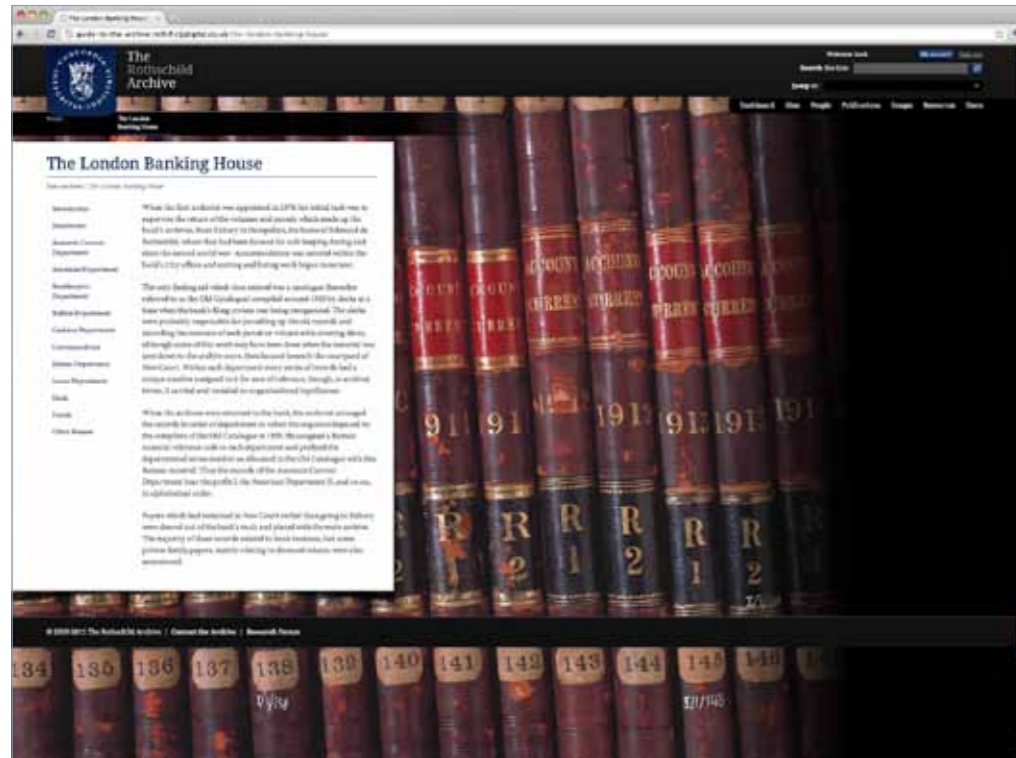


# Review of the year's work

Melanie Aspey, Director of The Rothschild Archive

Work in the Archive continues to take place against the backdrop of preparations for the planned move into the new headquarters of the Rothschild bank in London. The building is on the site of New Court, the premises first acquired by Nathan Mayer Rothschild in 1809, and will be the fourth that the business has occupied since then. The archivists have been documenting the process of the construction from the first days of the project, acquiring film, photographs and sketches to add to the Archive's collections. In conjunction with the move we have also updated our website and research forum, a process discussed elsewhere in the *Review* by Justin Cavernelis-Frost.<sup>1</sup> The redesign of the website has allowed us to make use of micro-sites which should help members of the research community access information with greater ease and facilitate use of the collections.



## Research

The third student to begin work at The Rothschild Archive under the Collaborative Doctoral Award Scheme of the Arts and Humanities Research Council is Anders L. Mikkelsen. He has contributed an article to this issue of the *Review* on the first stages of his research into sovereign bond issuance in the London capital market, 1870–1914. The awards are administered jointly by the Archive and the Centre for Contemporary British History at King's College London.

The London reading room continues to attract a wide range of researchers from many countries whose studies can be supported by the resources at the Archive. Subjects studied by researchers in the reading room included loan contracts with the Ottoman Empire and Egypt;

Greek loans and trade with Greece; the history of the Creditanstalt; the Indian market in the 1880s; Gunnersbury Park and Leopold de Rothschild as a Collector; the collections of Adolphe de Rothschild; Jewish emancipation in 19th-century Britain; the life of the 1st Lord Rothschild.

## Research Project

As reported in the previous year's *Review*, the Archive has embarked upon a long-term project examining the activities of the London and Paris houses in trade with the Americas over the course of the long nineteenth century. The American Project seeks to facilitate access to the many significant, and largely untapped, resources in our collection relevant to the study of nineteenth-century transatlantic trade and American financial and banking history. The records in the collection provide rich material for studies on international finance, the development of railways, the history of commodities, diplomatic history and the development of social networks. In association with the project, an international conference co-sponsored by the Program in Early American Economy and Society and the Archive, 'Foreign Confidence: International Investment in North America, 1700 to 1860' will be held on 11–12 October 2012 at the Library Company of Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup> The keynote presentation will be given by Professor Emma Rothschild. One aim of the conference is to promote the collections of the Archive, and those of other European institutions, to scholars researching this period of American history.

## Archive events

On behalf of the Centre for Contemporary British History at King's College London the Archive hosted a workshop for the British Association of Former UN Civil Servants, with talks from Dame Margaret Anstee and Alan Doss. The Association has developed a project to assemble in the Bodleian Library personal papers and other records dealing with the experiences and contributions of UN staff members to the UN during their careers.

## Outreach

In 2010, Melanie Aspey and Victor Gray made presentations on a training course for banking archivists, 'The Archivist as Communicator', jointly organised by the European Association for Banking and Financial History (EABH), UCL (the host organisation), the Business Archives Council and The Rothschild Archive. Melanie Aspey presented a paper at the conference 'Biographies of the Financial World' organised by The Foundation for Economic History Research within Banking and Enterprise, Stockholm, together with the Institute for Economic and Business History Research. In January 2011 Claire-Amandine Soulié made a presentation at a seminar organised by Dr Rainer Liedtke of the University of Darmstadt, which focused on the Rothschild letters in Judendeutsch.

*Opposite*  
The Rothschild Archive website contains detailed guides to many of the Archive's collections, including the records of N M Rothschild & Sons.

*Below*  
Portraits presumed to be Salomon von Rothschild (1774–1855) and his wife, Caroline née Stern (1782–1854).  
RAL 000/2061





*Above*  
Imperial Order of the Sacred Treasure awarded to Edmund de Rothschild (1916–2009) in 1973.  
RAL 000/1906

### Acquisitions

Inevitably, the process of preparing for a move into new premises has led to the rediscovery and reassessment of a great many business files. From the corporate records department of N M Rothschild & Sons the Archive received a number of files including several relating to the development of New Court in the 1960s. Aside from plans and costings, the files contain detailed descriptions of the architectural and design features of the building.

The Archive's collection of material relating to the lives of members of the Rothschild family was also enhanced. From the estate of the late Baron Elie de Rothschild the Archive acquired a pair of miniature portraits of 'Baron' and 'Baroness' Rothschild. The male was certainly Salomon von Rothschild (1774–1855), based on known images of him by the same artist, which led to the assumption that the female was his wife, Caroline née Stern. If this is the case, it is the only known portrait in which she has been identified as the sitter.

Charlotte de Rothschild made a gift of some material relating to the life of her late father, Edmund de Rothschild, the first chairman of N M Rothschild & Sons Limited. The family of Mr Eddy, as he was affectionately known, has deposited his entire collection of papers with the Archive. The papers encompass his involvement with many different projects during his time at the bank, including the Churchill Falls hydro-electric dam in Newfoundland and his deep involvement with the development of Anglo-Japanese relations, for which he received the Imperial Order of the Sacred Treasure in 1973. Papers from the early part of his life include his diaries and photographs from a round-the-world tour which he made in the years immediately prior to World War II, and which he published in part in his book *Window on the World*.

In line with its commitment to locating and recording archives of relevance to Rothschild history that are in collections elsewhere, the Archive digitised papers relating to the acquisition by the American Museum of Natural History of the collection of birds of Walter, 2nd Lord Rothschild (1868–1937) in the 1930s. The collection of 280,000 bird skins remains the largest single acquisition by any natural history museum and served to raise the American Museum of Natural History to a position of parity with the Natural History Museum in London in terms of research collections.

### Archive library

Several authors presented copies of their published works that were based to a greater or lesser extent on research carried out at the Archive. Professor Harry Paul, who wrote an article about Henri de Rothschild as a collector of art for an earlier issue of this *Review*, presented copies of *Henri de Rothschild 1872–1947 Medicine and Theater*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).<sup>3</sup> Jehanne Wake gave a copy of her book *Sisters of Fortune* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2010), a study of the four Caton sisters of Maryland, granddaughters of Charles Carroll, the only Catholic signatory of the Declaration of Independence. The book contains many references to the financial advice received by the sisters from Hannah, the wife of N M Rothschild. A copy of 'How to make a Potentially Defaulting Country Credible: Karl Rothschild, the Neapolitan Debt and Financial Diplomacy (1821–26)' from the *Revista di Storia Economica*, (Fondata da Luigi Einaudi, 2010), was received from Maria Carmela Schisani, who is based at the University of Federico Secondo, Naples, and who is working on a history of the Rothschilds' Naples house.

*Below*  
A selection of digital images of lantern slides from the Ornithology Department of the American Museum of Natural History. The slides were made in 1932 when Walter Rothschild's collection of bird skins was collected from Tring and shipped to New York.  
RAL 000/2062



## 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