

National Monuments Record and the National Trust Headquarters

Swindon

5 October

Jane Golding and her colleagues, Elaine and Teresa, introduced us to the extensive contents of the NMR collection in one of the former Great Western Railway buildings at Swindon. The archive includes reference collections on archaeology and architecture, together with smaller sections on related topics such as industrial archaeology, archive preservation and management, aerial photography, and place-name studies. Some 50,000 volumes are held with over 200 subscriptions to journals, and around 1,000 new monographs are added to the library each year. In excess of 8,000,000 photographs are in store.

Important additions to the collection during the 20th century included a photographic collection of 1870s Manchester street scenes, workshop views from Birmingham's jewellery quarter, 65,000 measured drawings of buildings, and records of village life in Derbyshire, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire by independent photographers such as Henry Taunt and Herbert Felton. There is much of interest to members researching furniture and interiors, such as the architectural photographs taken by

Bedford Lemere between the 1870s and 1950s, which include a series commissioned by Waring of their furniture in use, for example in a Liverpool hospital. Finding vernacular interiors may be tricky and it was suggested the first way in should be geographical. Jane suggested contacting the Research Room before visiting, as staff can point researchers in the right direction.

Access to the NMR is from Tuesday to Friday by arrangement (tel: 01793 414600, or email: nmrinfo@english-heritage.org.uk).

After lunch we visited the adjacent National Trust Headquarters, constructed in an environmentally conscious manner to include recycled materials from the GWR site. Here Clare Conybeare gave a presentation on the collections management programme recently commissioned jointly by the National Trust and the Royal Collections, intended to record and interpret the chattels and paintings in the Royal Collections and 350 NT properties. It is hoped that access to the records will in due course be available on the internet. The new software package has many advantages over the previous Catalist database. As one might expect, the critical factors affecting the value of the new system include the quality of the recorded information and of the accompanying digital images.

The Society's thanks for a most interesting day are due to Jane Golding, Elaine and Teresa, and to Clare Conybeare.

John Boram

The Quaker Meeting House, Nailsworth, Gloucestershire, photographed in 1957 by Herbert Felton. (Royal Commission on Historic Monuments).

