Contents

Introduction
Eric de Rothschild 7

Review of the year’s work
Melanie Aspey 8

Rothschild cousins in a global world
Hassan Malik 14

The Rothschild Scientists workshop
Jenni Thomas 22

Charlotte ‘Chilly’ von Rothschild:
mother, connoisseur, and artist
Evelyn M. Cohen 28

Mr Warren’s photograph album:
memories of a vanished Rothschild estate
Justin Cavernelis-Frost 38

‘The book that started it all’: art, archives and Austria
Melanie Aspey 47

Principal acquisitions
1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013 53
Introduction

Eric de Rothschild, Chairman of The Rothschild Archive Trust

On behalf of my fellow trustees I am pleased to welcome you to the fourteenth issue of The Rothschild Archive’s Review of the Year. After fourteen years of activity, it is gratifying to see that the level of interest in our collections is as high as ever. This year we have welcomed visitors from across the globe studying subjects as diverse as banking systems, technological innovations, Jewish textiles, decorative arts and political biography. Two of our researchers, Evelyn Cohen and Hassan Malik, have contributed articles about their research to this Review.

Following the exhibition at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France – Les Rothschild en France au XIXe siècle – more French scholars have become aware of our collections in London and in France, at the Archives Nationales du Monde du Travail, Roubaix.

My cousin, Evelyn de Rothschild, is responsible for creating The Rothschild Archive Trust, which became a model for some other family businesses. His interest in the Archive has never waned. This year in particular we thank him warmly, as chairman of The Eranda Foundation, for generous support of the Rothschild Scientists project. As the Project’s Director, Dr Jenni Thomas, notes elsewhere in this Review the activities of many members of the Rothschild family are being acknowledged in the form of publication, exhibition, and collaborative research projects.

We remain enormously grateful to the Rothschild business in London for its continuing support of the Archive by providing excellent accommodation and resources for the Archive’s staff and visitors. It was particularly rewarding for the Archive to see how positively the relations between the Trust and the Bank evolved since the opening of the new building. Its permanent position on its entrance terrace has certainly been instrumental in this development. The Archive is used both for the entertainment of clients and for preparing documents for them. It is also a very useful tool for staff training. It has become an integral part of the life of the bank. The Trustees value this important relationship.

The Archive Trust is also supported by Rothschild family banks, vineyards and foundations and I thank them all, on behalf of the Trustees, for these continued relationships.

Members of my family have made many gifts of papers to the Archive this year. The Trustees are indebted to Nina Burr and Nathaniel de Rothschild as well as to Charlotte de Rothschild, executrix of the estate of our dear cousin, Leopold de Rothschild.

The staff has been as busy as ever supporting the work of visiting researchers, cataloguing collections and answering hundreds of enquiries addressed to our website www.rothschildarchive.org. The Trustees very much appreciate their enthusiasm and expertise and I wish to thank them all, and more particularly Melanie Aspey, for the great job they are doing and also because they are very much responsible for the flourishing of good relations with the bank.

Finally, I welcome two new Trustees, Nigel Higgins, CEO of the banking group, and Dr David Todd, of King’s College London.
Review of the year’s work

Melanie Aspey, Director of The Rothschild Archive

The Archive has fully settled in to its new premises at New Court and the Reading Room, (the subject of an article by Natalie Broad in the previous issue of this Review) has been attracting researchers from around the world. Researcher numbers, in common with those of other archives in London, were slightly down on earlier years during the London Olympics.

Researchers

David Thomas of the University of Georgia was awarded a Rothschild Archive Bursary. Mr Thomas’s PhD examines links between diplomacy and finance and he spent time at the Archive studying the correspondence of August Belmont, the US agent of the Rothschild banks in New York in the nineteenth century. Dr Jennifer Stagel of Ohio State University returned to the Archive to continue her research into the Rothschilds and Russian oil. Other researchers studied the banking system in Mexico, Latin American sovereign debt; the revival of French eighteenth-century interiors in English houses; the Hamilton Palace sale; bimetallism; Jewish banking networks and Rothschild collections in France. Hassan Malik and Evelyn Cohen write more about their research in articles in this Review.

Exhibition

The Archive played a significant role in an exhibition about the life of James de Rothschild (1792–1868), organised by the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The exhibition, *Les Rothschild en France au XIXe Siècle*, ran for 14 weeks from 20 November 2012 and aimed to present the Rothschild family in the context of other bankers of the era, notably the Camondo and Pereire families. A catalogue of the exhibition featured articles by Youssif Cassis, Michael Hall, Harry Paul, Claire-Amandine Soulé, Claude Collard and others, exploring the Rothschilds’ financial and business ventures in France and their philanthropy in social services and the arts.

A major publication cataloguing the works of art that were donated or bequeathed by members of the Rothschild family to French institutions is being prepared by Pauline Prévost Marcilhacy. The catalogue, *Le mécénat des Rothschild*, will be published by Musée de Louvre editions. An interior of the Rothschild property at 47 rue de Monceau (left).
Nelly de Rothschild, née Beer (1886–1945) in a recently discovered portrait by Philip de László. This image, painted in London, has been identified by scholars at The de László Archive Trust as a trial for a second portrait. Information about both portraits of Nelly, as well as other members of the Rothschild family, is available on the Trust’s website.

Below

Conference
Foreign Confidence: International Investment in North America, 1700–1860 was a conference organised jointly by The Rothschild Archive and the Program in Early American Economy and Society (PEAES). It was held at the Library Company of Philadelphia in October 2012. Cathy Matson, Director of the PEAES, is a member of the Archive’s Academic Advisory Committee. The keynote speech, Atlantic History and Financial History, was given by Emma Rothschild and contributions to the two-day event were made by academics from the USA, the UK, Canada, France and Spain.

Library

Acquisitions
Elsewhere in this Review, Justin Cavernelis-Frost writes about an album of photographs of the former Rothschild property at Aston Clinton. The Trustees of The Rothschild Archive London would like to thank Ken Blackmore, Gillian Arnay and Rosemarie Storr of Aston Clinton for their assistance in enabling the Archive to acquire Mr Warren’s photograph album. Special thanks are due to Mrs Storr for sharing her unpublished research on the Warren family with The Rothschild Archive. Images from Mr Warren’s album will be exhibited at the History of Aston Clinton exhibition to be held at St Michael’s and All Angels Church, Aston Clinton, in July 2013.
Nina Burr, the daughter of the late Bettina Looram who died in November 2012, presented to the Archive a collection of papers assembled by Mrs Looram and her family in the wake of their return to Austria after World War II. Mrs Looram succeeded in securing the return to the family from Austrian national museums those works of art that had been retained at the war’s end. The collection consists of lists of looted art, numerous files of the Nazi administration about their treatment and the negotiations with the successor authorities. Further details can be seen in the article on page 47 of this Review.

Among the many items presented to the Archive by Nathaniel de Rothschild is a portrait sketch of his grandmother, Nelly de Rothschild, née Beer by Philipp de László. The Archive has been working with The de László Archive Trust so that the picture can be included in the online catalogue raisonné at www.delaszloarchivetrust.com.

Outreach

• The Archive ran a summer school for young scholars in September 2012, following on from the success of that held in the previous year. The Trustees are grateful to the presenters on this course for generously participating in this event, and to Kathryn Boodry for organising it once more.

• The Director of the Archive spoke at the Society of American Archivists’ conference Beyond Borders in August 2012. In the following month Claire-Amandine Soulé presented a paper at the Johannes Gutenberg Universität, Mainz on the history of Rothschild railways and commodities.

• The Archive continues to welcome groups of visitors to the Archive, in addition to individual researchers. Staff of the Archive participate in the Rothschild Corporate Social Responsibility programme by speaking to groups of students from schools and colleges and organising special events at the Archive for them. Groups of students from UCL, Cambridge and King’s College London visited the Archive to learn more about using archives to support their research.

• Justin Cavernelis-Frost made a presentation to post-graduate archive students in an event organised by the Business Archives Council and he and Natalie Broad represented the Archive at the annual Meet the Archivists event, hosted this year by the British Postal Museum and Archive.

• The Archive also hosted a conference on behalf of King’s College London on the Windsor Dynasty in November 2012.

• In recent years the Archive has produced postcards of items from its collection primarily but not exclusively to promote research projects. One of the most popular of these has been ‘Baron Rothschild’s List of Maxims’, a list which used to sit on the desk of the late Edmund de Rothschild at New Court. Fiona McGrail-Groves, formerly of his office and now working with the Archive, chose this image and has made many other valuable contributions to the presentation of the Archive to staff and visitors alike.

The Archive has much to look forward to in the forthcoming year. The archivists have been working on catalogues of new material in preparation for their publication on the website which we hope will attract more visitors to our collections. The return of the last files looted from the family in Vienna in 1938, which were discovered in the store rooms of the Austrian National Archives, will take place in the coming months.
Rothschild cousins in a global world

Hassan Malik shows how the letters exchanged between the London and Paris Rothschild bankers in the early years of the twentieth century are an invaluable chronicle of their times.

To speak of the present-day world as a globalised one has become a cliché in recent years. Every year appears to bring a greater degree of convergence in living standards, incomes, and even culture between a range of countries in the ‘emerging’ and ‘developed’ worlds. Yet it comes as a surprise to some contemporary participants in global capital markets to learn that the current era of globalisation in which we live is not only not without precedent but that the world was once arguably even more globalised than it is at present. Moreover, it was in particular within the sphere of international finance that the world showed a greater degree of integration than in the present day.

The bond markets of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries showed investors to be remarkably cosmopolitan in their tastes. Whereas contemporary Western investors have only begun to drift relatively recently out of their home markets into more exotic ‘emerging’ and ‘frontier’ markets – largely through investments in mutual funds that select portfolios of individual bonds on their behalf – their forebears were far more willing to directly purchase securities issued on behalf of distant lands. It would not, for example, be unusual to see the proverbial Scottish widow invest in bonds from Australia, Egypt, Argentina, Brazil, the Ottoman Empire, China, Persia and Russia. The global capital market was truly global in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with even distant tertiary towns and cities in so-called peripheral economies being tied to the global financial centres of the time – London, Paris, and New York – through the telegraph and the local agents of a range of powerful banks. The Rothschild houses were indisputably at the top of this extensive food chain of global finance. It was the Rothschilds who were the bank of choice for governments seeking to borrow in the principal financial centres of Europe, where their willingness to associate their name with a bond issue was a powerful signal to individual investors not only of the quality of the issuer, but of the support which the issuer enjoyed: having associated their name and brand with a deal, the Rothschilds were known to do everything in their considerable power to ensure the success of the deal in question.

In this sense, even as the global markets of the past were in some ways more democratic, and even as individual retail investors investing in individual securities were a more prominent feature of the previous era of globalisation than of the present one, global finance was in the past dominated by an elite group of financiers (dubbed the ‘gatekeepers’ of finance by one scholar) who held considerable power over the access of individual issuers to the global capital markets. Studying the thinking of these gatekeepers provides considerable insight into how capital markets functioned in this earlier era of global finance.

In this respect, the collection of daily – often even more frequent – letters from the Rothschild cousins in London to those in Paris is one of the richest collections available for historians of global finance during the first modern age of globalisation. The letters, which survive from 1906 to 1914, provide a fly-on-the-wall perspective on the most intimate discussions between some of the most powerful men in finance, and indeed, the global economy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
Many banks, of course, preserved their correspondence, and such collections remain an important source not only for banking and economic history but also for social, political, and even cultural historians. What makes the Rothschild letters particularly valuable, however, is their multifaceted nature. To a far greater extent than any other banking group in the world at the time, the Rothschilds presided over a truly global business empire, and their correspondence reflects an intimate involvement with events from Latin America to Europe to Asia. Each letter not only provides insights into individual business questions the cousins were grappling with at a given point in time, but also shows the relative importance the cousins attached to different deals and indeed parts of the world on a given day. It is not unusual, for example, for a letter to begin with reference to family matters, move on to a discussion of British domestic politics, touch on the family’s investment in the Rio Tinto mines, and then move on to an extensive discussion of Russian affairs, ranging from the Tsarist Empire’s public finances to its anti-Semitic policies, which were a source of particular concern for the Jewish financiers.

Indeed, the letters were a somewhat unexpectedly important source in my own doctoral dissertation on Russia’s experience with foreign investment from c.1892–1922. By the time Russia’s famous reformist finance minister, Sergei Witte, took office in 1892, the Rothschilds had all but washed their hands of the public finances of the country in which they had been particularly active earlier in the nineteenth century. The Tsarist government’s odious treatment of what the Rothschilds called their ‘co-religionists’ was the principal driver of the wedge between the Jewish house and the Tsarist regime. Indeed, during the Russo-Japanese War, which ended in a humiliating defeat for Russia, many Jewish financiers – notably Jacob Schiff of Kuhn, Loeb – not only abstained from lending to Russia, but actively sought to support Russia’s Japanese enemies.

Even though the London Rothschild’s involvement in loans to the Russian government had cooled by the late nineteenth century, their letters nonetheless provide rich insights into how the most powerful financiers in the world viewed the largest net international debtor in the world, as well as how they explained major phenomena in the contemporary global financial markets.

The Rothschild correspondence proved particularly valuable in studying the story of the Russian Government Five Per Cent Loan of 1906. The loan was a landmark deal for the Russian government for two major reasons. First, certain smaller corporate loans notwithstanding, the loan marked the return of the Russian government to the London bond markets after decades of focusing its borrowing operations on the Paris market. Second, the Russians floated the loan in the aftermath of their humiliation in the Russo-Japanese War and after months of often violent political troubles that would become known as the Revolution of 1905. While the Russian government’s efforts to secure the support of the Rothschilds were unsuccessful, the cousins’ commentary on the loan is nonetheless valuable from the standpoint of understanding the loan and the broader significance of the deal in the global capital markets.

The correspondence leaves little doubt as to the sharply negative attitude the firm – and especially the London cousins – had on Russian matters. Much of the commentary from this period makes reference to the anti-Semitic policies of the Tsarist regime and explicitly links any major participation by the Rothschilds in Russian government loans to tangible improvements in the conditions of the Rothschilds’ ‘co-religionists.’ In this sense, even if they focused more on the religious question than on geopolitics or finance, the London Rothschilds echoed a more general British Russophobia evident in the contemporary financial press – not least in the pages of The Economist.
‘We are still without news from [Rothschild’s New York agent] Belmont himself with regard to his interview with the President yesterday & in the meantime the Bank of California bombards us with telegrams asking for assistance. They virtually acknowledge that none of the Banks there are in a position to state their assets & liabilities & that for a curious chemical phenomenon their vaults & iron safes there have not been damaged so they believe, but are still so hot that they dare not open the doors: the scientific theory is that if they did so, the cold air would cause all the contents to crumble into dust, whilst if they allow these chambers to cool, the contents will be found intact.’

From a letter of 26 April 1906 sent by Lord Rothschild to his Paris cousins.

xi/152a/6
More importantly, the Rothschilds’ correspondence on the question of Russian loans reveals the relative importance they attached to Russian affairs within the context of broader trends in the global capital markets. While the papers of the various French and British banks involved in the deal predictably preserve in minute detail the records of the negotiations leading to the April 1906 flotation of the loan, the Rothschild letters are almost unique in the degree to which they place these negotiations and the ultimate flotation of the deal in a broader context.

Unlike most of the French banks involved who were heavily focused on Russian operations, for example, the Rothschilds actively dealt in a very broad range of markets, and so their understanding of the relative importance of the Russian deal as a driver of events in the London bond market is particularly interesting from the standpoint of the history of international finance. Their letters provide a candid insider’s perspective on how markets reacted to news of the Russian loan, and how the markets digested the issue, which, at 2.25bn francs, was one of the largest ever at the time.

More specifically, early 1906 was the start of a particularly turbulent time in global financial markets. Some scholars attribute the origins of the devastating Panic of 1907 in the United States – one of the greatest financial crises in the twentieth century, and one that historians frequently cite as the event that led to the creation of the Federal Reserve in 1913 – to the San Francisco earthquake of 18 April 1906.¹ In this view of events, it was the liquidity crunch tied to insurance claims originating in San Francisco that roiled global money markets, setting in motion a chain of events leading to the devastating panic in 1907.

Yet, the Rothschild letters raise an intriguing alternate explanation that suggests far more global roots to the Panic of 1907. The contract for the Five Per Cent Russian Government Loan of 1906 was signed by the underwriters and government on 16 April 1906 – just two days before the San Francisco earthquake – and the loan floated to the public shortly thereafter. As 1906 progressed, the much-touted Russia loan, which appeared to have been a successful issue at first, began to weaken in the secondary market. Indeed, by June, the Russian finance minister had agreed to a scheme proposed by his principal bankers to create a fund to support the price of the bonds in London and Paris.² The letters of the London Rothschilds in the summer of 1906 leave little doubt as to their thinking that the negative impact the poor performance of the Russian bond weighed on global markets. By July, the London cousins wrote to Paris saying, ‘the depression in Russian securities hangs like a heavy cloud over the rest of our market.’ Acknowledging rumours that British insurers suffering losses from Californian claims were liquidating their portfolios, the Rothschilds still stressed the poor performance of the Russian loan as a key cause of market malaise.³ That some of the most powerful financiers in the world attributed the troubles in the London market to a significant degree to the poor performance of the Russian loan is notable. Given the close temporal proximity of both events, evaluating the relative importance of the San Francisco earthquake and the Russian loan as triggers of market instability with any degree of precision is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Nevertheless, the Rothschild commentary is significant to the degree that it complicates previous scholarship like that of Bruner and Carr, which relies largely on the financial press.

More broadly, the Rothschild commentary on the market situation of early 1906 shows how papers in the Archive can shed light on countries and questions with which the Rothschilds had no direct role. Even though they were boycotting Russian loans, the Rothschilds’ negative commentary on the country in justifying this position is itself a rich source of material for financial historians in that it shows the cultural and political dimension to their refusal to participate in Russian lending – something that scholarship in the social sciences on the first modern age of globalisation, which often stresses factors such as monetary architecture or macroeconomic fundamentals, frequently overlooks. Moving beyond financial, economic and business history, the letters are an important lens into political and even social history, given the significant attention the cousins devoted to politics and social issues in their correspondence.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed an extraordinary time of global integration, and of financial globalisation in particular. The Rothschild houses lay at the centre of the growing global bond market, and their influence and connections extended by this time well beyond the realm of finance to politics and society more broadly. The cousins’ letters from 1906–1914 are an important collection that allows the reader to sit in at intimate virtual dinner-table conversations between some of the most influential men in the world at the time. It is a perspective that is rarely found in traditional government archives, and is one from which historians not only of finance, but of politics, society, and culture in the early twentieth century have much to gain.

Dr Hasnie Malik is a Max Wiberg Postdoctoral Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. He received his PhD from the Department of History at Harvard University in the autumn of 2013. His dissertation, Bankers and Bolsheviks: International Finance and the Russian Revolution, 1892–1914, explores the story of one of the largest booms and busts in international financial history.

NOTES

⁵ Ibid.
The *Rothschild Scientists* workshop

Jenni Thomas reviews the first *Rothschild Scientists* workshop which featured not only valuable contributions from workshop attendees but a guest appearance from London 2012’s Olympic and Paralympic medallists.

The *Rothschild Scientists* project continues to go from strength to strength. Regular readers of the *Review* will recall that the project was established in February 2012 to bring together dispersed collections relating to members of the Rothschild family in a virtual archive. The first year of the project was funded by The Rothschild Foundation and funding has been secured to run the project for a further two years from The Eranda Foundation. Our early findings revealed that the richness and diversity of the collections would benefit from more detailed research, so one of our first tasks was to organise a workshop for various invited experts to identify research strands which incorporate the work of the Rothschild scientists and promote the use of the archives and collections they created.

The Workshop

The workshop, hosted by The Rothschild Archive, was held in September 2012 and proved to be immensely productive. The day began with two sessions of papers. The first session, chaired by Professor Joe Cain (UCL), considered some key members of the family and their connections with the natural and biological sciences. Alice Adams (Natural History Museum, hereafter NHM) began the first session with a paper which considered Walter Rothschild and his Zoological Museum at Tring. Adams noted that Walter employed some of the most celebrated taxidermists of the day and was particularly interested in colour mutations and hybrids. Tim Sands and Cally Martin (The Wildlife Trusts) highlighted Walter’s brother Charles’s efforts in establishing the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, which later became The Wildlife Trusts. Melanie Aspey (The Rothschild Archive, hereafter RAL) spoke about Charles’s daughter Miriam’s entomological research and her work championing conservation and human rights. Jenni Thomas (RAL) rounded off the session with an examination of Walter and Charles’s cousin, Lionel de Rothschild, and his involvement in horticulture.

The second session, chaired by Melanie Aspey, focused on natural history collections accumulated by members of the family. Dr Robert Prys-Jones (NHM) gave an insight into Walter’s vast and important zoology collections while John Chainey described some of the highlights of the entomology collections accumulated by Charles and Walter. Pippa Shirley and Catherine Taylor (Waddesdon Manor, The National Trust) drew our attention to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art and archival collections at Waddesdon Manor, which relate to natural history and horticulture. Ian Edmans (Waddesdon Manor, The National Trust), Curator of Birds at Waddesdon’s Aviary brought us back into the twentieth first century in his discussion of the Aviary’s current work in conservation and breeding programmes. The Aviary has recently been responsible for producing the first parent reared Black and White Laughing Thrushes (*Garrulax bicolor*) in the UK, in addition to the first Spectacled Laughing Thrushes (*Rhinocichla mitrata*) bred in the UK. Edmans also provided a brief history of the Aviary, which was completed for Ferdinand de Rothschild in 1889. The session was concluded by Dr Gabriel Bodard and David Little from King’s College London’s...
Department of Digital Humanities. Bodard and Little described some projects that the Digital Humanities team are currently engaged in to give workshop participants a sense of the research possibilities provided by emerging digital technologies.

During lunch, Claire Jackson and Lorna Cahill (NHM Archive) presented a PowerPoint slideshow of selected images of letters sent to Walter’s Zoological Museum, popularly known as the Tring Correspondence. Those letters sent between 1903 and 1914 have been catalogued by Cahill thanks to funding from The Rothschild Foundation. The correspondence continues beyond 1914 and we are keen to secure funding to carry on this cataloguing work. Lunch also coincided with the Olympic and Paralympic athletes’ victory parade through central London and we had a fantastic view of the athletes and their well-deserved medals.

The remainder of the day was spent discussing future directions for the project and culminated in a roundtable discussion chaired by Professor Peter Mandl (University of Cambridge).

Future Directions

The discussion highlighted the variety of projects which could be undertaken in relation to the Rothschilds and science. While space does not permit a detailed examination of all the suggested avenues of research, to mention three in brief: one particularly popular idea was to look at science and philanthropy. Building on research undertaken by The Rothschild Archive and Royal Holloway to examine Jewish philanthropy and social development in Europe between 1800 and 1940, it was suggested that the project could investigate how the scientific interests of members of the Rothschild family on both sides of the Channel have influenced their collecting activity and philanthropic work. The relationship between amateur and professional scientists also received detailed consideration, particularly the ways in which museums and collections were marginalised by university-based laboratory science at the turn of the twentieth century. A project might investigate how Tring’s Zoological Museum persisted as an institution owned by an ‘amateur’ scientist in the rise of ‘professional science’. Workshop participants also emphasised the importance of digital methods of mapping resources connected with the Rothschilds and science and making them available to researchers online.

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K. Nagano’s *Nawa Icones Japonicorum Insectorum*, published in Japanese and English by the Nawa Entomological Laboratory. The scientific and intellectual exchange during and following Charles’s trip to Japan contributed to the above work. The first volume, published in 1904, focused on Sphingidae, a family of moths commonly known as hawk moths, sphinx moths and hornworms and acknowledged Charles’s assistance.

Sample page of Charles’s *Diary of Japan*. Of particular interest is the entry for 25 February 1902: Charles met with Allan Owston in Japan, and notes the contribution made by him. Owston’s business relationship with the Rothschild family commenced in the mid-1890s when he began collecting avian and entomological material for Charles’s older brother Walter, most notably in the Mariana Islands, south of Japan.
As part of King's College, London’s MA in Nineteenth Century Studies, we hosted an intern to work on documents relating to Charles Rothschild’s round the world trip in 1902, with particular reference to his stay in Japan. This has improved our knowledge of Charles’s scientific networks and collaboration with naturalists in Japan, particularly entomologists. We were also surprised to discover that Charles’s trip overlapped with the signing of the Anglo-Japanese agreement of 1902. In his diary entry for 16 March 1902, Charles wrote:

Small deputation called with invitation for us to witness the ceremony in honour of Anglo-Japanese Treaty. We went and were surprised to find ourselves the guests. Was introduced to an old general. Sat on only chairs. A lawyer, the general and another man made speeches or read proclamations. Firing of bombs and band playing Japanese and English National Anthems. We bowed to portrait of Mikado and that of English King.

Everybody most polite. Four cheers ended the proceedings. As we could not stay to lunch we were presented with boxes of provisions, and saké cups.

In February 2013 we were delighted to learn that the collaborative project between RAL, the Royal Society and the universities of Kingston and Liverpool, titled ‘Words from the WISE: investigating women in science, 1830–2012’, secured an Arts and Humanities Research Council ‘Science in Culture Network Grant’ of £41k. This will enable us to run a series of networking events with our project partners to investigate female participation in learned societies between 1830 and 2012. The project, which was inspired by the scientific work of Dame Miriam Rothschild, was judged as ‘outstanding’ by the AHRC’s peer reviewers and will form the foundation of a larger scale project.

Our first workshop, which will be held at the Royal Society in July 2013, will bring together archivists and researchers to identify the key scientific societies and scientific women which a larger project might investigate. The workshop will be closely followed by the project’s international launch event at Manchester Museum, which has been timed to coincide with the International Congress of History of Science, Technology and Medicine, an event held every four years. Also scheduled for July is an exhibition at the Royal Society featuring artworks inspired by their female Fellows. This will include a bronze bust of Miriam Rothschild, who was made an FRS in 1985. The bust was designed by Stuart Cornish, who has also lent material associated with his designing the sculpture. The WISRNet project website is up and running at www.womeninscience.net. Interested parties may wish to sign up to our JISCMail list at www.jiscmail.ac.uk/WISRNET.

Finally we are in the process of developing the Rothschild Scientists pages on the Archive’s website. These will contain a digital repository of Rothschild science-related holdings and provide project updates to keep partners and supporters abreast of how things are going.

All in all, it’s been a great first year and we have no doubt that the next two years will be just as exciting.

NOTES

1 A detailed report of the workshop and its findings, titled The Rothschild Scientist: Future Directions, is available upon request from The Rothschild Archive.
Charlotte ‘Chilly’ von Rothschild: mother, connoisseur, and artist

Evelyn M. Cohen presents the life and work of one of the most accomplished artistic talents in the Rothschild family.

Charlotte von Rothschild (10 August 1807 – 17 May 1859), affectionately referred to within her family as Chilly, was the first-born child of Nathan Mayer Rothschild, founder of the Rothschild bank in London, and his wife Hannah Barent Cohen. A talented and innovative artist, Chilly’s accomplishments have remained largely overshadowed by those of other illustrious members of her family.

Charlotte, who was born in Manchester and raised in London along with her six siblings, married her cousin Anselm von Rothschild in 1826 and moved to Frankfurt where her husband was active in the bank run by Amschel Mayer von Rothschild, uncle to both members of the bridal couple. Over a period of twenty years they had eight children, seven of whom survived into adulthood.¹

Early in her marriage Charlotte was portrayed by the Dutch-born painter Ary Scheffer, who was active in Paris beginning in 1811. Executed around 1827–1828, the portrait depicts Charlotte in three-quarter view, seated serenely while gazing at the viewer.² The painting was executed either during her pregnancy or within the short life of her first-born child Mayer Anselm Léon, who was born on 7 July 1827 and died a year later on 11 July 1828. Charlotte’s life of privilege is made evident in Scheffer’s work by the elegant white, somewhat diaphanous, gown and the lavish jewellery she wears.

Charlotte was devoted to her offspring. Perhaps as a consequence of experiencing the loss of Mayer when he was only one, she wrote to her mother about how extremely anxious she was when her children were ill. As a young mother of two daughters, two-year old Julie and nine-month-old Hannah Mathilde, she informed her mother about a soirée she gave for her brother Anthony before his departure that ‘went off very well and would have been very comfortable had I not been rather uneasy about my little girls who had a bad cold.’³ A touching testament to her dedication to her children comes from a statement her son Ferdinand (1839–1898) wrote in his memoirs: ‘All my love went to my Mother, who indeed sacrificed the whole of her short life (we lost her in 1859) to the care and tuition of her young family.’⁴

While Charlotte was visiting her mother in London in the 1840s, Hannah wrote to her daughter-in-law Louisa, who was in Paris, reporting that Chilly’s ‘sole desire is for the improvement in all respects of her children & is indefatigable for this purpose.’⁵ Charlotte’s involvement in the education of her offspring is also apparent in Ferdinand’s account of his childhood in which he recounted that his mother taught him to spell before entrusting him to the care of a French governess and the family tutor. Chilly, who was an art lover, taught her children to appreciate paintings in the family’s collection. Ferdinand described how he would study them, learning under his ‘Mother’s tuition to distinguish a Teniers from an Ostade or a Wouvermans from a Both.’⁶

Charlotte actively acquired art on her own. Ferdinand recounted that in 1854 or 1855, when ‘Count Schörnbrun of Pommersfelden,’ near Würzburg, decided to sell his art treasures, Chilly, who was in Frankfurt, travelled there, but purchased only a small painting by Gabriel...
Metsu. She had been greatly impressed by some sixteenth-century stamped leather wall hangings she saw, but it seems that to make a major purchase of this type she needed the permission of her husband. Her uncle James, who at the time was in Frankfurt, undermined her goal. His passion for acquiring art was described by Charlotte’s brother Mayer as a ‘mania,’ evidenced by James chasing after antiquities regardless of the distance he needed to travel or of unfavorable weather conditions. Forgetting about how competitive her family members were, Charlotte naively told her uncle about the wonderful hangings. He frigted disinterest, but immediately took off the next day to acquire the works for his Château de Ferrières.

Typical of women of her standing, Chilly engaged in crafts herself. Ferdinand described how he nestled at her feet while she worked on some tapestry chairs, and how he possessed a settee made by her hands, which she designed in consultation with him. He wrote that his mother belonged to a sewing circle called the Näh Verein, in which women of all ages would assemble in the evenings to make ‘garments, knitted stockings and muffettes for the poor, while they drank tea, ate ices and cakes, and recorded the latest news.’

Ferdinand also recounted how in the early 1840s Amschel gave his niece and nephew property at Grüneburg, on the outskirts of Frankfurt, along with funds to build a house on it. Charlotte originally wanted it designed in an English manner, but ultimately it was built primarily in a French style. Ferdinand recalled how his mother, who was adept at gardening, helped plan the grounds with plantings of young chestnut trees on each side of the road. He also claimed that the design of the interior, in the style of Louis XV, was requested by Charlotte who was inspired by a Pompadour bed she had seen in Paris.

Above all, Charlotte took an active interest in painting. It is not known when she began to study art, but the painter and art dealer Moritz Oppenheim wrote in his memoir that when she asked if he would take her on as a student, she informed him that she had previously studied with the French painter Baron François Gérard. Charlotte must have begun studying with Oppenheim by 1831 at the latest, as he introduced her as his pupil in a letter to the painter Wilhelm Hensel dated June of that year.
Her correspondence with members of her family indicates that Charlotte was a dedicated painter. In 1834, she wrote to her mother about her life in Frankfurt; she recounted that her ‘mornings were occupied in copying a very pretty picture Mrs. De Bethmann has lent me,’ while after lunch she walked with her daughters [Julie and Hannah Marhilde]. Six years later Chilly once again described her routine in Frankfurt, this time in a letter she wrote to her brother Anthony in London. She explained that she did not have much news to report as ‘the day passes quietly enough, in my usual occupations of painting, reading, and attending to my children & household duties.’

Until recently Charlotte’s art was known primarily from her self-portrait in which she depicted herself seated before an easel while painting an image of Anselm on a canvas (see page 30). Her husband is seated at the left, between Charlotte and a shaded window. His walking stick, gloves, and hat are placed somewhat haphazardly on the table next to him, as though he had taken his place in a hurry. This is an apt depiction as Anselm – described by Ferdinand as a rather distant father – was frequently away from home for long periods of time. Charlotte also includes two of her children. The older one, who clutches a doll, points to the unfinished canvas, while the baby is held in the arms of a nanny. The small space they occupy, it includes paintings on the back wall, a paint box in the foreground at the right, and a cabinet with curios behind the artist. In this idealised domestic setting Charlotte portrayed herself attired in lovely clothing, with nary a drop of paint staining it.

The most ambitious work of art known to have been undertaken by Charlotte is a haggadah, the liturgical book used during the ceremonial Passover dinners, which she illuminated for her uncle Amschel, completing it in 1842. While a professional scribe was hired to pen the text in Hebrew and German, the decorations, as indicated by Charlotte on the Hebrew title page, were executed by her. That Chilly could write Hebrew is clear from a letter she sent to her sister Louisa in 1832. The somewhat awkward letters of the title page and of the inscriptions that identify the biblical illustrations appear to be by Charlotte’s hand.

In decorating the manuscript, Chilly relied on both Jewish and Christian sources, often with changes that reflect contemporary nineteenth-century tastes. The appearance of the title page is largely adapted from one of the pages of the Book of Hours of Frederick III of Aragon. The architecture, curtains, and angels holding candles are virtually identical in the two manuscripts. In both a red panel within a gold frame contains a text written in gold letters that include a large initial letter. A table with a white cloth covering on it and a blue fabric on the side facing the viewer fills the bottom of both pages. All of the Christian motifs, such as a cross and incense burner found in the book of hours were removed by Charlotte. In their place she decorated the space in front of the table with the Rothschild coat of arms set within an elaborate frame. The bottom of the frame and the strand of jewels were copied from yet another page from the Christian manuscript.

An illustration of the four sons discussed in the text of the haggadah is based on a traditional Jewish source. The scene is derived from an image first created in the well-known printed Amsterdam Haggadah of 1695, in which all four sons mentioned in the text appear within one panel. This grouping has continued to be used by artists through the centuries.

Title page of the haggadah in which Charlotte, who identifies herself as the daughter of Nathan Rothschild, wrote that she ‘drew [these illustrations] with my weak hand.’ The same humble phrase appears in her lengthy German dedication to her uncle on page four of the manuscript.

Braginsky Collection, Zurich.
assisted Charlotte while she worked on the haggadah, although it is not clear exactly how much he contributed to the design of this manuscript. Some of the motifs in the haggadah relate to drawings executed by him, while others are based on Christian manuscripts, which Oppenheim noted Charlotte borrowed from the library in Paris. In the case of the seder scene, similar representations are found in Oppenheim’s oeuvre, but all known examples postdate Chilly’s work. In Oppenheim’s depictions the figures wear contemporary clothing and the haggadot on the table are printed books rather than illuminated manuscripts, as portrayed by Charlotte.

The production of handwritten and painted haggadot was relatively rare in nineteenth-century Europe. It is not known if the Rothschilds owned decorated medieval Hebrew manuscripts at this time, though it seems they had not yet begun to collect illuminated Christian manuscripts. That members of the Rothschild family were interested in art of the Renaissance is demonstrated by a painting commissioned decades earlier. In 1824 Charlotte’s uncle Carl von Rothschild had Oppenheim paint a panel painting, now lost, depicting Susanna and the Elders. The choice of panel instead of canvas reflects a Renaissance, rather than a contemporary, taste.

Charlotte identified herself as the artist in only one place in the haggadah. She painted her initials on the back of the chair of the male figure at the right. Her initials, CR, also appear at the top of several letters Chilly wrote, where they are embossed and embellished with a coronet. Oppenheim wrote that the highpoint of his teaching career was when he

Although in Charlotte’s haggadah the placement of the sons and some of the poses of the figures have been retained, the clothing reflects a contemporary taste for recreating medieval and Renaissance styles of dress. Particularly worthy of note is the hat with the feather worn by the youngest son.

Similar hats are worn by the two youths depicted on the right side of the table in the scene of a seder, the ceremonial dinner. Although the Passover meal appears to take place within a contemporary German room, the clothing of these two figures, as well as those of the women seated opposite them are not typical attire of the period. Romanticised fashion of a pseudo-medieval and Renaissance style was of interest at the time. Paintings of the period in France and Germany recreated historical scenes in which similar clothing was shown. In the case of the seder scene, however, it seems likely that Charlotte was inspired not by paintings by other artists, but by garments that belonged to members of her family. The portrait of Betty de Rothschild and her son Alphonse of circa 1835 depicts them standing in their residence at 19, rue Lafitte in Paris. Both the newly decorated interior and the costumes worn by the two figures are inspired by the style of Francis 1 of France.

Charlotte identified herself as the artist in only one place in the haggadah. She painted her initials on the back of the chair of the male figure at the right. Her initials, CR, also appear at the top of several letters Chilly wrote, where they are embossed and embellished with a coronet. Oppenheim wrote that the highpoint of his teaching career was when he

Opposite
Detail of page 15 of the haggadah in which the sons are identified in the Hebrew inscription on the scroll. It reads from right to left: ‘wise, wicked, simple, [and] who doesn’t know how to ask.’

Braginsky Collection 1914, Zurich.

Detail of the seder scene on page 42 of the haggadah. The Hebrew verse inscribed beneath the illustration is Exodus 13:8.

Braginsky Collection 1914, Zurich.
Dr. Evelyn M. Cohen (PhD Columbia University), an art historian, is a former Samuel H. Kress Fellow, and Coleman Fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She received the National Jewish Book Award for her publication on the Rothschild Mahzore.

In loving memory of Mirella Levi D’Ancona

NOTES

1 From Hannah’s correspondence it is clear that Charlotte also had a difficult pregnancy that terminated in a miscarriage in 1842. See RAL 105/10, 11, 17, and 24.

2 Ary Schefter painted a portrait of Charlotte de Rothschild, Chilly’s Parnassian cousin in 1816 as well. This Charlotte, born to James and Betty de Rothschild in 1813, was a painter of landscapes and still lifes. See RAL 115/6, 7/1, 6–12, December 1824.

3 Ferdinand’s unpublished memoir housed at Waddesdon Manor. All subsequent citations of his comments are from this journal.

4 RAL 105/10/3/4 and Lady Battersea Papers RAL 105/37. Louisa was the wife of Hannah’s son Anthony.

5 Works by the artist Ferdinand referred to were probably acquired as part of the collection of Dutch paintings from the estate of Klerck de Reuss, which Charlotte and Anselm purchased in 1838. The title page is based on p. 299 of the book of hours.

6 Although Chilly may have been introduced to Oppenheim through ‘Professor Oppenheim,’ but the purpose of these expenditures was not noted. RAL 105/10/4–6.

7 Jerusalem, NLL, Moritz Oppenheim Archive, no Var. 388, 1940.

8 RAL 105/10/27/1/17, 27 October 1843.

9 RAL 105/10/4/4, 244, Christmas wish (1843).

10 Oppenheim, Erinnerungen, p. 71.


12 Their lack of ownership of these works at this time would explain Charlotte’s need to borrow manuscripts from the library in Paris. It is noteworthy that James de Rothschild began collecting Christian manuscripts, specifically illuminated books of hours, beginning in 1810.

Mr Warren’s photograph album: memories of a vanished Rothschild estate

Justin Cavernelis-Frost takes a look inside a recently acquired volume of unique private photographs to shed new light on life at Aston Clinton at the turn of the twentieth century. Further research has revealed the stories behind the images: the career of Mr Warren, Head Gardener; tragedy in the Warren family; efforts to improve public sanitation; and celebrations for the Coronation of 1902.

The collections of The Rothschild Archive are remarkable in their scope and variety. It is often the personal documents in the collection that repay detailed investigation. Such an item is accession 000/2126, the item known to us as Mr Warren’s photograph album, acquired by The Rothschild Archive in November 2012, a volume that can immediately transport us through the years by showing us images frozen in time.

The landscape of England was once resplendent with large country houses. For an elite group of families, their wealth allowed them to acquire a collection of properties. So successfully did a concentration of Rothschild family members settle in the Vale of Aylesbury that in the nineteenth century the area acquired the sobriquet ‘Rothschildshire’.¹ As important land-owners and commissioners of works, Rothschild patronage transformed the local landscape and the lives of the people employed on their estates. One such person was Mr William Hedley Warren, (1862–1928), Head Gardener at Aston Clinton for thirty years. The mansion at Aston Clinton no longer stands, and very few documents relating to the estate survive, making Mr Warren’s photograph album an important new discovery for the history of this Rothschild property.

This fascinating volume, measuring 30 by 40 centimetres contains over 220 previously unknown private photographs of Aston Clinton. Compiled between 1896 and 1902 it is a tantalising glimpse into Mr Warren’s life over these six years. The album contains Warren family photographs, views of buildings and views in Aston Clinton, and the joyful celebrations for the Coronation of 1902. Images of working life show Mr Warren and his staff, their horticultural triumphs, and activity on the estate through the seasons. The photographs are remarkable for their elegant composition and the clarity of the images.

The Rothschild connection to Aston Clinton began in 1849 when Sir Anthony de Rothschild bought the estate from the Marquis of Chandos.² Anthony Nathan de Rothschild (1810–1876) was the second son of Nathan Mayer Rothschild (1777–1836), founder of the London banking house.³ Born at New Court, the family home and business address in the City of London, Anthony studied at universities in Europe, before serving an apprenticeship to the family firm, spending time in both the Frankfurt and Paris businesses. Becoming a partner in 1836 upon his father’s death, a good portion of the responsibility for running the family business fell on Anthony’s shoulders, and he was closely involved in the management of the family’s continental railway interests, and the Rothschild gold refinery in London.⁴ Anthony married Louise Montefiore (1821–1910) in 1840. Louise was the daughter of London stock-broker and financier Abraham Montefiore (1788–1812) and Henriette, née Rothschild (1791–1866). They had two daughters, Constance (1843–1931) and Annie (1844–1926).⁵ The family first lived at 107 Piccadilly, dividing their time between London and Paris, before moving to an opulent home at 2 Grosvenor Place in 1847, the year Anthony was granted a baronetcy by Queen Victoria.⁶ When the Aston Clinton estate came up for sale in July 1849, Anthony and his brothers Lionel Nathan (1808–1879) and Mayer Amschel (1818–1874) discussed a possible investment purchase, agreeing to pay no more than £26,000, as ‘it is not like a fancy place’.⁷ The property was finally purchased by Anthony in 1851 as his country estate, and the family took up residence in 1853.

Anthony and Louise had four children, the two eldest being Constancie (1843–1931) and Constance (1844–1926). Anthony’s son Lionel Nathan (1840–1910) was born in 1840. He was the second son of Anthony and Louise and was educated at Eton College and Christ Church, Oxford. He then worked in the family business before returning to Eton as Head Master in 1864. Lionel was a keen enthusiast for the sport of polo and was one of the founders of the English Polo Association. He married Emily Beatrice Viscountess Page (1860–1935) in 1899 and they had no children.

William Hedley Warren (1862–1928) Head Gardener at Aston Clinton. Photograph dated 1901. 000/2126
The large mansion was situated to the south-east of the village of Aston Clinton, and from 1844, Anthony and Louise began to make alterations to the house. The architect George Henry Stokes, assistant of Joseph Paxton (who had designed the great Rothschild house Mentmore; Towers for Anthony’s brother Mayer de Rothschild) and the builder George Myers produced a neo-Classical design at the foot of the Chilterns. Extensions included a ‘Billiard Room building’, dining room, offices and a conservatory. George Devey took over from Stokes from 1864 to 1877, designing the park gates and various cottages on the estate. Even after these building works, the house was not ostentatious, and was described by Lord Rosebery as ‘the only Rothschild mansion that could be called a gentleman’s house’. External views in Mr Warren’s album show a large neo-Georgian Italianate-style house with verandahs, a large porte-cochère and an elegant conservatory. By the time the Rothschilds sold the estate in 1924, the estate comprised 540 acres, and the house had grown from its humble origins to become a classical mansion with seven reception rooms, billiard room, ball room, thirteen principal bed and dressing rooms, seventeen secondary and servants’ bedrooms, four bath rooms and complete domestic offices, with stabling for 32 horses.

Louise de Rothschild was initially disappointed with the property, and wrote in her diaries ‘the house is too small to be very comfortable’. Nevertheless, she and her daughters came to love Aston Clinton and the family enjoyed a pleasant life in the country. The house and park were the setting for many entertainments, both formal and intimate. Anthony was a keen countryman and he became owner of a number of successful racehorses. Aston Clinton hosted shooting parties at which the Prince of Wales was a frequent guest, while artists, such as Sir Charles Hallé and Sir Arthur Sullivan, performed at the family’s parties. Constance in particular had a great love for the house and the estate, and found it hard to leave when the family sold up in 1924. Her Reminiscences, published in 1924, recall her youth at Aston Clinton, and her views on the staff were clearly influenced by her Temperance beliefs.

Perhaps it would not be out of place were I to state here that in those old days domestic service bore no stigma, as, unfortunately, some think it does now, but was an honourable, even an enviable, calling. From an early age village youths and maidens would aspire to serve in the ‘big house’ connected with the soil of their own county, and considered it a matter of justifiable pride to remain a lifetime with one employer, thus helping to carry on the traditions of that house, keeping warm the name it might have acquired for generosity and hospitality. I can speak, indeed, with grateful recollection of the many devoted men and women in my parents’ household, whose excellent service was deeply appreciated. If, unhappily, there was a failure amongst them, the cause could generally have been ascribed to over-indulgence in the matter of drink, which in those days was not unknown in other grades of society.

When Anthony died in 1876, Louise continued to live in the mansion. After the death of their mother in 1910, Constance and Annie used Aston Clinton as a holiday home, keeping the estate going until the First World War. The estate eventually passed to Charles Rothschild, (1887–1924). When he died in 1924, his executors, concerned about the cost of the upkeep of Aston Clinton, put the estate on the market. The whole estate was disposed of in sales in 1925 and 1924, and again came to the market in 1924, when the ‘freehold estate known as Aston Clinton Park’ was auctioned, and purchased by a builder for development.

At Aston Clinton, Anthony and Louise were noted for their enlightened views of the responsibilities towards their employees and tenants. Shortly after arriving at Aston Clinton in 1833, Lady de Rothschild wrote in her diaries, ‘let me not be carried away therefore by the indolent luxury of giving, but try to do real good at our little Aston Clinton’. The whole family took a close interest in the development of the community, and the Rothschilds transformed the estate and village. A large number of workers’ cottages were built and The Anthony Hall in the village was erected by Louise in 1874 in memory of her husband. Other schemes for the benefit of the village, such as a Library were established. Both Rothschild daughters inherited their parents’ sense of moral responsibility and devoted their time to education issues and other social welfare causes. Aston Clinton Infants’ School was built by Anthony as a sixteenth birthday present for Constance, at her request. Constance was later to recall:

My family, whilst remaining true to their religion, established a firm footing in the social and political life of their country, and beyond that were recognised as being some of the best landlords that the county of Bucks had ever seen. Their sporting tastes made them popular amongst their country friends and neighbours, and my parents’ genuine charity and kindness of heart endeared them to the clergy in their villages and to all those who were working for the welfare of the people.

William Hedley Warren was Head Gardener at Aston Clinton from 1876 until his retirement in 1944. During this period he and his family would have witnessed many of the changes wrought by the Rothschilds. Born in Salisbury, Wiltshire in 1862, William married Mary Elizabeth Horne (1866–1939) of Cardiff, in Christchurch, Hampshire in 1887. In 1889 their first child Charlotte Beatrice (known as ‘Beatrice’) was born, followed by a son, also called William Hedley in 1891. In 1895, William took up the position at Aston Clinton, and a second daughter, Ethel Doris was born in Aston Clinton in 1896. The family lived in a substantial detached

Aston Clinton Infants’ School, teachers and pupils, 1899. Ethel Warren is in the little girl in the front row, sixth from the left.
cottage on the estate.²³ A letter written in 1948 records his distinguished career over 30 years. He was appointed by The Royal Horticultural Society as one of the judges at the exhibition at Chelsea, was a lecturer for the Bucks Education Committee, and was for many years a contributor to the Gardeners’ Chronicle, the Gardeners’ Magazine and the Journal of Horticulture. He was a judge at local horticultural shows, and during the First World War, acted as an adviser on war-time gardening. He held many positions of esteem in the local church and community including Rector’s Warden of St Michael and All Angel’s Church, Aston Clinton and he was an active member of the Parish Council.²⁴

The Head Gardener was the most senior staff member of ‘outdoor’ staff after the Estate Steward, and was a ‘management’ position. Mr Warren was not only a skilled man who had learnt his trade as an apprentice to fine gardeners before him, but he was also a mentor to those who worked under his command. Photographs in the album show Mr Warren with his staff, posed with early lawn mowers and other tools of their trade.²⁵ The position was well paid and salaries of £100 per annum were not uncommon; a young gardener at nearby Halton House earned 16 shillings a week in 1932.²⁶ Mr Warren would have been responsible for ensuring a continuous supply of fresh fruit, vegetables and flowers from the estate garden to the Aston Clinton dining tables throughout the year, regardless of the weather. Constance recalled how the family valued the work of Mr Warren and the garden staff:

My dear mother found much happiness in bestowing gifts of fruit and flowers on friends and neighbours… but fruit and flowers and luxuriant gardens are not evolved by the waving of a magician’s wand; they all need long and careful preparation, and friends and neighbours… but fruit and flowers and luxuriant gardens are not evolved.

Opposite

Aylesbury Cottagers’ Show, November 1899. Events such as this one were often a source of intense rivalry and real pride.

Haymaking, Aston Clinton, 1899. Cutting grass and currying for hay was a labour-intensive process, undertaken in the few short weeks when the grass was at its most nutritious.

The Rothschild Archive there exists a notebook of Thomas Hobbs, Gardener to Anthony’s nephew (and keen horticulturalist) Leopold de Rothschild (1841–1927) at Gunnersbury Park. An entry for November 1894 gives an indication of the daily tasks a Head Gardener would have undertaken:²⁷

November 1894
Note
17 Cleaned and rearranged Orange House
18 Passiflora prunifera and Grevillea robusta elegantissima brought in
20 Rose House pruned
21 12 Carnations Countess of Eve brought in also 6 cattleyas: Queen Charlotte
23 Carnations cuttings put in, 100 Mrs L. de R. pr. & Sir H Calcraft
27 Cathoch had 160 plant of Carnation, Mrs L de R. Cleaned cool Orchard House
30 Calla Elliottiana bought in
30 Begonia Galea de Saunus put in Cattleya House, Finish tying Rose House²⁸

In Edwardian horticultural circles it used to be said that one could tell a man’s status by the size of his bedding list; 10,000 plants for a squire; 20,000 for a baronet, 30,000 for an earl and 100,000 for a duke.²⁹ Testament to the fine work of Mr Warren can be found in the Catalogue of the 1932 sale of Aston Clinton. Lot 1 included ‘gardens and pleasure grounds which include an Italian sunken garden, the park and kitchen and vegetable gardens with an extensive collection of glasshouses’.³⁰ The kitchen garden is described as being in a high state of cultivation and including a fig house, vineyard, peach and cherry houses. A fine photograph in the album depicts tables at the Aylesbury Cottagers Show of 1899 groaning with prize-winning produce; another is captioned ‘Crop of Alicante grapes, 17 months from time of planting 1900. However, by 1914, the kitchen garden had been cleared and the glasshouses demolished.’³¹

No journals or gardeners’ notebooks from Aston Clinton survive, but in the collection of The Rothschild Archive there exists a notebook of Thomas Hobbs, Gardener to Anthony’s nephew (and keen horticulturalist) Leopold de Rothschild (1841–1927) at Gunnersbury Park.
Despite professional success and the achievement of respectable social standing, the life of the Warren family was overshadowed with sadness. The Warrens’ daughter Beattie died tragically young in March 1906 aged seven (photographs in the album show her memorial plaque in the churchyard of St Michael and All Angels Church, Aston Clinton). The cause of death was typhoid fever, to which five deaths were attributed in the village. It was reported that Lady de Rothschild had paid for ‘disinfectants’ and ‘a trained nurse’ for the village, and that Lord Rothschild (of nearby Tring Park) had ordered an ‘offensive ditch’ on the main road to be converted with pipework.

The meeting was in favour of a proper sewerage system for the village.23 Young William Hedley Warren (the finely dressed boy seen in many of the photographs) was born in 1871 in Chesham and he appears on the 1881 Census, aged one month, however, his name does not appear with his family at Aston Clinton on the Censuses of 1901 and 1911. Clues to William’s life are to be found in the photograph album which surprisingly contains images of the Royal Earlswood Asylum in Surrey and the nearby railway station, Redhill. Contemporary records of earlswood list William Hedley Warren as an inmate in 1901, aged nine. It is likely that William was a child with learning difficulties, and records from Earlswood show that he died there of influenza in April 1919, aged 14. William was interred with his sister Beatrice (who had died 21 years earlier) in the churchyard of St Michael & All Angels, Aston Clinton. There is an interesting further Rothschild connection. Sir Anthony de Rothschild had been an officer of the project to found ‘The Royal Earlswood Asylum’ in 1847, the first establishment to cater specifically for people with learning disabilities (who had previously been housed either in asylums for the mentally ill or in workhouses). Earlswood was a step forward in the care of children with special needs, and we are left to speculate as to whether Lady de Rothschild supported Earlswood as an alternative to institutions in Buckinghamshire, which at that time may not have been as progressive.24

The album also records happier times. Mr Warren served as ‘hon. Secretary and organiser of the festivities in celebration of the Coronation of the late King Edward’.25 On 26 June 1902, the Coronation of King Edward VII was cancelled because the King was taken ill, (the King was later crowned at Westminster Abbey on 9 August 1902).26 However, the village celebrations went ahead with some alterations. The photograph album contains many images of what must have been a jolly summer event. In the cricket field, the Rectors, Thomas Williams gave a speech on the history of the Coronation ceremony, and there were competitions (flat races, ‘living wheelbarrow’, ‘jumping in sacks’, and the egg and spoon race for children, a potato peeling competition for married women and a hat trimming competition for the men. In the evening, there was a Grand Illuminated Cycle Parade, and the album contains images of bicycles decorated with flowers, garlands and lanterns.

At the time of the sale of Aston Clinton house and park in 1903, several estate cottages were occupied by former Rothschild employees, including the Warners. It was agreed that the sale should not be delayed by any of the cottages remaining occupied, and Mr Warren and his wife and daughter moved to a new house, ‘Sunnymead’ in Buckland, near Aston Clinton.27 It was here that Mr Warren passed away in 1918, aged 61. He left an estate of £3,209 (≈ £500 today). His wife Elizabeth died in 1939. Their surviving daughter Doris appears on the Electoral Roll of 1941 living at ‘Sunnymead’ but by 1949, another family is recorded living in the property.

The creation and maintenance of an exquisite garden was part of the portfolio of interests that enabled the Rothschilds to take their place as country squires. It was expected of them as responsible estate managers, and was another way in which they could display their wealth, fashionable taste and attention to detail, a finely planned garden could be used to entertain both friends and business contacts, and a good kitchen garden ensured a generous table.

The gardens of the Rothschilds blossomed as their social status grew; Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild (1852–1918) grew rare orchids at Waddesdon Manor, whilst his sister Miss Alice (1847–1921) planned the elegant parterre. At Halton, Alfred de Rothschild (1842–1918) grew exotic roses that were made to bloom out of season. In many ways, the Rothschilds arrived in the Vale of Aylesbury regarding themselves as outsiders compared to the established landed aristocracy. At Aston Clinton, they showed the seeds of kindness through their philanthropy, and generous and careful management of the estate, which resulted in an appreciation of them that passed through the generations and is evident in the locality to this day.

Justin Caveney-First is Archivist at The Rothschild Archive. He is a member of the Board of Trustees, the Archives and Records Association UK and Ireland.

NOTES
23 In addition to Aston Clinton, Rothschild houses in the Vale of Aylesbury included Aintree House, Wing, Bucks, purchased by Lionel de Rothschild (1811–1890) for his son Lionel (1845–1917) in 1873; Champneys, Tring, Herts, purchased by Nathaniel, 1st Lord Rothschild (1845–1937) as part of the Tring Park estate; Eythrope House, Waddesdon, Bucks, purchased in 1859 by Alice de Rothschild (1847–1921; Halton House, Halton, Bucks, built by Alfred de Rothschild (1844–1917); Membreto Towers, Memmores, Bucks built by Mayer Amschel de Rothschild (1814–1875); Tring Park, Tring, Herts, the country seat of Nathaniel, 1st Lord Rothschild (1845–1937); and Waddesdon Manor, Waddesdon, Bucks, built by Ferdinand de Rothschild (1812–1879).
25 Born in Frankfurt, Nathan Mayer Rothschild (1777–1855) founded the London banking business at New Court, St Stephen’s Lane in London in 1819. Remarkable success dealing in bullion and foreign exchange, including the famous Watteau Commission, quickly established the Rothschilds as the pre-eminent bankers of their age.
26 Anthony’s eldest brother Lionel (1808–1875) worked at the bank but became more involved in politics, taking his seat as the first Jewish MP in 1841. Anthony’s brother Nathaniel (1812–1875) settled in Paris and his remaining brother, Mayer Amschel (1806–1879), showed little interest in banking. Anthony was closely involved in the management of the Chémtn de fer du Nord, the family’s main railway interest in France, and with the financing of the Chemins de fer du Pas de Calais to the Midi, the Italian-Moroccan Railway Company as well as funding railway construction in Brazil. In the 1870s he was involved with investment in an ironworks in Mexico. The Royal Mint Refinery was the family gold refining business, which began in 1818 when the Rothschilds acquired the lease.
27 Louise de Rothschild (1821–1912) was an outstanding figure of her generation, speaking several languages...
Aston Clinton reverted to the Rothschild on August 1st, 1884. The late Lord Bessborough arrived at between Lionel and Anthony in 1884, with which title the baronetcy must have been a great success, for in 1911, Mr Warren was invited by the Parish Council to serve as secretary to manage the village festivities for the Coronation of George V. Minutes of Aston Clinton Parish Council, 1911-1933, Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, 1947/1. The book that started it all’ Melanie Aspey explains how a recent acquisition provides a valuable link in the chain of research into lost art and the collections of the Rothschild family.
During the negotiations for the return of the papers from Moscow, Mrs. Looram had been engaged in an ultimately successful campaign to alter Austrian law, so that those individuals and families who had surrendered to the Austrian state elements of their collections of art in order to secure the return of other pieces looted by the Nazi regime could finally recover the entire collection.¹ "I thought, oh gosh. I wonder whether it’s worth having a go," Bettina Looram recalled. "So I rang the minister’s office. And in 10 minutes she rang back."² Many of the pieces returned to the Rothschild family were placed for sale with Christie’s in London in 1999.³ Supporting documentation about the items in the sale was transferred to the Archive, and has been consulted frequently by researchers, curators and dealers since then.⁴

Bettina Looram died at her home in Austria on 10 November 2012. Thanks to the generosity of her family, further collections of archives have been deposited with the Archive, which document the intricate history of the looting and recovery of the collections of art.⁵

The papers were just one element in a systematic exercise in expropriation that involved the Viennese business house of S M von Rothschild, real estate and works of art. Immediately after the Anschluss in March 1938 the Vienna business house was put into the hands of administrators and traded under the name of E von Nicolai. The real estate was occupied and variously used by the National Socialist regime. The works of art were earmarked for distribution among leading Nazis, Hitler included, and were stored in salt mines at Alt Aussee for the duration of the war.

Even a cursory reading of the papers chills the spine as familiar names emerge from the pages: the signature of Martin Bormann on a document authorizing a step in the expropriation; the careful annotation of the inventories of the Rothschild collections, noting which of the pieces has been chosen by Göring, which by the Führer himself. Nothing, it seems, is too small to be overlooked. An inventory of the Rothschild bank at Renngasse, 3 dating from 1940 notes the location of the offices, their contents, and even a complete list of the typewriters owned by the bank, together with details of the operator. The bizarre routine of recovery of property in the post-war years is documented too. Ferdinand Maier, a senior member of the Rothschild staff, made regular requests of the Viennese police that they return, for instance, the lamps that were formerly in the bank house but which, as of Spring 1947, were to be found in a private apartment in Vienna’s Fourth District. Maier drew up and signed a declaration acknowledging that the residence of the Russian captain Miroshnichenko, at 20–22 Prinz Eugen Strasse in Vienna had been returned to the property owner (the Rothschild family) with no cause for complaint about its condition. The property was subsequently demolished in the 1950s and the spot is now occupied by the Arbeiterkammer of Vienna.⁶

The material is a rich resource for historians of art, documenting the collections during and after the war. The extent of the sales of family material that took place is revealed: at the Dorotheum, silver and porcelain in 1941; art in 1953; books (from the collection of Louis von Rothschild) between 1949 and 1954. There are inventories in varying format and detail of the family properties at Enzesfeld, Schillersdorf, Flusslgasse, Hohe Warte and Theresianumgasse and extensive lists of items donated to museums around Austria.

A substantial part of the collection consists of a card index of the collections of Alphonse von Rothschild, identifying each piece and its place of deposit during the war. A familiar item emerges from a folder of lists and photographs relating to the collections of Louis von Rothschild: a portrait of Salomon von Rothschild, more recently to be found on the walls of the Rothschild bank at New Court. This is without doubt one of the pictures referred to in a letter to Louis from Anthony de Rothschild in 1951, in which the writer thanks his Viennese cousin for the gift of family portraits. ‘While I was on holiday the pictures which came from the Renngasse were hung in the hall and look very well…’⁷

One of the many files recovered by the Rothschild family from the office of Dr Britsch of the German Ministry of Economics detailing the treatment of Rothschild assets.
This collection contains a number of photographs of the works of art belonging to Louis von Rothschild as well as illustrated inventories, such as the one pictured here. The level of detail of the inventories of the Rothschild bank made in 1940 makes it possible to recreate the contents of every single office. On this page the precise details of every typewriter in the bank and its user are meticulously recorded. 000/213
NOTES
2 Thomas Tantke, Der Fall Rothschild. Recherche über Enteignung (Vienna: Molden, 1999).
3 Obituary notice for Bettina Looram, Daily Telegraph, 11 November 2012.
4 The Exhibition of the Baron Nathaniel and Albert von Rothschild (London: Christie’s, 1999).
5 13 case 2094 1945–1953; General and Home Papers of Leopold de Rothschild, CBE (vi/4); General and Home Papers of Leopold de Rothschild, Lieutenant (vi/3); Business Papers of N M Rothschild & Sons (vii/1); Business Papers of N M Rothschild & Sons (vi/1); Business Papers of N M Rothschild & Sons (vi/5), Volumes of accounts from various series kept by N M Rothschild & Sons including American Accounts, series vii/4, 1940–1951; General and Home Ledgers, series vii/5/5, 1911–1915. A total of 205 volumes.
6 2050/2007
7 Mount financial staff serving in the Great War, entitled ‘New Court – 1914 – In His Majesty’s Service.’ The list comprises 96 names, plus two members of staff ‘Serving in the French Army.’ Members of the Rothschild family serving with the Royal Bucks Hussars are Lionel de Rothschild MP, Major, Evelyn de Rothschild, Captain, Anthony de Rothschild, Lieutenant.
8 2050/2002
9 A collection of letters, 46 items in total, mainly in the hand of James de Rothschild (1792–1862) and his immediate family. The majority of the letters are addressed to administrators and board members of the Compagnie du Chemin de fer du Nord, of which James de Rothschild was a founder member.
10 2050/2012
12 Right
16 An agreement between Alexandre Baring, Jacques Laffitte and James de Rothschild, and the Minister of Finance, Joseph de Villette, Paris, 2 April 1814. The agreement was for the conversion of state bonds from 3 to 5%, which was made possible by the general proclamations of Ville’s administration under Louis XVIII. With the accession of Charles X to the throne in 1824, a series of measures were taken in favour of the nobility. Ville suggested that the funds generated by the conversion be used to indemnify a billion francs (le milliard des émigrés) those whose possessions had been confiscated during the Revolution.
17 2050/2136
18 A collection of letters, 46 items in total, mainly in the hand of James de Rothschild (1792–1862) and his immediate family. The majority of the letters are addressed to administrators and board members of the Compagnie du Chemin de fer du Nord, of which James de Rothschild was a founder member.
19 2050/2012
21 2050/2012
22 Right
Printed materials


Bound red leather volume commemmorating a dinner given for Baron Philippe de Rothschild OBE in the cellars of Hedges & Butler Limited, Regent Street London by Alan Walker Esq, Chairman Bass Charrington Limited, Tuesday 24th July 1973. The volume contains a brief history of Château Mouton-Rothschild, poems, a guest list, wine list, menu and illustrations. The back page is signed ‘to the Mouton lover Peter Quennell, Philippe’.

Artefacts

Bronze medal struck to commemorate the 70th birthday of Salomon von Rothschild, 1844. This medal has been mounted in a plaster plaque, entitled ‘Industrie’. Presumed to be one of a set, the others being ‘Concordia’ and ‘Integritas’.

Plaque designed by René Lalique and awarded to Lionel de Rothschild who, in his English boat ‘Flying Fish’, won the Perla del Mediterraneo competition, 1907.

Design for a ceiling tile for library of Gustave de Rothschild. Watercolour on paper 31 x 35cm (broad)

Images

Engraving of the Rothschild hospital in Geneva, date unknown

Photographs of the demolition of the 1912 New Court Building taken by the McGee Group Limited, contractors undertaking the demolition.

Copy of La Nature Héritée, no. 4821, 15 November 1929 featuring an article on the Théâtre Pigalle.

Copy of Le Journal Illustré, Sunday 2 April 1876, with an engraved illustration: ‘Le mariage de mademoiselle de Rothschild au Temple de la rue la Victoire’ describing the marriage of Berthe de Rothschild and Albert von Rothschild.

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