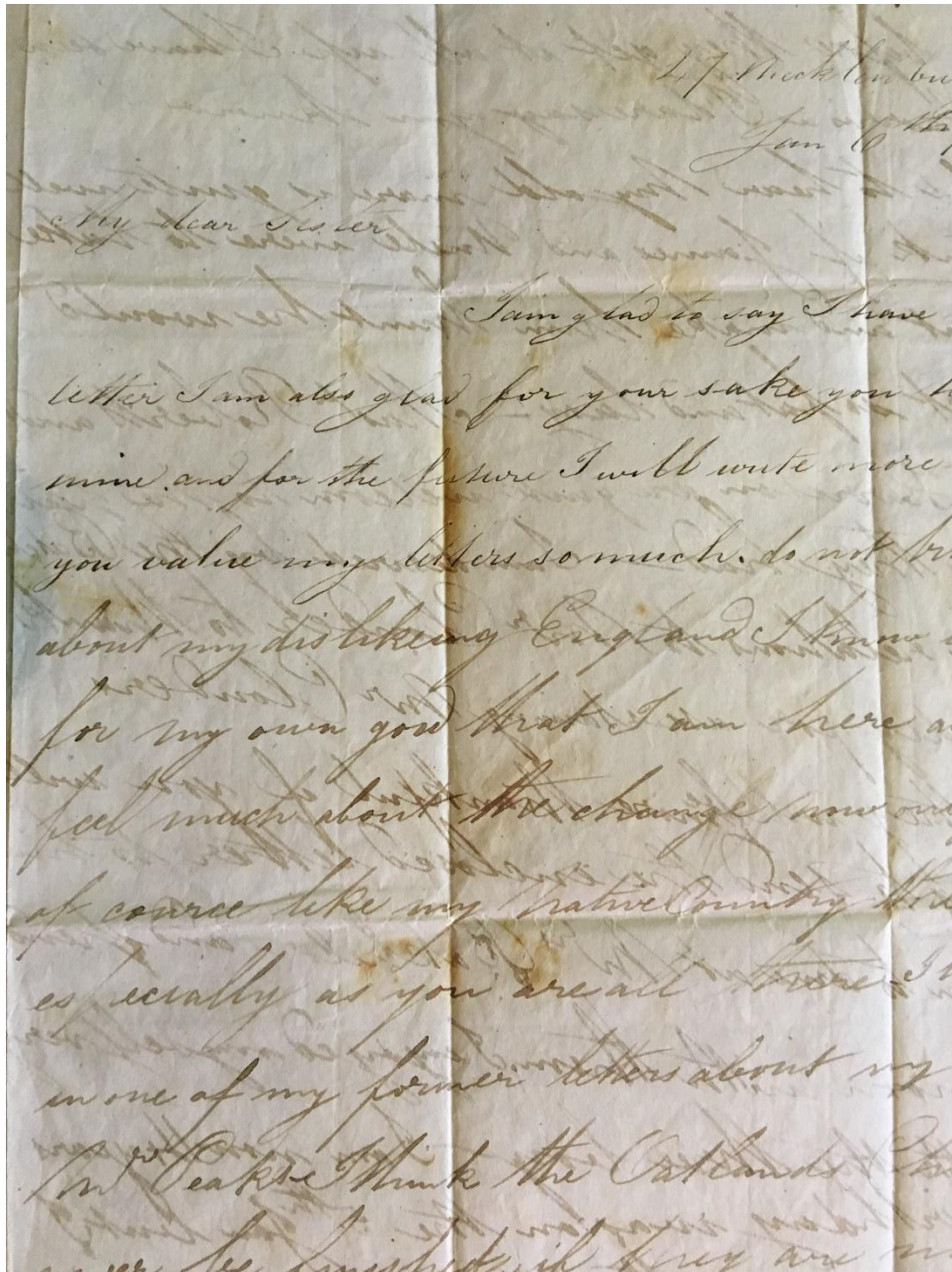


Annotated Letter # 2: Thomas Weeding to his sister, Oatlands, 6th January 1845



(2)

47 Mecklenburgh Square

Jan 6th 1845

My dear Sister,

I am glad to say I have received your letter I am also glad for your sake you have received mine and for the future I will write more regular as you value my letters so much. Do not trouble yourself about my disliking England I know it is all for my own good that I am here and I do not feel much about the change now only I must of course like my Native Country the best especially as you are all there. I have told you in one of my former letters about my visit to Mrs Peakes. **I think the Oatlands Church will never be finished**, if they are not quick about it the first part will fall down with old age before they get it all up. I have seen James Morris as I daresay you know.

I am glad to hear my old mare is quite well and I think if James and Uncle were to take him out and **make him hunt** he would not get so fat and lazy - Master Roberts and Richard Harrison are quite welcome to the pair of Bantams they had – I am desired by the Batchelors who are relations to Mr Clonder to thank you kindly for ascertaining Mr Clonders address and they will be more thankful if you will be so good as to send the enclosed letter to him.

I have been to dine at Mrs Batchelors and spend the afternoon with them, I enjoyed myself very well with the three boys – I am now 14 years old my birthday was on the 5th Jan but I kept it on the 6th as it was on Sunday and I was very lucky at cards for I won £1,,17 shillings at a party Mrs Weeding gave so I think I did very well on my birthday – and I am invited out to another of my school fellows parties on the 9th of this month and **I daresay there will be some card playing** and as I have always won as yet at cards I hope I shal (sic) continue to do so at the same time I hope you will excuse the rubbish (sic) I am putting In this letter, I must now conclude hoping this letter will find you all in good health

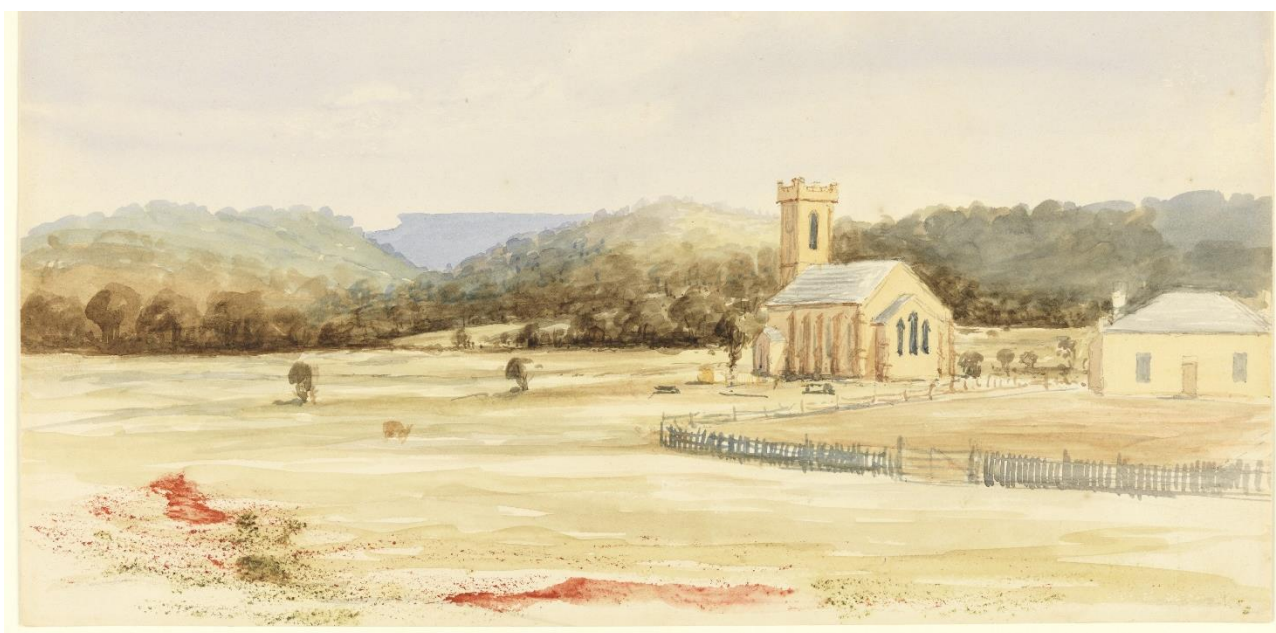
Give my love to all at home

I remain

Dear Sister your ever affectionate Brother
Thomas Weeding

I think the Oatlands Church will never be finished...

Thomas had a point here. Way back in 1827, Thomas Anstey was agitating for a church in Oatlands, where services were being held on the back verandah of the Military Barracks. But Anstey didn't get a church; rather, he got a Court House (which doubled as a Church on Sundays). And so it dragged on, with endless public meetings, fundraisers and appeals to Government. Work finally began in 1839, and by 1840 the church was ready for roofing. Finally, in January 1849, services were able to be held in St Peter's Anglican Church. The one thing that was never finished was the clock; the tower has an opening for one, but sadly no clock graces it.



St Peter's Oatlands by Susan Fereday ca 1870 (Allport Library & Museum of Fine Arts)

Take him out and make him hunt...

Emigrants to Van Diemen's Land were usually very keen to bring their manners, laws and social systems with them. In the 1840s when Thomas is writing, fox hunting in England had become the major past-time of middle class folk in the country (and some from the city too). In Van Diemen's Land, the Midlands Hunt Club was established in..... With no foxes to hunt, the usual quarry was roos, or later on, rabbits.



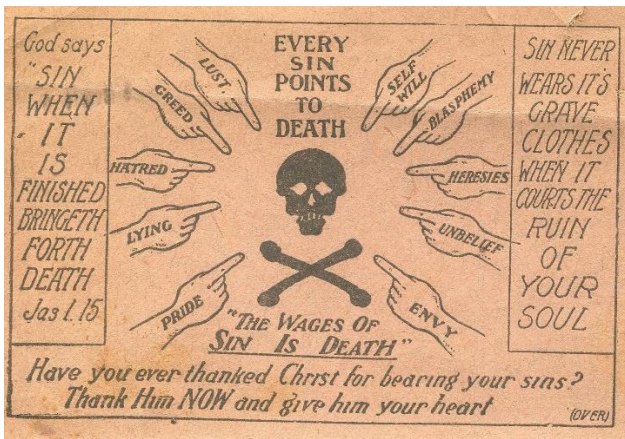
The Midlands Hunt Club outside the Melton Mowbray Inn (Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office)

I daresay there will be some card playing...

Thomas is contemplating the joys of playing cards with his schoolmates. At the time, card playing was viewed by many as an evil almost as bad as Sunday travelling (catching a train on the Sabbath). Religious tracts published in the 1840s enumerate how those foolish enough to dabble with cards were on a fast road to hell



Playing cards found under the floor of the Oatlands Gaolers Residence. Note the Five of Spades with no number.



From the Religious Tract Society ca 1880

Mecklenburgh Square

Thomas is writing from a quite salubrious part of London; 47 Mecklenburgh Square was the home of his “kind friend and benefactor” cousin Thomas Weeding, usually referred to in the letters simply as Mr Weeding.



Mecklenburgh Square East, ca 1890. Much of the grand Georgian architecture survives to this day