



# Review of the year's work

*Victor Gray, Director of the Rothschild Archive*

This has been the first full year of operation of The Rothschild Archive in its new premises in St. Swithin's Lane and under the aegis of the Rothschild Archive Trust. Both have contributed to a sense of renewed confidence and direction among the small team whose task it is to explore the content of the archive and to develop and exploit its potential as a source for researchers.

## Cataloguing

Following the publication last year of a Guide to the Archive, efforts this year have been focused on a number of pilot projects which will help define priorities and methodologies for 'drilling down' into the detailed content of the collection so as to strike the richest seams for future research use.

Work on the series of letters from the Rothschilds' Madrid correspondents, Weisweiler and Bauer, during the years between 1881 and 1892 was reported in last year's Annual Review and was completed during this year.

The firm, in its various manifestations, was in regular and heavy correspondence with both the London and Paris Houses of Rothschild from 1833 to 1929 and the quantity of surviving letters, some in French, others in German, is vast. The pilot project, which also dipped into the series received by and sent from de Rothschild Frères in Paris, gave some considerable insight into the information-gathering methods and the executive functions of the two banks and pointed the way to further work which might be done.

The immediate fruits of the project were a substantial indication for researchers of the complexity of the reports to be found in this series. For the year 1884, for example, matters discussed or reported included an outbreak of phylloxera in Málaga and of cholera in Alicante, with stringent quarantine restrictions; an earthquake with 900 victims; the sickness of the

King and the Infanta; a growing economic crisis in Cuba and the damaging effect on the Spanish economy of flour and sugar production in Cuba; competition between the mines of Almadén and those in California; the working of Spanish railways (in which the Rothschilds had significant interests) including news of rail accidents and disasters; and military conspiracies, student disturbances and teachers' walk-outs in Madrid.

A second pilot, concerned with Rothschild involvement in the world of commodities, looked at what records among the archive would provide evidence on the bank's engagement in the 19th century tobacco trade. The results of that pilot are described in an article by Richard Schofield on page 16 of this Review. This approach has proved a valuable way of identifying for researchers the sources in the Archive on which they might concentrate and will undoubtedly be repeated with other commodities.

A third route explored has been biographical in approach, taking individual members of the family, in this case Lionel Nathan (1808-1879) and his son Alfred Charles (1842-1918) and providing, alongside brief summary biographies, details of the archive sources which can be explored to pursue further research into their lives and activities. The results will be made available in leaflet form and via the website.

Yet a further approach being tested is that of attempting a detailed listing of correspondence relating to a particular year or event. Given the degree to which historians and myth-makers alike have seen links between the family's banking activities and the 'Year of Revolutions', 1848, this was an obvious subject for a pilot project. Work is, at the year end, well under way and will be reported on next year.

The results of these pilot projects will now inform decisions for work in the Archive in coming years.

## The Judendeutsch Letters Project

The central project to which the Archive has been committed for some time remains the work of transcribing and translating the letters between the five Rothschild brothers, written to each other on an almost daily basis during their rise to banking pre-eminence and in the years up to the death of the last of them, James, in 1868.

Work has most recently concentrated on the early years, between 1814 and 1818, the target being the completion, by the end of 2001, of a complete set of German transcriptions and English translations of the 2,000 or more letters from that period, linked electronically to scanned images of the originals so as to allow further editorial and research work to be carried out. The longer-term goal will be publication, probably in electronic form, of a series which will throw substantial new light on the funding of European governments in the final years and during the aftermath of the Napoleonic War.

## Acquisitions

The Rothschild Archive is very much a living archive committed to the goal of bringing together as comprehensive as possible an account of the activities of the Rothschild family and their interests, whether in business, in collecting, or in the field of social welfare. As such, the seeking out and receipt of new archive material is a key objective, pursued with considerable success this year.

Two important collections of family documents, generously placed in the Archive, the first by Anita Rothschild and the second by Sir Evelyn de Rothschild, have made substantial new contributions to our knowledge of the family's history.

The first group have their origins in the lives of Nathaniel Mayer, 1st Lord Rothschild (1840-1915), his wife Emma Louisa (1844-1935) and their descendants. A fuller listing of the contents of these collections will be found on page 30 but some items among the papers merit highlighting. A magnificent and unusual survival is a collection of ten highly illuminated testimonials executed in varying but consistently beautiful styles and

presented to Lord Rothschild on the occasion of his 70th birthday in 1910. Together they form a remarkable collection of examples of this Arts and Crafts calligraphic fashion.

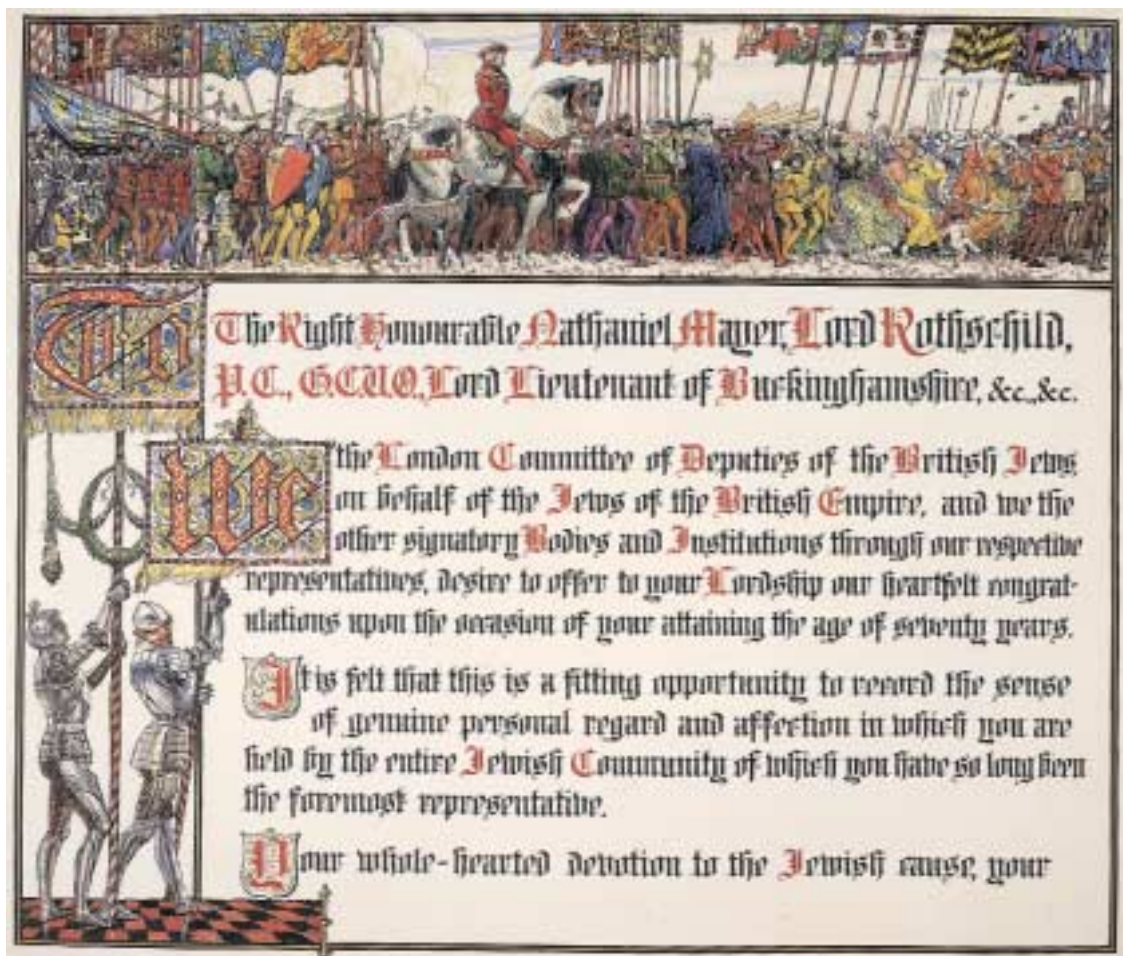


*A watercolour cartouche of Tring Park, the residence of Nathaniel Mayer, 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Rothschild, from a testimonial presented to him on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday by the tenants of his Buckinghamshire Estate*

Of the two sons of the marriage, Walter's activities are reflected briefly in a volume of press cuttings recording his General Election campaign for the Aylesbury seat in 1906, and Charles' in the typescript of an unsigned book on the Bill of Exchange with manuscript annotations in his hand, as well as in an album of photographs taken on an expedition in 1903 to Egypt and the Sudan in search of entomological specimens.

The collection of papers extends, however, well beyond this immediate family group. Through Emma's branch of the family (she had been born in Frankfurt, the daughter of Mayer Carl, one of the partners in the Frankfurt bank of M. A. Rothschild und Söhne), comes an important series of portfolios describing and illustrating the collections of gold and silver *Schatzkammer* objects built up by her father. A bound volume of *Lieder* composed by Emma's aunt, Hannah Mathilde, the wife of Wilhelm Carl von Rothschild of Frankfurt and a pupil of Chopin is a valuable find, containing some hitherto unknown pieces.

Perhaps of most significance are the contents of several small boxes which housed correspondence and papers from the earlier generations of the English Rothschilds, collected together seemingly because they were recognised as being of potential importance in the history of the family. They include letters on political and financial subjects,



*Title page from an illuminated testimonial presented to the 1st Lord Rothschild by the London Committee of Deputies of the British Jews on the occasion of his 70th birthday, 1910*

from a range of correspondents, to Lionel de Rothschild and to his son, Natty. Family affairs are reflected, in particular, in two collections of letters written by women: the first a small group of letters from Charlotte (1819-1884), around the time of her marriage to Lionel in 1836, in which the seventeen-year-old bride-to-be reveals her hopes and anxieties about her new life; the second a short series of letters to Nathan from Hannah Rothschild and some of her children during their visits abroad to attend the marriage of James and Betty in Frankfurt in 1824 and to Paris just prior to the birth of Betty's first child in 1825. These two collections, along with collections relating to the purchase of Gunnersbury in 1835, letters from Evelyn and Anthony and from other serving officers in the First World War and notes about

aspects of Rothschild collections, had been organised by Emma, Lady Rothschild. It is not clear whether she also organised the political and financial correspondence, which was the subject of a good deal of study and arrangement by various hands.

The collection has been well tended and augmented by Charles' son, Victor, 3rd Lord Rothschild, and by his son, Amschel.

The second major accession, from Ascott, adds a great deal to our knowledge of the lives of Lionel de Rothschild (1808-1879), the son of Nathan Mayer, and, even more so, his wife Charlotte, with letters from many of her friends and family across the last forty years of her life.

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Title page of sheet music of *Mélodies* composed by Hannah Mathilde von Rothschild and sung by Adelina Patti

The death of their daughter, Evelina, who died in childbirth just a year after her marriage to her cousin Ferdinand, is reflected in a small collection of mourning items and in letters by Ferdinand expressing his grief. But the life of that next generation is far more fully recounted in the personal letters of Marie de Rothschild, wife of Leopold, who was in constant correspondence with her many cousins and relatives from among the leading banking families of Europe – the Perugias (her own maiden name), the Landauers, Scheys and Weisweillers.

Of particular value from this collection is a series of volumes of systematically collected cuttings on the Rothschilds, dating from as early as the 18th century and continuing well into the 20th. When matched with those recently acquired from Frankfurt this provides a remarkably broad account of the development of the family seen through the eyes of the press.

To these major deposits must be added two smaller but equally interesting groups of papers. The first, presented to the Archive by Mrs Rosemary Seys, daughter of Lionel de Rothschild

(1882-1942), comprises mainly papers and letters relating to the lives of her parents, while a further deposit of papers by Dame Miriam Rothschild includes material on her father Charles' entomological interests.


Among other papers received during the year, mention might be made of the contract for alterations and additions to Sir Anthony de Rothschild's Buckinghamshire house at Aston Clinton, bought in 1851. The contract was rediscovered within months of the arrival in the Archive of a similar contract for Mentmore, the house built by Anthony's brother Mayer Amschel. Both contracts were with the Lambeth contractor, George Myers. Anthony's work was on a considerably smaller scale, with a total contract price of £5,179, almost exactly a third of what Myers had bid for the work on Mentmore (though Myers' final bill was almost 400% above estimate at £19,905!). The arrival of the Aston Clinton contract from 1851 gives a context to the many receipts and accounts for work already in the Archive (ref. XII/41/1 and XII/2/0) and helps fill in the hitherto rather shadowy history of the house, which was demolished in the 1960s.

## Continental Europe

While the bulk of the papers received this year have related to the English family, the activities of the French and German branches have also been well reflected (see the List of Acquisitions, p. 30).

Mayer Carl von Rothschild (1820-1886) proves to be a central figure among papers received which relate to the Frankfurt branch. His unparalleled collections of *Schatzkammer* objects are recorded in several catalogues, while the early years of the library, opened in 1887 in his memory by his daughter Hannah Louise, are reflected in an early catalogue of acquisitions. It was in this library, now housed in the Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek, that the remarkable collection of European news cuttings on the activities of the Rothschild family originated. Microfilm of this collection, acquired this year, is described by Melanie Aspey on page 22 of this Review.

From France have come two printed works on infant nutrition by Henri de Rothschild (1872-



1947) written in his late twenties. He was, eventually, to write well over a hundred papers on the subject. Henri also figures as one of eight members of the family pilloried in the series of anti-Semitic caricatures published by Lenepveu in Paris around the turn of the century and also acquired during the year.

Developing our knowledge of archives in France has been a stated objective for the year and, to that end, Elaine Penn has spent some time at the Centre des Archives du Monde du Travail (CAMT) in Roubaix, where the records of de Rothschild Frères have been placed. The visit served to build relationships for the future and a number of joint projects between the two Archives have been proposed.

A visit has also been made to Château Lafite to examine and undertake some preliminary listing of the archives of the Estate, which include many interesting documents both from the years since the family acquired the Estate in 1868 and from earlier owners back to the 18th century. Further work is planned for the coming year.

## Research in the Archives

The Rothschild Archive Trust was established with the explicit goal of extending access to the collections to the widest possible range of researchers and thereby encouraging high-quality research.

The publication of the Guide and the construction of the Archive's website, have been but two means used to develop a widening circle of research contacts. These efforts will remain at the heart of the Archive's programme in years to come.

Already these efforts are bearing fruit. The number of researchers finding their way to the Archive has increased by exactly 50% over the last full year of operation before the move of the Office to its current premises. Moreover, to the range of enquiries by letter has now been added a new volume of e-mail contacts. Overall therefore, the desire of the Trustees to increase use is finding a ready response.

There is still much scope for greater use, however. During the year, the Trustees have considered options for developing a research network which will, over the years, attract more significant research in the Archive. These options include partnerships with one or more academic institutions. During the coming year, this thinking will be developed and taken forward.

In the meantime, the year has seen research visitors from the U.K., U.S.A., Spain, Italy, Germany, Israel and Canada and a range of approaches, from those pursuing individual private research to postgraduate work and research for publication. Subjects have been as diverse as ever: from Brazilian finance to Japanese gardens; from the funding of the Battle of Waterloo to British responses to the American Civil War; from the building of art collections to the architecture of Victorian offices; yacht building to Spanish railways; Jewish history to Latin American commission houses; espionage to mediaeval wood carvings.

Two particular emphases are apparent this year. The creation, economics and dispersal of art collections continues to develop as a new and keenly pursued aspect of art history, while there seems also to be a return to biography, with at least four writers planning and preparing biographical works on members of the Rothschild family and using the Archive as an element – in some cases the key element – in their research.

Among research contacts have been a number associated with forthcoming publicly focused initiatives based upon or featuring aspects of Rothschild history. These include the planned exhibition on the Rothschilds as art collectors, scheduled to open in Philadelphia in 2005, a permanent exhibition on the life of Edmond de Rothschild for display at Ramat Hanadiv in Israel and an exhibition, 'The gift of the gods: the art of wine and revelry', to open in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto in the Summer of 2001. Contributions were made to two historical projects based in hospitals, The Clementine Kinderhospital in Frankfurt, founded by Louise von Rothschild in 1875 in memory of her daughter, Clementine, and The Evelina Hospital for Sick Children, founded by Ferdinand de Rothschild in 1869.

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The cover of 'Rothschild - A Place in Czech History' showing the opening of the Kaiser Ferdinands Nordbahn, a contemporary illustration

The Archive featured in television programmes on the life of Edward VII and the Rothschild collections, the latter for Japanese TV.

## Publications

The year began with the publication of *The Rothschild Archive: a Guide to the Collections*, a major stepping-stone in the history of the Archive, providing for the first time, a view into all parts of the collection so that researchers can navigate their way around them and locate likely sources of material for investigation. The Guide's attractive presentation and innovative loose-leaf format, which allows for future amendment and expansion, have been widely welcomed.



A page from the *Guide to the Rothschild Archive Collection*, published in 2000

Simultaneously, the Archive launched its own dedicated website [www.rothschildarchive.org](http://www.rothschildarchive.org) which

incorporates a searchable text of the Guide, together with practical information on the Archive and how to use it and a range of galleries of images and information on Rothschild subjects, with links to other sites. An on-line form for the submission of e-mail enquiries is already bringing almost daily contacts to the Archive.

The site will gradually evolve as we develop a sense of what will be of most use and interest to site-visitors.

Two further publications have been completed this year. Following the appearance of *Rothschild and Hungary* last year, we went on this year to produce a second booklet, *Rothschild: A Place in Czech History*, once again intended primarily for use within the N M Rothschild Group but nevertheless providing a useful introduction to scholarly study. The booklet touches upon a number of themes, including the building of the first railway in the Austrian Empire, the Kaiser Ferdinands Nordbahn, financed and promoted by Salomon von Rothschild, the Rothschild acquisition, in 1843, of Witkowitz, the largest ironworks in the Empire and the magnificence of the nearby estate of Schillersdorf.

*The Rothschild Archive Review of the Year April 1999-March 2000*, an innovation proposed by the Trustees as a means of publicising the work of the Archive and of building up a circle of interest among researchers and potential contributors to the Archive, has proved widely popular and has elicited a number of very positive and helpful contacts.

## Rothschild Bibliography

At the suggestion of the Trustees, early groundwork has been laid for the compiling of a bibliography of published works by members of the Rothschild family. With such a diverse range of interests, particularly in the field of science, it is recognised that this will be a long project, but methodologies are now being worked out and a database set up.

## The Rothschild Family Tree

One small but significant part of the life of the Archive is the logging of births, deaths and marriages in the family in order to update from time to time the Rothschild family tree. The first fully researched tree was published by the late Victor, 3rd Lord Rothschild, in 1973 in a private edition with fine typography and a carefully structured system of identification for every individual. This was revised in 1988.

To mark the millennium, the Archive has now produced a second privately printed revision, incorporating changes in the intervening years. Research for the updating of the tree was led and, in large part, carried out by Lionel de Rothschild.

Wishing to maintain the tradition of fine design, the Archive commissioned designer Sally McIntosh to produce a more compact family tree with companion index, the two pieces housed in an elegant blue and gold case.



*The Rothschild Family Tree, 2000 edition*