



Detail from an engraving
of the gold fields around
Ballarat, Australia, c.1852.

Introduction

Eric de Rothschild, Chairman of The Rothschild Archive Trust

Welcome to this issue, the thirteenth, of The Rothschild Archive's *Review of the Year*.

2012 was an important year in the life of NM Rothschild in St Swithin's Lane. The bank enjoyed its first year in the new building which adds a magnificent architectural landmark to the City of London.

Thanks to the imagination and creativity of architect Rem Koolhaas, this building opened a unique vista onto the Wren church of St Stephen Walbrook and also gave new prominence to the Archives which are now housed on the entrance terrace of the building. A unique collaboration between the offices of the architect and the firm of Robert Thompson's Craftsmen Ltd created a most attractive and much praised décor for our Reading Room and collections.

In this new environment, the Archives are at the heart of business and remind all visitors of the strong links which the collections have to the family and its various businesses.

A special word of thanks is due to Tony Chapman who led the rebuilding project and who chose Robert Thompson as a partner in this venture. It is very much worth noting that this is the fourth building the family erected on this site acquired by our founder in 1809.

As you will see from the pages of this *Review*, the archivists have been continually active in developing research initiatives that make the richly diverse collections in our care noticed and used by a broad group of scholars.

Research on the history of Rothschild in the USA has been stimulated by efforts such as the successful summer school directed by Kathryn Boodry. To her and to the eminent and enthusiastic presenters on this course, I express the appreciation of the Trustees. We welcome the link that has been forged with the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Program in Early American Economy and Society, directed by Dr Cathy Matson who is a welcome new member of the Trust's Academic Advisory Committee.

As a new initiative, the historical contribution of members of the Rothschild family to science, natural history and environmental initiatives is being explored through a special project which began this year. The Trustees are enormously grateful to the Rothschild Foundation for supporting this project in its early days.

The centrality of the Archive Trust which houses the memories of all the Rothschild family and of its business, artistic and scientific achievements in the last centuries would not have been attained without the development that the chief archivists have given to it since its creation by Victor Rothschild in 1978. Our gratitude, once more, goes to Vic Gray, the Trust's first Director, but very much also to Melanie Aspey who succeeded him and has done a remarkable job both in keeping a high level of academic rigour but also making the collections so 'user friendly' to all participants of the family group. A very special word of thanks to her and her staff for their hard work.

At the Rothschild lecture which was particularly well attended by supporters of the Archive, Emma delivered a remarkably eloquent speech on the significance of the past to our lives today and on the importance of archives. Emma's invaluable historical expertise is most useful and appreciated by the Trust.

Last but not least, we are very grateful for the continuing support of the Trust by so many of the family banks, vineyards and foundations but also to the many individual family members who donate precious family archives and artefacts to the collection. This year in particular, we thank Nathaniel de Rothschild and his sisters for their contribution.