

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY MUSEUM

ANNUAL REPORT 2000/2001

The Museum Service had a difficult year in 2000/2001, with internal problems tending to overshadow real achievements in mounting a varied exhibition programme, and maintaining a highly successful education service. There was a net reduction in the total number of visitors compared with 1999/2000, but visitor figures since December have shown a marked increase over the same months last year. This recovery may be linked to the employment in November of a marketing assistant, Steve Sinden, who has ensured that Museum leaflets reach a much wider audience and that the Museum gets much more regular attention in the national and local press. During the year, 54,657 people visited the Museum, compared with 65,181 in the previous year.

EXHIBITIONS

The Museum offered visitors a varied and changing programme over the year. *ReCollection*, the exhibition of one hundred objects illustrating the lives of Buckinghamshire residents during the twentieth century, continued until June. This was funded by a Millennium Festival grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Chiltern Landscapes, an exhibition of the works of William and Harriet Callow, was held from September to December. The Callows lived at Great Missenden from 1855 to 1882 and recorded their home and its surroundings in more than 80 watercolours. This was thought to be the first time the work of Harriet Callow had been exhibited alongside that of her more famous husband.

The artist in residence programme sponsored by the *Muir Trust* took place in October to coincide with the William and Harriet Callow exhibition. Watercolourist Peter Claydon lead workshops and gave talks. His work was displayed in the Museum in November.

The exhibition *Excessive Pleasures*, which ran from January to March, featured prints by a previous Muir Trust artist in residence, Dale Devereux-Barker.

The *Off the Wall* Art Market was held in November. The title of this exhibition of the work of local artists reflected the undertaking that as soon as a painting was sold, it was replaced with an item of equally high standard. The exhibition was very well attended and all of the considerable profits were passed on to the Museum. The exhibition was organised by the Friends and Patrons of the Museum. The Museum benefits enormously from the generosity of these imaginative and energetic organisations.

EDUCATION

The Museum's Education Service to schools continued to be popular, with taught sessions often fully booked a term in advance. Most of the school groups were visiting the Roald Dahl Gallery, but a new exhibition entitled *Stone, Paper, Scissors*, conceived by Education Manager, David Erskine, has proved very popular with young people. This hands-on exhibition explores the science of materials and encourages children to discover what things are made of. A fruitful partnership with the County Council's Continuing Education team has been further developed this year. A highly successful *Family Fun Day* was held in December, which attracted 750 visitors. This was co-ordinated by Hilary Dean and Pam Russell. Special events for the February half-term holiday were also very successful and contributed to a significant increase in numbers visiting the Museum over the same period last year.

COLLECTIONS

The curatorial staff of the Museum and the Environmental Records Centre continue to be based at Halton. During the year, a review of the Halton premises was conducted with a view to using some of the space for school parties and adult education classes. This plan was rejected when costings were received for upgrading the toilet accommodation and providing disabled access.

The curatorial staff have, however, moved into the large classroom at Halton in order to create space in the newer wing for further storage of archaeological finds and archives. New mobile shelving has been ordered and sufficient shelf space will be created to accommodate significant new deposits of material from the Eton Rowing Lake and the Maidenhead Flood Prevention Scheme. These arrangements have been negotiated by the Museum's Collections and Information Manager, Sarah Gray.

A notable addition to the Museum collections during the year was the Prestwood Hoard. This comprises 111 silver coins and 700 bronze coins which were found in separate locations during a metal detector rally at Prestwood in 1999. They were declared as national 'treasure', but were purchased by the Museum with a grant of £6,600 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. A new Curatorial Officer (Social History and Archaeology) was appointed in January. He is Jim Inglis, who was formerly Curator of Elgin Museum in Scotland.

The legal transfer to Milton Keynes Council of those objects in the collections which were added since 1957 and have a Milton Keynes provenance has progressed and has been linked to an application by Milton Keynes for the status of a registered museum. These objects will remain at Halton for

the foreseeable future and the valuable financial contribution of Milton Keynes Council to the operational costs of the Museum will continue. The Joint Arrangement under which this work is carried out for Milton Keynes is likely to be merged with the similar arrangement which exists for the accommodation of archives of Milton Keynes origin in the County Record Office.

The *Museum Connections* programme, which aims to display items from Museum collections in libraries across the county, has continued. The Friends of the Museum have purchased five more *Connections* cases in addition to those already in place in Amersham, Marlow, Princes Risborough and Winslow libraries.

The collection of 20,000 photographs of Buckinghamshire drawn from the County Library and the County Museum has proved to be the most visited part of the County Council web site, with about 100,000 hits during the year. The Museum's own web-site went live in September and has received about 35,000 hits. It enables the visitor to make a virtual tour of the Museum.

Julian Hunt
County Records and Local Studies Manager

THE COUNTY RECORDS AND LOCAL STUDIES SERVICE

REPORT FOR 2000-2001

Following the award of a grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund, as reported last year, the plans for the new Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, extending and refurbishing the present Record Office accommodation, were finalised in preparation for the building work, beginning in July 2001. The publication in 2000 of the revised version of BS 5454, the British Standard for the storage and exhibition of archives, meant that we were able to take its recommendations into account. It was also necessary to make arrangements for the phasing of the building work in order to avoid any risk of damage to archives and to minimise the inevitable disruption to the public service.

ACCESSIONS

Altogether 135 accessions were received in the Record Office in the calendar year 2000. A full list can be found in the Annual Report obtainable from the Record Office.

One of the most significant accessions came from Aylesbury prison (now Aylesbury Young Offender Institution). The records mainly relate to the period between the 1890s and 1950s when it was a women's prison and borstal. They include records of prisoners and staff, many of which are at present subject to extended closure periods for reasons of confidentiality. Before 1878, when the management of prisons was transferred to the Home Office, the prison was the responsibility of the county magistrates, so the Record Office already held pre-1878 records among the county Quarter Sessions records. Shortly after their deposit, the prison records were used in the making of a BBC television documentary in the series *Bloodies*. The programme was about Florence Maybrick, who was convicted of poisoning her husband in the 1890s.

Minutes of Marlow Urban District Council from its formation in 1896 until 1948 were deposited by Wycombe District Council, as the first stage in the

process of transferring records from the Council's custody into the Record Office. These were followed by some of the records of the Borough of Chepping Wycombe (including minutes of the corporation, 1831-1875 and 1882-1888, as well as minutes of the paving and lighting commissioners, 1815-1849, and of the local board of health, 1865-1872), and minutes of Wycombe Rural District Council, 1903-1933, and of Hambleton Rural District Council, 1895-1934.

The Record Office received the originals of two maps of which we had previously held only copies. One is a plan of the estate of the Earl of Warwick in Hogshaw, 1767, and the other a plan entitled 'Whaddon in the olden time', dated 1800. This is a rough sketch of the village, with drawings of the buildings and the names of occupants and surrounding fields.

Land tax assessments were received from Slough Museum relating to four parishes in Burnham Hundred in 1750. These are particularly welcome as, although the Record Office has a good series of land tax assessments for the county between 1780 and 1832, earlier survivals of such records are much rarer.

The Cowper and Newton Museum at Olney deposited the archives in the Miss C. M. Barham Johnson Bequest, which include records, articles, newscuttings, etc, relating to William Cowper of Olney, the Reverend John Newton and Dr John Johnson, 1786-c.1986.

As usual, a large number of the accessions received during the year were of title deeds. The solicitors Francis and How of Chesham deposited several boxes of deeds, c.1650-c.1930, mainly relating to properties in that parish, though a small number relate to properties elsewhere, e.g. Amersham, Hertfordshire (Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead), Kent (Brabourne), Middlesex, Yorkshire (Rotherham).

Miscellaneous accessions included deeds relating to the following properties: premises at Chartridge

(Tokefield family), 1572, 1600; a message, water mills and land on which a windmill had lately stood, all in Stewkley, 1708; a message in or near the Horse Fair, Aylesbury, 1693; lands in Ashley Green, now part of Grove Farm, Whelpley Hill, Chesham, 1618-1781; premises in Aylesbury Street (formerly Cross Street), Fenny Stratford, 1719-1908, and elsewhere in the parish; and the estate of the Shelton family in Wraysbury, c.1764-c.1940, and also in Kent. A manor court roll of the honour of Gloucester for Stowe, Lamport and Maids Moreton, dating from 1786, was also deposited.

The minute book of the Committee of Subscribers to the Sunday School, Chalfont St Giles, for 1789-1799, including the names of children and subscribers, was received, together with two letters relating to the appointment of the village schoolmaster in 1872.

A photograph album of the meeting of the Old Berkeley Hunt at Chequers in January 1925 includes photographs of the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, and his wife welcoming the hunt.

Negretti Automation (formerly Negretti and Zambra), makers of measuring instruments, donated miscellaneous records on the closure of their Aylesbury factory, including newscuttings, photographs of products, and product brochures.

Records of the Women's Land Army belonging to the late Miss Aileen M. J. Oxley, County Organiser for Buckinghamshire, were deposited by her family. They relate to her service in the WLA during World War II, including unsigned copy minutes of the Bucks and North Bucks Committees (c.1940-1941), newsletters, photographs, and an illustrated presentation album recording the history of the WLA in Buckinghamshire similar to one donated to the Office many years ago (D/X 976).

CATALOGUES AND INDEXES

Work has continued on automating the Record Office catalogues by entering data into the CALM 2000 database. We also began using the accessions database in CALM 2000 and this now contains details of all accessions since 1993. The conversion of the Record Office finding aids into electronic format is clearly a task of enormous proportions and the databases are not yet available for public use, but they have already proved of great value to staff in assisting with enquiries from researchers.

The Record Office has been a participant in the

Access to Archives (A2A) project, which is establishing on the world-wide web a database of archive catalogues from English record offices. A consortium of 15 record offices under the aegis of the South-East Regional Archives Council successfully applied for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for a project called 'From Landlord to Labourer'. This aims to convert 32,000 pages of catalogues of family and estate archives into electronic form and mount them on the A2A website. Buckinghamshire is to provide 10% of the catalogues. In addition, copies of our Quarter Sessions and Petty Sessions catalogues were supplied to the A2A team. The A2A website can be searched at:

www.a2a.pro.gov.uk.

Additions continued to be made to the Record Office and Local Studies website, including summary lists of parish register holdings and lists of local newspapers held in the Local Studies Library and other libraries throughout the county. The website has a new address:

www.buckscc.gov.uk/archives.

The Buckinghamshire Record Society published the *Index to Probate Records of the Archdeaconry of Buckingham, 1483-1660, and of the Buckinghamshire Peculiars, 1420-1660*. The vast majority of the wills and administrations listed in this index are held at the Record Office, and our existing indexes consequently formed the basis of the volume, but it also includes Buckinghamshire probate records at Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Bedfordshire Record Offices and at Eton College Library. The volume can be purchased from the Record Office, as can other publications of the Record Society still in print.

CONSERVATION

The Record Office conservator carried out work on the Historic Children's Book Collection at Chesham Library, for which a grant had been awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Most volumes were placed into tailor-made boxes or book shoes. Altogether 430 items from the collection passed through the conservation studio and the whole collection can now be seen on display at Chesham Library.

At the end of 2000, the Record Office was asked to clean the large collection of historic records belonging to Wycombe District Council. These include records of the Borough of High Wycombe,

Wycombe and Hambleton Rural District Councils and Marlow Urban District Council. The collection is a large one and some 940 items, mainly volumes, were dealt with.

Work continued on flattening and repairing the marriage allegations and bonds of the archdeaconry of Buckingham. Other records which received attention included account books of the overseers of the poor for Aylesbury and a Primitive Methodist baptism register for High Wycombe.

ANNUAL ARCHIVES LECTURE

The guest speaker at the Annual Archives Lecture held in County Hall, Aylesbury, in November 2000

was Dr Michael Clanchy of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. His lecture was entitled 'Preserving Memory: record-making and literacy in medieval England' and illustrated with many fascinating slides. Taking as the centre-piece of his lecture the Boarstall Horn, which is held in the Record Office, Dr Clanchy showed how in the largely illiterate society of the time it was not only written documents that were regarded as records, but also symbolic memory-bearing objects, such as tally sticks, knives and of course the Horn itself.

*Roger Bettridge
County Archivist*

COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE

REPORT FOR 2000

The year saw the implementation of a series of modernising initiatives begun in 1999 and reported in *Records* 41. First and foremost was the completion of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Management document, entitled 'A future for our past' which went through a consultation process and was formally adopted by the County Council in October. The Plan provides a strategic framework for the management of Buckinghamshire's archaeological heritage and indicates how the County Archaeological Service will meet the challenge of providing 'best value'. An Action Plan sets out a prioritised programme for the next five years designed to address current deficiencies and improve the service, particularly through externally funded projects and partnership working. The adoption of the Management Plan represents a significant success in re-establishing the County Archaeological Service's position after the difficulties of the late 1990s.

The implementation of the Plan began even before its formal adoption. After a long period of quiescence the Sites and Monument Record began to receive greater attention. The computerised database was transferred to the industry-standard Access SMR software package linked to the council's Geographical Information System. English Heritage support was obtained for an audit of the Sites and Monuments Record, which was particularly useful in documenting the substantial and increasing data-inputting backlog. The next steps are to develop and implement an Action Plan to address the issues identified by the audit, including the lack of public outreach for which a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund is proposed.

Planning and conservation advice casework reached unprecedented levels in 2000 with 571 consultations received, of which about 1 in 3 had archaeological implications. The year saw the completion of the major programme of excavations at Dorney Rowing Lake but otherwise fieldwork was mostly small-scale. Evaluations at The

Lea, Denham and Aston Clinton identified later prehistoric, Roman, and, in the latter case early Saxon sites, which will require further investigation in advance of development. At Ludgershall the value of very small-scale work was confirmed by the discovery of a late-medieval pottery production site of the Brill/Boarstall industry, the first such find in this village. The service was also involved in the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan Inquiry using research by English Heritage (Everson 2001) to secure a change in the alignment of a proposed road past the scheduled ancient monument at Quarrendon, providing written evidence to the inquiry and helping to develop Aylesbury Vale District Council's Green Spaces Strategy which seeks to protect the monuments affected by Aylesbury's proposed expansion.

The service was also involved in several major projects in the spheres of conservation and research most notably the Whittlewood, Whiteleaf and Chalk Downlands projects. The Whittlewood Project, initiated by Dr Chris Dyer of the University of Leicester, aims at understanding the origins of dispersed settlement in this area on the Bucks/Northants county boundary. The Whiteleaf Project has been developed in collaboration with the County Council's Countryside Team and the local community. It involves a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for works to restore and interpret the chalk cross and Neolithic barrow on Whiteleaf Hill, Princes Risborough. A meeting with officers of the Chilterns AONB led to the setting up of an historic environment task group which provided input to the revision of the AONB's Management Plan, and to their proposed Chalk Downlands Project which aims to manage and restore this distinctive and threatened Chiltern landscape.

In conclusion, the year 2000 saw the County Archaeological Service establishing the firm foundations and wide networks essential for developing the service as envisaged in the Archaeological

Management Plan. We hope to report further progress next year.

*Alexander (Sandy) Kidd
Senior Archaeological Officer
Bucks County Council*

REFERENCES

Everson, P. 2001. 'Peasants, Peers and Graziers: the landscape of Quarrendon, Buckinghamshire, interpreted', *Recs. Bucks*, **41**, 1-46.