

THE MUSEUM

The main event in the year was the opening of the new gallery on Aylesbury by the Chairman of the County Council on December 6th. The cost of this was generously met by the Trustees of Harding's Charity and it was designed by Robin Wade Associates. It is intended to complement the Rural Life Gallery and, in addition to illustrating life in Aylesbury, to show different influences on town as compared with rural life. There is a brief historical introduction and then sections on different aspects of life in Aylesbury. These include manufacture, shops, the prison, John

Wilkes, and leisure activities. The general atmosphere of the Gallery is designed to give a market air and it has proved very popular.

Two open days on the theme 'Fun and Games in the Museum' were held on May 3rd and 4th. Apart from special Museum displays there were demonstrations by local schools of maypole dancing on the Friday, and Morris dancing by local groups on the Saturday, as well as some games for visitors to participate in. Fortunately the days coincided with a fine weekend and there were over 3000 visitors.

The main exhibition was 'Views of Stowe' by John Piper. Many of the drawings were originally produced with a view to publishing them as aquatints but there was also a number of finished watercolours. The exhibition also included a few views of Stowe executed during the war and the differences in style between

these and the later works was of much interest.

The number of visitors during the year was 31,744, which was the highest on record, mainly due to the Open Days.

C.N.G.

COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

There was a total of 132 accessions during the year (148 in 1984), the largest accession being that from Francis and How, solicitors, Chesham. The District Valuer for North Bucks deposited some material for the great 1910 valuation which to some extent complements the so-called Domesday Books already held. Some additional records were received for former local authorities in North Bucks; one group of files for the borough of Buckingham came to light in the Old Town Hall building.

Records were received for some 22 ecclesiastical parishes. 5 were for parishes which had not previously deposited. 4—Drayton Parslow, Stewkley, Winslow and Middle Claydon—had parish registers dating from the 16th century. The records received from Great Marlow are of particular interest. The accounts of the churchwardens and overseers are among the earliest and best in the county and there is extensive documentation on the building of the new parish church in the 1830s. Some 19th-century parish papers for Aylesbury relate in large part to the restoration of the church after 1848.

The most impressive single document in this category is the original royal charter, dated 1615, for Queen Ann's Hospital Charity, Newport Pagnell, which the Governors have placed with the other records of the charity previously deposited.

Francis and How, the old-established Chesham firm of solicitors, have deposited the bulk of their records. A large proportion consists of title deeds, etc., of clients' estates including the Fuller family's Hyde House estate and the Lowndes estate in Bucks and London. They also reflect the firm's activities as

stewards of the manorial courts, clerks to the magistrates and to local boards, etc.

Among miscellaneous documents received were summary building accounts for Denham Place, 1688-1701.

Shortage of staff added to the problems of listing current accessions and this was considerably in arrears at the end of the year. The large group of deeds of public houses in south Bucks which came in last year was catalogued and a collection of deeds for the Newport Pagnell area was also catalogued after an interval of several decades.

After a lengthy interval conservation work recommenced in September when the new archives conservator took up her appointment. It was decided initially to devote most effort to protecting the recently-reshelved outsize volumes of bound inclosure awards which, on account of their weight, are prone to damage from rubbing and scratching.

The general card index to places has been improved by the addition of extensive cross references. There has been consultation with the County Council's computer unit about the feasibility of computerizing the general index to personal names.

The number of personal visits was 2469. There has been no significant change in the figures since 1982, following a peak of 2797 in 1981. This trend must be seen in the light of the introduction of Monday closure in 1982, in order to enable staff to devote more time to cataloguing, and the very limited searchroom available. Postal enquiries amounted to 783

(738). 2750 telephone calls were logged (1904 for 10 months of 1984), of which 1348 were enquiries and 697 were reservations. The combined total for postal and telephone enquiries in 1981 was 849.

The number of document slips presented was 6755 (6559). A total of 9893 (9467) items was produced.