

# Review of the year's work

Victor Gray, Director of The Rothschild Archive



*above*  
A commemorative medal for Béatrice Ephrussi (*née* de Rothschild), 1864-1934, issued by the Institut de France, the Académie des Beaux-Arts and the Fondation Ephrussi de Rothschild

*below*  
A cheque for one million Prussian thalers, part of the reparation payment by France to Germany in 1871

## Acquisitions

AFTER A YEAR DOMINATED by the arrival of large and significant collections – the papers of the Austrian Rothschilds returned from Moscow, papers of the French family from Château Lafite – it is perhaps no disadvantage to the process of listing and assimilating that this has been a year of smaller, though no less welcome acquisitions.

Since the destruction, in 1901, of the business papers of the Frankfurt Rothschilds following the closure of M.A. von Rothschild und Söhne, it has been the case that knowledge of the life and work of that branch of the family has been limited in comparison with their English and French cousins. German papers are therefore always much welcomed and the gift, this year, through the kindness of Baronin Nadine von Mauthner, daughter of Baron Albert von Goldschmidt-Rothschild, of a group of photographs and genealogical papers, has been a useful step in rebuilding our knowledge. By chance, some of the individuals featured in these papers are also present in another gift, a group photograph taken in 1922 in the Grüneburg in Frankfurt, the home of Hannah Mathilde, widow of Wilhelm Carl von Rothschild, on the occasion of her 90th birthday.

An equally generous gesture has been the deposit in the Archive by Mr Peter Schwabach, as descendant of the last proprietor of the Berlin bank of S. Bleichröder,





of a historically important document. Bleichröders acted as the Rothschilds' agent in Berlin and the two banks were both involved in arrangements for the payment of the reparations demanded of France by Germany at the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. The document now in the Archive is a cheque for one million Prussian thalers made by the City of Paris through de Rothschild Frères to S. Bleichröder and destined for the coffers of the German government. This was but the first part of the sum due. France was ultimately to pay almost 5,000 million francs.

A high proportion of the enquiries received in the Archive relate to images and there have been some significant additions this year to the collection – which now totals almost four thousand. The Burial Society of the United Synagogue has this year made a generous donation to the Archive of a portrait in oils by Herbert Horwitz of Leopold de Rothschild (1845-1917), painted during his Presidency of the United Synagogue, from 1915-1917.

One of the most charming of Rothschild family groups is the watercolour by Richard Dighton of the family gathered for the wedding in 1826 of Anselm von Rothschild of Frankfurt to Charlotte, the daughter of Nathan Mayer. The acquisition of a pencil sketch of Nathan by Dighton, clearly made in preparation for the group, gives yet another variation to the huge and remarkably diverse range of images of the founder of the English branch. Another new piece, a cartoon of Amschel Rothschild facing insurgents in Frankfurt at the height of the 1848 disturbances (*Barrikaten-Szene am 18 September*) is one of a number of Rothschild-related items arising from the 'Year of Revolution', including pamphlets, broadsides and cartoons, which have lately been added to the collection.

Among other images acquired is a highly unusual miniature by L. Gilbert, dated 1833, of a figure in the costume of an Austrian Imperial messenger, carrying a letter addressed to 'Monsieur de Rothschild à Paris'. James de Rothschild had become Austrian Consul-General in Paris in 1821 and this image is a reminder of the traffic of commercial and political correspondence which must have been carried regularly between Vienna and the rue Laffitte.

Group photograph,  
at the Grüneburg,  
Frankfurt, the home of  
Hannah Mathilde,  
widow of Wilhelm Carl  
von Rothschild, 1922  
(The gift of Dame  
Miriam Rothschild)

## The Library

The building of a comprehensive library of books, pamphlets and periodicals relating to Rothschild subjects continues to be an objective. This year there have been a number of rare and unusual additions. Worthy of particular mention are the privately printed *Poèmes* by Philippe de Rothschild, published in a limited edition in Paris by Henri Javal in two volumes, 1950 and 1954, the first, *A l'aube d'une guerre*, illustrated by Mario Avati, leading French revivalist of the mezzotint, and the second, *Eclos à l'aube*, by Georges Arnulf.

*A manual of Judaism detailed in conversation between a rabbi and his pupil; being an introduction into the knowledge of the principles of the Jewish faith for the use of the juvenile members of that persuasion*, by Joshua Van Oven (1766-1838) was printed by Wertheimer in 1835 for sale at the Jews' Free School. It carries a full-page dedication to Mr and Mrs de (Nathan and Hannah) Rothschild. Van Oven, Physician to the Great Synagogue, had put forward detailed proposals for the development of the care of the Jewish poor and the Rothschilds had both given substantial and generous support to the school throughout their London years.

*Les Rothschild, une famille de financiers juifs au XIX siècle* by Edouard Demachy, published in Paris in 1896, appeared at the height of the wave of anti-Semitism which followed the Dreyfus affair and is an addition to the small collection of vituperative pamphlets and cartoons of the period collected together in the Archive.

*Pages détachées du cahier d'une jeune fille*, by Baroness Laura-Thérèse de Rothschild (1847-1931) was published by her in Paris in 1891 and reprinted, probably by her son Henri, in 1925. It is dedicated and addressed to her children and contains the text of a number of essays written by her at the age of eighteen, all of them reflecting the extreme piety and highly developed sense of morality which left a mark (and not always for the good) on the minds of her children.

The project to complete and publish a bibliography of publications by members of the Rothschild family is now well advanced and publication is expected during 2004. So far, a total of almost a thousand titles have been collected and described.

## Research Projects

Work has begun this year on the transcription of the census returns for the Rothschild households both in London and in 'Rothschildshire', the area of Buckinghamshire and west Hertfordshire where the Rothschilds built or acquired country houses during the nineteenth century. The work is intended to give a better idea of the size and structure of the households employed in the houses. The results will complement employment records where they are held and should give a new perspective on the relationship between the houses and the communities in which they were set. Work will be completed during 2003/4 and the results will be published on the Rothschild Research Forum.

Two major listing projects have been completed during the year. A sampling of the papers of August Belmont, the Rothschild agent in New York, has focused on the year 1861, the first year of the Civil War. The results form the basis of an article by Elaine Penn on page 25 of this *Review*.

Papers of the French Rothschild family, received in several consignments over recent years from Château Lafite have, during the year, been fully catalogued into a single comprehensive database. This catalogue is now accessible in both French and English.

The long-running project for the transcription, translation and eventual publication of the 20,000 Judendeutsch letters between the five Rothschild brothers from 1814 to 1868 is now

*opposite*  
Miniature by L. Gilbert  
of an Austrian Imperial  
messenger carrying  
a letter addressed to  
'Monsieur de Rothschild  
à Paris', 1833



dealing with the period from 1826 to 1831. Meanwhile, a research assistant has now been engaged to explore the background to the correspondence for the period 1814-1818, which together form the projected first block of letters for Internet publication. The work will focus on identifying the individuals referred to in the letters and on setting the details recorded in them within the context of unfolding historical events. It is hoped that publication on the web will follow early in 2004.

The project achieved public profile in May 2003 with the publication of an article in *The Times* on the work of Mordechai Zucker, who is undertaking the transcription of the very difficult and idiosyncratic Judendeutsch. The appearance of the article gave rise to the broadcasting of a feature on the project on the TV programme *UK Today*, which is transmitted internationally.

A major new project on the history of Rothschild philanthropic and charitable activities across Europe will begin in 2004. An Academic Advisory Committee has now been appointed to oversee the project. It comprises Professor Peter Pulzer of All Souls, Oxford, Professor David Cesarani of the University of Southampton, Dr. Peter Mandler of Gonville & Caius, Cambridge and Dr. Rainer Liedtke of the University of Giessen.

## The Rothschild Archive and the Internet

The year has seen preparatory work for the launch of the Rothschild Research Forum, a new area of the Rothschild Archive website ( [www.rothschildarchive.org](http://www.rothschildarchive.org) ) which will be directed at those who have a current, ongoing research commitment to subjects related to Rothschild history. The Forum was launched in May 2003 and its progress, intention and content are described by Melanie Aspey on page 22 of the *Review*. Meanwhile, the Archive has affirmed its place in the overall network of British archives by taking part in the on-line catalogue project Access to Archives (A2A) which so far brings together the catalogues of the collections of some 300 archives in England, all of which can be simultaneously searched for content on any specific subject. The content of the *Guide to the Collections of The Rothschild Archive* has now been added to A2A, making them accessible, alongside several million other catalogue entries, to researchers across a whole range of subjects.

Anyone currently searching the name Rothschild on A2A ([www.A2A.pro.gov.uk](http://www.A2A.pro.gov.uk)) will find not only the entries in the *Guide* but a further 178 occurrences from 48 different archives as diverse as the Institute of Mechanical Engineers and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. The Rothschild Archive is, proudly, the first independent business archive to participate in the scheme.

## Research in the Archive

The number of research visits to the Archive has grown by some 40% during the year.

Among research focused on economic and political history during the year were projects looking at Rothschild influence in Russia, at the Russian pogroms, Brazilian and Argentinian loans from 1880 to 1913, Rothschilds and the American Civil War, Jewish business networks in Italy and the Rothschilds in Naples, British capital in Japan, Rothschild and Mexico from 1875 to 1890, American mining engineers in the Witwatersrand and Rothschild and Rio Tinto.

Research looking at the artistic engagements of the family embraced, among other themes, the English Rothschilds as collectors of art, Alfred de Rothschild's collections, Anglo-Jewish patronage of music in the 19th century and collections looted by the Nazis.

The Rothschild Archive provided materials for projects looking at socio-historical projects, including Belgian refugees in the Jews' Temporary Shelter in London during the First World War, Jewish involvement in that war and the philanthropic activities of the French Rothschilds.

Biographical research touched upon Baron Henri de Rothschild, Charlotte and Lionel de Rothschild, Moses Montefiore, the sons of Nathan Mayer Rothschild and Joseph Paxton.





## Research links

A continuing objective for the Archive is the development of our knowledge and understanding of the history of the Rothschild family and their businesses in France. During the year, Elaine Penn spent some time in the Centre des Archives du Monde du Travail (CAMT) in Roubaix familiarising herself with the archives of de Rothschild Frères which are held there. There is a firm intention to work more closely with CAMT in the future to look at the relationships between collections there and in London. One project now being investigated is the staging of a conference to explore themes common to the two archives.

Through the good offices of Professor François Crouzet of the Université de Paris-Sorbonne, an article by him describing the contents and services of The Rothschild Archive has now been published in the *Newsletter* of the Association Française des Historiens Economiques.

Developing contacts with the staff of Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire have led to a growing understanding of common issues and specialisms, leading, in particular, to partnership on the building of the Rothschild Research Forum (see page 22) for the benefit of those studying the Rothschild art collections through Waddesdon and for others working in the Archive on other fields of Rothschild history. Contacts with and proposals for collaboration have this year been explored with the Wiener Library in London, RAF Halton (based in a former Rothschild mansion in Buckinghamshire), the Jews' Free School and the Jewish Museum Frankfurt.

Among lectures delivered by members of the staff of the Archive during the year were presentations to the Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum; the Conference of the European Association for Jewish Studies in Amsterdam; the European Association for Banking History and the Jewish Association of Cultural Societies.

Watercolour by R. Dighton of the Rothschild family at the wedding of Anselm and Charlotte, 1826, with original sketch for the head of Nathan Mayer (3rd from the right), *below*

