

THE MUSEUM

Important excavations were carried out at Missenden Abbey in advance of proposed extensions, on a Roman site on the line of the Amersham by-pass, medieval kilns in Brill and medieval kilns in the Alderbourne Valley near Denham found during a watching brief on the line of the M25. These are, or will be, more fully recorded elsewhere in the *Records*.

Two further craft demonstration days were arranged and proved even more popular than the year before as 950 adults and 768 children attended. On this occasion a number of professional craft people demonstrated glass engraving, ceramic painting, tapestry weaving, machine knitting, bobbin making, jewellery, pottery and basket making.

In October a new Temporary Exhibition Gallery in Church House, which was bought a few years ago, was opened and forms a major addition to the amenities of the Museum. It has not hitherto been possible to have any but the very smallest exhibitions and nothing involving a great weight, as the exhibition gallery had previously been on the first floor. The first exhibition was a most interesting one organised by the County Record Office: 'The Hartwell Comet, a Bicentenary Commemoration of John Lee of Hartwell House', which was opened by Patrick Moore. The second

exhibition was the most important which has ever been held in the Museum, namely 'Rodin and his Contemporaries', borrowed at very short notice from the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation. 3,116 adults and 929 children visited the exhibition over a period of just over three weeks. The Bucks County Beekeepers Association also commemorated its centenary by a fascinating exhibition of old methods of bee-keeping combined with modern techniques including an observation bee hive.

The Museum mounted two exhibitions in Milton Keynes. One comprised the collection of studio pottery and was shown at the Great Linford Art Centre from the 10th February to the 13th March and attracted much favourable comment. The other consisted of the drawings of Stowe by John Claude Nattes taken in 1805, 1807 and 1809 which were bought two years ago. This exhibition was opened by the Chairman of the County Council. The Museum in conjunction with Stowe School published a catalogue of the Stowe drawings and this formed a commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Stowe School. It would have been quite impossible for the Museum to have produced this catalogue on its own and we are grateful to Stowe for the opportunity of collaborating on this project.

COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

Although there was no let-up in public demand, the pressure on staff was less acute than in some previous years owing to the appointment of a part-time search room supervisor last year.

The total of separate accessions was 133. A detailed list is given at the end of the County Archivist's Report, available from the Record Office.

Records were received from twenty-nine ecclesiastical parishes, of which six had not previously deposited. The records of Great and Little Brickhill contain fine series of parish registers dating from the mid-sixteenth century. The Weston Turville parish records are unusually rich in correspondence, dating from the late eighteenth century, much of it relating to the management of the glebe. Wendover has a mixed bag of records including

some interesting title accounts. Prestwood's records, with earlier deposits, establish it as one of the best documented parishes of nineteenth century creation. Unexpected or unusual finds among parish records include letters of marque for a privateer, 1695 (Princes Risborough); detailed enumerations for the 1821 and 1831 national censuses in Princes Risborough; lists of books in Mentmore parish library; and a valuation and rental of the Duncombe estate in Great Brickhill, c. 1687-1701.

Records of voluntary organisations received this year included minute books and other documents relating to a village friendly society, a property protection society, a local agricultural association and a Darby and Joan club.

Mr. R. White of Chinnor deposited a group of court rolls and other documents relating to the small manor of Corhams in Bledlow, dating from the mid-seventeenth century. Unfortunately, they had suffered greatly from exposure to the elements. They were given emergency conservation treatment and many of the rolls have since been repaired with comparatively little loss of legibility.

Professor Chibnall presented three very attractive and informative volumes, dated 1772 and 1837, containing map-surveys of farms on two estates in north Bucks. He also presented some facsimiles of documents acquired in the course of his researches and two studies in the history of the Chibnall family.

The correspondence of the late George Eland (1880-1971), the well-known Buckinghamshire historian, was presented by his executor. The largest group of letters is a series of several hundred from his friend and fellow antiquary, Frederick Gurney. Like all Gurney's letters they are interesting, amusing and full of valuable information and comment on Bucks history and on a host of other subjects.

Other miscellaneous accessions included eighteenth-century maps for estates in the Chalfonts and High Wycombe; an account

book for the Dropmore estate, 1833-4; a stray minute book of the Board of Guardians of Beaconsfield Union; and a reconstruction of the missing North Marston parish inclosure map of 1779 painstakingly compiled by Mr. M. Finnemore combining documentary research with local knowledge to impressive effect.

A new Zeiss microfilm reader was purchased as a replacement for the existing Kodak reader which is obsolescent. A replacement Ricoh photocopier, with enlargement facility, was also acquired.

In addition to listing of current accessions, the Lowndes MSS, a large and complex estate archive relating to the Chesham area, was finally catalogued, though the catalogue has yet to be typed. The size of the accumulated backlog of cataloguing remains a cause for concern however. It cannot be drastically reduced at the present level of staffing.

The assistance of a volunteer enabled a survey to be effected of the large deposit of Howe estate deeds received in 1980 (AR94/80) and a summary bundle-list to be made of the Ashridge estate records.

An index was compiled to the personal names in the catalogue of the Spencer-Bernard papers. Several other small lists were similarly indexed and an existing card-index to the parties mentioned in the Ashridge deeds was typed. Without such indexing much of the information in the catalogues remains relatively inaccessible.

A start was made in compiling a brief summary guide to the Office's holdings.

The number of personal visits to the Office was 2455 (2412 in 1982). A total of 560 postal enquiries was dealt with. Statistics of telephoned enquiries were not kept consistently owing to the large volume of calls connected with searchroom reservations, but were well in excess of 200. Last year postal and telephoned enquiries combined amounted to 828. The number of document request slips pre-

sented was 6028 (6541). A total of 9121 (10112) items was produced, of which 1168 (811) consisted of reels of microfilms used, for the most part, in place of originals actually held in the Office.

The total of microfilms produced would

have been higher by 356 reels if sufficient viewers had been available.

As usual family history was the most popular subject. Local history and house history were also well represented.