

THE MUSEUM

1992 was a year of enormous change for the County Museum's building in Church Street, where two galleries still remain open and still attract over 12,000 visitors per year. In February work commenced on the restoration of the timber structure of the main building, including the treatment of all wood to eradicate death watch beetle, woodworm and rot. Main timbers were reinforced with inserts of steel and resin, and many new timbers were added to improve the load bearing of floors. The quality of the workmanship has been excellent at all times.

In October the main contractors for the refurbishment scheme started work, and an half acre of temporary roof was built over the entire County Museum building to protect it from the weather as repairs were undertaken. Every tile and slate was removed, the roof timbers and parapets repaired, and then the tiles were replaced onto the same roofs from which they were taken. New Welsh slates were used to replace the originals which were badly worn, and all lead work and gutters were renewed. The result will be a waterproof County Museum for the first time in many years.

Sir Timothy Raison launched an appeal to raise £500,000 to build an Art Gallery in the heart of the County Museum. This will include existing rooms in Ceely House and the Old Grammar School to create a 3,000 sq.ft. art gallery complex of regional importance. Fundraising is going well and approximately £275,000 had been raised by the end of 1992. Work has already started on the demolition of 1930s extensions on the Old Grammar School playground site to make way for the new building. As well as a first floor art gallery the extension will provide a ground floor museum gallery and a new basement and munitions room.

The family of the late Roald Dahl has given £75,000 to the County Museum towards the creation of the Roald Dahl Children's Gallery, a 'hands-on' gallery particularly for children and families. This will be situated in the Coach House of Ceely House and in an extension to be built in the yard behind. It will become a major attraction at the County Museum, and should attract visitors from all over Britain.

Work on documenting collections on computer has been a major project since the Museum moved to the Museum Technical Centre at Halton. This enormous task is progressing well, with assistance from volunteers to supplement work by Museum staff. Information from early accession registers is being combined with new records and will enable the collections to be used more effectively in the future.

The County Museum continues to acquire material for its collections. 327 coins from an important Roman hoard found in 1989 at Chalfont St Peter have been purchased. Three smocks were also acquired. Two, worn at Fawley Court, were purchased and another, from Swanbourne, was given. A still-life painting and an archive of material relating to Alexander Jamieson was donated to the Museum, providing background information to the four paintings by this Weston Turville artist that were purchased last year.

Other acquisitions include amethyst and glass beads and silver rings from a necklace from a Saxon burial at Tattenhoe, ammonites from the Kimmeridge clay at Watermead, and paintings and architects' models from Milton Keynes.

Colin V. Dawes, County Museums Officer

COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

Extracts from the County Archivist's Report for 1992

There was a total of 130 accessions during the year. Last year's total was 134.

Accessions of County Council records included a set of returns to a survey of school accommodation made in 1902. Unfortunately, the number of returns (98) is less than half the total of schools known to have been in existence in 1900.

Several transfers of judicial records were received, the largest being the records of the Amersham district of the county court which date back to its inception in 1847. The information in the records is summary in character; but trade and occupations are consistently noted in the nineteenth-century plaint books.

Other official records to be received included a small group of papers from the former county gaol at Aylesbury. They date from shortly before and after 1878. Records were received for two civil parishes and for sixteen ecclesiastical parishes. The latter included the ancient parish registers of Turville which began in 1582.

Nonconformist church records included minutes and accounts for Lacey Green Primitive Methodist Church, 1855–1900 and the Independent chapel at Newport Pagnell.

The largest single accession this year was an addition to the archive of the Hampden estate and the earls of Buckingham, documenting the descent and administration of Hampden from the 1820s onwards in great detail.

Small groups of deeds were acquired for the Minshull family of Aston Clinton, and for the Smiths of Wendover. Some miscellaneous terriers and other estate papers of the Vanhatten family of Dinton were acquired by purchase.

Also acquired by purchase were some stray letters from the archives of the Lee family of Hartwell,

comprising letters from Sir Harry Verney of Claydon to Dr John Lee, 1830–1832, concerning the projected county infirmary at Aylesbury (later the Royal Buckinghamshire Hospital). The letters are mainly taken up with practical matter relating to the hospital, but one letter from Verney alludes to the so-called Swing Riots, directed largely against agricultural machinery, and deplores the low wages paid by some employers locally as a possible source of discontentment.

Perhaps the most remarkable accession was a brass-bound volume containing the journal kept by Georgiana Caroline Grenfell (1826–1911) of Taplow Court, between the years 1864 and 1909. Entitled *The Childrens Journal*, its earlier pages are a vivid day-to-day chronicle of the lives of the widowed Georgiana and her six children, all born between 1853 and 1860. Interspersed in the text are a great many photographs and sketches, both portrait and topographical. Georgiana continued to keep the journal until two years before her death in 1911 at the age of 85. It thus gives a remarkably continuous record of a single family over more than forty years.

In addition to the current listing of smaller accessions, a draft box list of the large additional deposit of Hampden estate records was prepared. The detailed indexes to the published annual list of accessions for 1986–1990 were completed but are not yet fully typed. Several summary handlists to specific document types and classes were prepared for the use of enquirers.

Susan Ranson had almost completed the listing of the Claydon House manuscripts by the end of the year and the typing of the draft catalogue was well advanced. The archives have been moved to ground floor accommodation, and it is intended to make them available to bona fide researchers by appointment. The seventeenth-century Verney correspondence is already available on microfilm in the County Record Office and the originals will not normally be accessible.