



Research into the experiences of so many members of the Rothschild family during World War I has allowed us to re-examine many of the collections at the Archive and to link together material which reached us from diverse sources. A comprehensive account of the family's lives and description of the sources is available on the Archive's website.⁵

Detail from one of the panoramic photographs, in the file associated with Robert de Rothschild. RAL 000/796

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NOTES

¹ The title of this article is taken from a letter written by Winston Churchill to Nathaniel, 1st Lord Rothschild in January 1915. RAL 000/848/37. The text is based on a longer piece in the Rothschild Pensioners' Newsletter published in London.

² 'Paris. 1st Aug 1914. My dear Uncle, Forty four years ago ! my poor dear mother embarked with us children in times just as tragic as these we are

experiencing and which now necessitate the departure of my dear wife and my dear children. I entrust them to you, and may God protect them. Believe me, my dear Uncle, your very affectionate, Edouard.' RAL 000/1323/33.

³ Thanks to Caroline Poulain, curator at the Municipal Library of Dijon for information on menus from World War I and to Gisèle Kaiser for assistance with the interpretation. Further examples of

menus can be found on the websites www.patrimoine.bm-dijon.fr/pleade/ and www.centenaire.org/fr/tresors-darchives/fonds-publics/bibliotheques/archives/cuisine-de-guerre-menus-de-la-bibliotheque

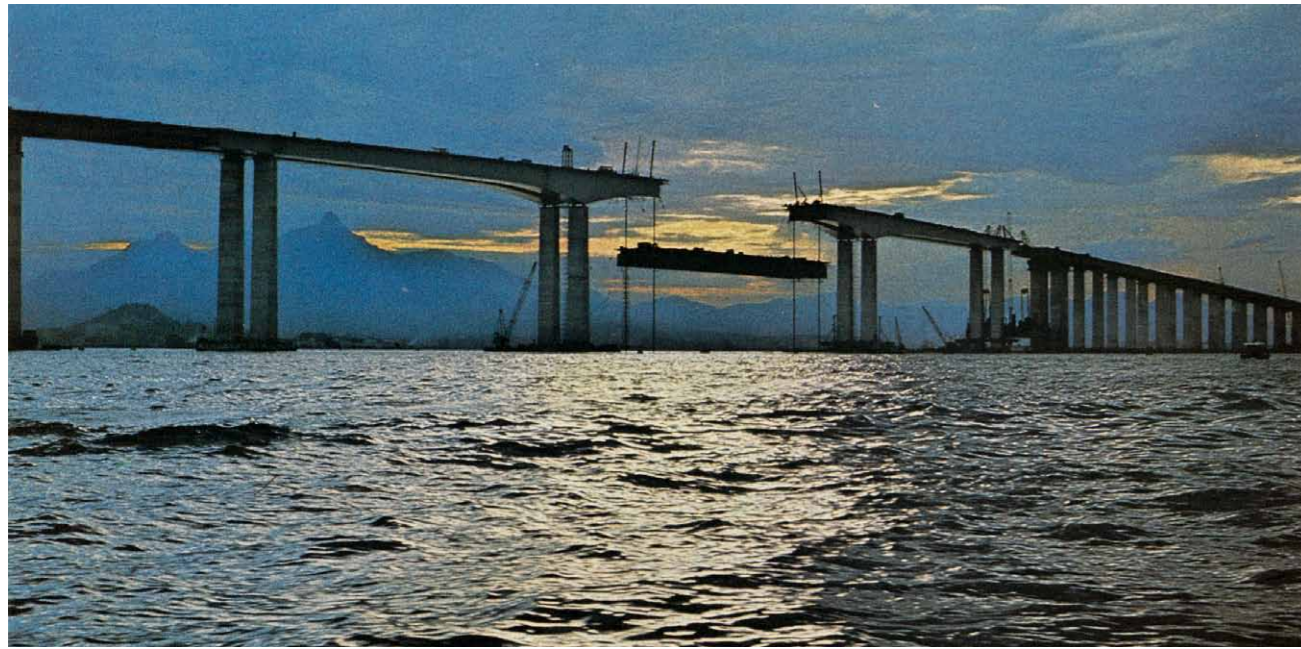
⁴ Baronne James de Rothschild *Souvenirs de la Grande Guerre (1914-1918)* (Macon: Protat Frères, 1927).

⁵ www.rothschildarchive.org/exhibitions/rothschilds_and_the_first_world_war/

'Beloved friend to so many': the papers of Leopold de Rothschild (1927-2012)

Melanie Aspey describes the process of collecting and arranging an archival collection for future historians.





Readers of previous issues of this *Review* may remember that the first visitor to the Archive's new Reading Room at New Court was Leopold de Rothschild who was then in his sixth decade at the bank. His death some months after this visit was a cause of great sadness to so many: his family, his many friends, business associates, colleagues at the bank and fellow musicians and railway enthusiasts. In the last issue the acquisition by the Archive of the papers of Mr Leo, as he was most widely known, was recorded in the notes about principal accessions made during the year.¹ While the material is not yet available for research under the current conditions of access the archivists have been working on the papers to ensure that they are listed and stored properly.

Mr Leo's papers were maintained in immaculate order by a succession of secretaries including Jean Neal and, for 30 years, Jennifer Jacobs.² In turn they managed his office and his papers, consigning those no longer current to the system of records management at the London bank. From the 1920s each series of records within every department had been allocated a number which in Mr Leo's case was 54. There is no significance to this number: it is simply the next in the sequence used by the clerks receiving the files.

In common with the files of other partners of the bank – N M Rothschild began to trade as a company with limited liability only in 1970 and the partners became directors of the new company – the first file consists of letters of congratulations on becoming a partner. Mr Leo's papers are no exception to the general rule. Early on in his career he began to travel to Latin American countries, leading the bank's business expansion in Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela and Chile in particular. His files record the business trips he made and chart the development of many enduring relationships with business houses in the region. In London he chaired The British-Venezuelan Society & Chamber of Commerce and was closely involved in the bank's financing of the Rio-Niterói Bridge in Brazil, a product of two loans to the country organised in the 1960s.

Above
The Rio-Niterói Bridge under construction.
RAL 000/1267

Opposite
Mr Leo at his desk in the third New Court building, 2007. Watercolour by Matthew Cook.
RAL 000/2025

Previous page
Leopold de Rothschild in the Partners' Room, New Court 1962.
RAL 000/207

He had many external business interests. Like his great uncle, Alfred de Rothschild, Mr Leo served as a director of the Bank of England between 1970 and 1983. In 1969 he helped to found and chaired Rothschild Intercontinental Bank, a partnership with the National Provincial Bank, which then formed partnerships with other Rothschild financial houses, Banque Lambert, Pierson, Heldring & Pierson and banks in US cities.

These files offer a lesson in the development of communication methods since he began his working life. From the first file – hand-written letters of congratulations from friends and City associates on his partnership – to the print-outs of emails and voicemail messages, taking in typed letters, telexes and faxes on thermal paper. An early task, of course is to preserve the content of these evanescent formats.

Supplementing the written record are some audio-visual materials, recordings of interviews given to radio music programmes and his own account of the building of the Exbury Gardens Railway, each requiring its own particular conservation attention. To add to the record are the transcripts of oral history interviews conducted with the staff of the Archive and his own notes about his life.

These files demonstrate the balance of a full life as they record Mr Leo's engagement with many philanthropic and cultural organisations. He sang for 50 years with the Bach Choir and was its President.³ His involvement with The Countess of Munster Musical Trust, Glyndebourne, English National Opera, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Royal College of Music and many more musical institutions is meticulously recorded in his papers.

Railways were a major passion in his life. With the help of his life-long friend, architect Sir James Dunbar-Nasmyth, he created the Exbury Gardens Steam Railway. Films and photographs of this much-cherished project will be preserved alongside the papers.

Until the records are released for research, they will rest in the Archive alongside the hundreds of files recording the history of the Rothschild business in the second half of the twentieth century and the life of one who made such a contribution to its success.



NOTES

- ¹ The papers have been accessioned with references RAL 000/2093, 2094 and 2096.
- ² In 2009 Jean Neal's widower, Peter, passed on to Mr Leo for deposit with the Archive some of her papers relating to the time she worked at the bank.
RAL 000/1985.
- ³ A short documentary about the June 2014 world premiere of 'Psalms for Leo' composed by Jonathan Dove is available on YouTube. www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UBiskvae2M.