

Review of the year's work

Melanie Aspey, Director of The Rothschild Archive

Acquisitions

More than one hundred separate accessions were recorded in the Archive during the year, ranging from a single document or photograph to significant collections of business papers. Outstanding among them was an acquisition by the Trust – intellectually if not physically – of a unique nature: the transfer of ownership of the records of de Rothschild Frères from the Rothschild family to the Trust was finalised.

In recent years staff of the Archive have gained a better understanding of the nature of the records of the French bank, held on deposit at the Archives Nationales' Centre des archives du monde du travail in Roubaix, northern France, thanks to the warm and open reception they have received from Madame Françoise Bosman, the Director of the centre and her colleagues.

The transfer of ownership has cemented this relationship between the archivists who look forward to working together with researchers to exploit the collections yet further. To this end Madame Bosman and Victor Gray, the former Director of the Archive, proposed a joint colloquium, which will take place at Roubaix in 2006. Two distinguished historians, Professor François Crouzet and Professor Alice Teichova, have agreed to co-chair the Academic Committee for the colloquium, which will take as its theme the Rothschild family's interests in eastern Europe.

An article about the development of the archives of de Rothschild Frères and plans for future joint ventures between staff of The Rothschild Archive and the Centre des archives du monde du travail appears on page 49.

Accessions of a more regular nature include a cartoon by SEM (Georges Goursat, 1863–1934) featuring members of the Rothschild family and their contemporaries (see front cover). SEM was a leading cartoonist of the *belle époque* in the early years of the twentieth century and depicted many Rothschilds during his career. The discovery of this item was of particular interest to Victor Gray who has been working on a new research project, Rothschild in caricature. The project, based in The Rothschild Archive, sets out to identify all surviving cartoons and caricatures of the Rothschild family and to use them as the basis for an analysis of changing attitudes towards the family and its enterprises. The first results of his research will be published on the Rothschild Research Forum.³

Two rare publications about the activities of the Austrian Rothschilds were also added to the collection of printed works. The first, *Der Baron Rothschild: Reisen, Jagden, Menschlichkeiten* by Forstrat Gruenkrantz (Munich: Verlag für Kulturpolitik, 1924), is an account of Baron Nathaniel

Opposite

The offices of de Rothschild Frères, rue Laffitte, n.d. A visitor from the London bank in 1847 remarked of the French clerks, *It is astonishing how they continue to come out such 'Swells' and to dress as well as they do.*

Private collection.



Obverse and reverse of a silver token granting free travel on the Lombardy and Central Italian Railway to Lionel de Rothschild, a director of the company.



von Rothschild (1836–1905) and the family’s hunting grounds in Austria. This was a gift from a member of the family. The second, a collection of reprinted official documents relating to the Southern Railway (*Sammlung der die Concession und die Constituierung der k.k. priv. Südbahn-Gesellschaft betreffenden Urkunden*), edited and published in 1900 by the board of the railway company was discovered, complete with map of the network, in an antiquarian bookshop in Vienna by one of the Archive’s research contacts. Another Rothschild railway involvement in the Habsburg Empire was reflected in the purchase of a silver coin engraved by Desaide-Roquelay, permitting Lionel de Rothschild, a director of the company, to enjoy free transport on the lines of the Lombardy and Central Italian railway.

Research

The continuing and growing popularity of web-based resources does not diminish the demand for access to original material at the Archive’s London reading room where visiting researchers continue to prove the value of the collections to scholars working in diverse disciplines. Financial historians have researched Rothschild loans to Hungary, Australia and Brazil, Rothschild involvement in the mercury trade with Mexico and the commission houses in North and South America. Biographers of the Rothschild women, Benjamin Disraeli, plant hunter George Forrest and financier of plant hunters, Lawrence Johnston, have found useful source material in the Archive which is being revealed by the archivists’ cataloguing work.

The Archive continues to develop its relationships with historians of art and the history of collections, this year holding a seminar on the sources available to those engaged in research on collections of gold and silver *objets d’art* formed by members of the Rothschild family. The format of this seminar was of use to all participants, making available information about sources in the Archive and enabling the archivists to learn more about the research methods of the researchers. Further seminars are planned to promote the use of the collection to more scholars.

Rothschild Archive bursaries are available for researchers engaged in full-time education and committed to research projects which will involve substantial use of The Rothschild Archive. The bursaries are designed to provide practical assistance with travel, accommodation or incidental costs associated with such work in London. Hans Willems of the University of Antwerp received the first ever bursary this year to help him continue his research into the history of the Antwerp stock exchange. His account of this research and the importance of the collections of the Archive to him appear on page 14.

Palaeography

Letters exchanged between the first generation of the family to leave Frankfurt and establish business houses across Europe were usually written in a form they termed ‘Yiddish’, in this case the German language written in Hebrew characters. While the transcription and translation of these letters continues at a steady pace, revealing at every turn new information about the development of the business and insights into the family’s response to political events around them, the Archive sought advice from experienced palaeographers and Hebrew and Yiddish specialists about ways in which the necessary skills for reading this script might be preserved and transmitted to others. Plans for workshops based on the letters will be discussed in the coming year.



Watercolour of Baden by Emma von Rothschild, 1865, one of a group of thirty sketches and watercolours produced by the future Lady Rothschild in the years leading up to her marriage which were acquired by the Archive during the year.

The Rothschild Research Forum

The Rothschild Research Forum, launched as part of the Archive's web site in 2003, continues to expand. New members join weekly, and new content is regularly published by the Archive, by founder partners at Waddesdon Manor and by Forum members themselves. Articles from the *Review* appear on the web site in pdf form, and are the most popular pages among users. Guides to sources on the lives of a number of Rothschild women including Emma, 1st Lady Rothschild, Julie, Baroness Adolphe de Rothschild, Alice de Rothschild, Constance, Lady Battersea and Béatrice, Baroness Ephrussi, were published during the year. A contribution from Gillian Clegg – a valuable index of the horticultural literature relating to Gunnersbury Park – triggered further research by Dr Michael Hall that led to the discovery of a series of statues purchased by Nathan Rothschild, a hitherto unknown venture by the self-styled philistine. Dr Hall identified the statues as a series of eight by the sculptor James Thom based on characters from the poems of Robert Burns.

To commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of Benjamin Disraeli in 2004 the Archive contributed to the Research Forum a detailed finding aid to relevant sources in the collection. In the course of the preparatory research four letters from Disraeli came to light, copies of which were forwarded to Mel Wiebe, Professor of English and General Editor of the Disraeli Project (Emeritus), Queen's University in Canada. References by Disraeli in the letters to a pamphlet led the archivists, at the request of Professor Wiebe, to another item in the collection, one of a series of publications and manuscripts that had already been referred to on the Archive's web site, and which were listed in the previous issue of this *Review*.¹ Professor Wiebe was eventually able to assign to Disraeli an authorial role in the production of the pamphlet, which he identified as *Progress of Jewish Emancipation since 1829*. In a report on the investigation to the Research Forum² he commented,

This then is what the process of editing these four letters has accomplished.

A previously unidentified publication is now established as having been planned, largely written and brought to completion by Disraeli – in short, a new item has been added to the bibliography of Disraeli's works. Not only that, but these letters show that Disraeli was, behind the scenes, orchestrating Rothschild's campaign to gain admittance to parliament – in effect, he played a much more active role in the cause of admitting Jews into the British Parliament than has been previously recognized.

This new discovery exemplifies the rationale behind the establishment of the Research Forum, which was created to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge about resources for Rothschild history and to encourage the exchange of information between archivists, curators and researchers.

Library

Caroline Shaw's work on the Rothschild family's bibliography (the subject of an article in the previous *Review*) has led to the further enhancement of the Archive's library, notably in the area of natural history. Maurice de Rothschild's co-authored 1906 article on the forest pig of central Africa, 'L'Hylochærus Meinertzhageni O. Ths.', from the *Bulletin de la Société Philomathique de Paris* and an article published by the British Museum in 1982 on the Rothschild collection of Ixodoidea, to which Miriam Rothschild wrote a foreword, were welcome new discoveries. A generous gift from Professor and Mrs Stanley Weintraub was a copy of the rare *From January to December, a book for children*, written by Charlotte de Rothschild in 1873. Mrs Weintraub had discovered the publication during research at the Archive, and described it in an article on the Rothschild Research Forum before this particular copy came to light.

Donations from researchers at the Archive based on their use of the collection serve to highlight its diversity. The books include 'Los intereses de los banqueros británicos en España:



Far left
A sample group of post-First World War publications about the development of Hungary and eastern Europe from the papers of Rozsika Rothschild, deposited with the Archive by her daughter, Miriam.

Left
Poster in memory of Edmond de Rothschild (1845–1934) produced in Tel Aviv one month after his death.

la Banca Baring y su pugna con los Rothschild por el control del mercurio de Almadén’, in *Hispania*, 2003, by Dr Inés Roldan de Montaud; ‘A “láthatatlan” aláíró. A 4%-os államkötvények jegyzői 1881-ben’, [The invisible hand: the subscribers to the 1881 4% Hungarian State Bonds issue], which appeared in *Korall* no.14, 2003 by Professor György Kövér; *Les Rothschild: collectionneurs de manuscrits*, published by the Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2004, by Dr Christopher de Hamel; *Le Sang des Rothschild*, a comprehensive guide to Rothschild genealogy through the male and female lines of the family by Dr Henri Mars and Joseph Valynseele; ‘A display of opulence: Alfred de Rothschild and the visual recording of Halton House’, from the journal *Furniture History*, vol.xl, 2004, by Barbara Lasic.

Professional conferences and seminars have proved to be fruitful ground for developing research contacts and for promoting the availability of the Archive. During the year, staff from the Archive made presentations to the 15th International Congress on Archives in Vienna about the development of the Rothschild Research Forum; to the European Association for Banking History’s conference in Athens on the role of archives in corporate social responsibility programmes; to the International Railway History Association’s first conference in Semmering on railway history sources at the Archive; to a joint conference in Frankfurt on the Frankfurt Judengasse about material in the Archive relating to the Rothschild family and the ghetto; to the Bucks Gardens Trust about sources for the history of Rothschild gardens.

Articles about aspects of the collection written by the archivists appeared in the December 2004 issue of *The PhotoHistorian*, the journal of the historic section of the Royal Photographic Society, and *Latin American Research Review*, vol.40, no.1, 2005.

Exhibitions

A decade after the Frankfurt Jewish Museum staged its major exhibition, *The Rothschilds: a European Family*, the Archive enjoyed yet another collaboration with colleagues there. The exhibition *Zurück nach Moskau* (Back to Moscow), timed to coincide with the conference on the Judengasse, was based on the documents taken from the Rothschild family in Vienna by the Nazis and returned to them from an archive in Moscow in 2001. The venue for the exhibition was particularly fitting, since it was the Museum’s director, Dr Georg Heuberger, who first brought the documents’ location to the attention of the Rothschild family. Furthermore although the documents had been captured in Vienna, they had been transferred to that city from Frankfurt only eleven years before. Their display in Frankfurt was therefore something of a homecoming.

Documents and archives relating to the life of Ferdinand and Evelina de Rothschild were loaned to Waddesdon Manor for a display focusing on the couple and the Jewish Museum, London, borrowed material on the life of Disraeli for a bicentenary exhibition.

Philanthropy

The major research project hosted by the Archive, Jewish Philanthropy and Social Welfare in Europe, 1800–1940 continued into its second year led by Dr Klaus Weber. Dr Weber delivered a paper entitled ‘Housing the Poor: Rothschild initiatives in London, Frankfurt and Paris (1880–1930): conflicts of charity, profitability, publicity and anti-semitism’ in the section on Networks of Welfare at an Economic History Symposium at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in January 2005. In November 2004 he presented a seminar on the scope of the project at the University of Southampton’s Parkes Centre, where he is a Fellow.

The future development of the project received a significant boost thanks to the award of a generous grant from the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung (Cologne), one of Germany’s major grant-giving bodies. Dr Weber made an application for funding to support one specific element of the project: the creation of a research team to investigate in more detail the sources of information about the foundations established and supported by the Rothschild family and their contemporaries in Vienna, Paris, Naples, and Frankfurt. Gabriele Anderl, Céline Leglaive, Luisa Levi d’Ancona and Ralf Roth were appointed to pursue this research. The information gathered in this way will be fed into a project database developed with creative enthusiasm by IT specialists at N.M. Rothschild & Sons.

The Fritz Thyssen Stiftung made a further gesture of financial support for the project by granting funds for a workshop entitled ‘Western European concepts of “Welfare”, “Philanthropy” and “Charity”: changes in meaning over space and time c.1800–1940’, which will be hosted by The Rothschild Archive.



Miriam Rothschild

Miriam Rothschild

In January 2005 one of the Archive’s friends and supporters, The Hon. Miriam Rothschild, DBE, FRS, died at the age of 96. Dame Miriam made numerous gifts to the Archive, enriching them all with her personal memories of her family and its history. It was in fact Dame Miriam who impressed upon the staff of the Archive the number and scale of philanthropic ventures supported by the Rothschild family, often anonymously, and the importance of recording them in some way. The encouraging interest that she took in the subject personally was one of the factors that led to the formation of the Academic Advisory Committee to oversee the Philanthropy research project and to the first successful bid for project funding.

NOTES

¹ ‘Sundry manuscripts and pamphlets dealing with religious disabilities in Great Britain in the cases of the Jews, Quakers and Roman Catholics, a collection in The Rothschild Archive, 000/573/6’, in *Rothschild Archive Review of the Year, 2003–2004*, pp.59–60. The

pamphlet identified by Professor Wiebe is item number 14 in the list.

² <http://www.rothschildarchive.org/research/?doc=/research/articles/mwDisraeli>

³ http://www.rothschildarchive.org/research/?doc=/research/articles/car_aopenpage