

## Future plans

The Archive is pleased to participate in events designed to further an understanding of archives among students beginning their research, and to this end continues to play a role in the 'Meet the Archivists' event, which will be hosted at the Rothschild offices in late 2011. The Archive also hosted visits from students at King's College London and the Institute for Historical Research. The Archive will hold a summer school in September 2011, in connection with The American Project. The week long course aims to help graduate students beginning their dissertation research. The course, organised by Kathryn Boodry, and hosted by King's College London, will include presentations on palaeography, the use of financial records and other sources as well as sessions on the study of Atlantic history.

In the last quarter of 2011 work will begin on a project designed to explore the work of members of the Rothschild family who supported or who were themselves scientists. The Archive plans a collaborative venture with colleagues from the Natural History Museum in London and in Tring to create a virtual archive of the papers of Rothschild scientists. Funding from The Rothschild Foundation has facilitated the creation of temporary posts to carry out this work and to develop the project.

## NOTES

- 1 See 'The Rothschild Research Forum' in *The Rothschild Archive: Review of the Year April 2002 – March 2003* for a description of the establishment of this online resource.
- 2 For further information about the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Program in Early American Economy and Society, see [www.librarycompany.org/Economics/](http://www.librarycompany.org/Economics/)
- 3 'Collecting Chardins: Charlotte and Henri de Rothschild' in *The Rothschild Archive: Review of the Year April 2004 – March 2005*.

Marble portrait sculpture of Salomon Mayer von Rothschild (1774–1855). Paul Joseph Raymond Gayraud, acquired in 2010. RAL 000/2040

Marble bust of Lionel de Rothschild (1808–1879). RC Belt 1880. RAL 000/2001



## New light on the 1847 election in the City of London

Vic Gray describes one of the Archive's recent acquisitions, which reveals voting patterns in the City of London in a momentous election.

The 1847 election for the City of London, at which Lionel de Rothschild was elected to become the first Jewish Member of Parliament, has long been recognised as one of the most significant milestones on the road to Jewish emancipation in Britain. The votes of the City electorate were, of course, the beginning rather than the end of the final thrust of a long-fought campaign to overturn the requirement for all new Members of Parliament to sign the Oath of Abjuration 'upon the true faith of a Christian' – the measure which effectively precluded Jews from entering the House of Commons. It would take another eleven years, during which Lionel was elected on no fewer than five occasions, before that was overturned by the passing of the Jewish Disabilities Act of 1858.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of these events cannot be disputed. More controversially, however, the long years of campaigning for emancipation which both preceded the 1847 election and followed it, until the procedural gridlock over the Disabilities Act was finally cleared, are still sometimes casually read as evidence of an anti-Semitism endemic to British society at the time, a conclusion perhaps coloured more by the shadow cast by Dickens' Fagin, who made his appearance in 1838, than by any detailed assessment of contemporary levels of anti-Jewish sentiment.<sup>2</sup> To equate the views and reactions of broader society with the procedural entanglements and rhetoric of Parliament (or with a fictional creation) is, perhaps, in this instance at least, heavily simplistic. Enthusiasm for plotting the landmarks of emancipation may have served to understate the subtler features of the landscape. How far, for example, was the issue of sustaining an exclusively Christian Parliament a burning issue for the City electorate at large in 1847? The very fact of Lionel's election victory – indeed, his five victories – has sometimes been overlooked in this. If the London establishment was as anti-Semitic as all that, how did it come about that they chose to vote for Lionel anyway?

A new piece of evidence, recently arrived in The Rothschild Archive, throws some partial but important light on the degree to which the issue of Lionel's Jewishness was significant to London electors in 1847. Buried for many decades among the records of the bank of N M Rothschild & Sons, the evidence comes in the form of a large calf-bound volume, its spine now robbed of its binding and its covers showing significant wear and tear. Nothing on the outside reveals what lies within: a rare, in some ways unique, survival of nineteenth-century electoral practice.

The volume is a poll book for the 1847 Parliamentary election for the City of London. Inside, almost 500 pages have been pre-printed with columns.<sup>3</sup> On the far right of each page, at the head of each of nine narrow columns, appear the names of the nine candidates who stood at that election. To the left a wide column has been used to write, in manuscript, the name and address of each individual who placed a vote. In the right hand columns, his votes are individually recorded in the appropriate columns beneath the names of each candidate for whom he voted. Each voter was allowed to place up to four votes. The four Members of Parliament who would emerge victorious would be those who secured the most votes.

Since the adoption in 1872 of the secret ballot, we have gradually lost sight of the major difference which open public voting made to the whole election procedure. Acts of Parliament of 1696 and 1711 together required the keeping of a record of who had voted and, more

significantly, how, and provided for a copy to be retained by the Clerk of the Peace and made available to anyone making enquiry. At many elections, whether municipal or parliamentary, a printer or publisher might also be on hand to record the votes cast by each person and would rush to publish them as a commercial venture. At others, the political parties themselves would record similar information for their own statistical purposes and, presumably, to know where to focus attention at future elections. This latter seems to have been the purpose of the volume now in The Rothschild Archive. That it found its way back to the bank where Lionel was a partner and was subsequently preserved over many generations in the Partners' Room, no doubt as a precious icon of Rothschild history, speaks volubly of the significance it bore for them.

Preserved in this way, unnoticed by the outside world, it has been spared the vicissitudes which have befallen many another poll book. Regarded as practical tools, their lifespan of use was limited and most were eventually discarded as ephemeral before their historical value came to be appreciated. To neglect has been added destruction. The largest collection to have been put together, held in the Guildhall Library, London, was destroyed in one night of bombing on 30 December 1940.

For the City of London there are only thirteen parliamentary elections for which full or partial poll books can still be found, and this for the long span of nearly two centuries between 1682 and the end of the system in 1872.<sup>4</sup> Only one of these, for 1837, dates from later than the Reform Act of 1832. And there is none at all for the reign of Queen Victoria – until, that is, the discovery of the Rothschild poll book.

The election of 1847 pitched four Tory candidates against four Liberals, with one independent, William Payne. Lionel de Rothschild, putting himself forward as a Liberal, was joining two standing Liberal Members: the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell and Sir James Pattison, a Director and former Governor of the Bank of England. Standing for the first time, like Lionel, was Sir George Larpent, a former chairman of the Oriental and China Association and deputy chairman of St Katharine's Dock.

Standing against them as Conservative candidates were John Masterman, a Director of the East India Company, who had served as an MP for the City since 1841 and who had supported Peel's move towards the Free Trade cause, a move which had brought down the Tory government; John Johnson, who had just served a term as Lord Mayor; R C L Bevan, another banker; and James Freshfield, the lawyer, who was keen to return to Parliament after losing his Cornish seat in 1840. These last three clung to the established Protectionist views of the party.

When the outcome was declared on 30 July, the official returns showed Russell to have headed the poll with 7,137 votes, followed by Pattison with 7,030 and Rothschild with 6,792. Larpent, the fourth of the Liberal candidates had been narrowly defeated – by just three votes – by John Masterman, the Free Trade Conservative.

That Lionel's candidature was not simply a matter of individual ambition is clear. As soon as the 1847 election was announced, the Board of Deputies of British Jews had appointed a committee to ensure the election of a Jew to Parliament. During the campaign, they had posted across the City copies of a bill headed 'An address of the Jewish Association for the Removal of Civil and Religious Disabilities to the Electors and Inhabitants of the City of London'. This set out the case for treating the Jewish community as 'a loyal, industrious and moral body of men', tried and tested in all these qualities over many centuries. It went on to extol Lionel's virtues as a candidate.<sup>5</sup>

During the party meetings which preceded the election, the Liberals made no explicit reference to Lionel's Jewishness nor to the procedural problems in the Commons which would inevitably follow on from his election and might well prevent him from taking up his seat. The Conservatives, on the other hand, were not slow to emphasise the point. Thomas Baring, the MP for Huntingdon and Rothschild's principal banking rival in London, while chairing a meeting of Conservative voters, spoke of the Liberals as having 'An English Lord and a foreign

*Opposite*  
Pages from the poll  
book showing the voting  
patterns of individuals.  
RAL 000/2027

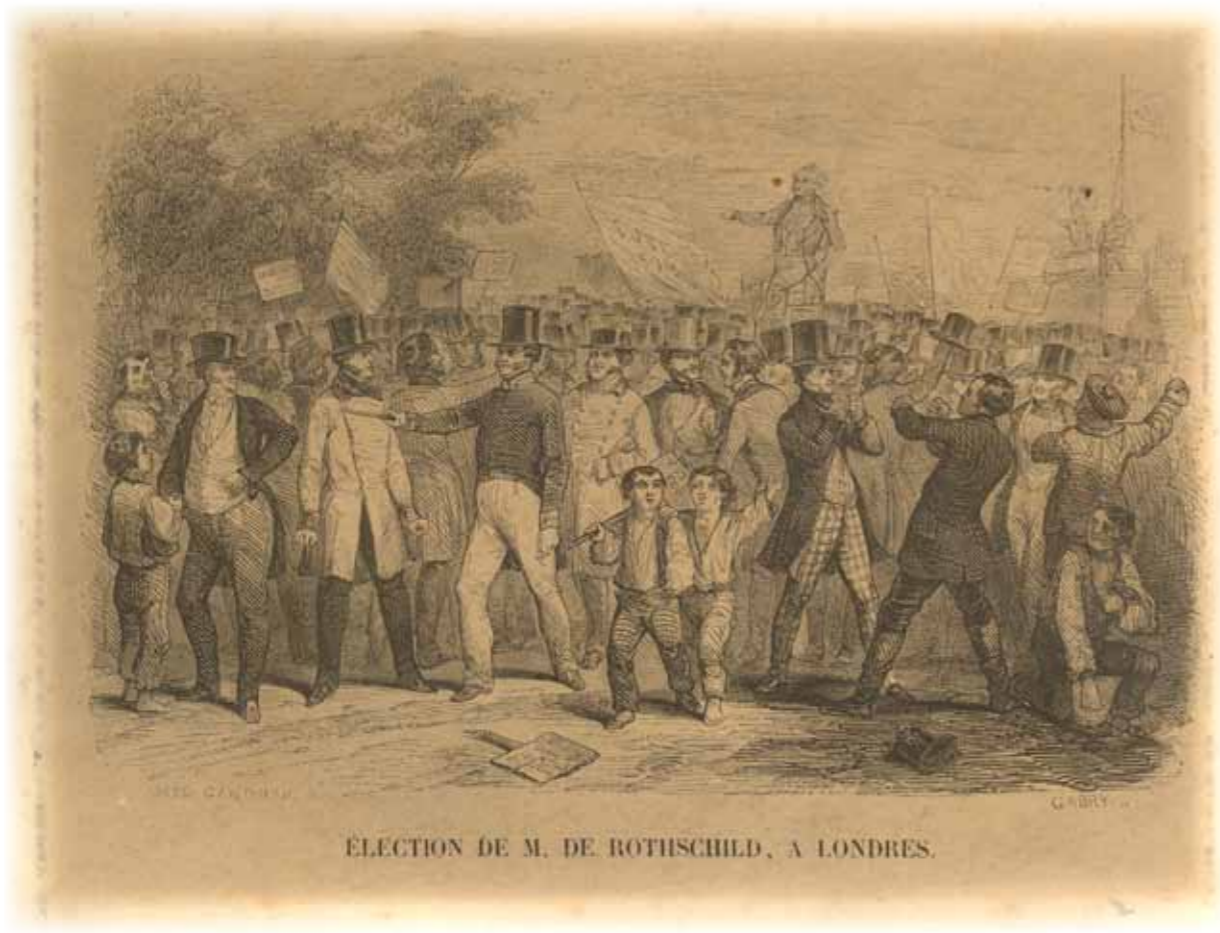


Baron (hear, hear) on their bill of fare (Applause). The former could take his seat and retain his high office; the other could not take his seat and retain his religious creed ("hear, hear" and cheers); for if he took his seat in the House of Commons he could only take it by storm.<sup>6</sup>

Lionel himself, predictably, drew little attention to the procedural problems which would, inevitably, arise should he be elected. In a speech delivered to Liberal supporters on 8 July, he stated only that: 'On the subject of civil and religious liberty he considered that there ought not to be any intervention by the State to restrict perfect liberty of conscience'.<sup>7</sup>

At least in so far as the statement of issues and policy during the campaign was concerned, Jewish emancipation formed, therefore, only one element among the electoral issues raised and pursued, and that, it would seem, a minor and, on the whole, tacit one. The major debate, which had brought down Peel's government, was that of protectionism versus free trade. The questions of the extension of the franchise and of direct as opposed to indirect taxation of commodities were certainly more overt, the subjects of much of the preliminary speech-making.

But what of the voters themselves? The total of votes given to Lionel would seem to indicate that the 'Jewish question' formed no significant part of the consideration of the electorate. At the end of the newly recovered poll book, following the listing of voters and votes, appear a number of pages of psephological analysis, breaking down the votes by ward, comparing



ELECTION DE M. DE ROTHSCHILD, A LONDRES.

the distribution of votes in elections since 1837, calculating totals for those who cast one, two, three or four votes and analysing how they were distributed among the candidates and, finally, assessing the relative numerical strengths of the political parties. These pages give us the opportunity to further test this hypothesis. Overall the Liberals, with Rothschild among their candidates, received 55.4 percent of the votes cast in the 1847 election, improving the position from the last parliamentary election for which a full slate of candidates had stood, that of 1841. This had produced a 49.8 percent vote for the Liberals and had split the returned four seats equally between the two parties. On this basis, therefore, Lionel's candidacy had certainly not impaired support for the party.

With the help of the poll book we can look more closely at the voting pattern of individuals. Significantly, only 107 people out of 13,419 are recorded as having voted for the other three Liberal candidates while abstaining from voting for Rothschild, a tiny proportion of the whole and interesting when compared with the record of 254 who abstained from voting for Lord John Russell while voting for his other three party colleagues.

Still more interesting is the case of those who can be demonstrated to have voted for Rothschild and Rothschild alone. There was no obligation on voters to cast a full slate of four votes; that was merely the maximum. There were instances at this election of those who cast one, two or three votes. These voters for a single candidate were referred to as 'plumpers'. For the 133 citizens who went to the hustings specifically to vote for Rothschild and no one else, we may, even if we cannot probe deeply into motivation, safely presume either a personal commitment to Lionel as an individual or a determination to support the cause of Jewish parliamentary representation.

*Above*  
Lionel's election campaign was featured in the international press.  
RAL 000/429

*Opposite*  
A page from the poll book which classifies voting by ward and livery.  
RAL 000/2027

Votes in Wards and Parishes at the  
City of London Election 29<sup>th</sup> July 1847

Wards	Parishes	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Total
Aldersgate Within & Without		94	71	44	27	236
Oldgate & Whittington		210	130	150	132	622
Wapping & Whitechapel		232	160	170	172	734
Bishopsgate Within & Without		229	157	154	140	680
Broad Street & Whitechapel		181	126	147	119	573
Bridge & Whitechapel		232	161	176	156	725
Broad Street		231	150	170	160	711
Castle Baynard		179	124	144	120	567
Chancery Lane & Finsbury		174	120	125	106	525
Cornhill		134	95	100	95	424
Chapelgate Within		103	71	82	50	306
St. Martin		165	107	120	122	514
Finsbury Within		170	120	120	109	519
St. Martin North Side		190	150	157	120	617
St. Martin South Side		230	240	226	210	906
St. Dunstons		200	174	126	124	624
Langbourn & St. Dunstons		221	170	247	209	847
St. Dunstons		79	56	57	50	242
St. Dunstons		270	177	160	122	729
Great St. Martin		2620	2776	2760	2419	10575
St. Dunstons		2000	2460	2200	2210	8870
St. Dunstons		6600	2020	5210	4700	18530
St. Dunstons		6722	5040	4760	4700	21222
St. Dunstons		6670	5060	4760	4710	21200
St. Dunstons		6660	5000	4760	4710	21130
St. Dunstons						133

In terms of the geography of voting patterns, a breakdown by ward of the votes cast shows Lionel's weakest support to have come from the small ward of Inner and Middle Temple (9.54 percent of total votes cast), with its high proportion of voters from the legal profession and, perhaps surprisingly, from the Cornhill ward just to the north of St Swithin's Lane (11 percent). His strongest support came from three of the more peripheral wards which had heavier levels of residential properties: Cripplegate Within and Without, stretching towards Whitechapel (18.2 percent and 18.56 percent respectively) and Portsoken (21.64 percent), in the area where the Barbican Estate now stands, a ward which had, in 1844, returned David Salomons as an Alderman. These were the areas of the City where there was the greatest concentration of Jews, until the intensive settlements later in the century in the East End, beyond the City.<sup>8</sup>

To the addresses of the 133 'plumpers' there seems, however, to be no geographical pattern. They are randomly scattered across the City and indeed beyond, in the case of those who were eligible on account of their membership of livery companies. By using an 1847 street directory of London it has been possible to trace a proportion – something over half – of those whose names are registered as plumpers for Rothschild. Of these, 15 percent were from what we would now refer to as the professional classes, mostly lawyers, but including a surgeon and an artist. 30 percent came from the world of commerce, where Rothschild himself operated, though the range here covers everything from stock- and commodity brokers and merchants to a flour factor and a meat salesman. But by far the largest element – over half – is from the class of skilled tradesmen: brass-founders, watchmakers, boot- and shoemakers, carpenters, a baker, a fruiterer, a cook and four landlords of licensed premises.

Without much closer research it is difficult to draw any telling conclusions from these figures, but the 1847 poll book provides an opportunity which, it is hoped, this brief paper will encourage, for such a study. Meanwhile, there seems little doubt, on the evidence of this newly available and key source, that while, in 1847, the issue of Jewish participation in Parliament may have been a major hurdle for the Establishment to cross, for the electorate in the City of London it was no longer an issue of significance.

*Vic Gray is a Trustee of The Rothschild Archive and its founding Director. He is a passionate advocate for archives and was appointed MBE for services to archivists in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2010.*

## NOTES

- 1 Among the many accounts of this campaign, see M. C. N. Salbstein, *The Emancipation of the Jews in Britain ... 1828-1860*, (London: Associated University Press, 1982); A. Gilam, *The Emancipation of the Jews in England, 1830-1860*, (New York-London: 1982); Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics*, (Oxford: OUP, 1983).
- 2 There has been any number of accounts of the progress of anti-Semitism in Europe, from Lucien Wolf's essay in his 1934 *Essays in Jewish history* to the latest account by Anthony Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora: a History of Anti-Semitism in England*, (Oxford: OUP, 2010).
- 3 The Rothschild Archive: 000/2027.

- 4 J. Gibson, and C. Rogers, *Poll Books, c.1696-1872: a Directory of Holdings in Great Britain*, (Federation of Family History Societies, 1989).
- 5 The text of the address is printed in Rev. Moses Margoliouth, *The History of the Jews in Great Britain*, vol. II, (London, 1851), pp.258-269.
- 6 *The Times*, 9 July 1847.
- 7 *The Times*, 9 July 1847.
- 8 Basing his evidence on the presence of Jewish ethnic names in the electoral registers, Geoffrey Alderman, identified about 350 Jews registered to vote in the City in the late 1840s, of which 270 were to be found in the Aldgate, Billingsgate, Portsoken and Tower wards (*ibid.*, p.179, n.27).

Letter from Lionel de Rothschild to John Delane, Editor of *The Times*, 30 July 1847, in which the writer expresses his thanks for help during his election campaign and asks for amendments to a report that is to appear in the newspaper.

I should very much like to see a few words added to my short speech of this morning to the effect that I was grateful for the support I had received from Electors having different politics to my own, but who were anxious to have an opportunity of recording a vote in favour of civil and religious liberty etc., etc. You know how to arrange it for me, so I hope you will not mind the trouble and accept my best thanks for it as well as for all you have done for me. I hope to see you soon and to thank you again personally.

Delane Papers, TT/ED/UTD/2/077  
Times Newspapers Limited Archive,  
News International.

Sept. 30 July 1847

My dear Mr Delane

I think any man like me  
after words added to my short  
speech of this morning, to the effect  
that I was grateful for the  
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I hope you will not  
mind the trouble and  
accept my best thanks  
for all you have done for me  
I hope to see you soon  
and to thank you again  
personally

Yours truly  
Lionel de Rothschild