

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.II*, 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 Chatziioannou (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 Bleichbröder (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 the coronation of Nicholas II, both at the Bnito oilworks.



Arç à l'usine Bnito à l'occasion du couronnement de S.M. l'Empereur Nicolas II



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>