

THE ROTHSCHILD ARCHIVE

REVIEW OF THE YEAR APRIL 2008 TO MARCH 2009



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The Rothschild Archive Trust

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Front cover

Photograph from a publicity brochure for the Royal Mint Refinery, showing plated metal wires used in contemporary electrical appliances and for decorative purposes, c.1948 [RAL 000/1989, presented to The Rothschild Archive as a gift by Gilbert Esposito from the collection of Patricia Sommers.]

A Royal Commission of 1848 recommended that the business of treating unrefined gold should be put out to tender. N M Rothschild & Sons were the successful bidders, operating the Royal Mint Refinery from 1852. Some 10.4 million ounces of gold were refined in 1919, although the Refinery's fortunes were to be mixed over the following decades. By the end of the Second World War, new business opportunities were being explored, and the main area of growth in the operation of the refinery focused upon the manufacture and production of non-ferrous metals in cast and strip form, including copper foil and plated wires. A rolling mill and annealing plant had been added in 1943 to cater for Government orders, and in peacetime these were set to work producing a wide variety of products that met the needs of industry. Promotional brochures produced for the firm's stand at the British Industries Fair held each year at Castle Bromwich provide an insight into the full range of activities of the Royal Mint Refinery. In the 1960s, reviews into the activities of the Royal Mint Refinery led to specific areas of the business being sold off to more specialised firms, and by 1968, the Refinery at 19 Royal Mint Street was closed.

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Introduction

Eric de Rothschild, Chairman of The Rothschild Archive Trust

This issue of the *Review*, the tenth, marks the end of the Trust's first decade.

Over the last ten years the staff of the Archive have welcomed to the London reading room hundreds of visitors from many countries: historians of finance, business and politics, art historians, biographers, family and local historians, historians of philanthropy and social engagement. The articles contained in this *Review* demonstrate vividly the richness of the collections in The Rothschild Archive and the wide range of research interests that they can support. I wish to thank all the contributors to this and previous issues of the *Review* for sharing the results of their research and promoting the collections in a lively and engaging way.

Members of the staff made frequent visits during the year to the Archives Nationales du Monde du Travail at Roubaix in order to work on the uncatalogued records of de Rothschild Frères and help prepare them for wider use by researchers. In London the archivists continue to develop finding aids to the collections to make them more readily available for consultation in the reading room or via the Archive's website, www.rothschildarchive.org

The project hosted by the Archive, Jewish Philanthropy and Social Development in Europe 1800–1940, has demonstrated the value of partnerships in achieving shared research goals. In July 2008 Dr Peter Mandler, a member of the Academic Advisory Committee, hosted a final project workshop at Cambridge University's Stephen Hawking Centre which included contributions from members of the project's research team as well as papers from a wider group of academics working in similar fields. The Trustees are grateful to Dr Mandler and his fellow committee members, Professor David Cesarani and Dr Rainer Liedtke, for their outstanding commitment to the project which has done much to raise the profile of the Archive in academic circles.

Following on from this successful and rewarding partnership, the Archive has joined forces with an academic partner, the Centre for Contemporary British History, to manage a series of three Collaborative Doctoral Awards placements, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The first award was made to Michele Blagg for her proposal to work on a history of the Royal Mint Refinery, early results of which can be seen in this *Review*.

None of the activities that the Trust undertakes would be possible without the generous support of N M Rothschild & Sons Limited, Rothschild & Cie Banque, Les Domaines Barons de Rothschild (Lafite), La Fondation Maurice et Noémie de Rothschild and GFA (Château Mouton), and I thank these institutions most warmly on behalf of all the Trustees.

Neither would these have been possible without the dedicated and highly professional staff we have in the Archive, led by Melanie Aspey. I wish to thank them for their invaluable contribution to the success of the Trust.

Review of the Year's Work

Melanie Aspey, Director of The Rothschild Archive

Researchers

Numerous visits to the London reading room have been made by members of an ambitious research project led by Pauline Prevost Marcilhacy. The project aims to record and catalogue the many thousand objects – pictures, jewels, statuary, objets d'art – presented to museums and galleries in France by members of the Rothschild family. Ulrich Leben, a member of the team, is a contributor to this issue of the *Review*. The Archive has received a number of publications and offprints from members of the research team, including *Les Rothschild et la Commande architecturale: collaboration ou maîtrise d'oeuvre*, in *Architectes et Commanditaires, Cas particuliers du XVI^e au XX^e* edited by Tarek Berrada (Paris: Louvre, 2006); *Charlotte de Rothschild, Artiste, Collectionneur et Mécène* in *Histoires d'Art – Mélanges en l'Honneur de Bruno Foucart*, vol.11, edited by B. Jobert, A. Goetz et S. Texier, (Paris: 2008) and *Le grand Appartement de l'Hôtel St Florentin, fleuron de l'architecture néoclassique* by Fabrice Ouziel in *L'Estampille / L'Objet d'Art*, September 2008. Sponsored by a Rothschild family trust in France, the project is a collaborative venture with the Louvre.

Dr Junji Suzuki contacted the Archive in the course of his research into the development of Japanese gardens in France. Dr Suzuki had long suspected that the Japanese gardens at Boulogne-sur-Seine, the property of Baron Edmond de Rothschild, were the work of the renowned gardener Wasuke Hata. During his visit to the Archive he was able to confirm this and also identified a picture of Mr Hata in a collection of photographs presented to the Archive in 2005 by Baroness Benjamin de Rothschild. Dr Suzuki kindly presented a copy of his article *Traces of a Japanese gardener in France* which appeared in 'Studies in Japonism' No.25, published by the Society for the Study of Japonism in 2005.



Wasuke Hata (1865–1928)
in the garden he created
for Baron Edmond de
Rothschild at Boulogne-
sur-Seine.

Collaborative Doctoral Awards

The Archive and the Centre for Contemporary British History (CCBH) were successful in an application for funding under the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Collaborative Doctoral Awards scheme for three PhD posts beginning in October 2008. The first award was to Michele Blagg, who is working on the history of the Royal Mint Refinery. The second award has been made to Nicola Pickering, who will study the development of the Rothschild family's landholding, estate development and collections policy in the Vale of Aylesbury.

The links with the CCBH have been greatly beneficial to the Archive, introducing researchers to the collection through a growing network of contacts within the University of London in particular.

The Library

In addition to the gifts from researchers and museums with whom the Archive has been in contact during the year and noted elsewhere in this report, there have been further additions to the library. Dora Thornton, Curator of Renaissance European Collections at the British Museum, with responsibility for the Waddesdon Bequest made by Ferdinand de Rothschild under the terms of his will, presented a copy of her article *The Waddesdon Bequest as a Neo-Kunstkammer of the Nineteenth Century*, which appeared in the 2008 issue of *Silver Studies*, the journal of the Silver Society.

Two works on the history of the Vale of Aylesbury, where the Rothschild family had their estates, were also received: Sheila Richards' *A History of Tring* (Tring Urban District Council: 1974) and *Aston Clinton House 1923–1932*, by former researcher and contributor to a previous edition of this *Review* Diana Gulland, which was published in volume 48 of the journal of the Buckingham Record Office in 2008.

Exhibitions

Material and information from the Archive's collections featured in a number of exhibitions during the year. The life of Mayer Carl von Rothschild (1820–1886) and the business of the Rothschild bank in Frankfurt were of interest to the Deutsches Historisches Museum for their exhibition *Gründerzeit 1848–1871*. Dr Rainer Liedtke and Dr Klaus Weber, director of the philanthropy research project, contributed an essay, *Zwischen Tradition und Moderne: Das Frankfurter Bankhaus M. A. Rothschild & Söhne*, to the exhibition catalogue *Gründerzeit 1848–1871, Industrie und Lebensräume zwischen Vormärz und Kaiserzeit*, (Dresden: Sandstein Verlag, 2008).

The Archive loaned historical images of the gardens of the Rothschild estate in Geneva, Pregny, to an exhibition on the historical gardens of Geneva, *Jardins, Jardins*, which was supported by a Rothschild family trust and held at the Institut et Musée Voltaire from May to November 2008. The archivists also assisted with the production of a guide book to Kasteel de Haar in the Netherlands, a property that was substantially recreated by Etienne van Zuylen and his wife Hélène, née de Rothschild, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Berlin Jewish Museum organised an exhibition on the subject of the loss and restitution of property which was also shown in the Jewish Museum Frankfurt. The Archive loaned some pieces from the collection which related to the collections once owned by the Rothschild family in Austria. The catalogue of the exhibition, edited by Inka Bertz and Michael Dorrman, was presented to the Archive.

Acquisitions

Gilbert Esposito made a gift of some documents and photographs relating to the Royal Mint Refinery, which he had inherited from Patricia Sommers, the daughter of a Refinery manager, George Buess. Mr Esposito visited the Archive during the course of his research for the biography of Ms Sommers which he has since published, a copy of which is held by the Archive.

A collection of letters from Alexandra, Princess of Wales to Hannah, Countess of Rosebery on the notepaper of Marlborough House and of the Princess of Wales Branch of the National Aid Society (Soudan and Egypt) was acquired at auction. The letters, dating from c.1885, relate to the work of the society and demonstrate the active role taken by the two women in the management of the society's business.

The Archive acquired a group of five albumen prints showing views of Rothschild family properties in Frankfurt, some of which appear to be unpublished. The acquisition of *Die Sammlung Erich von Goldschmidt-Rothschild* has added to the materials available at the Archive which offer evidence for the history of collections once formed by members of the Rothschild family, and which may be subject of potential restitution claims.

Details of other additions made to the collection may be found on page 54.

Promoting the Archive

The Archive has continued to promote the collections to new audiences. In the year under review the Archive has organised and hosted two special events: 'Meet the Archivists' and a workshop entitled 'Spreading the Net'.

'Meet the Archivists' was developed to encourage students embarking on post-graduate degrees to find out more about potential archival sources, particularly those in the City and in the business sector in general. Just over thirty participants attended informal lectures from Professor Peter Scott of Reading University and Dr Valerie Johnson of the National Archives on research techniques and had the opportunity to discuss their research plans with archivists representing banking, insurance, retail and communication businesses.

'Spreading the Net: partnerships in times of war and peace' brought together several researchers who had worked on the collections at the Archive, many of whom had research interests in common. The German Historical Institute London and the University of Düsseldorf were partners in the organisation. A variety of themes was explored including how networks offered a geographical expansion for family enterprise, whilst also offering a support system, a way in which to protect a business; networks as efficient mechanisms for distribution and communications, enabling informed business decisions to be made; the reliability of networks in relation to positive and negative aspects, together with areas where networks flourished and where they proved less successful. Questions were raised about the functions and importance of networks during periods of both instability and conflict. The culmination of the workshop was an insight into the sphere of influence afforded by the Rothschild family and their adaption to their cultural environments through involvement in philanthropic engagements. Papers were presented by Dr Hilde Greefs (University of Antwerp – Centre of Urban History) *Networks between Antwerp and London after the reopening of the river Scheldt (1796)*; Leos Müller (Uppsala University, Department of History) *Foreign merchants in Gothenburg during the Napoleonic Wars*; Margrit Schulte Beerbuehl (University of Düsseldorf) *Nathan Mayer Rothschild and his German partners (1800–1808)*; Monika Poettinger (Bocconi University, Milan) *International Networks in Milan in the Napoleonic Age*; Frank Hatje (University of Hamburg) *Religious minority and commercial networking: a case study*; Maria Christina Chatzioannou (Institute for Neohellenic Research/National Hellenic Research Foundation) *Expansion and Strategies of Greek Commercial Houses in the Long Nineteenth Century: From the Levant to England*; John Davis (Kingston) *Restoration, industrialisation and international finance: the Rothschilds and loans to Prussia, 1818–1832*; Rainer Liedtke (University of Giessen) *Agent, Business Partner, Friend: The multilayered relationship between the Rothschilds and Gerson von Bleichröder (1822–1893)*; Klaus Weber (Hamburg/London): *Adapted to their cultural environments: French and British ways of Rothschild philanthropy*. Andreas Gestrich (GHI), Richard Roberts (Centre for Contemporary British History/IHR), Roger Knight and Robert Lee chaired the sessions.

The Rothschild house in the Judengasse (left hand side of central building) by Carl Hertel.



Research Project: Jewish Philanthropy

In the final year of the research project, described in previous issues of this *Review*, members of the research team and other academic colleagues with an active interest in the subject participated in a workshop in July 2008 at the University of Cambridge. The workshop took the title of the project as its theme. The workshop was generously hosted by Dr Peter Mandler of Gonville and Caius College, a member of the project's Academic Advisory Committee. In the section examining Christian and Jewish approaches to philanthropy, Philip Manow spoke on the development of welfare state regimes in Europe, and Christiane Swinbank on Protestant, Catholic and Jewish Supporters of the German Hospital in London, 1870–1914; in the session on Migration: Patriot Jews and Alien Jews, Luisa Levi d'Ancona gave a paper on Jewish Philanthropy in Italy towards refugees during and after World War I and Tobias Brinkmann on Jewish migration in times of war and peace, and prosecution, 1918–1942. Ralf Roth (Frankfurt Jewish Philanthropy and the Impact of World War I, Inflation & Aryanisation) and Claire-Amandine Soulié (Women in Jewish Philanthropy) gave papers in the session on Jewish Philanthropy and the Shaping of Communities. In the final session, Jewish philanthropy, modernisation and secularisation, Céline Leglaive examined professionalisation and secularisation of French Jewish charity, 1850–1914 and Klaus Weber gave a paper entitled *From Modernisation to Secularisation: Jewish Charities in London, 1860–1950*.

The workshop benefited from the participation of Peter Mandler, David Cesarani, Rainer Liedtke, David Feldman, Abigail Green, Aron Rodrigue and Nancy Green, who chaired sessions and acted as commentators.

Klaus Weber presented a paper entitled *Tide of Migration: The Jews' Temporary Shelter in London, 1885–1930s*, at conference on 'Jewish Transmigrants from Eastern Europe in Germany, Britain, Scandinavia and other Countries, 1860–1929', which was held at the Institut für Geschichte der Deutschen Juden, Hamburg, in September 2008.

The publication of the project's first book, a collection of essays based on the workshop that investigated the meanings of the terms philanthropy, charity and welfare in a European framework, appeared in 2009. *Religion und Philanthropie und den europäischen Zivilgesellschaften. Entwicklungen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Rainer Liedtke and Klaus Weber was published by Schöningh with the financial support of the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung (Köln).

The Rothschild Archive: some history

The tenth issue of the *Review*, marking as it does the tenth anniversary of The Rothschild Archive Trust, prompts some reflection on the last decade in the context of the long period of care for archives by many members of the Rothschild family.

The Trust owes its creation to the initiative of Sir Evelyn de Rothschild, former chairman of N M Rothschild & Sons Limited. It was Sir Evelyn's intention for the Archive to be a central repository for the records of all branches of the family and that they should be protected within the constitution of a Trust. A number of other businesses have since adopted this strategy to safeguard their own heritage.

The intense interest in family history and archives felt by Sir Evelyn's father, Anthony, is keenly remembered by his family and documented in his own papers. Receiving the news in 1951 from his Viennese cousin, Louis, that the 'Renngasse archives' (the files of the bank in Vienna) had been 'thoroughly looted', he replied, 'What a shame about the family letters...with the Nazi's extreme care and documentation of war archives and papers, they probably exist somewhere.'¹ Anthony's optimism in this respect was well-placed. In 1994 the Archive received almost 1,400 files of papers that had been taken from the Rothschilds in France and subsequently captured by Soviet troops. Accessioned in archives in Moscow in the late 1940s, they emerged – together with thousands of other collections – after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the construction of which had begun in the year of Anthony's death, 1961.

Photographs from the Rothschild collection at the Archives nationales du monde du travail. Planing machines at the sawmill and arch erected in honour of Nicholas II, both at the Bnito oilworks.





Image of an illuminated manuscript described by J. Porcher in 'Trésors de la Collection Henri de Rothschild à la Bibliothèque Nationale', *La Revue Française*, 1951.

The Rothschild Archive, though then a department of N M Rothschild & Sons, already contained private papers deposited by several members of the family and for this reason, after the papers had been returned to France from Russia, the final leg of their journey brought them to London. Seven years later records looted from Vienna also arrived at the Archive, albeit it as a result of a more complicated set of circumstances. Victor Gray, the first Director of the Archive, has documented that process in a previous issue of this *Review* and elsewhere.²

Anthony was prompted to write to Louis having heard a rumour passed to his nephew Edmund by a 'high official' at the Bank of England that the Renngasse archives were to be disposed of. 'We would be prepared to look after any of the papers', he wrote, 'and would in due course of time get them translated and tabulated, as we are doing with our archives here.'³ The translations were those diligently undertaken by Miss Drucker, Miss Balogh and Dr Henry Guttmann of the correspondence of the Rothschild brothers from the nineteenth century, written when they were establishing their business houses in Europe. In recent years, this work has been elaborated upon by Mordechai Zucker who led the palaeography workshop noted in the previous issue of the *Review*.

The recipient of the rumour, Edmund de Rothschild, played a special role in the history of the Archive as it was at Exbury House in Hampshire, his family home, that the archives were stored until 1978 to offer them protection from the threat of war damage and also, as it turned out, disruptions during the rebuilding of New Court in the 1960s. Edmund, 'Mr Eddy' to generations of staff at the bank and successor to Anthony as senior partner, died in January 2009. During his lifetime he presented many collections to the Archive, including the outstanding group of Autochrome photographic plates made by his father Lionel in the decade before World War I. An exhibition about the Autochromes took place at Exbury in the summer of 2009, curated by Victor Gray.³

The Archive has evolved during periods of handwritten catalogues, card indexes, the early use of computers and the internet age. The Trust's first publication was the *Guide to the Collection*, imaginatively designed by Sally McIntosh (responsible also for this *Review*) to facilitate updates. In spite of the rapid growth of the Archive since then, no updates have been printed. Instead new findings aids as well as information about acquisitions, research opportunities and general news have been published on the Trust's website, rothschildarchive.org. The site is home to the Rothschild Research Forum, a partnership project between the Archive and colleagues from The Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire, the family property accepted by the National Trust in 1959. Launched in 2003 as a portal for researchers interested in any aspect of Rothschild history, the Research Forum contains tens of thousands of pages, including over 25,000 in the micro-site, The Rothschild & Brazil Online Archive.⁴

The Trust is not only responsible for the records situated in London. In 2004 members of the Rothschild family in France – who had already made gifts of significant collections of private papers to the Archive – agreed to transfer ownership of the business records of the French bank to the Trust. This development was a significant one, as the records, although owned by the family, had been placed on deposit with the French Archives nationales in the 1970s. The records are currently in the Archives nationales' centre for the records of business and labour in Roubaix and the development of finding aids to the collection is one of the highest priorities in the Trust's programme of work.

Since 1999 the Archive has been in the City of London with N M Rothschild & Sons, in a building that stands on the site of the offices in which they were first housed when Victor, 3rd Lord Rothschild established an archives service that would be available to the research community. He appointed an archivist, Gershom Knight, who was responsible for bringing the records back from Exbury and who initiated a cataloguing programme that was continued by Simone Mace. Her description of the collection for the Business Archives Council's journal was the first of many articles and books that have been written by the staff of the Archive.⁵ The output of



Taking down the tapestry.
One of a series of sketches
by Matthew Cook
recording the last days
of New Court and the
construction of the new
offices of N M Rothschild
& Sons on the same site.

the Archive has been enhanced by the skills and talents of numerous members of the staff. Caroline Shaw, an archivist and Portuguese speaker, publicised the Archive's sources for Brazilian history to the research community in Brazil and elsewhere.⁶ Julia Harvey, a former member of the staff of N M Rothschild & Sons, dedicated herself to the transcription of the letters of Charlotte, Baroness Lionel de Rothschild (1819–1884), thereby earning the gratitude of scores of researchers who have found the letters to be a rich source of information not just on the Rothschild family but on nineteenth-century society too.

During the forthcoming year the staff of the Archive will continue to prepare for the move into new premises, which will coincide with the building of the fourth New Court in St Swithin's Lane, London, the site of the London Rothschild bank since 1809. Work will continue on records from a more recent period to prepare them for use by researchers and an active programme of workshops, publications and visits is talking shape with a view to publicising the Archive to the broadest possible range of users. The support that the Archive receives from the Rothschild businesses as well as from family members who serve as Trustees, or who contribute to the development of the collection in other ways, bodes well for the future.

NOTES

- 1 Letter from Anthony de Rothschild to Louis Rothschild, 7 December 1951. The Rothschild Archive (RAL) XI/46/731.
- 2 Victor Gray, 'The return of the Austrian Rothschild Archive' in *The Rothschild Archive: Review of the Year 2001–2002*; 'The Rothschild Archive: The Return of the Austrian Rothschild Archives', in Patricia Kennedy Grimsted et al. (eds.) *Returned from Russia: Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent Restitution Issues* (Institute of Art and Law, 2007).

- 3 RAL XI/46/731.
- 4 <http://www.rothschildarchive.org/ib/?doc=/ib/articles/brazil1>
- 5 See <http://www.rothschildarchive.org/ib/?doc=/ib/articles/booklist> for a full list.
- 6 See <http://www.rothschildarchive.org/ib/?doc=/ib/articles/brazil1>

Brothers-in-law: the Rothschilds and the Montefiores

Abigail Green shows how new sources shed light on the origins of the Montefiore-Rothschild connection.

Moses Montefiore in old age, from an album of photographs belonging to Emma, Lady Rothschild (1844–1935).



Sir Moses Montefiore (1784–1885) was the pre-eminent Jewish figure of the nineteenth century – a humanitarian, philanthropist and campaigner for Jewish emancipation whose fame stretched from the Jewish settlement of Montefiore in Kansas to the ghettos of Eastern Europe and Morocco. Born into London’s Sephardi elite, Montefiore made his fortune on the stock exchange and retired at forty, a very wealthy man. For the next fifty years, he criss-crossed the globe in his efforts to improve the lot of nineteenth century Jewry, oblivious to the dangers of piracy, cholera and war, disregarding his ever-greater age and physical infirmities. Operating as a kind of unofficial ambassador for the Jewish people, Montefiore pioneered a diplomatic approach to the problem of Jewish persecution and helped to carve a new place for the Jews in the modern world.

Montefiore was not just a businessman and Jewish activist, he was also Nathan Rothschild’s brother-in-law. Arguably, indeed, the Rothschild connection came first. Money enabled philan-

thropy, and it has been generally accepted by historians that Montefiore’s marriage to Judith Cohen, the sister of Nathan’s wife Hannah, effectively made his fortune. Almost bankrupted in 1806 at an early stage in his career, Moses Montefiore is thought to have amassed perhaps half a million pounds thanks largely to his position as Nathan’s stock-broker. For a Jew like Montefiore, this wealth provided an indispensable entrée into the corridors of power. Montefiore’s business connections gave him ready access to leading politicians on all sides of the political spectrum, without which neither he, Nathan nor Isaac Lyon Goldsmid could have lobbied so actively for Jewish emancipation during the 1830s. Abroad too, Montefiore’s ability to relieve his oppressed co-religionists owed almost as much to his well-publicised Rothschild connection as it did to the support of the British government. In 1840, when he travelled to Alexandria and Constantinople to refute allegations of ritual murder in Damascus, the Ottoman Grand Vizier described Montefiore as one of ‘the esteemed people of the Jewish *millet* [nation]’ and ‘a relative of the famous banker Rothschild’.¹ This was an important consideration given efforts to involve both him and the Rothschilds in Ottoman finances. When Montefiore arrived in Morocco some twenty five years later, the distinguished historian Ahmed Naciri recounted (quite erroneously) how the Jews of Morocco had appealed to Rothschild, ‘the most considerable Jewish merchant in London’, who had then ‘designated one of his in-laws to visit the Sultan (May God have mercy on him) and to deal with this matter (...)’.²



New Court 1819. Nathan and Hannah Rothschild lived in number 2, on the right in this watercolour image, with their Montefiore neighbours in number 4.

opposite

A plan of the Royal Exchange from 1760, showing the pillars allocated to the various groups of traders.

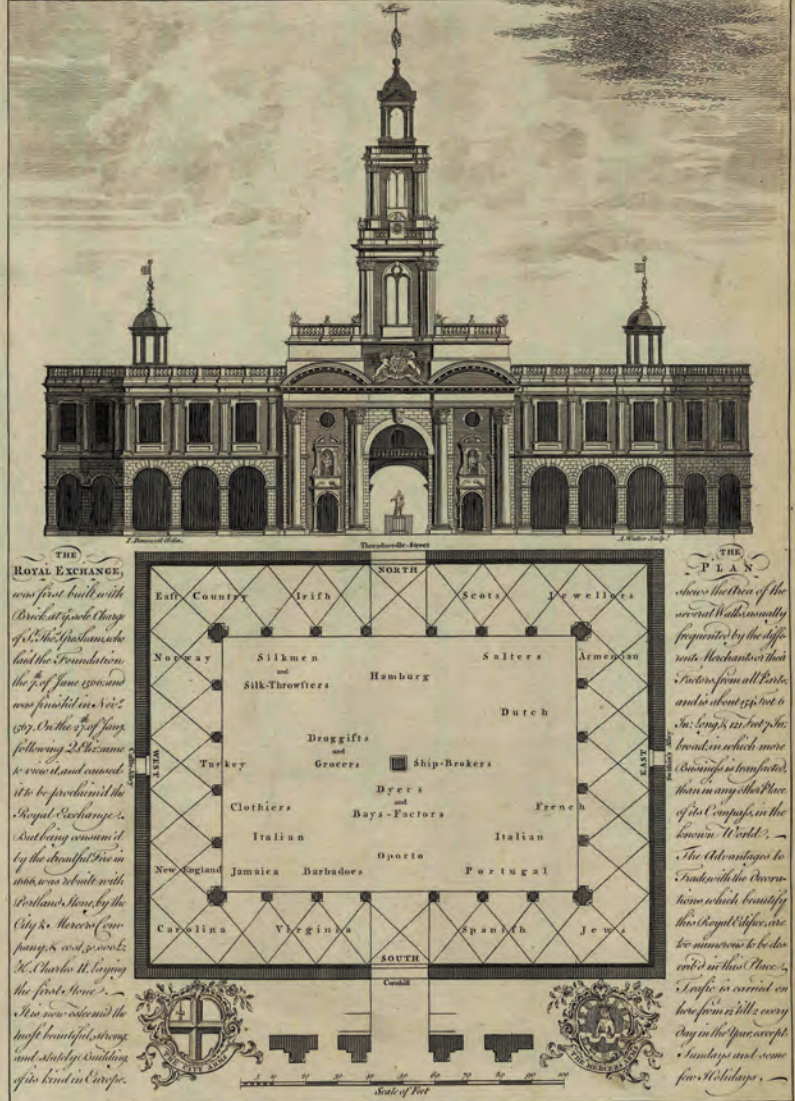
Nathan Rothschild by his customary pillar, in 'The Royal Exchange – Tom pointing out to Jerry a few of the primest features of life in London', Cruikshank.

Despite the importance of the Montefiore-Rothschild connection, the relationship between Moses and Nathan has, until now, been more the stuff of myth than of properly researched history. Together with material now available in the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, the Judendeutsch correspondence between Nathan and his brothers on the continent – Amschel, Salomon, Carl and James – adds a new dimension to our understanding of this relationship.

It is important to note that Montefiore's recovery from the disasters of his early financial career probably owed less to his Rothschild connection than historians have previously thought. When Nathan applied to marry Hannah in 1806, her father Levi Barent Cohen made certain that his future son-in-law owned at least £10,000, and insisted on a thorough examination of his books.³ Levi was dead by the time of Montefiore's marriage in 1812, but Judith still brought him an inheritance of £3,200: her relatives would probably not have permitted the match if they thought him a bad prospect.⁴ The membership records of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' congregation bear out this interpretation. By September 1811 Montefiore was already paying an income-related membership fee of £3 3s 4d, known as *finta*. This placed him in the upper half of *finta*-paying members roughly a year before his marriage.⁵

Undoubtedly, however, the relationship with Nathan made a difference. The two men were contrasting characters. Where Nathan was famously slapdash, Montefiore was meticulous. Where Nathan was daring, imaginative and risky, Montefiore was instinctively cautious. While Nathan was a workaholic, Montefiore found time to join the Surrey Militia, take lessons in the bugle, play cards, learn French, and read the Classics. Despite – maybe because – of their differences, Nathan and Montefiore hit it off immediately. Shortly after their marriage, the Montefiores moved to 4 New Court, St. Swithin's Lane, where they lived next door to Nathan and Hannah.⁶ Not long after this move to New Court, Montefiore began to benefit very substantially from Nathan's financial expertise – for which he was deeply grateful. On 31st August 1813, he added a codicil to his will giving Nathan and Hannah Rothschild, five pounds each for a ring and 'entreating them to continue to my dear Judith the friendship & regard, they have so kindly favoured us with; this is my last & most earnest wish'.⁷ Apart from Judith, his mother

An ELEVATION, PLAN, and HISTORY of the Royal Exchange of LONDON.



Tom & Jerry visitant la Bourse.

Rachel and his brother Abraham, they were the only personal beneficiaries.

By 1814, Nathan was allowing Montefiore to become even more closely involved in his affairs. In addition to their direct involvement in Britain's subsidies to her continental allies, the Rothschilds sought to profit indirectly by speculating on the fluctuations in bond prices.⁸ Russian bonds began to rise in 1814 as an Allied victory seemed increasingly likely, but with the outcome still uncertain, it made sense to try and buy them cheaply if you thought the Allies were likely to win. With this in mind, Nathan sent Montefiore to Paris in March 1814 to stay with his brothers James and Salomon de Rothschild shortly before Napoleon's first abdication. But Montefiore was too late. He reported that Russian Paper (bonds), which was 90 when he arrived, had now risen to 100. He would buy £2000 worth if the price dropped again to 90, but was unenthusiastic at the prospect, concluding: 'alas, this is all I can say with respect to the object of my excursion to this City.'⁹

As Nathan's close associate and neighbour, Montefiore also found himself at the heart of the thrilling events of 1815. He never tired of recalling the day when his brother-in-law woke him at five in the morning with the news that Napoleon had escaped from Elba.¹⁰ 'Hastily dressing himself, he received instructions what sales to effect on the Exchange, and then Mr. Rothschild went to communicate his information to the Ministry.' More prosaically, Montefiore derived substantial benefits from acting as Nathan's broker. In 1816, for instance, Montefiore Brothers sold £150,000 in Exchequer Bills received by Nathan from John Herries, Commissary in Chief of the British Government.¹¹ Montefiore had finally purchased his Broker's Medal in 1815, and on all this business he would have received the customary commission of 1/8%. Indeed, Nathan's brothers worried that he was too generous in the terms on which he did business with the Montefiores. In a letter dated August 1816, Nathan's youngest brother James wrote him from Paris: 'I note with great satisfaction that you have bought £400,000 stocks, but tell me, are you getting commission on it and, if not, where is your profit? That is the most important thing. Or are you working for Montefiore?'¹²

Commission was always welcome to a broker like Montefiore, but he must have found Nathan's government contacts at least equally useful. Acting on Herries' advice in 1816, Nathan invested almost all the firm's capital in 3% consols – a form of perpetual government bond – at prices of about 65.1 and 61.5, which enabled him to make a profit of £250,000 when they rose above 82 after July 1817.¹³ It seems almost certain that Montefiore profited from this excellent tip. James for one thought that Nathan was too indiscreet when dealing with his London associates: '[e]veryone is saying to me, "you are being secretive and your brother tells everything to those who want to hear him." Please, dear Nathan, if you send me a courier with an offer [of stock] then at least don't tell everybody about it'.¹⁴ It is telling that both Montefiore and his brother and business partner Abraham became seriously rich during precisely this period. In September 1815, Moses was assessed to pay *finta* of £8 13s 4d to the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, and Abraham to pay £8 10s. This was steep, but not yet top of the range. By 1819, however, Moses was paying a very high *finta* of £25 and Abraham £23 6s 8d, placing them among the very wealthiest of the Sephardi elite.¹⁵

The years between 1815 and 1817 proved decisive for the relationship between Nathan and the Montefiore brothers. On 23rd August 1815, Abraham married Nathan's sister Henrietta, thereby strengthening the connection. Abraham was a remarkably driven man with a real appetite and talent for business. As late as 1823, when Abraham's energies were already undermined by ill-health, his mother Rachel complained that she had not seen her son for some time, 'such a house of Business as he is in where every room is occupied with it I cannot but think the visits of an Old Woman must be intruding'.¹⁶ Henrietta was an equally strong character; she and the grasping Abraham proved a well-matched pair. In 1817, for instance, Salomon complained that his sister and her husband were too mean to 'sacrifice a shilling and to offer her brother a piece of blackened glass for the occasion of the eclipse of the sun'.¹⁷

An undated letter in Judendeutsch, c.1816, from Henrietta Montefiore to her brother, Nathan Rothschild, concerning her stock purchases.

Henrietta, née Rothschild, the wife of Abraham Montefiore.

When Henrietta and Abraham visited Paris in the spring of that year, they were intent on muscling in on Rothschild business operations. This put James' nose out of joint. 'I paid Montefiore all due respect and attention,' he complained to Nathan, 'but unfortunately I did not give him millions and, worse still, I did not talk to him about *rentes*, for how could I possibly know that this man had come here in order to make a spec as they say now? I had no idea at all and I thought all along he had come to Paris to amuse himself'.¹⁸

James had no objection to using Abraham as a broker, but advised Nathan not to involve his brothers-in-law in the rest of his affairs. If Nathan stuck to doing business with his blood family, James told him, 'you will soon find out who your friends really are, because as soon as the arse lickers see there is nothing more to gain, they will fall away like blood suckers when they have drunk too much blood.' Six months later, Abraham's disastrous visit to Paris continued to rankle. 'You write that when [Abraham Montefiore] is rich enough, with God's help, you will be thanked [but I say] your children are more likely to be given a glass of water', James wrote to Nathan that December.¹⁹ He signed off 'with good wishes from your loving brother who, like all brothers, is the one person you can rely on and whose loyalty and righteousness is more proven than that of a brother-in-law already counting on our brother Amschel's inheritance and working out the quickest way to join us.'

To some extent this was part of a wider problem. Nathan's brothers undoubtedly resented members of their extended family in London for seeking to interfere in family affairs. Writing from Amsterdam to his brothers James and Salomon in Paris, Carl von Rothschild complained: 'Nathan was on his own for too long and has attached himself too closely to others (...)'.²⁰ In 1817, James was therefore delighted to hear from Salomon that he 'did not know London any more'.²¹ Not only that people like [Abraham] Montefiore and Salomon Cohen are no longer discussing the letters, but that not even [Meyer] Davidson is getting them any more'. All this indicates that 1817 was something of a turning point in Nathan Rothschild's business practice – a year in which he decided to focus on the family firm at the expense of his new London relatives.

Moses Montefiore appears to have been more circumspect than the other Rothschild brothers-in-law. Indeed, Salomon went out of his way to describe Moses as 'a fundamentally honest, fine man'.²² The fact that Moses and Abraham had dissolved their partnership in November 1816 may have distanced him from his younger brother's ill-judged activities.²³ An often quoted letter written in early 1818 suggests that Nathan and Moses remained on very friendly terms. 'I am very happy to learn you make as good a Bear as you formerly did a Bull,' he wrote to his brother-in-law Rothschild. '[Y]ou must have had some difficulty with my brother Abraham, indeed it is quite a new character for both, it has one great advantage that while Consoles continue at or above 82 there can be very little to fear, you have beat your antagonists so frequently that I am surprised there are any to be found in the Stock Exchange to oppose you in any considerable operation'.²⁴ Retrospectively, however, the impact of Abraham's behaviour appeared little short of disastrous. When Rothschild died in 1836, Montefiore wrote bitterly: 'NMR was a great & honored friend to Jud & I until Henrietta arrived in England & married Abraham. They may God forgive them destroyed the kind feeling which preceedingly subsisted'.²⁵

This was, of course, an exaggeration. Montefiore and Nathan remained associates throughout the 1820s, famously founding the Alliance Assurance company together in 1824. Abraham died young, but his descendants would marry into the Rothschild family for several generations. Montefiore and Judith remained friendly with Nathan and Hannah, hosting the Rothschild children at their home in Ramsgate and attending the marriage of Lionel and Charlotte in Frankfurt just before Nathan's untimely death. As a member of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' burial society, it fell to Montefiore to watch over Nathan's body as it was transported back to his London home. Family ties remained warm, but in matters of business Montefiore was no longer a member of Nathan's inner circle. Where once this had included his London brothers-

in-law – not just Moses and Abraham but also Meyer Davidson and Salomon Cohen – now, he and his four continental brothers preferred to manage their business from behind closed doors.

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- 1 ‘Grand Vizierial Note, Addressing the Chief Secretary at the Imperial Palace, and Requesting an Imperial Command’, Irade-Mesail-i Mühimme 1005/1, Ottoman Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive (1840).
- 2 Ahmed Naciri, *Al Istiqsa Li Akhbhar Dunwal Al Maghrib Al Aqsa* (Casablanca: Dar Al Kitab, 1956), 112–15.
- 3 Lucien Wolf, *Sir Moses Montefiore. A Centennial Biography, with Extracts from Letters and Journals* (London: John Murray, 1884), 21.
- 4 ‘Will of Levy Barent Cohen, 17 June 1808’, Prob/11/1480, The National Archives (1808). More generally see Herbert H. Kaplan, *Nathan Mayer Rothschild and the Creation of a Dynasty. The Critical Years 1806–1816* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 6–10.
- 5 List of Finta Payments for the Following Three Years: Aug. 28, 1806, Aug. 24, 1809, MB Mahamad, Kislev 5563–1802 to Nisan 5571–1811, MS109, uncat B07/085, ff.149–153, 278–282; Sept. 3, 1811 MB of the Mahamad, Kislev 5571–1811 to Elul 5578–1818, MS110, uncat B07/085, ff.15–20, Records of the Spanish & Portuguese Jews’ Congregation (S&P), London Metropolitan Archive (LMA).
- 6 Louis Loewe, ed., *Diaries of Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore, Comprising Their Life and Work as Recorded in Their Diaries from 1812 to 1883*, vol.1 (London: Griffith Farran Okeden & Welsh, 1890), 18.
- 7 Small Brown Book starting with MM’s Will, Ellul 5, 5573, Arthur Sebag-Montefiore Archive (ASM), Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies.
- 8 See Kaplan, *Rothschild*, chap. 5.
- 9 MM to Nathan Rothschild, 9 March 1814, Folder 1, Hartley Library, University of Southampton (HL).
- 10 Wolf, *Montefiore*, 23–24.
- 11 Certificate of Attestation, February 1816[?], issued by Montefiore Brothers & Jo & Geo Van Sommer. Herries Papers, Add. 57380 f.70, British Library (BL).
- 12 James to Nathan and Salomon, 17 August 1816, RAL XI/109/5/2/130.
- 13 Ferguson, *World’s Banker*, 126–129.
- 14 James to Nathan and Salomon, 17 August 1816, RAL XI/109/5/2/130.
- 15 List of Finta Payments for the Following Three Years: 19 September 1815, MB Mahamad, Kislev 5571–1811 to Elul 5578–1818, MS110, uncat B07/085, ff.176–179, S&P, LMA.
- 16 Rachel Montefiore, 18 March 1823, to MM and JM, ASM.
- 17 Salomon and James to Nathan, 19 May 1817, RAL XI/T27/256.
- 18 James to Nathan, 19 May 1817, RAL XI/109/7.
- 19 Salomon, PS from James to Nathan, 29 December 1817, RAL XI/109/8/2/134.
- 20 Carl to Salomon and James, 11 November 1815, RAL XI/109/3/1/48.
- 21 James to Nathan, 19 May 1817, RAL XI/109/7/1/45.
- 22 Cited after Lipman, ‘Victorian Gentleman’, 14.
- 23 LD, 7, 21.
- 24 MM to Nathan, 10 February 1818, Folder 1, HL.
- 25 August 8, 1836, Loose leaf, MMJ, ASM.



Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild: creator and collector

Dr Ulrich Leben, a member of the research team exploring the contributions made by members of the Rothschild family to the cultural life of France, presents a summary of the life and collections of Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild.

opposite

The Temple of Love in the gardens at the Musée Ephrussi Rothschild.
(Lionel de Rothschild)

I hereby bequeath to the Institut de France, for the Académie des Beaux-Arts, the Villa Ile de France, in Saint Jean Cap Ferrat, together with all the works of art and furniture, and the gardens surrounding the villa, for the purposes of creating a museum ... To this new museum, I bequeath all my works of art, whether in Paris, 19, avenue Foch, or in the Villa Soleil and the Villa Rose de France in Monte Carlo: paintings, furniture, porcelain, tapestry, etc. It is my wish that as much as possible the museum keeps its current appearance as a salon, and that the valuable pieces are kept behind glass.

Thus read the clause in Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild's will, which secured the future of her art collection, now in the legendary Musée Ephrussi Rothschild on the Cote d'Azur. However, despite thousands of visitors to the villa every year, by Rothschild standards comparatively little is known of the extraordinary woman who devised this collection and its setting. By piecing together small details from various sources a more vivid picture of Béatrice emerges.¹

Béatrice de Rothschild was born in Paris on 14 September 1864, the daughter of Alphonse de Rothschild and his wife Leonora, and the granddaughter of James, founder of the French branch of the family, and his wife, the celebrated society hostess Betty. In 1883 she married Maurice Ephrussi (1849–1916), who was himself a member of a banking family originating in Russia.²

Following their marriage the couple divided their time between Paris and their country properties.³ Maurice had a vast stud at chateau de Reux, Pont l'Eveque; Béatrice, with a well-documented penchant for gambling, was a regular visitor to the Deauville casino. Having no children the couple were inveterate travellers, passing many months on board their yacht in the waters of Europe and beyond.

In spite of the fact that she had always lived without financial worries it was the inheritance that she received on the death of her father in 1905 that seems to have been the catalyst for Béatrice's building projects. In the very year of his death she acquired one of Cap Ferrat's most beautiful sites and began the construction of the villa Ile de France

Tired of sitting at the gaming table in Monte Carlo, she wished to breathe some fresh air and went to Cap Ferrat's uplands. There, she stepped out of her car. She enjoyed the slight slope, which went up through the olive, pistachio, and pine trees, and suddenly she found herself at the top of a hill, from where she could set her sights, simultaneously, on a double bay: the harbour of Villefranche and the bay of Beaulieu, and there she thought: 'this landscape is equivalent to the Inland Sea in Japan, the most beautiful site in the world: water, mountains, reflections, horizons, I want it'.

It is in these words, and using a perfectly imaginary description, albeit well suited to the spirit of the time and of its author, that Elisabeth de Gramont recounted the heart-stopping experience which would create the impetus for the construction of the Villa Ile de France.⁴

Indeed, Béatrice conceived her property, which overlooks the sea on three of its sides, as a liner drifting along the quiet Mediterranean waters, the house opening onto a gigantic bridge



left
Béatrice Ephrussi.
An autochrome portrait
from the Albert Kahn
collection.
(Musée Albert-Kahn –
Département des Hauts-
de-Seine)

opposite
A rare photograph of
Béatrice de Rothschild
in her youth.

ending with a prow-like figure and leading to a Temple of Love, the last focal point before the eye met the sea. The villa shares its name with the luxurious ship of the French Line, *Ile de France* on which Béatrice had travelled so extensively.

In order to make her dreams come true, she spared herself no expense nor did she make any compromise. She requested detailed information, ordered, organised and refined her decisions using plans and life-sized models which she dismantled and reassembled several times, depending on aesthetic or technical modifications. Her presence at site meetings shows a commitment to her work that is typical of the greatest building commissioners. She had the reputation of being a difficult client. As are all works by great creators, *Ile de France* is the result of a number of decisions driven by the visionary spirit of an aesthete whose financial means were almost unlimited.

A plethora of architects was consulted and worked towards the creation of this magical piece. Paul-Henri Népoux (1853–1934), architect of the Hôtel Meurice, Charles Girault (1851–1933), architect of the Petit-Palais and consulted by Edouard de Rothschild in 1905 for the manor in Gouvieux, Edouard Niermans (1859–1928), decorator in vogue in Monte-Carlo, Walter-André Destailleur, Aaron Messiah, Ernest Sanson, René Sergent, and Marcel Auburtin (1872–1926), who won the prize of Rome in 1898, are cases in point. This roll call of names demonstrates that Béatrice was very well informed and sought the best talent available.



It was Auburtin who, with a rather academic meticulousness, completed the overall plans for the house. Messiah then proceeded to go back to Auburtin's work and change everything. This situation was probably brought about by Béatrice herself as she enjoyed these constant changes. In addition, as she acquired new items, such as panelling, this often led to a change of plans and made the task nigh on impossible. Auburtin and his fellows may either have been forced, or relieved, to hand the project over to others.⁵

After the completion of the structural works in 1911, the Villa and its illustrious occupants enjoyed several years of splendour, with lavish parties, and visits from society figures.⁶ Following the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 and even after the death of Maurice in 1916, Béatrice continued working on her ambitious building projects in St Jean Cap Ferrat albeit at a slightly less frenetic pace. Indeed, her sights turned to a new adventure: the acquisition of a number of adjacent villas in Monte Carlo. These were renovated and partly rebuilt and surrounded with themed gardens linking them to one another. One of the main reasons for choosing this spot seems to have been the proximity of the casino, a favourite haunt, sparing the late-night journey home to Cap Ferrat. This new project still occupied her throughout the last few years of her life. When she died in 1934, in Davos in Switzerland, extension and decoration works were underway in her houses and gardens in Monte Carlo.

As far as decorating and furnishing her houses were concerned, Béatrice was true to her family's taste for period furniture and decorative elements from the eighteenth century. While the Villa Ile de France formed the backdrop for Béatrice's entertaining, surviving drawings of the Monte Carlo villas indicate that these would have lent themselves to rather more intimate events. A few details perfectly exemplify Béatrice's exacerbated interest for aesthetic exploration and prove that she was a genuine creator: in the Ile de France, mirrors reflect the sea as well as giving to the Temple of Love a magical effect; in Monaco, she planned the construction of a canal complete with pink marble steps, light and water effects, and a mirror reflecting the whole garden. Towards the end of her life however, she moved away from this concept focusing on the outdoors, and converted her gardens in Monte Carlo by creating a series of small spaces with different themes, patios and walled gardens, thus creating an intimate atmosphere very much focusing on the interior.

As well as being art enthusiasts, collectors, and sumptuous hosts, the Rothschilds were also great commissioners, and they created enchanting atmospheres. Béatrice was true to this heritage, which she handled in the same way as her parents, uncles, aunts, and cousins did: Ferrières, Mentmore, Waddesdon Manor, Vienna, and in Paris the private hotels of rue Laffitte, Faubourg Saint Honoré, avenue Foch, rue de Monceau, rue Berryer, to name but a few.⁷

In the Villa Ile de France, beyond family traditions, Béatrice's personality was an essential and fundamental factor in the choice of the architects, landscape gardeners, and in the much more personal decisions relating to the decoration and works of art. The variety and number of items was limitless: they comprised all the most beautiful and precious pieces.

To display her treasures, Béatrice used her vivid imagination, which was thoughtful, detailed, and original, very much reflecting how fond she was of her collection. Along with eclecticism, technical modernity was an additional proof of her originality and determination. A good example of this at the Ile de France is the metal structure supporting the villa's roof, flanked with a suspended, wooden canopy, covered with plaster and held together with hundreds of iron threads, forming an interesting mix of techniques and set-like pieces, and which Béatrice was determined to complete, even if this meant using all the state of the art techniques and means at her disposal to achieve her aims. It was above all, a liking for contrasts as well as a taste for aesthetics and harmony, which led Béatrice to confront all difficulties: lush gardens in the Mediterranean, imported urban environments, a search for airiness, brightness and light in a sunny country where shade and coolness were traditionally sought.

The Rothschild Archive London has been a valuable source of evidence for study of the villas. There is a lack of archival evidence related to the acquisition, payment, or remittances, of work and objects, which limits considerably the possibility of carrying out a detailed analysis. However, as with the study of other famous collections, it is often the pieces themselves which carry information and offer a useful testimony. Consequently, the archives repatriated a few years ago from Russia to The Rothschild Archive in London are a significant source.⁸ Photographs of buildings and artefacts, brought back by Italian merchants of Florence, Rome and Naples, and showing architectural stonework used as models for moulds from castings during the construction of the villa, are of particular interest. As far as the original elements themselves are concerned, they were preserved naturally, and a number of them were part of the stone garden. Even after the war, Béatrice continued to use her network of informers to search for original elements. Thus during the design of the Spanish garden in Monte Carlo, it is Lambert, a merchant from Paris, who sent photographs and sketches for the installation of an ogival window, which was purchased by Béatrice.⁹

Research for a monograph on the Villa Ephrussi¹⁰ has shown that Béatrice was a keen auction enthusiast, which was unusual for a Rothschild. Many of her collections were bought at public auctions and she, in turn, had no hesitation to return to the auction house, not always successfully, in an effort to renew her collections, as was the case for the Louis XVI salon from

The Musée Ephrussi
Rothschild in 1996.
(Lionel de Rothschild)



Parmantier, a workshop from Lyon.¹¹ Additionally we find in the 1934 inventories that apart from a few key pieces there were only a few works of art remaining which stemmed from her father's inheritance; the majority were probably exchanged within the family, or sold in order to purchase others. However, where her favourite areas were concerned, there were no restrictions, and it seems that Béatrice made cumulative purchases, as suggested by the inventories of her porcelain (from Europe and Asia) and textiles collections.¹² Among the documents found in the Fond Laprade, which relate to the setting up of the Monte Carlo houses, there is evidence of orders placed to Jean Dunand, the lacquer artist, which testify that Béatrice was open to contemporary creations.

Béatrice collected wrought iron which often originated in Italy or Spain. Only in 1934 part of it was displayed in the patio. The greatest part of the collection being in deposit, this was only uncovered during the Institute's works to turn the villa into a museum.¹³

The panels incorporated into the villa are but a fraction of the material Béatrice had purchased, and it is not surprising that many stories exist of purchases which cannot be substantiated, and she is often quoted as making purchases for which unfortunately we no longer have any evidence. For example, Hector Lefuel cited Béatrice as having bought the panelling in 'la chambre à glaces' (the mirror room) which Joséphine Bonaparte had installed in her room, located in the attic of her house on the rue Chantereine.¹⁴ Evidence of a number of other style and period panelling appears when reading documents related to the bequest.¹⁵



left
Béatrice's villa with its original colour scheme, in a postcard from the 1960s.

opposite
The official letter accepting Béatrice's bequest to the Institut de France.

The furniture collection currently exhibited at the Villa Ephrussi today was for the most part put together by Béatrice and her husband but also consists of a few pieces inherited from family members. The origin of the greatest part of this furniture remains a mystery, as the archival sources are lacking. By reading the few documents available at The Rothschild Archive, it is possible to recognise a number of pieces stemming from the paternal inheritance in Paris. It has been possible to identify other objects in the sales catalogues or even publications of the time.

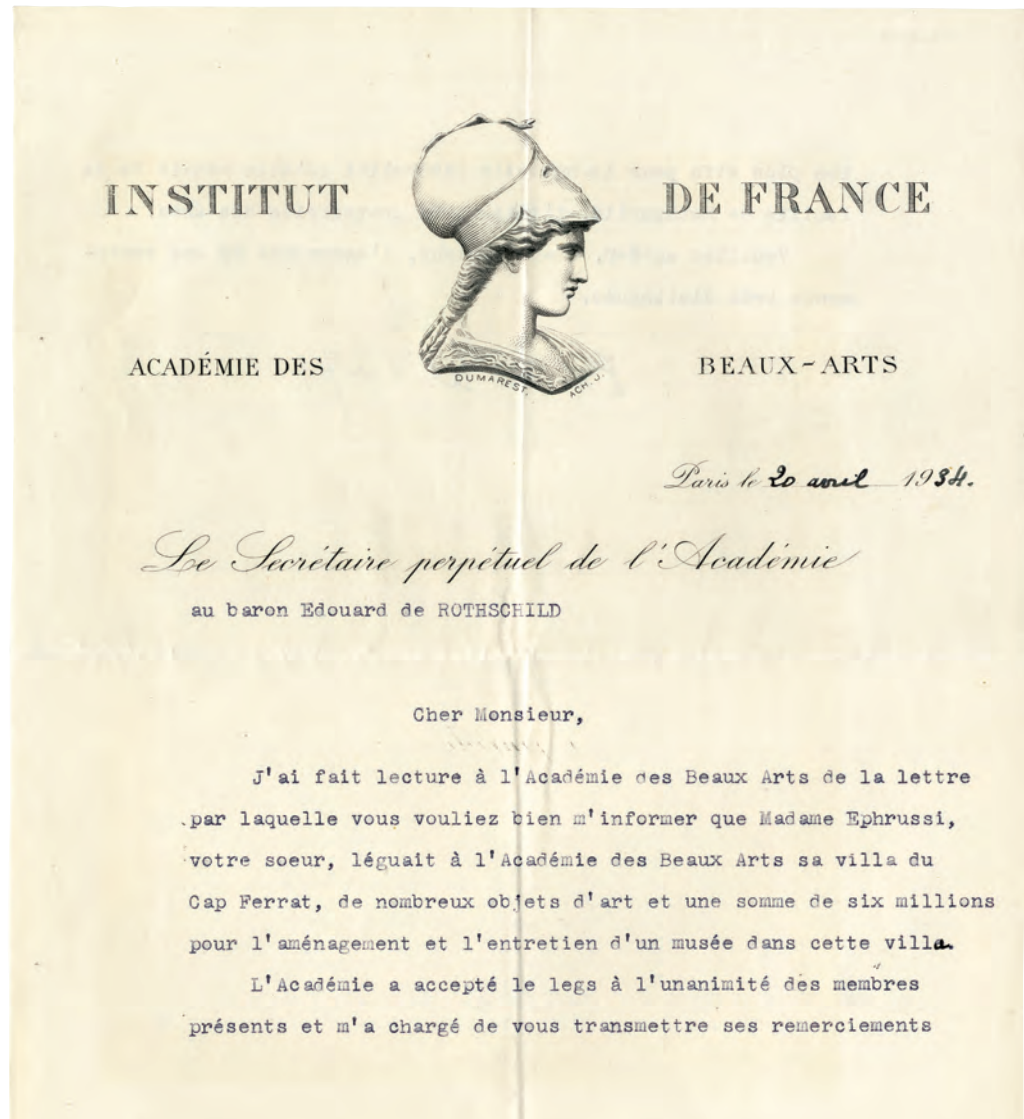
Part of the beautiful collection of paintings which Béatrice assembled during her life as a collector is still to be found in the Saint Jean Cap Ferrat villa.

By contrast to Alphonse de Rothschild, who, throughout his life, put together one of the most beautiful private collections of paintings in France, among which the famous *Astronomer*, by Vermeer, his daughter did not take to collecting works by great masters. It even seems that she discarded most of the antique and Dutch paintings, which she had inherited from her father. These were not recorded in the 1934 inventories, and they are no longer present in the villa.¹⁶

It is very possible, on the other hand, that the few impressionist paintings present in the Baroness's collection, were acquired by her husband, who gained an interest in this genre from his brother. Therefore it seems that Béatrice favoured paintings which were rather decorative and in pleasant colours, characteristic of the eighteenth century, such as works by Lancret or Schall, or drawings by Fragonard.

Béatrice's liking for colours is best illustrated by the extraordinary collection of polychrome arabesque wood panels and dated end of the 18th century, which she put together herself, and of which there exist no equivalent in France. Béatrice really took pleasure in creating these light, easy on the eye environments, and dedicated herself entirely to designing them. The way in which the paintings are placed in the villa, mirrors the way in which they are arranged in the Paris house. Hence the arrangement in the Louis XV salon of the villa, mostly reflects the arrangement of the pink salon in Paris.

Just a year after writing her will, Béatrice de Rothschild died, aged 70, in Switzerland in the Hôtel d'Angleterre in Davos. Her body was carried to Paris by undertakers Henri de Borniod and the burial took place on 11 April in the Père Lachaise cemetery. On the same day, the notary sent a message to the Académie des Beaux-Arts, informing it of the last will and testament of the Baroness. A few days later, on 15 April, the Institut was made aware of the bequest.¹⁷ A handwritten note on a letter addressed to Edouard de Rothschild, Béatrice's brother, by Charles



Le Secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie
au baron Edouard de ROTHSCHILD

Cher Monsieur,

J'ai fait lecture à l'Académie des Beaux Arts de la lettre
par laquelle vous vouliez bien m'informer que Madame Ephrussi,
votre soeur, léguait à l'Académie des Beaux Arts sa villa du
Cap Ferrat, de nombreux objets d'art et une somme de six millions
pour l'aménagement et l'entretien d'un musée dans cette villa.

L'Académie a accepté le legs à l'unanimité des membres
présents et m'a chargé de vous transmettre ses remerciements

les plus vifs pour la nouvelle libéralité qu'elle reçoit de la
famille de Rothschild, l'inlassable protectrice des arts.

Veuillez agréer, cher Monsieur, l'assurance de mes senti-
ments très distingués.

Ph M W. T. J.

M. Widor permanent secretary of the Académie, reveals that she had made her intentions clear four years earlier. On the same day, Widor went to Faubourg saint Honoré, no. 41, the address of Baron Edmond and Baroness Adelheid de Rothschild, and delivered the news. They had not been aware of their niece's generosity.

On 20 April 1934 Widor informed Edouard de Rothschild of the acceptance of the bequest by the Académie and the nomination of M. Albert Tournaire as a curator of the collection. After the opening of the coffers and the inventory of the silver, the general inventory was carried out.

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the collection, in all its originality and unique character, deserves a new light to be cast upon it. It would be wonderful if this brief exposé generates an interest in revisiting Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild's bequest.

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NOTES

- 1 The author only knows of a few portraits of Béatrice, in addition to that which most commonly appears in publications. At the villa Ephrussi, a relief portrait of Béatrice (posthumous) is also to be found; it is in a Louis XVI frame and was made by sculptor Paul Belmondo (1898–1982), MS 2842.
- 2 On marrying Maurice, Béatrice acquired Russian nationality, which she renounced in 1917 following her husband's death.
- 3 The couple first lived at rue de Berri and then at 19 Avenue du Bois (later renamed Avenue Foch.)
- 4 Elisabeth de Gramont, 'Au Cap-Ferrat, Un lieu plein de noblesse et de magnificence domaine la Côte "L'Île de France"', in *Nice – Matin*, Friday 24 December 1948, p. 5.
- 5 Changing projects while they were still underway was common within the family. Indeed, we know that Ferdinand de Rothschild changed his project for the red salon in Waddesdon Manor as he bought new pieces which he thought were more suited to the theme, a tribute to Louis XIV. Bruno Pons, *Architecture and Panelling: The James A. de Rothschild Bequest at Waddesdon Manor* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 1996), cat. 48–53, p. 357.
- 6 Research on great parties at the villa is still to be carried out using the local press of the time. A memorial stone located on the terrace in front of Madame Ephrussi's apartment commemorates the King of Sweden's visit in 1912.
- 7 Pauline Prevost Marcilhacy, *Les Rothschild bâtisseurs et mécènes*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1996).
- 8 RAL OE 313, 405.
- 9 RAL OE 405.
- 10 Michael Steve, *Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild* (Nice: Andacia Editions, 2008), p. 121.
- 11 Pierre-François Dayot, *Suite de huit fautenils ... , La Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild* (Paris: Les Editions de l'Amateur, 2003), p. 196.
- 12 RAL OE 341.
- 13 RAL OE 405. Reference to 83 wrought iron pieces.
- 14 '... paintings on a yellow background enlivened by light lilac foliage, and au naturel butterflies'. Hector Lefuel, *François-Honoré-Georges Jacob-Desmalter, Ebéniste de Napoléon 1er et de Louis XVIII*, (Paris: Editions Albert Morancé, 1926), p. 52. Another description is known of it, showing the ultimate refinement of her conception, comparable to the that which existed at the end of the Ancien Régime: '... this room with an alcove, all decorated with mirrors used as [tenures – should this be 'tenTures'?]: these would go from the floor to the ceiling, framed by a series of small columns topped with birds, which created a genuine, circular, facettes mirror enabling the visitor to view themselves from all angles ... the inside of the alcove was decorated with paintings featuring tropical flowers and birds.' Aubenas 'Joséphine' Paris 18 ...; I would like to thank Monsieur Bernard Chevallier and Monsieur Guillaume Seret for letting me have this piece of information.
- 15 A series of Renaissance sculpted panels, 'dans le box' Avenue Foch in 1934, and panelling purchased by Baron Edouard de Rothschild in 1941. These consist of five series of panelling comprising three Louis XVI series, an Italian piece of panelling, and Louis XVI-style panelling purchased from the Maison Jansen. List: Pieces belonging to Baron Edouard de Rothschild and acquired by the Beaux-Arts in 1941, (copy RAL).
- 16 Paintings bequeathed to Madame Ephrussi, *Paturage*, by Paul Potter, *Cavaliers*, by Ph. Wouwerman, *Vue de ville* by Van der Heyden, a painting by Gérard Dou (untitled), Codicil, Alphonse de Rothschild 29 December 1897, RAL OE 341.
- 17 To the Beaux Arts, Madame Maurice Ephrussi bequeathed her Cap Ferrat villa, together with a capital of six million francs, to turn it into a museum, in *L'Intransigeant*, 16 April 1934, RAL OE 341.

The Rothschild school in the Austrian woods: Albert and Bettina's Kinderasyl

The Rothschild Kinderasyl or 'Children Asylum' was a special kind of boarding school situated in Lower Austria between 1878 and 1945. This institution represents a unique example of the Rothschild family's involvement with local communities. Julia Demmer describes her qualitative study with former pupils remembering this unique Rothschild foundation.

A commitment to social responsibility was of high importance for the Rothschild family. The Rothschild Archive research project *Jewish Philanthropy and Social Development in Europe 1800–1940* and the work of Heuberger/Spiegel in their studies on Jewish Zedakah¹ demonstrate this strong strand running through the business and personal interests of the Rothschilds. Welfare institutions have been founded in many places where the Rothschilds lived and worked.

One of these places is Austria. Famous institutions had been established in Vienna, such as a home at Rosenhügel, a hospital in the ninth district and an institution for the deaf and blind at the Hohe Warte.² A less well-known enterprise was the 'Kinderasyl' or Children Asylum in Göstling/Ybbs, Lower Austria. While the building still exists, almost no written records, except short paragraphs in older local books, are extant. Up to now there has been no research to explore this particular institution and its relationship with families of the area. The lack of written or archival sources made the use of qualitative biographical research and contemporary witness evidence inevitable.

In 1820/21, Baron Salomon Mayer von Rothschild (1774–1855) first arrived in Vienna as one of the five sons of the famous Mayer Amschel Rothschild of Frankfurt. Complex negotiations with the House of Rothschild for a large loan to raise finances for the Austrian State demanded the full-time presence of a Rothschild in Vienna, and thus Salomon Mayer moved to the city and established a bank there – S M von Rothschild. Subsequent Rothschild operations in Vienna included investment in the country's railway network, and mercantile trade in the shipment of commodities such as cotton, sugar and tobacco. Through these banking activities, Salomon established himself as a major financier and industrialist, receiving a grant of nobility (along with his brothers) in 1822 from Emperor Francis I of Austria. Salomon was the first Jew in Austria to gain full citizenship and become a significant property owner. At his death in 1855 he was one of the major landowners in Europe.

Baron Albert von Rothschild (1844–1911) was the grandson of Salomon. In 1875 Albert bought a large property in the south of Lower Austria near to the Styrian boarder between Göstling, Lackenhof, and Gaming, which he shared with his wife Bettina (1858–1892) whom he had married in 1876. The region is mountainous and densely wooded and the Rothschild family established a big forestry enterprise as well as hunting estates and country residences in the Tyrolean style. The property was divided into five administrative areas, Waidhofen, Gaming, Göstling, Hollenstein and Langau. When Albert died in 1911 his sons Alphonse and Louis inherited the property: Alphonse and his wife Clarice inherited Langau and Gaming and Louis received Göstling, Hollenstein and Waidhofen.

In the Göstling region the Rothschild estate provided work for over 600 employees, mainly forestry workers who lived in often very poor conditions in remote areas of the domain. To support the workers the Rothschild family established various social institutions in the region, including the Kinderasyl, established in 1878 by Albert's wife Bettina, and a home for the elderly



this page
Albert and Bettina
von Rothschild.

The fathers of the children
living in the Kinderasyl
were mainly woodworkers
and lumberjacks at the
Rothschild estate.
(Leopoldine Egger, *Vom
Urwald zum Siedlungsraum*)

opposite
The Rothschild hunting
lodge in Steinbach (near
Göstling) c.1905.
(Georg Perschl,
Private Collection)



in Gaming. The conditions of employment by the Rothschilds were of high standard for the period. Depending on the status of employment, hunters, forest rangers, woodworkers and lumberjacks received different benefits from their Rothschild employers, but every worker was provided at least a shelter or small dwelling which was maintained regularly. They were also provided with a certain amount of firewood and electric bulbs for free. Employees were able to purchase everyday goods at cost price. Even local people who did not work directly for the Rothschild family had the advantages of the social employer, as in wintertime free meals were served to all children of some villages and warm clothes were given out. Above all, the benefit of a secure job with the Rothschilds was most valuable in a scarcely populated area in hard times.

The Rothschilds had a reputation as tough but fair masters. Stealing was not uncommon among employees in this tough environment. Baron Alphonse was well aware of this, and was tolerant of pilferage by poorer employees but could not stand employees of higher grade getting rich at the expense of poorer ones, expressed in his sentiment – ‘I don’t care about mice, but about rats!’

In the Lower Austrian region, the name of Rothschild is associated with prosperous and successful business and public social philanthropy. The Kinderasyl is a good example of the typical female philanthropy in the Rothschild family tradition. Bettina, and later her daughter-in-law Clarice, maintained personal interest in the Kinderasyl. When the family stayed in the region (mainly during the hunting season), the Baronesses took the opportunity to visit the Kinderasyl. During the year, the Director of the Kinderasyl Ms. Saxeneder (and from 1918/19 Mrs. Henöckl) looked after the institution, together with an administrator in Waidhofen. Visits by Baroness Clarice were memorable, as one of the children recalls:

I kissed her hand, Clarice’s hand, one day. This was, when she visited the Asylum one day. This happened occasionally, about every one or two years. Anyway, at that day the Baroness came and we were of course washed and dressed neatly. And then she was sitting outside, beneath the linden tree and we had to stand there in a row and had to kiss her hand. I can remember this very well, we were very excited. And then we got presents and a snack. This was outside, beneath the linden tree, there were benches and we got hot chocolate and a cake, I remember this very well. But I can remember just one time, that she came, but I think she must have come more often.³





The Kinderasyl exerted a strong influence on the life of the workers' and their families. Children of the asylum were able to attend school regularly, an activity which could not be taken for granted at that time in that region. Many families had great difficulties in overcoming the distance to school in this mountainous area and the cost of providing school equipment and clothes was prohibitive. Children had the opportunity to live in the Kinderasyl from where they could easily attend the local village school in Göstling/Ybbs. The children received proper nutrition, and individual care for a very low monthly fee together with regular schooling. They received school equipment and seasonable clothes for every day use as well as a Sunday dress. Many received their first pair of shoes through the Kinderasyl.

To put a child in the Kinderasyl parents had to pay five Schilling for one month. This was approximately equivalent to the daily wage of a woodworker and therefore relatively inexpensive. Other families who did not work for the Rothschilds had to pay one Schilling to a family in the village for one overnight stay of the child. A woman of the region explained that she had a high number of missing schooldays because her father could not afford to pay for overnight stays very often.

The Kinderasyl was a unique institution. It was not a usual kind of boarding school because the children came from rather poor families. Boarding schools in Austria at this time were usually connected to the church, expensive, or reserved for exceptionally gifted pupils. The Kinderasyl was different and did not meet any of those criteria. The institution was not connected to any particular religious belief, charged relatively modest fees and was open to all children of the Rothschilds' employees regardless of talent or status of the parents. It was neither a children's home nor orphanage in the typical way, because the pupils mostly came from stable families. The Kinderasyl might be seen as a kind of social boarding school. Despite the benefits the Kinderasyl provided, it was a very hard challenge for children to leave home and family at such a very young age for long periods of time. The children were aged six when they started and normally returned home just four times a year. This was a tough burden at a young age and influenced their whole life.

Pupils of the Kinderasyl
with their director
Ms Saxeneder and
female helpers c.1905.
(Andrew Demmer,
Private Collection)



Pupils of the Kinderasyl
with their director
Mrs Juliane Henöckl
(in the front with dog)
and female helpers
(back row) c.1937/38.
(Gisela Buder,
Private Collection)

To gain an insight into the life and impact of the Kinderasyl the writer carried out interviews with twelve people who visited the Kinderasyl between 1925 and 1945 and two other people with strong connections with the institution. The surviving witnesses were traced through personal contact and with the help of local people and local authorities. Interviews with former pupils had been recorded by the son of one of them for a radio broadcast with the Austrian radio station Ö1 in 1998,⁴ and these further informed this research. Interviews for this study followed oral history conventions, and were conducted and recorded in a private setting. After transcription and analysis the interviewees had the opportunity to review the texts before they were published. Data derived from oral-biographical interviews needs careful consideration. Oral material can never be seen as evidence of truth. Biographical material offers individual perspectives into the memory of a person at a specific time. Consequently oral interviews give insight into individual memories, feelings, and patterns of dealing with experiences. The interviews studied here offer a unique image of a special institution and life-circumstances of the children of Rothschild employees during 1925 and 1945 in the region of Lower Austria.

Part of the research was the examination of the everyday life and education experiences of the children together with the role of the educators, and the life-long significance of their childhood experiences. The evaluation showed that the children benefited from highly individual learning during a special time in their lives. A key finding was the importance of the personality of the educators for individual child development set against often harsh personal circumstances. The role and importance of peers during hard times were reflected in the interviews and the study compared learning and discipline with other times, and concluded that in the Kinderasyl comparatively modern educational methods were put into practice. For example the day was structured with well planned learning and leisure time, and children had one hour every day in the evening to let off steam by being allowed to run around screaming in the house!

Another aim of the investigation was to preserve individual memories and reinforce the message 'Don't forget the past!' This study supports oral memories of 'ordinary' people with their specific experiences, and is also an important tribute to the history of the Rothschild



banking family and their notable contribution in social institutions all over the world. The social commitment of the Rothschild banking family seen in the Kinderasyl was of huge importance to the life of a large number of children in the Lower Austrian Region at that time. A significant passage of one interview, concerning a personal thank-you to the Rothschilds, highlights this lasting memory. The reminiscence below shows on the one hand the personal gratitude in the memory of an interviewee towards a member of the Rothschild family, but also the fact that a child of a rather poor family in Lower Austria made their way to Switzerland to work there. Regular school attendance and the relative stability of the Kinderasyl could be one of the reasons of this individual's success, made possible through the social commitment of the Rothschild family.

The Kinderasyl in 2000.
(Leopoldine Egger, *Vom
Urwald zum Siedlungsraum*)

The grave in Prilly this is a suburb of Lausanne near to the lake of Geneva. There is a big, old, Jewish cemetery. I was often there when I used to live there. It is a quite simple grave, yes and I also pulled up weeds when I went there. And instead of flowers there are stones lying on the grave. I never took flowers. I always looked for a stone. I was there several times, even after my retirement I came to Prilly. And I was not just because of the Kinderasyl there. I also came because of what she did in wintertime in Lackenhof. Clarice always organised a cooky in wintertime, to make soup for us children. Without that soup, I do not know if I would have made my way home every day. Therefore I thought many times thank you Clarice for the soup, thank you.⁵

In 1938, with the takeover of power by the Nazi regime the Rothschilds were dispossessed of all their properties. The Kinderasyl was taken over by the National Socialists but continued to operate as a kind of boarding school until 1945. After the Second World War, Louis Rothschild disclaimed his former properties and consigned them to the Austrian Republic. Alphonse died in exile, but his wife Clarice took back their properties in Lackenhof and Langau and continued to run the forest enterprise after the war. Her daughter Bettina Rothschild-Looram still lives in the region today. The former Kinderasyl building still stands in the village of Göstling/Ybbs, a lasting reminder of this unique and individual social enterprise.

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NOTES

- 1 Georg Heuberger; Spiegel, Paul, *Zedakah. Jüdische Sozialarbeit im Wandel der Zeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: E. Henssler KG., 1993).
- 2 Kurt Pfeiller. *Die Österreichische Linie der Familie Rothschild* (Lunz am See: self published, 1955, pp.25–8) and Ruth Kobizek, Gernot Schnabert, *Rothschild Stiftung. Neurologie Rosenhügel* (Vienna: Verein Memo, self published, 2002, p.25).
- 3 Gisela Buder (Interviewee), interview fragment translated into English by Julia Demmer.
- 4 Ernst Gerhard Weber, *Hörbilder Eisenstrasse: Die Mäuse machen mir nichts aber die Ratten* (CD broadcast from the Austrian radio station Ö1, 1998).
- 5 Maria Schuhleitner (Interviewee), Interview fragment translated into English by Julia Demmer.



The Racing Rothschilds: the sportsmen, the maverick and the legend

In 1909 a horse called Bomba won the coveted Ascot Gold Cup under the blue and gold colours of James de Rothschild. Diana Stone's essay celebrates that victory and explores how the Rothschilds' successes and conduct within the Sport of Kings helped strengthen their position in a society where Jewish members could often count on an uphill struggle for acceptance.

*Hannah,
Mayer de Rothschild's
champion filly.*

The world of the Turf is a kaleidoscope of colour and action, speed and tension, with occasionally the satisfaction of victory, but often the misery of defeat. Horseracing is a great leveller – merchants and gentry, farmers and aristocrats, financiers and future kings – anyone, even the most distant outsider, has a chance to win. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a successful race-horse breeder and owner was a celebrity, and the racing public and the press took him to their hearts. Triumphs in racing brought the added benefit of association with cosmopolitan society.

The Rothschild family's entry onto the racing scene began in 1835, when Baron James de Rothschild (1792–1868) established racing stables at Ferrières, his estate outside Paris.¹ Remaining first and foremost a banker, Baron James set the standard for achievement on the Turf, counting victories in two of the major races of his day – the 1839 French St. Leger at Chantilly, and the Grand Prix Royal in 1844. Although racing was only a diversion for him, Baron James's stables were successful enough for him to leave a thriving operation to his two sons, Alphonse and Gustave. Following his death they expanded it to include a breeding farm and in 1873 moved the stud to Meautry, near Deauville.

Baron James's English brother Nathan Mayer (1777–1836) had four sons. All of them were bitten by the racing bug in varying degrees. Anthony (1810–1876) lived for many years in France. He built stables at La Morlaye, near Chantilly, in 1839. His horses were trained by Thomas Carter, also his uncle's trainer.² Records show Anthony's horse *Muse* winning the Criterium de Deuxième Classe at Chantilly on Saturday 2 October of 1841 in Carter's colours of amber, lilac and grey. Through the years Rothschild horses have occasionally run in their trainers' colours. Perhaps this has been a way of circumventing the tradition of non-participation on the Jewish Sabbath.

Prize money was an important aspect of Anthony's racing, as he expected his horses to pay their way, preferably with some 'pocket money' left over. He won in excess of 30,000 francs (£1,200) with his horses in 1841.³ In a letter to his brothers in the autumn of 1842 when he had ten horses in training, he wrote that he was hoping to '... win one or two more [races] this year so that our expenses will all be paid. It would be a famous good thing'.⁴

When Anthony returned to England in 1843, his younger brother Nathaniel (1812–1870) took over the horses at La Morlaye. One of the first Jews to be elected into the French Jockey Club, Nat continued the successful relationship with Carter as trainer. Among their biggest wins were the French Derby in 1846 and the French Oaks in 1852. Agreeing with his brothers' philosophy that the horses should not be a financial drain, he wrote from Paris in 1842, 'I am in great hopes of seeing Annetta win tomorrow, if so the little mare will pay nearly all the expenses of the stable for this year ...'. But following this is a very telling comment '... I hope to good-

ness she will win, for it's the best fun in the world seeing the blue and yellow come in first.' This is an early indication of the passion that was beginning to creep in to the up-to-now *divertissement*. Meanwhile, the eldest of these four brothers, Lionel (1808–1879), was having a smattering of successes over fences with a horse called *Consul*.⁵

Not all the family were enthralled with racing. Lionel's wife, Charlotte, disapproved on all fronts. Family rumour suggests that this may have been the reason that Lionel sent his horses to the post under a pseudonym. For three years, 1876, 1877 and 1878, his colours were registered with Wetherby's in the name of 'Mr Acton'.

The youngest of the four brothers, Mayer (1818–1874) was the first Jew to be elected to the English Jockey Club, the bastion of the richest and most influential men of the day. Mayer's approach to the business of breeding was shrewd as well as enthusiastic. He was known to have avoided rash speculations, bought from the best breeders and employed the best trainers.⁶ An added advantage was that he had a natural discerning eye for horseflesh. His stud produced a string of champions that still feature as legends of the turf.

In 1843, at the age of 25, he registered his colours of blue and yellow. By the 1850s he had become a familiar sight in the paddocks at Ascot, Epsom, and Newmarket, usually seen in the company of men such as the Prince of Wales, Lord Rosebery and other notables. His horses were trained by William King and Joseph Hayhoe.⁷ From the beginning victories had come quickly and Mayer was on the way to becoming one of the most successful racehorse owners in the country. That first year he won six major races, including his first Classic, the One Thousand Guineas with *Mentmore Lass*. He was to win the race for a second time in 1864 with a horse called *Tomato*.

Favonius, winner of the Derby 1871. Print on linen.



St Amant racing to a win in the 1904 Derby.



1853 was a busy year for Mayer. He also set up a breeding farm at Crafton, near his country seat at Mentmore.⁸ Some canny acquisitions reaped long-lasting rewards particularly a broodmare called *Emerald*. In addition to *Mentmore Lass*, her offspring produced wins in the Cesarewitch, the Goodwood Cup and the Derby. The best of *Mentmore Lass*'s descendants was a homebred filly called *Hannah*, whose sire was Mayer's grand stallion *King Tom*. In the 1871 season *Hannah* won the One Thousand Guineas, the Oaks, and the St Leger 'amid the deafening cheers of myriads of delighted Yorkshiremen'. That year was known in racing circles as 'The Baron's Year'.⁹

Mayer's flamboyant style helped to create a popular Rothschild image. Generous, exuberant, slightly eccentric and genial, 'Muffy', as he was known to his family, was a celebrity also because his racing colours won money for countless punters. On Mayer's death one of the obituaries read, '... to say that [this] was deeply regretted by sportsmen of all classes would be to convey a very inadequate idea of the profound sorrow caused by his death. In every phase of his life his generosity and munificence had been unbounded. His expenditure in charity was as vast as it was unostentatious. Society lost in him a polished and agreeable host; Sport, a genuine and enthusiastic patron, and Suffering Sad Humanity a liberal and sympathetic benefactor'.¹⁰ Another obituary published in *Bailey's Magazine* – five pages long – was entitled 'A Model Sportsman'.¹¹

Known for his characteristic charm and great sense of fun, Mayer's nephew Leopold (1845–1917) was captivated by the magic of thoroughbred racing during his university years.¹² He soon became a devoted and successful patron of the Turf and remained so for his entire life. Although in body he joined the banking group at New Court, his passions lay elsewhere: horses and motor cars. Leo considered the greatest moments of his life to be his election to the Jockey Club in 1891, and getting the contemporary motoring speed limit increased by 6 miles an hour in 1902.¹³ In 38 years of racing he won an estimated 851 races, many with his trainer Alfred Hayhoe.¹⁴

Throughout the years, Leopold's keen and friendly rivalry with the Prince of Wales was the subject of much publicity.¹⁵ This was mainly sparked by two talented horses, both 1893 foals. Leo's home-bred *St Frusquin*, an ordinary looking brown colt described as 'without elegance', turned out to be one of the best youngsters of his age group. He began his three-year old year in 1896 with a win in the Two Thousand Guineas. The Prince of Wales was running *St Frusquin*'s

half brother, the sleek and elegant *Persimmon*, also with success. The two had met once, in 1895, and on that occasion *St Frusquin* had emerged the victor.

They were destined to meet again two years later. When *St Frusquin*, after a decisive win in the Two Thousand Guineas, finished an unexpected second to *Persimmon* in an historic and heart-stopping 1897 Epsom Derby, letters of condolence flooded in to both Mr and Mrs Leopold, proving that Leo's celebrity reached far beyond racing circles. The half-brothers met on one final occasion later that year in the Princess of Wales's Stakes. *St Frusquin* proved the better horse on that day by half a length. The competition between the two only increased their popularity. *St Frusquin*'s merit was celebrated by the London and North Eastern Railway when it named one of its famous 'A3' locomotives after him, an honour which was repeated when, years later, they christened a second locomotive *Bronzino*, after another Rothschild winning stallion.¹⁶

An outpouring of sentiment similar to 1897 occurred again in 1904, only this time it was the result of jubilation, when Leo's *St Amant*, a *St Frusquin* colt, captured the Derby. The race had taken place in a colossal thunderstorm, and Leo is reported to have run out into the driving rain without coat or hat, and fairly dancing with joy in a typical demonstration of spontaneous pleasure, led his horse into the winner's circle. Leo and his wife Marie were overwhelmed by letters of congratulation from good friends, acquaintances, and unknowns. One such, from Kings College School, Wimbledon Common, read: 'Dear Sir, may we, the present pupils of your old school, knowing the kind interest you have always taken in it, be permitted to offer our most hearty congratulations on your great success at Epsom last Wednesday'. Another from the Post Master in Leighton Buzzard, '... May I be permitted to congratulate [you] on your great victory ...'. Vita Sackville-West wrote, 'Dear Mrs Rothschild, [Our] compliments on St Amant's great victory. We had all backed him here ...'.¹⁷

Leopold's second cousin James Armand (1878–1957), was his contemporary on the racing scene for a number of years until Leo's death in 1917.¹⁸ Their contrasting figures – Leopold jovial and portly, 'Jimmy' tall, angular and beaky – were familiar sights at race meetings. Although they were dissimilar in many respects James, too, was hugely popular in Turf circles, recognised for his high standard of integrity more than for his winners. He was known for his predilection for long-shots and outsiders.¹⁹

James's lifelong approach to the sport was always less ambitious than most wealthy owners, and while his cousins and uncles energetically pursued the top honours of Grade I races James seemed content to buy and breed what were considered 'second class' horses by his comrades – recognising their limitations and exulting when they achieved surprising victories at long odds. He also had a sense of humour. After his horse named *Snow Leopard* failed to produce an expected win, James promptly officially renamed him *Slow Leopard*. He became notorious as 'a fearless gambler'. His wife, Dorothy, later wrote that, 'while being a man whose judgement and wisdom were indisputable in the more serious matters of life, James was forever delighting in the unlikely and unorthodox and loving any upset of the accepted norm in his recreations ...'.²⁰

James retained Frederick Pratt as his private trainer in 1903, an association that lasted for 42 years.²¹ He registered his racing colours of bright blue shirt with two rows of yellow chevrons and a yellow cap in the same year he engaged Pratt. There were several quiet years, then came James's first successes as an owner. The horse, *Beppo* was the grandson of Leo's *St Frusquin*, and was James's first really exciting horse, winning seven English races, and a third place finish in the 1907 St Leger. Continuing the early British links with French racing, James sent *Beppo* to race across the Channel several times, but did not find the success he had enjoyed in England.

James's greatest victories on English turf were with *Bomba* and *Atmah*. In 1909 *Bomba* was the unexpected winner of the Gold Cup, at odds of 25/1. Ridden to victory by the apprentice Freddie Fox, he triumphed by a half length over the favourite, cousin Leopold's *Santo Strata*. Two years later Fox brought James's only English Classic winner, *Atmah*, home first in the One Thousand Guineas.

St Amant, 1904 Derby winner.

'Mr Leopold de Rothschild winning the Derby with *St Amant* (1904)'. Watercolour, Mason.

In 1922, James inherited Waddesdon Manor and Estate from his great-aunt Alice, and in the same year was elected to the Jockey Club. Although his 'independent views' possibly prevented him from becoming a steward, he was later seen as a man with vision in advance of changes that were accepted in later decades. In 1929 the Club recorded its thanks for his support of a test case which ultimately changed a controversial rule affecting nominations and entries for particular races. Described by his friends as a 'grand seigneur', James was a man of striking distinction, violently proud and morally fastidious. He was known to be a good loser and 'gracious' when he failed. Despite his rather formidable demeanour he was regarded by all classes of racegoers with cordial respect.²²

Almost immediately after inheriting the estate, James set to work building a stud farm to house his mares and foals, a legacy which remains today. His breeding philosophy was something of a talking point. One friend famously commented that where many people were known to back outsiders, only Jimmy attempted to breed from them.²³ In fact James's 50-year racing career was remarkably successful, with 193 winners and some £82,000 in prize money.

After the fashion of the earlier Rothschild studs, James tended to race his home-bred horses, rather than trying to make money from their sales. While some good solid stock and a few winners emerged from his nursery, his results did not compare with those produced by his relatives. Both *Bomba* and *Beppo* were disappointments as sires. *Milenko*, one of *Bomba*'s sons, was





the only real success for James, notable for winning consecutively the Jockey Club Stakes (a distance race) and the Cambridgeshire (a sprint). It was considered extraordinary to win at those distances in that order.

The racing world had a surprisingly international aspect in the early twentieth century and the Rothschilds contributed to the universal improvement of bloodstock. The bloodlines of James's horses were sufficient to be perceived as an improvement to mediocre stock. He sold two winning stallions abroad – *Milenko* to Argentina and *Bronzino* to Australia – to accolades from the racing press.²⁴

Through the years there have been many famous and well-loved Rothschild equines. The most legendary of them all is the French stallion, *Brantôme* (1931–1952). Owned by the Rothschild Haras de Meautry, he was bred and raced by Edouard de Rothschild (1868–1949). He remains ranked among the best French horses of all time.

This colt was an outstanding example of the cross-channel activity between Britain and France, and of British influence on French racing. His sire, *Blandford* was Irish and his dam, *Vitamine* was French. *Brantôme* was unbeaten in 1934 and 35, his first two years of racing. His wins included the most important races of the day: The Prix Robert Papin, Grand Critérium and Prix Mornay as a two-year old, and the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, Prix Lupin, Prix Royal Oak and Poule d'Essai de Poulains the following year. Descriptions of the Arc de Triomphe, the richest race in France, told how he seemed to falter as he drew up on the pace setter, then



opposite, from left
Alphonse (1827–1905),
Leonora (1837–1911),
Gustave (1829–1911), and
Leopold de Rothschild
(1845–1917) with jockey
Crickmer at Deauville
Races, 1904.

Leopold de Rothschild in
a 'Spy' cartoon of 1884.

above
Anthony de Rothschild
(1887–1961) and wife
Yvonne at Epsom races.

'James de Rothschild Esq.,
taken from the life',
coloured etching by
George Belcher, 1922.

he gathered himself to stride past the eventual third place horse, held off a late challenge by another (English) horse, and passed the finish line going away wining by two and a half lengths. It was a thrilling race, the crowd went wild, not only for the exciting race, but because second place runner was a highly touted English horse.

In 1935 his training focused on preparation for the Ascot Gold Cup. He had two easy wins before disaster struck. As he arrived to run in the Prix de Dangu just prior to leaving for England, he escaped from his groom and went on a mad gallop through the streets of Chantilly. By the time he was caught, he had lost three shoes and cut himself badly. Despite this, Edouard felt compelled to send him off to Ascot rather than risk being perceived as unsportsmanlike and causing huge disappointment to the racing world.

It proved a bad decision. The champion never found his stride. Throughout the distance he did not cover the ground in his usual style, even though he ran up near the leaders until the end. He finished fifth, completely out of the running, and even the English press reported that he was well below form. *Brantôme* had beaten the third-place horse by 20 lengths in the Prix du Cadran on an earlier occasion.

Edouard is said to have commented after the race, 'I realise now, too late, that the mishap which prevented my horse undergoing his scheduled training and gallops had caused him not to be his best. I suppose I should not have sent him over, but I knew that such a wide interest was taken in him and the Gold Cup that I wanted to keep faith with the English public'.



"BRANTÔME"

André Marchand, Pinxit.

Brantôme returned to France and was given time off. In September of that year he had an easy win in the Prix d'Orange. He then went to Longchamp for his second Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, but came fourth, two lengths behind the winner. It was said that there was a mishap during the race, and he had struck a stake marking the course, which affected his going. The Arc was his last race, and he retired from the turf still a champion to the French public.

But his story does not end here. After five seasons at stud, in August of 1940, the Nazis swept in and, along with all the best bloodstock in France, seized virtually all the Meautry horses broodmares, foals, and three stallions, including *Brantôme*. The horses were either sold to make money for the Nazi coffers, sent to Germany or Hungary for racing, or consigned to the German army stud at Altfeld for breeding. It was not until after the war ended, in 1946, and after prolonged negotiations, that some the Meautry horses were returned to Baron Edouard and his son Guy. There were subsequent clouds surrounding the progeny of French sires in Germany for those years, so although *Brantôme* did not appear as an outstanding sire – he made second on the list of French leading sires in 1950, his highest rating – one can't help but wonder how successful he might have been had his fate been different. With a lifetime record of 12 wins in 14 starts, he remained a hero in the hearts of the French, and when he died in 1952 the newspaper headlines announced: *Brantôme de Rothschild is dead.*²⁵

The Rothschild involvement in racing continues today, although perhaps slightly lower-key than those early years. The long-established stud farms at Southcourt and Waddesdon are alive and well. The Haras de Meautry remains a successful operation, the oldest in France continuously owned by a single family. And every spring brings high hopes for the new crop of foals and every season the anticipation of victories.

Diana Stone is an Assistant Curator at Waddesdon Manor, doing research on various aspects of the collection, working on special exhibitions, giving special tours and lectures, and managing the photographic library. She previously worked on a stud farm, competed in equestrian sports and owned a point-to-point horse.

NOTES

- 1 Details on the Rothschilds as breeders in France have come from the Thoroughbred Heritage website, text prepared by The Rothschild Archive, 2007 with additions by Patricia Erigero. Ferrières was close to Chantilly, which rapidly became the heart of the new French racing world.
- 2 In those early years, many trainers, jockeys and stable lads were brought over from England and flat racing was an English import. Thomas Carter was one of the best of the English-born trainers in France.
- 3 Notes provided by Tim Cox, The Library of Thoroughbred Racing and Breeding.
- 4 RAL XI 109/42A/2/1.
- 5 This horse had given Lionel his first win in 1841. Flat racing provided, as brother Nat described in a note from Paris, ‘... ten times the excitement of a steeple chase because you see the whole of it.’ RAL XI 109/43A/2/43.
- 6 RAL XI 109/45B/6/40.
- 7 George Ireland, *Plutocrats: A Rothschild Inheritance* (London: John Murray, 2007), p.306. He put his horses initially with William King and Joseph Hayhoe at Russley Park near Lambourn in 1853, and three years later moved the yard to Newmarket under the sole direction of Hayhoe.
- 8 Mayer’s breeding programme produced long lasting results. In 1871 *Hannab*’s sire, *King Tom*, had been purchased by Mayer for £2,000. After a disappointing career, he was retired to stud in 1857. By 1863 he had sired 56 winners. Between 1861 and 1877 he made the list of top ten sires in Britain 14 times. In 1870, and again in 1871 he topped the list as the leading sire. In 1864 Mayer won over £11,000 in prize money. Twenty eight of that season’s winners were by *King Tom*, proving beyond any doubt the success of Mayer’s breeding program.
- 9 In honour of *Hannab*’s triumphs, Mayer gave the New Court clerks a dinner at Richmond. In addition his filly’s victories, Mayer’s colt *Favonius* had brought him a Derby win. Only three times previously in the history of racing had the Derby and the Oaks been won in one year by the same owner. Mayer finished that extraordinary season by winning the Cesarewitch Stakes with *Corisande* at Newmarket. Even the press celebrated with him. Among advanced backers, the betting motto that year was ‘follow the Baron’. Racing chronicles of the day spoke glowingly about the Baron, ‘... he is grudging his success by none, and his cheery face makes no secret how proud he is to see his horses – not only themselves, but also their sires and dams, bred by himself – win. All honour to such a noble sportsman! It would be well for the best interests of the Turf if all raced as he’. Dixon W W ‘Thormanby’ *Kings of the Turf: Memoirs and Anecdotes of Distinguished Owners, Backers, Trainers and Jockeys who have figured on the British Turf, with memorable achievements of famous Horses*; (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1898) p.353.
- 10 Ireland, p.307.
- 11 Ibid, p.347.
- 12 Upon finishing an uninspired tenure at Kings College Cambridge his father Lionel wrote to him in 1867 saying, ‘I am glad you are pleased with yourself for having guessed the winners of the two great races, your [college] examiners were quite right in saying that you have a good hand at guessing ...’ – Leo remained undiscouraged and immediately took over the running of Lionel’s stud at Gunnersbury. He later moved the breeding operation to his beloved Ascott and christened it Southcourt Stud.
- 13 Virginia Cowles, *The Rothschilds: A Family of Fortune* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), p.170.
- 14 Alfred Hayhoe took charge of the training of Leo’s race horses at Palace House Stables, Newmarket in 1881. This partnership resulted in years of racing satisfaction, with many successful horses. When Hayhoe retired, John Watson took over as Leopold’s trainer. In a demonstration of loyalty that was to later be echoed by Leo’s second cousin James, this association lasted 40 years.
- 15 Leopold was popular to such an extent that the future King Edward VII struggled through a snowstorm to be present at his wedding in 1881. This marked the first time a member of the Royal Family had attended a service in a synagogue.
- 16 Cowles, p.197.
- 17 RAL 000/1373/8/a–c; RAL/1037/117/3 and 7.
- 18 Born in France, James was the son of Baron and Baroness Edmond de Rothschild. Neither were racing enthusiasts, but indulged their elder son’s interest in horses by allowing him to stay on an extra year at Cambridge University where, in addition to a reasonable academic standing, he had cultivated a circle of friends and relatives with whom he spent most of his time either racing or hunting. It was during this time, when he was twenty, that he had backed a horse named *Jeddab* at odds of 100/1 against, in the 1898 Epsom Derby. The horse won and James’s fate was sealed.
- 19 James’s impulsive and eccentric style shines through clearly in stories of two fillies purchased within three years of each other. The earlier was *Tishy*, who became notorious for ‘crossing her legs’ a euphemism for being clumsy, or not trying. Despite her reputation, or perhaps because of it, James bought the filly at the autumn sales. The following spring he was vindicated as she won the Summer Handicap for him at Newmarket, but finished last again in the 1922 Cesarewitch. The second had a happier ending. In 1925, in London, James read in a French newspaper that a three-year old filly named *Reine Lumière*, who had a modest record up until a surprise win the previous day, was to be sold. He immediately told his agents in France to buy her, and the deal was finalised five days before the prestigious Grand Prix de Paris. *Reine Lumière* won the race by a head, in a race described in the press as full of incidents.
- 20 RAL 000/1373/4.
- 21 This partnership must have jelled into friendship because in 1913 James commissioned the Russian artist Leon Bakst to make a portrait of Pratt for inclusion in the set of paintings illustrating the Sleeping Beauty story which was meant to hang in the dining room of James’s London house. Pratt’s portrait was the only non-Rothschild included in the seven paintings.
- 22 James’s obituary. *Bloodstock Breeders Review*, 1957.
- 23 Mrs James (Dorothy) de Rothschild, *The Rothschilds at Waddesdon Manor* (London: Collins 1979), p.108.
- 24 James had a promising stallion called *Bronzino* who won the Greenham Stakes and the Doncaster Cup in 1910. The horse gave an impressive fourth place finish in the Cesarewitch. Sadly, his racing career came to an end in 1911 when he broke down during preparations for the Ascot Gold Cup, for which he had been favourite. After that, James sold him to an Australian racing enthusiast who recognised his breeding potential and shipped him out to stud in Sydney in hopes of raising the quality of bloodstock there.
- 25 Details on *Brantôme* and his career have come from Thoroughbred Heritage website, text prepared by The Rothschild Archive, 2007, with additions by Patricia Erigero.

The Royal Mint Refinery, 1852–1968

Michele Blagg summarises the history of the Royal Mint Refinery, which is the subject of her PhD research.



Some of the most popular images adorning the walls of Rothschild offices in London are a series of black and white photographs of the gold refining enterprise operated by N M Rothschild & Sons between 1852 and 1968 under the trading title of the Royal Mint Refinery. As this article will show the Royal Mint Refinery was a business that required constant adaption to the changing economic, social and cultural forces of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

For centuries both the refining of gold and the minting of coins had been the responsibilities of the Master of the Royal Mint, an office created in the sixteenth century. The Mint itself had been located in the Tower of London from the late thirteenth to the early nineteenth century, until the demands of new steam press machinery necessitated a move into new premises at Tower Hill. Concerns and criticisms were frequently raised over the expense and the lack of accountability of the old contract style system of operation. These objections lead to the establishment of a Royal Commission in 1848. Of the many recommendations made by the Commissioners, it is that relating to the treatment of unrefined gold entering the country which interests us here. The Commissioners proposed that this business should be put out to tender.

The prospect of taking on the refining business appealed to the Rothschild family in London.¹ The responsibility for the negotiations fell to Anthony de Rothschild, one of the sons and business heirs of N M Rothschild who secured the lease from the Government in January 1852. An element of the negotiations related to the lease of premises and purchase of equipment housed adjacent to the existing Royal Mint at 19 Royal Mint Street. The decision to add the word 'refinery' to the previous title of the Royal Mint was a fortuitous one, affording an element of anonymity for the Rothschilds, whilst they also gained what would today be described as a world recognisable 'brand'. Under the terms of the contract the newly established Royal Mint Refinery was required to receive 100 pounds of precious metal consigned by the Master of the Mint and to return the correct quantity of refined metal within fourteen days.²

An interesting aspect of the new business was its Anglo-French nature. First of all Lionel de Rothschild, Anthony's elder brother, took the advice of his uncle in Paris, Baron James, who already had experience of gold refining through a joint venture in Paris with a business partner called Michel Benoit Poisat.³ Lionel decided to work with Poisat in developing the London

above, from left

The Royal Mint Refinery, 1933. Note the wooden sabots worn to protect the feet. Victor, 3rd Lord Rothschild, remembered that these were burnt to recover any precious metals which might have adhered to the soles.

Bullion room, with George Buess, manager 1912–1937, in the bowler hat. There are probably two shipments in view, one marked 'Paris' the other 'National Bank of India'.

opposite

Refined bullion bars. Each bar had a unique identity in the combination of the R-number and the year date. The circular stamp was that of N M Rothschild & Sons in its capacity as an authorised Melter.

refinery. It is clear that the family felt that there were advantages as well as disadvantages to this sort of partnership, as can be seen in this note of caution from Lionel's brother, Nat, who was by that time working in the Paris office:

[Poisat] is a cunning old fox and much more interested than formerly ... he has got plenty of money and likes adding to it. Nevertheless, he is a clever man and understands his business amazingly well. In a word, I think you had better come to terms with him, let him have half and keep the other for yourselves, but don't make your contract more than three years. At the expiration of that period the affair will be so well organised that you will not want our friend Poisat and will be able to manage it yourselves.⁴

It seems that Lionel followed Nat's advice to the letter. With a contract signed, Poisat served as the first manager of the Royal Mint Refinery from 1852 until 1854. The Anglo-French aspect to the venture went even further. Aside from an extensive knowledge of refining processes Poisat brought with him an experienced workforce from the Normandy area of France.

The Royal Mint Refinery profited from the acceleration in world gold production levels that were seen throughout the nineteenth century. In the first 50 years of the nineteenth century levels of new gold production were recorded at around 38 million fine ounces. However, production subsequently soared to over 334 million fine ounces from 1851 following the new gold discoveries in California in 1849, Australia in 1852 and South Africa in 1886.⁵ Although by the turn of the twentieth century refineries had been established in California and Australia catering for locally-mined gold, by 1905 the Royal Mint Refinery was reported to be refining annually 3.3 million gross weight ounces of gold, rising steadily to 6.8 million by 1913, the majority of which originated in South Africa.⁶





The First World War brought the first real challenges to the fortunes of the Royal Mint Refinery. Despite the significantly reduced level of gold imported to Britain from South Africa, a consequence of wartime disruption to the supply, the refinery survived the years of conflict. The first year of peace, 1919, saw record levels of gold – 10.4 million ounces – passing through the hands of the refinery staff. At the same time, the restoration of London to its pre-War position as the international market place for gold was seen as crucial by those in the City. The South African mining companies, whose output amounted to over half of the all the world's newly mined gold, and who had channelled their gold to the Bank of England to support Britain's reserves during the War, now sought an agency to market their output. The Bank of England entered into an agreement with the South African mining finance houses for them to ship gold to London for refining, prior to being sold through N M Rothschild 'at the best price obtainable, giving the London market and bullion brokers a chance to bid.'

The choice of N M Rothschild to host this operation resulted from the expertise in the bullion business developed by the bank over the previous century was the obvious choice. In 1919 Rothschild was in a pivotal position – both as a major refiner and an agent for the South African gold producers.⁷

However, the Refinery's fortunes were to be mixed over the following decades. Pressure was mounting from local producers and mine owners for the establishment of a South African refinery and Mint in Pretoria. The new South African refinery subsequently opened in 1922, to the detriment of the Royal Mint Refinery. Gold refining records show a sharp decline from 1922 to an all time low of 800,000 ounces passing through the Rothschild refinery in 1929.⁸ However

The Royal Mint Refinery stand at the Castle Bromwich exhibitions in the 1950s.

there was a slight reprieve for the business following new discoveries of gold in West Africa during the early 1930s: with refining levels rising sharply to just over 12.5 million ounces for 1932.⁹ The boom was short-lived and decline soon set in. The outbreak of the Second World War further hampered the level of gold entering the country and recorded gold refining levels at the Rothschild refinery dropped significantly to a low point of around 32,000 gross weight ounces in 1941, before creeping back up to around 1.5 million ounces by 1952.¹⁰

Many historians have made reference to the ability of the Rothschild family to diversify into other areas of profitability when traditional business lines have come under threat. The operation of the Royal Mint Refinery is certainly a prime example of this. During both periods of world conflict the refinery was turned over to the manufacture of munitions and specialist equipment. At the end of the Second World War a reorganisation of the operation took place. Although the refining of gold was still the main strand of the refinery's business, levels had dropped considerably from their peak. New business opportunities were explored and developed. The main area of growth in the operation of the refinery focused upon the manufacture and production of non-ferrous metals in cast and strip form, including copper foil and plated wires. The modern rolling mill and annealing plant, which had been added in 1943 to cater for Government orders, in peacetime was set to work producing a wide variety of products that met the needs of industry. Promotional brochures produced for the firm's stand at the 1948 British Industries Fair held each year at Castle Bromwich – the forerunner of the National Exhibition Centre – provide an insight into the full range of activities of the Royal Mint Refinery. The Government-backed British Industries Fair was a chance for UK firms to





Promotional material in the 1950s, linked to the industrial exhibitions, demonstrated the refinery's efforts to adapt to changing markets.



expand their export endeavours providing an invaluable ‘gigantic shop window’ to international customers.¹¹ The Rothschild stand received over 180 enquiries, of which 150 were reported as new contacts.¹² While it was acknowledged within the business that twelve months might elapse before enquiries developed into actual orders, it was also noted that the event had provided existing customers with a chance to see the range of their products and new developments. The refinery staff who had attended the event recorded that ‘many people were surprised that we were producers of such things as copper strip, silver solders and plated wires, and it has definitely given [Royal Mint Refinery] a better chance to sell these products without extensive advertising in trade journals.’¹³

Throughout the 1950s the refining of gold continued steadily. Nevertheless, as the business operation was streamlined skilled workers were often re-deployed to work in the expanding engineering department, taking with them a wealth of technical knowledge.

By 1961 a period of reviews into the activities of the Royal Mint Refinery led to specific areas of the business being sold off to more specialised firms. When in 1965 the copper foil plant was sold to Brush Clevite, a number of employees moved over to the new company and relocated to Southampton. The remainder of the operation was sold to Engelhard Industries Limited in October 1967. One employee of the company has described the process of deciding whether the trappings of the last one hundred and fifteen years was sent to the new works, scrapped or sold off.¹⁴ The remaining staff either transferred to the new company, went to work for the main Rothschild business in London, were retired or opted for redundancy. Early in November 1968 the building at 19 Royal Mint Street stood empty and the factory gates and the buildings were closed for the last time.

Michele Blagg is a PhD student based at the Centre for Contemporary British History, working under the supervision of Professor Richard Roberts and Dr Michael Kandiah. The research project 'The Royal Mint Refinery, a business adapting to change, 1852–1968' began in October 2008. The research project is the first of three Collaborative Doctoral Awards to be hosted at The Rothschild Archive Trust in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Centre for Contemporary British History.



NOTES

- 1 Rothschild Archive London (henceforth RAL) XI/09.
- 2 RAL 148/29.
- 3 Some records of the Paris refinery may be found at The Rothschild Archive within the Bullion Department's series (VII/207).
- 4 RAL 000/1242.
- 5 *The Times*, 'Gold', a reprint of the Special Number, 20 June 1933 p.21.
- 6 RAL 148/24.
- 7 The 'Gold Fixing' tradition took place at New Court, the bank's London offices, from 1919 to 2004.
- 8 RAL, 148/24/3, RMR Silver and Gold Treated from 1 January 1905 – 31 December 1948.
- 9 *ibid.*
- 10 *ibid.*
- 11 *The Economist*, 10 May 1947, pp.30–31.
- 12 RAL, 148/18, Report entitled 'BIF Castle Bromwich 3 May – 14 inclusive'.
- 13 *ibid.*
- 14 RAL 000/1242.

Principal acquisitions

1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009

This list is not comprehensive but attempts to record 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 entry.



A sample of the letters acquired by the Archive during the year under review. See the description opposite [000/1970].

Family papers

Collection of letters in the hand of Alexandra, Princess of Wales, addressed to Hannah, Lady Rosebery, dating from 1885 to 1887 (see illustration opposite.) The letters are written on the notepaper of Marlborough House and The Princess of Wales' Branch of the National Aid Society (Soudan and Egypt) and relate to the work of the society, and related philanthropic activities. The subjects covered are the provision and equipping of a yacht; fundraising activities, especially through benefit concerts; the management of the central committee; and publicity activities including the casting of a medal and production of a print of a committee meeting. [000/1870]

Pocket account book for D M Davidson, brother of Benjamin Davidson begun January 1st 1847. Includes expenditure on cigars, wagers, china, furniture, hunting, travelling, etc. and notes on events, including the movements of Benjamin Davidson, the election of Lionel de Rothschild, 1847, and the abdication of Louis Philippe, 1848 [1847–1851]. Presented by Professor Giles Constable [000/1822]

Volume of signatures presented by the 'Constituents and friends of the mid division of Buckinghamshire' to Lionel de Rothschild, MP, on the occasion of his marriage to Marie-Louise Beer, 1912. [000/1960]

Following page

One of a series of sketches by Matthew Cook recording the last days of New Court and the construction of the new offices of N M Rothschild & Sons on the same site.

Published works

Transcript of hearing in the House of Lords, related to the case opposing Nathan Mayer Rothschild, appellant, and James Brookman, respondent, on appeal from the High Court of Chancery. [000/1944]

Brochure produced by the Service des Etudes of de Rothschild Frères, entitled *Société minière et métallurgique de Peñarroya*, undated, but c.1957. [000/1954]

Die Sammlung Erich von Goldschmidt-Rothschild (Berlin: Ball und Graupe, 1931). [000/1967]

Doctor A Trousseau, *La Fondation Ophtalmologique Adolphe de Rothschild* (Paris: 1905). [000/1935]

L'Institut de Biologie Physico-chimique fondé par Edmond de Rothschild à Paris from 'Le Miroir du Monde' (Number 51, 21 February 1931). [000/1947]

'L'Illustration' (6 Mai 1905) including *Le nouvel Institut ophtalmologique des Buttes Chaumont à Paris, fondation du baron Adolphe de Rothschild*. [000/1947]

'La Vie Illustrée' (22 May 1903) with an article entitled *La Coupe Henri de Rothschild a été gagnée par Leon Serpillet*. [000/1947]

'L'Univers Illustré' (12 October 1872) containing illustrations entitled *Les vendanges dans le Medoc: le cuvier de Chateau Lafite; Le diner des vigneron; Le clos de chateau Lafite* and an article by Chantal Martin. [000/1947]

'La Revue Française', Christmas 1951, with an illustrated article entitled *Trésors de la Collection Henri de Rothschild à la Bibliothèque Nationale*, by J. Porcher. [000/1949]

Copy of Newspaper 'L'Auto-Vélo', (20 December 1902) with an article on the Hôpital Henri de Rothschild [000/1950]

Collection of postcards related to the French Rothschild family and the various places in which they lived, worked, and carried out philanthropic activities, including: View of the Fondation A de Rothschild, Maison de Convalescence in Chantilly; Fondation A de Rothschild, Maison de Convalescence in Chantilly; Doctor Calot, head surgeon at the Hôpital Rothschild de Berck, Berck Plage; Berck Plage, Le Château de Rothschild; Ile Rothschild, Suresnes; Place Edmond de Rothschild in Tournan en Brie; Berck Plage, Chalet de Rothschild; Villa Ephrussi, Saint Jean Cap Ferrat. [000/1971]

Photographic items

Five albumen prints showing various views of the Rothschild family houses in Frankfurt. [000/1973]

Photograph album of 5 Hamilton Place, the home of Leopold and Marie de Rothschild, probably dating from the 1890s. [000/1961]

Artwork

A series of drawings by Matthew Cook made during the final days of occupation of New Court by the staff of N M Rothschild & Sons, prior to demolition of the building. The sketches were commissioned to form a record of the site, capture some of the personalities at work in the various offices and chart the development of the new building. The subjects include the offices of the banking division, the staff of the pantry and the security department, the removal of a tapestry from the entrance hall, and the building site after demolition.

