

THE MUSEUM

REPORT FOR 1999-2000

The Museum Service had a successful year in 1999/2000, with a varied and well-received exhibition programme, and considerable progress in both documenting the collections and making them more accessible through education, outreach and information technology. There was a reduction in the total number of visitors compared with 1998/99, but a slight increase in the number of school groups visiting and a rise in the number of enquiries dealt with. Income from admission charges was down but retail income rose following the extension of Museum shop sales to libraries across the county. External grant aid and sponsorship from a number of sources contributed to the exhibition programme, marketing, conservation, acquisitions and documentation.

A range of exhibitions over the year offered Museum visitors a varied and changing programme. The shows included *Objects of the Fire*, a stunning travelling exhibition of extremely fine modern ceramics, from which 3 local NADFAS groups generously purchased items for the Museum collection. *Road Rage, The Art of Formula One* was an unusual exhibition of particular appeal to motor racing fans which included a very popular Scalextric slot car racing circuit on which visitors could compete.

Picasso to Hockney, Great Prints of the Century was a survey of twentieth-century western art through printmaking which included work by major modern artists such as Braque, Munch, Miro, Klee and Warhol. It was curated by Pat Gilmour who also wrote the catalogue. Prints were lent by a number of major museums including the British Museum, Tate Gallery and V&A. The exhibition and catalogue were largely funded by the Museum Patrons.

The second artist in residence programme sponsored by the *Muir Trust* took place at the same time as the *Great Prints* show. Printmaker Dale Devereux Barker proved a popular choice, leading workshops, giving talks and creating new work which was then displayed in the Museum.

Great Prints was followed by *ReCollection*, the

most ambitious in-house exhibition to date, which was funded by a Millennium Festival grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. More than one hundred Buckinghamshire residents ranging in age from six to over ninety contributed a personal memory of the twentieth century linked to an object. The result was a fascinating range of stories and memories which gave a large number of county residents a direct personal involvement in a Museum display. A selection of the recollections was produced as a book and a copy was provided to every school in the county, for use as a teaching resource.

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

The Museum's Education Service to schools continued to be popular, with taught sessions often fully booked a term in advance. Most of the 245 booked school groups were visiting the Roald Dahl Gallery where teaching sessions are linked to Key Stage 1 & 2 of the National Curriculum, but this year older secondary school groups were also successfully attracted to the *Great Prints of the Century* exhibition in the autumn. A programme of courses and activities for adults and family groups was developed in partnership with Continuing Education during the autumn, including organised museum sessions arranged for community groups in the county who had never previously visited. This has been an encouraging start to new audience development.

COLLECTIONS, INFORMATION AND OUTREACH

The major task of the Collections team – documentation and audit of the 120,000 recorded objects and groups in the Museum's collections – was completed in November 1999. As a result, 5,600 groups of objects across the whole range of the collections (biology, geology, archaeology, social history, art and photographs) were identified for eventual transfer of ownership from the County Council to Milton Keynes Council under the Joint

Arrangements which followed local government reorganisation in 1997 and the emergence of Milton Keynes as a unitary authority

Completion of the collections audit has made possible an enhanced level of access to the stored collections and information resources for consultation, research, enquiries and display. The Museum team of contract curatorial staff worked closely on the audit with a team of volunteers from the Museum *Friends*.

Staff added selectively to the collections during the year. Donated items included: a 1970s paper minidress; a rare 5th-century BC iron dagger collected on behalf of Milton Keynes Council; *The Dried Garden*, two books of pressed plants collected near Chalfont St Peter in the 1880s; an original cartoon from the *Daily Mirror* by Philip Zec relating to the Third London Airport Campaign; and a Bucks Swan Millennium plate donated by the local ceramic artist Basia Watson-Gandy.

Deposits of 65 archaeological archives were agreed with 15 fieldwork contractors, working closely with the Council's Archaeological Officers, who were transferred to the Environmental Services Department in August 1999. Procedures for the deposit of archaeological material – an expanding area of work – were agreed with all contractors active within the county.

Grant aid support has been generous towards purchases for the county collections. Three Buckinghamshire groups of NADFAS (the National Association of Decorative and Fine Art Societies) funded the acquisition of studio pottery by Gabriele Koch, Peter Beard and Phil Rogers. The Museum *Friends* purchased works by two Muir Trust artists in residence: watercolours by Christopher Barrett (1998) and prints by Dale Devereux Barker (1999). A specially commissioned Buckinghamshire Millennium Clock with an elaborate carved wooden surround featuring

various aspects of the county was designed and made for the Museum entrance foyer by local wood carver Jeremy Turner. This was funded by a county NADFAS group and a grant from Southern Arts.

The County's Environmental Records Centre achieved considerable enhancement of the computerised Record during the year. The number of enquiries of this resource – from the public, environmental consultants and as part of the Development Control process – increased dramatically for the second year running.

The new *Museum Connections* programme, taking collections out of the Museum for display in libraries across the county, started in August 1999 with portable showcases in Amersham, Marlow, Princes Risborough and Winslow libraries. Purchase of the showcases was funded by the Museum *Friends*.

Grant aid from the Museums and Galleries Commission/Jerwood Foundation funded the first stage of the computer cataloguing and digitisation of the most significant bones from the Museum's unique collection of Ice Age Mammals from the Pitstone-Marsworth excavation site. It is hoped to attract further grant aid towards a second phase of this project for an education/public access Internet site.

The Museum's IT systems at both the County Museum and the Technical Centre sites were upgraded to the County Council's corporate standards during the year, and preparatory work for a Museum website was undertaken. Digitised data and images of the Museum photographic collections, together with those of Local Studies and Archives, were the first to be made accessible through the Internet.

Oliver Green
Head of Museum Service

THE COUNTY RECORDS AND LOCAL STUDIES SERVICE

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORT FOR 1999-2000 AND LIST OF ACCESSIONS FOR 1999

CENTRE FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE STUDIES

In March 2000 a grant of £463,500 was awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) towards the creation of the planned Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies. As described in last year's report, the project involves amalgamating the existing Local Studies Library with the Record Office and providing an increase in public seating, a new education facility and additional archive strongrooms. It will thereby address concerns about the lack of space and facilities for staff and public expressed in recent reports by inspectors from both the Public Record Office and the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. Plans for the Centre are now well under way and building work will begin in 2001.

USE OF THE SERVICE

The use of the service continues to rise, particularly the numbers of visitors to the Local Studies Library, where additional microfilm readers and computers were provided during the year. The National Survey of Visitors to British Archives, undertaken during October 1999, included for the first time users of the Local Studies Library as well as of the Record Office and the level of customer satisfaction with the overall service remains very high.

Many users now plan their visits to the Record Office by accessing the Buckinghamshire Records and Local Studies Service pages on the internet (www.buckscc.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/archives). This is one of the most visited sites on the County Council website, which was considerably enhanced by the publication in March 2000 of the Buckinghamshire Photographs database, a joint project with the County Museum Service. Over 20,000 views of Buckinghamshire are accessible

and the site receives over 3,000 hits per week.

Documents held in the Record Office were featured in a BBC television programme in the series *Breaking the Seal*, part of the History 2000 project. The programme, which was broadcast in March 2000, showed records relating to the enclosure of Weston Turville, including the enclosure map of 1799.

ACCESSIONS

The total number of accessions received in the Record Office during the calendar year 1999 was 148 (155 in 1998). A full list of the accessions is given in the Annual Report, obtainable from the Record Office.

Records deposited under the Church of England's Parochial Registers and Records Measure included the parish registers of Chesham, which were placed in the Record Office for safe-keeping before work began on alterations to St Mary's Church. Chesham is one of the minority of parishes fortunate enough to have registers dating back to 1538, when registers were first ordered to be made.

One particularly welcome deposit was the baptism register of Old Bradwell for 1813-1878, which had been missing when the Old Bradwell parish registers were deposited in the Record Office in 1972. It was found among a small accumulation of registers from several counties, which had passed into private hands and which was eventually deposited in the Centre for Kentish Studies. It had been feared that the register was lost forever, so its reappearance was particularly pleasing.

Records were also received from a number of nonconformist denominations – Baptists, Methodists and the Society of Friends – as well as transcripts of Salvation Army records at Buckingham. Three parish councils – Bledlowcum-Saunderton, Hambleton and Wooburn –

deposited records dating back to the foundation of parish councils in 1894.

The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society deposited a few miscellaneous items to add to the bulk of its archive collections already transferred to the Record Office. They included the notebooks of William Lowndes of Winslow, sometime Secretary to the Treasury (known as 'Ways and Means' Lowndes), 1679, 1693 and 1709; four probate inventories of members of the Hampden and Lee families, 1541-1617; a memorandum to Sir William Lee reporting on building work in progress at Hartwell in 1769; and a printed broadsheet of 1683 announcing the arrangements for touching for the king's evil (scrofula).

Another regular depositor, the Buckinghamshire Military Museums Trust, deposited a number of photograph albums relating to Buckinghamshire regiments between 1885 and 1972, including a silver-bound album of officers of the Royal Bucks Hussars, presented to the regiment in 1887, and albums of the 3rd Bn. Oxfordshire Light Infantry (Royal Bucks Kings Own Militia).

Nine London solicitors' firms deposited deeds of Buckinghamshire properties via the British Records Association: these records included a deed of 1591 by which Alice Carter established almshouses for five poor widows in Brill, a charity still in existence today. Lloyds TSB deposited deeds of properties in Hanslope, Calverton and Stony Stratford for 1626-1900. Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies transferred a map of the estate at Broughton near Aylesbury belonging to the Worshipful Company of Girdlers in 1792. Canon David Grice donated two letter-books of his grandfather, Mr R Grice, as station-master at Olney for 1898-1907.

As usual, most of the records were received either as gifts or deposits, but a few items were purchased. These included account books of the churchwardens, overseers of the poor and surveyors of the highways of the parish of Cublington in the late 18th century, the overseers' rate and account book for Princes Risborough, 1788-1802, a survey of the manor of Cippenham in Burnham, 1599, and additional records of the Clayton family of Harleyford Manor, including manor court rolls for Great Marlow, 1751 and 1755.

A joint programme of microfilming High Wycombe Borough, Wycombe RDC and Marlow UDC records has been initiated with Wycombe

District Council. These records, some of which date back to the 14th century, will be made available in microfilm or scanned formats in the new High Wycombe Library, whilst the originals will be preserved in the Record Office.

MODERN RECORDS

First established in 1998 as a service to the Education Department, the Modern Records Service now provides a full corporate service through Service Level Agreements with all departments. All Modern Records stores have now been equipped with mobile shelving, creating sufficient extra space for Social Services records from offices in Amersham and High Wycombe to be housed centrally and for some Environmental Services files to be brought in from an out-store. The service is working with colleagues in other departments to develop standards and protocols for dealing with electronic records, in order to keep pace with government targets to create all new records in electronic format by 2008.

JOINT ARRANGEMENTS WITH MILTON KEYNES

A further three-year contract with Milton Keynes Council for the provision of archive services was successfully negotiated. Joint projects to enhance the service are being planned, including the provision of Buckinghamshire probate records on microfilm.

CONSERVATION

The Conservation Unit moved from Hampden Hall, Stoke Mandeville, back to County Hall in November 1999 to a newly-equipped room in the basement of the New County Offices. This will make the running of the Conservation Unit much easier, eliminating the need to spend time travelling between County Hall and Hampden Hall and transporting documents between the two sites.

The Record Office has been closely involved with the HLF-funded project to conserve the historic collection of children's books at Chesham Library. Books in the collection have been repaired as necessary and slip-cases made for all the books in order to ensure their safe storage.

During the year, leather-dressing of the volumes

in the Kederminster Library at St Mary's Church, Langley Marish, was carried out under Record Office supervision. The volumes were given temporary accommodation in the Record Office strongrooms while the church roof was replaced.

ANNUAL ARCHIVES LECTURE

The fourth Annual Archives Lecture was held in the Ireland Room at County Hall on 25 November 1999. The guest speaker was David Vaisey, CBE, Bodley's Librarian Emeritus, and the title of his

lecture was 'Amateurs and Professionals in Archives and Local Studies'. In his lecture, Mr Vaisey discussed the achievements, characters and the eccentricities of some of the antiquaries and local historians who did so much pioneering work in preserving, transcribing and exploiting archive sources in the days before the emergence of professional archivists and local studies librarians.

*Roger Bettridge
County Archivist*

COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE

REPORT FOR 1999

The County Archaeological Service was transferred from the County Museum to the County Council's Environmental Services Department in October 1998. Whereas previously the work of the service was included within the County Museum's annual report, a separate summary will henceforth be provided. 1999 was a year of transition which, by its end, saw the service fully integrated into its new department and actively developing its future role. The New Year saw the departure of Jonathan Parkhouse to take up the post of County Archaeologist for Warwickshire, temporarily leaving Julia Wise as the county's sole curatorial archaeologist until the appointment of Sandy Kidd as the new Senior Archaeological Officer in June. In August the service finally moved from the Museum's Technical Centre at Halton into its new offices in Annexe A in the Old County Hall complex. Our new location in central Aylesbury provides for easier public access, especially by public transport, and is well placed for combining visits with the Record Office and Local Studies Library. It has also greatly improved contacts with our new department and given better access to central services, such as IT support.

The service's work in 1999 was dominated by the need to maintain the planning advisory service, which was especially difficult in the circumstances experienced in the first half of the year. The results of fieldwork undertaken through the planning process are reported elsewhere in this volume. Particular mention should be made of the unexpected discovery of the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age hillfort at Taplow, which gave rise to delicate negotiations, and of the BBC's filming of Northamptonshire Archaeology's excavation of a

late Saxon/medieval cemetery at Wing in the series *Meet the Ancestors*. The service also pursued objections to various aspects of the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan, including the proposed alignment of a link road which would affect the setting of the scheduled ancient monument at Quarrendon to the north of Aylesbury. In the latter case, intensive lobbying of English Heritage resulted in the timely completion of an excellent report of an earthwork survey conducted some ten years earlier.

Following the appointment of the Senior Archaeological Officer, a rapid review was undertaken to identify priorities for developing the service and raising its profile. Weaknesses were identified in a number of areas, including the procedures for providing planning advice, the Sites and Monuments Record's computer systems and inputting backlogs, the lack of formal policies and a low uptake of external funding opportunities. This led to a proposal to the Countywide Archaeological Advisory Committee that the service should prepare a county archaeological strategy. Work on the strategy began in the autumn of 1999 with a view to consultation and eventual adoption by the end of the following year. In parallel with this, project bids were developed to undertake an SMR data audit and purchase the current 'industry standard' SMR software package produced by Exegesis SDM Ltd which comes with an in-built GIS (Geographical Information System) link. Progress on these initiatives will be reported in next year's *Records*.

Alexander (Sandy) Kidd
Senior Archaeological Officer