

Review of the Year

Melanie Aspey, Director of The Rothschild Archive

Taking centre stage in the year's programme of work, as anticipated, was the preparation for the move of the archives into new premises. The core collection of the Archive – the records of N M Rothschild & Sons – is as comprehensive as it is thanks in large measure to the continuity of the firm in premises in St Swithin's Lane since 1809, the year in which N M Rothschild acquired the lease of 2 New Court. The space now occupied by the Archive matches the footprint of the first Rothschild banking house, so the move took on the characteristic of a home-coming. Inevitably the Reading Room was out of commission while the archives were packed up and awaiting transfer, a process that was completed towards the end of December 2011. In January 2012 the first readers were able to take their places in the Archive's new Reading Room. This is a magnificent space, the result of a collaboration between the architects of the building, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, and the Yorkshire family firm of Robert Thompson whose work many will recognise by the signature mouse carved into every piece. In a modernist building constructed with glass and steel the traditional style of the Reading Room, made from seasoned English oak, was specifically intended to reflect the history of the locus. Natalie Broad writes about the move, and the creation of the Reading Room, on page 49 of this *Review*.



Date	Name	Address	Comments
12.1.12	Leopold de Rothschild		BRAVO!



Opposite
Mr Leopold de Rothschild,
the first official visitor
to the Archive's Reading
Room.

Anne Sophie Overkamp,
a participant in the first
Rothschild Archive
Summer School, examining
N M Rothschild's textile
sample book from 1800.

Summer School

Thanks to a continuing fruitful relationship with King's College London, the Archive was able to run a planned summer school developed as part of the American Project research programme, which was held at the Guy's Hospital campus of King's. Kathryn Boodry, who writes elsewhere in this *Review* about the broader scope of the American Project, planned and organised the summer school. Sessions on palaeography, understanding and interpreting financial records, using archives, research methods and Atlantic history were designed to introduce new postgraduate students to the skills and techniques that underpin research at this level. The Archive is grateful for the enthusiastic participation of all the presenters: Dr Michael Anson (Bank of England Archives); Elizabeth Danbury; Dr Michael Kandiah (King's College London); Caroline Shaw (The Schroder Archive); Professor Klaus Weber (Viadrina University) and Kathryn Boodry (Harvard University) for their commitment of time and expertise.



Summer School participants looking at American accounts during a session on interpreting financial records.

Opposite
Nica de Koenigswarter's photographs: a small sample of the collection shown on arrival at the Archive.

The Rothschild Archive Lecture

In the first years after its creation The Rothschild Archive Trust held a series of lectures, which were given by Professors David Landes, David Cannadine, Niall Ferguson and Fritz Stern.¹ Thanks to the support of N M Rothschild & Sons, the Archive held a fifth lecture in January 2012 in the bank's new building. Professor Emma Rothschild spoke about Information, Archives and Financial History, the text of which appears on page 14 of this *Review*. The lecture was attended by representatives of many archives, libraries and museums as well as the City of London and the Rothschild businesses. The Trustees plan to continue the lecture series in the future.

Acquisitions

The collections of the Archive continue to grow, with new material arriving from the bank's business as well as from members of the Rothschild family. The children of Baroness Pannonica (Nica) de Koenigswarter (née Rothschild) presented archives and artefacts relating to their mother's book, *Three Wishes*,² for which she interviewed leading jazz musicians in America. Nica was a noted patron of many jazz artists from the 1940s onwards when she took up residence in New York.



Baron Nathaniel de Rothschild made a gift of a large quantity of archives, books and artefacts, which had been inherited or collected by his late parents, Elie and Liliane de Rothschild. While a prisoner of war Baron Elie was able to marry Liliane Fould Springer by proxy: she presented herself at the town hall in Cannes at the same moment that he signed a certificate in Colditz Castle. The couple's correspondence during his incarceration is included in the gift. The philanthropic work of Elie's parents, Robert and Nelly, is documented in the acquisition in files of reports from the various institutions which they founded or supported.

A list of principle accessions appears on page 55 of the *Review*.



Opposite
The Rothschild Archive Reading Room.

The team from Robert Thompson's viewed through the Reading Room window.

Below
Gold bars refined at the Rothschilds' Royal Mint Refinery.



Library

Several researchers and visitors made gifts of their publications for the Archive's library. Titles by members of the family will be added to the Rothschild bibliography on the Archive's website.³ Details of notable acquisitions will be found on page 55.

Exhibition

Some of the new acquisitions received from Nathaniel de Rothschild will be on display in Paris at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, which is staging an exhibition on the life of the founder of the French branch of the business, James de Rothschild (1792–1868). The Archive has been working closely with the curatorial, editorial and exhibition staff of the BnF to develop the exhibition concept, select items and prepare a catalogue. About a third of the exhibits are drawn from the collections of the Archive in London and at the Centre des Archives du Monde du Travail in Roubaix; other lenders include the Musée du Louvre, the Musée Nissim de Camondo, the Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme and other public and private collections in France. The exhibition *Les Rothschild en France au XIXe siècle* – opens in November 2012 until February 2013.⁴

Rothschild Scientists

The Archive has begun to explore the work and impact of the various members of the Rothschild family who were prominent natural historians, scientists and horticulturalists. The project has been established in order to identify and highlight collections in public institutions which were deposited by members of the Rothschild family and to explore ways of creating a virtual archive of these collections. Additionally, the project staff will work with other partners to identify and develop research strands which incorporate the work of the Rothschild scientists and which promote the use of the archives and collections they created. Dr Jenni Thomas and Lorna Cahill write about aspects of the project on pages 32 and 38.

Outreach

In October 2012 Kathryn Boodry and Claire-Amandine Soulié will present papers at a conference co-organised by the Archive and the Program in Early American Economy and Society and hosted by the Library Company of Philadelphia, drawn on research into the Rothschild business in America in the nineteenth century. Kathryn Boodry writes more about this on page 44.



NOTES

- 1 Edited versions of the lectures were published in previous issues of this *Review*, see www.rothschildarchive.org
- 2 *Three Wishes: an intimate look at jazz greats*, Pannonica de Koenigswarter was published posthumously.
- 3 [www.rothschildarchive.org/research/?doc=/research/articles/bib cover](http://www.rothschildarchive.org/research/?doc=/research/articles/bib%20cover)
- 4 [www.bnf.fr/fr/evenements et culture/anx expositions/f.rothschild.html](http://www.bnf.fr/fr/evenements-et-culture/anx-expositions/f.rothschild.html)