

THE MUSEUM

The major changes occurring in the County Museum continued during 1989. As a result of the building's potentially serious structural problems, most of the County Museum in Church Street, Aylesbury, has been closed since 1 April in that year. A detailed structural survey of the premises is being undertaken by the County Architect, and it is thought likely that most of the County Museum may not re-open for up to five years.

During the year the former Halton Middle School was converted into a 'Technical Centre' for Museum use. It provides excellent and secure environmentally-controlled storage for the Museum's collections, together with laboratory, workshop and office facilities for staff. Nine months were spent packing the collections, a task carried out to the highest standards by Museum staff and temporary employees, and the move commenced in December. The Technical Centre is not open to the public, although enquiries can be taken there and the Museum's collections may be used for research by appointment. The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society Library has also been relocated to the Technical Centre, and Society meetings have been held in its lecture room.

The Aylesbury Gallery and the Special Exhibitions Gallery remain open to the public with access from a new entrance off St Mary's Square. Visitor numbers have decreased considerably due to the closure of much of the Museum, but despite this 12,791 people visited during the year. The County Museum's other gallery, the Milton Keynes Exhibition Gallery, continues to be popular with visitors. Its exhibitions have ranged from contemporary kimonos to the work of local artists and children.

Despite the upheaval at the County Museum there have been a number of significant acquisitions. Perhaps the most important historical object acquired was the fourteenth-century bronze seal matrix from Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes, which had been discovered at Wolverton. Equally special in its own way was an albino badger killed in a road accident. A 1779 silver pocket watch by Thomas Field of Aylesbury was presented by a generous donor, and a fine watercolour, 'Perspective View of a Design for Blythewood, Buckinghamshire' was purchased at auction. These are but a few of many acquisitions made during the year.

Colin V. Dawes

COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

Extracts from the report of the County Archivist

Important developments this year were the filling, after a delay of several years, of the two additional posts of assistant archivist and assistant conservator, and the evacuation of the Judges Lodgings overflow store to slightly more spacious premises adjacent to the existing strongrooms. Of even greater potential significance was the appointment in October of an Archives Panel consisting of six members of the Public Protection Committee to consider the needs of the service as a whole. The Panel is expected to report back in early 1991.

There was a total of 116 accessions in the course of the year; the figure for 1988 was 131.

Transfers of records made by seven separate County Council departments included a set of 'Cropping books' containing a very detailed record of cultivation on the Council's smallholdings 1920-1965. Sizeable accessions were also received from the County Engineer, the Chief Education Officer, and the Area Education Office for Aylesbury Vale.

A large and important accession of hospital records was received from St John's Hospital, Stone, the former County Lunatic Asylum. The hospital was opened in 1853 and the records constitute a comprehensive and well maintained archive. The case notes for the period

1853–1916 will provide material for medical research, but are closed to the general public for a hundred years.

A box of Aylesbury parish documents passed over by the Buckinghamshire archaeological Society contained a large quantity of papers relating to the restoration of the parish church in the 1840s and 1850s.

An interesting series of trust deeds and documents of title for the former Baptist Upper Meeting House in Amersham, 1685–1944, was deposited by the Amersham Museum.

There was a considerable influx of education records, including records for Sir William Borlase's School, Marlow, comprising correspondence and other papers, including annual nominations of free scholars, dating from 1735 onwards.

The closure of the County Museum for structural repairs was preceded by the transfer of additional material from the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society comprising the bulk of the remaining archives held by them. The transferred material included a large collection of title deeds or charters, many dating to the thirteenth century; early estate records for the Atkins family of Newport Pagnell and the Paget estates in Iver and Marlow; and letter books and of the 3rd Duke of Buckingham and Chandos. The Society's map collection, together with collections of transcripts and antiquarian notes, were also deposited for the duration of the closure.

Parrott and Coales, of Aylesbury, passed over another mixed bag of records which illustrate the wide range of interests of a provincial firm of solicitors over a period of two centuries. They included records of two manor courts, the account book of a turnpike trust, 1848–1870, and a petty sessions minute book for the Missenden area, 1852–1863.

A batch of records relating to the properties of John Camden Neild (1780–1852) in North Marston, Bledlow, Buckland and elsewhere was transferred from the royal archives at

Milton Keynes Borough Council deposited two attractive maps, dated 1718, of the estates, of Browne Willis (1682–1760), the Bucks antiquary. Photographic copies were obtained of parish maps of Haddenham, Cuddington and Kingsey, 1819–20.

A small group of papers of the Baker family of Penn was acquired by purchase with assistance from the Buckinghamshire Record Society's records purchase fund.

By the end of the year a large proportion of the smaller accessions had been listed. The extensive material transferred by the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society is mostly covered by existing finding aids, also transferred, and will thus be immediately accessible for consultation.

The following transcripts of parish registers were received. Christenings, Burials and Marriages: Amersham 1561–1661, Bletchley 1559–1988, Chalfont St Giles 1584–1812, plus marriages only 1813–1837, Hambleton 1566–1837, Turville 1582–1648. Marriages only: Chalfont St Peter 1813–1837, Cublington 1755–1812, Cuddington 1754–1812, Dinton 1754–1812, Ellesborough 1813–1837, Emberton 1754–1837, Tyringham 1576–1836, Winslow 1560–1776.

Also presented were transcripts of census entries 1851–1881 for various parishes; transcripts of Court Rolls, 1498–1500, and other documents, relating to Princes Risborough; a transcript of a Bucks muster roll of 1535. Copies of Bucks entries in the Sun Fire Office policies were purchased. The names of transcribers and donors are recorded in the Archivist's report.

Over 350 documents were repaired and flattened or de-acidified; maps were repaired, bindings refurbished and photographs and negatives protected.

The number of personal visits to the Record Office was 2599 (2580 in 1988). Postal enquiries were 700 (653). A total of 2830 (2842) telephone calls was logged, of which 1136 (1253) were enquiries. A total of 15664 (15766) items was

produced, including 1766 (1781) reels of micro-film.

Other Collections

At the Milton Keynes Record Centre a second assistant archivist was recruited. In October the County Secretary & Solicitor was authorised to enter into discussions with the

Development Corporation about the future of its records, in the light of the impending winding up of the Corporation.

At Claydon House, cataloguing of the estate deeds was almost completed. A ground floor room in the house was designated for conversion into a muniment room.