

THE MUSEUM

The Museum held a major exhibition of Buckinghamshire crafts which was then shown in the Milton Keynes Exhibition Gallery. It is the first time that the Museum has received business sponsorship and a generous grant was received from Marks & Spencer Plc through the Bucks Arts Association. Seventeen invited craftsmen and women exhibited and the idea was to demonstrate the high quality of craft

work being produced in this County. This is little appreciated owing to the small number of outlets for selling and exhibiting crafts in Buckinghamshire. There were associated demonstrations on Saturdays during the exhibition.

The Museum also received sponsorship from Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co., this time directly, to arrange an exhibition of watercolours by

Thomas Uwins which was held for a month in the summer. He was an R.A. and Keeper of the National Gallery from 1847 to 1855. He probably first came to Buckinghamshire after 1810 to visit his brother who was a physician in Aylesbury. The exhibition contained figure studies including a number of lace makers.

The Lunchtime Lectures, which had proved such a popular part of the Museum's activities, were extended to Chesham. The reception was warm and thanks to the co-operation of the

library staff the lectures were very successful.

From May 1st 1984 under an Agency Agreement between the County Council and the Milton Keynes Development Corporation the Museum becomes responsible for the Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit, which has a staff of nine. The Unit advises on the conservation of the historical landscape of Milton Keynes and carries out rescue excavations where necessary. The Unit is financed by the Development Corporation. C.N.G.

COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

Extracts from the report by the County Archivist

This was another busy year: at times prospective visitors who wished to be sure of a seat had to make their reservations a week or more in advance. The availability of duplicate microfilms of many parish registers will provide an improved service for family historians.

Progress was made in making provision for the archives of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. A branch record office catering for the New City and for North Bucks generally is under consideration.

The total number of accessions was 148, the quantity of material received being well above the average of the past few years.

Of official records, the most important relate to the Royal Buckinghamshire Hospital, founded in 1833. Material was received from nineteen ecclesiastical parishes. The records for Buckingham include a fine series of parish registers commencing in 1562.

Records of voluntary organisations included minutes, accounts and other papers of the Weedon Charity, Chesham, 1627-1890, together with the wooden chest which was specially made to contain them in 1759. Some interesting documents relating to the Old Berkeley Hunt, 1862-1934, were purchased.

The world of business was well represented. The records of George Wigley and Sons, Auctioneers, Estate Agents and Surveyors, of Winslow, relate mainly to the period 1875-1951 and because of their completeness constitute an important source for the social and economic history of the north Bucks area. Messrs Courage of Reading deposited a large quantity of deeds and documents for their public houses in south Bucks, most of which formerly belonged to Wheeler's Wycombe Brewery. Other business records received related to a chemist at Buckingham, 1923-48; a glucose manufacturer at Fenny Stratford, 1926-47; and a corn mill at Tingewick.

Two interesting groups of family papers were acquired by purchase. The letters of the Johnson family of Olney are mostly dated between 1682 and 1696 and are largely concerned with the disastrous state of the family finances. The other group comprises eighteenth-century documents relating to the Baker family of Penn and in particular to Daniel Baker's tenure of the office of High Sheriff in 1722. Thanks are due to the Buckinghamshire Record Society and the Purchase Grant Fund for financial assistance with these purchases. Other estate records received included a fine series of estate maps for Chetwode, 1637-1831; nineteenth-century household account books

for Hartwell House; some additional Raper family deeds and maps; and a survey of Haversham parish, 1799.

Miscellaneous acquisitions included an inclosure quality book for Wendover, kindly presented by Mr M. Finnemore, whose experience in reconstructing the North Marston inclosure landscape alerted him to its significance when he chanced upon it in a bookseller's stock; and a militia payroll for newly enlisted men, 1803.

The volume of material received was such that it was not possible to keep abreast with cataloguing, though the majority of smaller accessions, and some larger ones, had been dealt with by the end of the year. The court rolls and deeds relating to Bledlow deposited by Mr R. White last year were catalogued following repairs. Some progress was also made with the listing of the Drake deeds acquired in 1981, and many of the files of the former County Clerk's department held in the Judges Lodgings

store were sorted. Otherwise little was done to reduce the accumulated arrears of cataloguing. It is estimated that over 40% of holdings are at best inadequately listed and several large collections have no list at all many years after deposit.

A considerable amount of staff time had to be devoted to cleaning the material received from Messrs Wigley and to preparing it for fumigation. A start was made with weeding and listing some of the better preserved papers and it is hoped to obtain some temporary assistance in processing the remainder.

The number of personal visits to the office, 2539 for the year, is slightly higher than the totals for the two preceding years (2412 for 1982 and 2455 for 1983). Telephone statistics show 949 enquiries. 738 postal enquiries were received, as against 628 for the preceding year. A total of 9467 (9121) items was produced of which 1755 (1168) consisted of reels of microfilm.