

Review of the year's work

Melanie Aspey, Director of The Rothschild Archive

Research Project

The research project *Jewish Philanthropy and Social Development in Europe 1800–1940* reached its closing stages during the year under review. The project's Academic Advisory Committee, with practical support from Claire-Amandine Soulié, organised a conference in January 2008 to mark the completion of the AHRC-funded programme, with the title *Philanthropy and Individualism: perspectives on individual giving in the age of mass society*. The conference was generously hosted at Waddesdon Manor with the support of Lord Rothschild.

A distinguished group of participants spoke about a range of noted philanthropists from diverse backgrounds. Michael Marrus on Samuel Bronfman; Richard Mendelsohn on Sammy Marks; David Cannadine on Andrew Mellon; Stephen Pielhoff on philanthropists in the Kaiserreich; Jonathan Conlin on Calouste Gulbenkian; Frank Prochaska on Edward VII; Abigail Green on Moses Montefiore and Hideo Katsumata on Eiichi Shibusawa. Klaus Weber, who has led the philanthropy project since its inception, presented preliminary results of the research to the conference and Bill Rubinstein summed up the proceedings on the final day. Pippa Shirley, Head of Collections at Waddesdon Manor, was a warm and enthusiastic participant in the proceedings of the conference and arranged special viewings of the Manor and some of its collections for the participants and their guests.

Professor Cesarani and Dr Mandler of the project's academic advisory committee have collected the papers presented at the conference and will edit them for eventual publication.

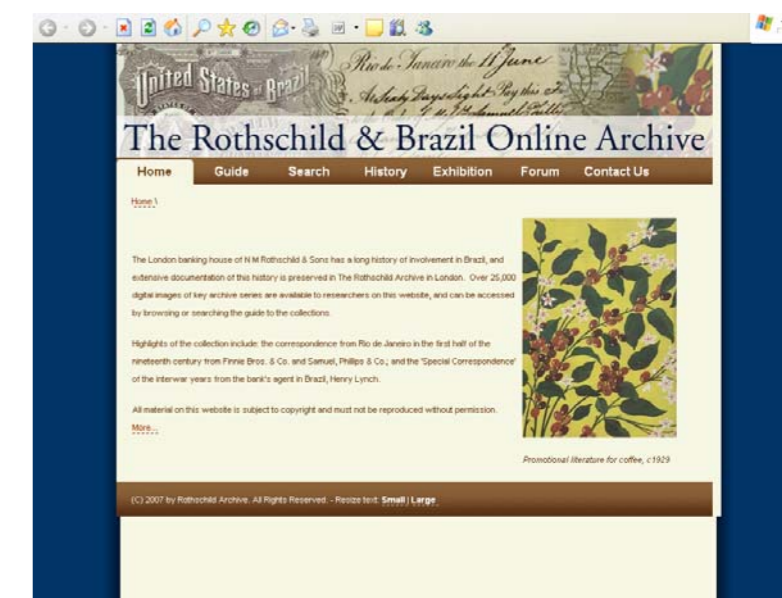
On the basis of his earlier research into transatlantic trade in the eighteenth century, Klaus Weber was invited to prepare a reader on the history of German involvement in the slave trade, together with Jochen Meissner and Ulrich Mücke, for which he took a short sabbatical from the project. *Schwarzes Amerika. Eine Geschichte der Sklaverei* was published by C.H. Beck of Munich in 2008.

The card offering new year greetings to Baron Edmond de Rothschild, founder of the Hôpital Rothschild in Paris, has been uncovered in the Archive during the research project described on this page.



A postcard promoting the Rothschild & Brazil online Archive project. The design is based on advertising material produced for a trade fair in Vienna in 1929.

A screen shot of the Archive's Rothschild and Brazil Online Archive, at www.rothschildarchive.org



The Rothschild Archive web site

The Rothschild & Brazil Online Archive went live at the end of February 2008, as a 'micro-site' within the main website's password-protected Research Forum.¹ The Online Archive was developed in response to the increasing awareness of the academic community of the scale and scope of the Archive's holdings on the financial, economic and political history of Brazil.²

N M Rothschild & Sons has a long history of involvement in Brazil. The firm's initial business there – merchant banking and bullion dealing – led to its appointment in 1855 as government financial agent in London, handling the government's borrowing in the London capital markets and becoming closely concerned with the country's fiscal, commercial and exchange rate policies. With the bank at the heart of the development of Brazilian public finance, The Rothschild Archive is an important resource for an understanding of Brazilian economic and political history, as well as the history of British informal imperialism and emerging patterns of globalisation.

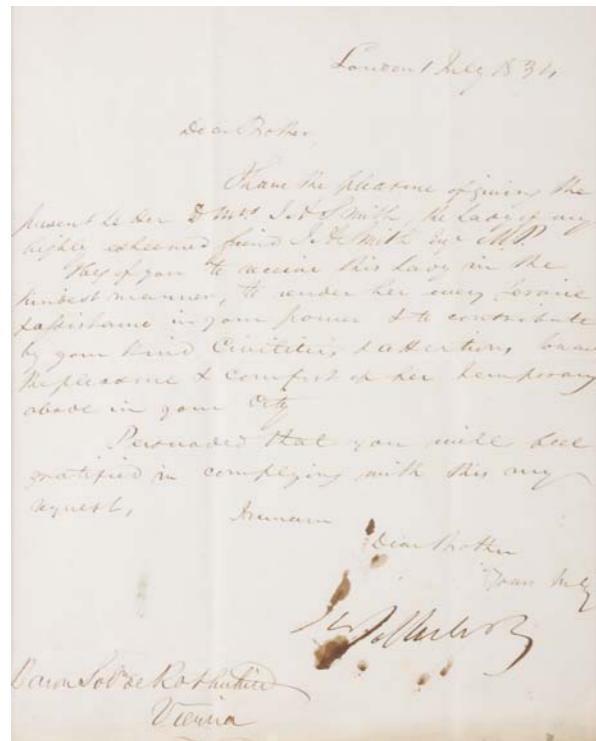
Caroline Shaw, who conceived and managed the Online Archive, promoted the initiative to academic conferences and user groups and contributed articles to the *Bulletin* of the European Association of Banking History and the newsletter of the Society of Archivists. The initiative was well received – and well used – from the outset, and the Archive remains committed to expanding the content of the Online Archive as demand develops. During the first phase of the programme around 200 key files were identified, yielding over 25,000 digital images. The material chosen focused on three main areas: 'new' files from the interwar years; government bond issues; correspondence sent by the bank's contacts in Rio de Janeiro in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Archive is grateful to all those who gave permission for their copyrighted material to be featured on the site, particularly colleagues at The Baring Archive and the Bank of England Archive. Users of the site, and especially the archivists, owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Roderick Barman, who generously made available for publication to the Online Archive his detailed listing of the papers of Samuel, Phillips & Co.,³ (RAL XI/38/215B), which he compiled during a number of visits to the Archive's London reading room.

Acquisitions

Tracy Wilkinson writes elsewhere in this *Review* about the unexpected discovery of a wax model for a coin or medallion that was commissioned by George IV in honour of Nathan Rothschild. The model had been stored with a number of other artefacts that had been at New Court for an indeterminate number of years, including a menorah, (see illustration below). Thanks to the help of Anthony Phillips,⁴ the maker is known to be Erhard(t) Christian Specht, Frankfurt am Main, the son of another Frankfurt goldsmith, Nicolaus I, who was born in 1766 and died in 1806. The date shown on the maker's mark, somewhere between c.1800 and 1805, invites speculation that the menorah might have belonged to Nathan Mayer Rothschild, who left Frankfurt in the final years of the eighteenth century, setting up his first home in Manchester before moving to London in 1808, just two years after his marriage.

Another acquisition relating to Nathan Rothschild, this time of a more customary, documentary nature, was a letter addressed to his brother in Vienna, Salomon, with the date of 1 July 1834. In the letter Nathan recommends his 'highly esteemed friend', the wife of J.A. Smith MP, as she travels to Vienna, requesting that she be provided with assistance and financial services. John Abel Smith played an important role in the campaign of Nathan's son, Lionel, to become a member of parliament and is shown in a painting representing the moment in 1858 when the campaign reached its climax and Lionel took his seat as the first Jewish MP. Smith and Lord John Russell flanked Lionel as he was presented to parliament for the first time. The 150th anniversary of this event fell in 2008.



Two acquisitions made in the year under review: the letter recommending the wife of J.A. Smith and the menorah, both described above.



Autochrome exhibition

The Archive's unrivalled collection of autochromes, of which Victor Gray wrote in the *Review* for 2005–2006,⁵ formed a central part of the National Media Museum's 2007 exhibition marking the centenary of the invention of the autochrome process. To coincide with the exhibition the Archive published a book, edited by Victor Gray, entitled *The Colours of Another Age*, with contributions from Colin Harding, Sophieke Piebenga and Lionel de Rothschild.⁶

Victor Gray also contributed articles to two publications on the subject: 'Lionel de Rothschild and the Autochrome' appeared in *The Photo Historian*, the journal of the Historical Group of the Royal Photographic Society, in April 2007 and 'The Colourful World of Lionel de Rothschild', in *Archive*, the journal of the National Media Museum.

The Library

Building up the Archive's collection of the writings of members of the Rothschild family remains an objective. Additions to the stock this year have been typically diverse, ranging from the work of the family in the nineteenth century, exemplified by the publication in *Apollo* magazine of Ferdinand de Rothschild's, 'Bric-a-Brac: a Rothschild's memoir of collecting', to the contemporary, with David de Rothschild's *The Live Earth global warming survival handbook*. The Archive also acquired a copy of Constance, Lady Battersea's *Waifs & Strays* (London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 187 Piccadilly, 1921) and the second edition of Miriam Rothschild's biography of her uncle, *Dear Lord Rothschild*, which was published by the Natural History Museum as *Walter Rothschild: the man, the museum and the menagerie*.

Work based on the use of the Archive's collections were acquired during the year, including the three-volume *A history of Royal Dutch Shell* (Oxford: University Press, 2007) by Joost Jonker et al., the first volume of which draws on the Rothschild archives at the Archives Nationales du Monde du Travail. Publications based in part on the collection in London include *A History of Herbert Smith*, by Tom Phillips; *The American Ambassador's Residence in Paris* [a former Rothschild property], by Ulrich Leben and Robert Parker; *Le Portrait*, a biography of the Ingres portrait of Betty de Rothschild, by Pierre Assouline. Dr Michael Hall presented a copy of his PhD thesis, *Baron Lionel de Rothschild (1808–1879): the biography of a collector of pictures*.

A number of publications to which the staff of the Archive contributed or on which they advised were also presented. These include *Returned from Russia: Nazi archival plunder in Western Europe and recent restitution issues*, edited by Patricia Grimsted, F.J. Hoogewoud & Eric Ketelaar, which contains an article on the return of the Austrian Rothschilds' archives from Moscow; *The Rothschild Fabergé Egg*, published by Christie's; *Autre Regard Sur Les Courses* [a history of horse racing in France], by Guy Thibault and 'Dame Miriam Louisa Rothschild CBE 5 August 1908 – 20 January 2005', by Helmut van Emden and Sir John Gurdon, published in *Biographies of Members and Fellows of the Royal Society*, no.52, 2006. The bibliography of Dame Miriam's works which appeared as an appendix to this tribute was supplied by the Archive.

Palaeography

As reported in previous issues of the *Review*, the Archive's collection of correspondence of the Rothschild brothers has long been seen as a core collection, central to an understanding of the family's business in the nineteenth century and to the relationship of the brothers to the leading European financial and political figures of the period. Among regular information on the European markets and family matters, new revelations, from highly informed and interested parties, are given on many of the major events of the period, the emergence of new national identities and the personalities of crowned heads and statesmen, aristocrats and bankers from virtually the whole of the European stage. The Rothschilds themselves referred to these letters as 'Jüdisch' or Yiddish, as distinct from the letters that they signed which had been written by clerks in their banking houses, letters which they identified as 'German' or 'French'. They

reserved for the Yiddish letters their private thoughts and comments, intending that they should only be seen by members of the family. The Archive has taken the first steps towards making the correspondence more widely available by publishing on the Rothschild Research Forum those letters written between 1814 and 1818. German transcripts and English translations are available online, with the digitised versions available for downloading. The archivists have continued to consider the ways in which the process for making the collection available for research can be improved and to ask questions about the very nature of the material. Chiara Scesa, an Italian archival graduate working at the Archive with support from the Leonardo da Vinci scholarship programme at the University of Bologna, compiled a database of the letters with basic information about each item.

Promoting the existence of the collection is just one part of the plan; it is also necessary to preserve the skills required to read the script. To this end the Archive organised a workshop designed to teach and improve the relevant palaeographic skills.

Dr Dorothea McEwan of the Warburg Institute, an experienced teacher of German palaeography, advised on the format of the workshop programme, and was joined on the planning committee by Dr Rainer Liedtke and Mordechai Zucker. The workshop was hosted at the Jewish Museum, Frankfurt, with the support of the Director, Dr Raphael Gross.

The number of applications for places far exceeded the number of available places, and has encouraged the organisers to plan further workshops. Some of the participants in the first session have begun to develop proposals for research projects based on the collection at the Archive.

A report about the workshop and the wider aims of the project appeared in the *Bulletin* of the European Association for Banking and Financial History.⁷

Outreach

During the year the staff of the Archive made presentations to a number of specialist history groups, and contributed to academic conferences, in order to make the collection more widely appreciated. The Director was invited to speak at a symposium organised by the British Friends of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, on the subject of the female members of the Rothschild family as artists, patrons and collectors. A group of the Friends also visited the Archive. Victor Gray spoke about the Autochrome collection to members of conservation group ICON, who visited the Archive for a special evening seminar on the subject of autochromes. Caroline Shaw spoke about the Archive's collections at a conference organised at the University of Wolverhampton by CHORD (the Centre for the History of Retailing and Distribution) and contributed to a seminar at Kings College London dedicated to exploring the relationship between archivists and academics.

The Archive participated in an initiative designed to introduce postgraduate students to the range of resources in banking and business archives and to offer some guidance and advice on research techniques. The initiative – 'Meet the Archivists' – was developed following informal discussions held between the Director and Dr Alexander Apostolides of the London School of Economics, at the annual conference of the European Association for Banking and Financial History.

Research

The number of visitors to the Archive's reading room in London was boosted by groups of visitors with specialist interests, among which were members of the Hampshire Archives Trust, the National Art Fund and the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies. Students from the post-graduate archive training courses at University College London, the University of Liverpool and the University of Wales at Aberystwyth were introduced to the work of the Archive on group visits, some of them returning individually to work in special projects as part of their course work.

(opposite page)
Mordechai Zucker (front)
and the participants in the
first Judendeutsch
Palaeography Workshop,
Jewish Museum Frankfurt,
October 2007.

A class in progress at the
Workshop.



NOTES

- 1 www.rothschildarchive.org
- 2 Caroline Shaw, 'Rothschilds and Brazil: an introduction to sources in The Rothschild Archive', *Latin American Research Review* vol.40, no.1, 2005 (pp.165–185).
- 3 Professor Barman's article, 'Nathan Mayer Rothschild and Brazil: the role of Samuel, Phillips & Co.', appeared in the Archive's *Review of the Year* for 2002–2003.
- 4 Anthony Phillips, International Director of Christie's, contributed an article on Jewish ritual

- silver to the Jewish Museum London's book *Treasures of Jewish Heritage* (London: Scala Publications, 2006).
- 5 'The colours of another world' in *Review of the Year* 2005–2006 (London: The Rothschild Archive, 2006) pp.14–19.
- 6 Victor Gray (ed.) *The Colours of Another Age: the Rothschild autochromes 1908–1912* (London: The Rothschild Archive, 2007).
- 7 Melanie Aspey, 'Deciphering History' in the *Bulletin* of the European Association for Banking and Financial History, 2007.