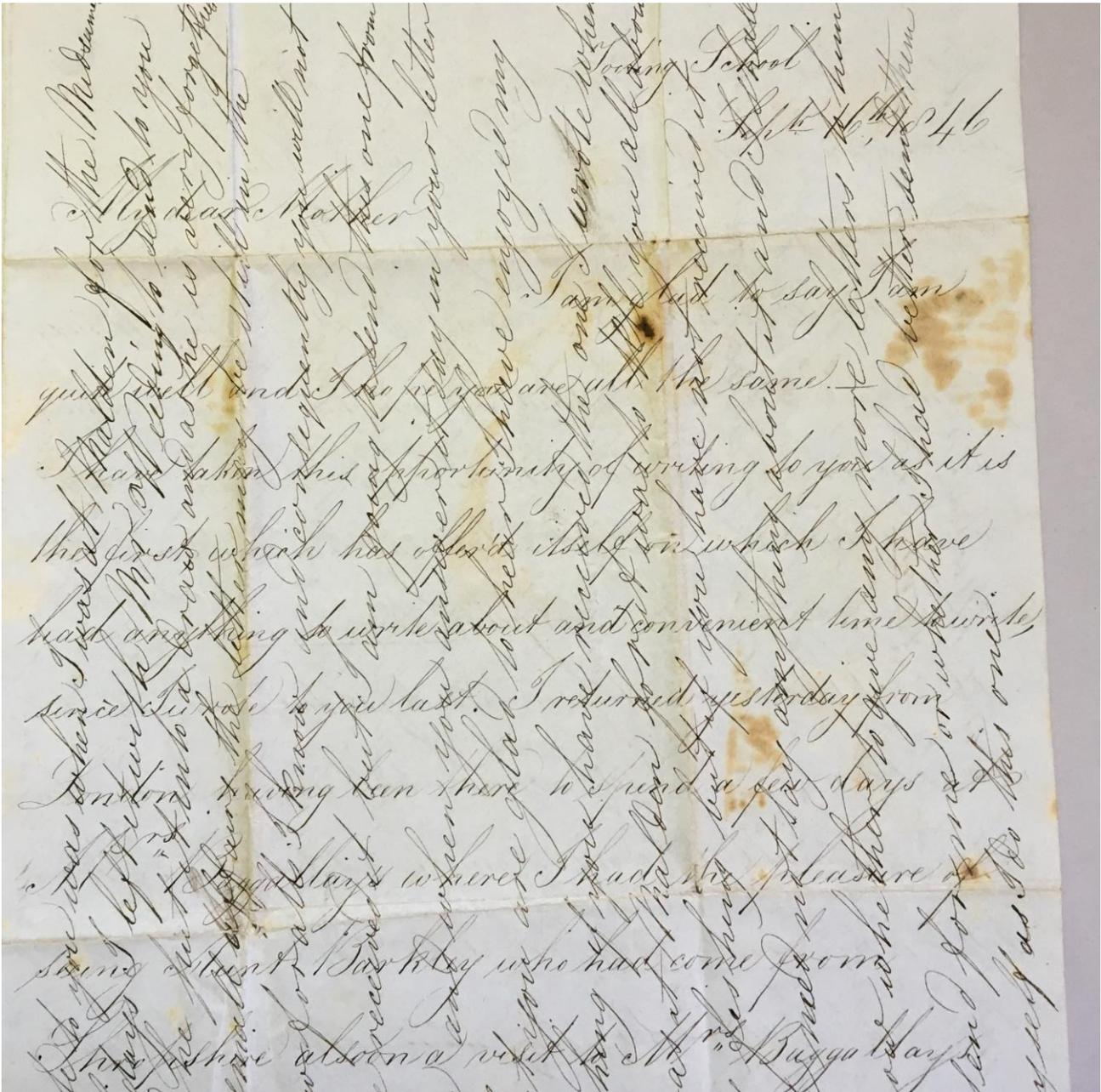


Annotated Letter Number 3 : Thomas Weeding writing home to Mother, September 1846



Tooting School
Sept 16th, 1846

My dear Mother,

I am glad to say I am quite well and I hope you are all the same –

I have taken this opportunity of writing to you as it is the first which has offer'd itself in which I have had anything to write about and convenient time to write, since I wrote to you last. I returned yesterday from London having been there to spend a few days at Mrs Baggallays where I had the pleasure of seeing Aunt Barkly who had come from Shropshire also on a visit to Mrs Baggallays.

I enjoyed myself very much, we went out sightseeing and among other places, we went over Westminster Abbey which of course you know and which I daresay you would very much like to see again. Mrs Barkly sends her love to all of you and is still waiting to hear from you she also asked me whether you are coming

over, to which I could only answer that you were still talking about it and I daresay I answered rightly as I suppose you have not yet determined to come.

Mr Weeding has determined to go down to Shropshire next Summer so I suppose I shall also go with him which I shall like very much as living at Mrs Barkly's will be more like home.

As Mr & Mrs Weeding are staying at Malden I only saw Mr Weeding when he went up to London to take Mrs Barkly down to Malden and bring me back to school, he is quite well as he always is.

Of course you have heard of the hailstorm which has done so much damage to the windowglass, the storm did not come so far as Tooting but it did a great deal of damage at Clapham which is not very far from here and in London all the **glass houses at the Zoological and Botanical gardens were smashed.**

We have had a great deal of cricketing lately we played a match with a school at Streatham and won it and as we beat them by so many we played them again and gave them their Masters on their side but we beat them again we also played another match with a school at Clapham and although our adversaries were almost all young men we beat them and as is generally the custom we had it put in the newspaper so that my name has been through the printing press. I have not seen James Morris yet although it is a very long time since you expected he would have arrived. I have a great deal to do in the lesson way besides all my other things. I now learn Euclid and Algebra.

I have not heard from you for a long time and as you are generally more punctual in writing to me than I am in writing to you I look out every time the postman comes to see if there is a letter for me. The last letter I wrote to you was when I was at Malden for the Midsummer holidays I left it with Mr Weeding to send to you and he put it into a draw (sic) and as he is very forgetful of small affairs the letter may be still in the draw (sic) for all I know and consequently you will not have received it but I am going to send this one from here and when you answer it say in your letter that you are glad to hear I have enjoyed my fishing if you have received the one I wrote when I was at Malden for it was to tell you all about my fishing but if you have not received it you need not say anything about it and I shall know whether to give any more letters to him to send for me or whether I had better send them myself as I do this one.

It is only a week to the Michaelmas Holidays, I don't suppose I shall go home but we shall not have many lessons to say as so few boys stop and we are not punished if we go out in the village as we are when it is regular school and as it is the time for blackberries I shall make some jam which is better than perhaps you may think considering that I am the maker and have no fire to make it. **To make a fire I get a bears grease pot** and the wick of a candle or a lot of cotton together with a lot of tallow and put them all into the bears grease pot and set light to the wick in several places which makes a thick flame and then I put the blackberries and sugar in a tin pan over the flame and it soon makes jam if the berries are ripe.

When you answer this please to tell how many bantams there are I suppose old Molly must be dead now as she was so old when I saw her last and although it is not much more than three years since that time yet it seems to me to be a very long time.

Tell me also what Uncle Lawrence thinks about coming over and how all the Hunting-Ground relations are more particularly about the Tom Weeding who went out last as I am not the only one who wants to know and you need not be afraid of Mr Weeding seeing the letter if you send it to me when I am at school. I think I must now conclude as I have not got anything more to say that will interest you not that I mean to say what I have already said will interest you.

Please to give my love to Fanny Harriet, James Uncle and all my friends

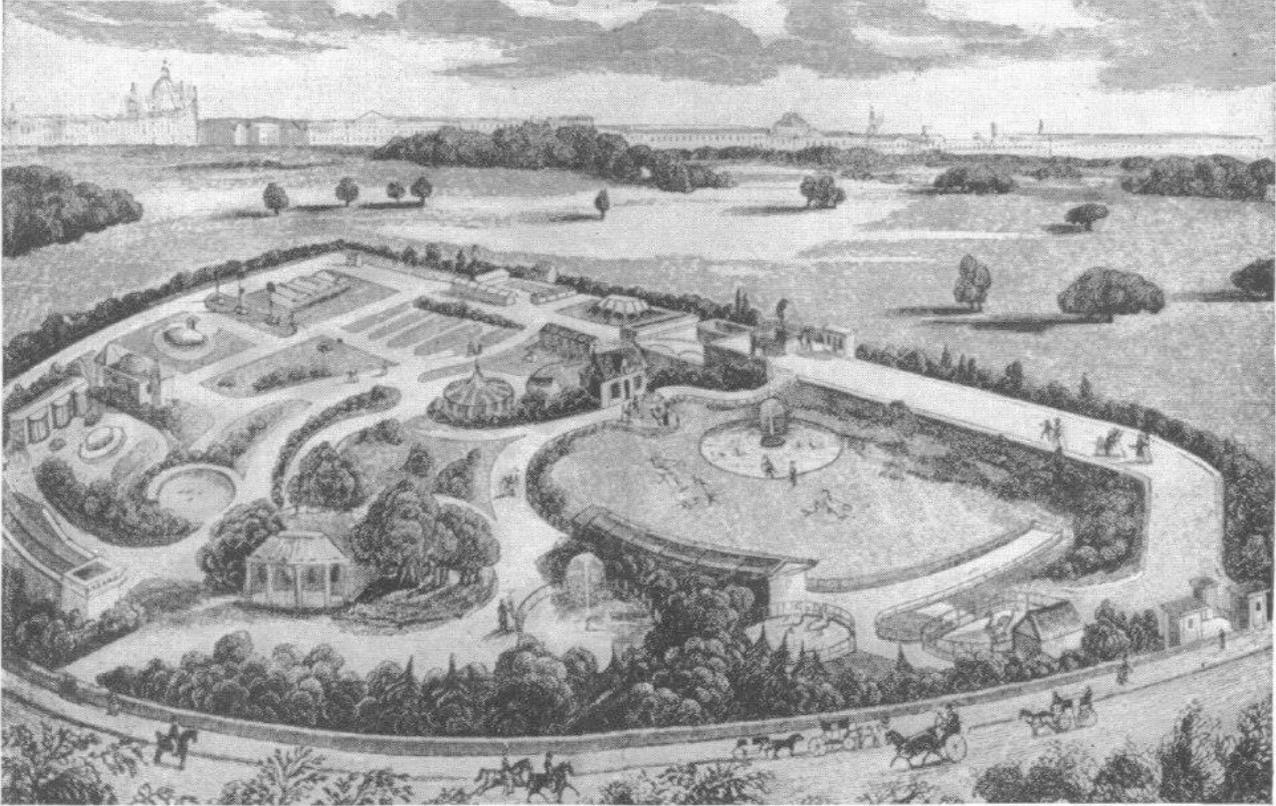
And believe me to remain

Your affectionate Son

T Weeding

“glass houses at the Zoological and Botanical gardens were smashed...”

Thomas is almost certainly referring here to the gardens of the Zoological Society of London (later known simply as the London Zoo).



PLAN OF THE GROUNDS OF THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

The Zoological Society was formed in 1826 and included such luminaries as Humphrey Davy, Robert Peel and Sir Stamford Raffles. In 1831 King William IV donated the 'Royal Menagerie'. The Zoological Society soon became one of the most popular drawcards in Victorian London.



Some of the menagerie at the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens, 1835



Could this be the glasshouse Thomas Weeding is referring to?

“To make a fire I get a bears grease pot”

Hard to believe now, but in 19th century England a ‘pomade’ of bears grease was a popular remedy for men with receding hair lines. In use as far back as the 17th century, the thinking behind bears grease as a balness cure was that bears are hairy, therefore bears’ fat (grease) must promote hairiness. Perhaps not the most scientific theorem, but it sold a lot of bears grease



When smearing rendered bear fat on your balding scalp, use only James Atkinson's