleries, providing a facility of regional significance that will compliment the new County Museum.

A number of significant acquisitions have been made during the year to the County Museum's collections. A unique late 15th century gold reliquary cross was discovered by a metal detector user in Milton Keynes on Easter Sunday. Generous support from the Victoria & Albert Museum Purchase Fund, the Milton Keynes Borough Council and the Milton Keynes Development Corporation supplemented the Museum's purchase fund and made its purchase possible. When found the cross had been recently buckled, but this damage was repaired by conservators at the British Museum.

Mona (the Moon), one of a group of seven statues depicting Saxon deities by Rysbrack that were sold in the 1921 sale at Stowe, was acquired by the Museum. An export licence for this important 18th century sculpture was withdrawn until 1st October 1991. With two days to spare the £45,000 needed for its purchase was raised by the County Museum, thanks to major support from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the National Art Collections Fund. Other funding came from the Museum's purchase fund and public donations. Rysbrack was the foremost sculptor working in England in the early 18th century, and the statue is thought to be one of his greatest works.

Four paintings of local scenes by Alexander Jamieson (1874-1937) were acquired with generous assistance from the Victoria & Albert Museum Purchase Fund. The artist lived in Weston Turville and is regarded as an important English Impressionist painter. The archive relating to the Jamieson's life was also added to the Museum's collection.

Other items acquired include a late Bronze Age gold bracelet discovered in Milton Keynes, two spearheads from Buckingham, a late 14th century chalkstone corbel from Aylesbury, carved as a female head, and a hoard of late 3rd century copper coins from Shenley Common Farm, Milton Keynes.

Colin V. Dawes, County Museums Officer

COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

*Extracts from the Annual Report of the County Archivist,
for 1991*

The report of the Archives Panel appointed by the Public Protection Committee in October 1989 to review the needs of the service, was approved by the Committee in June. The Report found that the Record Office has long been considerably under-resourced by comparison with other similar counties and that as a result its ability to carry out the basic objectives of rescuing and preserving records and making them available to the public has been seriously undermined.

To alleviate the pressing problem of insufficient accommodation the Report recommends that the conservation unit should be relocated outside the Office and that the possibility of accommodating other members of staff off-site should be investigated. It is also recommended that the basement storeroom should be adapted and equipped.

To reduce the large backlog of cataloguing the Report recommends an increase in staffing of at least three further archivists. Other recommended improvements include: an extension of opening hours; additional reprographic and computer facilities; a regular programme of preservation microfilming, and investigation of the possibility of a specialised service to schools.

An initial three-year programme incorporating annual increases in revenue spending of £18,700 is envisaged. Regrettably, financial constraints caused partial deferment of the first part of the proposed programme, but the Report's recommendations provide a clear blueprint for the gradual expansion of the service during the 1990s.

There was a total of 134 accessions during the year. Last year's total was 130. Several County Council departments made small trans-

fers of records. They included records of the former children's home at Bedlow 1924-1949, and a comments book for the Judges Lodgings, Aylesbury, 1927-1970, when Aylesbury was still an assize town.

South Bucks District Council deposited a further consignment of records of the former Eton Rural District Council, 1895-1930, together with minutes of the Eton Union Sanitary Committee, 1890-1895. More records were received from the Aylesbury Area Health Authority, including copies of annual reports, 1908-1919, 1927-1971.

Six civil parishes deposited their older records. The most varied were those for Haddenham, which included a very detailed parish valuation made in 1831 upon the inclosure of the open fields, parish vestry minutes and a subscription book for the Oddfellows Friendly Society, 1896-1916.

The parish registers of Hambleton, dating from 1566, were deposited. One volume contains contemporary scale drawings of the former rectory (now Kendrick House), as rebuilt in 1724. Additional deposits were also received from eleven other parishes.

Log books and other records were received for four schools. Account books of the Aylesbury Grammar School trustees, 1879-1967, were deposited. A run of insurance policy registers, 1875-1953, gives invaluable information about buildings in the Aylesbury area. Of special interest is a separate register of policies covering household and workmen's compensation insurance, 1907-1927, which gives particulars of employees and of wages paid.

The most significant group of estate records received was the four volumes relating to the

Buckinghamshire estate of the Stanhope family, earls of Chesterfield. They comprise a register of tenancies, 1760-1790, a map-survey, c.1779, and two other surveys dated 1798 and 1810. It may also be appropriate to mention here the title deeds of Lower Glory Mills, Wooburn, 1665-1865.

Stray records were acquired for several other landed estates: the Jenney family's estate at Drayton Beauchamp and elsewhere, 1648-1923; the estates of the Waller family of Hall Barn in Beaconsfield; and the manor of Bradenham, 1395-1691.

The trustees of William Harding's Charity, Aylesbury, generously funded the purchase of microfilm copies of the records of the Bucks estate of the Pakington family, lords of the manor of Aylesbury from the mid 16th century until 1802. They are particularly rich in medieval material.

Detailed cataloguing of the Buckingham borough archives, was completed and further progress was made in listing the manorial records deposited by the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society. Some experience was gained in the use of the computer for cataloguing.

Work has continued on the listing of the Claydon House manuscripts with the help of additional grants from the Pilgrim Trust, the Radcliffe Trust and the Marc Fitch Fund. The

draft catalogue now runs to over 400 closely-typed pages. It is expected that the work will be completed in the course of 1992.

The number of personal visits to the Record Office recorded during the year was 2,596 (2,513 in 1990). Postal enquiries were 716 (676). A total of 2,865 (2,806) telephone calls was logged, of which 1,199 (1,284) were enquiries. The number of document slips presented was 7,310 (7,987). A total of 10,060 (12,809) items was produced, including 2,077 (1,714) reels of microfilm. The latter figures reflect the much higher proportion of parish registers now produced on microfilm.

A rough analysis of the entries in the Office's visitors book for the year yields the following breakdown of subjects researched:

Family History	62%
Local History & Topography	25%
Other	13%
	100%

Conservation continued, although from October onwards Jeffrey Cargill was the sole conservator in post. More work was done in repairing and encapsulating marriage licences and in conserving photographs. A programme for boxing the much-used registers of archdeaconry wills was completed and a project to protect and consolidate other outside volumes, including manorial court books, was initiated.