

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY MUSEUM

ANNUAL REPORT 2003/2004

This year saw the implementation of a range of new and updated Museum public displays, signage and services as recommended in 2002–03 by the design consultancy, Objectives. With the consent and support of the Society and planning consent for the works to the museum building (Listed Grade 2*), building and installation works between April and July 2003 were completed in time for the busy summer holiday period.

The Museum's new look includes bright, DDA compliant signage throughout the buildings, a revamped reception area and shop, a Museum InfoPoint where curatorial staff meet the visitors, the creation of a Learning Zone for schools, events, talks and workshops, and new display spaces in the Baker and Viney Rooms (now rebadged as the Georgian Room and Collections Showcase) to display more of the stored Museum collections and major loan items to national standards of security and environment.

The year again saw over 9,500 school children visit the museum in organised groups. The Roald Dahl Children's Gallery offers schools a 90 minute teaching session where they are encouraged to investigate themes from history, natural history, science and technology through the characters and stories of Roald Dahl. Schools were also attracted by two specially developed curriculum and family learning exhibitions: *Badgers, Beetles and Bluebells* looked at the biodiversity of Bucks and *Victorians* focused on the lives of Victorian children. Both exhibitions offered schools a teaching session in the gallery led by Education staff. The former Aylesbury Gallery was converted to a schools group reception space, much needed on days when up to 120 children were on site. *Summer at the Museum*, a new programme of family learning events in July and August jointly promoted with Bucks Adult Learning, was also popular with family visitors.

Art Gallery exhibitions included *A Baker's Dozen* (13 children's book illustrators), *Fanfare* (work by Bucks Art Week artists), *British Studio Ceramics*, *The Magic of Masks and Puppets*, *All*

Together Different (Bucks21 Contemporary Art Group), *Tree of Life* (artworks on the human heart with a range of art, photograph and natural history collections to supplement the theme) and *Wycombe – images of a town*. *Museum Treasures* celebrated the centenary of the National Art Collections Fund and showcased the wide range of museum acquisitions with support from grant-aiding bodies, including the Society's generous gift of a water-colour of Iver. A linked *Treasures Trail* was completed by over 3000 children and families, tempted by a 'gold' chocolate coin reward.

The new Georgian Room gallery, meeting Government Indemnity standards, displayed the Society's paintings by Balthasar Nebot of the gardens of Hartwell House in 1738 with Georgian drinking glasses from the museum collections. From January – April 2004, the museum's own Bronze Age archaeology was supplemented by a splendid hoard of gold torcs and bracelets found in Milton Keynes and generously loaned by the British Museum.

The Wednesday lunchtime Gallery Talks series, introduced in 2002, attracted increasing audiences of 'regulars' and newcomers drawn by the broad range of topics always based on objects on display in the Museum. With a bright new look and more on the Museum 'menu', it was gratifying that visitor numbers again increased by 12,000 to 142,000 in 2003–04, reflecting the enhanced package of exhibitions and services and the second full year of free admission to the Museum.

Planning and fundraising continued for a large scale *Buckinghamshire in the Civil War* exhibition in November 2004. The Society's support for a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £35,000 under the *Your Heritage* scheme was greatly appreciated.

In December 2003, the Museum developed a further Lottery bid and public fundraising appeal to enable the acquisition and display of a rare surviving 1920s car made by the Cubitt Company of Aylesbury. As the car could not be displayed within the existing museum buildings, plans were devel-

oped for a new 'display garage' in the Museum garden. Planning consent has been granted with safeguards in place for the sensitive below ground archaeology and the Society's Trustees have given their permission for the building works, due to begin in the Spring of 2005. Again, the Society's support was a key factor in a further successful *Your Heritage* bid for £50,000.

This was also the first year of the Museum's participation in the national 3-year *Portable Antiquities Scheme*, funded by the DCMS to enhance the reporting and recording of Treasure and other public archaeological finds in Bucks and Milton Keynes through the new appointment of a Finds Liaison Officer. The scheme is already bringing more finds to light as evidenced by the significant archaeological accessions listed below and by new data added to the County Sites and Monuments Record.

Notable accessions to the collections included:

ARCHAEOLOGY

2004.36.1 Copper alloy Roman intaglio ring with two-colour blue glass gem, showing Venus, probably 3rd century AD, based on coin type of Julia Domna. The hoop is broken, and it is possible that it was never complete, and was designed to be adjustable. Found by metal detectorists at Ivinghoe Aston. The metal is very thin, and it has been suggested that the ring may have been intended as grave goods, though this is uncertain.

2004.86.1 Gold Merovingian finger ring, 6th-7th century AD. The bezel is a false coin with blundered legend and trilobate decoration on shoulders. Found by metal detectorist at Cublington, and declared Treasure. Purchased with the aid of Friends of the Museum, MLA/V&A Purchase Fund and Headley Trust.

2004.87.1 Gold pennanular ring, decorated with black bands, Bronze Age. Found by metal detectorist at Cublington, and declared Treasure. Purchased with the aid of Friends of the Museum, MLA/V&A Purchase Fund and Headley Trust.

2004.88.1 Silver medieval badge in the form of a crowned M with one tine of crown broken off. Found by metal detectorist at Haddenham and declared Treasure. Probably a secular badge rather than a pilgrim badge. Purchased with the aid of Friends of the Museum.

2004.173.1 Silver-gilt medieval spoon, late 14th

century. The bowl is incomplete and cracked. It has a hexagonal stem, which is bent, and a diamond point terminal. Found by metal detectorist at Creslow, and declared Treasure. Purchased with the aid of Friends of the Museum.

2004.174.1-58 Hoard of 58 silver medieval coins, early-mid 14th century. Found by metal detectorists at Creslow and declared Treasure. Purchased with the aid of Friends of the Museum, MLA/V&A Purchase Fund and Headley Trust.

2004.177.1 Silver coin, Iron Age; possibly made by *Catuvellauni* tribe, c50 BC. Found by metal detectorist at Buckland.

ART

2004.43.1-2 Two views of Parsonage Wood by Eva Ryn, oil on canvas, c1995.

2004.125.1-12 12 Watercolours of Milton Keynes by Shelagh Ashley, early 1990s (acquired on behalf of Milton Keynes Council).

CLOTHING AND TEXTILES

2004.44.1 Banner from the Lee Women's Institute, decorated with straw plait.

2004.65.1 Black velvet evening coat by the London designer Michael, 1960s.

2004.67.1 Smock from Beaconsfield, transfer from Bedford Museum.

2004.68.1 Cream shawl with Chinese style embroidery, late 19th century.

2004.71.1 Black georgette dress with diamante decoration, late 1920s.

NATURAL HISTORY

2004.60 Cecil Monk's *Diptera* (Flies) collection comprising 5 files of microscope slides accompanied by 4 files of notes and detailed drawings of wings.

SOCIAL HISTORY

2004.1.1 Door from Victorian cell in Young Offender's Institution, Bierton, formerly Aylesbury Gaol.

2004.2.1 Lambert and Butler cigarette card depicting Cubitt car.

2004.4.1 Three-legged stool of stick construction from the Horsenden Estate.

Sarah Gray, Curator

CENTRE FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE STUDIES

REPORT FOR APRIL 2003–MARCH 2004

In November 2003 the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies (CBS) was formally inspected by the National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office), which appoints local authority record offices as places of deposit for public records under the Public Records Acts. Places of deposit are periodically inspected to ensure that they meet the required standards for both storage conditions and public service, and this was the first inspection of Buckinghamshire Record Office since its re-opening as the CBS in 2002.

The inspection report congratulated us on the new facilities for visitors, our disabled access, improved reading rooms, the two additional strongrooms and the new air-conditioning system within all the strongrooms. We were also praised for our 'lively and useful' website and for the continuing development of our modern records management service. The National Archives has accordingly confirmed our status as a place of deposit for another five years. The main areas identified for further improvement are tackling the backlog of archive cataloguing, the provision of services to schools, and further development of the records management service, particularly to meet the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the need for electronic records management.

This generally favourable view of the CBS was echoed in the report for the South-East Region on the national survey of visitors to local authority archives and local studies libraries, published in 2003. For example, 100% of the respondents who had used the CBS rated the helpfulness and friendliness of staff and the quality of their advice as good or very good. The report compares the responses of users of fourteen Record Offices within the South-East Region and the CBS was placed first in the quality of copy services, microfilm and microfiche facilities, and opening hours, while the document production service was placed second.

ACCESSIONS

There were 153 accessions to the archives during the calendar year 2003, a full list of which will be available on our website.

The earliest records received during the year date from the 17th century: an account of poor law disbursements in Pauls Row, High Wycombe, 1636; a deed relating to lands in the common fields of Long Crendon, described in a schedule, 1658 (from the collection of the late Christopher Hohler); and a small group of deeds relating to Denham, comprising a Common Recovery for Denham mills, 1600, Letters Patent for Webbe Meade and a cottage, 1632, and a Final Concord between William Bowyer and Richard Chalkhill, 1656.

Our Modern Records team has been putting together a single set of minutes and reports for the committees of Buckinghamshire County Council for 1974–2000, not only ensuring the survival of as complete a record as possible but also the elimination of wasteful duplicate copies. The abolition of Community Health Councils led to the deposit under the Public Records Acts of the records of those for Aylesbury Vale, Milton Keynes and South Buckinghamshire, dating back to the establishment of the Councils in 1974. The history of late-20th century Buckinghamshire will also be illuminated by the records of the Marylebone Travellers Association, a pressure-group set up to fight the proposed, and eventually abandoned, closure of Marylebone Station, London, in the 1980s.

A small cache came to light of original brass rubbings made in the mid-1820s by George Lipscomb in the course of his research for his history of Buckinghamshire. They were made at the churches in Amersham, Chenies, Chesham Bois, Dinton, Drayton Beauchamp, Great Hampden, Leckhamstead and Little Missenden and complement Lipscomb's brass rubbings held in the BAS muniment room. At one time these rubbings belonged to the Library of Sir Thomas Phillipps, the 19th-century collector of manuscripts (and

friend of Lipscomb's), from where they went to auction a century or so ago.

The BAS transferred to us three items of ephemera which throw light on everyday life in the past – a higgler's licence, 1771, an Aylesbury grocery bill, 1809, and an advertisement for a cock fight, also 1809.

Berkshire Record Office transferred some 14 linear metres of records of Eton Urban District Council, which include deeds dating back to the 18th century. Another item relating to Eton is a plan of 1775 of Plowleys Farm, Stoke Poges, which belonged to Eton College. The plan shows turnpike and other surrounding roads, with details of enclosures and common land, field names and ownership.

Neale's Charity of Cheddington deposited records from the 18th to the 20th centuries, as well as the wooden box specially made to house the records in 1734. We also received records of the Horton Church Lands Charity, which include deeds relating to Five Bells Inn, 1775–1877, and plans and papers on the restoration of Horton Chapel, 1875–1877.

Other public houses represented in the accessions for the year include the White Swan, Olney (conveyance of 1800), and the Kings Head, Sherington, formerly the property of Thomas Meacher of Newport Pagnell, brewer, bankrupt (deed of 1819).

School records deposited include admission registers for Lady Rosebery's School, Wingrave, 1910–1919, Wingrave and Rowsham C. of E. School, 1893–1973, and the Countess of Rosebery's School, Cheddington, 1873–1915, and the log books of Great Hampden C. of E. School, 1873–1982.

Records of the Elliott family of Manor Farm, Hulcott, which have been deposited include leases, valuations and wills, 1813–1926, account books, 1879–1966, a register of the movement of animals, 1958–1969, and a sale catalogue for the Hulcott Estate, 1964. The same deposit includes a map and reference book of the parish by Henry Cooling, surveyor, 1838, and the minute book of the Vale of Aylesbury Cattle Association, founded in 1865 by a group of local farmers as a self-help society in cases of disease. Whenever an animal became sick, the Association paid for a vet to visit and, if necessary, the animal was destroyed and the farmer compensated. The Association was wound up in 1908.

Business records, 1864–1939, of Webb and Sons, brush manufacturers of Chesham, including accounts, wages books, specifications, a register of employees and correspondence, are among miscellaneous local records and ephemera collected for the Chesham Town Museum Project and now deposited in the CBS.

The papers of Dr Oliver F. Brown of Calverton, who died in 1987, relating to his local history research, have been deposited by his widow. We also received 'The Diary of an English Lacemaker', a manuscript by Barbara Edwards describing her activities as a lacemaker in 1981.

INTERNET PROVISION

The internet has in the last few years provided opportunities for access to archives that would have been undreamt of only ten years ago. The main benefit so far has been the availability of archive catalogues on-line. In particular, for the CBS, many of our major family and estate, local authority and small miscellaneous catalogues can now be searched on the Access to Archives website at www.a2a.org.uk, along with catalogues from over 350 record repositories in England, while national archive repositories such as the National Archives and the British Library have mounted their catalogues on their own websites.

The digitisation of archives themselves as opposed to the catalogues requires a much greater outlay of staff and financial resources, but where it can be achieved, it not only promotes access for researchers but also saves wear-and-tear on the original documents. The Museum and CBS database containing over 20,000 photographs of Buckinghamshire has proved very popular since being mounted on the County Council website in 2000 and there have been two welcome achievements in the field of archive digitisation in the last year.

First, in April 2003, County Councillor Mrs Margaret Dewar officially launched the 'Victorian Prisoners' database on the CBS website. It contains some 500 photographs of prisoners of all ages, from young children to the elderly, to be found in the receiving registers for the County Gaol, Aylesbury, 1870–1874 and 1877–1878, held in the CBS. The launch was attended by the present Governor of the gaol, now the Aylesbury Young Offenders Institution, and by two descendants of

convicts in the database. There was good coverage of the launch in the local press and the database was awarded a commendation at the annual awards of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). It has since been expanded to include written details of those prisoners in the registers for whom there are no photographs, bringing the number of prisoners featured to 2,330.

Information from this database was imaginatively presented, along with one of the original gaol registers and contemporary artefacts, in the 'Hidden Poor' exhibition at the County Museum, and it has considerable potential for use by family historians, social historians and school children.

Secondly, the enclosure maps and awards that we hold for parishes transferred to Berkshire in 1974 have been digitised by Berkshire Record Office in their Lottery-funded 'New Landscapes' project. This will create a new website where the parliamentary enclosure maps and awards relating to the present-day county of Berkshire between 1736 and 1883 can be seen. The awards held in the CBS which will be placed on the website are for Colnbrook, Datchet, Ditton, Farnham Royal, Horton, Langley Marish, Stoke Poges, Upton-cum-Chalvey, Wexham and Wraybury. The website address is www.berkshireenclosure.org.uk.

The address of the CBS website, for Lists of Accessions, Victorian Prisoners, Object of the Month and much else besides, is www.buckscc.gov.uk/archives.

EVENTS

The County Archivist Roger Bettridge was invited to take part in the ceremony organised by the Aylesbury Town Mayor, Ray Ghent, in March 2004 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the dedication of the Great War Cross in Aylesbury Cemetery. Mr Ghent has been researching the backgrounds of the 74 men named on the cross and obtained a lot of information from the cemetery registers of the period, held in the CBS.

The Heritage Manager Julian Hunt and the County Archivist were interviewed on the BBC

Radio 4 programme, *Making History*, for an item on the Gawcott Labourers' Strike of 1867. The CBS holds a printed handbill issued on behalf of the strikers, which was read out on the programme, and there is an article on the strike in *Recs Bucks*, 19, by Dr Pamela Horn, who also took part in the programme.

ARCHIVES AWARENESS MONTH

September 2003 was proclaimed as the first-ever Archives Awareness Month. This was organized on a national basis, with local repositories participating in different ways. The national theme for the month was 'Love and Hate' and we used this for an on-line exhibition, which is still available on our website. Items displayed include a 1723 love-letter, an anonymous threatening letter of 1800 and the unusually outspoken will of 'the most miserable of men', Sir Richard Atkins, 1695.

A series of taster sessions on family history on the internet, followed by 'Meet the Archivist', were held at Central Milton Keynes, Marlow, High Wycombe and Buckingham Libraries. We also held an event for children (ages 7–11) - a talk on Roald Dahl's archives, given by our former colleague Liz Whittingham, who is now Archivist to the Roald Dahl Centre, Great Missenden. The event, which was held at the County Museum and included a visit to the Dahl Gallery, was enthusiastically enjoyed by all the children.

The centrepiece of the month was the Archives Open Day at the CBS on Saturday 20 September. Visitors were able to look at a display of original archives, and the archive conservator put on a demonstration of bookbinding and document repair. There were also behind-the-scenes tours of the archives strongrooms, which are not normally open to the public.

For details of our next Open Day (not yet arranged!), please contact us direct to register your interest. As one 20-year-old visitor at our 2003 Open Day commented, 'I thought it was something only old people and parents get excited about, but it's not!'

*Roger Bettridge
County Archivist*

COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE

REPORT FOR 2003

The main achievements for 2003 were the restoration of Whiteleaf Barrow and Cross and the success of funding applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the "Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past" and "Getting to Know Bernwood" projects. Planning and conservation advice casework reached a new peak of 690 consultations received, of which 144 required some positive follow up. The Sites and Monuments Record handled 144 consultations, a slight increase on the previous year. In April 2003 the service was transferred from Minerals and Development Control to join Countryside Initiatives and Country Parks in a new Countryside and Heritage Group. This change should enable the team to better capitalize on opportunities for joint working on rural conservation and public outreach projects, such as the Whiteleaf Project noted below.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Government's proposals for a major growth area in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Region have significant implications for the historic environment which gained little recognition in the initial studies. Working with English Heritage and Milton Keynes Council, the Archaeology Service was commissioned to complete a report based on the Bucks Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (see below) for the Panel Inquiry into the proposed development strategy.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

The year saw many small-scale evaluations and watching briefs and several larger scale investigations, a summary listing of which can be found on the County Council's web site. Significant discoveries included a rare Middle Bronze Age site in Chesham; a Bronze Age field system and Roman cremation cemetery at The Lea Denham and, most impressively, a medieval and post-medieval tile factory at Rose Cottage, Penn, part of one of the

most prolific production sites for decorated floor tiles in medieval Europe. Considerable efforts have also been made to secure publication of reports delayed from excavations conducted in the late 1990s.

An unusual preservation case arose on the edge of the village of Ludgershall, where a plot of land was been offered for sale in small "sub-plots". The site contains well preserved ridge and furrow earthworks, part of the village's medieval open-field system, which are of recognised national importance and would be placed at risk of sub-division by fences. In response to concerns raised by the local parish council, and with the support of English Heritage, the County Archaeological Service advised and supported Aylesbury Vale District Council in the issuing of an Article 4 Direction revoking these specific permitted development rights. This direction was subsequently confirmed by the Secretary of State providing an example of a little-used provision of planning guidance to protect archaeologically sensitive sites from a clear and specific threat.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION (HLC)

English Heritage is supporting the Buckinghamshire HLC Project as part of their national programme of historic landscape characterisation projects. HLC aims to map the historic dimension of the modern landscape across the historic county (including Milton Keynes), distinguishing ancient woodlands from modern plantations, parliamentary enclosures from older fields, etc. It provides a tool for planning, land management and raising public awareness of aspects of the historic environment which have not always generated much professional interest and yet are fundamental to understanding our modern countryside. It is intended that the results will be made available over the web as part of the "Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past Project" (see below).

WHITELEAF HILL

In 2001, Buckinghamshire County Council was awarded a substantial grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore and reinterpret its Whiteleaf Hill Local Nature Reserve on the Chiltern scarp at Monks Risborough. Work commenced in 2002 with a team led by Gill Hey of Oxford Archaeology carrying out earthwork and geophysical surveys and trial excavations on two scheduled “barrows” and a prehistoric cross-ridge dyke. The main works, involving re-excavation and restoration of the Neolithic Barrow and restoration of Whiteleaf Cross, took place in 2003. Local people participated in the re-excavation of the barrow and related trial pitting and were kept informed of progress through information boards, an open weekend and schools events. The results will be published in *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* and *Records of Buckinghamshire*.

SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

Continued investment in the Sites and Monuments Record enabled the inputting backlog of reports to be reduced to less than 40 items, down from a high point of almost 800 two years previously. However, a substantial group of collections amounting to over 5000 items remains to be addressed. The main achievement was the success of the “Unlocking Buckinghamshire’s Past” Heritage Lottery bid, for which the County Council has been offered £150,000 grant aid. Unlocking Buckinghamshire’s Past will start early in 2004. It will enable us to provide a web-searchable version of the SMR with

added modules aimed at schools, local community groups and the recreation sector. The County Council is grateful for the invaluable support of the Buckinghamshire Archaeology Society and its members in supporting this bid.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The expansion of the Archaeology Service will enable us to provide a better and wider range of services than previously. The public dimension of archaeology will be improved both through web-based resources and more “hands-on” opportunities, such as those provided by the Bernwood and Whiteleaf Projects. We will be working to improve advice and resources available to help landowners manage monuments in a sensitive and sustainable way. The service will use HLC to help meet the challenge set by the government’s growth agenda to protect and enhance the best of our historic countryside and ensure that future development is sustainable. Increasingly, we are working with our key partners to promote an holistic view of the historic environment, encompassing archaeology, historic buildings and landscape within an integrated framework related to wider strategic agendas.

For further information on the work of the County Archaeological Service, visit our web site: <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/archaeology/index.htm>

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Buckinghamshire County Council*