

A large glacial channel, filled with outwash deposits was still visible along the old pit face. These inspecting this found a mixture of rocks and fossils from the Midlands and Northern England. Some pebbles and boulders still exhibit scratch marks as evidence of their transport by Pleistocene ice.

This probably will have been the group's last opportunity to examine Newton Longville as the brick factory was closed within a month of the visit and the pit will consequently slowly degrade or be filled.

M. J. Oates and K. M. Rowland

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## THE MUSEUM

1990 was the year of consolidation for the County Museum. Moving to the Museum's Technical Centre at halton was completed by the end of February, and provided attractive and spacious accommodation for the Museum staff and a large part of the collections.

The structural survey by the County architect on the County Museum's Church Street premises was completed in August, and resulted in a detailed two-volume report. Many more structural problems were discovered than were initially expected, and the study revealed severe infestations of woodworm and death-watch beetle. It was estimated that the repairs to the building would cost £1.33m plus fees, and that necessary improvements to the building to enable it to re-open as a museum would cost £600,000. These sums have not yet been secured, and the starting date for repairs has not been set, which is a worrying situation.

Several significant acquisitions were made during the year. A Saxon gold and garnet pendant from Milton Keynes was discovered by the Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit during excavations at Westbury Medieval village. Generous financial assistance from the Victoria & Albert Museum Purchase Fund en-

abled the Museum to purchase a fine late nineteenth-century painting by Alfred de Breanski Sr entitled 'Medmenham Abbey and Ferry on the Thames'. The Fund also helped with the acquisition of two other items, an early sixteenth-century golf ring from Milton Keynes and a magnificent 'founder's hoard' of late Bronze Age axe heads and metal found in Aylesbury in 1973. A unique and important Roman forger's hoard of over 800 items including coin dies, coin blanks and metal in three pots was discovered near Fenny Stratford, and was also acquired for the Museum. These are but a few of the many hundreds of items added to the Museum's collection in 1990.

During the year the County Museum's Officer attempted to purchase a portrait of Mrs John Wilkes, painted in 1775 by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Despite raising £57,000 in total from private and Museum sources it was impossible at the time for the County Council to provide the extra £28,000 needed to secure the painting, which subsequently exported to France, £41,000 raised from private sources was returned to the donors.

Colin V. Dawes

# COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

## *Extracts from the County Archivist's Report*

This was another busy year. The Archives Panel appointed last October continued its examination of the Office's problem and future needs and the Office was involved in a joint project on the teaching of Local History in schools. In addition an extensive programme of microfilming of parish records was undertaken. In June the Record Office was at last given exclusive possession of the basement storeroom into which overflow material was moved last year.

### *Accessions*

There was a total of 124 accessions this year; the figure last year was 116.

Small transfers of departmental records were made by the County Engineer, the County Secretary, and the County Emergency Planning Officer; some of the last contained information on wartime bomb damage.

An important group of records of the Amersham poor law union was deposited, consisting principally of minutes and accounts of the board of guardians. They dovetail with other, earlier, records of the union already in the Record Office.

Aylesbury Vale District council deposited a large accumulation of minute books, ledgers and rate books for Winslow Rural District Council and its predecessor body, the Rural Sanitary Authority, dating from around 1870.

Additional deposits of records were made for nine ecclesiastical parishes. Among those from Medmenham parish was a contemporary copy of a table of rates of wages in the county promulgated by quarter sessions in 1673. It is believed to be the earliest such list for Bucks to have come to light.

Nonconformist records received included records of the former Winslow Congregational church, the High Wycombe Methodist circuit,

and the High Wycombe and District Free Church Federal Council.

The world of business was represented by a series of out-letter books, 1867-1870, and other records of George Vernon & Son, Chartered Surveyors and Estate Agents, of High Wycombe. Much of the correspondence relates to estate management, some of it documented in great detail.

A chest full of title deeds of Selby-Lowndes family properties in Whaddon and Winslow was deposited. They date from the eighteenth century and include a lease of Winslow Hall, 1873, incorporating a schedule of fixtures in the various rooms. Also relating to the Selby-Lowndes family were two small estate maps of Whaddon Chase and its vicinity, 1800 and 1802. Two very fine map-surveys of the Lee family's Hartwell estate, dated 1777 and 1866 were also deposited.

Other estate material acquired included some stray deeds of the Lillingstone Dayrell estate, 1616-1805, and microfilms of the records of the Bucks estates of the Coke family of Holkham in Hillesden and Farnham Royal.

As usual, there were a good many small accessions of deeds and related documents for individual properties.

### *Cataloguing, Indexing and Conservation*

In addition to routine listing and indexing of current accessions, several selected accessions from previous years were dealt with. They included the records of Borlase School, Marlow, the Baker family correspondence and a large quantity of rate books of former district councils. Detailed listing of the manorial records received from the Bucks Archaeological Society in 1987 continued. Work was begun on a final catalogue of the Buckingham borough archive to replace the existing rough handlist.

Conservation work included the repair of marriage bonds and allegations from the series in the Archdeaconry records, many of which are too fragile to be produced to searchers. More work was also done in protecting and conserving photographs, mostly forming part of privately deposited archives. Altogether 243 paper documents were repaired and deacidified, 288 were encapsulated, and the work also included the repair of twelve volumes and six large maps.

#### *Use of the Records*

The number of personal visits to the Record Office during the year was 2513 (2599 in 1989). Postal enquiries were 676 (700). A total of 2806 (2830) telephone calls was logged. The number of document slips presented was 7987 (9202). A total of 12809 (15766) items was produced, including 1714 (1766) reels of microfilm.

## REVIEWS

*Descriptions of Lord Cobham's Gardens at Stowe 1700-1750.* Ed. G. B. Clarke, pp. 188, illustrations. Buckinghamshire Record Society No. 26, ISBN 0 901198 25 0.

Stowe has been called a palimpsest for garden designers. It was literally a palimpsest, indeed a Rosetta stone for the writers of poetry, letters, travel diaries, journals, notebooks, guidebooks, and other miscellaneous commentary that George Clarke has collected in this useful anthology. 'The aim of the present volume', he writes in the Introduction, 'is to collect into one place the most important pieces written on Stowe between 1700 and 1750, so as to throw new light on the development of the gardens and reflect the changing attitude of informed opinion towards them' (p. 7). The limiting dates coincide with the lifetime of Sir Richard Temple, Viscount Cobham, who began the layout in the 1720s. The collection includes extracts of poetry by Pope and Thomson, complete poems by William Congreve, Gilbert West, and Samuel Boyse; local history and travel by Browne Willis, Jeremiah Miles, and Defoe's *Tour* (1742) as revised by Samuel Richardson; journal and diary entries by or attributed to Edward Southwell, Sir John Evelyn, Thomas Knight, Charles Lord Cathcart, John Loveday, George Vertue, John Whaley, and Lady Newdigate; guidebook descriptions and commentary by Benton Seeley, William Gilpin, and George Bickham; passages from letters by John Viscount Percival, Jemima Marchioness Grey, Anne Grenville, and the King of Poland.

Two important pieces, Gilpin's *Dialogue* (1748) and Bickham's *Beauties* (1750), are too long to be reprinted, but Clarke refers us to readily available modern facsimile reprints edited by John Dixon Hunt and himself. A few of these selections are familiar, but even the best schooled student of Stowe will find treasures here surrounded by enlightening commentary in headnotes by the leading authority on the history of the gardens. Many are printed from manuscripts in county record offices (Bedfordshire and Warwickshire), Yorkshire Archaeological Society, British Library, Christ Church Oxford Library, Huntington Library; and rare imprints include a unique copy of a French pamphlet in a private collection (*Les Charmes de Stow*, 1748). The collection is generously illustrated with six plans, two modern reconstructions of the layout in 1700 and 1724, engraved plans dated 1739 and 1753 with a detailed key, plus numerous illustrations throughout the book from the three major collections of Stowe engravings by Rigaud, Seeley, and Bickham. The reprinted texts are not facsimiles, but 'extracts from printed eighteenth-century books have been laid out in the same way as the originals' (p. 12), and they make an attractive, legible appearance on the page. The texts of eighteenth-century verse follow standard modern editions, but Clarke has taken the trouble to restore 'capital letters authorised by eighteenth-century editions' (*ibid.*). For example, he prints Congreve's neglected poem on Stowe, 'Of Improving the Present Time' (1728) from the British Library manuscript (BL Add. MS 57804, f. 31),

following F. W. Bateson's 1930 edition for spelling and punctuation, and Curll's edition of 1729 for capitals.

Clarke's commentary solves a crux (p. 36) in Gilbert West's underrated estate poem from a manuscript annotation in a copy in the Princeton University Library. He points out that the earliest commentator on the gardens, Viscount Perceval, 'put his finger on the essential character of Bridgeman's layout . . . when he contrasted the *irregularity* of the whole design at Stowe with the *regularity* of the parts' (p. 14). Jeremiah Miles's account (1735) is remarked as the 'first to describe the Elysian Fields in any detail' (p. 60). He notes the 'heavy-footed, jocular tone' (p. 66) of the anonymous commentator who makes light of the fragility of the Shell Rotundo in the Elysian Fields 'since the Designer and Lord of it is as expeditious in Building as ever was Amphion, the Fortune of the one supplying him with as much Capacity as the harp did the other' (p. 74). He identifies Defoe's *Tour* in Richardson's 1742 edition as 'the source of the long line of Stowe guides' (p. 78) by Seeley and others. He gives an equally discriminating account of the sources of Boyse's secondhand descriptions in his poem on Stowe, *The Triumphs of Nature* (1742), and prints a reply from *The Gentleman's Magazine* (p. 111). He sums up the career of Benton Seeley, whose *Description of Stowe* (1744) was the first country-house guidebook, and who published the anonymous *Dialogue Upon Stow* (1748) reliably attributed in this century to William Gilpin. He has discovered a previously unknown source for John Bickham's *Beauties*, the rare pamphlet *Les Charmes de Stow* (1748) addressed to a lady the anonymous author soothes after mentioning the Temple of Venus: 'A ce mot, *Mademoiselle*, vous rougissez, le Coeur vous bat, & Vôtre aimable pudeur sent quelque allarme! Mais de grace ne vous effrayez point. Mylord *Cobham* est un Seigneur trop modeste . . .' (pp. 161-3).

This splendidly edited collection is a labour of love that will be treasured by every Stoic garden historian. And while one might quibble about a principle of selection that prefers literal to literary accounts (pp. 7-8), giving entry to John

Whaley's inconsequential paragraph (p. 59) while relegating Joseph Warton's important lines in *The Enthusiast* (1744) to the notes (p. 180), Clarke has added significant unknown documents to the record. The letters of Pope and Walpole, Clarke believes, cannot be trusted on details of the development of the garden design, but it is to these unreliable witnesses we must turn in order to understand the poetic ethos of the English landscape garden.

Morris R. Brownell

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*High Wycombe: a Pictorial History.* Ivan G. Sparkes. Phillimore, 1990, ISBN 0 85033 751 8. £10.95.

'An easy-to-read account of its [High Wycombe's] past, and of the making of the present environment' is how the publishers describe this pleasant book. Since the reading matter is confined to captions the description is accurate enough, but it means that an 'account', as the word is commonly understood, is not to be expected. Nevertheless there is much here of interest, both verbal and visual, material that anyone who knows the town will find appealing, and a stimulus to regret for what has been lost since World War II. The losses are not only of what was pleasing to the eye, but of much that brought employment and made sure that virtually all a family's needs were made locally.

The pictures—paintings and drawings as well as photographs—are well chosen and the captions clear and informative, though they do not always answer all the questions raised by the illustrations. Mr Sparkes's book gives a vivid notion of the appearance and economy of the town up to the 1980s.

That the only map is one showing the town's mills must be noted as a shortcoming. Maps of High Wycombe 'then and now' would have made it much easier for the mind's eye to superimpose the past on the present. We may regret, too, that more of the photographs are

not dated, though acknowledging how difficult it can be to do. Finally—an extraordinary omission for a publisher of Phillimore's stand-

ing—the pages are not numbered.

J.C.T.

## THE SOCIETY

### *Membership*

The Society learnt with regret of the deaths of Miss D. J. Adams, Mr R. G. Alexander, Miss D. M. Harris, Mrs M. Kessler, Mrs V. D. James, and Mr J. F. Warren.

At the beginning of 1991, there were 335 ordinary members, 109 family memberships, no junior, and 12 affiliated societies. Counting a family membership as 2 members, there has been an apparent fall in total membership of nearly 5% in each of the four past years.

### *Council*

Council met five times. Dr Arnold Baines FSA was re-elected chairman. Ted Bull was co-opted as Hon. Meetings Organizer and Newsletter Editor. Alan Dell was later co-opted.

### *Bucks County Council*

#### *Library & Museum Sub-Committee*

Society representatives were the President, Dr Baines, and Dr Hagerty, the two former serving also on the Museum Panel.

Stripping to determine the structural condition of the Church Street Museum buildings has laid bare evidence of their origins. Studies on site by John Chenevix Trench FSA and Mrs Pauline Fenley FSA, with the co-operation of Roger Evans (County Historic Buildings Officer) and English Heritage, have shown that Ceely House originated in the mid fifteenth century, probably as the premises of the Guild of the Virgin Mary.

The County Council will be undertaking refurbishment in accordance with the lease during the next three years at a revenue cost of £1.3m. Work necessary to comply with current regulations for museum use will entail capital

expenditure of £600,000. Construction of a first-floor in-fill to provide an enlarged art gallery (estimated cost £730,000) must depend on private funding which it is hoped to raise by an appeal.

The County Council has agreed to augment the Museum staff by new posts: Head of Resources, Keeper of Documentation, and Keeper of Social History (splitting the post of Keeper of History and Archaeology). The County Field Archaeologist becomes the County Archaeologist but creation of the recommended post of Field Archaeologist was postponed.

The Museum Panel has recommended *inter alia* that, in view of the projected demise of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation in 1992, meaning cessation of its funding of the MK Archaeology Unit, a review should be undertaken urgently of archaeological provision for the county.

### *Lecture Series*

Five talks, usually with slides, were held on Saturday afternoons in the Technical Centre, Halton.

*13 January:* Mike Farley sketched an archaeological view of transport by wheels and water.

*24 February:* Elliott Viney revived the glories of two great Bucks houses, Chequers and Hartwell.

*24 March:* Mrs D. Wright recounted the story of lace.

*17 November:* Bob Williams of the MK Archaeology Unit described the evidence of Saxon settlement, archaeologically so elusive nationally, as seen in the Milton Keynes area.

1 December: Elliott Viney recalled two dissimilar Bucks characters well-known in their times, John Schorne and John Wilkes.

### *Outings*

Five outings were arranged by the President, of which one had to be cancelled for lack of support. All enjoyed good weather.

9 June: Worcs & Gloucs. Little Malvern Court, gardens and priory (Mrs T. Barrington), Tewkesbury Abbey, Deerhurst church and Odda's chapel.

14 July: Northants. Lamport Hall, Naseby battlefield and museum, Stanford-on-Avon church and hall (Lady Braye).

11 August: War. Warwick town, church, Leicester Hospital and castle. Charlecote house, church and park (NT).

19 September: Somerset. Wells & Glastonbury. Cancelled.

13 October: Bucks Church Crawl. Whitchurch, Dunton, Addington, Buckingham, Stowe, Chetwode, North Marston (to mark the 700th anniversary year of Master John Schorne).

### *County Museum Archaeological Group*

Archaeological activities, outside Milton Keynes, have continued to be compromised by lack of staff as well as of funding. Despite the pressure on the County archaeologist, Mike Farley, he has continued to organize occasional meetings of the Group in the Technical Centre. Field walking has continued. A few exploratory investigations of threatened sites have been undertaken.

### *Environmental*

The Society was represented by Dr Baines at

the local public inquiry into the Aylesbury Local Plan. The Society's plea for a statement of AVDC policy towards archaeology more in line with English Heritage guidelines met with limited success.

Planning applications have continued to flood in. However, following the Hon. Secretary's accident in January, he has not been able to be so active in dealing with these. Society policy is to concern itself with applications affecting Listed Buildings and conservation Areas and, in co-operation with the County Archaeologist, in sites of known or potential archaeological interest. We do not have the resources to involve ourselves in applications mainly affecting the wider environment which must be left to the appropriate bodies, national and local.

### *Publications*

*Records of Buckinghamshire* Vol. 30 (1988) was distributed in January. In addition to thanking the Museum attendants who pasted in the fiches, the Society wishes to thank all those who helped Mrs Hagerty in the distribution. As usual, Spring and Autumn Newsletters were sent to members.

We record here, with our thanks, the generous gift of £2,800 presented by Mr R. J. M. Frost of R. Raphael & Sons plc of Walton Lodge towards publication in *Records* Vol. 31 of the report of the MSC excavations at Walton directed by Hal Dalwood.

Society Monograph No. 2, *Roman and Belgic Pottery from Excavations in Milton Keynes 1972-82*, by P. T. Marney, was published in February. Sales are handled by the Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit.

## NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

The Section had an active and instructive 1990.

20 January: Dr Michael Oates talked to an appreciative audience of a visit he made to

Spitzbergen to look at the geology and natural history of that northern land. Dr Oates illustrated the talk with slides and had brought along a number of specimens for examination.

17 February: Members bird-watched at Willen Lake, Milton Keynes. David Price, the Park Ranger, explained that the site had originally been old water meadows but its purpose now is to act as a balancing lake and is a site of national standing; 203 species have been recorded. One and a half million birds used the lake as a roost. A Water Pipit was in residence. Our species list included Greylag and Canada Goose, Mallard, Coot, Swan, Appleby Silvers, Mediterranean Gull, Pied Wagtail, Tufted Duck, Moorhen, Pochard, Shoveller, Wigeon, Shelduck, Herring Gull, Gadwall, Goldeneye, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Great Crested and Slavonian Grebe.

17 March: Members listened to Kate Rowland give a fascinating account of the lives of a variety of species of British spiders.

7 April: Following the Annual General Meeting of the Section, Aubrey Woodward delighted us with excellent slides on a wide variety of subjects, all of which had been taken in the Aylesbury locality.

26 May: John Hazell took us on a tour of Howe Park Wood, Milton Keynes, and explained the management plan for the fifteen acres of semi-natural woodland.

23 June: Nigel Phillips gave up two-and-a-half hours to show us round the Warburg reserve. Apart from explaining the various types of management in progress in different parts of the reserve, we were treated to an individually tailored tour to look at plants of special interest to us.

7 July: An informative afternoon was spent looking at grasses in Pilch field, Singleborough, with Roy Maycock, identifying some thirty species.

15 September: Although the final count of the species list was very small, members spent an enjoyable afternoon canal dipping at Ivinghoe Bridge.

6 October: We suffered a deluge on Victor Scott's fungus foray at Stockgrove Park. The

season had been very dry, not particularly good for fungus, but the discovery of a troop of the rare *Tricholoma leucocephalum* rounded off the foray most satisfactorily.

10 November: The illustrated talk on Madagascar given by Geoff Beck was received very well by an appreciative audience.

8 December: Andrew Cleave made his way from Basingstoke through blizzards to give us an entertaining and informative illustrated talk on Grasshoppers and Crickets.

Margaret Kendrick

*Report of the Hon. Recording Secretary*

1990 started with long spells of mild windy weather, with very little frost; this brought spring flowers out early.

Spring migrants among the birds showed a further decline in numbers. In the area immediately west of Aylesbury very few chiff-chaffs or willow warblers, garden warblers or black-caps were seen or heard. No adverse change has taken place in the environment; in fact more small coppices have been planted in recent years; so the reason for the decline must be sought elsewhere.

The warm spring was followed by a very hot dry summer. Butterflies did well, Holly Blues in particular. Colonies of Black Hairstreaks were well up in numbers; some new ones, not previously recorded, are doing well.

Moth populations are still declining, possibly as a result of more and brighter lights being used nowadays, especially fluorescents.

It was a bumper year for the fruits of trees and shrubs in hedges and gardens, reviving the old question of whether this presaged a long hard winter.

A buzzard was seen a number of times along the Thame valley near Stone.

I would be most grateful for details of sightings of flora and fauna to report in these notes.

A. T. Woodward

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