



Above and below: a selection of images from one of the Rothschild albums.

The £18,000 record of the Rothschilds on safari

IN 1928, the Austrian branch of the Rothschild family embarked upon an extraordinary and unprecedented 6500-mile expedition from Nairobi to Cairo.

Not a family to do things by halves, no expense was spared in ensuring that their trip across potentially inhospitable lands was as luxurious as possible: they travelled in the relative luxury of a specially modified Mercedes Type 400S and, even in the desert, they still dressed for dinner every night.

Four albums, containing over 500 photographs recording the trip, were recently returned to the family for £18,000 through a private treaty sale arranged by Norfolk-based sporting gun specialists Holt's.

The albums, each measuring 2ft x 18in (61cm x 46cm), are thought to have been taken from a Rothschild château after the family fled Nazi Germany. Their whereabouts between the 1930s and 1972, when they appeared for sale at auction in Covent Garden, remains a mystery, but they were discovered by Nick Holt while on a trip to America. He then took them to the Rothschild family in Geneva on behalf of the vendor.

These are not mere snaps of the aristocracy on safari. They provide a record of African flora and fauna and a useful historical reference, showing the family exploring Khartoum and rowing in boats through the temple complex of Philae, flooded when the British built the Aswan Low Dam. This site is now flooded by the Aswan High Dam, but the temple stands 550 metres away in Agalkai, where it was moved, stone by stone, by UNESCO between 1977 and 1980.

In the back of one of the albums there are also some original sketches for the wine labels created especially for the trip – a Rothschild family tradition that continues to this day.

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