

THE ROTHSCHILD ARCHIVE

REVIEW OF THE YEAR APRIL 2003–MARCH 2004



Contents

Introduction Emma Rothschild	5
Review of the Year's Work Victor Gray	6
One Hundred Years of the 'Bluff Rothschildien': Housing the Poor in Paris Klaus Weber	12
The Rothschild Bibliography Caroline Shaw	18
'Nathan Rothschild's Company': Jews, Quakers and Catholics Melanie Aspey	24
The Budapest Chain Bridge Amelie Lanier	30
Mayer Carl von Rothschild: collector or patriot Philippa Glanville	36
New Boundaries: Baron Lionel, photography and the United Kingdom Electric Telegraph Company Anthony Hamber	44
Cousins in Ceylon Victor Gray	52
Principal Acquisitions, 1 April 2003 – 31 March 2004	57
Appendix	59

Cover: detail of a plate showing Cortina in the Dolomites, from an original photograph by Nathaniel Mayer von Rothschild (1836-1905).

Taken from *Reise Erinnerungen* (Vienna: Friedrich Jasper 1901). Heliogravures by Blechinger & Leykauf.

The Rothschild Archive Trust

Trustees

Emma Rothschild (Chair)

Baron Eric de Rothschild

Lionel de Rothschild

Professor David Landes

Anthony Chapman

Staff

Victor Gray (Director)

Melanie Aspey (Archivist)

Elaine Penn (Assistant Archivist)

Caroline Shaw (Assistant Archivist)

Gill Chapman (Secretary)



The Rothschild Archive, New Court, St. Swithin's Lane, London EC4P 4DU

Tel: + 44 (0)20 7280 5874 Fax: + 44 (0)20 7280 5657 E-mail: info@rothschildarchive.org

Website: www.rothschildarchive.org

Company No. 3702208 Registered Charity No. 1075340

Introduction

Emma Rothschild, Chairman of the Rothschild Archive Trust

The Rothschild Archive Trust has made continued progress, in its fifth year of activities, towards its objective of serving as a major educational and research resource, in the United Kingdom and internationally. The millions of papers, photographs, books and other artefacts which constitute the Archive's holdings are increasingly known, and used, in the scholarly world.

The construction of the on-line Rothschild Research Forum (www.rothschildarchive.org) has played an essential role in this process. Researchers from more than a dozen countries, who are involved in economic, financial, social and political history, art, architecture and garden history, have a 'virtual meeting place' and an outstanding library of resources. The Archive team, as they have prepared content for the Forum, have become focused on the needs and priorities of researchers. This year's Review again bears witness to the diversity of the research going on in the Archive, including historical investigations of France, Germany, Hungary, Sri Lanka and the U.K., of finance and business, of photography and art.

The staff of the Archive are increasingly being called upon to deliver papers at academic and professional conferences, in a good indicator of the acceptance of the Archive and its work as a serious focus of research. The new research project on Jewish philanthropy, which has received generous funding from the Hanadiv charitable foundation has led the Archive for the first time to commission research in previously unexplored fields; the initial results of the project are presented in this Review (see page 12). With the Web publication, in the near future, of the first products of the Judendeutsch letters project and of the Bibliography project (see page 18) the Archive will be making a substantial contribution to historical research.

This year's Review is the last to be edited by Victor Gray, the founding Director of the Trust. We are delighted that Melanie Aspey, who has played such a major role in the development of the Archive, will succeed him as Director, in late 2004. Victor Gray will continue to be actively involved with the Archive's work, as a Trustee. The Rothschild Archive Trust is immensely grateful to him for his vision, commitment, and prodigious industry over the past five years. We are proud of his involvement in the larger national and European world of archives, and look forward to his continuing guidance in the years to come.

Review of the Year's Work

Victor Gray, Director of The Rothschild Archive

The earliest known use by the Rothschild family of its newly granted coat of arms, on a book binding of 1824 (see p8)



The Rothschild Research Forum

The launch of the new Rothschild Research Forum in May has provided an on-line library of information, sources, texts and news for anyone engaged in detailed research into aspects of the history of the Rothschild family or one of the many subjects with which their lives intersect. The Forum was described in some detail in the last edition of the *Review* and it would be superfluous to repeat that description. What is clear, however, after a year of operation, is that the Forum has already fulfilled two of the expectations which surrounded its launch.

First, it has provided a focal point for a range of researchers, scattered across the globe (from Canada to Australia, Denmark to Israel) and diverse in their interests (from early photography to international debt, from cultural geographies to the race for mineral resources). To date there are well over two hundred of them and the Forum provides them with the opportunity to keep pace with what is going on in related fields, to explore interactions and to access a volume of original material never before made available outside the Archive.

Secondly, it has changed the whole focus of the work of the Archive, shifting the primary question from “How do we help a hypothetical researcher in the future?” to “What can we put out there now, via the Web, for the constituency of interest which we know exists and which has a certain set of interests and approaches?”

Throughout the year, new material has been regularly added to the resources of the site; there are now over 700 pages of content. A major addition over the coming months will be translations, in English and German, together with images, of some 2,000 letters written in Jüddeutsche and exchanged among the five Rothschild brothers in the crucial years of their ascent to international status as bankers. This is the first fruit of a project which has now been some twenty years in the making and for the launch of which technical preparations have been underway for many months.

Rothschild and philanthropy

The beginning of 2004 saw the start of a substantial research project, the first major externally funded academic research to be commissioned by the Archive. Generous funding from the Hanadiv Charitable Foundation has made possible this exploratory study of the role of philanthropy and charitable activity, particularly among the Jewish community in Europe. By focusing on the activities of the Rothschild family, the study will offer a comparative perspective across the European countries in which they lived and operated and across an extensive time-span. The project, led by Dr Klaus Weber and spread across three years, will break new ground in its exploration of a range of themes, including the role and practice of charity amid evolving systems of state welfare and differences between Jewish and broader practice and experience. The project, which is being jointly run by the Archive and the Parkes Centre for the Study of Jewish/Non-Jewish Relations at the University of Southampton, is being steered by an Academic Advisory Group comprising Prof. David Cesarani of the University of Southampton, Dr Peter Mandler of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, Dr Rainer Liedtke of the University of Giessen and, from the Archive, Melanie Aspey and myself.

Partnerships in research

The model of partnership with institutions sharing similar interests and goals to those of the Archive, exemplified in the relationship with the Parkes Centre, is one which the Archive is keenly pursuing as part of its developing role as an *animateur* and facilitator of studies touching upon Rothschild themes. The strong links developed with Waddesdon Manor, in itself a centre for research into art historical themes based around Ferdinand de Rothschild’s magnificent collections, have extended still further this year. A working seminar was held in the Archive in which staff of the two institutions exchanged notes and facts on images of the Rothschild family with a view to identifying hitherto unidentified photographs. This seminar may, in itself, lead on to a gallery of images to be published on the Forum.

There has also been increasing dialogue with the Natural History Museum in London and its Walter Rothschild Museum at Tring in Hertfordshire. The first outputs of this are now present on the Forum and there is a growing expectation of more co-operation, focused upon the zoological work of Walter Rothschild as reflected in archives, publications and specimens among the Museum’s collections. Other institutions with which contacts and/or projects have been pursued during the year include Halton House, once the property of Alfred de Rothschild and now owned and used by the Royal Air Force, Gunnersbury Park Museum, the former home of Baron Lionel de

Rothschild in west London now administered by the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Ealing, the Château de Pregny in Switzerland, built by Baron Adolphe de Rothschild and still in family ownership, and the Centre des Archives du Monde du Travail at Roubaix, outside Lille, which houses the records of the French bank of de Rothschild Frères.

This last link seems set to become even closer during the year 2004/5 as negotiations towards the successful transfer to the Rothschild Archive Trust of the ownership of these archives, which remain the property of the family in France, move towards a conclusion. The hope and expectation is that the Centre, which is part of the Archives Nationales de France, will wish to continue to house, administer and make the papers accessible to researchers, while the Trust, as owners, will seek to strengthen joint working and evolve, in discussion with the administration of the Centre, new ways of exploring and developing the use of the French archives.

Acquisitions

The major collection of new papers this year has been generously placed in the Archive by Sir Evelyn de Rothschild. The papers centre mainly on the lives of Leopold de Rothschild (1845-1947) and his wife Marie (née Perugia) and contain a great deal of correspondence, both between members of the family and from friends and associates, throwing much light on matters social and political. One particular emphasis is on Leopold's lifelong involvement in the world of horse-racing, culminating in the 1904 Derby win by his horse *St. Amant*.

The death in 2003 of Jeanne, widow of Baron Eugène de Rothschild (1884-1976) severs one of the few remaining links to the last generation of banking Rothschilds in Austria. Though the former screen-actress Jeanne Stuart only married the Baron in 1952, when he had moved to the USA, the papers and mementoes which have now come to the Archive through the generosity of her executors, include many items – in particular photographs – from the family's estate at Enzesfeld in the 1930s where, famously, the Duke of Windsor found his first retreat following his abdication in 1936.

A fascinating memento, from the estate of the late Liliane de Rothschild (1916-2003), is a printed poem on the occasion of the marriage of James and Betty de Rothschild in Frankfurt in 1824, printed on silk and bound in red velvet bearing the arms of the family embroidered in silver thread (000/1322). Apart from its intrinsic beauty and the fact that it marks the beginning of one of the most successful and celebrated Rothschild marriages of the period, this is to date the earliest surviving family use of the coat of arms in the form awarded in 1822.

By chance, two rare items of printed propaganda from the Year of Revolutions, 1848, have come to the Archive during the year. The first, *Ein offener Brief an Rothschild*, is a conventional piece of anti-Rothschild propaganda from Vienna, rejoicing in the losses suffered by Salomon von Rothschild, head of the Viennese bank and accusing him of indifference to the plight of the poor of the city. The second takes the form of an open letter to James de Rothschild published in the *Tocsin des Travailleurs* and written in August by Emile Barrault, the Professor of Literature who became the mouthpiece of the Saint-Simonians, a quasi-mystical, socialist-orientated movement. The lengthy letter, which opens 'Vous êtes un miracle, Monsieur', attempts, on the surface, to persuade Rothschild to support the cause of the 'ultra-démocrates' as opposed to the 'ultra-bourgeoisie' whose time is done, in particular by giving his weight to the establishment of a more open banking system in the interests of the people at large. Overall, it is an eloquent and elaborate statement of the aspirations of the radicals at the time between the brutal repression of revolt in June and the election of Louis-Napoleon in September. It also clearly indicates the centrality of James's position as the personification of all that was deemed good and bad in the French financial system.¹

St Amant being
toasted on his
Derby win, 1904

Library

The task of building and sustaining a library of works on and by the Rothschild family and its interests has developed renewed vigour with the compilation of the *Bibliography* of family writings (see the article by Caroline Shaw, p.18).

A volume of twelve songs by Hannah Mathilde von Rothschild of Frankfurt (1832-1924), *Zwölf Lieder für Singstimme mit Pianoortefortebegleitung*, published in the late 1880s, sets to music the work of a number of poets, mostly German (including the epic poet Wilhelm von Bodenstedt, the poet and dramatist Franz von Dingelstedt and the Frankfurt writer Wilhelm Jordan), but also Russian (Alexey Tolstoy) and French (Paul Collin). Many of her chosen poets had also had works set to music by major composers of the day: Liszt, for example, in the case of Tolstoy, Collin by Tchaikovsky, Bodenstedt by Brahms. The range of these songs gives a clear indication of the breadth of Hannah Mathilde's interests in contemporary European poetry and music.

Two facets of the multi-talented Henri de Rothschild (1872-1947) are reflected in two rare pamphlets acquired during the course of the year. The first is the text of his play *Le grand patron*, performed at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées in 1931 and published in the review *La Petite Illustration* that year. The second is the text of a paper delivered by Henri two years later to an audience at the Bibliothèque Nationale and privately printed as *Comment j'ai réuni ma collection d'autographes*. (A fuller listing of new acquisitions appears on p.59).

Early photography

The Rothschild family's connection with the early years of photography has been explored in earlier editions of the *Review* and reappears in Anthony Hamber's article in this edition (p.44). It is a developing field of interest and led to a lecture this year by Melanie Aspey to the Historical Group of the Royal Photographic Society.

Jeanne Stuart, later
Baroness Eugène
de Rothschild,
photographed by
Dorothy Wilding
in the 1930s (see p.8)





One of the visual gems in the Archive is the collection of over 700 Autochrome photographs taken by Lionel de Rothschild (1882-1942) in the years before the First World War. This early colour process, devised by the Lumière brothers, produces results of a stunning delicacy which is particularly difficult to reproduce using modern printing techniques. During the year, experiments were undertaken in collaboration with the Hurtwood Press, printers of fine-art catalogues and books, to try to emulate the quality of the originals. If satisfactory results can be produced, planning will begin for a touring exhibition (and possible publication) of the best of this collection.

During the year, lectures were given by staff of the Archive to the Historical Group of the Royal Historical Society on early photography in the Archive's collections; to a seminar group of the Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at King's College London on NM Rothschild & Sons and Brazil; to a lunchtime audience at the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, on Walter Rothschild; to a Mellon Foundation Study Day at Waddesdon Manor, on sources for Rothschild garden history; and to the Acton Local History Society, on the Rothschilds at Gunnersbury.

Articles on the Archive appeared in *History Today* and, in France, in *Entreprises et Histoire*, the latter kindly contributed by Professor François Crouzet.

Researchers

The number of people approaching the Archive for information has been substantially increased by the development of the Research Forum. Often these initial approaches result in eventual research visits to the Reading Room and the range of subjects tackled this year remains gratifyingly wide.

Among those working on financial, banking and economic history, topics have included the 1837 New York banking crisis, the Barings crisis of 1890 and the Creditanstalt crash in Vienna in 1931. Rothschilds' leading place in the sovereign loans market has brought researchers into the development of bondholder organisations and the history of the *pari passu* clause in the international bond market, as well as more specific research into the 1881 loan to the Hungarian Government and loans to Brazil and Buenos Aires. The rich correspondence of Rothschild agents around the world continues to attract historians; this year, Samuel Phillips, the agent in Brazil, August Belmont in New York and Benjamin Davidson in California have all been the subject of detailed work.

Biographical studies have included the sons of Nathan Mayer Rothschild, Charles Rothschild (1877-1923), Betty de Rothschild (Baroness James, 1805-1886), Ferdinand de Rothschild, builder of Waddesdon Manor (1839-1898), Hélène van Zuylen de Nyevelt (née de Rothschild, 1863-1947), as well as William Smith, the abolitionist, the Empress Eugenie, Trinidad Huerta, the Spanish guitarist, Michael Balfe, Victorian opera singer, the Pereire brothers and Benjamin Disraeli.

Questions on the Rothschild art collections abound but this year detailed research has focused on Alfred de Rothschild's collections of paintings and furniture and Adolphe de Rothschild's crystal, while the family collections have been used to study the cultural geography of collecting, the collecting of French decorative arts in 19th-century Britain and the history of Fabergé.

NOTES

1. Extracts from the letter appear in Corti: *The reign of the House of Rothschild*, 1928, p. 270 and in Ferguson: *The World's Banker*, 1998, p. 495.

One Hundred Years of the ‘Bluff Rothschildien’: Housing the Poor in Paris

Klaus Weber, Director of a new European research project based in The Rothschild Archive, describes a pioneering charitable scheme in France in its centenary year

Elevation of
Fondation
housing in Paris,
by the architect
Augustin Rey



The charitable institution, the *Fondation Rothschild*, which still operates today, was set up in Paris in 1904. Its 100th anniversary coincides with the 130th anniversary of the *convention de famille* which underpins the *Fondation*.

This commemorative article has emerged from the initial phase of a three-year research project on Jewish welfare and charity, which has been recently launched by The Rothschild Archive and the Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations at the University of Southampton, with the financial support of the Hanadiv Charitable Foundation. The investigation incorporates a special focus on the Rothschild family and, as a result, looks at Germany, Austria, England, Italy and France, where family branches were established. The article cannot yet reflect any of the project's outcomes, but touches on some of the questions which have already emerged and tries to illustrate the many key problems that overlap in the iridescent subject of modern philanthropy.

Ambrose Bierce, in his sarcastic *Devil's Dictionary*, puts some of this iridescence into one pithy phrase: "Philanthropist, n. A rich (and usually bald) old gentleman who has trained himself to grin while his conscience is picking his pocket."¹ Many contradictory motives may be entangled where

charitable activities are concerned: genuine compassion, ambitions for social respectability, religious obligations, vanity, intentions to exercise social control – to name but a few.

The early industrial age witnessed not only the formation of a new class of working poor and the rise of self-made businessmen and industrialists, but also an unprecedented development of voluntary charity. Though often depicted as models of greed and social irresponsibility, many industrial magnates were well aware of the threats and conflicts arising from the enormous gap separating the rich and the poor. At the same time, they tried to prove that in resolving the social problems of an industrial society, the liberal principle of voluntary philanthropy would function better than a welfare state, whose mandatory redistribution of financial means could be fuelled only by fiercer taxation of profits and income.

A case study of Rothschild initiatives in 19th- and 20th-century philanthropy is of particular interest. Here, the general subject of individual voluntary charity merges with the specific issue of the identity of European Jewish communities. On the one hand, their far-reaching exclusion from Christian societies at large forced Jews to focus on their own community institutions, inspired by the traditional Jewish concept of charity: *tzedakah*, outlined in the Torah and the Bible. On the other hand, during the 19th century, the eagerness of many Jews to adapt to modern secular society and to achieve equal civil rights encouraged the creation of charitable institutions intended to bridge religious and cultural lines of separation. Thus, quite a number of Jewish institutions spearheaded secular modernisation.

Most of the Rothschild entrepreneurs took classic liberal stances. Nathaniel (“Natty”), the 1st Lord Rothschild (1840-1915) completely identified with the conservative interest in opposing both a state-funded and a contributory old-age pension system, as exemplified in the German model that had been in existence since 1891. In Paris, his brother-in-law Alphonse (1827-1905) criticised the government’s protective trade policy, influenced by the moderate socialist Jean Jaures. When interviewed by the writer Jules Huret in 1897, he stated: “There are richer men and poorer men and that’s all there is to it! Some are richer today and will be poorer tomorrow ... Everyone is subject to such variations ... As for these agglomerations of capital, it is money which circulates ... [and] bears fruit. It’s the wealth of the nations! If you frighten it away, ... all will be lost. ... Capital is labour! Apart from some unfortunate exceptions ... each man ... has that share of the available capital that his intelligence, energy and industry merit.”² This, of course, was the common standpoint of industrial leaders. Yet many of them did not simply oppose the development of state welfare, but launched paternalistic initiatives of their own. German industrial magnates like Alfred Krupp (steel) and August Borsig (locomotives), the French Emile Menier (chocolate industrialist and left-wing Député at the National Assembly), or the Czech entrepreneur Thomas Bat’a (leather and shoes) provided housing, pensions and health schemes for their employees.³

Nevertheless, the mere fact of capitalist magnates being engaged in philanthropy was an indicator that the liberal system did not work in the terms outlined by Alphonse. In being a philanthropist, the liberal capitalist was contradicting his own premise on this subject. Had a liberal economy enabled everybody to have his fair share of the riches of this world, according to each person’s abilities, why should there be a need for any intervention, voluntary or state-run? This inconsistency need not be examined more closely in this article but it is these very contradictions that, among other issues, make this investigation an interesting one.

Throughout the period under consideration, numerous members of the Rothschild family, across all its branches, were very active in a wide spectrum of charitable activities. They ranged from housing and relief for the poor, medical care and advanced medical research, orphanages and education, to cultural issues like patronage of the arts. One of their major concerns was the problem of housing for the poor. On this subject, Rothschild activities in Paris can be traced back to the early 1870s. In a letter

to the Mayor of Paris, dated 12 November 1871, the whole of the second generation of French Rothschilds - Alphonse, Gustave, Edmond, Charlotte, and Adèle, the widow of their brother Salomon - announced the wish of their late father James (1792-1868) to create a *fondation spéciale et perpétuelle*. Its purpose was to pay rent subsidies to the city's needy families. On 11 January 1874, the charitable foundation *L'Oeuvre des Loyers* was established by a *convention de famille*, with a capital of a million francs, later augmented by another 0.6 million after the death of James's widow Betty in 1886. Over the following decades, the *Oeuvre* paid 100,000 francs each year, which the mayors of the 20 Paris *arrondissements* helped to distribute to tenants with annual rents below 400 francs, regardless of their political or religious backgrounds.⁴

On 27 June 1904, Alphonse, Gustave and Edmond de Rothschild informed the *Ministre du Commerce* about a far more ambitious project for providing social housing. The brothers were to create the *Fondation Rothschild*, the primary aim of which was to "ameliorate the material living conditions of the workers." This was a rather unspecific and general way of putting it. The statutes, however, set out a programme that went beyond housing, embracing such matters as health, education, nutrition, and childcare. The State approved its charitable status in the following month of July.⁵

These Rothschild activities must be seen against a wider background. Among the urban elites, the rapid expansion of cities in 19th-century Europe had instigated lively public discussions on the problem of housing, linked with concerns about disease, delinquency and social unrest in slum areas, the unsuitability for military service of unhealthy young men and, especially in France, low birth-rates. At the *Expositions Universelles* of 1867 and 1878, the issue was presented in the form of model designs for cheap and decent housing, and, simultaneously with the 1889 exhibition, the first international congress on the issue of housing for the poor was held in Paris. The conference revealed that France, in favouring somewhat idyllic attached and semi-attached houses, appeared backward in comparison with England and Germany, where more radical approaches had led to vast blocks of social housing that made more efficient use of expensive urban spaces. The 1889 International Housing Congress encouraged the creation of the *Société Française des Habitations à Bon Marché* later in the same year. This body was actively involved in an incessant Europe-wide exchange of know-how in designing, building, and managing social housing schemes, an exchange which lasted until 1914.⁶

Yet its outcomes proved rather feeble. In Paris, during the 1870s and 1880s, the social housing sector grew at a mere 8 per cent in 5 years, while, in the same period, luxury apartments grew at a pace of 20, sometimes even 40 per cent. No speculator in search of an income from rents would have considered flats for the poor. New laws, meant to encourage investors, had little impact.⁷ No wonder that in late 19th-century Paris, a third of working-class families lived under appalling conditions in lodgings with only a single room, with diseases, particularly tuberculosis, spreading easily among the inhabitants. According to the *Bureau de l'Assainissement des Maisons de Paris*, some buildings in the city were so infectious that anybody entering them could be statistically assured of dying within ten years.⁸

The Europe-wide debate on this housing crisis may have led Alphonse, Gustave and Edmond to give the then breath-taking sum of 10 million francs for the erection of housing. Moreover, it illustrates the context of the extremely ambitious plans initiated by the *Fondation Rothschild* in 1904. Their scope was unprecedented, and not only in France. No comparably extensive project had ever been carried out before to provide a model. Therefore, the *Fondation*, with Frédéric Schneider as its first president, and prestigious members like Emile Cheysson (see n.6), launched an architectural competition and its experts undertook an exploratory trip to England.⁹

In this context *The Four Per Cent Industrial Dwellings Company* must be mentioned. Still in existence today under the name *The Industrial Dwellings Society*, it was initially conceived by a broad

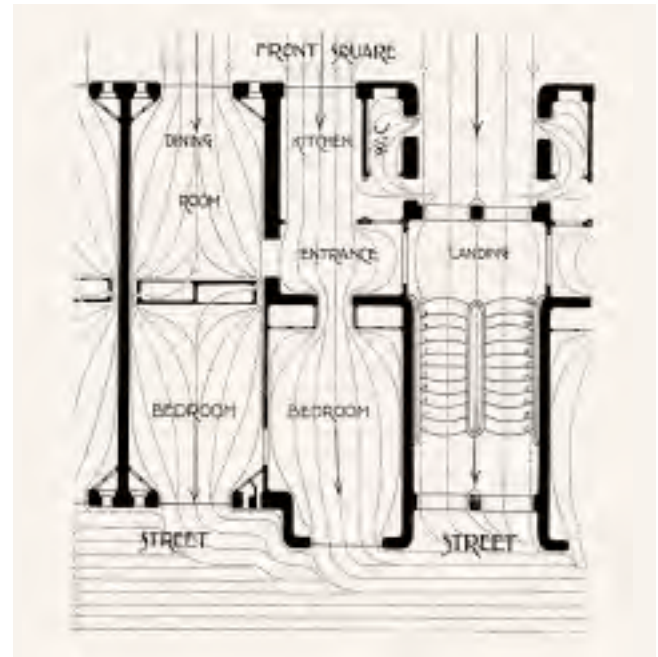
group of magnates from the Anglo-Jewish elite in London in 1884. But neither in Paris nor in London were tenement blocks for the poor considered a lucrative investment and, at the end of the day, it was Nathaniel de Rothschild who became the sole major stakeholder in the project. The name *Four Per Cent* embraced the economic formula of philanthropic housing schemes as acknowledged by the international community of social housing experts: a nett return in rents of 4-5% was considered the minimum profit margin that would attract capital and at the same time allow for the erection of hygienic, bright and properly aired tenement blocks providing affordable flats for workers, artisans and low-paid employees.¹⁰ Most probably, the *Fondation* experts studied the London model during their survey in England. Yet the *Four Per Cent*, with some 230 flats built in the crowded and impoverished East End before 1900, was within the average size of British philanthropic housing projects. The scheme of the *Fondation Rothschild* was to quadruple these figures.

The architectural competition was meant to inspire ideas, with significant prize moneys for the winners but no guarantee of their concepts being realised. In order to maintain efficiency in both planning and building and to avoid extravagant artist-architect attitudes, an architectural department was set up within the *Fondation*. Outstanding members of this team were Henri-Paul Nénot, its chief advisor, and the competition prize winners Augustin Rey and Henry Provensal.

The struggle against tuberculosis had a considerable impact on the layout. Constant optimum ventilation and bright rooms were the *sine qua non* of design. Medical experts on urban hygiene serving in the architectural department were inspired by advanced German T.B. sanatorium architecture, perhaps even by the sanatorium for Jewish women which had been founded by Edmond's wife, Adelheid de Rothschild (1853-1935) in the Black Forest in 1903. The Black Forest building itself had been designed by the pulmonary specialist Dr. Karl Hettinger.¹¹

Within a decade, the *Fondation* and its architects managed to erect five substantial housing complexes spread across five different Paris *arrondissements*, providing almost a thousand flats before World War I, and 1,125 by 1919. The existence of this foundation encouraged other magnates to create their own institutions, essentially along the Rothschild lines. Among them were the *Fondation Alexandre et Julie Weill* (1905), the *Fondation de Madame Jules Lebaudy* (1905), and the *Fondation Singer-Polignac* (1909).¹² Their success even induced the city authorities to obtain a state loan of 200 million francs in 1912 for the construction of 26,000 flats for families of modest income. These efforts were, however, obstructed by the outbreak of war.¹³ It was not until 1922 that the municipal *Assistance Publique* and the City of Paris managed to exceed the Rothschild scale, achieving some 1,450 flats each.¹⁴

So much for the philanthropic 'hard facts'. What about their political and self-representational aspects? In his ethical writings, the Jewish philosopher Maimonides (1135-1204) had distinguished eight degrees of *tzedakah*. One of the criteria to achieve the most pious and noble degree was that "the poor do not know the identity of their benefactor."¹⁵ Of course, Rothschild family members may have practised this form of philanthropy too, but good deeds exercised anonymously are, by their very definition, most



Ventilation plan
for *Fondation*
apartment,
Augustin Rey



A Fondation
apartment block,
Augustin Rey

unlikely to become the subject of historical investigation. The charities considered here had purposes that went beyond generous assistance to the needy. They were a means of self-projection for the members of the urban elites, testifying to the respectability and social responsibility of this new class of self-made businessmen and industrialists. Public donations, in fact, were reminiscent of the benefactions that in earlier times had been expected from kings and noblemen. Only in generously re-distributing parts of it, did the enormous material wealth of the *nouveaux riches* of the industrial age become a respectable asset. This was even more the case when the magnate was of Jewish origin, making him easy prey to the well rehearsed charges of usury and avarice. Through visible commitments to non-sectarian charitable institutions wealthy Jews – and the Rothschilds are but one example – intended to counteract these stereotypes and make a statement about Jewish identification with national goals and issues and therefore affirm assimilation as a *fait accompli*.

Ironically, however, the more extraordinary the generosity, the more spiteful were the anti-Semitic attacks which followed. In 1911, on the occasion of the annual payment of the 100,000 francs by the *Oeuvre des Loyers* to the mayors of the *arrondissements*, the well-known anti-Semitic paper *Libre Parole* provided an example of this. An anonymous article declared the whole procedure to be a mean swindle dreamed up by the Rothschild bankers: the '*Bluff Rothschildien*'. The author claimed that on his deathbed James de Rothschild had intended

to bequeath two million francs directly to the municipally-run *Assistance Publique*. He accused the heirs of having, instead, invested this sum in their own bank, paying a miserable 5 per cent per annum to the *Assistance*, and illicitly shovelling the surplus into their own pockets.¹⁶ To date during this research, no evidence for such misappropriation has been found. What makes it highly unlikely is the Rothschild philosophy of sustainability in charitable giving. Such large sums were never handed over to other bodies for them to dispose of, but were rather invested in a perpetual foundation in which family members would continue to have a substantial say.

Whatever a Rothschild did or did not do in the field of philanthropy was meticulously observed and judged, not only in public, but also within the family. When Maurice de Rothschild (1881-1957, a son of the above mentioned Edmond) masterminded a new housing project in 1930, his brother James Armand prepared very critical dossiers on the plans. With partners from the property world, Maurice conceived a mixed project, with more than 10,000 flats and integrated commercial spaces to be built on municipal land provided on long-term leases, 4,000 of which were to be let on strict social housing terms. James Armand and his advisers were highly critical of the economic aspects, but feared even more Maurice's close contacts with the Socialist-run municipality. This, and the dubious reputation of some of the real estate companies that he was involved with would be an easy target for more attacks.¹⁷

This brief and incomplete account of Rothschild housing initiatives raises more questions than it can answer. One might have suggested that magnate families would have gradually withdrawn from philanthropic activities as state welfare – and taxation – developed. Instead, the Rothschild housing projects were not reduced but obviously multiplied in scope each time a new generation took charge. This demands closer examination. Taxation on income and succession may have been an incentive for

charitable giving, encouraging successful businesses to reduce profits before taxation by making donations. This strategy would have been even more enhanced once tax deductions for charitable activity had been invented. Furthermore, what specific influence did Jewish issues have on decision-making? It is evident, for example, that the mass immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe into the East End of London was a major factor in the setting up of the *Four Per Cent Dwellings* in London; were similar considerations in play in Paris? Or was the 1904 donation intended rather to counteract anti-Jewish sentiments stimulated by the Dreyfus affair? How far was there a family network of information on philanthropic issues exchanged across borders and leading to the spread of up-to-date ideas and practice – even of competition?

In the course of this project, it is hoped, more light will be shed on some or all of the questions raised.

Dr. Klaus Weber is Director of the Research Project and a Research Fellow at the Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations at the University of Southampton. He is the author of Deutsche Kaufleute im Atlantikhandel 1680 – 1830, (München, 2004).

NOTES

1. Ambrose Bierce: *The Devil's Dictionary* (Vol. VII of *The Collected Works*). New York 1911.
2. The interview is quoted by Niall Ferguson: *The World's Banker. A History of the House of Rothschild*, London 1998, p.862. As Ferguson carefully considers, "it may be that Huret misquoted Alphonse, but Alphonse's letters to London suggest" that this was not the case. Ferguson concludes that these writings expressed an "uncompromising, not to say crass, *laissez-faire* view of the labour market ...".
3. Helmut Lackner: 'Das System Bata' in Architekturmuseum Basel (ed.): *Die Bata-Kolonie in Möhlin*, Basel 1992, pp. 61-67.
4. RAL, Lafite Papers, OC 161, including the letter to the Mayor of Paris (1872), 'Règles à suivre dans la distribution des fonds' (1907), annual letters to the mayors of the *arrondissements* (1890s); OC 220, obituaries, Betty de Rothschild (1886).
5. RAL, Lafite Papers, OC 161, statutes of the *Fondation Rothschild* (1911).
6. Marie-Jeanne Dumont: *Le logement social à Paris 1850-1930. Les habitations à bon marché*, Liège (Pierre Mardaga) 1991, pp.15-20. Georges Picot (1839-1909) and his fellow campaigners Jules Siegfried (1837-1922) and Emile Cheysson (1836-1910) were probably the most prominent figures in the French social housing sector and members of numerous bodies, e.g. the *Alliance d'Hygiène Sociale*. Picot's persuasive booklet "Un devoir social et les logements d'ouvriers" (1885) drew heavily on the English housing model and for some 20 years it remained the 'bible' to this sector of philanthropy.
7. Dumont: *Logement social*, pp.113, 165.
8. Dumont: *Logement social*, pp.18-19, 39. See also Jerry White: *Rothschild buildings. Life in an East End Tenement Block 1887-1920*. London (Pimlico) 2003, pp.12-13.
9. Dumont: *Logement social*, pp.31-35.
10. Since the 1860s, some thirty organisations or individuals (Peabody among them) had already built tenements for almost 7,000 London artisan families, though not all with philanthropic aims. The Four Per Cent was provided with a capital of £40,000, which was to be doubled in 1891. White: *Rothschild buildings*, pp.14-24, 28. A more recent assessment is offered by Susannah Morris: 'Market solutions for social problems' in *Economic History Review*, 44 (2001), 3, pp.525-545.
11. Uwe Schellinger: 'Adelheid de Rothschild (1853-1935) und die Gründung der M.A. von Rothschild'schen Lungenheilstalt in Nordrach' in *Die Ortenau* 82 (2002), pp.519-28. Due to the healthy climate of this particular village, half a dozen sanatoriums had been erected there before 1914. The impact of the methods developed in Nordrach on British T.B. treatment cannot be underestimated. While they were ignored in France's medical sector, they certainly did influence French social housing architecture. Also see Flurin Condrau: 'The Institutional Career of Tuberculosis Patients in Britain and Germany' in John Henderson (ed.): *The Impact of Hospitals in Europe, 1000-2002: People, Landscapes, Symbols*. In print.
12. The Lebaudy institution had been founded as early as 1889 as *Groupe des Maisons Ouvrières*, but changed its statutes in 1905, under the influence of the Rothschild Foundation, the only one that was able to rival the considerable Lebaudy funds. Dumont: *Logement social*, pp.93-96.
13. Dumont: *Logement social*, pp.113-115. Before 1912, the public sector had only provided for loans and tax exemptions, amounting to some 7.5 million francs, while the Foundations *Rothschild* and *Lebaudy* alone had donated 20 million francs by 1914.
14. Dumont: *Logement social*, pp.167-71. Thousands of flats were built by the Ville de Paris up to 1933.
15. Louis Jacobs: *The Jewish Religion. A Companion*, Oxford 1995, pp.72-73.
16. RAL, Lafite Papers, OC 161, cutting from the *Libre Parole*, issue 22 January 1911. The author is citing "one of our well-informed friends." He insists that the reproach was entirely plausible, but admits it cannot be proved because of the municipal administration's refusal of any investigation into Jewish (and in particular Rothschild) matters. To include in the calumny a "good Jew", here represented by James, was (and is) a common pattern in anti-Semitic discourse. Martin Reisligl / Ruth Wodak (eds.): *Discourse and Discrimination. Rhetorics of Racism and Anti-Semitism*, London (Routledge) 2001.
17. RAL, Lafite Papers, OC 148, comprises a dozen reports on this subject, see reports no. 1-2 and nos. 5-7.

The Rothschild Bibliography

Caroline Shaw of The Rothschild Archive describes her attempts to chart the family's countless ventures into print

The 'Dunottar Castle' from the cover of *Three weeks in South Africa* by Ferdinand de Rothschild



Has there ever been such a family as the Rothschilds for getting into print? For me, after working on this project for two years, the question is coloured by a mixture of wonder and exasperation. Will they never stop publishing? Of course, one hopes not; but is there to be no rest for the bibliographer? It has been a long-standing goal of The Rothschild Archive to compile a bibliography of publications by members of the Rothschild family and now, 1,840 entries by fifty-one individuals further on, we are perhaps ready to acknowledge that critical mass has been reached whilst accepting that completion may never be achieved.

The initial motivation for producing *The Rothschild bibliography* was a desire to bring some kind of intellectual order to this not insignificant aspect of the activities of the Rothschild family. It has been a mapping of a wide and diverse terrain and revealed some previously uncharted areas. Beyond this, and the greater insight allowed into the lives and interests of many members of the family, the bibliography has brought some other benefits to the Archive. New acquisitions have followed from our greater knowledge and awareness of the publications; and the ever-expanding database of references has also built up into a guide for locating material, whether held at the Archive or at another institution.

The Rothschild Research Forum has proved to be the logical and timeous way of distributing the bibliography as it currently stands, free of charge, to researchers with a proven interest in matters Rothschildian.¹ Each author's entries are accompanied by a brief introduction and often by illustrations too. Material can easily be updated as new information comes to light, and links made to related online material.

Whilst for the bibliophile nothing will replace the pleasure of handling a beautiful or rare book, the potential of modern technology cannot be ignored. It was pleasing to discover that *The avifauna of Laysan and the neighbouring islands: with a complete history to date of the birds of the Hawaiian Possessions*² by Walter Rothschild (1868-1937, creator of the Zoological Museum at Tring) is available online, courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries. Equally exciting was our first 'born digital' publication, *Growing as we age*, by Jacqueline Piatigorsky³ (née Rothschild, b.1911, sculptor). Online publications like these can be accessed directly from *The Rothschild bibliography*.

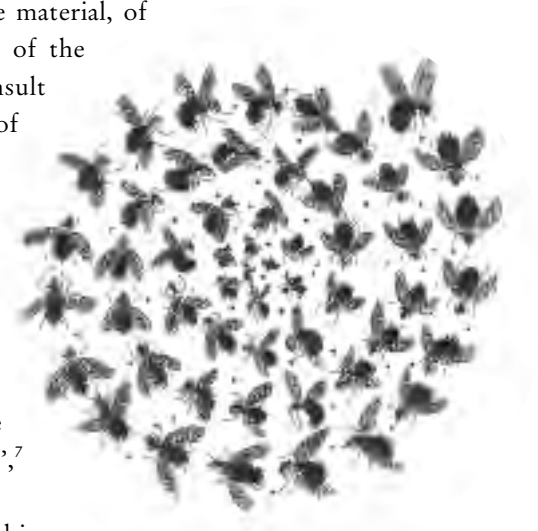
Online resources have, unsurprisingly, been invaluable in compiling the bibliography. The online catalogues of the British Library, the Bibliothèque National de France, the Deutsche Bibliothek, and the Natural History Museum, have been a few of the many to have been consulted. The Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal had an unexpectedly valuable catalogue, containing references to works published by the indefatigable Henri de Rothschild (1872-1947, doctor and playwright) during his wartime exile in that country. The Rothschild researcher network then came up trumps when we found a volunteer in Lisbon to examine some of the publications and send us photocopies of their contents pages.

Online bibliographic services which give access to information about articles from scholarly periodicals have also been used, helping to track, for example, the recent scientific publications of Miriam Rothschild (b. 1908, entomologist and conservationist). The antiquarian booksellers' online databases have been particularly fun to use, providing an effortless virtual rummage through what must be miles of actual shelving, but leading to the same thrill of an occasional unexpected discovery in unlikely places. How, for example, had an extremely rare copy of *Linoubliée*⁴ by Hélène van Zuylén de Nyevelt (née de Rothschild, 1863-1947, novelist and poet), one of only thirty ever printed, found its way to Argentina? Uncovering this book and Hélène's other works of literature has given us a fuller sense of her involvement in the milieu of the – then controversial – lesbian symbolist poet Renée Vivien.

But nothing can compare with the satisfaction of consulting the material, of verifying data derived from secondary sources and getting a sense of the contents themselves. Fortunately, Archive staff have been able to consult some of the personal libraries of members of the family as well as some of the great national library collections. Not every great library is a national library of course, and smaller institutions have also been invaluable resources. Visiting the library of the Royal Entomological Society, for example, proved to be a wonderful experience, with holdings ranging from the highly professional schoolboy research published by Charles Rothschild (1877-1923, banker and natural historian) in *Harrow butterflies and moths*,⁵ to his work on a parasite of the Antarctic seal 'Hemiptera parasitica: Pediculidae. *Echinopthirius setosus*,⁶ and an article of his on Hungarian lepidoptera 'Adatok Magyarországi lepkefaunájához',⁷ presumably translated for him by his wife Rozsika.

Inevitably not every item in the bibliography has been seen in this way, but in the cases of the extensively published scientists Walter Rothschild and his

Illustration by
Mario Avati for
the poem 'Sieste'
from *À l'aube
d'une guerre:
poèmes* by
Philippe de
Rothschild



niece Miriam Rothschild, we have been able to draw on a number of pre-existing bibliographies including Miriam's own list of her publications *List of papers published 1932-1979*⁸ and, for Walter, the 'List of scientific papers'⁹ and 'Bibliography'.¹⁰

Even for a non-scientist it is disappointing not to have seen all of these publications, not least because the Rothschild sense of style and appreciation of aesthetic quality can often be identified in their publications as much as in their art collections or their gardens. This applies regardless of the subject matter, and Miriam Rothschild and her co-authors Yosef Schlein and Susumo Ito say as much in their introduction to *A colour atlas of insect tissues via the flea*,¹¹ a book which makes a photographic journey through the innards of a flea reminiscent of the complex landscapes of Australian aboriginal art:

"It is hoped that some of the coloured photographs will stir the imagination and excite the aesthetic susceptibilities of students, not hitherto familiar with insect histology. For there is nothing which is more pleasing to the eye, and which can afford the microscopist more innocent excitement and pleasure, than good sections of insect tissues."¹²

Before the advent of electron micrography and other specialist photographic techniques, Walter Rothschild employed some of the best zoological illustrators of the day to produce accurate – and beautiful – plates, essential for the dissemination of the results of the taxonomic discoveries emanating from the museum at Tring. The work of J.G. Keulemans (1842-1912) and F.W. Frohawk (1861-1946) can be found in Walter's monographs and his journal *Novitates Zoologicae*. Maurice de Rothschild (1881-1957, French politician and financier) in *Voyage de M. le Baron Rothschild en Éthiopie et en Afrique orientale anglaise (1904-1905). Resultats scientifiques: animaux articulés*¹³ shows the same attention to detail. In the third volume of this work there are one hundred plates of insect illustrations, eighty-four of which are exquisitely hand-coloured. One could speculate that this might have been one of the reasons for the elapse in time between the expedition and the publication of its findings.

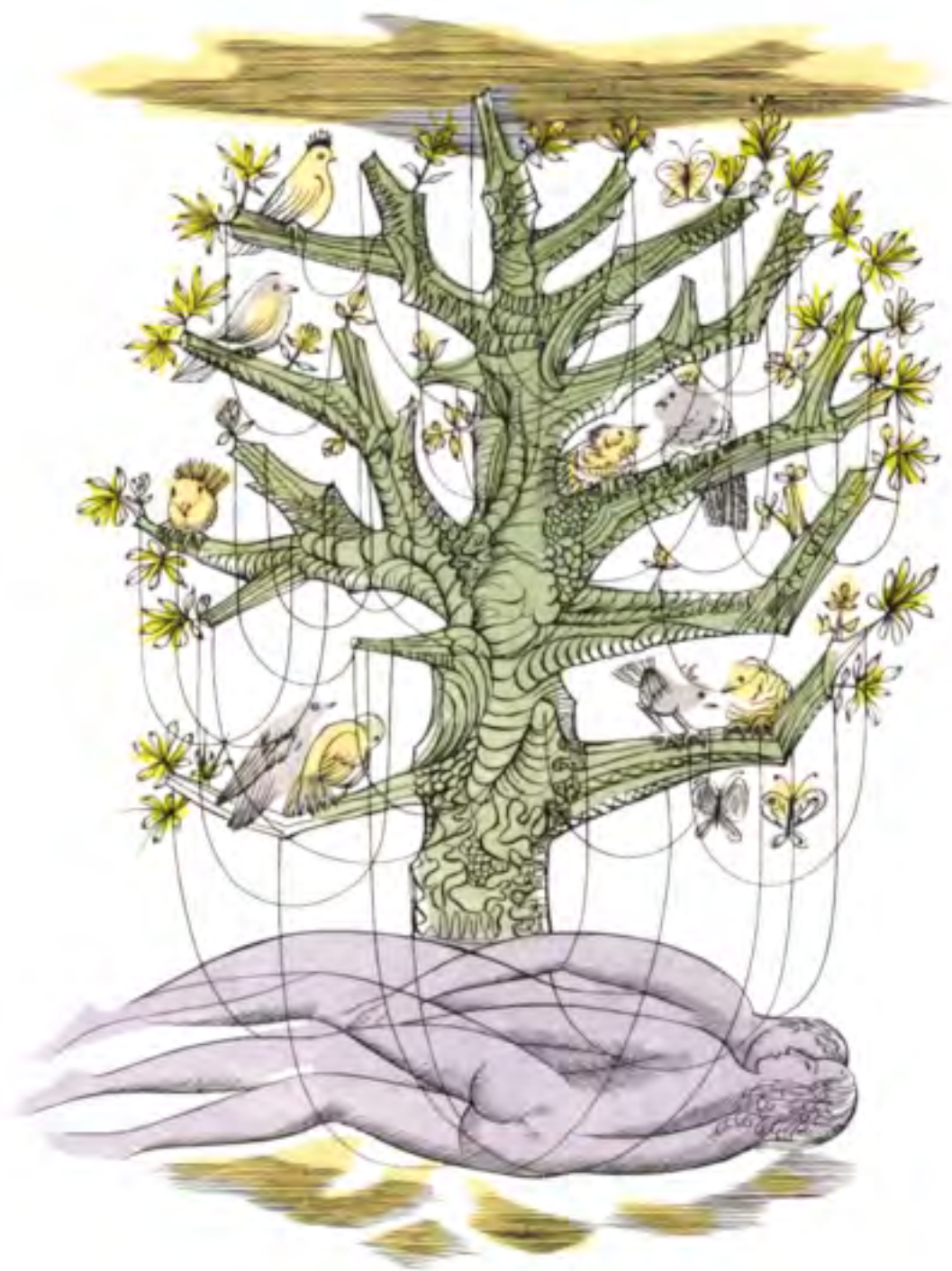
Not all Rothschilds are scientists of course, although even Philippe de Rothschild (1902-1988, winemaker at Mouton Rothschild), with five volumes of poetry to his name, published works on light diffusion and cathode rays. Book illustration and design reach a striking zenith with his companion volumes *À l'aube d'une guerre: poèmes* and *Éclos à l'aube: poèmes*.¹⁴ The first volume, poems written whilst a prisoner of war in Casablanca in 1940, contains dark illustrations, insect-inspired, by Mario Avati (b.1921), a leading French revivalist of the mezzotint. The second volume, of love poetry, has light and curious engravings and aquatints by Georges Arnulf (1904-1994). Another striking example of post-war French book design is *La danse artistique aux USA: tendances modernes*¹⁵ by Batsheva de Rothschild (1914-1999, founder of the Bat-Dor Dance Company in Israel) with its distinctive use of blue-grey majuscules, typography and layout.

Many of the family's publications can be found in fine bindings and *éditions de luxe* (see p20). *Linoubliée*, for example, is bound in lilac morocco with ivory silk lining; *Three weeks in South Africa*¹⁶ by Ferdinand de Rothschild (1839-1898, creator of Waddesdon Manor) has a cover bearing gold illustrations of the steamer 'Dunottar Castle' on which Ferdinand sailed to Cape Town, and a group of ostriches; and The Rothschild Archive's copy of *Le plus grand amour*,¹⁷ a play by Henri de Rothschild, is bound in green morocco with gold tooling – and this for an edition which claims that:

"Ce tirage, qui est de cinquante exemplaires, est destiné uniquement aux études de répétitions et de mise en scène."

The Rothschild love of collecting and their evident interest in books meet, for some members of the family, in bibliophilia. James Edouard de Rothschild (1844-1881, banker and bibliophile) is one of the

Illustration by
Georges Arnulf for
the poem 'Colin-
Maillard' from
*Éclos à l'aube:
poèmes*
by Philippe de
Rothschild



The final scene
from *La Rampe*
by Henri de
Rothschild.
Illustrations by
Maurice Leloir
and engravings
by Léon
Boisson



most notable of these, with his early interest in literature demonstrated by the four volumes of *Recueil de poésies françaises des XVe et XVIe siècles: morales, facétieuses, historiques. Tomes X-XIII*¹⁸ which he co-edited with Anatole de Montaiglon. His son Henri claimed that James Edouard's collaboration with Montaiglon had begun, in fact, as early as 1856 but his contribution was only acknowledged in the last four volumes of the series. Henri, who inherited this interest in books, published a graceful tribute to his father in *Un bibliophile d'autrefois: le Baron James Edouard de Rothschild, 1844-1881*.¹⁹ The book is beautifully decorated with designs drawn from the collections of both men. Victor, third Lord Rothschild (1910-1990, research scientist, civil servant and banker), created from scratch a collection now at Trinity College, Cambridge. The origins of the collection in the eccentricities of the university's examination requirements is described in his introduction to *The Rothschild Library: a catalogue of the collection of eighteenth-century printed books and manuscripts formed by Lord Rothschild*.²⁰ He also describes some of the hazards of book collecting in *The history of Tom Jones, a changeling; caveat emptor*.²¹

The range of subjects covered in the Rothschild bibliography is rather astonishing, and snapshots from a consolidated index could yield a wonderfully absurd alphabet: from aardvark to zinc, via mathematics, nicotine, oology [the study of eggs] and philately. But one subject which lends its very particular flavour is that of 'Rothschilds on Rothschilds'. Members of the family have often led lives out of the ordinary, and their writings about their experiences and those of their relatives offer a

unique perspective on people, places and times of interest to the rest of the world. Constance, Edmund, Ferdinand, Guy, Henri, Jacqueline, Laura Thérèse, Monique, Philippe, Rosemary and Victor have all published memoirs and autobiographies. Furthermore, Henri has written about James Edouard and Arthur; Victor has written about Nathan and Lionel; Miriam has written about Walter and Charles. Rothschilds have written about Rothschild gardens, homes, music and art. Lionel de Rothschild (b.1955), following the genealogical research previously published by Victor, is also the author, with Melanie Aspey, of the best-thumbed – and certainly the most beautifully designed – of all the reference works available in The Rothschild Archive: *The Rothschild family tree 2000*.²²

The Rothschild Archive sees the acquisition of publications by members of the family as part of its remit, and it is very satisfying to be able to write that the overwhelming majority of the publications described in this article can be consulted at the Archive.

Caroline Shaw has been an Assistant Archivist at The Rothschild Archive since 2002. She is also a Visiting Research Fellow in the Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at King's College, London.



A joyful
reworking of
the five arrows
motif by
Georges
Arnulf in *Éclos
à l'aube:
poèmes*
by Philippe de
Rothschild

NOTES

1. To view *The Rothschild bibliography* users must be registered as members of the Rothschild Research Forum. Visit www.rothschildarchive.org for further information.
2. London: R.H.Porter, 1893-1900
3. Los Angeles: Armchair World, 2003
4. Paris: Sansot, 1910
5. Harrow: Harrow School Scientific Society's Memoirs, 1895 and 1897
6. In: British Museum (Natural History) *Report on the collections of natural history made in the Antarctic regions during the voyage of the 'Southern Cross'* (London: British Museum [Natural History], 1902)
7. In: *Rovartani Lapok* no. 16, 1909
8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [printer], 1979
9. In: *Novitates Zoologicae* vol. 41, 1938
10. In: *Ibis* vol. 2, 1938
11. London: Wolfe, 1986
12. *Ibid.* p.8
13. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1922
14. Paris: Henri Javal, 1950 and 1954
15. Paris: Elzévir, 1949
16. London: Hatchard [printer], 1895
17. Paris: Protat Frères [printer], 1920
18. Paris: Paul Daffis, 1875-1878
19. Paris: E. Droz, 1934
20. London: Dawsons, 1969
21. Cambridge: [the author], 1951
22. London: Balding & Mansell [printers], 2000

Nathan Rothschild's Company¹: Jews, Quakers and Catholics

Melanie Aspey considers Rothschild links with Radicals and Reformers in the 19th century

Lionel de
Rothschild
introduced in
The House of
Commons,
26 July 1858 by
Henry Barraud



“The pictures in the principal rooms [of Gunnersbury House] are chiefly portraits of the family and their friends. In the billiard room there is one painting of historic interest – the introduction of the late Baron Lionel Rothschild into the House of Commons on his first being allowed to take his seat for London in 1858.”²

The picture depicts a scene at the heart of the British nation. Its calm and orderly appearance masks decades of struggle, setbacks and vicious attack. The central figure, Lionel de Rothschild, became the focus of the campaign to claim equal rights for British Jewry, but it was a struggle that had had many supporters, not least among them his father, Nathan Rothschild.

New sources and resources at The Rothschild Archive are helping to flesh out the structure of Rothschild history, especially in hitherto obscure regions, such as the family's social connections and their links to reforming groups. Significant lacunae in the correspondence series in the years of Nathan's death (1836) and the year of the formation of the Alliance Assurance Company (1824) frustrate the search for evidence of reactions to these events. However, small pieces of evidence drawn together can go some way toward making good the loss.

Nathan's early associations with radical figures began with the formation of the Alliance Assurance Company in 1824. The 1820s were the decade in which the struggle for Catholic Emancipation was finally won. In the succeeding decade the Abolitionists won their cause; Nathan played his role by issuing a loan to compensate the slave-owners and thereby hasten the end, at last, of the trade. In the 1840s, after Nathan's death, Lionel de Rothschild began a long campaign for the right to take up his seat in the House of Commons. Many of his supporters were drawn from the ranks of the families with whom Nathan had been engaged in previous decades. They saw him elected first in 1847 and remained steadfast in their support throughout a number of by-elections over the succeeding eleven years. Lionel was repeatedly returned as the City's representative but only in 1858 took his seat after the Lords approved a change of wording in the Oath. In future M.P.s might, on the grounds of conscience, be exempted from the need to swear allegiance to the Crown as a Christian.

The formation of the Alliance Assurance Company is often interpreted as a move towards opening the insurance market to Jews and Quakers, or perhaps (rather more apocryphally) providing employment for a relative of Nathan, who had been turned down for a post at an insurance company on account of his faith. Even more persuasive is the theory that Nathan relished the opportunity to challenge the established system. He was still something of an outsider in British society, in spite of his closeness to government ministers following the commission to supply funds to Wellington's troops in the lead up to Waterloo, and was perhaps more inclined to challenge the status quo. In this case his actions ended the monopoly enjoyed by Lloyd's in marine insurance. However the roll-call of the first presidents, directors and officers of the Alliance suggests that there is an element of truth in all these theories.

There were five presidents: Moses Montefiore, Nathan Rothschild, Samuel Gurney and Francis Baring (all bankers) and John Irving M.P. Moses Montefiore was Nathan's brother-in-law through his marriage to Judith, the sister of Hannah Cohen, Nathan's wife. Moses's brother, Abraham, was married to Nathan's sister, Henriette. The families were neighbours in New Court and at Stamford Hill. In subsequent years their campaign for Jewish emancipation would pick up speed in the wake of Catholic emancipation. The company's actuary, Benjamin Gompertz, was married to Montefiore's sister, Abigail. Samuel Gurney, a partner in the banking firm of Overend and Gurney, was from a prominent Quaker family. One of his sisters, Hannah, married Thomas Fowell Buxton and another was Elizabeth Fry. His daughter, Rachel, married one of Buxton's sons. John Irving, M.P., partner in the banking firm Reid Irving, with whom Nathan Rothschild raised a loan for Austria in 1824, had ship-owning interests. At a general meeting of Shipowners of Great Britain on 13 December 1821, he was called to be Vice-President, with others, of the organisation, which was chaired by Thomas Wilson, M.P.³ The fifth President was Francis Baring, senior partner of Rothschilds' major City rival Baring Brothers.

Thomas Fowell Buxton, M.P., one of the auditors, became a partner in the Truman Brewery in the East End of London the following year. He campaigned with Elizabeth Fry for prison reform and founded, with William Wilberforce, the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery in 1823. Two years later, on Wilberforce's retirement, he led the Parliamentary abolitionist campaign which finally succeeded in 1833.

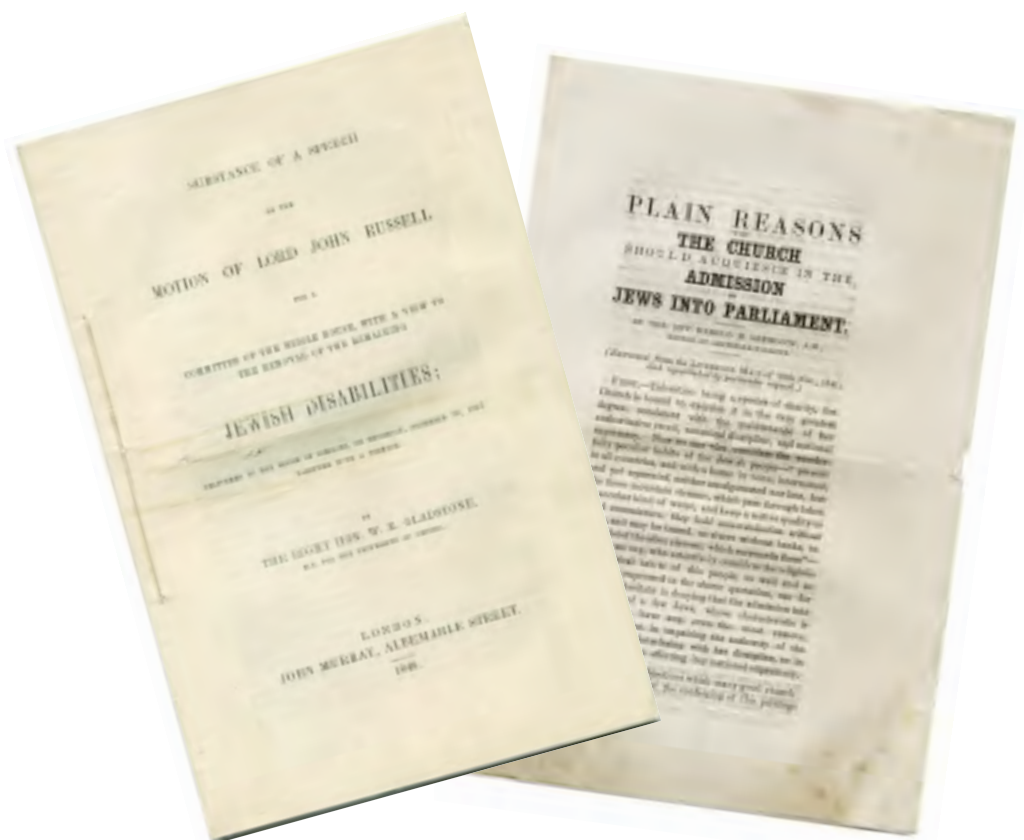
The company's counsel was Lancelot Shadwell, the last Vice-Chancellor of England.⁴ A letter in The Rothschild Archive, now published in the Rothschild Research Forum,⁵ written by Shadwell to Lionel de Rothschild from Westminster Hall on 21 January 1848, demonstrates a keen sympathy with the emancipationists.

“Though I have not the Honour of knowing you and never had as I believe the pleasure of seeing you except once at Sir Joseph Montefiore’s yet I beg you will do me the favour of accepting the accompanying Book - in itself of no value. But when I mention one short fact connected with it you will I trust think it worth preserving. Mr. Goldsmid I understand was the first of your nation that was ever called to the English Bar. The ceremony took place at Lincolns Inn on the 31st January 1833 when I was Treasurer and it was arranged that he should take the then necessary Oaths on a copy of the Law to be supplied by me - accordingly he was sworn on the first Volume. On the fly Leaves at the beginning I on the same day made some short Memoranda. The Book had been in my possession many years. It has acquired a new value in my sight [Hebrew phrase]. For I had long taken the deepest Interest in your remarkable Nation descended from the Illustrious Patriarch Abraham and called by God Himself in the Language of his Prophet. For them I had mingled feelings of admiration Love and Pity. Now when there is a strong probability that they will at last be treated in England with Justice and Humanity and that you will be the first among them to sit in a British Parliament it occurred to me that there was no one in whose custody I could more properly place the Book than yourself. So let me entreat you to accept it as coming from one who in common with all your Brethren fully appreciates those emphatic Words [Hebrew phrase] I venture to suggest that if upon the first Volume you should take your Oaths as a Member of the House of Commons it will thereby acquire a value that very few Books ever had before or will hereafter have. I have the honour to be Sir a Sincere Well wisher to Yourself and your Nation.”

As we now know, Shadwell’s optimism was rather premature. Goldsmid played a major role in the struggle for emancipation, which is acknowledged even in this encomium to Nathan published to commemorate the centenary of his death.

“It was his great desire to lift the burden which oppressed so many of the Jews at that time. It was his work in this connection that paved the way for emancipation of the Jews in England. Through his large financial services that he had rendered to England, apart from the services rendered to the British armies in the Napoleonic Wars, he became acquainted with the Duke of Wellington, and through him, he tried to create an atmosphere favourable to the change in the oath of Allegiance which would permit a Jew to take that Oath. In the history of the Jewish Board of Deputies it is recorded that Nathan Mayer Rothschild and Mr (later Sir) Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, were invited to attend a meeting of that board in April 1829. (They were not members of the Board.) At this meeting Nathan Mayer, now Baron Rothschild, stated that he had consulted the Duke of Wellington who was Chancellor (sic) and other members of the Government. As a result of these consultations it was suggested that a petition should be presented to Parliament appealing for the removal of the disabilities from which Jews suffered. It was suggested that the petition should be signed only by Jews born in England. The Board of Deputies agreed to do this and thanked the gentlemen for their attendance and for their efforts for the emancipation of the Jews. The petition was sent to the House of Lords and to the House of Commons. A Rothschild was among the signatories, not Nathan Mayer, but his son Lionel who was born in England, and so again Nathan Mayer Rothschild led in the struggle for emancipation, for he it was who inspired the Board to the petition.”⁶

Nathan’s commitment to the well-being and advancement of Jewry was not confined to Britain. In 1814 Lord Liverpool responded to his letter about the “state of the Jews in Germany” promising “to forward your representation to Lord Castlereagh in order that every due consideration may be given by his Lordship to the circumstances of their case.”⁷ In 1817, Carl Rothschild was able to remark favourably on the assistance that Nathan had been able to offer the Jews of Corfu.



In the 1820s the government ministers to whom Nathan made representations knew him well. Not only Lord Liverpool but also the Duke of Wellington and Lord Bexley, the former Nicholas Vansittart, had reason to listen to someone who had served British interests so well during the Napoleonic Wars. One copy letter in the Archive demonstrates that Nathan's representations were not just on behalf of the Jewish community but embraced the community whose struggle the Jewish emancipationists followed closely, the Irish.⁸

"It has occurred to me, that in the present state of Ireland, supposing the accounts we read from that quarter are true, even making allowance for some exaggeration of the distress, some easy and direct mode of relief is at the disposal of the Government but the benefit of which might be lost by delay.

I beg to suggest the purchase of American and East India rice (before speculators come into the markets) the price of which is at present low and the stock large and which in case of deficiency of the potatoe (sic) crop, would supply the numerous poor of that country with a wholesome food during the winter. I venture to address this suggestion to your lordship, which in my humble opinion if acted upon might prove beneficial to a suffering community and prevent those mischiefs which a threatened famine might otherwise produce."⁹

A throwaway line from the diaries of Moses Montefiore reveals something of the fervour with which the Jewish community pursued their equality. Montefiore notes in February 1829 that having discussed with Isaac Lyon Goldsmid a plan for procuring toleration of the Jews, he and his wife went to visit Nathan and Hannah Rothschild. Nathan promised to go to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Bexley,

Examples of literature collected by the Rothschild family on the subject of Jewish emancipation. (See Appendix, p59, for full list)



One of several annotated Division Lists collected during Lionel's parliamentary campaign.

who, in 1814, as Nicholas Vansittart, had commissioned Nathan and his brothers to collect coin with which to pay Wellington's troops. Hannah said if he did not, she would, records Montefiore.¹⁰ This is typical of the way in which Nathan was cast as the figurehead, the front man for appeals and campaigns. He had a talent for seeing the way forward, perhaps because in spite of his closeness to government he was not a part of the establishment and had no position to defend. He had after all turned down the offer of a knighthood by August 1815, preferring to be an English Mr Rothschild rather than an Austrian Baron von Rothschild. In business, Nathan worked out systems that led to the best profits. In Manchester for example he had realised that one merchant could derive three sets of profits from the process, and could therefore sell at a lower profit margin, thus satisfying both merchant and customer. In the wider world Nathan realised that the effectiveness of the welfare activities of the main London synagogues would be increased if the three bodies – the Great, the Hambro' and the New – combined so that the new body

could respond to and cope with the community's needs as immigration movements developed. The record of his "Great Idea", which was expressed to community leaders for the first time at a meeting at New Court, is preserved in the first issue of *The Hebrew Intelligencer*,¹¹ the only one known to survive. Although his plan did not come to fruition in his lifetime his aims were realised in 1870 with the creation of the United Synagogue, of which his son, Anthony, became first President.

Frustratingly, scant information can be found in the Archive about the loan of 1835 that hastened the end of the slave trade by compensating the plantation owners. *The Times* records a series of meetings between Nathan Rothschild, "a number of gentlemen from the City" (including Moses Montefiore), government ministers and the Governor of the Bank of England in July and August, and Montefiore's diaries carry an account of the issue.¹²

Nathan died the following year. One final source links him to the radical figures of the period and indicates how much he was a part of their circle. The memoirs of Thomas Fowell Buxton¹³ contain an account of a dinner on 13 February 1834 at Ham House (the home of Samuel Gurney) at which Nathan was present, regaling unnamed guests with his life story. What was the occasion? Perhaps the 10th anniversary of the foundation of the Alliance. Perhaps simply one of a number of similar meetings.

Nathan Rothschild's eldest son, Lionel, fulfilled his father's mission. As senior partner of N M Rothschild & Sons, he hosted in his room the meeting that led to the formation of the British Relief Association, a group of City merchants and bankers who raised £500,000 for famine relief in Ireland. The following year, together with Baring Brothers, the bank contracted the Irish 3% loan to raise £8 million for the same cause.¹⁴

Lionel de Rothschild commissioned the painting appearing at the beginning of this article from the artist and photographer Barraud. It includes a number of figures who could not possibly have been present at the scene, but to whom Lionel clearly wanted to pay tribute for their role in a shared struggle. Lord John Russell, a supporter of Catholic emancipation and Prime Minister when Lionel was first elected, was one of his sponsors, an echo of the relationship his father had had with Lord

Liverpool. The second was John Abel Smith, a member of the banking firm used by N M Rothschild & Sons for generations and a relative of William Wilberforce. Lionel's expression of gratitude for Russell's support over the eleven years between 1847 and 1858 might well have been addressed to Nathan by any number of those whom he served: "I have taken up much of your valuable time and I have often hesitated before I interrupted you in your more agreeable occupation; but on every occasion I have been most kindly received by you and have always found you the true and sincere friend of the oppressed and warm advocate of just and true liberal measures."¹⁵

Melanie Aspey was appointed as the Archivist of The Rothschild Archive in 1994 and has taken over the post of Director in November 2004. From 1992 to 2002 she was Chairman of the Business Archives Council.



Silver-gilt
badge of the
office of the
Alliance
British and
Foreign Life
and Fire
Assurance
Co., c.1824

NOTES

1. Headline of an article on the centenary of the Alliance Assurance Company in *The Financial News*, 28 June 1934. RAL 000/924.
2. Walford's *Greater London*, vol. 1, RAL 000/924. This extract, and many of the newspaper articles with this reference are from documents collected by Anthony de Rothschild, for a proposed publication on the Rothschild family.
3. *The Times*, 15 December 1821.
4. Details of Shadwell's role at the court of Richard Bethell, mentioned elsewhere in this *Review*, can be found in Nash's Life of Richard, Lord Westbury.
5. <http://www.rothschildarchive.org/> Research Forum: Lionel de Rothschild: letters from Lancelot Shadwell.
6. Morris Myer, "The Founder of the House of Rothschild in London and the Pioneer of Jewish Emancipation in England": *Today in History in Jewish Times* 28 July 1936.
7. The translation is by an unknown hand. RAL 000/924.
8. RAL TWE/1 quoting British Library Add. 38572 f.266, letter from Lord Liverpool to Nathan Rothschild, 12 December 1814.
9. See the appendix for material on Catholic emancipation.
10. Letter from Nathan Rothschild to Lord Liverpool, 21 August 1826.
11. Dr. Louis Loewe, ed., *Diaries of Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore*, facsimile of the 1890 edition (London, 1983).
12. *The Hebrew Intelligencer*, RAL 000/848.
13. *The Times*, 30 July 1835, 1 and 4 August, 1835; Dr. Louis Loewe, op. cit., p97.
14. *Memoirs of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, baronet*, with selections from his correspondence, edited by Charles Buxton (London, 1848). Buxton's papers at Rhodes House Library contain no reference to Nathan Rothschild. Lionel is mentioned in letters of Feb 1834, Nov 1837 and Dec 1838, although there are no letters from him. The index to the correspondence of the Anti-Slavery Society, also at Rhodes House, contains reference to the draft of an appeal from a James Long to Baron Rothschild, (n.d.). I am grateful to Lucy McCann of the Library for this information.
15. Jules Ayer, *A Century of Finance* (London, 1904). In 1847 the ship Rothschild carried 50 bags of corn provided by the citizens of Apalachicola. The reason for the naming of the ship is not known. *Transactions of the Society of Friends during the famine in Ireland* (1996).
16. Letter from Lionel de Rothschild to Lord John Russell, 30 July 1858 in Spencer Walpole, *Life of Lord John Russell*, vol 2, (London, 1889).

Appendix

“Sundry manuscripts and pamphlets dealing with religious disabilities in Great Britain in the cases of Jews, Quakers and Roman Catholics.”
A collection in The Rothschild Archive, 000/573/6.

Manuscripts

1. Copy Opinion on Baron de Rothschild's case “That there is not any existing Law which renders a Jew as such incapable of being elected and returned to Parliament as a member of the House of Commons.”
2. Draft statement as to the rights of Jews to sit in Parliament. (2 copies at various stages)
3. The opinion of Edward Whitchurch upon Baron Rothschild's position as duly elected Member for the City 1853. Letter and enclosed paper. Letter requesting that an enclosed paper be considered in relation to the Jewish Disability question.
4. Letter with statement prepared by W Willis regarding the case for the opinion of the Attorney General concerning the Russo-Dutch Advance 1847.
5. Minutes of an interview in Downing Street on Tuesday 29th August with Lord J Russell on the part of the City Deputation in reference to the removal of Jewish Disabilities.
6. Six sundry letters. One written 10th Feb 1848 concerns a petition being cared for by James Gernon. Another written 5th February 1848 concerns a paper as signed by various names and passed on for further assistance to Lord Montague.
3. An Act for the relief of His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects 10 George IV Cap VII. 13 April 1829. Also included is a Schedule to which the Act refers.
4. Report from the Select Committee on Quaker's affirmation 11 February 1833. Speaks of one case in which the admissibility of a Quaker to take his seat in Parliament has come before the House and lists the different Acts of Parliament relating to Quakers.
5. Statement of the Civil Disabilities and Privations affecting Jews in England 1829. Discusses why Jews should not be exempt from Parliament and lists history of Jews in England.



Annotated Division list from the 1847 session on Jewish disabilities

Printed Matter

1. “An answer to a pamphlet entitled Considerations on the Bill to permit persons professing the Jewish Religion to be naturalised; Wherein the false reasoning, gross misrepresentation and perversion of scripture are fully laid open and detected” 1753. Hostile to the extension of political privileges or the right of naturalisation to Jews.
2. Pamphlet in support of the “Bill to permit persons to apply for naturalisation professing the Jewish religion. By an Orthodox Member of the Church of England. An earnest address to the freeholders and electors of Great Britain.”
6. An Act for removing doubts as to the Declaration to be made and oaths to be taken by persons appointed to the office of Sheriff of any city or town being a county of itself. 5 & 6 William IV Cap XXVIII 21 August 1835.
7. Draft of a Bill to be entitled “An Act to amend the Law for the registration of persons entitled to vote in the election of members to serve in Parliament 1847.” Recites previous law and goes on to state that under the new law any male of full age of worth ten pounds or more and not subject to any legal incapacity be able to vote.
8. “A few remarks on the social and political condition of British Catholics” 1847, Earl of Arundel and Surrey.



**Part of a supportive letter
to Lionel de Rothschild from
Benjamin Disraeli, 1848**

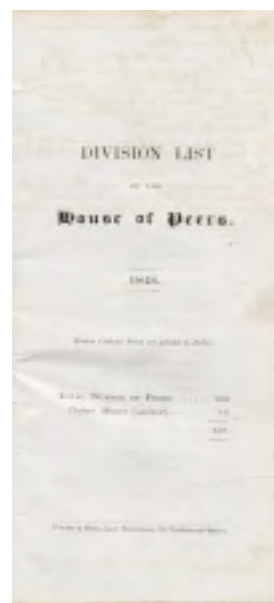
9. "Plain reasons why the Church should acquiesce in the admission of Jews in Parliament" Rev. Harold H. Sherlock A.M. Extracted from the Liverpool Mail 20 November 1847.
10. Public petition for and against the removal of Jewish Disabilities 16-17 December 1847. Split into five categories of Parliament, Ecclesiastical, Colonies, Taxes and Miscellaneous. Also includes the removal of Minister's Money in Ireland, Roman Ambassador, Roman Catholic Charitable Trusts Bill, Roman Catholic Clergy (Ireland), Rajah of Sattara, Transportation, Rating of Tenements, Clerkenwell Improvement, Crime and Outrage (Ireland) Bill, Debtor and Creditor, Health of Towns, Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) and Malmesbury Corporation.
11. Form of Petition for the removal of Jewish Disabilities.
12. Pamphlet in defence of Jewish Emancipation being a reply to an address by the Earl of Winchelsea, 1848, written by "One of the People".
13. Pamphlet and letter, "A free enquiry into the policy of admitting the Jews into Parliament and full participation

in the advantages, honours and privileges of British Denizens viewed as regards religion, justice and expediency" by Francis Higginson 1848; letter 22 January 1848.

14. Tract on the progress of Jewish Emancipation since 1829, 15 January 1848. A short summary of measures introduced into Parliament "for the removal of civil disabilities of English men professing the Jewish religion" as "so much misconception exists as to the nature" of those measures. (3 copies)
15. A speech delivered in the House of Commons on 16 December 1847 by the Right Honourable Lord John Russell in favour of the removal of Jewish Disabilities.
16. "A Bill intituled An Act for abrogating the Oath of Abjuration and the Assurance" 1855.
17. Addresses of the Liberal candidates to the electors of the City of London 1852, J. Russell, Lionel de Rothschild and James Duke each standing again for election.
18. Humble petition of the inhabitants of the borough of Marylebone to the assembled Parliament that Jews may be allowed to sit in Parliament.
19. Division list of the House of Commons on the Jewish Disabilities Bill. Sessions 1847, 1848, 1849 and relative motions in 1850 and 1851.
20. Division list of the House of Lords for the second reading of the Jewish Disabilities Bill 1848.
21. Division list of the House of Lords for the third reading of the Jewish Disabilities Bill 1848.
22. Division list of the House of Commons for the reading of the Jewish Disabilities Bill in 1847. Contains numerous hand written abbreviations and Comments. (2 copies)

23. "Substance of a speech on the motion of Lord John Russell for a committee of the whole house, with a view to the removal of the remaining Jewish Disabilities; delivered in the House of Commons, on Thursday, December 16, 1847. Together with a preface. By The Right Honourable W.E. Gladstone, M.P. for the University of Oxford."

24. Pamphlet "on the proscriptions and persecutions of the Jews with reflections on religious proscriptions by M. Bigon, late member of the chamber of deputies for the department of L'Eure. Translated from the French by a lady with an introductory preface and explanatory notes" 1848. First published in original form in 1821.
25. Draft copy of tract on the progress of Jewish Emancipation since 1829.



**An example of
a Division list, House
of Lords (item 20 left)**

The Budapest Chain Bridge

Amelie Lanier, author of a book on the Viennese banker, Georg Sina, recalls the building of a landmark which links Sina to his arch-rival Salomon von Rothschild

*The pontoon
bridge across the
Danube, for
centuries the
only link between
Buda and Pest
(Duna Muzeum,
Esztergom)*



The building of the Chain Bridge which connects Buda to Pest is first and foremost connected with the name of Count Istvan (Stephen) Széchenyi (1791-1860), remembered today by his fellow countrymen as the “Greatest Hungarian”. His father Ferenc (Francis) had already distinguished himself by his patriotic convictions and deeds; his name is connected with the foundation of the Hungarian National Library, for example. At the beginning of his career, Istvan led the typical life of a Hungarian nobleman of his time: he joined the army and lived a lavish and rather superficial life in the palaces and ballrooms of Vienna and Budapest. But in the early 1820s he began to change his attitude towards society, under the influence of two people he came to know at the time: his future wife, Crescentia von Seilern, and the cleric Stanislaus Albach. The latter impressed upon Széchenyi the idea that God had chosen every man to fulfil a special task in life. Széchenyi’s love for Crescentia, whom he wanted to convince of his worth, led to his choice of a life’s work: to become the benefactor of Hungary by modernising it in every possible sphere and to raise it to the level of other, more developed European countries. His model was England, and this it remained till the end of his life.

Hungary's historical position

Through marriage the Austrian emperor's family, the Habsburgs, had had claims on Hungary since the death of the last Hungarian king, Lajos, in the Battle of Mohács, fought against the Turks in 1526, had led to the collapse of the Hungarian kingdom. Until the peace of Szatmár in 1711 – when the main allies of the last Hungarian claimant to the throne, Ferenc Rákóczi, acknowledged their defeat and with it the Habsburgians' right to the Hungarian throne – Austria exercised this dominion only in part of Hungary, mainly what is now Western Hungary and Slovakia. At this time, the capital (and the seat of the Palatine) of this Habsburgian rump Hungary was Pressburg, now Bratislava. After the defeat of the Turks, following the conquest of Buda in 1686 and the rout of Rákóczi's supporters, the Kuruc rebels, the whole of Hungary fell to the Habsburgs, though it retained its own feudal parliament and legislation. The formal autonomy of Hungary was acknowledged in the fact that the Austrian emperor was called 'king of Hungary' and his rule was exercised by a representative – usually a member of the Imperial family – the Palatine.

The Danube

At the end of 1820, Széchenyi had travelled west from his regiment in Eastern Hungary where he was serving as a cavalry captain, to attend the funeral of his father on the family's estate in Western Hungary, not far from Sopron. When he reached Pest, he was unable to cross the river.

The Danube often froze completely. In winter the ice was thick enough for people to walk across from Pest, the emerging commercial centre of Hungary, to the city of Buda, the traditional political and administrative centre of the country. Buda was then the seat of the Palatine of Hungary (equivalent to a Viceroy of Austria).

In summer the connection between Buda and Pest consisted of a pontoon bridge. Boats were moored side by side on the water and boards laid across them, joined together by thick ropes. The passengers who used this bridge had to pay a toll to the authorities of the two towns which maintained it. This type of bridge, then quite common all over Europe, was not without its disadvantages: when it was in use, it blocked the river. Ships wanting to pass up or downstream had to wait until the bridge was opened at regular intervals in order to proceed with their journey. As steam-driven ships started to appear on European rivers and coastlines it became clear that this would be a severe and growing nuisance in the future.

But the much more important disadvantage of this kind of bridge lay in the fact that, when the Danube started to freeze in autumn or when the ice broke in the spring, the bridge could not be used. Ice floes broke loose and floated down the river, making it very dangerous to cross by boat. In effect, there were two lengthy periods each year when communication between the two towns was impossible or at least extremely unreliable. This state of affairs sometimes led to disagreeable surprises. One famous incident occurred in 1800 at the time of the marriage of Joseph, then Palatine of Hungary and brother of the Austrian Emperor Francis. More than a thousand guests from Pest who had crossed the river on the ice were trapped for several days in Buda when the ice began to break up in the night.

Széchenyi arrived at a time when the ice floes made the crossing of the river extremely dangerous. He had to search for days to find a fisherman willing to risk his life (in exchange for a considerable sum of money) to take him to the other side. It is said that, while crossing the Danube between the ice floes, Széchenyi decided that a fixed bridge had to be built here.

National and social aspirations for the bridge

Széchenyi's vision extended beyond the simple building of a bridge linking Buda with Pest. Firstly, he planned that it would create a real capital for Hungary by making the two towns unite and grow as one. Secondly, it would unite the country and create a consciousness of Hungary as a nation. People would extend their feelings of belonging beyond their own village, town or county. They would start to feel responsible for things happening in other parts of Hungary. They would be able to move around more freely and frequently in the country they lived in, acknowledging it as their own. For this reason in general Széchenyi considered the building and maintenance of roads and railroads and the development of steam boat transport the most important challenge of his political career. The bridge was only a part of his imagined system of 'means of communication'.

*The chain bridge,
designed by William
Tierney Clark,
completed and
opened in 1849
(Duna Múzeum,
Esztergom)*

The third and final purpose was to introduce taxation of the nobility. In other parts of the Austro-Hungarian empire, taxation of the nobility had been introduced during the reign of Maria Theresia, but for a number of reasons she decided not to impose it in Hungary. The Hungarian nobles clung jealously to this privilege and defended it at all costs. This exemption also extended to tolls, even to the tolls on the traditional pontoon bridge.

The financial planning for the bridge was based on the payment of tolls on its use - tolls to be paid by everyone, without regard to origin or rank. After years of lobbying, Széchenyi succeeded, in 1836, in persuading the Hungarian Diet to pass a law stating that, exceptionally and only on this bridge, the nobles would also have to pay a toll.

The financing of the bridge

The move to establish a future return on investment in the shape of tolls was necessary in order to attract a businessman willing to undertake the financing of the bridge through the medium of a joint stock company. This was the first real joint stock company in Hungary, founded in 1838, and only after it came into being was a law on joint stock companies passed in the Diet in 1840. The man who organised the company was a Viennese banker of Greek descent, Georg Sina.¹

Széchenyi probably turned to Sina because he thought he had more interest in the prosperity of Hungary than the Rothschilds or other Viennese bankers. Sina, being a Christian, had been elevated to the Hungarian nobility, which gave him the right to buy land. By the beginning of the 1830s he had already accumulated large estates in Hungary. Furthermore, at this time he was the sole supplier of Hungarian tobacco to the Austrian Tobacco Monopoly.²

Széchenyi may have judged the Rothschilds – possible alternatives to Sina – to be too close to Metternich and the Austrian government. Metternich placed great trust in Salomon: after all they were both Germans and Salomon had acted as something of a personal financier to him. But Metternich's feelings towards Hungarians was well known: he resented their legal and political autonomy.

Of other prominent Viennese bankers, Geymüller was already in decline, and therefore perhaps less willing to invest in anything substantial. Arnstein and Eskeles had been Széchenyi's bankers at one time, but had once turned him down when he asked for credit. The feudal laws of Hungary protected the debtor against the creditor, enabling them to delay indefinitely the repayment of a debt and even the payment of interest. This led to a series of abuses by Hungarian noblemen (though in complicity with some Austrian politicians and various suspect characters), to the detriment of Austrian creditors. The Arnstein and Eskeles banking house had itself been involved in some of these manoeuvres and therefore did not choose to risk its reputation further by giving credit to Széchenyi. After a passionate protest he was finally granted





*Count István
Széchenyi
(1791-1860)*

credit, but the affair gave him cause for thought. It may have been this episode which led him to write his book *Hitel* (Credit), which appeared in 1830. It also, no doubt, persuaded him to take this new business to Sina's bank.

These four banking houses had exclusive access to state loans and credit from the National Bank. All other bankers in the Empire depended upon them in one way or another, as did those in Prague. There was really no-one who could rival them. In Budapest, apart from Jews, there were Greek bankers and others of German nationality, but most of them managed only very small businesses. Many of these businesses were probably not completely legal, being often connected to smuggling, usury and the issue of or trade in papers of doubtful value. Samuel Wodianer and Moritz Ullmann (the initiator of the Hungarian Central Railroad, and a fierce enemy of Sina) were perhaps a little bigger than the others, but their eventual ascent into the ranks of powerful merchants and infrastructural investors was owed to Rothschild in the case of Ullmann and Sina of Wodianer.

In 1836 or 1837 Salomon von Rothschild could not have known that Georg Sina would later, in 1840, complain bitterly to Széchenyi in a private letter that, "never would I have undertaken the building of the Pest-Ofen bridge if you had not persuaded me to do it ..." ³ Rothschild was evidently convinced that he had been excluded from a profitable enterprise and began to intrigue, lending his support to some of the many enemies of the project in Hungary. The Jewish banker Wodianer, from Pest, was his special ally and he and several other businessmen from the town contracted another architect to provide a lower estimate than Széchenyi had secured from his chosen architect. (As it later turned out, both costings were far removed from reality). In the end Sina could only resolve the situation by granting a portion of the stock to Wodianer and Rothschild, thus giving them a share in the enterprise. Each took a participation of a sixth of the total stock capital of 5 million florins, equivalent to about half a million pounds sterling.

Building the bridge

The condition of the river at this point demanded the use of a suspension bridge with just two supporting pillars. Any other construction would have required more pillars, between which the ice floes would be caught, forming a natural dam and causing flooding of the towns. After major flooding in Pest and Buda in 1838 it became clearer than ever to everyone that only a suspension bridge would be suitable here.

The architect chosen by Széchenyi and contracted by Sina was an Englishman, William Tierney Clark. Clark had built three other suspension bridges in England, the Hammersmith Bridge and the Marlow Bridge on the Thames, and the Norfolk Bridge in Old Shoreham across the Adur. The only one of these to survive in its original state is the Marlow Bridge, the others having been replaced by bridges with greater transport capacity.

The bridge was built between 1840 and 1849. In 1848, Széchenyi collapsed mentally and from then on never again appeared in public. The last stage of the construction took place during the revolution of 1848/49, under extremely difficult circumstances. Twice it was in danger of being blown up and it was damaged in the fighting. The construction was supervised by a Scotsman, Adam Clark, who later married a Hungarian



*Salomon von
Rothschild
(1774-1855)*

and stayed in the country. It was his achievement that the bridge was saved from destruction, and he, together with Sina and representatives of the Austrian Army, opened it shortly after the conquest of Buda and Pest when large parts of the two towns, mainly Pest, were in ruins:

“The Baron Georg Sina arrived here yesterday and, with his Excellency the Commander in Chief Baron Haynau and a tremendous suite accompanied by the Civil Governor Baron Geringer and the other authorities passed over and opened the Bridge today at 12 o’clock. There was no other ceremony and I must say it was with rather a sorrowful heart that I looked on all the strange faces and thought of how different matters would have been had our good and noble friend Count Széchenyi been spared to us ...”⁴

Thus the first bridge over the Danube was inaugurated. In the end it did fulfil most of the aspirations Széchenyi had vested in it, and it contributed to the unification and the dynamic development of Budapest. Nevertheless, the bridge was a huge financial burden. The stock did not sell well, so a vast amount of the cost, which far exceeded initial estimates, had to be borne by the three main entrepreneurs, Sina, Rothschild and Wodianer. Although initially Rothschild and Wodianer had forced their way into the enterprise, Széchenyi and Sina had good reason subsequently to be more than satisfied with their participation. For a while Rothschild and Wodianer shared the losses with Sina. The bridge only began to be profitable in the 1860s, years after the deaths of Salomon (1855) and Sina (1856). But, though the original privilege, granted to Georg Sina stated that his company could keep the tolls from the bridge for 87 years, the Hungarian government eventually opted to buy it and Simon, the son of Georg Sina conceded the arrangement. The bridge was nationalised in 1870. The collection of the tolls went on into the 20th century. The Chain Bridge still stands, the oldest bridge on the Danube. On the Buda bridgehead, a commemorative stone records its construction.

In the reign of King Ferdinand V, Count Istvan Széchenyi raised the idea of connecting the cities of Buda and Pest with a chain bridge. To realise this enormous task, the great patriot joined forces with Baron Georg Sina, who made a contract with Archduke Joseph, Palatine of Hungary and leader of the national deputation. This contract was ratified under the statute 39/1840. By virtue of this, Baron Salomon Rothschild and Samuel Jozsef Wodianer of Capriora also joined the enterprise. The construction was executed over ten years according to the plans of the English engineer, William Tierney Clark and his deputy, Adam Clark. The bridge was inaugurated for public traffic on 21 November 1849. May God bless this work, and may the memory of its founders never be forgotten in this country.

Amelie Lanier is a freelance researcher and historian based in Vienna. She is the author of Das Kreditwesen Ungarns im Vormärz (1995) and Die Geschichte des Bank- und Handelshauses Sina (1998).

NOTES

1. Amelie Lanier, *Die Geschichte des Bank- und Handelshauses Sina* (Peter Lang, 1998).
2. He owed this position to a man in the Austrian administration friendly to him. Later he lost the monopoly.
3. Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), Manuscript Department, K (Széchenyi Estate) 174/96.
4. Adam Clark’s letter to William Tierney Clark is to be found in the Kiscelli Museum in Óbuda.

Mayer Carl von Rothschild: collector or patriot?

Philippa Glanville explores the relationship between politics and art in one of the great Rothschild collections



Mayer Carl von
Rothschild
(1820-1886)

A rococo gold-mounted jug in Lisbon, a massive Neo-Gothic horn in London, a silver plaque chased with Christ's Baptism at the V&A, a double cup by Hans Petzolt, a towering Renaissance centrepiece in Amsterdam: all are striking examples of Continental goldsmiths' work, linked today by their 19th-century owner.

Mayer Carl von Rothschild, or Charles as his English relatives called him, was born in 1820, the eldest son of another Charles, Carl Mayer (1788-1855), the fourth of the Five Arrows, the five sons of Mayer Amschel of Frankfurt. His mother was Adelheid Herz, daughter of a Hamburg merchant, his wife Louise (1820-1894) was a London Rothschild, daughter of Nathan, the founder of the London bank. He enrolled at Göttingen university and heard Ranke's lectures on German history in Berlin, before serving a banking apprenticeship in London and Frankfurt. From the late 1830s he worked in the Frankfurt bank, experiencing political disturbances in 1848 and the threat of a Prussian invasion in 1866.¹

Mayer Carl von Rothschild's collection of almost five thousand works of art was set out in his Frankfurt house on the Untermainquai and his villa at the Gunthersburg, outside the town. German plate stood out among the Limoges enamels, gold boxes from Paris, Dresden and Vienna

and Italian hardstone cabinets. All were catalogued by the Frankfurt art historian Ferdinand Luthmer in the early 1880s. Mayer Carl's name recurs as an outstanding figure, even within a family of collectors. However, little is known about how and why he collected, and how much, apart from the cameos and portraits by Moritz Oppenheim, was inherited from his father Carl Mayer.²

Luthmer gave few objects any provenance, although lists made after Mayer Carl's death in 1886 refer to the London sale of the Duke of Hamilton's collection in 1882. Mayer Carl's star acquisition was the well-known Mother Earth table centre (Merkelsche Aufsatz), bought privately in 1880 (see p39). This extraordinary confection of silver gilt and enamel, commissioned from Wenzel Jamnitzer in 1548-9, a metre tall and bristling with foliage and flowers, was widely admired in 19th-century Germany. Its price to Mayer Carl was exceptionally high: "Man spricht von 800,000 Mark", whereas the new museum in Berlin had paid 666,000 marks for thirty-six items from the Luneburg civic plate in 1874. The German state was rumoured to be trying to buy the Jamnitzer piece in 1895, after the death of Mayer Carl's widow.³

In the European art market of Mayer Carl's youth, collectors took advantage of the upheavals of recent history to pick over "the remnants of ancient wealth and grandeur... some ten years after the tranquillisation of Europe, distracted by the long war of the French revolution ... Art-Treasures had been dispersed and gradually fell into the hands of dealers." As long-established institutions across Europe sold their possessions, at least three of the Five Arrows collected, particularly showy "curiosities" of goldsmiths' work such as Mayer Carl's shield-hung cup of a Weavers Guild. In 1807 D.V. Denon had seized for the Musée Napoléon in Paris striking German plate from the treasury at Hesse-Kassel. Richly worked old Portuguese and German buffet plate attracted William Beckford and the Dukes of Sussex, Cambridge and York. Garrards sold "old Nuremburg" silver, for dressing historicist interiors, to the Duke of Buccleuch.⁴

The King of Saxony decided to reorganise his Kunstkammer in 1832. An auction of clocks and automata from his famous Dresden collections followed in 1835, the likely source of several Rothschild figures and automata. Although we cannot say what he first bought and when, dealers



Cup in the form of a cat, silver, Augsburg, c.1600 (Château Mouton Rothschild)

‘Der Merkelsche
Tafelaufsatz’
by Wenzel
Jamnitzer, one of
the major pieces
in Mayer Carl’s
collection, now in
the Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam
(BK-17040)

were the essential intermediaries. In July 1842, two generations of male Rothschilds, Anthony (the second son of Nathan), Mayer Carl, Carl Mayer and Nathaniel called on the leading Nuremburg dealers, the house of Abraham, Siegmund and Max Pickert, the first of many contacts.⁵

His father Carl’s residence in Naples from 1821 presumably explains his cameos and intaglios, untypical of later Rothschild taste. Mayer Carl, however, sought out early German metalwork, particularly animal form, ivory-mounted, rare or richly chased pieces. He shared this taste with Lionel and Mayer in London well after the 1850s when it was becoming unfashionable.⁶

Glittering and reflecting the light, in fanciful shapes, embodying wealth, goldsmiths’ work exudes continuity and tradition. Massive buffets for old gilt plate featured at Carlton House in the Prince Regent’s Gothic Dining Room, at Burghley and in Hardwick’s Livery Hall at Goldsmiths’ Hall. So for the Rothschilds to create spectacular buffets, as at Mentmore, where a four-tier buffet ran the length of the dining room to deploy their gilt plate to best effect, was following this fashion. The Mentmore shelves were covered in figured velvet to match the wall-covering and “large cups, a big round dish, an owl and an equestrian figure” stood on side tables, reflected in mirrors.⁷ Mayer Carl bought costly German objects at least till 1880. As the art critic Rudolf von Eitelburg commented in 1876, “they did not bear any foreign character”. In this way he was identifying with the new Germany and distancing himself from his relatives’ prevailing French taste amid the nationalistic and aggressive Franco-German relations of the 1860s and 1870s. By 1860 he was Court Banker for Prussia, and was preoccupied with delicate financial negotiations with Bismarck.

When Frankfurt was threatened by a Prussian invasion in July 1866, the Gunthersburg was in the line of advance. 180 soldiers were quartered on the family; it was “lucky that the cows were not yet in their new stable, for it makes a capital barracks”, his wife wrote to her cousins in London, reassuring them that Charles was perfectly calm, although it was rumoured that he might be imprisoned. In fact, his relationship with Prussia became crucial with the enormous indemnity subsequently demanded from Frankfurt by the Prussians. His key rôle, assisted by generous contributions to a new city hospital, led to his almost unanimous election to the parliament of the North German Federation in 1867.⁸

Was Mayer’s appetite for German decorative arts stimulated by his rôle as negotiator for Frankfurt’s interests? Apart from Meissen porcelain, his houses contained medieval horns, spectacular Mannerist silver by the Jamnitzer family and the Lencker brothers, Gothic-revival double cups by Hans Petzolt, high-relief plaques by the Augsburg chaser Thelott, and Dinglinger “toys”, mounted rhinoceros, tortoiseshell, “unicorn” and mother of pearl from other German workshops.⁹

Visiting his Frankfurt cousins, Ferdinand wrote to Lionel on 13 September 1874, “I had not much time to look at the curiosities as Baron Charles was hungry... I cared less for his new purchases than for his former ones, which as you will remember are very fine.” His doubts were well founded as far as some of the Renaissance jewels and early mounted objects were concerned. By the time of the first sale of his objects, in Paris just before the First World War, tastes had changed and some of Mayer Carl’s pieces made far less than might have been anticipated twenty-five years earlier when his massive estate was divided.¹⁰

His Untermainquai house, a neoclassical structure of 1820/1 purchased in 1846, was almost doubled in length in a four-year campaign, to designs by Frederic Rumpf. His wife Louise wrote in July 1850, “our house is still very little advanced”, and a year later in September, “The house is not yet finished and work people are still hovering about ... some of the rooms are as comfortable as I can wish them to be.” Guests entered through a marble-lined entrance hall. The first-floor panelled blue Smoking Room and the white and gold Louis XVI Salon are now incorporated into the Frankfurt Jewish Museum which occupies the building. The walls were hung with family portraits, but apart



Plaque depicting
the Baptism of
Christ, embossed
and chased by
Johann Andreas
Thelott,
Augsburg,
1685, probably
made for a
house altar
(V&A,M470-1956)



from a Tischbein depicting the much-admired German, Goethe, in Rome, he had little interest in 19th-century paintings. Louise had her private picture gallery upstairs, a sitting room hung with portraits of her family by Mrs Robertson.¹¹

His wife's letters depict Mayer Carl as an absent figure, constantly travelling on business, for example to Constantinople to negotiate with the Sultan in 1847. Accustomed to the hospitality and assimilated atmosphere of her London home, she found the straitlaced life of her observant Frankfurt parents-in-law inimical. Until 1848, the restrictions on the civil liberties of the Jews in Frankfurt, even if less onerous than those of Prussia or Saxony, constrained their social activities. In July 1852 she was gloomy about "we poor Jews" and liberal principles: "Here they are retrograding as fast as possible". Four months later, "what a wretched place this is, how full of meanness and littleness, how totally devoid of all that ennobles the heart or enlightens the mind". "Charles resolutely refuses ever to leave his fireside and cigar in the evenings", she wrote after ten years of marriage, although they attended a series of evening lectures on German history together in 1857. "I own with a blush that they make me feel rather sleepy".¹²

In contrast, in 1860s London, easy social relations between Sir Henry Cole, director of the South Kensington Museum (now the V&A), and the English Rothschilds led to weekends at Mentmore, advice to Sir Anthony on the design of gates for Aston Clinton, and extensive loans from Lionel, Mayer and Anthony for a glamorous exhibition in 1862. But in Frankfurt the cultural atmosphere was much less open. Mayer Carl's preference for privacy may have played a part. Perhaps to play down speculation about his wealth, he refused to lend to a city exhibition, to Ferdinand's surprise, although Anselm in Vienna published a catalogue and lent to the newly established Museum für angewandte Kunst.¹³

Mayer Carl's Untermainquai house, as with Rothschild houses in Paris and London, set out decorative art in picturesque juxtapositions. More fragile or precious pieces were in showcases, following the practice of early collectors of "curiosities" in France and England.¹⁴

A showcase of old plate appears in the 1838 Frankfurt family portrait of Mayer's cousin, Anselm. In the early 1840s his father Salomon set up a cabinet of curiosities in his new country house at Schillersdorf in Silesia, as Ferdinand and his brothers were to do in their respective houses. At Waddesdon, Ferdinand first set up a private *salle des curiosités* in the Tower Room, creating his famous Smoking Room only in the 1890s. A large vitrine in the Red Drawing Room of his London house, 143 Piccadilly, contained £50,000-worth of *objets d'art*.¹⁵

However, Mayer Carl took a significant step beyond these two forms of display. Much of his old German gilded plate was set out formally in free-standing cases in three "museum rooms" at the Untermainquai residence, open to the public and described in a long newspaper article in 1890. These "museum rooms", facing the garden, grouped objects broadly by materials. Large free-standing porcelain jars brought colour and bulk to contrast with the rectangular and heavy wooden-framed cases. There were no labels, and no printed catalogue, which, along with its restricted weekly opening hours, three in winter and six in summer, was the explanation offered in 1890 for its being so rarely visited. Ferdie's comment that "the cups and groups are crowded together in large glass cases and it is almost impossible to see them" suggests that it lacked a sense of happy placement.¹⁶

Mayer Carl died in 1886 leaving a widow and six daughters. His will echoes his father's in differentiating his personal collections as distinct from family records, decorations and heirlooms. In a lengthy codicil of 1854, Carl Mayer had specified as heirlooms for Mayer Carl his "ancient coins and modern medals in my iron chest" and his collection of cameos, while his antique time-pieces and snuff boxes should be divided by lot. In the 1880s, his son specified that his daughter Hannah Louise was to receive her grandfather's "old coins, new medals and numismatic books." But his main collection was divided by Luthmer and five executors between the widow and three daughters. "Silver from Germany" is the phrase used fifty years later in 1935 in Emma, Lady Rothschild's inventories (she was the second daughter), to distinguish the separate bequest from her father. His decorations and orders, displayed prominently by his eldest daughter, Adèle, in her rue Berryer reception room in Paris, are in a table case beneath the extraordinary foursquare St. Hubert Tazza (created by Vasters in the 1870s), recalling a glorious German past, both personal and artistic.¹⁷

From pride in his faith and his family, he excluded his daughter Margarethe from all but her legal obligatory portion of his estate, because she had married a Frenchman, the Duc de Guiche (later Duc de Gramont) in 1878, the year that Hannah, Mayer's daughter at Mentmore, "married out", to the Earl of Rosebery. "He objects to a Catholic, he objects to a Frenchman, he objects to a widower, he objects to a moderate fortune.... excepting a Rothschild, he would object to any living man." Lacking a son, he left his inherited family portraits to Adèle, the eldest, who had married Salomon James, son of the great Baron James and Betty, and moved to Paris; and to Hannah Louise, who stayed at home, his father's "old coins, new medals and numismatic books", plus his own decorations and orders. His art works were split between his widow and three of the daughters.¹⁸

His daughters Adèle and Emma showed their inherited collections in rooms of entertainment. In Paris, Adèle devised a *salle des curiosités* opening off the Smoking Room. Her double-height central hall was dressed with trophies of arms and two wall-cases containing Venetian glass and Limoges enamels, flanked by wall-mounted dishes of maiolica, a technique adopted for her father's large gilt dishes in the main first-floor Salon.

At Tring the showcases were recessed into panelling and the objects arranged singly for maximum dramatic impact, whereas Adèle in Paris preferred a crowded and rich effect. Her French 18th-century furniture was overlooked by a massive and unornamented showcase, some five metres long, crammed with

Two interior views of rue Berryer showing the St Hubert Tazza (left) and the massive display cases (right)



more than a hundred examples of goldsmiths' work. Medieval and Renaissance vessels were flanked by four shelves of paired nautilus shells, carved ivory, tankards and pear and gourd cups, with Vincennes porcelain flower groups above and Sèvres vases and clocks on the base. Smaller cases flanked the doorways. Elsewhere, table-cases stood between the sofas and armchairs, filled with boxes, *nécessaires* and other "toys".¹⁹

For Mayer Carl, his German plate evoked the proud histories of the cities of the Holy Roman Empire. The Renaissance was seen as a national art movement. The Free City of Frankfurt, the place of crowning of the Holy Roman Emperor, and the city chosen for the abortive meeting of the German princes in 1863, resonated with both historical and contemporary significance. His ambition was to bring together the best that the market could yield of this national treasure. In this he succeeded magnificently. When the collection was reviewed in 1890, the comparison was with nothing less than the German goldsmiths' work in the princely treasuries of Dresden, Munich, Hesse-Kassel, Vienna and Moscow.



Detail of the table centrepiece by Wenzel Jamnitzer from *Der Schatz des Freiherrn Karl von Rothschild*, *Meisterwerke alter Goldschmiedekunst*, edited by Ferdinand Luthmer 1883

Philippa Glanville was Chief Curator of the Metalwork, Silver and Jewellery Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum, and Academic Director of Waddesdon Manor until 2003. Her publications include Silver in England (1987) and Elegant Eating: Four Hundred Years of Dining in Style (2002).

NOTES

1. My warm thanks to the staff of The Rothschild Archive for sharing sources, particularly the letters of Louise von Rothschild and testamentary documents for Carl Mayer and Mayer Carl von Rothschild. N.Ferguson: *The World's Banker*, London 1998, passim; G.Heuberger (ed.): *The Rothschilds: A European Family*, Frankfurt Jewish Museum 1994, pp.179-181. Frankfurt was turbulent in the 1830s and 1840s, with "hep-hep" anti-Jewish riots in 1830 and 1834 and occupation by German Confederation troops from 1833 until 1842. British Envoys to Germany, Camden Soc. 5th series, vol.21 (2002), e.g. (p.51) Cartwright to Palmerston, 7 May 1833: "Mr Rothschild and a dozen or so of the chief bankers and merchants.....so alarmed by the cry of an approaching Revolution and general pillage".
2. F.Luthmer: *Der Schatz des Freiherrn Karl von Rothschild*, Meisterwerke alter Goldsmiedekunst aus dem 14-18 Jahrhundert, Frankfurt- am-Main 1885. For example, objects from his collection are in the Ashmolean Museum, Germanisches National Museum, Schroder Collection, Bayerisches National Museum and elsewhere. Ten items of metalwork are in the European Department, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. A Gothic revival double cup by Petzolt (Luthmer, pl. 47) was sold at Christies London, 11 June 2003. Cameos and boxes were sold at Sothebys London, 12 Dec 2003, lots 1-13, 42-44. The Smoking Room at Waddesdon epitomises his taste: Waddesdon Companion Guide, 2003, pp100-107.
3. The Rothschild exhibition in 2008, curated by Kathy Hiesinger of the Philadelphia Museum, will assess collecting by the Five Arrows, so far the least-documented Rothschild generation. Ferdinand de Rothschild cited some provenances for the Smoking Room "curiosities", essentially his bequest to the British Museum (Waddesdon Archive). The Paris-mounted jug, after a design by F. Boucher, was bought by the dealer Wertheimer at the Hamilton Palace sale: "Only the Best": Masterpieces of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1999, no.52; M.Hall: "The English Rothschilds as Collectors" in *The Rothschilds: A European family* (op.cit). For discussion of the 19th-century significance of the Jamnitzer centrepiece, now in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, see Wenzel Jamnitzer, Germanisches National Museum, Nuremberg 1995, pp.192-7. Ferguson converts the figure to £32,000, p.362. Guide to Berlin Museums, n.d.(c1990) pp.172-3; German newspaper cutting, 1895 (part of microfilm in The Rothschild Archive of a collection in the Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek, Frankfurt: RAL 000/838).
4. Art Journal 1856, cited in C. Wainwright: *The Romantic Interior: The British Collector at Home 1750 to 1850*, London 1989, p.293; S.Herman & J.Pascal, Mouton Rothschild: *The Museum of Wine in Art*, Paris 2003, p.157; Die Silberkammer der Landgrafen von Hessen-Kassel, Staatliches Museum Kassel, 2003, p.20; P.Glanville: "Boughton silver" in T.Murdoch (ed.): *Boughton House, The English Versailles*, London 1992.
5. J.Schardin: "History of the Horological Collections in Dresden" in *Antiquarian Horology*, Autumn 1991, vol.19, no.5, p.503; automata with a Rothschild provenance include: H.Tait: *The Waddesdon Bequest*, vol.2, 1988, p.260; Neptune on a turtle, sold Sothebys London, 26 April 1937, lot 164 (Victor Rothschild sale); and two Buttenmänner, Mouton Rothschild (one from Mayer Carl's collection, unpublished Mouton inventory), op. cit. p.63. My thanks to Norbert Jopek, Senior Sculpture Curator, V&A, who is preparing a full analysis of the Pickert 1832-1900 visitors book, to be published in the *Anzeiger der Germanischen Nationalmuseums*.
6. C.Davis: *A Description of the Works of Art...of Alfred de Rothschild*, vol 2, Sèvres China, Furniture, Metalwork and Objets de Vitrine, London 1884 and E.A Jones: *Catalogue of the Old Plate of Leopold de Rothschild*, London 1907; Earl of Rosebery sale, Sothebys London, 11 February 1999.
7. Tafelzeremoniell in Europa 1300-1900, Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin 2003, "Kredenz und Buffet" pp.143-7; P.Glanville, *Silver in England*, London 1987, pl.113, 114; Wainwright, op.cit., pl.253; P. Prévost-Marcilhacy: *Les Rothschild, bâtisseurs et mécènes*, Paris 1995, p.116. My thanks to Lady Rosebery for sharing memories of Mentmore, including "the Siamese cat delicately threading its way between cups, plates and figures" on the buffet shelves.
8. Cited in Wenzel Jamnitzer catalogue, op.cit., p.198; Ferguson, op.cit., pp.634-5.
9. Luthmer op.cit., passim; Waddesdon Companion Guide 2003, p.103.
10. Ferdinand's letters, The Rothschild Archive (RAL) 000/26; designs for Reinhold Vasters of Aachen's neo-Gothic horn and St. Hubert Tazza are at the V&A, see C.Truman: "Reinhold Vasters, 'the last of the goldsmiths?'" in *Connoisseur*, March 1979, p.161; Y.Hackenbroch: "Reinhold Vasters, Goldsmith" in *Metropolitan Museum of Art Journal*, vol. 19/20, 1984/5, passim; 'Les moulages...du restaurateur Alfred Andre (1839-1919)' in A.Kugel: *Joyaux Renaissance, une splendeur retrouvée*, Paris 2000, unpaginated; Galerie Georg Petit, Paris 12-13 June 1911, Orfèverie Allemande Pierre Dures Montis provenant de L'ancienne collection de Feu M. le Baron Carl Meyer de Rothschild (de Francfort).
11. P.Prévost-Marcilhacy, op.cit., pp.303-5. A photograph of her Green Salon around 1880 is reproduced as p.33, R.Burgard et al.: *Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt am Main*, Frankfurt, 1989.
12. Letters from Louise, 1841 to 1879, The Rothschild Archive, RAL 000/41/1: 1 Dec 1857.
13. Sir Henry Cole's diaries are in the National Art Library, V&A (my thanks to Elizabeth Bonython for sharing her references to the Rothschilds); A.Burton: *Vision and Accident, The Story of the Victoria & Albert Museum*, London 1999, pp.66-7; seven Rothschilds lent to the Art Wealth of England exhibition; Ferdinand's letter to Lionel, The Rothschild Archive, RAL 000/26; Dr F.Kunth: "Anselm von Rothschild, collector" in *Rothschild Archive Review* 2001/2, pp.37-41; F.Schestag: *Kunstsammlung des Freiherrn Anselm von Rothschild in Wien*, Vienna 1866.
14. Prévost-Marcilhacy, op.cit., pp.223-6; Wainwright, op.cit. pp.121-4 and passim; M.Baker & B.Richardson: *A Grand Design*, Abrams/Baltimore Museum of Art 1997, pp.30-1
15. Prévost-Marcilhacy, op.cit. pp.251-3; M. Hall: *Waddesdon Manor*, Abrams 2002, p.138; 1890 Alliance Insurance policy on Waddesdon at The Rothschild Archive, RAL 000/110.
16. *Intelligenz Blatt der Stadt Frankfurt a.M.*, Sunday 16 March 1890 (microfilm in The Rothschild Archive of a collection in the Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek, Frankfurt: RAL 000/838); Ferdinand letter to Lionel, 13 September 1874, The Rothschild Archive, RAL 000/26.
17. The Rothschild Archive holds the English codicil to Carl Mayer's will, 1854, RAL 000/105, and inventories of the Piccadilly and Tring houses taken on the death of Emma, Lady Rothschild, 1935, RAL 000/848.
18. Letters of Louise, 26 June and 21 July 1878; typescript analysis of his testamentary intentions, The Rothschild Archive, RAL 000/41.
19. Prévost-Marcilhacy, op.cit. p.229; Waddesdon Archive: inventory taken by C.Davis after Ferdinand's death, 1898

New Boundaries: Baron Lionel, photography and the United Kingdom Electric Telegraph Company¹

Anthony Hamber finds a surprising Rothschild place in the history of photography



'A post under
the railway
bridge at Acton'
(BL8753.dd.10:
photo 'No.1')

At the Buckinghamshire Lent Assizes held in Aylesbury in 1861, a court case brought by Baron Lionel Nathan de Rothschild (1808–79) against the United Kingdom Electric Telegraph Company (UKETC) and the Commissioners of the Metropolis Turnpike Roads north of the Thames was heard. The Bill of Complaint was filed on 25th May, 1861. The charge against the UKETC was the nuisance and obstruction being caused by the company's erection of telegraph poles along the verge of the public highway. In addition the Commissioners of the Metropolis Turnpike Roads north of the Thames were accused of exceeding their powers in giving permission to the UKETC to carry out this work, whereas in fact the commissioners should have been acting to stop the nuisance and obstruction. The 'true Bill' for this case was found in December 1861 and it thus went to trial at Aylesbury Crown Court in Spring 1862.

This case was to be significant in a number of respects. Firstly the case and its judgement formed an important piece of case law that is still actively cited today², and, secondly, it included one of the earliest uses of photography as a piece of evidence. *Halsbury's Laws of England*, quotes this case of Regina v United Kingdom Electric Telegraph Company in 1862 as the earliest date for



**'A post under
the railway
bridge at Acton'
(BL8753.dd.10:
photo 'B')**

the use of photographs being 'admissible to prove ... the configuration of land as it existed at a particular moment'³ However, the case report for this does not give an indication that the use of photographs was in any way out of the ordinary.⁴ This article examines the context of the case and the album of photographs now in the British Library that accompanied it and highlights an intersection between a number of business and personal interests of the Rothschilds.

The British Library holds a single bound volume containing two 'sets' of Albumen print photographs together with a copy of the printed Bill of Complaint. The contents of this volume were presented to the Library and accessioned in 1863, a year after the case had been tried at Aylesbury Crown Court. Unfortunately, the Library's records do not mention the source of this acquisition.⁵ However, the top right hand corner of the first fly page to the volume has an ink stamp of Wilson, Bristows & Carpmael and it would seem that this firm of solicitors, which acted on behalf of Lionel de Rothschild in this case, donated the volume. Research carried out in the surviving Bristows archive gives no further clues to its origins.⁶

The contemporary accounts of the court case are significant since Lionel de Rothschild does not seem to have been alone in using photography. Foster & Finlason *Nisi Prius Reports 1858-1867* states that "Photographic views of all the posts complained of were produced by both sides, and referred to by the Court and jury, in explanation of the evidence on the examination and cross-examination of the witnesses for the prosecution." Evidence was taken from a number of workmen who had erected the posts and a surveyor who was perhaps recorded in a number of Rothschild's photographs.⁷ This information, coupled with an examination of the photographs, has enabled the two separate sets used by the protagonists to be identified. It reveals a significant degree of sophistication in the manner in which photography was exploited to prove or disprove the claims of Lionel de Rothschild.

There are fifty-five Albumen prints sequentially numbered '1' to '55' each pasted to individual sheets of card with printed sequential numbers and captions.⁸ Each image measures around 29.2 cm high and 22.9 cm wide. Together they cover a route from Acton, on the western

edge of London, to Long Itchington, five miles east of Royal Leamington Spa in Warwickshire, and cover a distance of around 135 miles. These are the photographs used by the plaintiff, Lionel de Rothschild.

There is a further set of twenty-four Albumen prints, with hand-written lettering A to X and accompanying manuscript captions. These images, measuring approximately 17.7cm high by 20.3 cm wide, are pasted to individual sheets of card, and have handwritten labels. This set of images covers the same route, though it starts in Shepherds Bush, West London and ends at the Harp Inn near Southam. This is the set of photographs used by the defence, the UKETC.

A number of the photographs in the Rothschild set are annotated on the mount in red pencil with the letter of the corresponding UKETC image of the same location. This may have been to aid Rothschild's barristers in preparation for the case and in court itself. Some additional annotations seem to indicate that a post or prop has been removed, perhaps between the photographs being taken and the case being heard in court. However these annotations are difficult to decipher.

The creation of these sets of photographs was a sizeable photographic commission and required a not inconsiderable piece of organisation to travel along many miles of public highways documenting appropriate views to prove or disprove the legal point regarding the 'public nuisance' caused by the alleged obstruction by telegraph poles. One may presume that the photographers documented the then current state of the UKETC's telegraph and that by the time the case was heard in court changes may have occurred. Whether more photographs were taken but not used as part of the legal evidence has yet to be deduced. Both sets of photographs are anonymous and ultimately the search to identify the photographers may prove to be a fruitless task. A photograph album in The Rothschild Archive linked to Charlotte de Rothschild (1819-1884), Lionel's German first cousin whom he married in 1836, includes five photographs of the Rothschild house at Gunnersbury.⁹ One exterior view in the album, of the Orangery at Gunnersbury, probably dating to around 1860, has an enigmatic detail of the head and shoulders portrait of a man. The image has an annotation 'O.G. Rejlander and his head on a tree'. This man is allegedly the photographer Oscar Rejlander (1817-1875). To date there is no evidence that Rejlander took the photographs of Gunnersbury in this Rothschild album. However, if he did, and these images date to around 1861, then there is a possible – but yet to be substantiated – link to the photographs used by Lionel de Rothschild in the court case against the UKETC.

Of more significance is the fact that the two photographers frequently documented the very same site but – as will be discussed below – in different styles that would aid their clients' cause.

The origins of this case lie both in the great threat that telegraph technology was seen to pose to the Rothschild business and a more personal dimension. During the 1850s, following the 1851 United Kingdom Electric Telegraph Company's Act, Baron James de Rothschild (1792-1868) persistently stated that the telegraph was 'ruining our business'. As Niall Ferguson has pointed out 'it made it much easier to do what the Rothschilds had managed so ingeniously before, namely to conduct financial business between affiliated house over long distances.'¹⁰

The UKETC was proposed in 1850 by Thomas Allam. though it did not become operational until 1860 when the necessary capital had been raised. The company was formed with the expressed intention of developing telegraph communication in Britain over public highways and it came to an agreement with the Grand Junction and other canal companies to use their towpaths for its telegraph lines. The core of its network was to be a telegraph between London, Birmingham,



'Posts, with men at
work, in Banbury'
(BL8753.dd.10:
photo 'No.39')

and Liverpool. The company went fully operational in 1863.¹¹ The UKETC posed a specific threat to the Rothschild business since it was also the first telegraph company to introduce a fixed uniform charging rate over major trunk routes and in November 1861 announced that it would charge a fixed rate of 1s. for up to twenty words transmitted.¹² This simplified charging structure was popular with business users and was to be extensively used by banking interests in the City but it required that UKETC costs were kept low. The legal action taken by Lionel de Rothschild highlighted the attempts of the UKETC to reduce significantly its costs in constructing the telegraph network, digging trenches and laying cables being far more expensive to install and maintain than over-ground telegraph poles.

Lionel de Rothschild's claim was that the works being carried out by UKETC were extensive and would affect hundreds of miles of public roads, with the likelihood of permanent nuisance and obstruction in their construction and maintenance, and permanent effects upon the rights of users and owners. In November 1860 the UKETC had attempted to bring a bill to Parliament to confirm its powers to use telegraph poles rather than lay telegraph wires in trenches, but this failed.¹³ The Bill of Complaint paints a picture of the contractors working so fast that it had been difficult to prevent their actions. The contractors had been aggressive and threatened violence against those attempting to prevent the works. Thus, due to the 'supineness, connivance or indifference' of the Commissioners of the Metropolis Turnpike Roads north of the Thames, Rothschild, as the plaintiff, had had to go to court.¹⁴

However, Lionel de Rothschild had another specific personal reason for taking offence at the UKETC building a telegraph line on the verge of the road from Acton since it passed along the Uxbridge Road across the frontage of his property at Gunnersbury and had caused considerable annoyance and disruption.

The application of photography within legal cases relating to land boundary disputes dates to the very earliest years of the medium's existence, and this includes important international border disputes. Edward Anthony (1818-1888) a civil engineer turned photographer opened his Daguerreotype gallery in New York in 1842. He was employed by Professor James Renwick (1790-1863) of Columbia, New York to accompany him on a US Government mission to survey the northeast boundary of the United States with Canada. In 1838 Renwick had been appointed by the United States government as one of the commissioners for the exploration of the northeast boundary-line between the United States and New Brunswick. The specific area documented by Anthony was the border between the state of Maine and Canada. The Daguerreotypes taken by Anthony were submitted to the joint boundary commission of the US and British governments led by Secretary of State Daniel Webster (1782-1852) and the British Foreign Secretary Alexander Baring, 1st Baron Ashburton (1774-1848) and the photographic images are reported to have influenced the final decision that led to the signing of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty on 9th August 1842.¹⁵

A British precursor of the case brought by Rothschild can be found in the prosecution of the Pendleton Alum Works in Salford, on the western suburbs of Manchester in Lancashire. The owner of this factory, Peter Spence, had been brought to court on the charge of 'conducting an unacceptable nuisance at Pendleton'. Spence manufactured alum for the printing and dyeing industries but the factory had been emitting toxic waste products such as hydrogen sulphide and sulphuric acid. In the summer of 1857, the Manchester photographers James Mudd (1821-1906) and his brother Robert were commissioned to take eleven photographs as evidence for the Pendleton Alum Works indictment. A number of these photographs are dated 28th and 29th July 1857 though there are no records as to who actually commissioned them. The case was heard in the Summer Assizes of the Northern Circuit in Liverpool and commenced in August 1857. Although the court was certainly using a model as part of the evidence submitted, there is no indication of how the photographs were used.

The Mudd photographs, now in the Salford Local History Library, vividly show the stark outline of trees stripped of their foliage. A number of emotive images show the effects of the pollution in the foreground while the chimneys of the Alum works lurk in the background. The jury returned a verdict of guilty on the charge of the Pendleton Alum Works causing a nuisance, but declared as not proven the charge that the nuisance was injurious to health. The Pendleton works were closed down, and the business removed to Newton Heath, about half way between Manchester and Oldham.¹⁶

As pointed out above, the origins of Lionel de Rothschild's legal action probably lie in the fact that the UKETC, formed in July 1860, had constructed a new telegraph line along the boundary and across the entrance to the Rothschild residence on the Uxbridge Road in Gunnersbury. This was part of the UKETC project to establish an electric telegraph between London, Birmingham, Liverpool and other parts of its network. Nathan Mayer Rothschild (1777-1836) had acquired the Gunnersbury estate and its Regency mansion in 1835 as the Rothschilds' first country house and the family bought adjoining land in the 1840s and again in the 1860s. Gunnersbury was used as a venue for the Rothschilds' lavish entertaining and was to become the first Rothschild garden of significance in England and one of the most prominent in its day.



James Mudd. View
of Pendleton Alum
Works, July 1857
(Salford Local
History Library)

The Bill of Complaint stated that the UKETC had been digging a trench in front of Lionel de Rothschild's fence, and this soil belonged to him, although it was under the care and management of the Commissioners of the Metropolis Turnpike Roads north of the Thames. Trenches had gone under access roads to Lionel de Rothschild's property, rendering them dangerous and inconvenient and, for carriages, impassable. Furthermore, when the works were completed it would make it impossible for any new access roads to be built to the Rothschild property.¹⁷

The photographs used by the defence included a view – image 'C' – of the entrance to the Gunnersbury estate. The caption reads 'A part of Baron Rothschild's property at Acton which fronts the Uxbridge Road shewing the strip of land next to the palings under which the wires of the Electric Telegraph Company are fixed.' This image shows that the UKETC put the telegraph wires in a trench along the verge between the fence of Gunnersbury Park and the public highway. This was presumably to show that there was 'no obstruction' by telegraph poles on the land adjoining the front of Lionel de Rothschild's property. However, this ploy – perhaps undertaken once Lionel de Rothschild had made his initial complaint – had not prevented the court case and it may be significant that there is no Rothschild photograph of the damage to the access roads to his Gunnersbury estate.

Other photographs are also revealing. The photographer employed on behalf of Lionel de Rothschild adopted a photographic style that underlined the 'obstructive' nature of the telegraph poles. Frequently the shots are closely cropped so that a telegraph pole dominates the foreground. Conversely, the photographer for the UKETC took views with a wider perspective at an angle that tended to 'flatten' the telegraph poles against the background of the scene and thereby make them less obtrusive. A comparison of photographs 'B' and 'No.1' of the railway bridge at Acton (see p46) is a particularly stark example. In a number of instances the Rothschild photographer placed a figure or figures in direct juxtaposition with a telegraph pole to show the level of obstruction. In some instances the UKETC photographer took views that showed a figure walking 'unobstructed' along pathways beside the highway. A number of images are less explicit, such as the Rothschild image

'A post in
the middle of the
footpath just
beyond Uxbridge'
(BL8753.dd.10:
photo 'No.9')



'No.39' that is captioned 'Posts, with men at work, in Banbury' and shows a group of children gathered around the workmen installing the telegraph poles (see p51). This image reveals that the photographer had to make long camera exposures, because a number of children are blurred – having moved during the taking of the photograph. While it would have been quite possible for the photographer to have captured the children with a much shorter camera exposure the probable reason was that in order to give a sufficient depth of focus to the scene depicted the lens was closed down to its smallest aperture and that necessitated the long exposure times.

'A part of Baron
Rothschild's
property at Acton
which fronts the
Uxbridge Road
showing the strip
of land next to the
palings under
which the wires
of The Electric
Telegraph
Company are fixed'
(BL8735.dd.10:
photo 'C')



The key to the conclusion of this case emanates from the decision of the judge at Aylesbury Crown Court to direct the jury on a point of law, namely that if telegraph posts were within the fences of a road they constituted an obstruction whether they were on metalled road or grass verge or anywhere. This would make all defence on position of the post irrelevant. Counsel for the company took this point of law to the court of the Queens Bench as he could not therefore win at Aylesbury but the Queens Bench upheld the Judge's ruling. The UKETC had lost the case, a significant one for UK case law since the 'hedge to hedge' presumption at the heart of this case has been much discussed and quoted in subsequent roadway disputes. As attested by the case heard by Wiltshire County Council in 2001 'From the middle of the 19th century, there is a

consistent line of cases where the Courts hold that there is a presumption that a fence near to the highway has been erected by reference to the highway and that unless the presumption can be rebutted, everything between the fences, however irregular in width the verges are, is part of the highway. Most of these cases look back to *Regina v United Kingdom Electric Telegraph Company Limited*, heard at Buckinghamshire Lent Assizes in 1861.¹⁸ Lionel de Rothschild won his case against the UKETC and in so doing scored a victory against a threat to his commercial and private interests. Nevertheless, the Rothschild business subsequently adopted and adapted the use of telegraphy to further its cause. In both respects, new boundaries had been set.

Anthony Hamber is a photographic historian with ongoing research projects on mid 19th-century architectural photography and photographically illustrated publications published before 1880. His publications include A Higher Branch of the Art: Photographing the Fine Arts in England, 1839-1880 (1996).



Baron Lionel de Rothschild (1808-1879),
probably from a photograph

NOTES

1. I thank Melanie Aspey and Caroline Shaw of The Rothschild Archive, John Falconer of the British Library and Diana Connolly of Findtech for their help with the research into this 'album' of photographs in the British Library (BL shelfmark 8753.dd.10.).
2. The origins of this article are to be found in a search of the online British Library Public Catalogue and a subsequent search by the author of the Web that located *Burbage: Footpath 3 - objections to modification order, Wiltshire County Council, Environmental Services Sub-Committee, 5th September, 2001 Agenda Item No.14*, a case that cites *R. v United Kingdom Electric Telegraph Company* as well known case law.
3. *Halsbury's Laws of England, Volume 17*
4. I thank Roger Taylor for pointing out this case to me and Jenny Wetton of the Museum of Science & Industry in Manchester for pointing out this reference in Halsbury's and sharing her research findings in an unpublished writing on James Mudd.
5. BL shelfmark 8753.dd.10.accessioned '9MA 63'.
6. Diana Connolly of Findtech kindly examined the Bristow archives but found no records relating to this case.
7. Foster & Finlason Nisi Prius Reports 1858-1867 3 F & F 73
8. A full list of the images is available for inspection at The Rothschild Archive.
9. Rothschild Archive, 000/924. The album contains the bookplate of Leopold de Rothschild, son of Charlotte and Lionel de Rothschild.
10. Niall Ferguson, *The World's Banker: The History of the House of Rothschild*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London 1998 pp.573-574.
11. K. Beauchamp, *History of Telegraphy*, The Institution of Electrical Engineers, London, 2001 pp.78-79 and p.74. When the telegraph companies were nationalised to produce the Post Office in 1868 (Telegraph Acts (Great Britain) 1868-69) the UKETC was the third largest telegraph company in Great Britain.
12. *The Times*, Tuesday 19th November, 1861 p.7.
13. Bill of Complaint para 27 p.12 cites the details put before Parliament on 12th November 1860 in which it is stated that the UKETC would be given permission to 'erect, lay down, and maintain upon, over or under any street, road, or other highway, land, house or other building, posts, wires, pipes and other apparatus for the support and conveyance of telegraph wires.'
14. Bill of Complaint para 42 p.17.
15. Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene. A Social History, 1839-1889*, Macmillan Publishing, New York, 1938 p.52. I thank Alex Sweetman for pointing out this reference to me.
16. I thank Roger Taylor for pointing out this case to me.
17. Bill of Complaint, Para 19 p.9
18. opt cit., note 2

Cousins in Ceylon

Victor Gray and Ismeth Raheem explain a curious and lasting Rothschild connection with Sri Lanka

The Main Works
at the
Rothschild
Plantation,
Pussellawa
(W. Sabonadière:
The Coffee
Planters of
Ceylon, 1870)



The letters of Charlotte de Rothschild are among the gems of The Rothschild Archive. As the wife of Baron Lionel, head of N.M. Rothschild & Sons and a leading figure on the London financial and social scene, she was well placed to cast a knowing eye over the circle of prominent friends and acquaintances in which she moved. She used the opportunity with a style and wit verging often on the mischievous and occasionally on the acerbic.

On 24 October 1865, she wrote to her son Leopold at Cambridge:

“Dear Papa and your brothers were much startled yesterday by the arrival of Messrs. Gabriel and Maurice Worms. The elder brother has been quarter of a century in Ceylon, and is scarcely civilized in his appearance. Both brothers are very proud of having slaved from 4 o’clock in the morning and incessantly, during a quarter of a century to make money – but the elder of the tea-slaves is sixty-six years of age, and he really might have commenced somewhat earlier to enjoy life.”¹

With these two ‘scarcely civilized’ characters (she omits to acknowledge them in this letter as her cousins), Charlotte was brought into touch with a world far removed from her own and with a story which explains one of the more puzzling uses of the name Rothschild in the 21st century.

In 1841 the 36-year-old nephew of Nathan Mayer Rothschild, Maurice (born Moritz) Worms, set sail from London for the Far East. He was the youngest of three sons of Nathan’s eldest sister, Schöngé or Jeannette,

who had married in Frankfurt in 1795 Benedict Moses Worms (like Jeannette's father a merchant from the Judengasse). In his twenties, Maurice had come to London and become a successful member of the Stock Exchange. He must have been in regular contact with his uncle Nathan and his family.

What made Maurice take off for the East is unclear but a letter to his Rothschild cousins in London dated 31 May 1841 finds him in Colombo where he has already been for a month after a stay in Bombay. He was deeply impressed:

"Since my arrival I have made more journeys into the interior where I found it very beautiful and romantic, although rough and uncultivated. Nothing but impenetrable forest. You can only make your way on a horse and I needed 14 days to go 125 miles. You cannot imagine how fertile the country is, and how it is always surrounded with the most beautiful fruits, plants and leafy flowers, especially in the interior of the jungle."²

By July Maurice had moved on again, to Madras on his way to Calcutta and China, and in November and January he sent letters to the Rothschilds from Manila. But it was to Ceylon that he returned, seeing there a new and potentially profitable life for himself. He bought a substantial piece of land at Pussellawa, a district 24 miles south of Kandy on the road to the hill-station and sanatorium of Nuwara Eliya. He now invited his brother Gabriel to join him. Gabriel had been a merchant in Paris but after the July Revolution of 1830 had joined Maurice on the London Stock Exchange. Together, they now set up as G. and M.B. Worms.

The Ceylon to which they came had only been wholly under British rule since 1815. In 1833 a unified administration had been introduced and English declared the official language. At the same time land tenure had been changed to allow for private ownership and experiments began with the growing of coffee in the highlands around Kandy, given a new spur, first by the equalisation in 1835 of duty on West and East Indian coffee imported to Great Britain, and then by the dwindling of the West Indian supply. The brothers arrived amidst a boom. During 1841, when Maurice visited Ceylon, the sale of crown lands to would-be planters topped 78,000 acres, more than twenty times the level of 1837.³

Letters of introduction from the Rothschilds in London to high-ranking Government officials and influential personalities among the mercantile sector no doubt eased Maurice's path in settling down in Ceylon. They included introductions to the recently appointed Governor of the Colony, Sir Colin Campbell, and another newly arrived merchant, Henry Ritchie (a friend of Charles Hay Cameron, another investor in coffee plantations, and husband of of Julia Margaret Cameron, the famed Victorian photographer).

The thousand acres which he and Gabriel bought represented a promising investment and, although no evidence has yet been found, the fact that he chose to call this new estate Rothschild suggests that his London cousins had some part in the funding. The Rothschild plantation was big; the average coffee estate in Ceylon was under 200 acres. Indeed, with its neighbour, the Delta plantation, managed by the Sabonadière brothers, it was the largest on the island.

In these early years of the coffee boom it seemed that simply clearing the forest, digging a hole and planting a coffee bush was enough to guarantee success. Climate, soil and the market were all set fair. Between 1849 and 1869 coffee exports quadrupled to 835,000 cwt per year and the price virtually doubled.⁴

On the back of this ready market, the Worms brothers turned their already large estates into perhaps the most modern and productive unit on the island. The coffee beans were prepared and dried at the main works in Pussellawa before being dispatched by cart (and later by railway) to Colombo for shipping. The brothers divided their resources, Maurice managing the Rothschild estate and Gabriel basing himself at the company's offices, 19 Baillie Street in Colombo, handling sales and shipping and managing their dépôt in Grandpass.⁵



Maurice (above)
and Gabriel (below)
Worms

It is not, however, their highly successful coffee business for which the Worms brothers have entered the history of Sri Lanka and left their mark on its landscape.

In December 1839, just a year or more before Maurice's arrival in Ceylon, experiments were being made in the Royal Botanic Gardens at Peradeniya, just outside Kandy. A small batch of tea-seeds, sent from Assam in India, was sown. A few months later, 205 tea seedlings were also planted to assess how well they would do in Cingalese soil. In May of the same year, a number of young plants were sent off to the hill-resort of Nuwara Eliya to test their ability to weather the climate there.⁶ The government of the island had commissioned a report to look at the economic potential of this crop, urged on no doubt by the fact that earlier in that same year the very first commercial crop of tea from Assam had been sold on the London markets, breaking the centuries-old Chinese monopoly.

Almost twenty years after Maurice's death, a statement was made by his nephew, George,⁷ in a letter to *The Times*: "My late uncle Mr Maurice B. Worms brought the first tea-plants from China to *Ceylon* in September 1841, and formed a nursery of them on his estate at Pusellawa (vide Sir J. Emerson Tennent's *Ceylon*, Vol. 2 Chapter 7). Samples of the tea grown there were often sent by Mr M.B. Worms to friends in England and found to be excellent. Owing, however, to the objection of the importation of Chinese labour and to the then ignorance of the Cingalese as to the art of preparing tea, its cultivation remained for many years in abeyance."⁸

Sixty years after Baron de Worms' letter, Sir Thomas Villiers, in his *Mercantile Lore*, claimed that Maurice "brought [tea] cuttings [to Ceylon] from China and formed a small garden at Condegalle, Pussellawa, in September 1841. A Chinaman was imported as Teamaker, but the cost of tea made worked out at about £5 per lb".⁹

It is certainly true that Maurice's few surviving letters from 1841 confirm his intention to visit China on his Far Eastern tour and therefore that he may have returned to his new Ceylon estates with tea seedlings, even perhaps with a Chinese tea worker. It is also clear that news of the Worms' experiments got back to India for in 1845 a rather two-edged editorial appeared in *The Madras Crescent*:

"Our Ceylon friends are rejoicing in the cultivation of the tea plant, which has been imported by the house of Messrs. Worms into that island, and is said to be in a thriving condition, many young plants having been raised from the seeds of those originally introduced; and they anticipate that, ere long, tea may become another important branch of their colonial trade."

In a tone heavily protective of the Assam tea trade, the writer went on (ever so politely) to warn the brothers not to count their chickens: "Ceylon lies too far within the tropics to offer a climate like Assam, which lies without them; the plants may thrive to appearance, but that is not a demonstration of their quality.... The Ceylon planters should put the leaf to the proof before speculating on a large scale."¹⁰

It is clear that the brothers were involved very early on with experiments in tea-growing and indeed that they succeeded in moving beyond the simple experiment of trying to persuade tea bushes to flourish in Ceylon soil and actually reached the point of turning the shoots into drinkable tea, as witness the testimony of their nephew in England in the letter to *The Times* quoted above. Certainly they have come to be regarded as pioneers, if not, by some, the founding-fathers of the Ceylon tea-trade. But how far they moved on to attempt to make a commercial success of the venture we cannot, for the moment, say. The fact that, for the rest of their working life, it was coffee which was the mainstay of their estates, may speak for itself.

The Worms' working life in Ceylon lasted for two decades and was a story of considerable success. By the 1860s their original land-purchase had expanded into some twelve properties across the productive district, totalling over 7,000 acres.

The brothers also attempted to play a part in the civic life of the island but found themselves, in a curious parallel with their Rothschild cousins at home in England, faced with barriers against their Jewish background. In 1847 Gabriel Worms stood as a member of the Legislative Council, but, despite being elected, was denied his seat on exactly the same grounds as his cousin Lionel de Rothschild who, in the same year, stood for and won

one of the seats for the City of London. In both cases it was the inflexibility of the law, backed up by strongly restrictive conventions, which insisted that Jews should swear the standard oath of allegiance 'on the true faith of a Christian'. While Lionel was able, with the help of his friends and connections, to join battle successfully over the issue, Gabriel seems to have quietly accepted the rebuttal and retired from the fray. Lionel and his political friends eventually (after eleven years) won the battle; Gabriel, now in his 57th year, chose not to stand again.

Indeed, by that time, the brothers, now well entered into their fifties, may already have started considering their withdrawal from the business and a return to England. They made the move in 1862, putting the disposal of their assets into the hands of their bankers, the Oriental Bank Corporation. The sale of parts of their estates realised £157,000 and the core assets were acquired by a new firm, the Ceylon Company, launched in April 1862 on the London Stock Exchange. Though successful as a coffee producer this company was held back by loss-making estates in Mauritius and was finally brought down by the collapse of the Oriental Bank in 1892. Its assets were bought up by a new company, The Eastern Produce and Estates Co., the corporate descendant of which manufactures tea on the Rothschild Estate to this day.

The shift from coffee to tea production in Ceylon was a direct result of *hemileia vastatrix*, the coffee-rust disease, which increasingly ravaged the island's cotton crop from the late 1860s onward. The early experiments of the Worms' brothers and others had lacked commercial scale and the techniques for turning leaf into saleable tea, but during the 1860s, James Taylor, on an estate at Loolecondra (some 15 miles from Pussellawa), was working on both of these problems so successfully that, between 1870 and 1880 the acreages under tea in Ceylon increased from about 250 to 9,300 and by 1880 over 162,000lb of tea were being exported and coffee production had dwindled.¹²

All this lay (just) in the future when the Worms brothers eventually arrived back in England in 1865 and called upon their Rothschild relatives. It was then that Charlotte recorded her rather sharply edged impressions of the brothers. She soon warmed, if not to Maurice, at least to the chatty Gabriel:

"When we are tired of hearing about Ceylon, and his joyful excitement at being safe and sound in London after having spent a quarter of a century under a devouring sun, has subsided, he too may subside into an old humdrum gentleman, but at present, he is original and droll. His fifteen hundred coolies have neither bed-clothes to cover them, nor beds to sleep in, nor washing-apparatus, nor wearing apparel. They tie a rag round their loins, and own an earthenware vessel in which they boil their rice which is deducted from their earnings, and they do not amount to a sovereign a month...At Colombo five hundred native women clean and sort and pack the coffee berries. The cultivation of the estate and preparation of the coffee cost fifty-thousand pounds per annum, the profit being about ten thousand, but very often the heat is excessive and the crop fails so that there is a great loss. The planters used to rise at 1/2 past 3 in the morning, and go to bed at 9 - dress in white linen, live in terror of snakes and elephants - the former being disagreeable and sometimes poisonous, the latter laying waste with their enormous strides whole tracts of coffee fields. Mr. Gabriel Worms says that pine-apples are eaten by pigs and porcupines, and cost a farthing a piece - and that Ceylonese pearls are becoming rare and dear, having been much preyed upon by an enormous insect, which opens the maternal oyster, and eats the beautiful gem. The Anglo Indians have brought home for their four nieces four sapphire rings."¹³



The Barbecue,
or Drying Floor
at the Rothschild
Plantation
(Sabonadière)

How much of this was embroidery by Gabriel and how much by Charlotte it is impossible to say. Certainly, one feels, this was not the last time Gabriel would dine out on his Ceylon years.

Maurice seems to have retired quite soon to a suburban villa, The Lodge in Egham, from where he issued a series of letters to *The Times* in the spring of 1866 describing a cure for the rinderpest, based on experiments he had made with his own cattle in Ceylon and effectively (or so he claimed) used on an outbreak on Lord Leigh's estate in Hertfordshire. Just a year later, on 23 April 1867, he died.

Gabriel, on the other hand, stayed in London, taking lodgings first in Dorset Square near Regents Park and then at 111 Bond Street. He continued to call on his Rothschild cousins, amusing them with gossip and eventually earning Charlotte's approval as "our good-hearted eccentric cousin". According to his obituary, he gave up much of his income in retirement to charity. On his death in 1881 at the age of eighty, beneficiaries included the United, Central, West London and Great Synagogues, the Marylebone Charity School for Girls and the Friend in Need Charity in Colombo, as well as his landlady and her family. The residue of his £70,000 estate passed to his brother, Solomon Benedict, Baron de Worms.¹⁴

The Times spoke of him as "one of the founders of the modern prosperity of Ceylon" and subsequent histories have confirmed the view. To the 21st-century tourists who arrive regularly in Pussellawa, however, the name on display remains not Worms but Rothschild, a long-lasting cousinly compliment which gives rise to much puzzled speculation as to the family's involvement. With luck, this article may have cleared the confusion.

Victor Gray was Director of The Rothschild Archive from 1999 (until October 2004) and was previously Head of Corporate Records and Archives at N.M. Rothschild & Sons Limited. He is a former Chairman of the National Council on Archives.

Ismeth Raheem is an architect (Royal Danish Academy, Copenhagen, 1969) artist, and art historian of the Colonial Period in Sri Lanka. He has exhibited paintings in Sri Lanka and Europe. His publications include articles for exhibition catalogues for the British Council (1986 and 2000) and the Maritime Museum, Amsterdam. His most recent published work is Images of British Ceylon, History of Nineteenth Century photography of Sri Lanka (Singapore 2000)



**Today's
product of the
Rothschild
Plantation**

NOTES

1. Letter from Charlotte de Rothschild to her son Leopold, 24 October 1865. The Rothschild Archive 000/84
2. M.B. Worms to N.M. Rothschild & Sons, London, 31 May 1841. The Rothschild Archive, XI/109/41/7/5
3. J.E. Tennent: *Ceylon: An account of the island physical, historical and topographical*, London, 1859, Vol.II, p.230
4. *ibid*, pp.212-213
5. D.M. Forrest: *A hundred years of Ceylon tea*, London, 1967, p.138
6. *ibid*, p.50
7. George de Worms, elder son of Solomon Benedict Worms, born 1827, succeeded to the title of Baron de Worms on the death of his father in 1882.
8. *The Times*, 23 August 1886, p.4. In fact, Tennent's account, referred to by George, says little, but confirms that he had seen tea bushes (at some unrecorded date) blooming at Pussellawa and that there had been a difficulty in finding skilled labour to dry and prepare the leaves.
9. Sir Thomas Villiers: *Mercantile Lore*, the Ceylon Observer Press, 1940, pp.126-127
10. Reprinted in *The Times*, 1 August 1845, p.3
11. Others claimed to have been the first. The Rev. E.F. Gepp claimed to have cleared half an acre of jungle behind the home of his employer, the Chief Justice of Ceylon, Sir Anthony Oliphant, in order to plant about thirty tea plants from the consignment sent to Nuwara Eliya from Assam. Other contenders are W.J. Jenkins, a retired Assam planter, at Condegalla and a Mr Llewellyn at Pen-y-Lan in Dolosbage (Tennent, *op.cit.*, pp.54-56).
12. Tennent, *op.cit.*, p.288
13. Charlotte de Rothschild to her son Leopold, 26 October 1865. The Rothschild Archive 000/84
14. *The Times*, 21 October 1881

Principal acquisitions 1 April 2003 -31 March 2004

This list is not comprehensive but attempts to record all acquisitions of most immediate relevance to research. Some items listed here may, however, remain closed to access for some time and for a variety of reasons. Researchers should always enquire as to the availability of specific items before visiting the Archive, quoting the reference number which appears at the end of each paragraph.

Records of N.M. Rothschild & Sons

- Loan Department: contracts, 1927-1971 (000/1229); Private Accounts, 1950s and 1960s (000/1355)
- Index cards recording applications for charitable support to NM Rothschild & Sons from the 1930s to the 1970s. Outcomes of applications are also recorded (000/1337)

Miscellaneous family papers

- Items from the collections of Baroness Liliane de Rothschild, including a poem on the occasion of the marriage of James and Betty de Rothschild, Frankfurt, 11 July 1824, printed on silk and bound in red velvet, bearing the bookplate of the library of James de Rothschild (000/1322)
- Papers of Jeanne de Rothschild, wife of Eugène de Rothschild and formerly the British actress Jeanne Stuart. The collection includes many early photographs and mementos of the Viennese branch of the Rothschild family and the Enzesfeld estate in Austria. Enzesfeld was famously where the Duke of Windsor found a retreat following his abdication (000/1336)

Family papers from Ascott, Buckinghamshire, relating to Leopold, Marie, Anthony and Evelyn Achille de Rothschild (000/1373)

Leopold de Rothschild

- Receipts and valuations, mainly concerning jewellery, 1858-1908; miscellaneous letters and accounts relating to N.M. Rothschild & Sons and the Rothschild family, 1871-1907.
- Letters from: Joseph Wood, Frank

Marshall, Israel Gollancz and Lionel Ford and other papers relating to Harrow, 1895-1910; Claude Montefiore and C. P. Villiers, c.1895-1917; miscellaneous correspondence and drafts, 1880-1917.

- Racing journal, 1879-1913 (with key); catalogue and account of the sale and disposition of the Nursery Stud, presented by the sons of the owner, August Belmont, 1891; trial books, 1890-1908 (3 volumes: 1890-1893, 1896-1899, 1900-1908); breeding records, 1880-1882; race records, 1879-1904 (5 volumes: 1879-1884, 1886-1891, 1893-1898, 1899-1904, 1899-1909 (contains some duplication of previous volume); miscellaneous items relating to steeplechase and point-to-point, 1877-1896.

- Miscellaneous letters relating to racing, 1871-1917.

- St Amant's Derby win, 1 June 1904: press-cuttings; menus, programmes and other souvenirs; letters relating to St. Amant, 1904-1905; receipts, pedigrees and other items relating to racing, 1850-1913; letters and press cuttings relating to St. Frusquin, 1896-1899.

- Volume of obituaries from the press, 1917; inventory of plate at 5 Hamilton Place and Ascott, n.d.; inventory of plate at Ascott, n.d.; inventory and valuation of the contents of Palace House for estate duty, 1917.

Leopold & Marie de Rothschild

- Letters from: Lord and Lady Rothschild, and their children Charles and Evelina, 1878-1931; Louise de Rothschild, Lord and Lady Battersea and Annie Yorke, 1882-1930; Alfred,

Leonora, Evelina, Ferdinand and other members of the Rothschild family, 1866-1936; members of the Rothschild and Perugia families, 1914-1918; miscellaneous persons (political), 1881-1932; miscellaneous persons (social), 1890-1935.

- Volume containing press coverage of the wedding of Leopold and Marie de Rothschild, 1881.

Marie de Rothschild (née Perugia)

- Letters from: her mother, c.1889; her sister, Henrietta ('Jetti'), and her brother-in-law Albin Valabregue, 1871-1931; her nieces, Marie and Louise Hirsch, 1894-1934; her brother Fritz Perugia, 1872-1908; her sister-in-law, Louise Perugia, and her nephews Fritz, Josef and Stefan Perugia, 1892-1936; Lord Asquith and family, 1897-1929; Arthur Balfour and family, 1899-1930; Vere and Roberte Bessborough, 1905-1935; Charles and Edith Cotes, 1892-1923; Viscount D'Abernon, 1904-1934; Ella, Edith, Ethel, Flo and John Du Cane, n.d.; Louise Gosford, c.1929; her cousin, Nina Levi (née Worms), 1873-1922; her cousin, Gertrude von Worms, 1877-1890; Alice Derby and family, 1886-1936; Ettie Desborough, 1915-1937; Lord Esher, 1891-1913; George Lambton, 1917-1922; Marie Belloc-Lowndes, 1916-1932; Cynthia and Horatia Seymour, 1915-1935; Mary Wemyss, 1906-1934; Edith Wolverton and family, 1894-1933. Letters from friends and family, and material relating to their deaths, 1873-1937; In Memoriam—Charles Cotes, 1904; In Memoriam—Georges Weil (1881-1914); letters received on the death of Louisa, Lady de Rothschild, 1910; letters received on the death of her

brother-in-law Lord Rothschild, 1915; letters from New Court and miscellaneous accounts, 1891-1930.

Anthony de Rothschild

- Letters about racing from Lord Crewe, Lord D'Abernon, Alice Derby, Victoria Primrose, Lord Rosebery, Arthur Villiers and other friends, 1925-1936; copy of *The Times* Gold Number, featuring the Royal Mint Refinery, 20 June 1933; album containing photographs of the Royal Mint Refinery, 1938.

Publications of the Rothschild family

- *Zwölf Lieder für eine Singstimme mit Pianofortebegleitung* by Hannah Mathilde von Rothschild c1887: twelve poems by various poets set to music by Hannah Mathilde (000/1352)
- Six framed miniatures of members of the Rothschild family: Leonora, Walter, Emma and Alfred (000/1369)
- *L'Hylochaerus Meinertzhageni* O. Ths. by Maurice de Rothschild et al (Paris, 1906); *Circé: pièce en quatre actes* (Paris, 1929), *Le grand patron* (Paris, 1931) and *Comment j'ai réuni ma collection d'autographes* (Paris, 1933) by Henri de Rothschild
- *Christopher Fry et la comédie des saisons* by Philippe de Rothschild et al (Paris, 1962)
- Papers on economic history given by Emma Rothschild at the Centre for History and Economics at King's College, Cambridge
- *Bin ends* (London, 1980) by Victoria Rothschild
- A number of the scientific publications of Miriam Rothschild and Victor Rothschild.

- Six volumes of catalogues for exhibitions from the collection of Edmond de Rothschild at the Louvre: *Les incunables de la Collection Edmond de Rothschild: la gravure en relief sur bois et sur métal* (1974); *Maîtres de l'eau-forte des XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (1980); *Ornemanistes du XVe au XVIIe siècles* (1987); *Graveurs allemands du XVe siècle* (1991); *Graveurs en taille-douce des Anciens Pays-Bas 1430/1440-1555* (1997); and *Maestros de la invención de la Colección E. de Rothschild del Museo del Louvre* (2004) (RAL Library)

Pamphlets and printed material

- An open letter from E. Barrault to M. Rothschild on Saint-Simonism and the revolution (Paris, 1848) (000/1241)
- Souvenir programme for an orchestral performance given by the pianist Sundgren in Sydney on 28 October 1940 in aid of Lord Rothschild's Jewish Relief Fund for War Victims and Refugee Children in Britain (000/1251)
- Catalogue for the Halton Industrial Exhibition, 1868 (000/1258)
- *Catalogue des volailles, canards, oies* from the Domaine des Vaulx de Cernay c1925 (000/1284)
- Tribute in Hebrew to James de Rothschild by Rabbi J. Kohn-Zedek, n.d. (000/1290)
- Anti-Rothschild broadsheet *Ein offener Brief an Rothschild* (Vienna, 1848) (000/1324)
- *Die Kräbwinkler suchen die papiere in die höhe zu treiben*. Satirical etching of Nathan Rothschild and three of his brothers, literally inflating a variety of financial instruments by means of bellows, c1830 (000/1270)