

THE MUSEUM

1993 continued to see enormous change in the County Museum's buildings in Church Street. Two galleries remained open but the refurbishment of the building, now in its second year, meant that most of the premises remained closed to the public. The completion of repairs to the roof was celebrated by a 'topping out' ceremony, when the final chimney pot was cemented in place on Ceely House by the Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire and Mrs Gillian Miscampbell, Chairman of the County Council. Internally the replacement of services, floors and ceilings went ahead, starting with the Old Grammar School attics.

Early in the year the 1930s buildings in the Old Grammar School playground were demolished to make way for the new Art Gallery extension. The Muniments Room in the basement was removed and the basement extended to the full size of the old school playground. This involved an archaeological excavation by the County Museum's archaeology service, uncovering Medieval burials and evidence of the Iron Age hillfort. It was found that Ceely House required considerable underpinning as the playground was excavated, considerably complicating its restoration. By December the Art Gallery's steel and concrete structure was in place, and for the first time it was possible to see the magnificent space that will be created for the County Museum on three floors. The funds for this building are being raised most effectively by Sir Timothy Raison and the Art Gallery Appeal Committee, almost £400,000 having been raised by the end of the year.

A new entrance foyer for the County Museum has been constructed at the side of the building, adjacent to the Coach House courtyard. Lifts for disabled people, and goods, are also being constructed to serve all parts of the Museum.

A grant of £25,000 from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts enabled plans for the Roald Dahl Children's Gallery in the Coach House to be progressed. This funding was provided to finance a lift for disabled children in the extension to the Coach House.

Work on the Museum's collections continued, documentation on computer being a priority. Volunteers as well as staff carried out this work, and enabled great strides to be made in the management of the collections. Thanks to the facilities at the County Museum's Technical Centre, Halton, the Museum's collections are in better conditions than has previously been possible to achieve, and this facility continued to be improved.

The Museum's collections continued to grow by gifts and purchases. Notable acquisitions included a group of 20 works by John Nash, forming a core collection of this important Buckinghamshire artist's work. This purchase was grant-aided by the National Art Collections Fund and the Victoria and Albert Museum/MGC Purchase Fund. A splendid four-volume copy of George Lipscombe's *History and Antiquities of the County of Buckinghamshire* was also acquired. It had been 'improved' by the addition of 350 plates, watercolours, letters and maps. Lady Piper, the widow of John Piper, placed 58 sketches and drawings of Stowe by John Piper on loan to the Museum, bringing the Museum's illustrations of Stowe, spanning two centuries, up to date. It is hoped that these will eventually be acquired by the Museum.

Among the archaeological material acquired was a 13th-century seal, incorporating a 1st-century engraved gemstone, from Shenley Church End, and a fine 10th-century strap-end from Wellwick Farm, Wendover.

Colin V. Dawes,
County Museums Officer

COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

Extracts from the Annual Report of the Count Archivist for 1993

Several projects begun last year came to fruition. The new accommodation for the conservation unit at Hampden Hall was opened in June while the equipping of the newly converted basement strongroom was completed without fanfare in February. Experiments with computerising the accessioning process also proved successful and will help to achieve greater efficiency. Accessions during the year totalled 149; last year's total was 130.

The winding-up of the Aylesbury Vale Health Authority in March was preceded by the deposit of further records of the Royal Buckinghamshire Hospital which closed in 1991. They cover (though with some gaps) the whole period from its foundation as the Buckinghamshire Infirmary in the early 1830s to the commencement of the National Health Service in 1948. Predating the actual foundation of the hospital is a series of over fifty letters, dated 1830–1833, from various members of the gentry, clergy and nobility of the county, as well as from local medical practitioners, responding to requests for their support. Some of the letters, which are addressed to Sir Harry Verney, one of the principal promoters of the hospital, give an insight into the conditions of the poor at this time.

A minute book of the select vestry for Great Missenden, 1828–1833, which had strayed from parish custody, was deposited after languishing for many years in an estate agent's office.

The church book of a congregation of Particular Baptists at Hanslope, covering the years from its foundation in 1841 to 1884, was purchased. It contains minutes of church meetings, articles of faith, summary accounts and memoranda concerning membership, baptisms and other matters. Records of two school boards formed under the 1870 Education Act, which were found abandoned in the former County Council children's home at Bledlow were passed to the Office. They relate to

the parishes of Linslade (now Beds) and Langley Marish (now Berks).

Significant deposits for two Aylesbury companies came in during the year. Air Trainers Ltd. was one of several "high-tech" light industries established in the immediate aftermath of the War, in this case to manufacture flight simulators. It was later taken over by the rival firm of Redifon Ltd. of Crawley who closed down the Aylesbury site in 1972. The nature of the work and the process of closure are well illustrated in the documents.

In contrast to Redifon, the firm of Hazell, Watson and Viney Ltd., printers, represents a more traditional type of industry and has been established in Aylesbury for well over a century. The records received include a continuous register of employees engaged from 1874 onwards, photograph albums dating from the earlier part of the present century which illustrate the whole range of production processes, newscuttings and scrapbooks. Some of the latter relate to the career of Walter Hazell (1843–1919) who was active as a social reformer and whose concern for industrial welfare found practical expression in his own business.

The records of the Mackenzie family of Fawley Court were acquired partly by purchase and partly by gift. They consist principally of court rolls of the manor of Fawley and title deeds, family settlements, leases, etc., of estate properties in Fawley and neighbourhood, including the manor of Henley-on-Thames (Oxon), acquired in 1768. The fine series of over fifty court rolls spans the period 1355–1728. The deeds show the development of the estate from the late sixteenth century under its successive owners, the families of Alford, Whitelocke, Freeman and finally Mackenzie, who purchased it in 1853. Included are some deeds and papers of the Marlow families of Langley and Higginson to whom the Mackenzies were related

by marriage. Among these is a "book of evidences" relating to Langley property in Marlow transcribed by the Reverend Thomas Langley (1769–1802), author of *The History and Antiquities of the Hundred of Desborough ...* (1797).

The National Trust deposited another significant cache of Lee family archives from Hartwell House comprising mixed account books and other papers from the collection of a Brighton book dealer who was the purchaser of one of the lots in the 1939 sale and who bequeathed his estate to the Trust. Several generations of Lees are represented in the documents, which cover the period 1654 to 1835. Perhaps the most interesting documents are some private accounts of Sir William Lee (1726–1799), 4th Baronet, and his wife Elizabeth.

The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society decided to add its collection of over fifty manuscript estate maps to the material already deposited by the Society.

An original petition of the Civil War period was purchased at auction in December. The petition, which is addressed to the two houses of parliament, dates from 1643. It bears the signatures and marks of approximately five hundred freeholders, farmers and labourers living "adjoining to Windsor Castle". It seeks relief from the severe hardships suffered from the excessive quartering of soldiers, in some cases to the number of thirty or forty men to a house.

Box-listing of the massive Mackenzie estate archive was undertaken by Sarah Charlton, a former member of staff who was employed on a temporary basis for this purpose. Re-listing of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society's collection of manorial records received in 1987 is now about 75% complete.

The problem of coping with the large backlog of cataloguing was examined again in a report to the Public Protection Committee. It was recognised that really significant inroads into the backlog would require additional staffing.

Listing of the estate records and the later correspondence of the Verney family at Claydon House, of which the County Archivist is a trustee, is expected to be finished during 1994. An exhibition of

documents relating to the Verney family during the Civil War was put on in the summer.

The number of personal visits to the Office was 2693 (2679 in 1992). Postal enquiries numbered 784 (731). A total of 3449 (2852) telephone calls was logged, of which 1536 (1260) were enquiries and the rest reservations, etc.

From 1 November a more flexible system of reserving places in the public searchroom was adopted and appears to be working well.

Relocation of the conservation unit to the new accommodation at Hampden Hall took place during May. The additional space has enabled more and better equipment to be provided. The premises were formally opened on 11 June by David Lidington, M.P. for Aylesbury. Appropriately, Dr Lidington has a Ph.D. in English History.

The Record Office put on its usual display as part of the County Council's stand at the County Show. The theme of the main display was Buckinghamshire in the Civil War. It is hoped that it can be re-used as part of a larger version to be offered to branch libraries.

E. Jack Davis (1914–1993)

Jack Davis, who died on 11 September, held the office of county archivist from 1957 until his retirement on health grounds in 1976, but his responsibility for the county's archives in fact dated back to 1946, when he was appointed archives clerk within the office of the Clerk of the County Council. It was not until 1951 that the first assistant archivist was appointed and suitable accommodation provided both for the reception of deposited records and for the convenience of researchers. Thereafter until the transfer to the present purpose-built accommodation in 1966 the staff of two coped valiantly with an increasing tide of accessions and laid a solid foundation for later expansion. Following his retirement Jack was employed for a number of years by the diocese of Oxford as part-time inspector of parish records under the 1978 Parochial Registers and Records Measure, an appointment which he greatly enjoyed. A memorial service was held at the Friends Meeting House, Aylesbury, on 2 October.