

## 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 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 Thrush (*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



### Above

Photograph of female members of the Nawa family from an album compiled by Charles Rothschild. As part of his trip to Japan, Charles met with Yasushi Nawa, a Japanese entomologist based in Gifu who headed the Nawa Insect Research Centre, also known as the Nawa Entomological Laboratory. Charles also found time to spend with Nawa's family. The image also includes a record of the places Charles visited as part of his round the world trip together with the dates of arrival and departure.

Photograph of entomologists based at the Nawa Entomological Laboratory, Gifu.



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 Mandler (University of Cambridge).

### Future Directions<sup>1</sup>

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 institute 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.

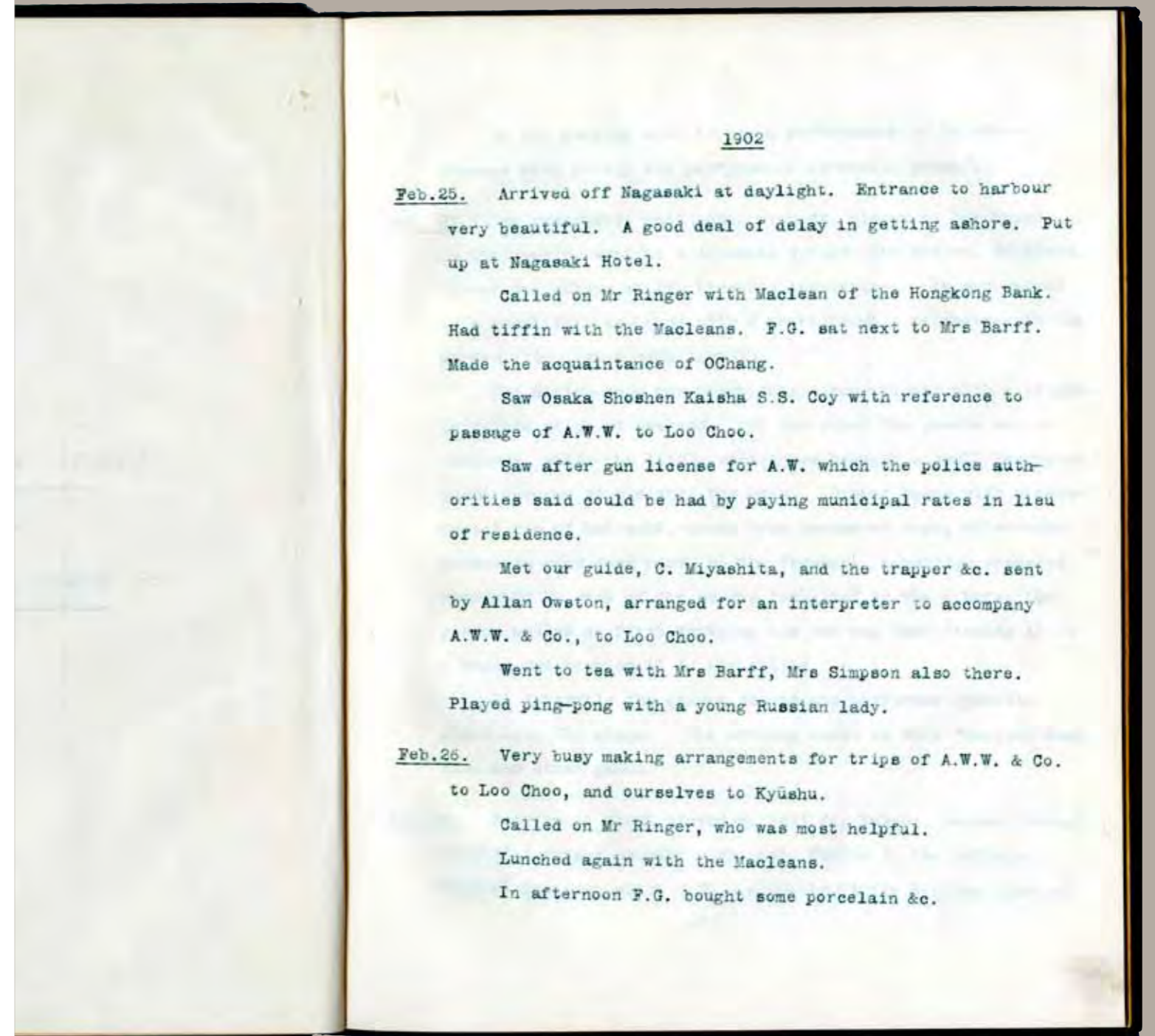


K. Nagano's *Nawa Icones Japonicorum Insectorum*, published in Japanese and English by the Nawa Entomological Laboratory. The scientific and intellectual exchange during and following Charles's trip to Japan contributed to the above work. The first volume, published in 1904, focused on Sphingidae, a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

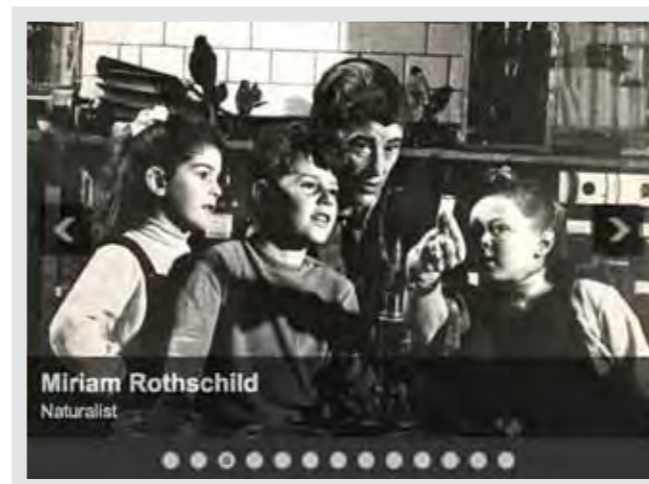
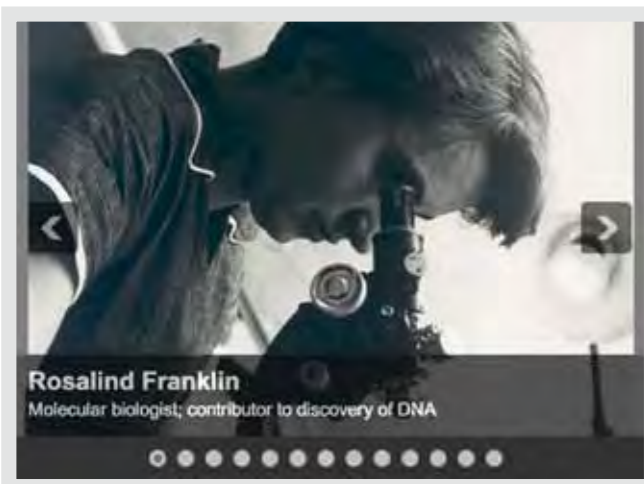
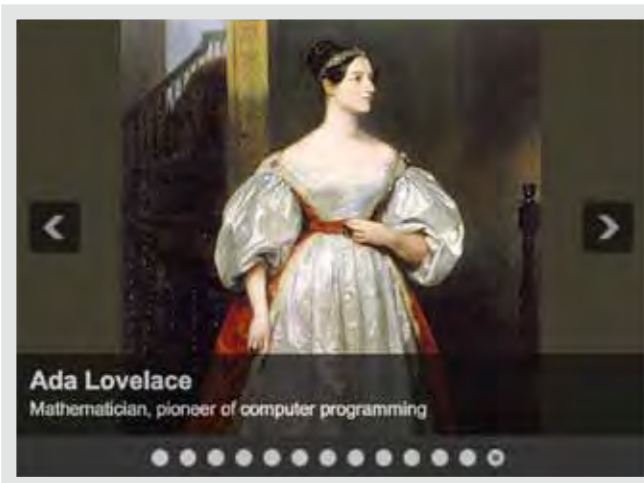
plates. I regret, however, that although I have done my best to secure perfection, yet owing to the fact that the art of lithography in this country is still in an undeveloped stage, these plates are far from being satisfactory.

My best thanks are due to Mr. Y. Nawa, Mr. C. Rothschild and other gentlemen for their kind assistance in the preparation of this little work.

K. Nagano,



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.



Images of female scientists featured on WISNet's website. From left and clockwise: Ada Lovelace (1815–1852) Dame Mary Cartwright, DBE FRS (1900–1998) Dame Miriam Rothschild, DBE FRS (1908–2005) and Rosalind Franklin (1920–1958).

### Current Work

In addition to thinking about how the future directions discussed above might be incorporated into the project, we have also been busy at work on other aspects including a data reconciliation project to reunite Walter Rothschild's bird nest, egg and skeletal material, which he gave to the NHM upon his death in 1937, with the parent bird skins he sold to the AMNH in 1932. This is particularly important as Walter collected numerous endemic island subspecies, many of which are now extinct or endangered. Matching the parent skins with their corresponding eggs and nests adds invaluable data to our knowledge of the species and their breeding activities, which can also assist in conservation efforts. We plan to compile a paper of our findings in collaboration with the NHM over the coming months.

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 WISNet project website is up and running at [www.womeninscience.net](http://www.womeninscience.net). Interested parties may wish to sign up to our JISCMail list at [www.jiscmail.ac.uk/WISNET](mailto:www.jiscmail.ac.uk/WISNET).

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

<sup>1</sup> A detailed report of the workshop and its findings, titled *The Rothschild Scientists: Future Directions*, is available upon request from The Rothschild Archive.