

FNL Annual Lecture 2006: The John Murray Archive *Given by John R Murray VII*

Last time I spoke in this room it was to the Royal Society for Asian Affairs on the opening up of Central Asia from the doorstep of 50 Albemarle Street. It was extraordinary to discover how many Murray authors were involved. But this was only one small part of the Murray archive.

This evening, I have let myself in for something quite different and much more daunting. It is as if I was trying to fit Wagner's Ring Cycle into forty minutes.

Clearly in this company I must bear in mind the well-known advice that the mother whale gave to her young: 'Beware my dears, it is when you are spouting that you are most likely to be harpooned.'

You will know, from the press coverage when the John Murray Archive was offered to the National Library of Scotland, that it is made up of over 150,000 manuscript letters as well as the manuscripts of the works of Byron, Walter Scott, Livingstone and others. But it also includes the ledgers, account books and letter books. It spans one of the most exciting and complex periods in our history with so many pioneering discoveries in science, medicine, exploration and archaeology. By the end of the nineteenth century the world was unrecognisable from what it had been at the beginning. And the Murrays were at the forefront of most of the developments. They published many of the key books of the period - Jane Austen's *Emma* and *Persuasion*, Byron's *Childe Harold*, Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and Livingstone's *Missionary Travels* to mention just a few. Murray also launched the Quarterly Review in 1809, with the help of Walter Scott and George Canning, as a counterblast to the Edinburgh Review, and it became the leading literary and political quarterly of the century, and brought into Murray's circle people of power and influence.

I plan to spend a moment considering what an archive is. The word archive sounds fussy and uninteresting, and certainly from our experience with, for example, the Heritage Lottery Fund, it is plain to see that education is needed on this front. It is easy to enjoy Raphael's Madonna of the Pinks or the beauty of the Macclesfield Psalter, as both are visual experiences. It is much more difficult to appreciate 150,000 manuscript letters together with ledgers, account books and letter books.

Whenever an archive is mentioned, people tend to think of boxes filled with papers browning at the edges and ledgers with the leather backs crumbling containing columns of incomprehensible figures. And simply as paper, an archive is fairly worthless. However when you feel the paper and look more closely at the writing, you begin to get an inkling of something exciting. It dawns on you that the writing is conveying ideas, thoughts, observations, instructions, feelings, and even, at times, passion. By simply touching the ink (God help you if you are wearing those awful white gloves), you are making direct contact with the writer. I will never forget the excitement when I first held a letter from Michael Faraday and realised that, when my ancestor received it, Faraday was experimenting with electromagnetism further down Albemarle Street at the Royal Institution. He even used to dine on occasions at No 50. I also remember the first time I held David Livingstone's letters, some written on that blue paper of which he was so fond. Those from deepest Africa are particularly poignant.

The immediacy you get from touching a letter is only the first step to making direct personal contact with the writer. Dipping into the Murray archive and reading the letters brings the writers as well as their periods to life. Most of the great issues of the day are debated, and most of the key people make an appearance - usually many appearances. You have the literary world: Jane Austen, Walter Scott, Byron, Washington Irving and Herman Melville; the scientists such as Faraday, Davy, Babbage, Sir Charles Lyell and Darwin; the politicians: Disraeli, Peel, Palmerston, Lord Salisbury and Gladstone; the explorers: Mungo Park, Sir John Franklin, Captain WE Parry, Paul Du Chaillu, Clapperton and Livingstone; the Archaeologists: Layard and Schliemann; and the social and political theorists: John Stuart Mill, Malthus and David Ricardo - to mention just a few.

But although so many of the key thinkers and men of action are represented, it is above all the thousands of people (over 16,500 names have so far been identified), whose letters have never yet been read, that makes the potential of the Archive so exciting. It is estimated that over 80% of the Archive is waiting to be opened up.

I would like to spend a few minutes on what to many people appears to be the least interesting aspect. Apart from the 150,000 manuscript letters there is the large collection of ledgers and record books. But in addition to the Murray ledgers, there are also the Charles Elliott letter books and ledgers and the Smith Elder ledgers.

Charles Elliot, an exact contemporary of the first John Murray, was active in Edinburgh between 1770 and 1790, and was a dynamic businessman exporting books to America, the West Indies, India, and Europe, as well as the length and breadth of the UK. He had ambitious plans. One of these was to send his shop man out to Philadelphia at the time of the American War of Independence to set up a bookselling business importing his books from Edinburgh. Elliot sadly died of a stroke at the early age of 41 in 1790, and the business died with him.

But, by marrying Charles Elliot's daughter, John Murray II inherited Elliot's letterbooks and ledgers and they lay in the archive forgotten until Bill Zachs began the research for his magnificent biography of JM I. It was Bill, and above all Warren McDougall, who rediscovered them and made us aware of how important they are.

From the letterbooks, which contain more than 3,000 letters, we can follow Elliot's correspondence with booksellers and customers, and there is even a record of Robbie Burns buying a set of magnificently bound volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from Elliot's shop in Parliament Square in Edinburgh. These unique records throw a fresh light on the late 18th-century book trade.

Also, John Murray was in regular correspondence with Charles Elliot during these early years and as both sides of the correspondence survive in the Archive, this makes engrossing reading.

Now to the John Murray ledgers and letter books. We originally saw these as simply taking up room in our wine cellar and only recently, with the growing interest in the history of the book, has their significance been fully appreciated. They record in detail the actual mechanics of book production, distribution and sales and all in the most elegant copperplate hand.

All the books published by John Murray since 1768 feature in these ledgers, with the production costs itemised. The entries usually include the publishing arrangement between John Murray and the author, the cost of the paper (which was one of the highest costs in book production at this time) and then a list of all the trades involved: the printer and the print-run (you can see that the first quarto edition of *Childe Harold* had a print run of just 500, but this moved swiftly into thousands), the illustrators (perhaps Turner who illustrated many Murray books), the steel engravers or the woodblock makers, the mapmakers (according to the recent history of Stanford's, the three main contributors to mapmaking in the nineteenth century were Stanford, the RGS and John Murray), the binding cost, and finally the profit or loss. There is often the ominous entry 'Sold to Tegg'. This would refer to overstocks being sold to Mr Tegg who was a remainder merchant, and some say a sharp operator, with outlets in Australia.

The ledger for *Emma* reveals that Jane Austen paid for the cost of the production. There is also a list of people receiving early copies, including the Prince Regent, who received his copy bound specially in morocco costing £1.4.0d. This copy is still preserved in the Royal Library at Windsor. The dedication of *Emma* to the Prince Regent was written by John Murray as Jane Austen could not bring herself to be so obsequious. It is interesting to see that Murray's clerk spelled Jane Austen's name wrong (Austin) on her royalty cheque and she endorsed it adopting the same wrong spelling.

One of the ways that John Murray sold his books was through his Coffee-House Sales, or sales at the Albion Tavern in the City, and these are shown in the ledgers. At the beginning of each publishing season, Murray would invite the London booksellers such as Longman, Rivington, Golburn and Hatchard to a slap-up dinner. Having plied them with the best claret so that they were nicely tiddly, John Murray would then auction his new titles at specially arranged terms of credit.

So from the archives you can often trace the passage of a manuscript: being delivered and entered into the Manuscript Book, the author's letters to Murray about the book, Murray's replies from the letter books, possibly the reader's report, the estimates for production costs, through to the ledgers and sales figures. This is, I think, unique.

Perhaps now is the moment to set the Archive into context but with a number of digressions.

The first John Murray came south from Edinburgh in 1768 and founded his bookselling and publishing business at 32 Fleet Street, an area much frequented by printers and the book trade, and a stone's throw from Dr Johnson's house. At the end of the eighteenth century there was no distinction between book-seller and publisher. This distinction came early in the nineteenth century and the second John Murray was at the forefront of this. Perhaps as the saying goes 'on the publication of *Childe Harold* Byron woke up to find himself famous and Murray, a gentleman publisher.'

It is interesting to note that when John Murray set up in business in 1768 the production of books had changed very little over the 300 years since the days of Caxton and the introduction into England of moveable type. However, from then on enormous changes took place. The introduction of the steam press in the early nineteenth century and then mechanical typesetting, the new methods of reproducing illustrations and later photographs, and then much later the arrival of computers and the ability to set entire books on screen and email them across the world in a matter of seconds, changed the production of books out of recognition. All these changes are reflected in the Archive.

While looking into the development of the printing press, I followed a trail that will give you an inkling of the kind of network of associations that is a key to understanding the Murrays. Referring, in the New DNB, to the 3rd Earl Stanhope, who was responsible for a key development of the printing press, discovered that his grandson, the 5th Earl, was an author and friend of the Murrays. The 5th Earl was a supporter of Robert Peel who, at the time, was contributing to the *Quarterly Review* for John Murray. Stanhope was also the moving spirit behind the founding of the National Portrait Gallery. He persuaded Disraeli (who was a Murray author and friend of the family - but more of this later) while Chancellor of the Exchequer to support the project. He also allied the support of Sir Charles Eastlake who was Director of the National Gallery (another author and friend of the Murrays, and adviser to the third John Murray on his personal picture collection). When the Commissioners of the National Portrait Gallery eventually met in 1857 (the year Murray published *Livingstone's Missionary Travels*) they appointed Eastlake as Chairman and George Scharf as Secretary. Scharf and his father both illustrated Murray books. Scharf the elder illustrated Darwin and Scharf junior illustrated a mass of Murray books including Charles Fellows' *Lycia*, and he travelled through Asia Minor with Fellows making drawings of the antiquities on site to illustrate his book. This goes to show the extraordinary way in which the Murray network spread out.

But to return to the history of the Murrays.

It was in 1812, on the publication of *Childe Harold* and its phenomenal success, that John Murray II moved from Fleet Street to the more literary and gentlemanly Albemarle Street. There is an apocryphal story that when walking past the west end of the Strand he overheard Beau Brummel remark, while looking east, 'I had no idea London stretched that way'. So Murray promptly moved west to Albemarle Street in aristocratic Mayfair.

During the early part of the nineteenth century the drawing room at 50 Albemarle Street became the great literary, scientific and political meeting place. But by 1824 Murray was already finding it

difficult to carry on his normal business with so many people in his drawing room, and so the Athenaeum Club was founded by John Wilson Croker and others to take the pressure off Albemarle Street. Murray received visitors not only from the UK but also from all over the world who arrived in London with introductions to him men such as George Tichnor, the American author who, in 1815, observes after dining with John Murray, "The conversation could not long be confined to politics, even on the day when they heard full news of Wellington's successes, they turned to literary topics as by instinct.' (It is worth noting that it was

Murray who published Wellington's Despatches). In 1816 Washington Irving comments: 'Mr Murray's Drawing Room is a great resort of first-rate literary characters; whenever I have a leisure hour I go there.' In 1835 Cavour also visited Albemarle Street while in London and writes 'His house in fact has much more the appearance of one of the aristocracy than of a business man ... [after dinner] we men remained another hour passing round the wine and listening to the pleasant sallies and witticisms of the company.'

To appreciate fully the archive one has to understand that the Murrays became close friends of their authors. This close relationship can be seen right up to my generation. Freya Stark, the great Arabian traveller, was my godmother, John Piper, the painter and polymath, was my brother's godfather, Osbert Lancaster, the cartoonist, was my younger sister's godfather and, believe it or not, Sir Francis Younghusband, who in 1904 led the notorious mission to Lhasa under Curzon who was then Viceroy of India, was my elder sister's godfather. But this was only following a Murray tradition for Layard, discoverer of Nineveh and Nimrud, was my great-great-great-uncle Hallam's godfather. This close friendship between publisher and author gives the archive a personal quality that one does not usually expect from a publishing house.

Byron is a particularly good example of this special relationship. At first he corresponded with John Murray, who was ten years his elder, in the normal way an author would with a publisher. However, as the years went by the relationship turned into a true friendship, leading Tommy Moore to protest violently in his diary:

'Murray showed me a letter which Lord Byron had written him, which is to me unaccountable, except from the most ungovernable vanity - He there details to him (to Murray, the bookseller - a person so out of his caste & to whom he writes formally, beginning "Dear Sir") the details of an intrigue in which he says he is at this very moment actually engaged with a Venetian girl "the daughter of one of the Nobleman", whose name is Angelina, & whose age is eighteen etc. etc. - entering into such details as it would be dishonourable to communicate even to the most confidential friend, and thus completely *identifying* the poor girl (if indeed any such girl exists) for the edification of Mr Murray and all the visitors to his shop - to whom it is, of course, intended he shall read the Gazette of my Lord's last Venetian victory - this is really *too* gross.'

'All the visitors to his shop' refers to the gatherings at 50 Albemarle Street that Walter Scott called Murray's 'four o'clock friends' - they met at Number 50 each afternoon to gossip and discuss the latest topics of interest, and after Byron had left England in 1816, to hear his news from his letters to John Murray.

These letters, of course, contained graphic accounts of Byron's latest conquests but Moore further complained that Byron often addressed his publisher, a mere tradesman, as 'My dear Murray' and allowed Murray to address him, a peer of the realm, as 'My dear Friend'. It certainly gives one an idea of the kind of relationship that had built up between the two.

Lady Caroline Lamb also formed a strong and lasting friendship with John Murray. In many ways he became her confidante, even though he turned down her scurrilous novel *Glenarvon* and she caused him no end of trouble. He clearly had a soft spot for her and their correspondence is certainly unusual. Caro was, as we all know, one of Byron's most notorious lovers. It was she who coined the phrase, 'Mad, Bad and Dangerous to know'. Although her affair with Byron in 1812 was short-lived, she

became obsessed with him for the rest of her life. Letters poured from her pen that were often simply a stream of consciousness. She wrote to Murray about Byron, his poetry, his marriage and much else, and she even invited him to the country to shoot and also proposed a quick visit with him to Paris. When looking at the enchanting miniature of her in page's costume in our collection, you can understand why Murray was beguiled by her. She confided in him and he never betrayed her trust except that he ignored her incessant requests to burn her letters. Their friendship continued until her death in 1828.

Here are just two snippets from her letters to John Murray to give a flavour of their relationship.

18 Nov 1814

'Dear Murray amidst all the changes & chances of this mortal life let me entreat you not to forget me - pray write me a letter of news & accept the parcel I send in remembrance of one who will never forget the real kindness you have strewn her?

And on 12th December 1816 following a visit to 50 Albemarle Street: It is strange but my visit to your House today has made me miserable... your room speaks of him [Byron] in every part of it - & I never see you without pain - yet is it not strange it seems to me most unpleasant if I pass any length of time without seeing you & what I can safely add - that I think you have been a sincere and upright friend to both him & me - for I am yours in my heart and soul.'

Murray's authors were often most demanding. Apart from writing to Murray requesting among other things magnesia, gun powder, tooth powders and even bulldogs as well as books, Byron even asked John Murray to collect little Allegra's body from London docks and arrange for her burial in Harrow church. Persuading the rector to allow this was no easy feat. Not only was Allegra illegitimate but also the daughter of the notorious Lord Byron. Murray miraculously succeeded in having her placed just inside the door. There is also a letter from James Hogg, 'the Ettrick Shepherd', asking John Murray to find him a wife. His letters are some of the liveliest in the Archive. And what about the occasion that Paul du Chaillu asked Murray to arrange to have two gorillas stuffed for him! We will hear later of David Livingstone's requests.

Now I plan to look briefly at the relationship between the Disraelis and John Murray. Isaac D'Israeli had known John Murray II since 1795 when Murray took over the business and Isaac acted as his literary adviser. When Murray held his literary salons and dinners in No 50, Isaac was introduced to those literary people such as Byron, Scott and Southey about whom he had written in *Curiosities of Literature* and his other books. Benjamin Disraeli, as Isaac's son, was naturally introduced to this circle at an early age and Murray was so taken by him that he asked him to advise on a manuscript before he was even sixteen. It seems that the distinguished publisher and businessman was already bewitched by this young man and for a while he acted as a kind of father-figure and patron. When Disraeli offered him his first work, *Aylmer Papillon*, in 1824 (which Murray judged unpublishable) Murray delayed turning it down for fear of discouraging him. Disraeli, becoming impatient for a reaction, wrote to Murray on July 29th 1824: 'the sooner it be put in the fire the better, and you have some small experience of burning manuscripts? The burning of Byron's Memoirs in the fireplace at No 50, a disagreeable experience for Murray, had taken place only a short time before and for Disraeli to be as forthright as this shows an unusual relationship between the nineteen-year-old and the forty-six-year-old publisher.

It was even more extraordinary that Murray allowed Disraeli to invest money for him in shares of the Anglo-Mexican Mining Association, and there is a letter from Disraeli of January 31st 1825:

'It was a holiday on the stock exchange today in consequence of the decapitation of Chas Ist...

A seller of Anglo-American was not found ... but tomorrow will be the day of action.'

Here was someone, still under age, buying stocks for John Murray, the famous publisher, in a very dicey market which was shortly to collapse. Disraeli also persuaded Murray to set up a daily paper, *The Representative*, to challenge *The Times*, an ambitious plan with correspondents based in Europe

and beyond. Disraeli, together with a dubious banker named Powles, and John Murray put up the money. This project was a disaster and closed down within six months - Murray lost £25,000. This led to a breach between the Disraeli and Murray families, and Disraeli took the opportunity of lampooning Murray in *Vivien Grey*, published in 1826.

Here is a letter of May 21st 1826 from Disraeli to Mrs Murray in which Disraeli writes: 'Mr Murray has overstepped the bounds ... he has spoke and is now speaking of me to the world in general terms which to me are inexplicable, as they appear to be outrageous ..'

And Mrs D'Israeli then writes to Murray requesting 'an explanation of your conduct ... for while you are expressing great friendship we were constantly hearing of the great losses Mr Murray has sustained through the mismanagement and bad conduct of my son. Surely you, sir, were this story truly told, it would not be believed that the experienced publisher of Albemarle Street could be deceived by the plans of a boy of twenty whom you have known since cradle.'

But in a letter to Murray of May 27th 1830 when he is offering Murray his new manuscript *The Young Duke* [eventually published by Colburn], Disraeli writes, The rupture was finally over and Murray published Contarini Fleming in 1832. But I must return to the history of the publishing house.

Murray was involved over copyright and there is a correspondence in our archives between Murray, Dickens and Gladstone over the pirating of books. Washington Irving, a Murray author, was particularly concerned with this. At this time there was much importing of illegal editions into Britain and Dickens asked Murray to write to Gladstone about policing this. Gladstone, a friend and a Murray author, suggested that the only way to stop piracy was to reduce the price of the original editions so that pirating was no longer profitable. Murray acted on this and produced his Home and Colonial Library and Railway Readers at low prices.

In science Murray's most famous author was Charles Darwin whose *Origin of Species* he published in 1859. Charles Lyell, yet another Murray author, recommended Murray to Darwin and Darwin wrote to Murray. "The book ought to be popular with a large number of scientific and semi-scientific readers - I have done my best, but whether it will succeed I cannot say.' When Murray showed the manuscript to his adviser the Revd. Whitwell Elwin (then editor of the *Quarterly Review*), Elwin advises strongly against it and recommends that Murray write back to Darwin suggesting that he concentrates on the study of pigeons which as he writes, 'will sell much better'. Luckily Murray did not take his advice. In a later letter to Murray, Darwin insists that if Murray changes his mind about publication he must not worry and he, Darwin, will not hold him to any agreement and will return any money paid to him. After publication Murray issued, in the *Quarterly Review*, the devastating critique of the book by 'Soapy Sam', Bishop Wilberforce. This shows that Murray was not frightened of publishing both sides of an argument.

In the early nineteenth century, Murray was also at the forefront of travel and exploration. Sir John Barrow, Second Secretary to the Admiralty, brought to Murray many of his 'Barrow Boys' such as Captain Franklin and James Ross of the North West Passage and Denham and Clapperton of the Niger. It

was through him that Murray became the publisher of the Journal of Navigation, the Navy List and also publisher to the Board of Longitude. If you read Jules Verne's *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, who attempts to sail to the North Pole, you will find that John Murray authors are his main sources.

Once the Napoleonic wars were over and people began to travel again, Murray took advantage of the arrival of the railway and, as I have mentioned, was one of the first publishers to produce a series of cheap railway readers. John Murray III, after travelling through Europe as a young man and finding no suitable guidebooks, began his famous *Murray Handbooks* that predated Baedeker by several years. By the end of the century the Handbooks covered the UK and almost the whole of Europe as

well as Russia, Asia Minor, Egypt, India, Japan and New Zealand, and so famous did they become that Punch published a parody of Cowper's 'My Mary' which opens as follows:

‘Once we could scarce walk down the Strand,
What Jungfrau now can us withstand
When we are walking hand in hand
My Murray.’

These Handbooks brought in considerable correspondence with suggestions and criticisms. There is a charming letter from Felix Mendelssohn asking Murray to include his favourite inn in Switzerland in his next edition (which he did. John Ruskin sent in so many corrections to the *Northern Italy Handbook* that Murray asked him to rewrite the section on art. This is why many of his letters are in the archive.

This period saw Murray authors opening up most parts of the world. Central Asia was a particular area covered by people such as Moorcroft, Alexander Burnes, Robert Shaw and later Francis Younghusband. And there is that extraordinary woman traveller Isabella Bird, who journeyed alone through Persia, Korea, China and elsewhere. She was also a marvellous photographer and many of her photographs taken in Persia and in the Far East are in the archive. It always amuses me that my ancestor taught her to ride a tricycle down Albemarle Street.

Now to turn to David Livingstone's friendship with the Murrays.

Murray originally wrote to Sir Roderick Murchison who, with John Murray, was a founder member of the Royal Geographical Society, the most important geographical society in the world, asking him to approach Livingstone about writing an account of his travels for him. Murchison duly wrote to Livingstone explaining that 'the Great Publisher' would be interested in publishing him. Livingstone agreed and began writing in 1857. The correspondence over the editing and publication of *Missionary Travels* makes amusing reading. Livingstone was very particular about what he wanted. There is a splendid letter where he, having seen a proof of one of the proposed illustrations, writes: "The lion encounter is absolutely abominable, I entreat you by all that's good to suppress it. Everyone who knows what a lion is, will die laughing at it ... It's like a dray horse over me..." On another occasion Livingstone complains bitterly of Murray's reader's comments on the manuscript. 'If written in my style,' he writes to Murray, "... it is more likely to be popular and saleable than if diluted and emasculated as this man has impudently presumed to do... My dear fellow every iota of his labours must go. I think you will not find me cantankerous or difficult to deal with in any other matter.' He also insisted on keeping his own sounds of animal noises and when Binny, Murray's editor, suggested changing 'piss' to 'urinate' in relation to an elephant he explodes "has the man never heard one do it?" In a later letter Livingstone concedes 'but I can't muster a single grumble at you in return.'

But what particularly intrigues me is the personal requests that Livingstone makes of Murray. He asks him to arrange for the payment of his daughter Agnes's music teacher in Paris and for her pocket money. He also asks if Mrs Murray can advise Agnes on what dresses she should wear when she comes out of mourning for her grandmother. Livingstone seeks from Murray the name of good agent as he wants to rent a house for a month, and he also asks him to send money out to his brother Charles in America. And what will sound so familiar to publishers today is Livingstone's letter to Murray complaining that his friends cannot find copies of his book in any of the bookshops in Manchester.

Here is just one recent anecdote that you may like. When Dervla Murphy was setting off to bicycle from Kenya down to Cape Town, she asked me in the usual way to provide her with an introduction on John Murray paper. This I did, and on her return she told me that, while she was cycling through Zambia, she decided one evening to stop in a largish village for the night. When she appeared most of the locals took fright at this apparition. Dervla found her way to what she thought was the chief's hut but it turned out to be a minute Livingstone museum. In a small showcase she saw a copy of Livingstone's *Missionary Travels*. She immediately took out of her pannier her

introduction from me and gave it to the first person who approached her. It had an startling effect. This person immediately went to the showcase and as he read off the title page 'John Murray, Albemarle Street' he also read the sheet of paper Dervla had given him, 'John Murray, Albemarle Street' and signed 'John Murray'. All the village were immediately summoned to meet Livingstone's publisher.

But to move on to the early twentieth century and a different aspect of the archive.

It was when the post-1920 book files were returned from our warehouse to Albemarle Street that we came upon seven thick files marked 'The Letters of Queen Victoria'. We showed these to an Australian academic, Yvonne Ward, who was researching her thesis on how Queen Victoria was interpreted to the public after her death. Her excitement was enormous, for here was the story of the preparation and publication of Queen Victoria's correspondence - the first time the correspondence of an English sovereign had ever appeared in print.

These files begin in 1904 and show how Lord Esher, that *eminence grise*, A. C. Benson, the brother of the archbishop, Lord Knollys, Edward VII's private secretary, and John Murray achieved a publishing first that at times seemed impossible. Lord Esher, who moved freely in royal circles, had the idea of publishing the Queen's correspondence. He chose A. C. Benson as editor, who was a master at Eton at the time and so usefully close to Windsor. As publisher he decided on John Murray who had published the speeches of Prince Albert and the elephant folio of the Albert Memorial for Queen Victoria and who was also A. C. Benson's publisher.

The problem of selecting, editing and printing the correspondence – initially in three volumes - was horrendous. Princess Beatrice, literary executor of Queen Victoria and known as Babe by her family, had her own views on how the Queen should be portrayed, and Edward VII, who had to approve the proofs, seemed to have little interest in reading them and was often out of the country in Baden Baden, Marienbad or elsewhere when most needed. Lord Esher had a devious habit of making changes that appeared to come from the King when they were in fact his own.

No sooner was volume 1 in proof than Princess Beatrice decided to reveal additional correspondence to be included. John Murray then had to instruct the printer to insert this, in already standing type. A new set of proofs was then produced. Edward VII was given them and after holding onto them for nine months insisted on a number of additional cuts. Each time something was cut out Murray had to try to get Benson to find something of equivalent length in chronological sequence to insert to save the printer from having to move all the type up. If letters were inserted the procedure was reversed. More often than not the printer had to move the type up and down to accommodate these additions and deletions. At a late stage this became even more difficult and expensive and time consuming as the index had to be amended as well. Each person involved in checking and amending the proofs – there were six - was instructed to make their suggestions and corrections in a different coloured pencil to keep them distinct.

Esher, Princess Beatrice and Edward VII all had their own idea of how Queen Victoria should be presented. However, they seemed to agree on one thing that she should be seen as Queen and Empress, and nothing that showed her as a woman or as mother of her children, should appear. Passages that were too private or potentially scandalous or trivial were to be cut out, but everyone had different ideas as to what these were. In the end so many letters had extracts removed in them that it was decided not to use ellipses as these would, as Lord Esher said, 'destroy the readers' confidence'.

When the first two volumes were in type (1200 printed pages) there was not sufficient type to set volume 3, even though Murray had already bought additional type for the printer. Only when volume 1 was stereod could the type be dishd and volume 3 composed. One has to bear in mind at this point that French and German editions were to be published simultaneously and the volumes had to be reset in the USA to establish local copyright. This all added to the extraordinary complexity of this whole operation.

Throughout, John Murray had to oversee the project and somehow keep everything moving. This proved a nightmare and it was he who bore the brunt of the professional and financial anxiety. However, the project had attached to it enormous prestige and ultimately both John Murray IV and V were knighted by the King for their services.

This whole episode shows a different approach to the Archive and one that I find totally absorbing. It reveals the whole picture, in its most complex form, from concept of a book through the editing process into production including the actual printing problems and then to final publication.

But I see my time is up.

I hope I have managed to give you a flavour of the Murrays and the John Murray Archive. I am only sorry that there is no time to move up to my father's period when once again the drawing room in 50 Albemarle Street became a great meeting place filled this time with his 'four o'clock friends' - Freya Stark, John Betjeman, Kenneth Clark, Harold Nicolson, Paddy Leigh Fermor and all the others